

Animals and diplomacy: on the prospect for interspecies diplomacy

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Abstract

If diplomacy is considered an alternative to war, can the ongoing human ‘war against animals’ be replaced with diplomacy between humans and other animals? While many scholars and practitioners of diplomacy can be expected to dismiss such an idea out of hand, this essay encourages us to think more seriously and thoroughly about what it might imply to engage diplomatically with nonhuman animals. Doing so requires a somewhat unconventional conception of diplomacy, and some scholars have already done much to rethink diplomacy in suitable ways (despite the persistent anthropocentrism). Combining such work with political science scholarship on human-animal relations, indigenous peoples’ relations with animals, various notions of animal ambassadorship and the study of animal behaviour in natural settings, the essay argues that interspecies diplomacy is possible and urges scholars to further explore this and how the possibility in question can be translated into reality.

Keywords

animals, diplomacy, human-animal relations, interspecies diplomacy

Introduction

If a key issue in diplomacy is ‘how far we are willing to extend diplomatic experimentation, skill and innovation’,¹ then why should we not challenge the anthropocentrism of Diplomatic Studies (DS) and start contemplating what it might imply to engage diplomatically with non-human animals? In the light of both the planet’s multiple ecological crises and the extreme violence characterizing contemporary human-animal relations,

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doing so seems both ethically correct and in accordance with the following call for ‘sustainable diplomacy’:

diplomacy should not only be concerned with advocacy, policy implementation and public relations but also – and more crucially – with innovation and creativity, experimentation in finding ways and terms under which rival entities and ways of living can co-exist and flourish (including biodiversity and future generations). The major challenge with regard to diplomacy [. . .] is how to engender normative, yet pragmatic change, how to make possible a shift from practices concerned with preserving specific, and perhaps unsustainable, ways of living [. . .] to practices that are more cosmopolitan and accommodating of alterity, practices that emphasize self-knowledge and are open to identity transformation.²

In this spirit, the present essay explores the possibility and prospect for diplomacy as it concerns human relations with other animals. Towards this end, the next section brings out the limitations of existing work on animals and diplomacy through a focus on what is currently the most comprehensive DS engagement with animals – namely, Leira and Neumann’s article on ‘beastly diplomacy’.³ In search for openings that can enable animals being taken more seriously in the study and practice of diplomacy, the second section engages with critical efforts within DS to rethink what diplomacy is or can be all about. Based on an understanding of diplomacy as the ‘mediation of estrangement’⁴ and a practice responding to ‘the challenge of how we can live together in difference’,⁵ the third section engages with various ideas and bodies of thought that can stimulate our diplomatic imagination and contribute to make interspecies diplomacy and less violent human-animal relations possible. The conclusion encourages scholars of DS and International Relations (IR) to not only further explore this possibility and how it can be translated into reality, but also take the underlying conception of animals as agential subjects seriously in studies on international relations more generally.

Animals and/in the study of diplomacy

Overall, animals have received little attention by DS and IR scholars, and this was the background for Leira and Neumann’s call for ‘a more serious engagement with beastly diplomacy’.⁶ In this connection, they focused on four ways in which animals matter in diplomacy, with the first concerning their ‘ontic status’ or ‘what animals *are* in various situations and cultures’.⁷ This includes ‘the very distinction between man and animal’, and while acknowledging that ‘defining what counts as human and what counts as beastly is a thoroughly political move’, they argue that ‘the uneasy divide between beast and man has been a key complicating factor for the existence of diplomacy’, and ‘if the “other” is beastly, diplomacy cannot take place’.⁸ The issue of ontic status also includes the diplomatic complications that can follow from particular animals having a certain status within a particular socio-cultural context. In this connection, they mention the need for foreign diplomats to pay due respect to the holy status that monkeys and cows have in India, the difficulties that can follow from diplomatic encounters in which participants have different conceptions of the same animal (e.g. dogs as family members vs dogs as unclean), and religious taboos related to particular animals being consumed as food.

The second way in which Leira and Neumann consider animals to matter in diplomacy concerns 'the metaphorical and symbolic aspect; what animals *represent*'.⁹ In this connection, they point partly to how states identify themselves or are identified by others with specific animal species. Cases in point include the Chinese panda, the American bald eagle and the Russian bear, and they stress the appropriateness of 'a foreign country's diplomats [showing] particular interest and dedication towards the animals concerned'.¹⁰ With regard to the metaphorical aspect, however, Leira and Neumann place the most emphasis on animals being used as 'diplomatic gifts'. In fact, this is the main focus of their article, and they provide a good overview not only of the history of animals being used in this way, but also the different meanings involved in such diplomatic animal gifting. Contrary to literature framing this solely in terms of 'public diplomacy',¹¹ they stress and exemplify how the diplomatic gifting of animals has been used to create or sustain a sense of community; to signal or confirm superiority or hierarchical relations; as tokens of balance in reciprocal exchanges among equals; and as items of value in more instrumental relationships.

In recognition of many diplomatic households including animals, the third way in which animals are seen to matter in diplomacy concerns their status as 'diplomatic subjects'. While this is dealt with in less than half a page, Leira and Neumann stress that such animals 'need to be able to cross borders and profit from the same diplomatic immunity as that given to diplomats and their families', and point to various problems that can emerge in connection with their transportation to as well as arrival and settlement in a new country.¹² Finally, animals are considered to matter in diplomacy as 'objects of negotiations', and they point to three overlapping contexts for this: First, animals as resources, which they illustrate with bilateral diplomacy related to the 'reindeer grazing land issue' in northern Scandinavia, and multilateral fishery diplomacy off the coast of Norway. Second, animals as endangered species, which they illustrate with the negotiation process leading to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora. Third, the issue of animal welfare, in connection with which they give reference to an article on 'farm animal welfare' in EU-Brazil trade relations.¹³

While Leira and Neumann do a great job in placing animals on the DS agenda, their way of doing so is not without limitations. First, it is done fully within a state-centric conception of diplomacy. That said, they acknowledge that 'few today insist on a strict state-focus within diplomacy', and do so in a footnote connected to how 'a high-profile whale-hunting protester, Paul Watson, rammed one of the Norwegian coastguard vessels, *Andenes*, in July 1994'.¹⁴ In another footnote, they refer to a book written specifically to guide animal protection NGOs seeking to influence or participate in diplomacy related to animal welfare.¹⁵ The context for this is their argument that diplomacy cannot be reduced to the negotiation of treaties: 'Beyond treaties, the preservation of endangered species can also directly and indirectly involve diplomatic efforts, both in general preservation efforts and in establishing knowledge through pathologic study'.¹⁶ Overall, these comments connect with a two-fold development within DS that can significantly expand the agenda on 'animals and diplomacy' – namely, a conception of diplomacy incorporating a whole lot of non-state actors and going beyond representation to include governance.¹⁷

In connection with the present essay, a more significant limitation of Leira and Neumann's article concerns how diplomacy is seen as occurring only among humans, with animals objectified and used instrumentally to mediate inter-human relations or otherwise serve human interests. In their case, 'animals matter to who people conceive of themselves and others to be, how they relate to one another, and how they survive and thrive'; animals are considered to have 'an impact on political relations among unities as well as on diplomats' daily lives'; and 'important parts of human interrelations are left unexplored if inter-species interactions are ignored'.¹⁸ The anthropocentrism in question is acknowledged when Leira and Neumann state that '[w]hile this article embraces the idea that humans are constituted among other things by an animal outside, it stops short of attempts at seeing the world from the point of view of cats, cows or lions, let alone communicating with them'.¹⁹ Without retreating from this, they conclude by indicating the potential benefits of moving beyond anthropocentrism:

The many beastly diplomatic gifts [. . .] suggest to us a picture where the mere recounting of the animals as things is insufficient. This article has noted how gift relations and motivations for giving come in at least four forms, but what emerges from this reading is the importance of the beastly gift itself. Thus, a reading of the beast as mediating actants – non-human entities with limited but clear agency, as discussed in actor-network theory – might yield further insights. While this article prefers not to go the full post-anthropocentric route [. . .] some of the arguments made are certainly echoed here, such as that if animals are acknowledged not just as symbols, 'but also as political actors and subjects in their own right, [this] changes how the processes and outcomes of politics are conceptualized'.²⁰

The main problem with this is that Leira and Neumann nowhere acknowledge animals as 'political actors and subjects in their own right'. To the contrary, they maintain and reproduce what they accept to be a 'thoroughly political' division or 'separation between human and animal',²¹ and thereby adhere to the long-held view among Western philosophers that it makes sense to engage neither politically nor diplomatically with animals.²²

Towards interspecies diplomacy: theoretical and normative considerations

While critical scholars have highlighted the 'avalanche of exclusions, marginalizations, and exoticizations [that] has accompanied the conventional, state-centric perspective' in DS,²³ they have done nothing to highlight the exclusions and marginalizations that follow from the field's anthropocentrism. That said, the way some scholars have rethought diplomacy can nonetheless enable moving DS in a less anthropocentric direction. This is the case not least with Der Derian's influential reframing of diplomacy as the 'mediation of estranged individuals, groups or entities'.²⁴ The terms 'alienation' and 'estrangement' are at the centre of his genealogical study of the origins and transformations of diplomacy – this, as different forms of alienation are seen to have given rise to various estranged relations in need of mediation – and although his focus is primarily on diplomacy as an inter-human practice, the relevant human estrangements include 'not only alienation from other people and other cultures but also from one's labour, the environment and god(s)'.²⁵

In this connection, Der Derian's engagement with the mediation of human estrangement from 'God' as part of his inquiry into 'mytho-diplomacy' within a Judeo-Christian context was the background to Leira and Neumann arguing that 'the ritual sacrifice of domesticated animals' could be seen as an element internal to 'the ongoing diplomacy with God/the gods'.²⁶ While an alternative hypothesis could be that humans at one point invented god(s) to mediate their estranged relationship with other animals, there is little doubt that religions like Judaism and Christianity have played a key role in shaping human-animal relations in distinctly non-diplomatic terms. Regarding the Western context at the centre of Der Derian's work, the dominant tendency within both religious and secular thought systems has been to constitute animals as radically different and inferior to humans, which has fed into and justified their subjugation. According to Mason, however, 'dominionism' or 'the worldview of the human supremacist' goes further back in time to the emergence of animal agriculture. Prior to this,

people regarded animals with fascination, awe, and respect [and] had a strong sense of kinship with animals. [. . .] Animal agriculture – or the enslavement of animals for human benefit – turned it all upside down. Animals had to be taken down from their pedestals so that they could be controlled, worked, and bought and sold. The old sense of kinship with the living world was replaced with fear, loathing, dread, and alienation.²⁷

Irrespective of when exactly it emerged, the human-supremacist worldview invested the human 'with powers of life and death over all other beings and with the prerogative to control and manage all geographical space'.²⁸ In this connection, it can make sense to note Leira and Neumann's argument that '[o]ne way of handling the problem of difference when diplomacy has been deemed to be unfeasible has been exclusion and extermination of an allegedly beastly "other"'.²⁹ While their concern is with groups of humans considered 'beastly' – including Indigenous peoples during European colonization, and others who have been 'dehumanized' or 'animalized' in various contexts (e.g. Jews and Gypsies in Germany during the 1930s and 1940s, and Tutsis during the Rwandan civil war in 1994) – the consequences for animals of being devalued and inferiorized is an underlying and enabling story. Yes, when considering how the 'animalization of people has [. . .] led them to be treated as animals',³⁰ the reference point is of course how humans have come to consider certain ways of treating animals as acceptable.

While many animals have indeed been excluded and exterminated by humans either when conceived of as competitors, predators or pests, or as a result of their habitats being colonized or destroyed, a significant number of other animals have been subjugated and incorporated into various human projects. The nature of such projects has varied a great deal (e.g. transportation, food production, warfare, entertainment, research, sport and companionship), and there is overall significant variation also in how humans perceive and relate to different 'domesticated' as well as 'wild' animals. Leira and Neumann draw attention to this in terms of cross-cultural differences regarding the 'ontic status' of animals, while intra-cultural complexity and contradictions have been the focus of many studies. As for instance noted by Dhont et al., 'most people care a great deal about the welfare and interests of companion animals (e.g. cats and dogs) and some wild animals (e.g. dolphins and chimps), but much less about food or farm

animals (e.g. pigs and sheep) and unappealing wild animals or animals perceived as pests (e.g. snakes and frogs).³¹

If estrangement is treated as a condition of possibility for diplomacy, then what are the implications of the complexity and plurality of human-animal relations for humans being considered estranged or not in relation to animals? Needless to say, this depends on how one understands 'estrangement'. On his part, Der Derian defined it as 'separation marked by indifference to hostility', which corresponded to his general definition of alienation as 'a diagnostic or descriptive way to designate separation which is accompanied by sentiments ranging from indifference to hostility'.³² In this connection, he added that alienation 'can be used to describe simultaneously objective situations (separation) and subjective factors (from indifference to hostility)'.³³ In what follows, I will stick to the term 'estrangement', and simply conceive of it in terms of what Der Derian also referred to merely as a 'condition of separation'.³⁴ This is in accordance with how estrangement is understood also by other scholars, with a case in point being Hailwood's conception of it as a 'state of being separated or cut off from something'.³⁵

Thus understood, it makes sense to talk about many humans in today's highly urbanized world being estranged from animals living either disconnected from humans in a wilderness context, or with limited human contact within more humanized contexts. These animals can be considered internal to Hailwood's conception of 'nonhuman nature' or 'the natural world insofar as it is not human and has not been shaped and interpreted by humanity for human-oriented ends'.³⁶ This contrasts with animals who have been 'humanized' in the sense of being subjugated and transformed through multiple interventions aimed at making them serve human interests. This includes 'working animals', 'food animals', 'lab animals', 'zoo animals', 'entertainment animals' and 'companion animals', all of whom can be considered parts of 'the natural world insofar as it has been shaped and interpreted by humanity for human-oriented ends'.³⁷ While this 'humanized environment' includes also non-domesticated animals living within a humanized context and having at least some contact and interactions with humans, the issue of human-animal estrangement is probably the least clear regarding animals who are 'relatively highly humanized (domesticated, selectively bred, tamed, controlled and confined)'.³⁸ The simple reason to this is that many such animals are not really recognized *as* animals.

Regarding 'production animals', Kortemäki has argued that '[i]ntensive and industrialised meat production reduces animals to commodities and quantitative units in the food system', and that their objectification and situatedness within the framework of production 'results in a cognitive process of de-animalisation, where the sight of animals as animals is lost and they become viewed as mere production units'.³⁹ Furthermore, she emphasizes how this system works to hide the fundamental character of animals both materially by preventing them from 'expressing complex behaviour that would make them appear more animal-like', and socially in that 'a reifying and detaching stance is maintained with the language that approaches animal-based food products via "mass terms" (pork, beef) rather than words that would refer to the individual and distinct character of animals'.⁴⁰ Although things are different with companion animals, they are also constituted as objects, property and commodities in most contemporary societies. Moreover, this has increasingly been complimented with a process through which they

are not merely included as members of human families, but also constituted as forever-infantilized 'little humans'. Irrespective of the role played by the 'pet product industry' in humanizing companion animals this way, the result is another cognitive process whereby the sight of animals *as* animals can be lost.

If most domesticated animals have been de-animalized and de-othered through objectification and/or humanization, then what are the implications for the prospect of human-animal diplomacy? In this connection, the significance of the de-animalization and de-othering in question becomes clear if one accepts that diplomacy is 'a way of knowing and dealing with otherness'⁴¹ and something thriving on 'the inclusion of the other as a subject with agency rather than an object to be acted on'.⁴² Against this background, the prospect for interspecies diplomacy depends on humans recognizing animals as such subjects, which first and foremost requires an acknowledgement of animals being more than their humanized forms. As noted by Hailwood in connection with foxes:

If we say that a fox is 'more than' the set of interpretations and roles foisted onto it through our landscaping – 'pest', 'wily quarry' and so on – then we are saying there is more to the fox than the place it has in relation to our human-oriented purposes. Our awareness of this 'more than', or 'remainder' left over by our landscaping of the fox, marks our estrangement from it.⁴³

Drawing in part on Buller and Morris's claim that 'farm animals remain, for all their breeding, selection, docility and husbandry beyond our complete societal appropriation',⁴⁴ Kortemäki argues that a similar 'more than' exists also with regard to 'production animals' – this, in that 'the fundamental characteristics of those animals "is still there" in the background'.⁴⁵ Other ways of highlighting this can be to point to the agency manifested in resistance on the part of domesticated animals,⁴⁶ or the complex behaviour that 'farmed pigs' or 'laboratory rats' exhibit when released from captivity.⁴⁷ Recognizing that 'domesticated animals' historical and biological ties to humans do not take away their agency or their otherness' is important,⁴⁸ and further human estrangement should be nurtured in cases where animals have been de-animalized within contexts of human domination. However, it is also necessary to do away with the tendency to see animals as different in kind and 'radically other', and accept that humans 'are continuous with all other life forms, not only in body but also in mind'.⁴⁹ Human and most other animals are sentient, and many other animals also share a variety of characteristics previously thought specific to humans.⁵⁰

Besides a commitment to human-animal estrangement and the recognition of animals as subjects with agency, another normative pillar of this essay consists of a conception of diplomacy as something positive when considered in the context of contemporary human-animal relations. With reference to 'factory farming and industrialized slaughter technologies', multiple types of experimentation on animals (medical, military, etc.), the 'torment and death' that animals are subjected to 'in order to satisfy human recreational pursuits', 'human encroachments on non-human habitats' and 'the modes of discipline, surveillance, containment and control that attend and are inherent to the practice of "pet ownership" and "domestication"', Wadiwel has argued that 'we are at war with animals':

This is a protracted war, a war that arguably grows in intensity, a war that has no foreseeable end. This is a war that operates under the guise of peace, constructed more often than not within the rule of law. This is a war that does not appear to be a war, yet – as the casualties demonstrate – it bears the unmistakable hallmarks of continuing warlike domination.⁵¹

While Wadiwel draws on von Clausewitz's conception of war as 'an act of force to compel our enemy to do our will' and Foucault's notion of 'politics [as] war pursued by other means' when making sense of human domination and treatment of animals as war,⁵² my concern with interspecies diplomacy is antithetical to a conception of diplomacy as the continuation of war by other means. Although one should certainly be alert to the possibility of diplomacy masquerading war or domination, I embrace the element of 'sustainable diplomacy' that Constantinou and Der Derian specified as 'finding ways and terms under which rival entities and ways of living can co-exist and flourish'.⁵³ This implies a conception of diplomacy as being an ethic concerning 'how we live together and in relation to others and share with them the material and spiritual resources of the world'.⁵⁴ While adopting Constantinou's conception of diplomacy as a 'practice that genuinely responds to the challenge of how we can live together in difference',⁵⁵ this essay seeks to extend it beyond the humanist and anthropocentric limitations of his work. That said, with reference to the growing scientific 'recognition that non-human animals do not simply have intelligence but consciousness', Constantinou and Opondo have recently hinted at what the present essay seeks to do:

If the historical animal inability to 'speak' is now being reviewed as a human inability to 'listen,' how far should these developments change the perspective of animals not merely as passive recipients of (humanitarian) respect or beings in the service of human affects, but as interlocutors with whom affirmative modes of co-existence need to be negotiated?⁵⁶

Towards interspecies diplomacy: exploring practical possibilities

With no wish or intention to specify what interspecies diplomacy necessarily should be all about in practice, what follows draws on and brings together different ideas and bodies of thought in an attempt to explore what it might imply for humans to start engaging diplomatically with animals.

Animals as sovereign communities

If one thinks in terms of the dominant understanding of diplomacy as something occurring among sovereign entities, then one way forward regarding the possibility of interspecies diplomacy can be to follow Donaldson and Kymlicka in conceiving of certain animals as constituting sovereign communities. Based on the view that animals have certain rights that impose obligations on humans, their book *Zoopolis* explores how humans can organize themselves politically in a way that recognizes, respects and positively protects their rights.⁵⁷ Drawing on liberal political theory, they propose for animals to be differentially incorporated in the way that politics is currently organized based on

how they stand in relation to humans and existing human communities. More specifically, they argue that domesticated animals should be included as co-citizens within existing political communities, that wild or wilderness animals should be constituted as separate sovereign communities, and that non-domesticated wild animals residing in (sub)urban regions should be treated as denizens.

Regarding wild animal communities, the recognition of sovereignty rights is taken to rest not on the existence of formal authority structures or legal institutions, but rather on 'whether they have an interest in autonomy, which, in turn, depends on whether their flourishing is tied to their ability to maintain their modes of social organization and self-regulation on their territory'.⁵⁸ While the moral purpose of sovereignty is to prevent injustices of colonization and domination, Donaldson and Kymlicka acknowledge the challenges involved in operationalizing the sovereignty framework for wild animals – including the need for a conception of 'shared' sovereignty due to the territories of human and animal communities often overlapping; the need for a fair (re)allocation of territory taking past injustices related to human colonization into account; and the application of norms of international justice (e.g. equity, reciprocity and compensation) to govern 'fair interaction' between sovereign human and animal communities.⁵⁹ In addition comes 'the political question of how to *enforce* wild animal sovereignty', in connection with which they argue that

Wild animals are usually not in a position to physically defend themselves from human interference. They cannot represent themselves in diplomatic negotiations or on international bodies. They cannot make collective decisions about delegating responsibility for the protection of their sovereign interests.⁶⁰

The issue of diplomatic representation of sovereign wild animal communities connects with that of animal representation in politics, which Donaldson and Kymlicka discuss in connection with domesticated animals within their co-citizenship scheme,⁶¹ and other scholars have explored in the context of alternative proposals for politics being reorganized in an animal-inclusive fashion.⁶² The dominant view is clearly that there is a need for one or another trustee model of representation, and this goes also for Donaldson and Kymlicka regarding wild animals. More specifically, they argue that '[t]he answer lies in some form of proxy representation by human beings who are committed to the principle of animal sovereignty', and refer to Goodin et al.'s work on 'simian sovereignty' and the argument that 'a sovereign great ape nation would inevitably take the form of a protectorate, for which humans act as trustees'.⁶³ That said, they acknowledge not to have a blueprint for the representation of neither domesticated nor wild animals, and state that 'what matters in the end is not the creation of this or that institutional mechanism [. . .] but rather the underlying picture of human-animal relations that drives the institutional reform'.⁶⁴

In the case of relations between human and wild animal communities, the picture in question consists first and foremost of the former recognizing the latter as sovereign, and one challenge for DS and IR scholars can therefore be to explore what this might imply in terms of interspecies diplomacy. In this connection, one option can be to consider further what might constitute a suitable institutional mechanism or framework for wild animal communities being represented in diplomacy. An alternative can be to consider if

diplomacy between sovereign human and wild animal communities can be practiced in other ways. For instance, Donaldson and Kymlicka have argued that domesticated animals are capable of more direct 'political participation' through their mere presence in public space and various 'processes of self-representation',⁶⁵ and the question can be raised if the mere presence of wild animal communities and/or aspects of their behaviour can somehow be considered in terms of diplomatic participation. Given that the territories of sovereign human and wild animal communities will often overlap, DS and IR scholars can also address instances of direct conflict between such communities and explore what role diplomacy can play in mediating and resolving them.

Regarding the above, a possible objection can be that a fundamental communication barrier stands in the way of meaningful diplomacy – this, irrespective of animals being represented by humans or otherwise participating in diplomacy. However, if one avoids reducing communication to the use of human language, then most animals clearly speak and communicate in multiple ways, and the challenge becomes how this can be incorporated in an interspecies diplomacy context. In connection with his conception of trustee representation whereby 'dedicated animal representatives' are tasked with translating 'the interests of animals [. . .] into their deliberations with other representatives over what is the public good', Cochrane acknowledges that 'animal representatives will not be able to question their constituents in the conventional sense', but argues that 'they can still employ other equally important techniques of listening – being attentive to body language, eye movement, facial expression, habit, and so on – to come to an understanding of their interests'.⁶⁶ While such close-contact techniques might work less well with respect to wild animals, alternative ways of 'being attentive' or listening to them can still be explored,⁶⁷ and scientists or others with a good understanding of particular animal communities can potentially serve as 'interpreters'.⁶⁸

The question can be raised if interspecies diplomacy related to a conception of sovereign wild animal communities really has the potential to move us beyond the ongoing war against animals. According to Wadiwel, this is not the case, as animal sovereignty theory maintains what he refers to as 'the human prerogative to decide'.⁶⁹ More specifically, he raises the question of 'who gets to decide on citizenship and sovereignty, and who regulates these political statuses?', and argues that Donaldson and Kymlicka's framework 'relies upon humans determining these category differences, and standing at the borders of political status to determine eligibilities and entitlements'.⁷⁰ If we are to get beyond the self-claimed 'human sovereignty' involved in this, then Wadiwel considers it necessary to critically question the 'humanist conceptualizations' of the 'existing political structure (citizenship, the nation State and the Westphalian system)'.⁷¹ While this might be the case, it does not necessarily make it futile for DS and IR scholars to engage with aspects of diplomacy concerning the relationship between sovereign human and animal communities. For instance, it is possible to follow Meijer in acknowledging that Wadiwel contributes to 'shed light on the power structures on which our interpretations of politics and non-human animals are built', while considering Donaldson and Kymlicka's conception of sovereign wild animal communities to offer a 'first practical step to bring about change'.⁷²

An alternative can be found in Morizot's call for a diplomatic approach to the human-wolf conflict in France. The specific conflict in question aside, Morizot makes a general

case for ‘animalizing politics’ through a recognition of other animals having their own political forms, and conceives of ‘animal diplomacy’ to consist in finding ways of entering into relations with them that coincide with those forms.⁷³ Regarding any particular wild animal community, this requires ethological knowledge of their ways of being in the world; the identification of behavioural traits shared with them as a result of evolutionary affiliation and ecological conditioning; and the exploration of ways to communicate and negotiate directly with them on the basis of eco-ethological commonalities and the ability to see and think like them. In consequence, a key role of the human diplomat becomes that of ‘identifying forms of a common language; not expressive forms (what are they asking for?) but “impressive” forms (what messages can we get across?), while looking for mutually beneficial ecological interactions’.⁷⁴ Overall, while Morizot’s conception of animal diplomacy moves beyond existing interpretations and structures of politics, humans are nonetheless assigned a privileged position in managing human-animal relations and ‘steering’ coevolution with wild animal communities in directions considered mutually beneficial.⁷⁵

Treaties with animals

Without a mechanism in place to ensure animal representation, it might seem meaningless with a separate section focusing on treaties between humans and other animals. The main reason to this is that a treaty is conventionally understood as ‘a binding formal agreement, contract, or other written instrument that establishes obligations between two or more subjects of international law’,⁷⁶ which quickly re-raises the question of who should negotiate and enforce a treaty on behalf of animals. Even within the fictional social contract tradition, several capacity requirements have historically been used to conclude that ‘[t]o make Covenant with bruit Beasts, is impossible’.⁷⁷ That said, efforts have been made to include animals in contractarian theory in two ways: First, by conceiving of them as parties to a ‘domestication contract’, with domestication understood as mutually beneficial and implying human obligations to protect and care for animals who ‘chose domestication’.⁷⁸ Clearly, the idea of such a contract can be seen to legitimize human domination of animals. Second, animals have been conceived as beneficiaries of a contract framed by humans behind a Rawlsian ‘veil of ignorance’ that excludes knowledge also of one’s species from the ‘original position’ in which society’s moral principles are chosen.⁷⁹ Not knowing their species belonging, the humans framing such a contract can be expected to rationally make veganism morally obligatory for humans.

Attempts to include animals in a form of contract have been made also outside of the liberal social contract tradition. Drawing on both Derrida’s critique of that tradition and Cassirer’s conception of humans as symbolic creatures with a distinct capacity to distinguish between actual and possible objects, Cornell has explicitly sought to ‘rethink the covenant that we should have with animals’ and specified three obligations ‘imposed on us a creatures who can and should imagine a world in which animals are not violated’ – namely, to ‘avoid cruelty of a sort evidenced in every slaughterhouse’; ‘respect the many species of animals in their communities with their rituals, practices, and relationships’; and ‘respect the wider ecosystem in which animals live’.⁸⁰ Alternatively, Gabardi has proposed a ‘posthumanist social contract’ that proceeds on the basis of the real ‘state of

nature' as it concerns the biosphere and the conditions of all life forms, considers animals as co-members of society and moral communities based on their coevolutionary moral kinship with humans, and aims to elucidate and test 'alternative models of the good life'.⁸¹ With regard to human obligations vis-à-vis animals, he specifies six guiding principles (i.e. recognition, reconciliation, responsibility-to-intervene, rehabilitation, restitution and reinhabitation) considered to have the potential of transforming human-animal relations.

When considering the issue of humans being parties to treaties with animals, an alternative can be to consider diplomacy beyond the hegemonic Western tradition. This has already received quite some attention within DS, with one prominent case in point being 'indigenous diplomacies'.⁸² In this connection, however, the relevant scholarship seems to have completely neglected Indigenous peoples' long tradition of having diplomatic relations with animals, which importantly has required no concern with developing an institutional mechanism through which animals can be represented. As noted by Nadasdy in response to Donaldson and Kymlicka's *Zoopolis*:

northern indigenous people do not regard animals as incapable of participating in the political process without human aid. On the contrary, animals and other non-human persons are already powerful actors who play a vital role in northern indigenous society; they do not require the help of human 'enablers' to communicate their needs or facilitate their participation in politics. These sentient and spiritually powerful beings are perfectly capable of protecting their own interests and communicating their needs and desires directly to humans.⁸³

In Anishinaabeg philosophy, for instance, King states that 'non-human communities are afforded supreme status' and '[w]e live at their discretion', and goes on to argue that this is 'illustrated in our creation story in which the birds and muskrat decide if we live or die, to the promise we made to the eagle to live by the laws of creation, or our first treaty with the deer and moose to always ensure their homes and communities flourish in exchange for their flesh, bones, skin and teachings'.⁸⁴ The treaty that King refers to was established after the sudden disappearance of various animals from Nishnaabeg territory a long time ago. When the people finally located them, it became clear that they had left because they felt treated without due respect. In the ensuing negotiations

the chief deer outlined how the Nishnaabeg nation could make amends: 'Honour and respect our lives and our beings, in life and in death. Cease doing what offends our spirits. Do not waste our flesh. Preserve fields and forests for our homes. To show your commitment to these things and as a remembrance of the anguish you have brought upon us, always leave tobacco leaf from where you take us. Gifts are important to build our relationship once again.' The Nishnaabeg agreed and the animals returned to their territory.⁸⁵

In his work on how large-fauna extinctions have been narrated by Indigenous peoples as well as settler-colonizers in North America across time, Sweet considers some of the most productive narrations to have worked within 'the paradigm of treaties or agreements between humans and nonhumans', and argues that it is particularly relevant in the current context of the so-called sixth mass extinction.⁸⁶ With reference to how the treaty form 'developed in order to resolve histories of violent relations', he draws an explicit

parallel between the Treaty of Westphalia and how several Indigenous peoples' treaties with animals are 'founded on histories of interspecies violence'.⁸⁷ Furthermore, he considers one of the main attractions of thinking about treaties with animals to be that '[t]he treaty form is grounded neither in mastery nor love but in the recognition of sovereignty and mutual respect'.⁸⁸ With reference to the above-quoted treaty as well as other treaties between the Nishnaabeg and 'animal nations', Simpson states that each constitute 'an ongoing reciprocal and dynamic relationship to be nurtured, maintained, and respected' for the sake of bringing about 'a lasting peace for all involved'.⁸⁹

Against this background, DS scholars can explore how the above tradition with inter-species treaties might inspire thinking about such treaties and their possible content more generally. That said, the challenges involved in this are not insignificant, as the treaties in question are embedded in cosmological frameworks and legal systems not shared by most contemporary human societies. Furthermore, given that such treaties are rooted in local-ecological contexts, it would likely require thinking in terms of a complex system with overlapping and complementary treaties at multiple levels. Against this background, an alternative can perhaps be to assume that all early human societies subscribed to ontologies somehow resembling those of many Indigenous peoples today – this, with an emphasis on the equality and co-dependence of humans and animals, and implying that 'common survival in the world depends on an expansive and generous attitude of radical other-than-human charity' – and conceive of this as an original 'social contract'.⁹⁰ In this case, humans can be seen to have dishonoured the contract when they started domesticating and otherwise exploiting animals long ago, with all aspects of the ongoing war against animals operating in extension of this, and all steps to end the war representing efforts to restore the contract.

When discussing and dismissing the idea of a peace treaty in connection with the ongoing human war against animals, Wadiwel follows 'Foucault's logic on the relationship of war to political power', and argues that 'we need not assume that a treaty suggests a future relationship of equality'.⁹¹ Rather, while it can provide 'peace and security', it can in his view 'also be understood in a negative sense as the means for continuing domination, since the agreement frequently confers rights for the victor' and accords only 'limited freedoms as "concessions" to the defeated "enemy"'.⁹² Furthermore, he argues that '[t]he treaty is a document that is premised on the threat of force', with the stronger party ready to exercise overwhelming violence should hostilities break out again. Against the peace treaty idea, Wadiwel proposes a temporary 'truce' in the form of a 'one day without killing animals', with truce understood as something frail and inconclusive that nonetheless can open up space for greater equality and create a foundation for different relations and a different politics 'capable of not merely reproducing existing forms of domination, but ending war'.⁹³

Wadiwel's 'thought experiment' aside, the question can be raised if thinking in terms of a peace treaty or the like between humans and other animals necessarily will masquerade war or human domination. If the point of departure is that humans won a war and a possible treaty will offer 'concessions' to defeated animal 'enemies', then a reproduction of existing forms of human domination is probably unavoidable. In consequence, rather than thinking in terms of humans granting animals something through an end-of-war treaty, it can potentially be more productive to think in terms of pre-war

conditions constituting a treaty to be honoured. How exactly one can or should imagine the conditions in question is not given, though one can probably do worse than starting with a conception of humans and other animals being equal and co-dependent, and then consider how they can live together in difference within a broader ecological context. With such a point of departure, it becomes clear that current efforts to rectify war damage done to animals fall way short – this, with ‘wildlife management’ (including managerial approaches to wildlife conservation) being oriented towards ‘control’ rather than ‘diplomacy, negotiation and conviviality’,⁹⁴ and ‘welfare provisions’ for domesticated and other captive animals being equivalent to warfare provisions.⁹⁵

Animals as ambassadors

A different way forward regarding the possibility of interspecies diplomacy can be to focus on individual agents involved in diplomacy and consider whether certain animals can be conceived of as ‘diplomats’ or ‘ambassadors’. That said, the concern here is not with how animals-as-diplomatic-gifts are commonly considered ‘goodwill ambassadors’ in inter-human diplomacy, but rather with individual animals somehow mediating relations between humans and larger groups of animals. In this connection, it is many years since Serpell and Paul developed their pets-as-ambassadors hypothesis concerning ‘whether, in the process of acquiring quasi-human status, pets can also serve as ambassadors; nonhuman representatives of the interests and moral claims, not only of their own species, but of animals in general’.⁹⁶ In other words, the ‘ambassadorial role’ or ‘mediating powers’ of companion animals are seen to rest on ‘their ambiguous, *intermediate* position on the boundary between human and animal’ or ‘their liminal, intermediate properties – their ambiguous mix of human and non-human characteristics’, and the idea is that humans having strong and interactive relationships with such animals will develop a concern for and positive attitudes towards animals in general.⁹⁷

Beyond companion animals, rescued animals residing in farmed animal sanctuaries are often explicitly referred to as ‘ambassadors’ for their conspecifics within industrial animal agriculture. Combined with educational information, immediate encounters and close interaction with the actual referents of the ‘meat’ and ‘dairy’ that people commonly consume are seen to have the potential of feeding into empathy and care for animals (ab)used in animal agriculture. Yet another common case in point is wild animals living in zoos, aquariums or the like, who are often also explicitly referred to as ‘ambassadors’ for their wild conspecifics and/or wildlife more generally. Although all ‘zoo animals’ are sometimes referred to as ambassadors, the term is most often used with reference to animals either participating in interactive ‘animal ambassador programmes’ or belonging to an ‘ambassador species’.⁹⁸ Combined with educational information, observing and/or interacting in person with such animals is seen to have the potential of feeding into a concern with wildlife and support for conservation efforts.

Even if one accepts the above metaphorical depictions of animals as ambassadors, it is unclear how well the animals in question actually perform as ambassadors. While Serpell and Paul support their pets-as-ambassadors hypothesis with reference to various historical cases as well as their own study on the relationship between childhood pet keeping and attitudes towards animals,⁹⁹ more recent empirical research has provided

additional support for it.¹⁰⁰ The existing research related to zoo animals is significantly much less conclusive,¹⁰¹ and no systematic research has been conducted on the effect of visitor interactions with animals in sanctuaries.¹⁰² However, whatever the case might be, there is clearly nothing automatic in close contact and interactions with individual animals resulting in a positive change in human attitudes and/or behaviours vis-à-vis yet other animals. For instance, one can easily find pet owners who could not care less about other animals, and some studies of pet ownership have found no positive connection.¹⁰³

Against this background, DS scholars can potentially explore how animals in the above-mentioned and perhaps other sites best can execute diplomatic agency by considering institutional arrangements and perhaps also individual animal characteristics. In this connection, one relevant issue concerns the extent to which the animals in question are fully recognized as ambassadors, and if the introduction of more formal procedures of accreditation potentially can make a difference. For instance, when a human family acquires a pet, can a letter of credence issued as part of a formal ceremony contribute to this being perceived as a matter of hosting an ambassador as much as getting a new family member? Another relevant issue concerns both the number of humans a particular animal ambassador gets to interact with, and the frequency with which (s)he interacts with specific humans. While this is less of an issue with pets, it can be difficult for animals in sanctuaries and zoos to properly get their diplomatic messages through in one-off interactions with human visitors, and they should perhaps also be enabled to more proactively do so vis-à-vis non-visiting humans. This also raises the issue of location, as many zoos and all farmed animal sanctuaries tend to be situated away from where humans live.

That said, there are significant structural limits to the diplomatic agency of the animals discussed above, and this raises serious questions about the capacity of the animals-as-ambassadors idea to bring us beyond the ongoing war against animals. The main reason to this is undoubtedly that the animals in question are subjected to human control or located within power relations that significantly constrain them. In one sense, they can be considered captive prisoners of war, with a focus on them serving as ambassadors potentially becoming an obvious case of diplomacy masquerading war. This is perhaps particularly the case with zoo animals, where the site itself paradigmatically illustrates and powerfully reproduces the imperialist and exploitative relationship between humans and animals.¹⁰⁴ Important ethical issues pertain also to animals located in animal sanctuaries,¹⁰⁵ even if they are in a better condition than both zoo animals and their conspecifics exploited and killed in food production. While animal ambassadors in sanctuaries also have somewhat more agency with respect to (non)interaction with human visitors, it remains the case that humans in both zoos and sanctuaries instrumentally decide that they should be ambassadors, when and how their ambassadorial roles should be performed, etc.

Although currently not declared and used instrumentally as ambassadors for a larger group of animals, pets also live lives that they have not chosen and over which they have limited control. For the main part, they have been bred into being and transacted among humans in the marketplace, and their legal status is that of property, which Wadiwel argues represent 'the everyday form of appropriation by which humans claim dominion over animals'.¹⁰⁶ Beyond this, he argues that 'practices of violence circulate and frame

human relations with companion animals', including 'forcible constraint and separation; reproductive and sexuality controls; surveillance and disciplinary regimes in relation to nutrition, sleep, movement; forms of body modification such as [neutering and] micro-chipping; and life and death powers wielded by the state and pet owners'.¹⁰⁷ While their position is precarious to say the least, most owners nonetheless seem to love their pets to bits, and the question can be raised if their property status should be taken to define the totality of the relationship between humans and pets and/or if pets nonetheless can play a meaningful role in an interspecies diplomacy context.

While the potential for pets and residents in farmed animal sanctuaries to serve as ambassadors seems worthy of further consideration, zoos come across as much too abusive and internal to human domination to constitute meaningful sites for animal ambassadorship. Against this background, the question can be raised if members of 'ambassador species' living in their natural habitats can serve as ambassadors in human-animal relations. In this connection, so-called non-consumptive in situ wildlife tourism often incorporates a focus on how humans observing and potentially interacting with charismatic megafauna in their natural habitats can feed into care and concern for not only the species in question, but also wildlife and conservation efforts more generally.¹⁰⁸ However, the ambassador effect is again far from clear, and such wildlife tourism can itself have not-insignificant negative effects on wildlife.¹⁰⁹ Importantly, this includes how the presence of tourists can affect animals having no wish whatsoever to encounter with humans. When it comes to wild animals open to and perhaps eager to interact with humans (e.g. dolphins), Taylor and Carter have proposed the establishment of 'inter-species embassies' as sites of engagement with 'significant otherness'.¹¹⁰

Finally, it can be mentioned that certain wild animal species have been considered particularly suitable as ambassadors for other animals due to their similarity to humans. For instance, Goodall and Bekoff have argued that 'the great apes are like us in so many ways that they serve as ambassadors for all the other wonderful animals with whom we share the planet'.¹¹¹ The logic informing this is that if humans acknowledge both how similar they are to humans and that 'we are ourselves animals',¹¹² then this will break down the human-animal distinction and contribute to human care and concern being extended to the whole animal kingdom. In contrast to the earlier animals-as-ambassadors hypotheses, the point here is not that humans should travel to places where great apes live in order to observe and interact with them, but rather to learn about them and their similarity with humans through educational material. While there is research indicating that a perception of animals as similar to humans can have such effects,¹¹³ there is again nothing automatic about this, and there is also the potential for similarity with humans becoming a criterion for which animal species should be safeguarded in the ongoing war against animals.

Ethologists as diplomats

Animals are not alone in being considered ambassadors in the context of human-animal relations, and it is indeed quite common to conceive of humans engaged in animal advocacy as ambassadors for animals. For instance, Goodall has been referred to as a 'passionate, active, and engaging ambassador' for wild animals¹¹⁴; some large NGOs

like PETA has a tradition of appointing celebrities as ‘ambassadors’ for animals; and several smaller and more local animal advocacy groups have programmes whereby children become ‘ambassadors’ for animals. However, the idea here is different and concerns whether certain humans can be conceived of as diplomats for other humans within the context of human-animal relations. More specifically, the focus is on whether knowledge of animals produced by scholars like Goodall and Bekoff can be conceived of as *diplomatic knowledge*. Within DS, the relationship between diplomacy and knowledge has received quite some attention, and Cornago has distinguished between an understanding of diplomatic knowledge as *statecraft* or ‘an instrument of state power and governmentality’ on the one hand, and *heterology* or ‘a venue for empathy and mutual self-transformation’ on the other.¹¹⁵

The latter understanding draws on Constantinou’s engagement with the ‘transformative potential of diplomacy’ as one element of what he calls ‘homo-diplomacy’. More specifically, his concern is with a form of diplomacy that ‘engages heterology to revisit and rearticulate homology, whose mission is not only, not just, the knowledge and control of the Other but fundamentally the knowledge of the Self – and crucially this knowledge of the Self as a more reflective means of dealing with and transforming relations with Others’.¹¹⁶ With reference to Der Derian’s conception of diplomacy as ‘the mediation of estrangement’, he argues that homo-diplomacy concerns ‘the mediation of sameness, internal mediation, as a condition for [...] the mediation of the estranged’ – this, in the sense that ‘not only the Other but the Self become strange, a site to be known or known anew’.¹¹⁷ In a more recent attempt to revalorize a ‘humanistic tradition of diplomacy’, Constantinou refers to the diplomatic knowledge in question as ‘reflexive-knowledge’ and connects it to an ethic of diplomacy as a ‘mode of living’ related to ‘coexistence and sharing’ which, in turn, ‘underscores the need to get acquainted with the languages and histories of the other – not as a mere strategy for knowing the enemy or rival – but for self-development and ultimately self-knowledge and self-critique’.¹¹⁸

With animals conceived of as ‘others’ to humans in the context of interspecies diplomacy, the question becomes if knowledge of them can be treated as diplomatic knowledge understood in terms of heterology. In this connection, it must first be acknowledged that humans produce knowledge of animals and their behaviour in very different settings and for quite different purposes, with much of it being fully integral to the ongoing war against animals – this, because the settings as such are characterized by human domination (e.g. laboratories and zoos) and/or because the knowledge is produced instrumentally in relation to human power and governmentality (e.g. studies of farmed animals aimed at increasing their ‘productivity’). Against this background, the most relevant knowledge production in a Western context is the naturalist tradition that emerged in Europe in the 17th to 19th centuries and was (re)invigorated with the establishment of ethology as a field of study in the 1930s.¹¹⁹ Stimulated further by the development of cognitive ethology in the 1970s,¹²⁰ what characterizes much of this knowledge production is an effort to understand the behaviour, cognitive processes, social lives and cultures of animals through long-term observations of them under natural conditions.

If one considers the history of such knowledge production – including, not least, Darwin’s work on the evolutionary origin of all species,¹²¹ and Goodall’s research documenting chimpanzees behaving in ways commonly considered unique to humans¹²²

– then there is no doubt that it has generated critical (self)reflection on and reconsideration of what it means to be human and the place of humans in the larger picture of things. Beyond this as well as the view that humans historically became who they are based on observation of and learning from animals,¹²³ some ethologists argue that the potential for further learning is significant.¹²⁴ Moreover, there is little doubt that ethological knowledge production has generated critical reflection on and reconsideration of the ethical dimension of human relations with and treatment of animals.¹²⁵ Overall, though the ‘diplomatic’ effects generated so far are not insignificant, DS scholars can potentially further this by explicitly acknowledging ethologists as diplomats and engaging with their knowledge production accordingly.

Regarding the knowledge production in question, it should be noted that it can be intrusive when implying humans spending long time in the habitats of animal communities with which humans otherwise do not interact. While the negative effects of this might be less than wildlife tourism, such animal communities should potentially just be left to live their lives separately from humans. Things can be different with non-domesticated animals bordering or living within humanized environments, as these are animals with whom humans inescapably interact and where efforts are needed to find ways to live together in difference. This includes not least the many animals sharing urban life with humans, who have tended to be neglected in ethological research beyond applied concerns with ‘pest control’ and the like.¹²⁶ With respect to domesticated animals, non-applied ethological research on/with residents in farmed animal sanctuaries can potentially also serve a diplomatic knowledge purpose. While such research has been slow to develop, existing studies highlight that ‘[c]ows, chickens, pigs, turkeys, ducks, geese, sheep, and goats possess complex cognitive and emotional inner worlds’, that ‘[t]hey form close and enduring bonds with kin and others’, and that each member of any particular species has her/his own subjectivity and individuality.¹²⁷

Everyday human-animal diplomacy

In his work on homo-diplomacy, Constantinou also highlighted a second element concerning ‘nonprofessional dimensions of diplomacy’ or ‘the interpersonal dealings of the homo sapiens, or if you like the nontechnical, experimental, and experiential diplomacy of everyday life’.¹²⁸ In a more recent chapter focusing specifically on ‘everyday diplomacy’, Constantinou argues that ‘diplomacy can be broadly understood to emerge whenever someone successfully claims to represent and negotiate for a territory or a group of people or a cause, or successfully claims to mediate between others engaging in such representations and negotiations’, and emphasizes how diplomacy thus understood ‘ceases to be a professional skill or special technique and thus captures a wider spectrum of social activities’.¹²⁹ While valorizing the existence of ‘plural diplomacies’ in both the past and the present, Constantinou nonetheless argues that ‘[t]his is not to say that anything and everything is diplomacy, but rather that any actor or encounter with *otherness* can be potentially diplomatised’. In this connection, he goes on to state that

At stake therefore is what the adoption of diplomatic identity entails in terms of seeking to promote a specific issue as a *diplomatic* problem or the interests of a particular group as

pertaining to those of a *diplomatic* interlocutor, and whose concerns are consequently open to negotiation rather than the mere exercise of domestic governance and authority.¹³⁰

Against this background, the question can be raised if the idea of ‘everyday diplomacy’ can be meaningfully and productively applied in the context of human-animal relations. With regard to how humans relate to companion animals, for instance, thinking in terms of diplomacy would differ significantly from both a ‘dominionistic’ and ‘humanistic’ approach, with the former tending to treat animals as objects or very different-and-inferior beings and value them primarily for the uses they provide, and the latter tending to elevate animals to the status of surrogate humans and value them primarily for the emotional benefits that they provide.¹³¹ In contrast, a diplomatic orientation would first and foremost imply treating a companion animal as a *diplomatic* subject or ‘an interlocutor whose *separate* will, interests, and ways of being deserve to be recognized as constituting “external” affairs’.¹³² Moreover, if diplomacy is understood normatively as an alternative to war or ‘domestic governance and authority’, then a diplomatic orientation would also imply interacting with companion animals based on respect for their otherness and with the aim of living together in difference.

An immediate challenge for such a diplomatic conception of human-animal companionship is that the latter is embedded in a broader context saturated with human power. Despite this, however, many pet owners not only fully recognize the subjectivity and individuality of their pets, but ‘practically engage with understanding the similarities and differences between themselves and their animal companions on a day-to-day basis’ – this, partly based on popular notions of species psychology, and partly through embodied interaction and communication.¹³³ Furthermore, at least some pet owners seem to make sincere everyday efforts to understand and negotiate the separate wills, interests and ways of being involved in the relationship.¹³⁴ Beyond this, it has been argued that the intimate relationship between humans and companion animals can represent a form of resistance to socio-cultural norms of human domination. Irvine did so in her study of play between adult humans and their companion animals, and Wadiwel has done so in connection with petting practices.¹³⁵ Taking the physical intimacy that humans often experience through such practices as the point of departure, he argues that one way to understand this can be as ‘a curious evolution in the history of [the] large scale war against animals, one which has allowed humans and animals to negotiate shared pleasures, a provisional friendship, within the trenches of war’.¹³⁶

Given the power inequality, however, DS scholars can explore further if it really can make sense to think diplomatically about human-animal companionship. In this connection, it seems clear that one will have to distinguish between different types of companion animals. So-called ‘exotic pets’ and other animals kept in small cages are but captive prisoners of war, and the extent of meaningful and mutual interaction between humans and such animals is very limited. Things are different with dogs and cats, who often move around and interact freely with humans within apartments and houses. However, it can potentially be argued that genuine diplomacy can occur only if animals living in such larger cages are free to not merely come and go, but also leave permanently. The latter is in most cases possible only with cats, who have not been transformed into a ‘captive species’ through human domestication. That said, feral cats *and*

dogs as well as many other animals live amongst humans in cities around the world, and this raises the question if the idea of everyday human-animal diplomacy can be extended further to include human relations with non-companion animals. In her study on everyday native wildlife and urban conviviality in Brisbane, for instance, Paxton explicitly called for 'multispecies diplomacy and negotiation' oriented towards 'living together' and allowing 'difference to flourish'.¹³⁷

Conclusion

With reference to wild animal communities being treated as sovereign, human and animal communities having treaties with each other, individual animals serving as ambassadors for larger groups of animals, ethologists producing diplomatic knowledge as heterology, and everyday human-animal diplomacy, this essay has explored the possibility of diplomacy concerning human relations with other animals. Despite the challenges involved, I consider such diplomacy fully possible and conducive to the development of ways for humans and other animals to live together that are significantly less violent and much more sustainable than the current war condition. Furthermore, I consider a diplomatic approach that recognizes animals as non-radical others with their own ways of being in the world to be more promising in achieving this than proposals aimed at incorporating animals into political or governmental arrangements created by humans – this, for the simple reason that the latter will inevitably imply a continuation of the war against animals.¹³⁸ In this connection, it can potentially be productive to think of diplomacy as a generic practice or 'mode of existence' that not only exceeds the relationship between human polities, but also precedes politics as we have come to understand it.¹³⁹ Against this background, I strongly encourage other scholars to further explore the possibility of interspecies diplomacy – this, in whatever form and not necessarily limited to those discussed in this essay – and how it can be translated into reality.

Beyond broadening the scope of DS to incorporate human-animal relations, this essay speaks also to the more general problematic of animals and/in the study of international relations. In this connection, if the presence of animals within all conventional IR domains is recognized,¹⁴⁰ then how we develop and conduct our studies should in my view be informed by a key premise underpinning the present essay – namely, a conception of animals as agential subjects whose separate wills, interests and ways of being should be recognized and taken seriously. While this certainly implies a more-than-human conception of international relations, it also implies a conception of animals (human *and* non-human) as being something more than 'actants' within a Latourian scheme of things (as hinted at by Leira and Neumann and seemingly embraced by Constantinou and Opondo).¹⁴¹ If one accepts that animals have consciousness and are sentient, then that should imply relating to them differently than non-animal living beings and non-living things both as interlocutors in diplomacy, and as beings within the context of international relations more generally. And, if conceiving of animals as agential subjects in this context should require efforts at 'seeing the world from the point of view of cats, cows and lions' and perhaps even 'communicating with them',¹⁴² then why not face up to rather than escape the epistemological and methodological challenges involved?

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