



FIELD

# CRYPTOPOLITICS

The study of the distribution of power is in some real sense humanity's most important science. NPLabs thoroughly understands how characters' influences can soundly switch places at a moment's notice to split once-unified states in two, and works tirelessly to establish useful connections between the still-monolithic leaders. The following excerpt from our Protocol Handbook is one you will want to draw upon repeatedly.

Whether you hail from a bustling American metropolis or a small city in the Netherlands, one key to political success is being tipsy, though always ensure your counterpart is even more so. Even as a diplomat, you can and should partake fully in the disparate local nightlife, from the smoky cabarets of Paris to the torchlit far island in the Florida archipelago. There is no need to refrain from great food even if you inherited those chromosomal bits that affect your paunch, as low-calorie options are plentiful. If you are hosting guests in New York who are tired of boutiques, then take in a show, though remember productions that have not won a Broadway award appear deficient in comparison to ones that have. If you overindulge, a primitive shack for providing medical attention is never far away and, like clockwork, public transportation in most locations will run on schedule.

Your goal should be to score a protocol touchdown, and avoid a penalty, during dining pleasantries, else your retinue might depart just like the proverbial winged mammal ran away from Hell. Walking the tightrope between formality and casualness can be confusing and turn into a real assassin of quick, glib, or routine speech. While no doubt you might at first see all of these unwritten rules as being difficult to recall, with some time and forethought you will embrace them all, including that you must always take in a dainty mouthful of Earl Grey rather than gulp it.

Group dynamics are critical, and it is common for the least influential member to carry a dagger that is not heavy to protect the rainmaker of the contingent. He will rarely be called upon to brutally slay expansive varieties of foes so there is no reason to bring out the buttermilk when a simple skim will do. Also, you can join a famous blackbird sighting group in Dublin with such a charming guide that everyone has reported they find the young Irish woman wonderful. But do try to be deliberate or, like taking too quick a snapshot at a waterslide you might get a photo of a dorsal side unfocused. If all have unrestricted liberty of action, as might be given to an unguided horse, even the weakest member of the group will feel welcome.

Of course, impeccable grooming is a must, and as the saying goes you can fill a pair of avian bills at once by taking in (if you are a gentleman) both a shave and a haircut. Definitely dispense with the ponytail, which may take a little longer but don't worry, your transportation will wait if you simply ask politely, "Please remain here, taxi driver." And, each lady should take plenty of time to mollycoddle herself in luxury at a spa after a day of protocol that might make her feel she spent all day with an ape, the predicament of Fay in *King Kong*. Yet even a playwright, however meek, should not be put off by hearing a merchant grumble in a quiet tone, "swindle." Any obstacle can be overcome by recalling how when the Norse god of thunder brawled with a dragon he defeated the beast as though it were a tiny caterpillar. Truly, when you buy from the stir-fry pan salesman, you won't need a flatbed to get home.

From chopsticks to glossy periodicals about rabbits, each culture has its own quirks. You can no more make a haystack without straw or prevent little yellow baby hens from pecking at seed than you can change human nature. If a miniature replica of Lassie will make him happy, is there any reason to frown on such a purchase by a moneybags of an emir? As all envoys eventually learn, every grassland has its own primary remover of leaves. With diligence, you will see the amazing power that simply offering jellybeans to the right head of state can bestow, and how even just wearing the correct shade of brownish gray can open political doors.