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Territory, sovereignty and entitlement: Diplomatic discourses in the United Nations Security Council

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A B S T R A C T

This paper builds upon feminist approaches within political science, international relations and geography that study how bodies haunt global politics, by exploring how entitlement to power connects through the scale of the body to that of the state. In a context of rising populism and political bluster, as well as post-*#metoo* discussions of personal entitlement displayed by well-known political figures, there is a need to take seriously how discourses of statehood within security crises are gendered in specific ways. This paper argues that the concept of entitlement offers potential for geographic enquiry by opening up new perspectives on masculinist framings of territory and state in critical geopolitics and in critical international relations. It considers specifically how diplomatic discourses ground and naturalize claims to territory by showing how states' entitlement to territory and masculinist forms of personal entitlement are connected. Drawing upon feminist approaches to language, discourse and power, this paper studies diplomatic interventions at the United Nations Security Council in New York in 2014–2017 on the crisis in Ukraine. Methodologically, it analyses diplomatic speeches through the concept of entitlement to show how territorial claims are naturalized through rhetorical devices grounded in hegemonic forms of masculinity. It argues that a clearer understanding of the connections between discourses of personal entitlement and state territorial sovereignty can further our understanding of territory.

> "We use many beautiful words about the need to peacefully settle political crises (…). However, after discussing Ukraine here about 30 times, the question arises as to how well-aligned the declarations are with the situation in the country. Are they directly applicable, or are they provided just for the sake of eloquence?" (Ambassador Churkin 2015. United Nations Security Council 7365:7)

1. Introduction

A prolonged crisis has been taking place in Ukraine since November 2013 when then-president Viktor Yanukovych suspended preparations for an agreement with the European Union, sparking mass protests. Despite declarations by Western leaders about the end of the Cold War's bipolar world, the 'integration light' of the European Union's Neighbourhood policy seemed to conjure up geographical imaginaries of a world still fractured into blocks (Lacarrière, 2017), albeit with shifting perimeters. As this former part of the Soviet Union was faced with stark choices over NATO expansion, past geopolitical imaginaries seem to be making a comeback, storied and framed differently by those involved (Toal, 2017). In February 2014, the pro-Russian Ukrainian government in Kyiv, headed by President Vladimir Yushchenko, was toppled. The intense political crisis that ensued led to him being ousted in February 2014. In a rapid sequence of events, Russia annexed the then-autonomous Ukrainian region of Crimea. The first meeting of the United Nations Security Council dealing with the crisis in Ukraine was held shortly after.

On the 18th March 2014, a few days after the Russian army had moved into Crimea, Vladimir Putin, President of the Russian Federation, gave a long speech in Moscow in front of the State Duma deputies, the Federation Council members, the heads of Russian regions, as well as representatives of Russian civil society. Putin laid out how Russia had been repeatedly wronged and abused, and why he had ordered his military to correct what he saw as a historical injustice, using past suffering to justify the seizure of territory belonging to another sovereign state. He further railed against what he saw as enemies conspiring against him, despite his best attempts at diplomacy in a shifting world. His speech was shot through with references to geographic scales and geopolitical entities:

> *"We understand what is happening; we understand that these actions were aimed against Ukraine and Russia and against Eurasian integration. And all this while Russia strived to engage in dialogue with our colleagues in the West. (…). And with Ukraine, our western partners have crossed the line, playing the bear and acting irresponsibly and unprofessionally.*

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(…) And this strategic territory should be part of a strong and stable sovereignty, which today can only be Russian" [1]

Because Russia had been wronged, he suggested, and because his partners were unreliable, he had had to step in, strongly and heroically, and ensure the safety of the people in Crimea. He seemed to say that this was an obvious and natural fact, and not – as the international community was saying – a military invasion. Russia, Ukraine, Eurasia, the West: these territories were constructed rhetorically, conjuring up multi-scaled geographical imaginations.

A few years later, in September 2018, Donald Trump, President of the United States, spoke in front of the United Nations General Assembly in New York. With him at the helm, he argued, the United States would not be taken advantage of any longer. He explained that foreign goods flowed into an America rendered helpless, while others systematically gained unfair advantages. Like Putin, Trump presented his country as an exploited victim and a defiled territory, and himself as a heroic figure in this battle ("*Around the world, responsible nations must defend against threats to sovereignty not just from global governance, but also from new forms of coercion and domination*").[2]

These two speeches addressed distinct historical moments, topics and contexts. Yet both powerful men shared the belief that they embodied the destiny of their respective countries, beyond the role conferred by their political positions. Each used a variety of rhetorical flourishes to ground their claims to state territory through an eerily-similar mixture of victimhood and entitlement. These puzzling uses of outrage, vulnerability and strength needs taking seriously to understand how they connect to issues of state sovereignty and territory. In a global context of rising populism, political bluster and posturing, as well as welcome post *#metoo* discussions of powerful elites, challenges to personal entitlement have entered the mainstream.

This paper choses to take this popular interest in questioning entitlement into the field of global politics, exploring how questions of personal entitlement connect to political discourses on the territorial state. This focus on the scale of the individual builds upon the now-established trend of connecting scholarship on feminist approaches to politics within political science, international relations and geography, mapped out since the early 1990s. Scholars have focussed on introducing new political actors into discussions of politics, security and vulnerability to broaden the understanding of each (Dalby, 1994; Enloe, 1989), while others have focussed on bodies are sites and spaces for connecting the global and the intimate (Mountz, 2018; Pratt & Rosner, 2006). In these approaches, the body is taken as a scale where power operating at larger scales can be understood, thinking the geopolitical though the body "as scale and site upon which ideas, ideologies, and politics are performed and made meaningful" (Mountz, 2018) and where sovereignty is performed and claimed. These studies share an interest in understanding how global forces haunt and shape the intimate spaces of bodies. This paper explore these connections further by focussing instead on how bodies haunt global politics: thinking about how entitlement to power connects through the scale of the body to that of the state. By starting from personal entitlement, I argue that understanding how territorial entitlement is persistently naturalized within political discourse reveals how fragile such territorial sovereignty is as a basis for international politics. Territory, rather than being birthed historically once and for all (Elden, 2013), needs to be understood as constantly re-grounded and re-naturalized ((Jackman et al., 2020); (Fall, 2010)(Minca et al., 2015) Like personal entitlement, territorial entitlement on a global scale is revealed as tenuous and fragile. States, like people, only scream "Mine! Mine!" because this ownership presented as natural is constantly under question, never secure.

[1] From: http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20603.

[2] From: https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2018/09/trump-unga-transcript-2018/571264/.

Gender and critical geopolitics have long been connected within security discourse (Dalby, 1994). Dalby connected feminist writing in political science and international relations, showing how this provided a better geographical understanding of territory and space. Since then, many fields have taken discursive practices seriously, analysing connections and interactions between different geopolitical cultures (Ò Tuathail 1996; Bard, 2004; Shepherd, 2015a, 2015b; Toal, 2017). Here, I argue that how territories are constructed and claimed rhetorically by people holding positions of power reveals how these are grounded in discourses of sovereignty and entitlement that are always spatialised and gendered. In examining how territory and territorial entitlement are naturalized discursively during specific security crises, I connect three distinct strands of scholarship:

1) I build upon the literature that connects feminist international relations and feminist political geography to explore how discourses of statehood within security crises are gendered in specific ways, thinking this through the concept of hegemonic masculinity. State territorial claims in times of crisis are constructed through diplomatic discourse and practices, as well as through military might.
2) I define the concept of entitlement in relation to territory, and explore how entitlement is grounded in interpersonal relationships, drawing upon literature from psychology that takes language and power seriously.
3) I then examine how discourses of personal entitlement and statehood connect within diplomatic discourses, spaces and practices, analysing how diplomatic speeches use rhetorical devices to ground and naturalize territorial entitlement. This takes seriously not only what is said in diplomatic speech, but how it is said.

Empirically, I bring these strands together in discussing speeches made at the United Nations Security Council on the conflict in Ukraine to show how discourses of entitlement and sovereignty feed into and complicate our understanding of territory. I am suggesting a path forward for thinking critically about territory in a way that takes seriously how personal entitlement and states' entitlement to territory are connected, adding weight to calls for a feminist historiography of territory (Jackman et al., 2020).

2. Literature review: Making entitlement territorial

2.1. Gendered territories

International security has traditionally been defined as maintaining state territory and the political independence of states. The United Nations Security Council is tasked with maintaining international peace, and with preserving the territorial autonomy and sovereignty of states by maintaining a distinction between foreign and domestic spaces, and their authority over individuals and populations within their boundaries. Territory "is a bounded space which there is a compulsion to defend and secure – to claim a particular kind of sovereignty – against infringements by others who are perceived to not belong" (Cowen & Gilbert 2008, pp. 1–30, p. 16). Territory is a historical and geographical concept: one of the ways of ordering the world politically and spatially that structures how states behave on economic, strategic, legal and technical issues (Agnew, 1994; Elden, 2010 & 2013; Painter, 2010). This understanding of territory connects to a narrow definition of territoriality used to denote a state's exclusive authority over its territory (Elden, 2013; Sassen, 2013).

Leading feminist geographers have argued that many studies of territoriality and boundaries centred on issues of sovereignty and security seem to make gender irrelevant (Jackman et al., 2020; Staeheli, Kofman & Peake 2004). Yet territory and sovereignty are fundamentally gendered concepts: "sovereignty is often practised in terms of surveillance and power over precisely demarcated spaces; modes of rule that are quintessentially masculine, in terms of their claims to objective

knowledge of territory, technological modes of power projection, and detached 'scientific' surveillance as the essential prerequisite to policy action" (Dalby, 1994, p. 603; Hancock, 2004, pp. 167–176). Invoking use of the term 'fraternity' by Anderson in his classic book *Imagined Communities* (1991), Slootmaeckers states that "if the nation is conceived as a club of men, it is not a far stretch to argue that the process of defining boundaries is framed in masculine terms" (Slootmaeckers, 2019, p. 243). Territory is also gendered through symbolic and linguistic associations – through discourse – when terms such as rape, violation and intervention are used to describe territorial phenomena.

Feminist international relations emerged in the 1990s from a critique of the realist and rationalist IR canon and have diversified considerably (Prügl, 2011). This scholarship puts women and gender issues back into the global picture and discusses how the international is fundamentally constructed as gendered (Sjoberg, 2009 & 2010; Prügl, 2011; Shepherd, 2015a, 2015b; Zalewski, 2015), heterosexist (Spike Peterson, 1999) and masculinist (Beasely et al., 2013, pp. 29–44; Prügl, 2011). One of the important contributions of this field has been to broaden the analytical focus beyond states, and to introduce a more nuanced and multi-scaled understanding of what constitutes the international. These innovations are important because mainstream approaches have been rather different: "For analytical purposes, scholars of International Relations (IR) tend to treat the state as if it were a person. It is assumed to have 'interests' and 'intentions', said to 'act' (and often to 'act rationally'), even allowed to experience 'death'. In the most extreme cases of anthropomorphization, the state is explicitly given 'a body' and 'a life'" (Wadley, 2010, pp. 38–58, p. 38). In his classic work on diplomacy written nearly a hundred years ago and reedited many times, Satow stated that "under international law a State is a legal person with legal rights and obligations (…). Its status is based on the exercise of effective control over a population within a defined territory which has been recognized and given effect in international law; and it is international law which determines its capacity as a legal person, its competence, and the nature and extent of certain rights and duties" (Satow, 2009, p. 23). In a field where so much is contested, this naturalization of the personhood of the state is one of the few things mainstream IR scholars agree on or take for granted (Wadley, 2010, pp. 38–58; Wendt, 2004). For some, this personhood of states is little more than a useful fiction, metaphor or analogy, rather than something that has true ontological reality; while for others, the attribution of personhood to states works so well in helping make sense of the world that states 'must be people too', real from the inside to themselves (*see debate between* Wendt, 2004; Jackson, 2004; Neuman 2004).

Mainstream IR scholars, wherever they fit on the spectrum of considering the state-acting-like-a-person-or-really-being-one, broadly seem to assume that it is an ungendered entity. Yet much feminist scholarship shows that when something is considered ungendered "this should set off alarm bells" (Wadley, 2010, pp. 38–58, p. 38), since masking gender usually means elevating the masculine to the status of universal, masking partiality through claims to universality (Enloe, 1989). Political arenas are saturated with gendered meaning, with states and associated state actors cast as variously 'masculine' or 'feminine' through a system of symbolic meaning that creates social hierarchies. Failing to consider the role of gender does not make theory gender-neutral, nor does conceptualizing the state as a generic, non-gendered actor (Wadley, 2010, pp. 38–58). Leaders, states, international organisations all act in accordance to gender norms and categories, albeit in different ways at different times (Wadley, 2010, pp. 38–58), notwithstanding the internally fragmented nature of such categories. Studies of crisis reveal how states and their leaders are further gendered through wars: heroic militarized masculinity is directly associated with power (Dowler, 2012); patriarchal protectors gain power not through a repressive show of force but from an apparent willingness to sacrifice themselves to protect their families (Enloe, 1989; Young, 2003); discourses of masculinist protection rely on images of hostile outsiders, including within the state itself (Slootmaeckers, 2019); and figures of motherland as nurturing and worth dying for abound. Patriotism plays a specific emotive function in constituting a single state-as-body as a coherent whole, grateful to the leader who vowed to protect it, making dissent not only dangerous but also ungrateful (Young, 2003).

If the state can be a (gendered) person, the opposite also holds: people can 'be' states. This role is not only played by heads of state but also by diplomats: the individuals tasked with representing a state in its relations to others (Aggestam & Towns, 2019). They are trained professionals, part of a 'diplomatic body', who literally embody the state (Satow, 2009), and are subject to specific privileges. Understanding diplomats as representatives of states is part of a productive cycle where the state constitutes diplomatic agents that in turn constitute the state: "By performing its presence, beholding the state's presence is possible because of its embodiment in the diplomat, enabling the state to make representations of Self and Other that are credible due to diplomacy's presence and voicing of the state" (de Orellana, 2019 : 4). The notion of entitlement, to which I now turn, allows me to tease out how these scales mutually constitute each other, grounding and maintaining territorial entitlements.

2.2. Entitlement and territory

Territory and territoriality are connected to sovereignty and ownership that owe as much to the legal geographies of property (Blomley, 2016) as to animal ethology (Sack, 1986). Ownership is linked to property law: land is held through a title that is a bundle of rights held either by individuals or different parties. From this notion of holding a title to land the English language coined the term 'entitlement'. This term is polysemic and difficult to translate. It is a fundamentally spatial term yet goes beyond the spatial. For individuals, I find the use of the term 'entitlement' more helpful than the more-commonly used term 'privilege' (Pease, 2010) because of its etymological and ontological connection to space. Entitlement describes someone's right to something, whether actual or perceived; something to which one is entitled; the power or authority to do something; or the legal obligation of a government to make payments according to criteria set in law. What these concepts share is a model of ownership that defines the right of owners, be they individuals or states, to do what they want, within a geographical entity, as long as it does not impinge on others' rights. By connecting the two first meanings (i.e. the right to something and the thing itself), we can explore empirically how they are linked through notions of territory, property and sovereignty.

To make sense of the discourse of entitlement, I draw upon studies of dominance and entitlement carried out in psychology that focus on violent interpersonal relationships. This is one of the few fields where the notion of (gendered) entitlement is theorised and used. Scholars have argued that in relationships with intimate partners, violent men frequently make use of devices that "constructed a blurring of the roles of 'victim' and 'perpetrator'. Most notably, there are many instances where men draw on the very powerful narrative of 'emasculation' or 'crisis' and construct themselves in the position of the 'wounded'" (Boonzaier, 2008, p. 191; see also; Wood, 2004). Wood notes that research on violent men has repeatedly highlighted how men's efforts to control others connect strongly with specific cultural codes of masculinity (Wood, 2004). She shows that "some researchers assert that men who engage in intimate partner violence identify with and embody *in extremis* widely accepted cultural ideologies that promote masculine authority and aggression (…). Men who identify strongly with traditional Western codes of manhood often feel, or fear, that they do not measure up to those codes. Attempting to shore up their masculine self-concept, they may try to control others, particularly those who are physically weaker" (Wood, 2004, p. 558). Violence becomes a way of claiming the power and status they see as a birthright of manhood. These studies within psychology do not develop a spatial analysis of entitlement *per se*, although geographers might be sensitive to the implicit role

played by space, such as when men disempowered in the public sphere of work focus on maintaining patriarchal power over their intimate partners in domestic spaces.

Despite the role that language plays in supporting violence and dominance, few studies have focussed on the rhetorical devices used to justify such behaviour. Adams et al. however, have shown how "the way men talk about women and relationships can have the effect of justifying violence, concealing abuse and supporting entitlement to positions of power" (Adams et al., 1995, p. 387). Within semi-structured interviews of men involved in domestic abuse, they analyse the subtle use of language that allows specific male perspectives to dominate and to underpin their entitlement to power. Taking rhetoric to be the means through which the formal aspects of language are given impact and persuasiveness, Adams et al. show how entitlement is constructed discursively. Power is grounded not only in what you say, but in how you say it. They identify *reference ambiguity*, *axiom markers, metaphor, synecdoche and metonymy* as five key rhetorical devices that work cooperatively and combine within broader discourse to resource assumptions of dominance, reinforcing discourses of natural entitlement. This allows them to identify "a series of links that promote particular ways of looking at familiar objects. The devices work together with discourses in building up the credibility of a particular position for the speaker" (Adams et al., 1995, p. 402). Identifying such rhetorical devices, they argue, helps explain how men achieve the cumulative and colonizing effects of long-term programmes of abuse by constructing a sense of naturalness and correctness to their entitlement to positions of power.

Male discourses of entitlement within intimate relationships marshal language to ground specific positions, rooted in particular conceptions of manliness. Scholarship on hegemonic masculinity has further shed light on how particular forms of masculinity are normative, requiring other men to position themselves correspondingly (Beasely et al., 2013, pp. 29–44; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Slootmaeckers, 2019). The notion of hypermasculinity goes one step further in a sensationalist endorsement of elements of masculinity such as "rigid gender roles, vengeful and militarized reactions and obsession with order, power and control" (Heeg Maruska, 2010, pp. 235–255, p. 239), leading to aggressive, reactionary, caricatured and bellicose behaviour. When agents of hegemonic masculinity feel threatened or undermined in times of crisis, this can lead to temporary inflation, as hypermasculinity exaggerates and distorts hegemonic masculinity through hypergendered behaviour.

Like other masculinities, hegemonic masculinity is culturally and spatially diverse. Yet globalization has created "a world gender order [that] involves the rearticulation of national hegemonic masculinities into the transnational arena" (Beasely et al., 2013, p. 34). State behaviour by foreign policy elites reflects these hegemonic masculinities that occur at the top of a hierarchy of power relations (Heeg Maruska, 2010, pp. 235–255), often in conjunction with nationalism (Riabov & Riabova, 2014). These masculinities are nevertheless fragile and in a constant state of insecurity, requiring reaffirmation (Slootmaeckers, 2019). I explore how masculinities and entitlement are embodied and performed on the international stage within diplomatic discourse.

2.3. Diplomatic spaces and practices

There has long been scholarship within political science and international relations focussing on diplomacy (*see panel with* Murray, 2011; Sharp, 2011; Criekemans 2011), including a focus on practice that draws from ethnographical methods (Nagelhus Schia, 2013; Neumann 2002, 2012; Pouliot & Cornut, 2015; Sending et al., 2015), as well as first-person memoirs by prominent diplomats (Kleiner, 2009, Power 2019; Araud 2019). Geographers added their voice to this scholarship by taking an interest in diplomatic spaces and practices, with studies on places, cities and embassies (Kuus, 2016; Mamadouh et al., 2015), diplomatic cultures (McConnell & Dittmer, 2016, pp. 104–113), institutions and bureaucracies (Kuus, 2015a, 2015b; 2018), unofficial diplomacy (McConnell, Moreau & Dittmer 2012), or affect and assemblage (Dittmer, 2017).

One common but often unacknowledged shared characteristic is the gendered nature of diplomacy, still assumed to be a male profession and masculinized practice[3] (Cassidy, 2017; Aggestam & Towns, 2018, pp. 277–293), with classic books reflecting this when they describe (male) practices and address the imagined (male) reader (Satow, 2009, *see note page xxvii*). Scant attention has been given to the question of gender in much of the literature on diplomacy, although this is slowly changing (Aggestam & Towns, 2019; Cassidy, 2017; Neumann, 2008; Towns & Aggestam, 2018). Despite being tentatively open to women since the 1920s, the diplomatic service and diplomatic posts within international organisations are still disproportionately held by men (Aggestam & Towns, 2019; McCarthy, 2014; McCarthy & Southern, 2017), notwithstanding increasing challenges to the gender binary (Aggestam & Towns, 2019). Women in this field continue to appear as exceptions, unable to escape reference to their gender (Cassidy, 2017).

Lack of women is not the whole story: Aggestam and Towns note that diplomatic practices have taken place within gendered institutions grounded in a homosocial environment with particular forms of engrained masculine norms, scripts and practices (Aggestam & Towns, 2019) that together shape expected patterns of behaviour. Women can embody and perform masculinities, since these relate to social positions, and are therefore different from the category of 'men' (Slootmaeckers, 2019). This gendered masculine culture has been even more prevalent within peace negotiations that remain "ingrained with masculinized norms of power, as they are strongly associated with security interests and military affairs. Hyper-securitization and 'exceptional politics' are additional reasons for the polarization of gender roles and for the virtually exclusive presence of men at the negotiating table" (Aggestam & Towns, 2019, p. 20), perpetuating institutional sexism (Cassidy, 2017). Here, I am interested in seeing empirically how these engrained individual masculinized norms of power and entitlement connect through discourses of state sovereignty and territorial entitlement within the key institution tasked with debating global security.

2.3.1. Discourses and performances of UN diplomacy

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) is one of six principal organs of the United Nations, charged with the maintenance of international peace and security. It is an international body whose power is contingent on the voluntary cooperation of states, measured in variables such as the contribution to peacekeeping missions and the national enforcement of sanctions regimes, holding both symbolic and political prestige (Hurd, 2002). It has five permanent members: China, France, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom and the United States. Ten non-permanent members are also elected for two-year terms by the General Assembly, of which Ukraine from 2017. A state that is a party to a dispute being considered by the Council may also be invited to take part in discussions without a vote (http://www.un.org/en/sc/).

The socialization of a variety of international actors within the United Nations system is made possible by a shared diplomatic culture that relies on theatricality and the recognition of certain discursive and performative tropes (Cohen, 1997; Nagelhus Schia, 2013), grounded in the use of English and French as working languages beside the other six official languages (Oglesby, 2016, pp. 242–254) and aided by simultaneous interpretation into official UN languages. In the Security Council, all notes from meetings are available in multiple translations. But language is about more than mere understanding: it is deeply codified. In the case of diplomatic practices, it is not only a matter of choosing what

[3] Aggestam and Towns (2018) notes that 85% of total ambassadors worldwide are men, and approximately 90% of all peace negotiators and 95% of all chief peace mediators are male. Fliegel (2017) notes that men hold approximately 80% of UN permanent representative posts.

language to speak but also how to speak it. Paraphrasing George Steiner, Oglesby notes that "each tongue construes a set of possible worlds and geographies of remembrance. Less poetically, languages also often lack comparable concepts and words, making translation a diplomatic challenge" (Oglesby, 2016, pp. 242–254, p. 246). It is usually assumed that diplomatic language is "marked by restraint, subdued tone, moderated vocabulary, and 'refined control over nuances in the meaning of words'" (Oglesby, 2016, pp. 242–254, p. 242), yet exchanges do not always remain courteous, as I discuss here.

There is a disconnect between how public the UNSC written material is – speeches are taped, transcribed, filmed, translated, made available online and amply picked up and commented on by the media – and how inaccessible the actual individuals are for researchers. At the same time, particularly in a new global ecology of instant and public digital exchanges, referred to colloquially as #Diplomacy (Seib, 2016), less scripted formats provide a simulated immediacy and proximity. Scholars studying diplomacy have found ways around the practical difficulty of accessing diplomats, notably by interviewing bureaucrats and less senior members of diplomatic corps (Dittmer, 2017; Kuus, 2015a, 2015b; McConnell et al., 2012) or by carrying out details ethnographies of diplomatic spaces (Neumann, 2008 & 2012; Jones 2020). This is not the approach that I follow here. Instead, it is not because this is only part of the diplomatic story that we cannot take the discourses of diplomacy seriously, specifically – in this case – to unpick how these are embodied performances that serve to naturalize territorial entitlement.

3. Methodology

Rather than considering much-studied presidential speeches (Hodges, 2011; Schlesinger, 2008) diplomatic communication (de Orellana, 2019), or ethnographic material, I consider the formal public discourse performed by diplomats at that United Nations Security Council (UNSC). The transcripts of these meetings are interesting examples of discursive geopolitical performances. It is hard not to be struck by their inherent theatricality: a form of ritualised high-stakes "*huis clos*" that are fascinating to read, with a named list of characters specifying the part each is playing. Many individuals reappear from session to session, weaving a complex narrative, often cultivating public personas outside of the UNSC. This goes beyond theatre. The people speaking represent real political and military state power. The matters discussed are far from fictional: war and violence elsewhere, life and death simmer beneath the words.

This paper is part of a broader multi-team research project on the UNSC funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation and the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft that has involved constructing an online database of all verbatim statements given by the representatives of permanent and non-permanent members during public meetings of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) between 2010 and 2018. It is comprised of all the records of these statements that have been made publicly available by the UN, in either their English original or the UN's translation into English. The textual data is connected to metadata linking each statement to speaker-nationality/speaker-role/date/time/meeting number and agenda title of the meeting. The database is mainly designed to facilitate corpus-driven social science research, but can also be used for other methodological approaches such as discourse analysis. This is now accessible via a web-based query tool that enables researchers to quickly and intuitively assemble sub-corpora of UNSC-debates. Users can analyse and compare UN Security Council debates and then jump back to the web-tool to assemble new sub-corpora based on their previous insights (Kohlenberg et al., 2019). This database was constructed because although transcripts of individual UNSC debate are available online in variously formatted PDF-files, the UN's existing search tools do not allow a user to differentiate or filter textual data within them.

Within this corpus, I have chosen to examine only the sessions concerned with the crisis in Ukraine from March 2014–February 2017. This provides a rich corpus of diplomatic discourse during an ongoing crisis with direct territorial implications. To make sense of these hours of diplomatic discourse, my colleagues Carinne Domingos and Eliana Laurenti, working as graduate research assistants for the project, prepared a summary table of the meetings listing references to geographical scales and territories, including a short summary of the topics discussed. I used this to identify a number of key exchanges that I analysed in detail. I quote extracts using the UN reference number and the page numbers from the English version. Authors have long noted that diplomacy is about much more than words, as subtly non-verbal clues form an integral part of diplomatic life and what has been called the broader and deliberate 'theatre of power' (Cohen, 1997). Recorded videos of all interventions, as well as the simultaneous interpretation carried out on the spot, are also available online but are not analysed here.

There is an important tradition within social science of taking discursive and narrative approaches seriously, exploring how repeated narrations shape sociopolitical reality and accumulate into wider cultural narratives (Fairclough, 1990), often with a strongly Foucauldian flavor connecting power and discourse. Discourse is taken to be an "evolving set of values, understandings or meanings specific to particular cultures, contexts and times. These in turn construct and are constructed by the relationships of those they influence" (Adams et al., 1995, p. 387). Performativity is connected to this, conceptualized as the repetitive process through which the subject is produced discursively (Butler, 1993). Scholars have focused, for instance, on how powerful political actors' public interventions – such as presidential speeches – define reality and impose particular interpretations on the world (Hodges, 2011). Scholars have examined how multiple, overlapping discursive encounters infuse events with shared meaning, showing how powerful political narratives are made and circulated, and how they bring meaning into existence and 'story' the world, rather than trying to measure them up against an objective reality (Shenhav, 2006). Some have focused on the gendered dimensions of discourse (Weatherall, 2002; Wodak, 1997), including on how men and women are socialised differently into managing conflict and exercising power. These studies are often explicitly critical, focussing on how talk and texts serve the interests of those with power, exposing how inequalities are naturalized (Shepherd, 2008; Tracy et al., 2011), although some studies have been critiqued by feminist scholars for their overemphasis on discourse rather than material suffering.

The discourse analysis carried out here is methodologically exploratory. I do not use corpus analytics on the data, but rather use the database to identify short extracts dealing with territorial issues that are analysed in depth qualitatively. I am interested in seeing how specific figures of speech and rhetorical devices and tools are mobilised within broader discourses of authority and entitlement. Although these figures of speech are further explained theoretically and exemplified in the analysis, I briefly lay them out here for easy reference (Fig. 1):

4. The Ukraine crisis at the United Nations Security Council

4.1. Personalising and performing the state

Even if cast as representing and speaking on behalf of a state, seasoned diplomats within the United Nations Security Council perform individually. They are acutely aware of the political power of language and rhetoric, and are trained to use it. They rehearse their interventions beforehand, elsewhere. Few exchanges are unscripted: some are first drafted by speech writers, some are on-the-spot responses. Many effective speakers reference and mobilise their own biographies, their places of birth, their personal experiences and relationships to each other when speaking in their official capacity. (*"In connection with the tragic events in Odessa, my native city and not that of the Russian representative"* Mr. Prystaiko, Ukraine, 2016.7683:25; "*On a personal note, I recently saw an 11-year-old boy from the small Ukrainian town of Mariupol, in southern Ukraine (…)*" Mr. Prystaiko, Ukraine, 2016.7683:8); *"I was 15 years old*

Anaphora	A repetition of a sequence of words at the beginnings of neighboring clauses, thereby lending them emphasis
Axiom markers	A figure of speech that refers to the nature of reality as a whole, appearing to proclaim omniscience
Hyperbole	An exaggeration for the sake of emphasis
Metaphor	An implicit, implied or hidden comparison between two things that are unrelated, but which share some common characteristics
Metonymy	The replacement of the name of a thing with the name of something else with which it is closely associated
Reference ambiguity	An authoritative statement, against which it is difficult to voice disagreement or provide possible contest
Synecdoche	A figure of speech that references a part of something to represent the whole, or a whole to represent a part

Fig. 1. Adapted from https://literarydevices.net/figure-of-speech/.

in August 1968, when the Soviet forces entered Czechoslovakia. We heard the same justifications, the same documents being flaunted and the same allegations" Mr. Araud, France, 7124:1).

Some members of the Security Council switch languages strategically to emphasize by whom they wish to be heard, either a person in the room or others further away ("*I am speaking in Russian in order to be properly understood*" Mr. Sergeyev, Ukraine, 2014.7125:19; "*I know that in the media there are some Russian companies and one Ukrainian television station*" Mr. Sergeyev, Ukraine, 2014.7125:14). In the same session, the Russian delegate – a polyglot who habitually speaks Russian during UNSC sessions – ironically comments on his Ukrainian counterpart's choice to speak in Russian, not in English: "*First of all, I would like to welcome my Ukrainian colleague, Mr. Sergeyev, with whom I have been working for quite some time here at the United Nations. I congratulate him on the fact that today he spoke not only in English and French, but also in Russian. It was the first speech that I can recall him delivering in Russian. I should like to tell him, better late than never!*" (Mr. Churkin, Russian Federation, 2014.7125:15).

Some intimidate each other, speaking down or strategically using irony or disdain, often in specifically gendered ways. Mr Churkin, the Russian self-declared doyen of the Security Council at the time (see S/PV. 7876.2017 : 18) is a particular master of the ironic put-down, used as a show of strength (*"I have the impression that Ms. Power is taking her information from United States television. Well if she gets all her information from United States television alone, then of course everything in Ukraine must seem just wonderful"* (Mr. Churkin, Russian Federation, 2014.7172:16); "*By the way, let me point out to dear Ambassador Haley* (…)" (Mr. Churkin, Russian Federation, 2017.7876:19). "*I would like to express my sympathy to you, Madam President, because under your presidency we have just wasted 2 h discussing the format of this meeting (…). But what can we do when there is a game without rules?*" (Mr Churkin, Russian Federation, 2014.7124:3). Once, Ms Power spoke during the first part of a meeting and was then replaced by a male colleague, Mr Pressman, who spoke for the rest of the meeting. Mr Churkin requested the floor solely to point out that *"I understand that Ms Power decided she had not been eloquent enough in setting out the American position, and that her Deputy needed to repeat some portions of her statement"* (Mr Churkin 2015.7365:20), pointing ironically to a sort of diplomatic mansplaining.

In the crisis discussed here, such hegemonic masculine traits are fundamentally part of the diplomatic culture into which members of the Security Council are socialised. These shows of outrage are grounded in mechanisms of entitlement and control that are always already personalised and gendered at an individual level. This can be equally true for the few women speaking at the UNSC: they enter an already constructed world where role expectations are defined in terms of adherence to preferred attributes such as power, strength and reason associated with masculinity. Even when women conform to these masculine norms of behaviour, they are not necessarily considered genderless or 'honorary men'. Gendered language, in particular, is not only mobilised by men. Discursive devices used by female speakers that reflect existing patriarchal norms. The following quote by Ms Power could be read in this way: "*Let us pull the veil away from Putin's peace plan and call it for what it is: a Russian occupation plan*" (Ms Power 2015.7365:6). This metonymy ('*pull the veil*') uses an evocative expression associated with Orientalism to suggest the need to reveal hidden truths, while also pointedly associating the Russian president with feminine imagery.

4.2. Making entitlement territorial

Throughout these meetings, a collective use of repetition – a refrain – resonates through the speeches made by delegates opposed to the Russian position: the inescapable "*sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine*", a key principle of international law. In 2014–2017, the term 'territorial integrity' is used 173 times by various UNSC delegates in meetings discussing the crisis in Ukraine. In many cases, non-P5 members briefly take to the floor to affirm little more than their commitment to this fundamental principle of international law, using near-identical terms. In contrast, the Russian delegate sings a different territorial refrain: that while he does not dispute the principle of territorial integrity, the situation in Crimea is instead related to self-determination: "*the enjoyment of the right to self-determination involving separation from an existing State is an extraordinary measure, applied when further coexistence within a single State becomes impossible*" (Mr Churkin, Russia, 2014.7138:2). His colleagues, he implies, are simply referring to the wrong territorial principle. Clashing geopolitical imaginaries are endlessly conjured up rhetorically, redrawing divisions, entitlements and alliances across the globe.

During one of the earlier meetings, the French delegate – who habitually presents the position shared by members of the European Union – sums up the broader geopolitical context, invoking specific territories and geopolitical imaginaries:

> *"The situation before us is not a modern-day geopolitical spat. This is not a situation in which Ukraine is being forced to choose between East and West, which would go against all the values on which the European Union is founded. I recall that the Union's very existence is based on the rejection of such practices of another age, which twice left our continent in ruins in the course of a single century" (Mr Araud, France, 2014. 7124:7).*

In addition to the French Ambassador's use of compelling images of

conflict (*spat*) and devastation (*ruins*), he puts his finger precisely on Russia's geopolitical reading of the situation. The scales and geographical entities conjured up here (*East/West*) are neither defined precisely nor placed territorially. He refers to history and to places different than those under discussion. To do this he makes repeated use of metonymy in which a linked term (*ruins*) stands in for the intended object (i.e. *war damage*). He uses another metonymy to describe a fractured world, intelligible to his listeners because the terms are culturally associated with the word they replace (*West* with Europe & North America; *East* with the former Soviet space and beyond). These terms are culturally-loaded and convey other meanings and values, with unequal standing and power. Speaking about Russia as part of the 'East' – even if rejecting this association, as Mr Araud does, suggesting it is part of misguided Russian attempts to recreate the USSR within a new Eurasian territory –associates the term with an orientalised and unequal Other (Said, 1978). The fact that this figure of speech is effective and understood by all, and not only within the past historical context it apparently refers to, also lends credence to the Russian interpretation that this is precisely a geopolitical clash of territorial imaginaries, with speakers staking their entitlement to them. In a later meeting, Mr Araud returns to this theme of offering an alternative geopolitical reading of the situation as a throwback to earlier times, mobilising old terms such as '*sphere of influence'* that hark back to past geopolitical imaginaries:

> *"By occupying Crimea, Russia has taken a territorial bet ('gage territorial' in French). The goal is clear to bring the authorities of Kyiv to heel, to bring them back into the sphere of influence of Moscow and to remind them that their sovereignty is limited, as Mr. Brezhnev once said after invading Czechoslovakia. In short, Russia is taking Europe back 40 years. It is all there: the practice and the Soviet rhetoric, the brutality and the propaganda. France does not want to play this ridiculous game ('jeu dérisoire'), which does not serve the interests of anyone, and certainly not the Ukrainian and Russian people." (Mr. Araud, France. 2014. 7125:2)*

The metaphors used *("territorial bet"; "ridiculous game")* conjure up ludic images in which the speaker wants to play no part, flagging up how retrograde, childish and improbable the Russian position is. This wider geopolitical context is also directly addressed in an exchange the same day between the Russian and American delegates.

> *"The Russian position has been and remains consistent and open. While Ukraine is merely a geopolitical playground for some Western politicians, for us it is a brotherly country to which we are bound by many centuries of common history (…). In this extraordinary situation, which is not of our making and in which the lives and security of the inhabitants of Crimea and south-eastern Ukraine are under genuine threat from the irresponsible and provocative acts of gangs and ultranationalist elements, we emphasize once again that Russia's actions are entirely appropriate and legitimate" (Mr Churkin, Russian Federation, 2014. 7125:4).*

> *"Listening to the representative of Russia, one might think that Moscow had just become the rapid response arm of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. So many of the assertions made this afternoon by the representative of the Russian Federation are without basis in reality. Let us begin with a clear and candid assessment of the facts. It is a fact that the Russian military forces have taken over Ukrainian border posts. It is a fact that Russia has taken over the ferry terminal in Kerch. It is a fact that Russian military ships are moving in and around Sevastopol. (…) It is a fact that Russia has surrounded or taken over practically all Ukrainian military facilities in Crimea. (…) Russian military action is not a human rights protection mission. It is a violation of international law and of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the independent nation of Ukraine" (Ms Power, United States of America, 2014. 7125:4).*

Mr Churkin, the Russian delegate makes use of the meek language of brotherhood, shared connections and helplessness, while pointing to the broader scale of regional geopolitics of which he is a victim. In response, Ms Power, through irony and repetition, images of violation, and the vocabulary of international law, lists what she sees as her counterpart's falsehoods, and rescales the conflict down to the state and its challenged borders. The imagery of territory, geopolitical scales and the gendered images of brotherhood and violation are intriguing. The rhetoric attempts to naturalize their claims to truth and entitlement – and like in Putin and Trump's speeches quoted earlier – use axiom markers ('*it is a fact'*), bodily metaphors (*the violated nation*), metonymy ('*the playground'*), synecdoche ('*rapid response arm'*) and anaphora (repetition of '*it is a fact'*). Mr Churkin justifies the use of military power as the natural response to victimhood, transforming invasion into righteous self-defence.

4.3. Performance and entitlement

In the UNSC, the concept of bodily performance is particularly salient as so many exchanges are quintessentially theatrical. The following extract is one of many by the Ukrainian delegate that strategically stages personal anger and affect:

> *"[In English] Yes, the Ukrainian army proved its strength and ability to repeal a Russian offensive. However, Ukraine is paying a dramatically high price, losing its best sons and daughters to this war. (…) I ask the Council to look at this picture; it shows a 26-year-old officer, Andriy Kyzylo, who was killed on the 29 February near Avdiivvka. Look at his eyes, Mr. Ambassador, it is your weapons and your compatriots who killed him. [In Russian] You killed him! [In English] Our people get down on their knees to treat their fallen defenders. Russian invaders are buried in unmarked graves. (…) The Russian Federation should stop arming militants and sending its mercenaries and military personnel to Ukraine. Does anyone seriously think that rockets and artillery shells grow on trees in Donbas?" (Mr Yelchenko, Ukraine, 2017. 7876:8).*

Mr Yelchenko starts with a show of strength, drawing upon an image of virile military competence, then switches to the image of innocent children using both a hyperbole ("*its best*") and a synecdoche ("*sons and daughters*") to stand in for the people or the military (i.e. *the people*). The Ukrainian state is cast as simultaneously nurturing and protecting, like a parent, yet powerless. He then makes a visual argument, showing a photograph, literally aiming to put a face on military sacrifice. His strategic language switch makes clear to whom his literal accusation is directed ("*you killed him!*"), as his Russian counterpart Mr. Churkin is figuratively made to embody the actions of the Russian state. Images of sacrifice and piety ("*down on their knees*") help to affirm that the soldiers on his side are defending, not aggressing, yet are also cast as effective military killers to be feared ("*unmarked graves*"). The final statement uses an ostentatiously absurd metaphor ("*artillery shells grow on trees*"), a figure of speech that draws parallels between two apparently distinct things, to ridicule his opponents' position. The rhetoric here conjures up various military masculinities: the innocent and sacrificial military victim; the determined Ukrainian soldiers tasked with defending their homeland; and the faceless, devious Russian invaders.

Many of the statements presented at the UNSC rely on these complex figures of masculinity with (hegemonic) 'good men' presented as vigilant, and tasked with protecting subordinates, ready to fight and sacrifice themselves. The (subservient) 'bad men' are outsiders, aggressors, unrefined, merciless and unpredictable, and fundamentally unentitled to the spaces they inhabit. Young (2003) has written that the gendered logic of the masculine role of protector towards women and children ('*womanandchildren*' Enloe, 1989) illuminates the meaning and appeal of a state that wages war abroad and expects obedience and loyalty at home. This patriarchal logic implies that a masculine protector puts those protected in a subordinate position of dependence and obedience similar to that of women in the patriarchal household. Unity comes through the shared experience of outside threat. "While legitimating authoritarian power over citizens internally, the logic of masculinist

protection justifies aggressive war outside" (Young, 2003, p. 2). Throughout these exchanges, the widely-held notion of masculine protection is mobilised, masculinizing the state and feminizing men who do not conform.

In response to this specific story of military sacrifice, the Russian Ambassador responded that this was another instance of a Ukrainian who "*completed the picture by bragging to the press that his heroic lads were moving forward where they could, metre by metre, step by step*" (Mr Churkin, Russian Federation, 2017.7876:9), mocking the claims to masculine strength and territorial conquest made by his counterpart by using ostentatious rhetorical devices for comic effect: metonymy ("*the picture*") and synecdoche ("*heroic lads*"). Instead, he suggested, this was Ukraine just "*setting itself up as a victim of aggression*" (Mr Churkin, Russian Federation, 2017.7876:9), delegitimising Ukraine's claim to territory. Such discourses are part of what Riabov and Riabova have called the remasculinization of Russia under Vladimir Putin: a politics directed towards constructing collective identity through gendered discourse. This identity is fundamentally territorial. This involves using gender metaphors to produce power hierarchies (Riabov & Riabova, 2014), including conjuring up feminizing internal and external enemies. While Russia is undoubtedly an extreme example of gendered nationalist rhetoric, this corpus shows that this use of gendered rhetoric is widespread during territorial crises.[4] These statements are contests over masculine power and manliness as much as they are about territory: referencing the effeminate (de-masculinized) and impotent (de-militarized) Other by suggesting he is not only weak but also dependent, while defining the Self as both victim and entitled aggressor.

Because of the nature of the conflict many of the speeches discuss territory and territorial integrity and increasingly-vacuous calls to respect the sovereignty of states. Mr Rycroft, speaking for the United Kingdom, makes use of a rhetorical device known as anaphora – repeating a phrase – that creates links between elements and instills rhythm:

> *"This is what happens when Russia disregards the sovereign right of Ukraine to choose its own destiny. This is what happens when Russia undermines the territorial integrity of Ukraine by illegally annexing Crimea. This is what happens when Russian military personnel stand side-by-side with separatists whom they have equipped, armed and trained. And, this is a reality that the Security Council cannot, must not, accept. We need urgent action to bring an end to this upsurge in violence before it spirals out of control" (Mr Rycroft, United Kingdom, 2017. 7876 : 12).*

His repetition of a phrase ("*this is what happens*") joins up separate events logically, creating a sense of inevitability between them. By linking them rhetorically in this way, he is able to consider them all together as unacceptable, precluding nuance. His choice of metonymy ("*upsurge*" and "*spiral*") to describe violence makes this seem inevitable and disembodied, and a fundamental threat to what is presented as the natural order of territorial sovereignty. His use of reference ambiguity ("we") makes his position appear concerned but is also a way of overriding possible contest in the face of what is presented as almost the forces of nature. It is not clear who is covered by this pronoun: his own position and perspective are buried in an authoritative statement made on behalf of an imagined collective, making it difficult to voice disagreement. But his main opponent is another seasoned diplomat, equally able to mobilise rhetorical devices to further his own entitlement. The Russian delegate responds also making use of anaphora:

> *"Still on the issue of Crimea, however, it is the representative of the United Kingdom, who for some reason persists in saying that the crisis in Ukraine began with Crimea. I am compelled yet again to recall that the whole thing began with a coup that owed a great deal to external support. Here is my advice to the representative of the United Kingdom about his position. Give back the Malvinas; give back Gibraltar; give back the part of Cyprus that was annexed; give back the Chagos archipelago in the Indian Ocean, which has been turned into a huge military base. Perhaps then his conscience will be a little clearer and he will be able to speak to other topics" (Mr Churkin, Russian Federation, 2017. 7876 : 18).*

There are many other similar examples that use comparison to other places and other times, as forms of precedent or counter-example, personalising the exchange. Here, in trying to fracture the claim to territorial entitlement by Ukraine, Mr Churkin references other territories to which the United Kingdom feels entitled, personalising this claim as though it were his counterpart who conquered them, like a child stealing a toy ("*give back*"), while presenting himself as a victim ("*coup"; "external* support"). By linking these different territorial claims rhetorically through anaphora, he creates a category of events that can only be contested as a whole, naturalizing his own and the Russian entitlement to the territory of Crimea. In response, the Ukrainian delegate similarly connects geopolitical scales, equating the state and the diplomat by saying that both are delusional: "*it seems that Russia is living in a parallel reality created by current Russian propaganda, a parallel reality that becomes even more twisted when Ambassador Churkin starts to talk about Crimea*" (Mr Yelchenko, Ukraine, 2017.7876 : 20).

4.4. Weakness, power and legitimacy

The frequent comparisons to other times and other places, as in Mr Churkin's multiple comparisons to Crimea quoted above, also include a number of references to fictional or imagined scenarios, in a sort of 'what-if' personalised territorial geopolitics:

> *"I am trying to imagine what would happen if, while President Obama was in California, Mitt Romney turned up at the White House and the United States Congress, in one House of which there is currently a Republic [sic] majority, all of a sudden voted to impeach President Obama. How would the United States public opinion react to that? Would that be a manifestation of democracy? That is exactly what happened in Ukraine. Why did Mr. Yanukovich leave? He was scared into leaving Kyiv for Kharkiv. He was intimidated into signing the agreement of 21 February. He was threatened that the presidential residence would be stormed if the premises were not vacated by 10am. That is not democracy. That is not respect for the Constitution" (Mr. Churkin, Russian Federation, 2014. 7125:16).*

Mr Churkin uses several axiom markers here, a rhetorical figure that refers to the nature of reality as a whole ("*This is not democracy*"). Axiom makers are a rhetorical device that "in the context of an unequal relationship, forcefully communicate the speaker's authority and power. They are statements which proclaim omniscience" (Adams et al., 1995, p. 394). Their effect is to silence, to terminate discussion, and signal danger to the less dominant partner. In the same speech, he mentions many other episodes of humiliation ("*What about the wave of violence that swept through western and central Ukraine? (…) What about the municipal leaders who were dragged from their offices, tied to pillars and mocked?"* Mr. Churkin, Russian, 2014.7125:17). Mr Churkin flags the barbaric attribute of his enemies, using a metaphor that associates them with nature rather than civilisation ("*the wave of violence*"). Multiple masculinities are invoked here: Russia as the hegemonic masculine protector, superior to its ally Yanukovych cast as its grateful but subordinate, dependent and feminized subject, equally distinct from the devious, barbaric and threatening Ukrainian forces (see Messerschmidt, 2013, pp. 189–218 for a similar example elsewhere). In response, Ms. Power presents her version of the same episode, focussing on how President Yanukovych fled the city. ("*He packed up himself and his family and he left the seat of the presidency vacant for two days while his country was in crisis. He also left vast evidence of corruption and vast evidence of the amounts that he had stolen from the Ukrainian people (…). That is the history.*" Ms. Power,

[4] See (Fall & Domingos 2020, *in press*) for analysis that focusses further on gendered discourses of brotherhood and fraternity, naturalizing the scale of the state as a natural community.

United States, 2014.7125:18). Ms Power uses axiom markers ("*that is the history*"), synecdoche ("*left the seat*"; "*out of office*") and anaphora ("*vast evidence*") to depict an alternative masculinity based on weakness, cowardice and treason – belittling the entitlement to territorial power Mr. Churkin claims Yanukovych had.

5. Conclusion: Sticks, stones, words and bones

Scholars have often shown the similarities between a theory of performativity for people and the processual relational approach for states: meaning that states emerge through a process that is meaningful to an audience, much as individuals constitute their own identity through performance. In this paper, rather than consider that the states are gendered 'just like' humans – i.e. states-as-bodies are made to exist performatively like people – I have shown how the two can be thought of as connected. By focussing on what takes places during UNSC sessions, I have discussed an example of how bodies haunt global politics: how entitlement to power connects through the scale of the body to that of the state.

The public diplomatic performances described here are carried out by seasoned performers who craft public personas to embody their states. Mr Churkin was apparently nicknamed 'Vitaly Charmyourpantsoff' by a Washington Post cartoonist. Writing about him after his death, Ms Power tried to disentangle this fleshy contradiction of embodying both self and state: "Vitaly was a masterful storyteller with an epic sense of humor, a good friend and one of the best hopes the United States and Russia had of working together. I am heartbroken by his death. I am also saddened that, in our hyperpolarized environment, praise for Vitaly — the diplomat and the man — has been interpreted as acquiescence to Russia's aggression" (Power, 2017, online). Published autobiographies remind us that the sole analysis of diplomatic discourses misses a large part of the story: these diplomats are real people with public and private lives, interacting professionally behind the scenes, away from the main stage (Araud 2019; Power 2019). Nevertheless, these diplomatic performances must be taken seriously as political theatre that helps us to see in detail how bodies are sites and spaces that connect the global and the intimate.

Maintaining territorial conquest means naturalizing entitlement. While the diplomats embody the positions of their respective countries, it is striking to see how closely they all follow the same script. The diplomatic culture they inhabit is shot through with gendered values, mobilising discourse to exercise power and claim space. Examining a security crisis at the United Nations Security Council allows this process to be made tangible, shedding light on the constitution of the state as intelligible within a normative heterosexual and hegemonic masculinity that is both compulsory and naturalized. Diplomats at the UNSC perform global and morally superior patriarchal personas ready to lead the international effort to protect the world, within an institution that is itself a sort of super-patriarch whose only power comes from building collectives. They draw upon cumulative images of protection and rescue, tales of villains, victims and heroes, offering paradigmatic masculine models for international gender relations. They sell their positions on virtue (Messerschmidt, 2013, pp. 189–218). Those feminized and infantilized are not necessarily women, although figures of women/-children/innocent civilians abound, and would require further analysis. What Toal has written about another context resonates here: "it is a supreme irony of the current geopolitical crisis that both the United States and Russia draw upon structurally similar affective storylines in their geopolitical cultures to produce mutually incomprehensible interpretations of the same events" (Toal, 2017, p. 13). Keeping our minds fixed on the words and the people enunciating them, and not only on the guns, shows us how territory needs naturalizing specifically because it is so far from natural.

By putting different strands of scholarship into dialogue, I have shown how a multi-scaled concept of entitlement provides a framework for understanding how state's righteous rationale for aggressive war is made possible. Just as violent men discursively spar with the partners to attempt to impose compliance, so too do diplomats. This focus on discourse does not mean there isn't also physical violence elsewhere. Diplomats are shape-shifters, individual body and international state, who set the scene for political and military claims to territory. Anaphora, axiom markers, hyperbole, metaphor, metonymy, reference ambiguity, and synecdoche are therefore more than just literary devices: they are part of the political tools that diplomats use when constructing claims to territory. The concept of entitlement, because it is a messy, multi-faceted and multi-scaled concept, is helpful in teasing out how territorial sovereignty, rather than being a self-evident feature of international politics, is the result of many ongoing powerful rhetorical constructions. By looking at the specifics of personal entitlement and understanding how these are connected to learnt and embodied masculinities, we can gain better insights into territorial entitlement as an act of power. A closer attention to how these discourses of territorial entitlement rely and build upon other forms of entitlement may enable better resistance to them. Just as gender identities are revealed to be fragile, multiple and in constant need of affirming in order to exist, so too is the entitlement to territory.

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