Foreign policy in an age of globalization

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Introduction

Foreign policy as we know it today emerged with the ministry of foreign affairs (MFA) in the 18th century. Although factors such as the merging of the diplomatic and consular corps with the MFA from the first decades of the 20th century onwards, the growth in the number and size of state agencies and the proliferation of international organizations have changed foreign policy-making, foreign policy has kept its coherence as an object of study. The goal of this chapter is to think through the extent to which globalization is changing foreign policy. In order to do so, I draw on literatures on the state and on diplomacy. Globalization is understood as an intensification of relations between an increasing number of polities, both in the sense that relations become denser and in the sense that the speed of interaction increases. As with internationalization before it, this process cannot fail to challenge the importance of foreign ministries. The chapter ends with a discussion of how foreign ministries strike back by orchestrating the action of other types of entities. What takes place in the area of foreign policy is part of a wider shift in state practices, away from governing directly towards governing from afar. Foreign ministries join other parts of the state apparatus in governing *through* other state and also non-state entities.<xen>[1]</xen>

The baseline

In order to discuss the transforming force of globalization on foreign policy, we need a conceptualization of foreign policy that may serve as a base for comparison. Any policy may be 'foreign' in the sense that it aims to have an effect on something which is held to exist primarily outside 'our' political and legal sphere, however defined. There is a basic theoretical problem with using the term in this sense, however, and it is to do with the difference between hermeneutical terms (terms used in the social context analysed) and analytical terms (terms foreign to that context but useful to the analyst). In small-scale societies, as well as in large-

scale pre-modern societies, there is little to remind us of such a conceptual division between domestic and foreign. That division is dependent on a certain categorization of the world which only emerged in Europe in the 16th and 17th centuries (Walker, 1992) The principle of sovereignty which emerged between territorially defined entities at that time only came to be expressed in institutionalized social practices at the end of the 18th century. During the late 17th and most of the 18th century, it was not yet clear whether things were foreign in the older sense of falling outside the actual grasp of the king, or whether it was foreign in the sense of falling on the other side of a territorial border.

Understood as a social phenomenon, foreign policy emerged simultaneously with foreign ministries (Neumann 2007a; Leira, forthcoming). The emergence of foreign ministries in Europe was part and parcel of a professionalization of policy-making overall. Another apposite element here was the codification of diplomacy which took place at the Congress of Vienna. After the Napoleonic wars, any political phenomenon had to be institutionally categorized as being either domestic or foreign. By the end of the 19th century, the role of the court in decision-making, which had remained an important factor in policy-making throughout the century, was seriously weakened. This was also the time when European states began to gather the diplomatic corps, the consular corps and the foreign ministries in one institution, called the foreign service. What we see today as the normal division between foreign and domestic policy is but a century old.

The knowledge production of the state during high modernity was perhaps best captured by Weber in his ideal type of bureaucracy. Weber fashioned the ideal type in a series of methodological articles written at the very beginning of the 20th century. As he summarized the key idea in his posthumously published *Economy and Society*,

> For the purposes of a typological scientific analysis it is convenient to treat all irrational, affectually determined elements of behavior as factors of deviation from a conceptually pure type of rational action. […] in analyzing a political or military campaign it is convenient to determine in the first place what would have been a rational course, given the ends of the participants and adequate knowledge of all the circumstances. Only in this way is it possible to assess the causal significance of irrational factors as accounting for the deviations from this type. The construction of a purely rational course of action in such cases serves the sociologist as a type (ideal type) which has the merit of clear understandability and lack of ambiguity. By comparison with this it is possible to understand the ways in which actual action is influenced by irrational factors of all sorts, such as affects and errors, in that they account for deviation from the line of conduct which would be expected on the

> hypothesis that the action were purely rational. (Weber [1904–1905], 1968, vol. I, p.6)

Weber immediately goes on to specify that rationality is what we may call an analytical term, that is fashioned after the fact, for a scientific purpose, and not what we referred to above as hermeneutical terms. I note this here as a reminder of the absolute irrelevance of the ideal type to any actually existing social constellation as anything other than an analytical tool. A Weberian bureaucracy never existed. The reason why I evoke it here is simply as an ideal-type baseline of how state policy – including foreign policy – was ideally (as opposed to actually) made during high modernity. A bureaucratized foreign policy should, at the very least, be made by a leadership distinct from the bureaucracy implementing it, it should act in uniform fashion in all events and it should follow written routines.

The challenge to the existing institutional set-up

Practitioners working in diplomatic services and scholars tend to agree that Weber's ideal type has come under severe pressure. The state is a polity based on a particular territorial mode of organization. Weber saw it as a claimed monopoly on the use of physical force. Schumpeter saw it as a claimed monopoly on taxation. Durkheim saw it as a nexus of domination between a power elite and a spatially bounded society. These are all conceptualizations of a spatially defined area that at any given time remains the same, and that is clearly delineated. The delineations may vary over time and they may at any given time be contested, but the principle of delineation remains uncontested. By contrast, globalization inherently involves deterritorialization, hence it is an *ipso facto* challenge to the state.

The newness of globalization cannot be linked to space alone, however. Deterritorialization is but one element of it; globalization entails two more crucial factors in addition to space. The first of these is time. The speed with which information and, to a slightly lesser degree, material objects can travel is rapidly increasing. The second factor is, to borrow a term from John Ruggie (1993), density. The density of flows of everything from persons (for example tourism, migration) to information (for example TV programmes, homepages on the internet) to goods is higher than ever. True, in the late 19th century the flow of goods was intense and increasing rapidly, but the relative flows of persons and information were limited. Furthermore, the total global population was significantly lower (something in the order of one in every ten human beings who has ever lived has done so in

the post-World War II period), so in absolute terms the flows of persons and goods are absolutely unprecedented. This density has effects that are not only quantitative, but also qualitative, for it challenges the very 'boundedness' of the state. A polity may only be called bounded if a set of boundaries exists between that polity and other polities that is important in a sufficient number of contexts. Therefore, there exists a limit to how large the flows of information and material objects may be perceived to be before the polity is no longer thought of as bounded. Once the density of communication exceeds this threshold, the polity is no longer clearly territorialized.

The flow of immigrants into the United States is substantial, as is the flow of information and material objects in and out of that state. The US government has reacted by thinking about territorialization in a new way. For example, it is taxing certain goods and services at the source and insisting on American jurisdiction over companies that are noted on American stock exchanges, regardless of their physical location. The US government is also imposing a certain number of deterritorialized practices, such as email surveillance. We would, nonetheless, hardly conclude that the United States is a deterritorialized state. But the changes are of such a magnitude and are increasing at such a pace that we may easily conceive of a situation in which the 'density threshold' is perceived to be surpassed. This clearly has implications for foreign policy.

Globalization is a term for how space, time and the relationship between them reconfigures the world in which foreign policy is made, and puts the bureaucratic mode of knowledge production under heavy pressure. Time is compressed and, consequently, it takes more political energy to maintain the importance of space. Globalization thus understood is a continuation of internationalization, a term for how the centralization of foreign policy in each state went together with an increase in relations between them. Historically, internationalization emerged in tandem with foreign policy, as a principle that continuously threatened to undermine the categorization of policy into domestic and foreign. Institutionalization was already connected with intensifications of time and density. New technologies played a key role (for example the telegraph, the wire, the telephone). Internationalization eventually brought about key changes, including mounting pressure for state accountability, widening in state recruitment patterns and the emergence of international organizations. It is instructive to briefly consider how foreign policy was changed by these developments because it suggests ways in which foreign policy is challenged by globalization as well.

Where accountability is concerned, the attempts of parliaments to survey and control foreign policy is paramount. These attempts are as old as foreign policy itself. Following tentative attempts within revolutionary France, the first parliamentary committee on foreign affairs emerged in the United States in the 1820s, followed by Great Britain, until, in the 20th century, parliaments everywhere had foreign committees. Concurrently, we have seen increased interest in foreign policy from the press and the media. The advent of international organizations, which began with functional organizations in the second half of the 19th century, continued with the founding of the League of Nations, only to multiply after World War II. It fell to foreign ministries to man the offices of the League, and they generally did so by drawing on people from their own ranks. Manning of international organizations continues to happen by delegation from and with the guidance of foreign ministries (Weiss, 1975).

With globalization, there has been further increase in pressure concerning accountability, widening in recruitment patterns and international organizations. The pressure for accountability has not first and foremost taken the form of further calls for parliamentarian control, although there is patchy movement in this direction. The key change seems to concern relations with the media. Half a century ago, Marshall McLuhan pointed out that compression in time and space put speed of information at a premium and changed our ways of understanding the world: '[when] a new technology extends one or more of our senses outside us into the social world, then new ratios among all of our senses will occur in that particular culture. It is comparable to what happens when a new note is added to a melody' (McLuhan, 1962, 41).

It is journalists who are the principal composers of globalization. Gone are the days when journalists respectfully approached foreign ministries in the hope of picking up some treasured comment. Currently, journalists, diplomats and politicians are mutually dependent on one another. *Ceteris paribus,* it is the journalists that set the pace by breaking the news, and the others who react. In the Norwegian foreign ministry, morning meetings address the question of how to respond to headline news. Furthermore, while the media regularly decide to carry a story for days in a row, and so succeed in forcing the ministry into a defensive posture, the reverse is rarely the case. We should, of course, not totalize this trend. Any foreign ministry may still withhold information from the media that it deems to be particularly sensitive, and will continue to do so. During the Thatcher years, the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office was able to play favourites with the journalists, and often denied access to overtly critical journalists to its daily briefings. Still, the trend remains clear and

ubiquitous; the level of access for journalists which is considered ‘normal’ by all parties is rising. All this happens in the name of transparency. This norm is part and parcel of the state-society model that is presently spreading across the globe, which means that as long as ministries and politicians do not take active measures to halt or reverse the trend it is set to continue.

Since Americans like Benjamin Franklin and Tom Paine played a role in internationalization by casting themselves as diplomats of mankind, much has been made of the importance of ‘world society’ and ‘world opinion’. While world opinion is a social fact, it remains unclear how it should be conceptualized. Furthermore, it is not evident to what degree world opinion impinges on foreign policy outcomes. National public opinions are multifaceted and blurry as well, and we have endless examples of how political outcomes may run against them, but that does not stop them from acting as very real parts of any politician’s equation. For makers of foreign policy, who deal in changing peoples’ impressions of countries and of events, world opinion is of importance and it looms larger as space is compressed (for a particularly informative practitioner’s view, see Dickie, 2004).

Globalization means that the question of information becomes a question of proliferating target groups. Together, politicians, spin doctors and diplomats conduct public diplomacy, once the curious preserve of Soviet diplomats. It primarily targets domestic media, but there are other targets as well. More resources are being spent on entertaining foreign journalists. The Canadian innovation of staging town hall meetings has begun to spread. Utilizing interactive arenas for discussing foreign policy on and off the internet is increasingly common and expected. Since it is hard to see how internet discussions could be limited to citizens, the nature of that medium may further open up space for non-citizen voices and so further blur the distinction between citizens and foreign nationals. Malleable geographical boundaries go together with malleable social boundaries. Briefly, the deepening and widening of accountability means that the importance of impression management has increased.

The proliferation

Globalization is characterized by a proliferation in the number of and kinds of agents that are pertinent to the making of foreign policy. If transcendence of boundaries is an effect of globalization, then the states system must increasingly be seen as only one part of the global political system. It follows that the state’s personnel must sooner or later take cognizance of

the other kinds of polities that exist within the system. If negotiation and, more widely, mediation is a key to foreign policy, then the work of the state's diplomats increasingly involves mediating between a wider slate of agents than states. Diplomats used to mediate across state boundaries, but are now increasingly mediating across a plethora of different social and political boundaries. The domestic/foreign distinction is a correlate of state boundaries. If then state boundaries are relativized, so too is the domestic/foreign distinction. The distinction is increasingly hard to uphold, and it is becoming less relevant in an increasing number of contexts.

The fact that diplomacy involves different kinds of agents is not new, and students of foreign policy have covered this terrain well. Beginning in the late 1960s, the 'comparative foreign policy' school detailed the challenge that other ministries posed to diplomatic services (Rosenau, 1969; Hermann et al., 1987). Some 20 years later, a small set of literature on sub-state diplomacy began to emerge (Michelmann and Soldatos, 1990; Hocking, 1993; Neumann, 2002). What has drawn less attention is that, with increased density in international affairs and more hybridization, there is an increasing number of groups that look like functional equivalents of foreign ministries. International agency networks play an ever more important role (Keck and Sikkink, 1998). NGOs are evolving their own corps of quasi-diplomats. So are transnational corporations (Stopford and Strange, 1991). Typically, however, the groups of people outside the diplomatic services that carry out equivalent functions do not handle the full gamut of diplomatic hese tasks. If we turn to the literature on diplomacy for guidance about foreign policy functions (in the sense of tasks), they are often said to be three: information gathering, negotiation and communication (Wight, 1977, 115–117).<xen>[2]</xen> For example, any sizeable transnational firm will have people working on information gathering and communication as well as employing negotiators, but typically these are different people. Again, travel bureaus will have offices overseas representing them, but the people working there will be different from those who do their information gathering and their negotiation. If we look the functions taken together, it is still only MFAs that do them all.

The fact that foreign ministries are still alone in fulfilling the functions of foreign policy tells us nothing about the impact of globalization on how those functions are being fulfilled, however. I would argue that the key way in which foreign policy decision-making generally, and MFAs specifically, have been changed by globalization lies exactly in the way these functions are now carried out by the state apparatus.<xen>[3]</xen>

The state response

The state apparatus was itself changed by internationalization. Internationalization meant that ever newer parts of the state apparatus began to undertake tasks of a transnational character. This had three immediate consequences. First, and this had already happened in the 1940s, there was an explosion in so-called summit diplomacy. Top politicians availed themselves of the shrinking of space and time to take foreign policy matters in their own hands. By rushing things to the top, summit diplomacy may serve as an example of how internationalization opened up possibilities (Dunn, 1996). A second consequence, which caught the attention of scholars from the late 1960s onwards, was the increase in international activity by ministries other than those of foreign affairs and defence. By the millennium, most Western ministries had an international department. A third consequence, much noticed in the 1990s, was that, particularly throughout the EU, prime minister's offices (PMOs) played an increasingly important role in the shaping of foreign policy.<xen>[4]</xen> This was a logical consequence of the involvement of different ministries, a factor that begged for coordination. Since the role of other ministries vis-à-vis MFAs proved too strong for the MFAs to coordinate on their own, a new coordinating entity for foreign policy emerged – the PMOs.

Foreign ministries were slow to adapt to these new trends. As demonstrated by the comparative foreign policy literature, the main impulse seems to have been that MFAs wished for the entire phenomenon simply to go away. At least in the case of some states, MFAs gambled that their prestige and experience would make them indispensable. This turned out to have been a misplaced gamble, as other ministries simply persisted in carrying out business without necessarily consulting the MFAs.

To generalize, MFAs only really acknowledged the pervasive importance of globalization during the late 1990s (witness, for example, how the need to acknowledge globalization is not a key topic in *any* of the analyses of 12 national MFAs worldwide in Hocking, 1999). As seen from the MFAs, the key challenge was not only to concede the growing importance of other agents in foreign policy decision-making, but also to forge strategies to secure the MFAs as nodes in the networks of decision-making. In order to do that, MFAs had to ensure that the information they could provide remained of paramount importance for how these other agents defined their environment. Politicians in charge of foreign ministries as well as diplomats began to grasp that, in order to maintain a key role in foreign policy decision-making, they had to change *their own* organizations. Two principles

of organization stood out as particularly ripe for rethinking; one was MFA hierarchy, the other the basic *modus operandi*.

Hierarchy is a cherished principle of foreign policy-making, and in a number of ways, it is unavoidable. Clear communication spells coordination, and coordination spells some kind of hierarchy. The stronger the hierarchy, the more cumbersome the chain of command and the longer the reaction time. This means that globalization, which compresses time, is a direct challenge to hierarchy. New technologies play a dual role. On the one hand, these technologies have contributed to the density of flows that put hierarchy under attack. On the other hand, they favour hierarchy – emails may be used for commands and electronic texts make it easier for the top of the hierarchy to trim information right before it is released. As seen from the MFAs, the question was how to retain a key role, and the answer was to network their own organizations in order to increase the number of interfaces with other agents. This is being done by empowering employees to answer a wide range of questions from the outside and to take a wide range of new initiatives with relatively less preparatory work than before. This did not change the principle of hierarchy in any way – people who are out of line still get slapped down and the insubordinate are disciplined just as they used to be – but the subject matter to which hierarchy is applied shrunk dramatically. If an organization may speak with a thousand voices on a number of issues on which it used to be able to speak with only one, it spells increased action capacity. The network organization is simply a much more efficient model for fulfilling the key foreign policy function of information collection and dissemination under the conditions created by globalization than is the old megaphone model. Whereas the stirrings of such a change may be observed in a number of MFAs, it is of course hampered, first, by the resistance of senior diplomats, whose turn it is to be on top of old-fashioned hierarchical lines, to step aside in favour of the new principle of the network organization and, secondly, by the hierarchical bent of the broader foreign policy-making context. The more hierarchical the state in question, the less easy for its MFA to respond to globalization by introducing networked organization.

A second consequence stemming from the range of polities is a proliferation of sources of information. As a result, the public struggle for defining reality intensified and foreign ministries were put at a disadvantage relative to their previous situation, where their information was often better and often inscribed with more authority than, say, press information or information from the ministry of transportation. Since journalists specialize in speed, diplomats have lost out on that particular score at least since the advent of the telegraph

in the 1840s (Nickels, 2003). MFAs used to compensate for that by co-opting journalists and academics and furnishing them with authoritative information – authoritative because it came from the MFAs. The advent of globalization partly destroyed this bargain, since the importance of speed increased and the relative position of the MFAs weakened in such a degree that its information did not remain effortlessly authoritative. The Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) was the first to implement the answer to this, namely to change its *modus operandi* from being reactive to events to being pro-active. There was organizational innovation to inform Canadian society, including town hall meetings. There were all kinds of exchange with other providers of information: scholarships for journalists and academics to spend time at DFAIT, swapping of personnel with other MFAs, planting own personnel in NGOs, and recruiting personnel from NGOs (Canada's success with the landmine ban was partly due to the fact that DFAIT recruited activists like Mark Lawson to work in their ranks). When, on Robin Cook's behest, the UK Foreign Office recruited Amnesty International's former parliamentary officer to advise on human rights and a member of Save the Children to work on the rights of children, Cook went from soliciting advice to headhunting people. Cook also seconded people from the Foreign Office's own human-rights department to Article 19 and to the Minority Rights Group (*The Economist*, 6 March 1999). When Bernard Kouchner became foreign minister of France, he repeated the move (an easy one for him to make, coming as he did from *Medicins sans frontièrs*). At present, we find these practices, at least in embryonic form, in most Western MFAs. Here again, there is resistance from senior diplomats. Being pro-active means acknowledging to the competition that you are not indispensable. Therefore a prerequisite for pro-activeness is recognition of other social groups as something more than passive takers. Reaching out is, therefore, a move that acknowledges the competition propelled forward by globalization. It is not a move that comes easily to a generation of foreign ministry personnel that were juniors when MFAs gambled that they could simply ignore the stirrings of internationalization by pretending it did not exist.

Conclusion

Internationalization brought higher density of state-to-state relations; globalization brought a further increase in speed and a plethora of other agents with an interest in foreign policy-making. The traditional key agents, the MFAs, are answering by changing their organizations into networked ones. What new kind of foreign policy decision-making does that make for? If

there is an overall logic to the shift in political rationality under conditions of globalization, it is to do with a change from direct to indirect rule. There has been a move from direct to indirect governing, and indirect governing increasingly involves objects that are to be found beyond the boundaries of the state whose foreign policy tries to govern them. More is left to individuals, and control is growing more indirect, with direct control being increasingly reserved for after-the-fact situations when indirect control has turned out to be too soft to secure the desired result (Neumann and Sending, 2010). This logic is working its way into foreign policy-making as well. Consider the training of foreign ministry personnel to deal more independently with other kinds of agents. It hangs on indirect control being effective. By training its employees well in advance, the top of the organization sees to it that the answers given when the top does not listen will be within acceptable parameters. Direct control kicks in when this indirect strategy does not work out. Indirect rule also kicks in where pro-activeness is concerned. It is about orchestrating social situations in advance, in the hope that the outcome will be more favourable than it would otherwise have been. By employing indirect means, one may save the use of more direct means for a later point. Governing takes place from afar. But if one wants to govern from afar, then one needs to be far-sighted. A plan for the long haul is needed in order to consider different outcomes, to listen to second opinions and to have contingency plans. All this changes the faces of foreign policy. Foreign ministries join other parts of the state apparatus in governing through other state and also non-state entities.

The shift in performing policy away from trying directly towards governing from afar is accompanied by a shift in the very meaning of the term foreign policy. Increasingly, foreign policy does not seem to refer to politics happening elsewhere, but to policy which involves different non-domestic agents and so call for MFA orchestration. This shift of meaning poses a challenge to linguistic practices which still presuppose that foreign policy is state policy oriented towards the outside of the state. States may not be able to monopolize the term foreign policy for much longer.

<en-group type=“endnotes”>

Notes

<en><label>1</label> I should like to thank Gunther Hellmann, Knud Erik Jørgensen and other participants at the workshop on changing foreign policies in Frankfurt, 1–4 July 2010, for their comments.</en>

<en><label>2</label> Bull (1977, 171–172) adds ‘minimisation of the effects of friction’ and ‘symbolising the existence of the society of states’; this can be called smoothing and representation.</en>

<en><label>3</label> In previous work (Neumann, 2007b) I have argued that, when left to their own devices, for reasons that are to do with how the work has been set up and how diplomats see themselves and their role in foreign policy-making, diplomats will produce nothing new. The issue here is different, namely how MFAs change. Until convinced otherwise, my hypothesis remains that it is the MFAs politicians who engender change.</en>

<en><label>4</label> Yet another factor, specific to the EU, was the increasing importance of the EU itself for national foreign policy-making. That is a topic which will not be further considered here, but see Hocking and Spence (2006).

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