

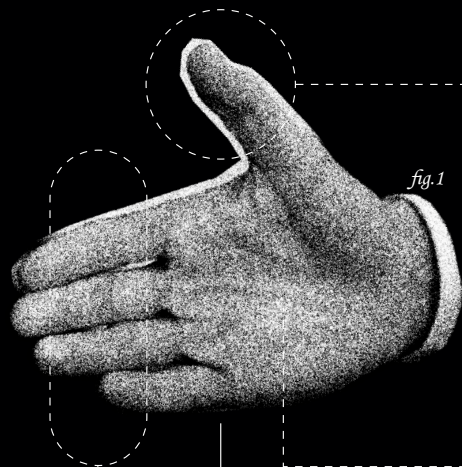
The Handshake is a ritual which, throughout the centuries, has built its own codes and set of rules. Rather than a banal habitus it is a (multifaced performative act) which, according to its enactment in different contexts, can assume a broad variety of meanings.

In political communication the handshake represents an essential part of the protocol. In fact, when it involves politicians, the handshake is a public event happening in front of an audience of journalists. Hence, politicians who are aware of the (nuances of body language) try to take advantage of the event in order to portray themselves in the public eye and convey a specific message to their public.

The gestures displayed in the fluid choreography of the handshake can be pinned down as discrete movements. The aim of this research is to investigate the (non-verbal rethorics) of those movements and interpret them as pre-arranged signs carrying significance.

This brief concertina reviews a series of handshakes between heads of state to unravel different typologies of greetings. Through comparisons, and the recognition of recurring patterns, the intention is to shed light on the possible (power dynamics) which from time to time are put in place between the two politicians.

The most neutral form of handshake consists in raising the right hand in front of the bust with the palm perpendicular to the ground.

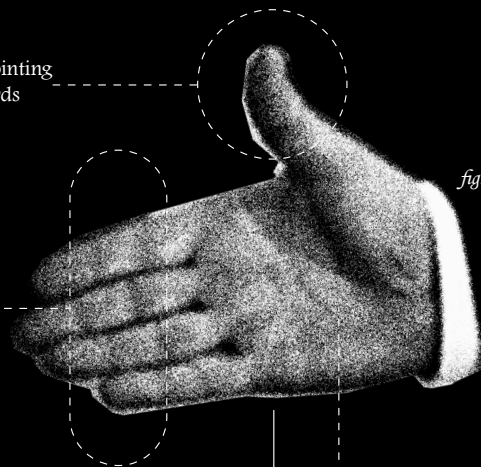
*fig. 1*

JUSTIN TRUDEAU

Tight fingers
pointing ahead

Thumb pointing
upwards

Palm perpendicular
to the ground

*fig. 2*

SCOTT MORRISON

The thumb points upwards whereas the other fingers are tight and point towards the interlocutor.

DONALD TRUMP

JUSTIN TRUDEAU

fig.3

FINGERS TIGHT / SPREAD

Approaching the handshake with the fingers wide spread reveals an intention to prevail on the interlocutor.

fig.4

RECEP TAYYIP ERDOGAN

VLADIMIR PUTIN

VLADIMIR PUTIN

BARACK OBAMA

fig.5

fig.6

ASCENDING / DISCENDING APPROACH

Approaching from the top down it is a position of control, whereas from below it is a subordinated approach.

URSULA VON DER LEYEN

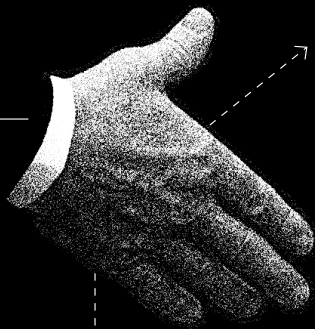
GIUSEPPE CONTE

DONALD TRUMP

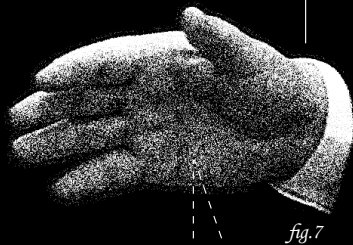
The rotation of the wrist changes
the balance of power.

XI JINPING

PALM DOWN / PALM UP APPROACH



Palm facing
upwards



Palm facing
downwards

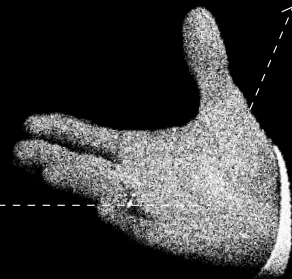
The palm facing downwards manifests dominance whereas the palm
facing upwards communicates deference.

fig. 8



Palm facing
downwards

Palm facing
upwards



DONALD TRUMP

EMMANUEL MACRON

PALM DOWN / PALM UP APPROACH

JOINING HANDS

The hands move towards one another until the palms are touching.

BENJAMIN NETANYAHU



Left hand
double grasping

ALBERTO FERNANDEZ

RECEP TAYYIP ERDOGAN

VIKTOR ORBAN



fig. 10

Thumbs meeting
specularly in the
hollow of the hand

Palms touching

JOINING THUMBS

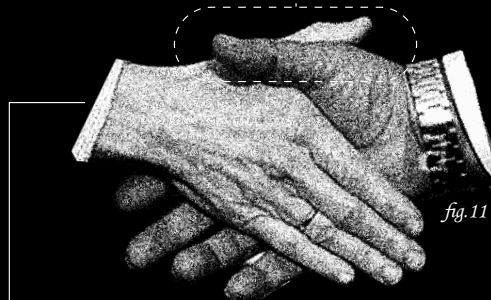


fig. 11

URSULA VON DER LEYEN

ISMET YILMAZ

SCOTT MORRISON

DONALD TRUMP



fig. 12

LEE HSIEN LOONG

SCOTT MORRISON



fig. 14

THE GRIP

When the hands meet the fingers close into a grip.
Then it usually follows a brief up and down movement.

THE GRIP

The person on the left shows the back of the hand closer to the
observer, visually overpowering the other person's hand.

ANGELA MERKEL

VLADIMIR PUTIN



fig. 13

DONALD TRUMP

VLADIMIR PUTIN

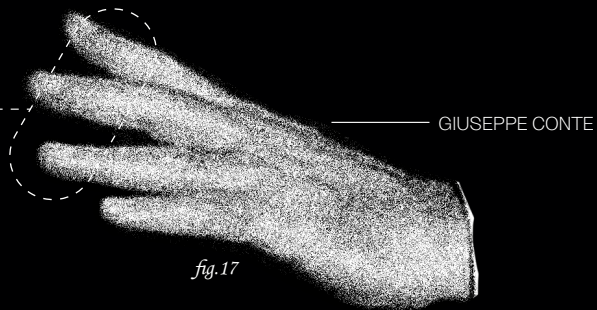
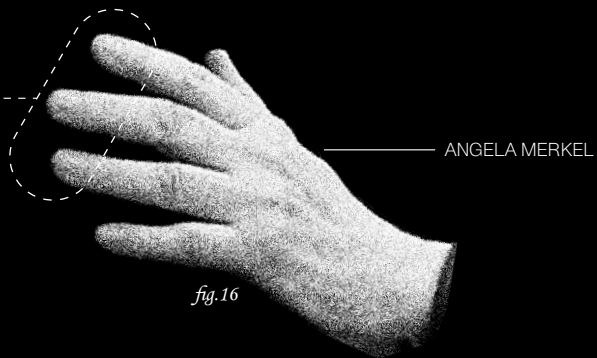


fig. 15

The left hand might play a key role in defining the power relationship established between the two people shaking hands.

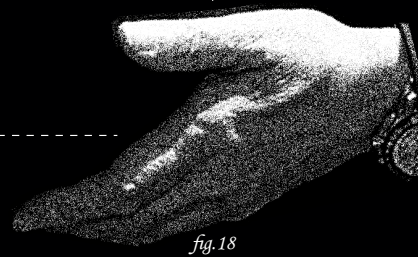
LEFT HAND ROLE

Left hand touching
the other person's shoulder

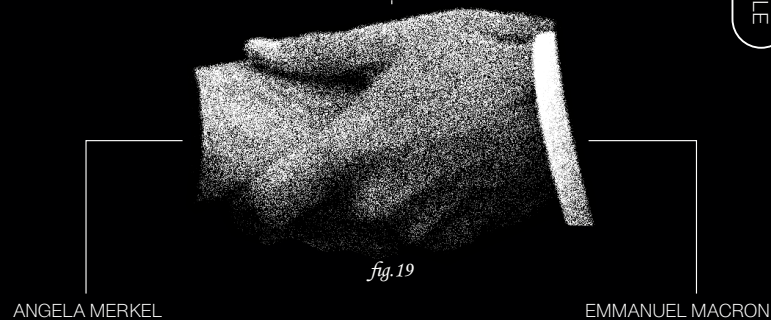


Left hand holding
the other person's elbow

SHINZO ABE



Left hand grasping
the other person's wrist



LEFT HAND ROLE

The left hand placed on the upper arm can be considerate a friendly gesture but also an attempt to exert authority.

It happens frequently that the upper arm grasp is employed by the person entering the handshake from the right, so they bypass the camera disadvantage.

The fingers curl around the upper arm increasing the grasp -----> and consequently the assertiveness

UPPER ARM GRASP

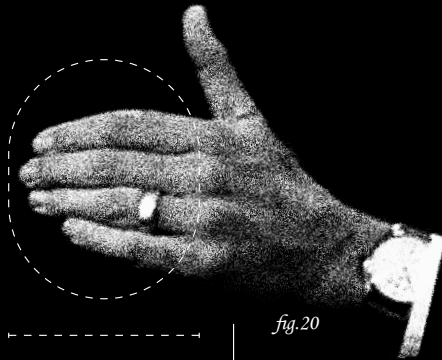


fig.20

JUSTIN TRUDEAU



fig.21

SCOTT MORRISON

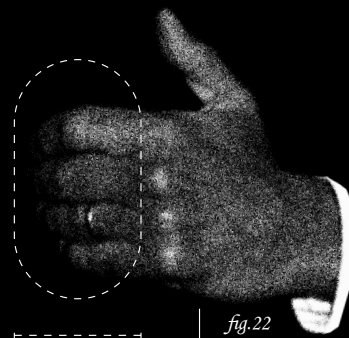


fig.22

EMMANUEL MACRON



fig.23

RECEP TAYYIP ERDOGAN

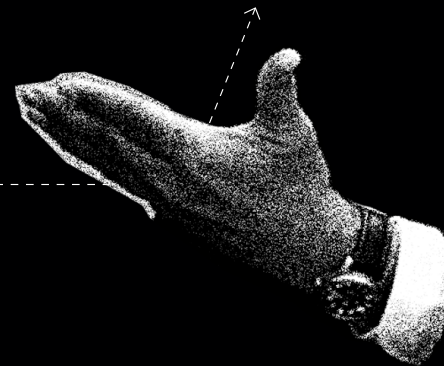
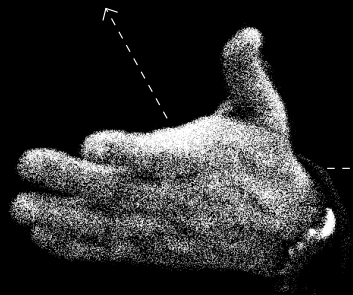
UPPER ARM GRASP

If not directly involved in the handshake, the left hand can still contribute to shape significances in the choreography of the greetings.

The left hand raised facing upwards is associated with the idea of supporting and sustaining

LEFT HAND TO SUSTAIN

LEFT HAND TO SUSTAIN



Left hand raised
with the palm
facing upwards

Firm grip

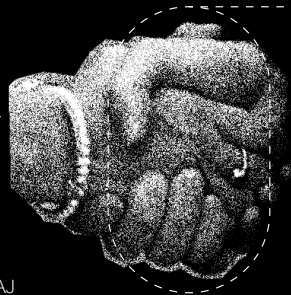


fig.24

SUSHMA SWARAJ

SHINZO ABE

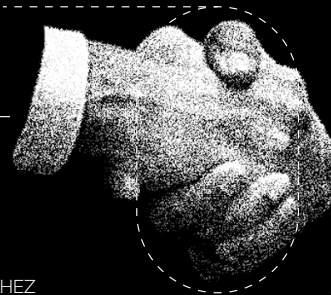


fig.25

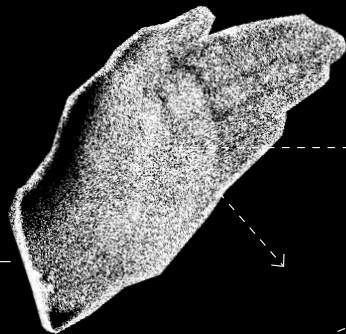
PEDRO SANCHEZ

ANDRES MANUEL LOPEZ OBRADOR

The left hand raised facing downwards is associated with the idea of limiting and stopping

The left hand facing downwards might be used sometimes to pat the other person's back of the hand too

LEFT HAND TO LIMIT



Left hand raised with the palm facing downwards

Palms parallel to the ground

fig. 26



NARENDRA MODI

DONALD TRUMP

LEFT HAND TO LIMIT

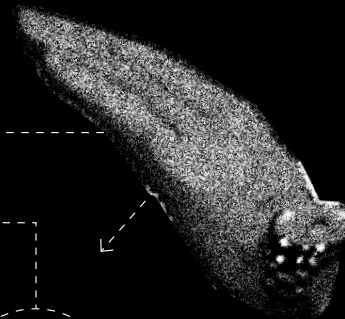
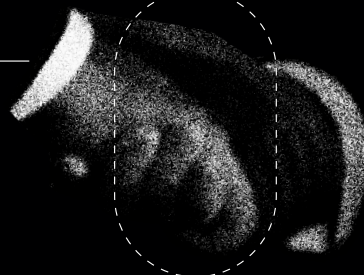


fig. 27

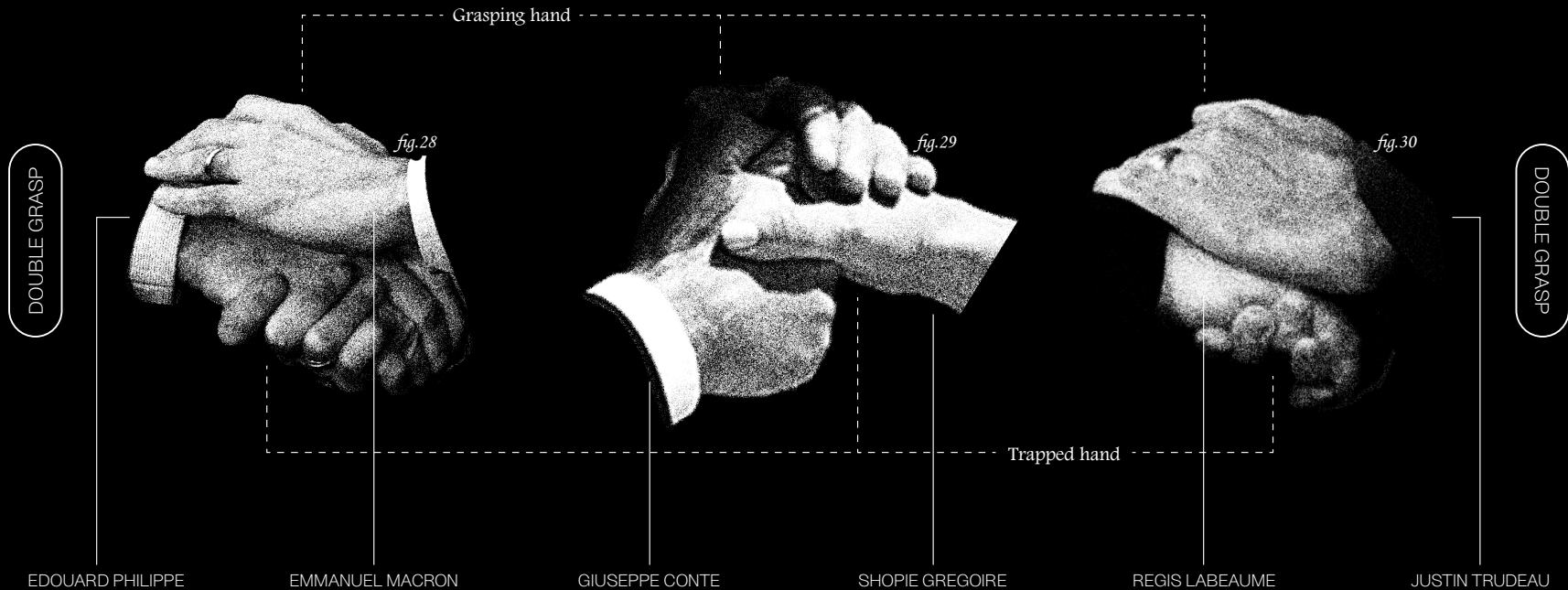


NICOLAS MADURO

RECEP TAYYIP ERDOGAN

The left hand is often used to double clasp the other person's hand.
The double grasp traps the handshake and it limits the movement.

The double grasp double can be seen as a expression of esteem and affection
but also to overpower the interlocutor and re-assert control.



In several occasions Trump has shown a close attention to the nuances of the body language. In particular, there is sequence of gestures he employed in many cases.

JAIR BOLSONARO

DONALD TRUMP

TRUMP'S MANOEUVRE

TRUMP'S MANOEUVRE

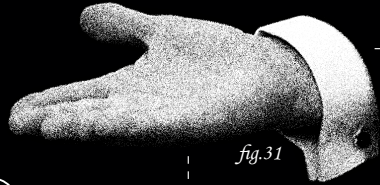


fig.31

Palm facing upwards

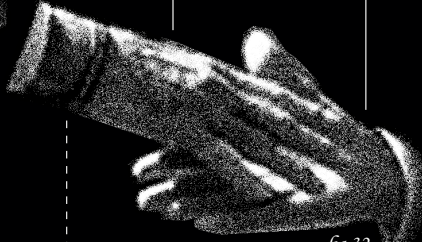


fig.32

Hand approaching from the top down



fig.33

BORIS JOHNSON



fig.34

Patting hand

SHINZO ABE

A —He offers his hand with the palm facing upwards.

B —The counterpart join the handshake from the top down.

C —He firmly grips and squeezes the other person's hand.

D —He pats the back of the hand and he pulls it towards himself.

Commonly referred as the 'homie handshake', it consists in rotating the palms so the fingers are clapping each other's thumbs.

DONALD TRUMP

SHINZO ABE

The 'homie handshake' is an informal greeting and it is generally considered a sign of companionship.

HOMIE HANDSHAKE

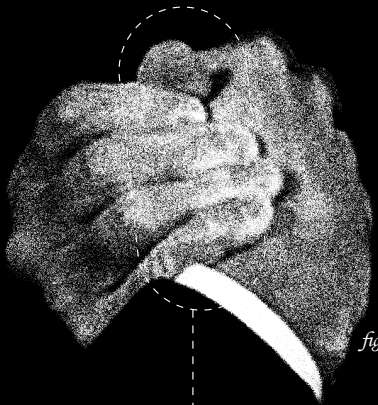


fig.35

Fingers clapping the thumb

DONALD TRUMP

EMMANUEL MACRON



fig.36

Left hand reinforcing the handshake



fig.37

GIUSEPPE CONTE

ISAIAS AFWERKI

HOMIE HANDSHAKE

THE HUG

VERA GUREVICH



VLADIMIR PUTIN

EMMANUEL MACRON



ALBERTO FERNANDEZ

The hug is the most confidential form of greeting. It is considerate very intimate and friendly but it might also be interpret as an invasion of the personal space.

THE HUG

fig.39

The 'winner's hand raised' consists in grasping the hand of the other person and raising it above the head. It is a gesture that is always addressed to an audience.

It is a gesture associated with the sport's sphere, and it means victory. More in general it communicates a profound understanding and appreciation.

WINNER'S HAND RAISED



fig.40

BENJAMIN NETANYAHU

NARENDRA MODI

WINNER'S HAND RAISED



fig.41

CLAUDIA SHEINBAUM

ANDRES MANUEL LOPEZ OBRADOR

TABLE OF THE IMAGES

fig.1 Justin Trudeau offers his hand to Alberta Premier Jason Kenney, Ottawa 2/05/2019

fig.2 Scott Morrison offers his hand to Gladys Berejiklian (Premier of New South Wales), Sydney 14/03/2020

fig.3 Justin Trudeau (R) & Donald Trump (L), White House, Washington, 13/02/2017

fig.4 Vladimir Putin (R) offers his hand to Recep Tayyip Erdogan (R), Osaka 29/06/2019

fig.5 Vladimir Putin (L) & Barack Obama (R), New York 28/09/2015

fig.6 Ursula von der Leyen (L) & Giuseppe Conte (R), Brussels 4/02/2020

fig.7 Xi Jinping (R) & Donald Trump (L), Beijing 9/11/2017

fig.8 Emmanuel Macron (R) & Donald Trump (L), La Malbaie in Quebec 8/06/2018

fig.9 Alberto Fernandez (L) & Benjamin Netanyahu (R), Jerusalem 24/01/2020

fig.10 Recep Tayyip Erdogan (L) & Viktor Orban (R), Budapest 8/10/2019

fig.11 Ursula von der Leyen (L) & Ismet Yilmaz (R) (Turkish Defense Minister), Incirlik in Turkey 21/01/2016

fig.12 Scott Morrison (L) & Donald Trump (R), Buenos Aires 30/11/2018

fig.13 Angela Merkel (L) & Vladimir Putin (R), Sochi 2/05/2017

fig.14 Scott Morrison (L) & Lee Hsien Loong (R) (Premier of Singapore), Singapore 7/07/2019

fig.15 Donald Trump (L) & Vladimir Putin (R), Helsinki 16/07/2016

fig.16 Angela Merkel places her hand on Emmanuel Macron's arm, Berlin 15/05/2017

fig.17 Giuseppe Conte places his hand on Khalifa Haftar's shoulder (Libyan military commander), Palermo 12/11/2018

fig.18 Shinzo Abe holds Thomas Johnson's elbow (his professor at University of Southern California), Los Angeles, 2/05/2015

fig.19 Emmanuel Macron (R) & Angela Merkel (L), Compiègne (northern France), 10/11/2018

fig.20 Justin Trudeau places his hand on John McCallum's arm, Ottawa 13/03/2017

fig.21 Scott Morrison places his hand on Josh Frydenberg's arm (Minister of Environment), Canberra 23/08/2018

fig.22 Emmanuel Macron places his hand on Benjamin Netanyahu's arm, Paris 5/06/2018

fig.23 Recep Tayyip Erdogan places his hand on Khaled Mashals arm (Chairman of the Hamas Political Bureau), Jerusalem 26/11/2012

fig.24 Shinzo Abe (R) & Sushma Swaraj (L) (Indian External Affairs Minister), Tokyo 28/03/2018

fig.25 Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador (R) & Pedro Sanchez (L), Mexico City 16/01/2019

fig.26 Narendra Modi (L) & Donald Trump(R), Biarritz in France 26/08/2019

fig.27 Recep Tayyip Erdogan (R) & Nicolas Maduro (L) (President of Venezuela), Caracas 2/12/2018

fig.28 Emmanuel Macron (R) & Edouard Philippe (mayor of Le Havre), Saint-Nazaire, western France, 1/02/2016

fig.29 Giuseppe Conte (L) & Shopie Gregoire Tradeau (R), La Malbaie in Quebec 8/06/2018

fig.30 Justin Trudeau (R) & Regis Labeaume (L) (Quebec City mayor), Quebec City 19/08/2019

fig.31 Donald Trump offers his hand to Justin Trudeau, White House, Washington 13/02/2017

fig.32 Jair Bolsonaro (L)& Donald Trump (R), White House, Washington 22/03/2019

fig.33 Boris Johnson (L) & Donald Trump (R), White House, Washington 25/09/2018

fig.34 Donald Trump (R) & Shinzo Abe (L), White House, Washington 5/11/2017

fig.35 Emmanuel Macron (L) & Donald Trump (R), White House, Washington, 24/04/2018

fig.36 Shinzo Abe (R) & Donald Trump (L), White House, Washington 10/02/2017

fig.37 Giuseppe Conte (R) & Isaias Afwerki (L), Asmara 12/10/2018

fig.38 Vladimir Putin & Vera Gurevich (his teacher), Moscow 9/05/2019

fig.39 Alberto Fernandez & Emmanuel Macron, Paris 5/02/2020

fig.40 Narendra Modi (R) & Benjamin Netanyahu (L), New Delhi 14/01/2018

fig.41 Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador (R) & Claudia Sheinbaum(L) (Head of Government of Mexico City), Mexico City 13/11/2019