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The Emergence of Foreign Policy

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International relations scholarship typically treats foreign policy as a taken-for-granted analytical concept. It assumes either that all historical polities have foreign policies or that foreign policy originates in seventeenth-century Europe with the separation between the "inside" and "outside" of the state. It generally holds that foreign policy differs in essential ways from other kinds of policy, such as carrying with it a special need for secrecy. I argue against this view. The difference between "foreign" and "domestic" policy results from specific political processes; secrecy begat foreign policy. Growing domestic differentiation between state and civil society in the eighteenth century—articulated through a relatively free press operating in a nascent public sphere—enabled the emergence of foreign policy as a practical concept. The concept served to delimit the legitimate sphere of political discourse from the exclusive, executive sphere of king and cabinet. I explore these processes in Britain and France, important cases with different trajectories, one of reform, the other of revolution. Historicizing foreign policy like this serves to denaturalize the separation between different forms of policy, as well as the necessity of secrecy. Doing so cautions against the uncritical application of abstract analytical terms across time and space. *jel* code: historical international relations foreign policy conceptual analysis

Foreign policy must be made in the foreign office. It cannot be left to fools like Fleet Street editors, back-bench MPs, and Cabinet Ministers

—Sir Humphrey Appleby[1]

The Emergence of Foreign Policy

From Wilson's fourteen points, to claims that politics should "stop at the water's edge," to controversy over Wikileaks' release of classified US government cables, the last century has seen recurrent debate over the proper relationship between democracy and secrecy in foreign policy. On the one hand, activists and liberal intellectuals argue that secrecy undermines democracy and that more openness and debate will produce better policy. On the other hand, many diplomats and realist intellectuals claim that a measure of secrecy is vital to the safeguarding of national interests. Both sides share the assumption that, one way or another, foreign policy has always been essentially different from other kinds of policy. In this article, I challenge this assumption. I examine *how* foreign policy became different: how foreign policy emerged.

The discipline of international relations offers two different takes on "foreign policy." First, it sees foreign policy as carrying a self-evident meaning: as an abstract expression of relations between political entities: "Broadly interpreted, foreign policy is about the fundamental issue of how organized groups, at least in part strangers to each other, interrelate" (Hill 2003, xvii). Such definitions render foreign policy as an analytic concept that transcends particular historical periods or kinds of political communities. It is always distinct, and essentially different, from other forms of policy. Second, critics of this account suggest that foreign policy provides one of the key ways in which the political Self is differentiated from the Other: "Foreign policy was not a bridge between two distinct realms, but something that both divided and joined the inside and the outside, the state and the interstate system" (Campbell 1998, 60). In this understanding, foreign policy emerged sometime during the seventeenth century. It was producer, and the product, of the modern state and state system.

Despite their differences, these two approaches both treat foreign policy as an *analytic concept*: as a label for a broad object of analysis. In contrast, I proceed by historicizing foreign policy as a *practice concept*. Humans approach the world through concepts, which structure both thought and possible action. Many of the concepts employed by social scientists, such as "globalization" and "habitus," are analytical. Scholars craft them to apply beyond the lifeworld of the actors that they study, with the specific aim of establishing a critical analytical distance between themselves and their objects of research. Other concepts are practical, employed in everyday activity (compare Brubaker and Cooper 2000, 4–6).

Foreign policy is both and herein lies at least two major challenges. When engaged in historical analysis, we risk conflating the analytic and the practice concepts. We thus forget key differences between the past and the present and lose critical distance. Foreign policy as a twenty-first century practice concept is associated, for instance, with institutions such as ministries of foreign affairs and embassies, as well as ideas such as national interests, rational utility-maximization, and bureaucratic politics. These are all modern phenomena and using the term *foreign policy* in periods during which they did not exist risks carrying them along as conceptual baggage. This can lead the analyst to read the past in light of the present and to interpret past actions through terms which made little or no sense to past actors.

The second challenge lies in a naturalization of the present understanding of foreign policy. Utilizing an analytical concept of foreign policy overlooks the question of

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[1] Quote from Lynn (2002), *Yes Prime Minister*, S1E6.

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whether, and how, its emergence as a concept was intertwined with other processes of change. Studying the practical concept of foreign policy thus implies a denaturalization of our current understandings of foreign policy, *both* practical and analytical. This denaturalization has a number of empirical implications, which I return to in the conclusion, but one follows already from this framework. If foreign policy as a practical concept emerged at a specific time, for specific reasons, and has changed meaning over time, it cannot be taken for granted that foreign policy has meant the same thing in different places. Different languages have different ways of articulating foreign policy, each potentially with its own developmental trajectories.

Moving to the specifics, traditional accounts hold that the distinctiveness of foreign policy means that it requires different rules than other forms of policy, especially with respect to secrecy. I reverse the causality, instead claiming that desires for separate treatment and secrecy themselves generated foreign policy. Where the critics focus on *foreignness* and differentiation between states, I suggest that focus should be on *policy* and the differentiation between state and society. More specifically, I argue that foreign policy emerged when the external affairs of states were questioned domestically—in a process closely related to the emergence of a public sphere and a relatively free press during the eighteenth century.

The argument follows in five sections. The first relates this study to the literature on foreign policy and introduces my conceptual approach. The second situates the emergence of foreign policy within the broader changes in political language. The third explores the first emergence of foreign policy in England, out of intense newspaper exchanges around 1730. In the fourth section, I discuss how foreign policy travelled to France and how the French response in the end was not reformist, but revolutionary, denying the validity of any distinction between the executive power and society. In the fifth section, I discuss broader theoretical implications for our understanding of foreign policy. The conclusion focuses on what this all means for the study of foreign policy.

Meanings of Foreign Policy

In much international relations scholarship, foreign policy is a taken-for-granted term, defined for example as "the sum of official external relations conducted by an independent actor (usually a state) in international relations" (Hill 2003, 3). This kind of understanding underpins most foreign policy analysis, regardless of whether the focus is on studying the content of foreign policy, the pursued policy, or the process leading up to such policy (Hudson 2012). Such a conceptualization has also been considered as historically commonsensical in much academic work. From the notion of foreign policy as perpetually different follows a specific need for secrecy in the handling of it. The need for secrecy has two causes in the literature. First, public opinion is fickle and uniformed and thus untrustworthy. Second, open discussion allows for internal dissent, which weakens the state in international interaction. The basic assumptions are that polities have always had foreign policies and that the fundamentally different character of foreign policy demands secrecy.

Scholars questioning the categorical and naturalized distinction between the inside and the outside of the state have challenged this understanding of foreign policy over the last thirty years. They have instead stressed the very historical practices that had given rise to this distinction, looking at identity and boundaries (Shapiro 1988; Walker 1993). Thus, Richard Ashley (1987, 51) suggested that foreign policy should be considered as "a specific sort of *boundary-producing political performance*."[2] The basic assumptions in this literature is that foreign policy became possible with the spatial demarcation between inside and outside, sometime around 1600, that foreign policy proper sprung from the analysis of interests, that is, reason of state, around 1650 (Bartelson 1995, chap. 5) and that foreign policy has always been concerned with identity and difference (Doty 1993, 1996; Weldes 1996, 1999; Milliken 1999, 2001).

In this critical literature, identity has crowded out history; politicizing the concept of identity has implied a reification of the concept of foreign policy. In a move that relies on the multiple meanings of "foreign" in the English language, foreign becomes privileged over "policy," and foreign policy is assumed to have been about identity politics since it became possible to distinguish inside from outside. Thus, in a somewhat ironic twist, the critical definition of foreign policy mirrors the traditional understanding of the phenomenon in being an analytical concept, rather than a practical one. The attempt to turn the understanding of foreign policy as boundary-drawing into an explicitly defined analytical concept takes the move to its logical conclusion (Hellmann, Fahrmeir, and Vec 2016, chap. 1–3).

But how did a practice concept of foreign policy emerge in the first place, and what was the condition of possibility for being able to discuss something like foreign policy? While I share the historicizing impulse of the critical approaches, my basic assumption here is that the emergence of foreign policy must be sought in later developments than the seventeenth-century distinction between inside and outside. We must explore the eighteenth-century emergence of civil society, a public sphere, and public opinion.

Approaching the concept of foreign policy, at the threshold of modernity, it makes sense to draw on existing conceptual analyses of the period (Koselleck 1985, [1959] 1988; Foucault 2007, 2008, compare Berenskoetter 2017, 161–64, 167–70). I rely on the notion of concepts as inherently ambiguous and the overarching claim that the period from 1750 to 1850 witnessed a radical transformation of political language.[3] Studying conceptual change, I look for the introduction of new concepts around which meaning can congeal and ask why they emerged and how they enabled action. More specifically, when approaching the emergence of foreign policy, I focus on the many terms that feed into the concept, if the concept implied change or simply a new name for existing practice, why the concept emerged when it did, how the concept was applied to direct conduct, and how it was challenged as a naturalized concept. Answering these questions necessitates locating foreign policy in its wider web of meaning.

Changes in the Language of Politics and Otherness

Foreign policy draws on two other concepts (foreign and policy), which have been gradually changing across the centuries. The previous section suggested that we wouldn't expect foreign policy to emerge before the eighteenth century. We should nevertheless explore empirically whether foreign policy entailed something completely new, as suggested here, or if it was simply a new label for an already established practice.

[2] All emphases in quotations are from the originals.

[3] The approach here differs from Owen (2015) in emphasis (the political rather than the social), but springs from a similar historicizing ambition.

The starting point for such an exploration must necessarily be the concepts of politics and policy.[4] These key concepts have changed considerably since the Renaissance. From Aquinas, politics was considered as "the art of the city or as civil philosophy," but reason of state inverted this, making politics "an ignoble, depraved and sordid activity" (Viroli 1992, 476–77). In both of these understandings, politics was considered as a science or an art, a discipline (Palonen 2006, 35). Politics (or the art of governing) was seen as a continuous whole, with the individual, the family, and the state all in need of governing. No clear-cut distinction between the art of government as directed toward one's own subjects and as directed toward other princes or their subjects existed. This understanding proved durable. The first sentence of the entry for "politique" in the *Encyclopedia* (1765), for instance reads as follows: "La philosophie *politique* est celle qui enseigne aux hommes à se conduire avec prudence, soit à la tête d'un état, soit à la tête d'une famille" (Diderot and D'Alembert 2010, 917).[5] In such a situation, differentiating something as foreign policy would hardly be conceivable.

Much the same was the case in English, as witnessed in dictionaries. Bailey (1737) defined policy as "Craft, Subtlety; a prudent managing of Affairs; also the Art of governing a Kingdom or Commonwealth."[6] Here, politics/policy was still an undifferentiated concept, covering both man and state. However, Fenning (1763) started the definition with "[t]he art of government, as it respects foreign powers." Dr. Johnson (1768) provided even more context, defining policy as "(1) [t]he art of government, chiefly with respect to foreign powers. (2) [a]rt; prudence; management of affairs; stratagem." Dictionary definitions lagged everyday use. In 1730, *Fog's Weekly Journal* (a leading Tory London weekly) argued "that politicks consisted in the knowledge of the different Interests of all the Governments in the World, the open and secret Views of those that presided in their councils, and the Manners of treating with them" (quoted in Black 1985, 57). By the 1760s this understanding had become common enough to enter the dictionaries. The polit-language was no longer unitary from individual to globe; it had become centered on the state, and it made sense to tie policy to how to interact with other states. The concept of politics was also undergoing another change—from a discipline to a sphere or a field (Palonen 2006, 43–46). This change entailed seeing politics as a spatial phenomenon, a field of its own. This differentiation of the concept of politics in the first half of the eighteenth century was a precondition for foreign policy or foreign politics as a concept of practice to emerge.

On the other hand, the term *foreign* emerged in the thirteenth century. Until the seventeenth century, it was a general term, signifying something as "being on the outside of" or "stemming from the outside." The specification "outside the country" was only one of several meanings and hardly the most common. In dictionaries from the eighteenth century, Bailey (1737) defined foreign as "outlandish, strange, not agreeable to the Purpose or Matter in Hand," and the combined terms that were listed all relate to law or economics. In Dr. Johnson's (1768) more comprehensive text, the first meaning listed was "[n]ot of this country; not domestic." Between the publication of these two dictionaries, a change had taken place, with the outside now being more explicitly the outside of the state.

As for composite terms, foreign affairs can be dated to the first decades of the seventeenth century. It referred both to matters taking place abroad (Coryat [1611] 1905) and to the handling of matters concerning other polities. The latter meaning was tied closely to the "committee for foreign affairs," which could be found both as a Privy Council institution and a parliamentary body (during the Long Parliament) during the seventeenth century (Carlyle 1906, 675–78; House of Lords [1645] 1767–1830, 579–80; House of Commons [1647] 1802, 347). The Privy Council committee for foreign affairs did not have foreign affairs (however conceived) as its exclusive prerogative, nor did it concern itself solely with foreign affairs (Turner 1923, 199). At first, it dealt *ad hoc* with royal marriage negotiations. When permanently established, the committee was to deal not only with alliances and treaties, but also with "the arming of the militia and the employment of the navy" (Carlyle 1906, 676). During the first years of Charles I's reign, there were also permanent committees of the council for trade and for Ireland, as well as the council of war; in 1628, there were "no fewer than five committees devoted to different branches of foreign affairs" (Carlyle 1906, 675–76). There is clearly imperfect overlap between what we today would consider foreign affairs and such notions during the 1620s. Throughout the seventeenth century, the committee for foreign affairs always handled the most pressing and secret activities of the state. The Privy Council committee of foreign affairs of the late seventeenth century was thus some sort of cabinet or inner ring of associates engaged in "discussing all policy" (Hutton 1986, 306), not solely foreign affairs. While it was possible to distinguish foreign affairs from other affairs, the most important distinction concerned degree of secrecy. Some of what we would call foreign affairs, but not all, and various other issues, were treated with greater secrecy than other issues. The very intermingling of issues indicates that a separate policy field concerning foreign affairs did not yet exist. What becomes clear from the seventeenth century usage is that the desire for secrecy was what begat foreignness. The desire of the Stuart monarchs to keep some issues away from a more assertive parliament necessitated a committee for foreign affairs.

Some consideration must also be paid to "external." In the meaning "outside, outward" (Johnson 1768), it was (and is) related more closely to some sort of entity than what foreign is. If something is external, it is external *to something*. This is obvious in the composite term "external policy," during the seventeenth century. It was for instance used to distinguish between the corporeal body of a church and that which was external to it (Nalson 1682, 151). There were important parallels between seeing the church as a body and seeing the state as a body politic. This enabled the application of external policy to the state as well (compare Kantorowicz 1957). The classical ideas of a body politic, whether organic or mechanical, nevertheless presupposed an undivided entity and thus allowed for no distinction between state and society.

The lack of distinction is obvious in an early-eighteenth-century example. *The Free-Thinker* of December 1718 first contrasted "the Internal Parts of Government" with "another Compass of Knowledge, of a very different Nature," namely "the External Parts of Government," and then "a regular and just Administration at Home" with "a Dexterous Management of Foreign Affairs," or "External Policy" (Philips and Boulter [1718–1719] 1722, 181–82, 184).

[4] One could also look to the language of diplomatic interaction, but this language was ambiguous until the end of the eighteenth century, and the term *diplomacy* itself was not coined until the French Revolution (Leira 2016, 32–33).

[5] "Political philosophy is one that teaches men how to behave with caution, either at the head of a state or at the head of a family."

[6] Bailey's dictionary was not paginated. Neither were the dictionaries of Fenning and Dr. Johnson quoted below.

The contrasting of administration within and policy outside illustrates the particular knowledge dimension of external policy—governing external policy demanded a special knowledge. However, even when presented as a systematic approach to the outside, external policy remained tied to the implicit idea of projecting a unitary body politic outward. The term did not allow for divisions within. Finally, foreign policy was also first used during the seventeenth century. It described the ways of foreign lands, as well as the policy of foreigners, meanings different from current usage. Even if the term was the same, the concept was not. Foreign policy could not become a practice concept until domestic change necessitated internal differentiation, as I will turn to now.

The Emergence of Foreign Policy in Great Britain

A key factor in the development of politics as a sphere and the application of foreign policy to demarcate the boundary of that sphere from the exclusive sphere of the executive power was the emergence of a relatively free and regular press. In England, censorship was gradually lifted with the Glorious Revolution of 1688 and the expiry of the Licensing of the Press Act in 1695 (Downie and Corns 1993, 4). Daily and weekly newspapers soon appeared, as did periodicals (Varey 2003, 115). The establishment of newspapers made possible a more consistent discourse on matters taking place outside of the immediate vicinity of the readers, including what went on abroad, and this is the period when an English public sphere emerged. As newspapers and periodicals grew in numbers and stature, there also arose the concept of freedom of the press. From the 1720s, journalists started to "describe the liberty of the press as 'a bulwark of our liberty'" (Downie and Corns 1993, 4). A focus on news from abroad was common among the early papers. The first daily English newspaper, *The Daily Courant* (1702), initially mainly provided extracts from foreign presses. Commentary on what went on abroad, and how Great Britain handled it, was not provided. This changed during the long period of Walpole's preeminence (1721–1742).

A focused opposition against Walpole started forming in 1726, when the oppositional circles around Bolingbroke and Pulteney engaged in a virtual "newspaper war" (Kramnick 1968, 116) with the government.[7] They used *The Craftsman* as their main vehicle (Varey 1993, 2003, 128–40). The stated goal of the paper was to expose "craft": "the Mystery of State-Craft abounds with such innumerable Frauds, Prostitutions, and Enormities . . . It shall therefore be my chief Business to unravel the dark Secrets of Political Craft" (D'Anvers [1726–1727] 1731, 6). Statecraft and political craft were seen as negative phenomena, creating a view of politics as related mainly to the state, and not to governing as such, and seen as inherently confrontational. The permanent opposition around *The Craftsman* was something new, bordering on the disloyal or even the unconstitutional to contemporaries (Skinner 1974, 108–13). To counter this, opposition was couched in terms of more general liberties, such as the freedom of the press, and expressed through historical analogies.

In the pages of *The Craftsman*, we find not only regular reference to matters foreign, but also to the handling of them. As stated in issue #45:[8]

> In foreign Affairs, either with Regard to the Operations of the Field, or the Intrigues of the Cabinet, I shall not only consult all the publick Prints both at home and abroad, but likewise compare them with those private Intelligences with which I have taken Care to be constantly supplied. (D'Anvers [1727] 1731, 4)

On the one hand, foreign affairs may denote the general field. On the other hand, foreign affairs can also be specified, as the general position of Britain vis-à-vis the other. The latter sense of the term was used increasingly in 1730–1731. In *The Craftsman* #222, it was commented how "our *foreign Affairs* have not been *conducted so fortunately*, or *prudently*, as We could wish" (D'Anvers [1730–1731] 1731, 57).

"Our foreign affairs" were discussed more thoroughly in a series of letters from "Mr. Oldcastle," a *nom de plume* for Bolingbroke, with "Some general Remarks on the *English History*" (D'Anvers [1730–1731] 1731, 49). The argument through analogy was thinly veiled, and the printer of *The Craftsman* faced criminal charges for printing the letters (Pettit 1997, 62–63). Further adding fuel to the fire, *The Craftsman* (#235) in January 1731 published extracts from what was allegedly a private letter from The Hague, criticizing the alliance practices and general conduct of the British ministers with regard to foreign matters.[9] For publishing this letter, the printer was convicted in December 1731, for seditious libel. The year that passed between publication and conviction saw fierce political debate in and about *The Craftsman*.

The issue of foreign affairs and liberty of the press was discussed at length in *The Craftsman* #278, when the editor D'Anvers responded to a comparison that had been made between *The Craftsman* and *Cato's Letters* published a decade before. A writer in the government-supported press had noted that Cato had dealt largely with "domestick Administration . . . of which the Body of the People of England were, in good Measure, adequate Judges," while *The Craftsman* dealt with

> Points of foreign Administration; Questions in themselves of the most difficult and complicated Nature; and which are therefore, of all others, the farthest removed from the Apprehensions and Understanding of the Body of any People whatever; and cannot without manifest and glaring Inconveniences, be made, on all Occasions, the subject of their Debate and Enquiry. (quoted in D'Anvers [1731–1732] 1737, 185)

According to this view, when deciding what should be published or not, the key difference between domestic and foreign administration was the degree of understanding among the general populace. Domestic issues might be of "Evident Nature," and the people thus "Adequate Judges," whereas foreign matters were "difficult and complicated" and thus not suited for general debate. The differentiation here is accompanied by a power/knowledge practice—"foreign administration" is made governable by excluding the people, and ideally also the press, from the consideration of it.

D'Anvers protested against this presentation and claimed that Cato "never so much as dreamt of that ingenious and most subtle Distinction between the *foreign* and *domestic Part of Government,* which hath been lately started, amongst several other Devices, to reduce the *Liberty of the Press*" (D'Anvers [1731–1732] 1737, 186). D'Anvers then

[7] To Habermas ([1962] 1991, 60–64), these developments were critical in the emergence of a public opinion and permanent opposition.

[8] The numbering given here is the one applied in the reprints, which differs somewhat from the original prints (Pettit 1997, 51).

[9] The text, omitted from the collection of issues, is reproduced in Varey (2003, 79–80).

went on to examine "the Force of his Distinction between *foreign* and *domestick Affairs*, which is the foundation of his whole Essay," summarizing the argument of his opponent thus:

> The Body of the People are not adequate Judges of Treaties, Negotiations, and other Transactions with foreign Courts, as They are of domestick Affairs; and therefore such Matters do not properly belong to their Cognizance. On the contrary, as the People cannot understand these Points, so the Discussion of them, in a publick Manner, gives our Enemies an Opportunity of mingling in our Councils, and thereby furnishes Them with an Advantage over Us, in the Negotiations of the Cabinet. (D'Anvers [1731–1732] 1737, 187)

The reasons for not discussing foreign affairs were thus that the people were unable to understand them and that the very discussion of them would give other countries insight into the dispositions of the English.

The first response of D'Anvers was "that the Doctrine, upon which this Distinction is founded is [e]ntirely new" What is described here as *new* is the doctrine that the liberty of the press could and should be limited, but the distinction between domestic and foreign administration/affairs was also new. D'Anvers accepted that the common people could not be expected to understand the full intricacies of foreign affairs, but added that

> even the common People are endow'd with common Sense, and are therefore capable of understanding these Points, as well as domestic Affairs, when they are explained to them . . . as the Interest of the common People is affected by the Conduct of foreign Affairs, as much as it is by the domestic Administration, so They have an equal Right to be informed about it. (D'Anvers [1731–1732] 1737, 189)

What we get here is a "countertruth," which denies that foreign affairs are qualitatively different. On the contrary, writes D'Anvers, the common people can become eminently knowledgeable, if one is willing to explain foreign affairs to them.

D'Anvers's long exposition occasioned several answers in *The Daily Courant*, answered again in *The Craftsman* #282. Here D'Anvers ([1731–1732] 1737, 223) repeated his opponent's claim, but with a new phrasing: "One of the Reasons, which He urged in his *first Essay*, against making Points of *foreign Policy* the Subject of *popular Debate*, was the Incapacity of the *common People* to understand them." The term foreign policy had not been employed in the first answer, but flows seamlessly into the argument here, indicating that at least to the writer foreign policy was more or less synonymous with Foreign Affairs. Here we have a relatively clear instance of foreign policy being used in the sense of "Our Foreign Policy."

The use of the term foreign policy seems to have originated with the government-sponsored writers. *The Gentleman's Magazine* reported on the debate with short summaries of the articles, and in the summary of the first article in *The Daily Courant*, it is stated that the writers of Cato's letters were not "insensible of the difference between Points of *Domestick* and *Foreign Policy*" (Urban 1731, 439). Likewise, when the government sponsored *The Daily Courant* commented on the matter in 1734, it laid out what must be understood as the "official" line:

> In the military part of the domestic indeed, and in both the branches of our foreign policy or government, which regulates our league and treaties, our wars or peace with other states, the King has a greater latitude; for, as they are almost all of them individual points or cases, which admit of very few, or no invariable general rules, and do also require the utmost dispatch, and the greatest secrecy, he is therein invested with the entire power of determining both what shall be done and who shall execute those determination. (quoted in Black 2004, 61)

Foreign policy thus first emerged as a new term in government propaganda, presented as less knowable and in more need of secrecy than domestic policy. The concept justified secrecy and became a way for the executive power to limit political debate. However, what was covered by the concept was primarily diplomacy, alliances, war, and peace. Other topics, which we today would classify as foreign policy, such as colonial issues and trade, were discussed without government sanction, as were confessional solidarity and European developments (Ahn and Simms 2010, 79–80; Black 2000, 95–134).

The sentencing of *The Craftman*'s printer effectively shut down the first flurry of discussion on foreign policy. Although parliament provided funds, and was at least partly consulted, there were hardly any references to foreign affairs, foreign politics, or foreign policy in Parliament during the 1730s. The theme did not return until the Walpole administration had again come under fire after 1740. Foreign policy was at that time the defense of those who would rather keep the House of Commons from prying into matters pertaining to other countries; revealing secrets would "destroy at once the whole Scheme of foreign Policy" (House of Commons 1744, Appendix, 24). Most explicit, although not using the term foreign policy, was the Secretary at War, William Yonge:

> As our Business relates chiefly to domestick Affairs, we ought to keep within that Province . . . as the Crown must be supposed to know more of foreign Affairs than have been, or can be communicated to us; we ought to have a Biass in Favour of that which appears to be the Opinion of the Crown. (House of Commons 1743, 98–99)

This is an obvious instance of a power/knowledge move: as long as foreign affairs are secret, they should remain secret. The practice of keeping foreign affairs secret served to produce the established truth that these affairs should remain secret, since Parliament lacked the knowledge required for discussing them.[10]

The incessant pamphleteers ignored such admonitions. In 1742, Lover of his Country ridiculed the course where "we are forced to *fluctuate* thus in our *foreign Politicks*, to change Sides often" (Lover of his Country 1742, 57–60). The writer also pondered on knowledge of these matters among the population at large. He argued that whereas the common man might at one time have been ignorant of foreign matters, he had by now enough knowledge to challenge the politics of the statesmen. What we see here is an exercise

[10] The analysis here is in line with Onnekink (2010, 37) and Black (1985, 16; 2000, 49, 177; 2004, 6), in seeing parliament largely as an arena for conflicts within government and in seeing little outside influence in the field of foreign affairs. This in contrast to others (Simms 2008, 39; Ahn and Simms 2010, 80), who argue that the outside influence was substantial and that parliament expressed public opinion.

in countertruth, where the state practice of conducting foreign policy in a (extremely curtailed) democracy is seen to create knowledgeable common men, well capable of making judgments on foreign policy.

In the second half of the eighteenth century, we find the term foreign politics used in works of history, like in David Hume's *The History of England* and also increasingly in political commentaries. Differences between factions or parties could lead to discussions of foreign affairs/policy. For example, in 1765 an anonymous pamphleteer set out to compare the two competing parties according to "their *principles of Government*, to their *system of foreign policy*, and to their *domestic Administration*" (Anonymous 1765, 2). This listing at the outset suggests that foreign policy was conceptualized as a field alongside other fields. More generally, various forms of foreign policy had a place in the vocabularies of those engaged in diplomacy and politics. We find it in the political critique of Edmund Burke and in exchanges between diplomats, pondering whether "any general system of Theory can possibly be applicable to so uncertain and fluctuating a Science as that of Foreign Politicks" (St. Helens [1802] 1896, 51). Although uncertain and fluctuating, foreign policy is here seen as knowable and as possible to act upon in an informed way. At the same time, those arguing for free trade established a clear distinction between politics and commerce and between foreign policy and trade, a distinction which has had resonance to this day. Turning now to France, the question was less one of informed action than one of complete overturn, of the abolishment of foreign policy.

The Emergence of Foreign Policy in France

A public sphere emerged later in France than in Britain, due to the strength of the absolutist state (Jacob 1994, 96). Around the middle of the eighteenth century, it nevertheless became possible to discuss political issues, and "public opinion" emerged as a contemporary term (Ozouf 1988, S6–S8). Since censorship was strict, the discussions were necessarily circumspect. The French state increased its capacity for surveillance and censorship during the eighteenth century (Farge 1994, 197–99), and unlike Britain, where the press became more independent, "press control was far more effectively applied in the 1780s than in the 1750s or 1760s" (Harris 1996, 68). On the other hand, the market for illegal literature (books and pamphlets) grew steadily during this period (Darnton 1995, 245). This literature was mainly focused on French internal affairs. Alternative outlets for discussion were also found in "an extraterritorial press, created by private entrepreneurs and covertly tolerated by the same authorities who controlled the domestic papers" (Popkin 1990, 17). These foreign papers, although closely connected to the French government through a number of formal and informal channels, came closest to creating a "public space" in France before the Revolution. The contrast with Britain is striking. No true public sphere existed in France, and discussions about the outside were rare and restricted to the elite.

In Britain, the polit-language, as traced in dictionaries, changed around the middle of the eighteenth century. This was also when foreign policy emerged. Comparing historical editions of the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française* provides a later dating, sometime around 1800. To be more precise, between the 5th edition in 1798 and the 6th in 1835. France, however, had a department for foreign affairs (*le département des affaires étrangères*) at least from the end of the seventeenth century (Scott 2007, 76). Thus, the term *"affaires étrangères"* was in use in much the same way as foreign affairs in England. Likewise, *"politique extérieure,"* a term that parallels external policy, was in use in much the same way as in English.[11]

Explicit political usage can be found from around 1760. Voltaire used both "politque étrangere" and "politique du dehors,"[12] and Forbonnais (1758, 14–15) made a clear distinction between *politique intérieure*, which could be studied systematically, and *politique extérieure*. The latter depended solely on circumstances, lead to vacillation and succeeded through patience and knowledge of secrets. In 1760, politique étrangere was used in the translation of Hume's *The History of England* and by Mirabeau (1760, 12, 268) when he laid out how public offices must necessarily provide for plenty, (domestic) peace and security, the latter implying "la politique étrangere & la defense."[13]

In Guibert's seminal *Essai général de tactique* (1772), *politique extérieure* was used frequently and laid out in a systematic fashion, as the logical counterpart to *politique intérieure* (Guibert 1772, XXXIX). This division was presented as natural and self-evident. In his further discussion of the relations between the two parts of the concept, Guibert was well within the mainstream of contemporary French enlightenment thought, which prioritized domestic affairs over external affairs. External policy in this perspective became mainly a reflection of the differing domestic makeups of nations and consisted of applying the means made available through domestic policy (Guibert 1772, XLI–XLII). The distinction between inside and outside was not followed by a distinction inside, for the very simple reason that no such distinction made sense under absolutism.

The more "modern" concept of *politique étrangere* appeared more systematically in French from around 1770, for instance, in a utopian romance by Tiphaigne de la Roche. On his imaginary island those who were driven by passions and governed by ambition satisfied their passion through the pursuit of *politique étrangere* (Tiphaigne de la Roche 1770, 121). This is a not-so-subtle dig at the practice of foreign policy, and, as Gilbert (1951, 6–7) stressed regarding the *philosophes*, "[t]heir main thesis is that the great role [that] foreign affairs played in the political life of their time was one of the most fundamental evils of the existing political system."

Jonathan Israel (2014) has suggested that Enlightenment thought came in two main varieties, one democratic and one radical. The same goes for what little could be found of systematic thought about external affairs in France (Howe 1986, 377–78). Some, like Voltaire and Montesquieu, believed that reason would lead monarchs to understand the mutual interests of all peoples and to peaceful interaction. Many others, including Rosseau and a number of those cited above, believed that monarchy was inherently violent and that control over foreign affairs should thus be given to the nation/the people. This emphasis on the will of the people tied in with broader trends in French political discourse, where "[p]ublic opinion was increasingly invoked, albeit in a largely rhetorical sense, as the arbiter in political disputes" (Harris 1996, 53). Basing arguments on public opinion implied a denial of the legitimacy of contending claims, since there in the final analysis could be only one singular public opinion, rooted in one universal public sphere (Mah 2000, 160–68).

[11] One could also find "affaires du dehors," a version of external affairs which is etymologically closely connected to the outside of the body or in particular the household.

[12] "politics of the outside."

[13] "foreign policy and defense."

At the eve of the Revolution, the French discourse on foreign affairs was a lot more circumscribed than the British one, existing without a fully functioning public sphere. Arguments were presented in books and pamphlets, rather than newspapers, and primarily printed outside of France. The French discourse was thus somewhat detached from current affairs and a lot more theoretical/philosophical than its British counterpart. The majority of writers suggested that foreign affairs should be rooted in public opinion. Since public opinion was idealized as unitary and above politics, discussions about pursued policy were few and far between. The difference between internal and external affairs was seen as a root problem of the world. Pursued to its extreme, this position implied the full removal of any principal between the nation and pursued policy.

The Revolution enabled a free press and a vibrant public sphere, although the limits between society and state were fluid through much of the Revolution. A new free press appeared in Paris virtually overnight in July 1789. Throughout the revolutionary years, it functioned in a tight symbiosis with political life, giving the Revolution meaning and transforming events into narratives, creating "a common revolutionary drama" (Harris 1996, 79). The Revolution turned press attention toward domestic politics and opinion pieces, and unlike the London press, the French revolutionary press "was much more single-minded. Politics was virtually the only concern of the majority of the new papers" (Popkin 1990, 106).

Editors and journalists were pressing specific political agendas, with little room for debate. The work of the legislative assemblies was fraught with political disagreements, but this was seen by the press as a problem to overcome, rather than as the usual state of affairs (as was the case in Britain after the 1720's). It seems reasonable to relate this reluctance to accept division to the strong emphasis on the Rousseauian notion of the general will and the ongoing struggles to represent the will of the people (Furet 1981, 51). Eventually, the demand for a universal public will led to the attempted eradication of difference (Mah 2000, 172). The refusal to accept a public sphere with differing opinions in the end led to the obliteration of the public sphere and to the imagined eradication of the boundary between state and society. During the Terror (1793–1794), the members of committee for public safety perceived themselves as enacting the will of the nation. This development had enormous implications for the conceptualization of the outside and foreign policy.

During the early stages of the Revolution, revolutionaries assumed that the king would retain control over foreign affairs. Domestic politics also clearly trumped foreign affairs in the press. However, gradually concerns grew about the direction of foreign affairs, as well as the legitimacy of letting the king handle these matters. Specific political issues, tying in with larger philosophical issues, pushed the revolutionaries toward action (Howe 1986, 377–80). To a very large extent, however, external affairs were discussed in extension of domestic affairs. The revolutionaries were "not so much regarding France as part of the states-system, as regarding the states-system in terms of the revolution and its ideology" (Savage 2007, 323).

At the philosophical level, dissatisfaction with policy and the ones carrying it out was closely related to the radical view of foreign affairs and diplomacy as irrevocably tainted by aristocracy and focused on war. The revolutionary discussions conceptualized matters foreign through the terms of diplomacy and politics more broadly, seldom using the term *politique étrangere* at all. In the place of old practices, the revolutionaries wanted a system where interactions were based in peaceful trade and mutual interests and where there would be no need for the "old diplomacy." Thus, the diplomats came under early and sustained criticism, as part of the general reaction against the nobles (Frey and Frey 2004, 108; compare Frey and Frey 2011, 2–6). As early as in March 1790, it was argued that the French diplomatic corps should be purged of the remnants from the old regime (Frey and Frey 2011, 6), a call that was soon repeated by Marat and Brissot.

As part of the questioning of current policies, the National Assembly discussed establishing *un comité politique* to examine the existing treaties of the state (Martin 2012). The establishment of what became the *comité diplomatique* in the summer of 1790 brought together the practical question of checking the existing treaties of the old regime and the ongoing desires for abandonment of the royal prerogative over external affairs. In a fairly rapid conceptual development, "diplomatique" came to cover not only the inspection of documents, but all activities falling within the expanding purview of the *comité diplomatique*. Although the committee never had executive powers (Howe 2008, chaps. 3–4; Martin 2012), it spawned debate about diplomacy in both the national assembly and the press, rapidly popularizing the concept.

In the early debate (1790–1791), aristocrats and the king made arguments that are recognizable from the British debate. They for instance questioned whether any foreign nation would risk dealing with France, when all diplomatic correspondence and secrets could end up being passed to the committee, "pour être ensuite discutés par les galeries?"[14] (Societe d'Aristocrates 1791, 22; compare Frey and Frey 2011, 21). Some of the moderates in the National Assembly also wanted to maintain the division of powers that was written into the constitution of 1791, which gave the king the right to appoint ambassadors, maintain political relations abroad, and sign treaties and alliances. These constitutional arrangements were never followed. After the flight to Varennes (June 1791), the king rapidly lost control over foreign affairs.

With the desire to control foreign policy followed a desire to refashion diplomacy. In late 1791, Brissot complained that the foreign minister had "retained those who had been promoted 'in the filth of the old diplomacy' and who maintained 'the same aristocratic system' in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs" (Frey and Frey 2004, 111). Some months earlier, General Dumouriez (1791), who later became minister of foreign affairs, had made a long speech to the Jacobin club. He drew heavily on radical enlightenment thought and suggested both a thoroughly new course for foreign relations and a complete reordering of the ministry of foreign affairs and diplomacy. He argued for open and honest negotiations and the abolishment of alliances and envisaged a future where interaction was based on trade and friendship and rooted in natural law. Like the philosophes before him, Dumouriez stressed the mutual interests of the peoples, against the conflicts of the monarchs, and he wanted the representatives of France to be men of the Revolution rather than trained diplomats. Dumouriez referred to the matter at hand simply as "politique" and, much like the Enlightenment thinkers, saw the external activities of the state as springing from the domestic makeup of the state. A new ministry was needed to put into foreign practice the ideals of the Revolution. Tellingly, Dumouriez did not mention any

[14] "then to be discussed by the galleries?"

need for secrecy or any attempt at differentiating between state and society.

Considering how the revolutionaries treated "diplomacy" as emblematic of most which had been wrong in the past, it should come as no surprise that an alternative was soon formulated. Gaspard Joseph Amand Ducher (1793, 75) called for a "[n]ouvelle diplomatie" basically concerned with commercial matters and desires for direct trade. He argued that French foreign affairs should solely deal with external trade and that politics should simply be the extension of commerce. The "new diplomacy" would be simpler, fairer, and cheaper than the old one, thus there would be no need for the former secrecy or noble privileges. The new ministers of France were to be "ni marquis, ni intrigans"[15] (Ducher 1793, 74).

Ducher's call for a new diplomacy echoed the general dissatisfaction with diplomacy, and for many the solution was simply to abolish the whole thing. It was for instance argued that "France would no longer be governed 'by the guile of cabinets nor by the mysteres diplomatiques'" (Rabaud, quoted in Frey and Frey 1993, 715). Even a connection with the national assembly might be unnecessary: "Our diplomacy is the truth, liberty. I demand the suppression of the diplomatic committee" (Saint-André, quoted in Frey and Frey 1993, 716).

Diplomacy and diplomats should be abolished, and the relations with other nations driven simply by the idea of liberty. This situation represents the complete obliteration of any notion of foreign policy or any other practice differentiating between state and society. Rather, society would be acting organically outward through the truth of liberty. Indeed, after the summer of 1793 (with the fall of the Girondins and the onset of the Terror), diplomacy was set aside and foreign policy became basically the all-out war. (Frey and Frey 2004, 120).

Rethinking Foreign Policy

Returning now to the assumptions made at the outset, the traditional notion that polities have always had something like foreign policy can be dismissed out of hand. Social and political interaction simply did not come close to the meaning attached to this term until the modern age. The critical writers were on the right track when exploring the distinction established between the inside and the outside of the state in the seventeenth century. However, even if this distinction was a precondition for foreign policy, the seventeenth-century monarch was still in charge of both domains. Merely making the distinction did not establish a duality between anarchy on the outside and society on the inside, for the simple reason that no such thing as a civil society had yet emerged. The fundamental continuity between man, household, and principality found in the description of a single logic of government, covering all the monarch's governing, both inside and outside, implied that a specific "foreign" policy made little sense.

The empirical cases demonstrate how domestic differentiation was what made foreign policy both possible and necessary. This ties in with broader theorizations of the emergence of civil society in the eighteenth century. Timothy Mitchell (1991, 95), for instance, argues that the state "should be addressed as an effect of detailed processes of spatial organization, temporal arrangement, functional specification, and supervision and surveillance, which create the apearance [*sic*] of a world fundamentally divided into state and society." Civil society did not simply emerge. Civil society and the modern state were produced through an internal and continuous boundary-drawing. Following Habermas ([1962] 1991), the site for this boundary-drawing has here been conceptualized as the public sphere. And this is where foreign policy came to play a central role. The seventeenth-century analysis of interests allowed for differentiation within the overarching pursuits of the prince (some directed outward, some inward). The emergence of civil society necessitated two additional differentiations: first, a differentiation between how to approach what was civil within and how to approach what was not civil on the outside and, second, a differentiation of the acting state from civil society. Finally, a means for handling the possible feedback from civil society was necessary. This, I argue, is what both enabled and necessitated the emergence of the practice concept of foreign policy.

Against this interpretation, it could be argued that the executive power always desires secrecy and that the introduction of foreign policy was simply an assertion of the power to keep issues off the agenda. However, while the desire for secrecy might be constant, what was radically new with the emergence of civil society and a relatively free press was that the ability to keep policy secret could no longer be taken for granted and that secrecy had to be legitimated. The possibility of full openness was what triggered conceptual innovation to preserve at least some issues as secret. Furthermore, what was defined as foreign policy and thus not open for discussion was not constant. Royal marriages might for instance be foreign, while trade was not necessarily so. The desire for secrecy was not unique to fields that we today might consider foreign policy, rather, the desire for secrecy and the understanding of foreign policy fluctuated in parallel. Likewise, the common realist notion that public opinion is too fickle to be heard in foreign policy is itself a product of the historical emergence of foreign policy. Rather than seeing foreign policy as something alien to public opinion and thus best kept secret, we should see an executive power desire to keep some things secret and thus defined as foreign policy.

Differentiation through foreign policy first took place in Britain around 1730, drawing on the earlier distinction between inside and outside, and incorporating the traditional secrecy associated with foreign affairs. Foreign policy emerged as an exclusionary power/knowledge practice when a relatively free press and public opinion started engaging with foreign affairs. Language remained ambiguous for several decades, but increasingly foreign policy was construed as a separate sphere—one where special knowledge reigned, and which thus must be kept secret. The response from civil society was on the one hand to reject the validity of the distinction and to claim the right to discuss all kinds of policy. On the other hand, the response was couched in reformist terms; better knowledge would make the public better judges of foreign policy. The necessity of keeping some things secret from potential enemies was not challenged. What the opposition wanted was, in short, to restrict the exclusive sphere of foreign policy as much as possible. One of the reasons why foreign policy has remained so contestable since its emergence, even in reformist polities, lies here. At stake has been not only which specific policies to pursue, but more generally what should count as foreign policy or not and thus be excluded or included in regular debate.

When we compare the French attack on external affairs with the British case, two things stand out: first, the general vitriol of the criticism; second, how closely "diplomacy" was

[15] "Neither marquis [that is noble] nor making intrigues."

linked to matters foreign. Whereas the British debates about foreign policy were largely debates about policy, the French ones were much more structural and focused on the general practice of diplomacy. The argument was that "[t]he evil inherent in diplomacy could be removed only by a complete reform of the political system" (Gilbert 1951, 9). To overcome this evil, the control of diplomacy must be shifted into the hands of the people, and "in a reformed world, based on reason, foreign policy and diplomacy would become unnecessary" (Gilbert 1961, 65–66). This difference in focus was a result of the differing access to political debate and the differences in the development of civil society. In Britain, policy could be criticized and even changed if the government fell. In France, by contrast, foreign policy, understood as a domestic distinction, could simply not arise. The problem of the external *had* to be tackled at a structural level where diplomacy constituted the extended arm of the king. British parliamentary government allowed for debates about foreign policy, whereas French absolutism necessitated a critique of diplomacy.

There is a parallel here to the more general difference between the English (utilitarian) and French (revolutionary) approaches to the problem of "how to set juridical limits to the exercise of power by a public authority" (Foucault 2008, 39). The French solution was to reconstitute the sovereign to ensure legitimacy, while the English solution was to start from the question of what it would be useful for the state to do. These two ways of thinking about government also lead to two different ways of practicing counterknowledge in the critique of foreign policy. The utilitarian approach was to question not the validity of the differentiation as such, but where the boundary was drawn, and in general push for the state to govern less, and for the reduction of the field demarcated by foreign policy. The revolutionary approach was on the other hand to reject the differentiation between state and society and to claim societal control over external matters. This was what happened during the Terror.

Thus, we see in revolutionary France only traces of attempted differentiation along the British lines. What won through was the rejection of differentiation. The idea of a universal public opinion and the refusal to accept differing opinions as valid, coupled with the radical notion of direct democracy and no filters between the people and executive power, implied that foreign policy was not utilized as a differentiating practice during the heyday of the Revolution. On the contrary, the perceived dissolution of the boundaries both between state and society and between the revolutionary French people and other (oppressed) peoples led to the complete abolishment of diplomacy and the turn to war as outward expression. Thus, revolutionary external affairs came to mirror the logic of absolutist external affairs, with one underlying logic to all politics and one will directing it.

The traditional reading of foreign policy sees it as a transhistorical phenomenon—always different and thus in constant need of secrecy. The analysis above demonstrates not only that foreign policy has a specific historical emergence, but also that the causal relationship between secrecy and foreign policy must be reversed. In early-modern monarchies, the executive power in general worked with little scrutiny, but with some issues (not solely related to external affairs) treated with more secrecy than others. With the emergence of a public sphere and a relatively free press, the continued desire to keep some issues secret begat foreign policy as a means for political differentiation. The critical reading of foreign policy has on the other hand stressed differentiation and the separation between Self and Other. While the differentiation between inside and outside was one important precondition for the emergence of foreign policy, this differentiation covers only half of the story. In the specific emergence of foreign policy, differentiation of "us" from "them" was not at stake; the focus was on political issues and fields of knowledge. The critical accounts have focused on ontic differentiation. This analysis suggests that foreign policy must also, and perhaps more so, be understood as an epistemic distinction, excluding the public from what they could not or should not understand.

As such, foreign policy was one of the concepts "testifying to a new understanding of the world" (Koselleck 2011, 10), in the threshold period between the early-modern period and the modern age. In this kind of setting, foreign policy served as a boundary marker set down by the state, delimiting the legitimate sphere of political discourse from the exclusive executive sphere of king and cabinet. Policy and politics within could be discussed relatively freely, but the external activities of the state were defined as off-limits. This delimiting act and the responses it triggered in public discourse were what provided the drama of the emergence of foreign policy.

Conclusion

Boundaries might be a universal feature of human group relations, but foreign policy, understood as a practice concept, is not. Rather, we should understand foreign policy as a specific spatiotemporal resolution of the problem of delimitation. In the widest sense, foreign policy emerged as a consequence of democratization. When the state was challenged by a free press operating in the public sphere, it reconfigured its external affairs as foreign policy. Foreign policy thus became a new object to be known, interpreted, and acted upon. The executive power sought to use foreign policy both to govern external affairs and to limit the domain of the public sphere. The opposition challenged this delimitation in two ways. Some accepted the designation of foreign policy as something distinctly different, while insisting on the right to discuss it, while others rejected the differentiation outright.

This article focuses on the emergence of foreign policy and the two central responses to it: the reformist and the revolutionary. England and France were the first states to utilize the concept; their different responses, and the trajectories they took, give the English and French cases something of a paradigmatic quality.

Nonetheless, the concept of foreign policy likely emerged in different ways and with different functions in other states. As the French case illustrates, the concept could be translated without retaining the same exact meaning. However, by being attached to the polit-language, foreign policy proved to be a durable political concept—and one that took on a certain modularity.

In both use and opposition, developments in other states show parallels with the early examples. In democratic states with a free public sphere, the executive power has typically wanted to keep some topics away from debate. Historically, foreign policy sometimes served that function, while in recent times "security" may have become more effective as a means for delimitation of public debate, as discussed in the securitization literature (Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998; Hansen 2006). Proponents of secrecy typically point to lack of public knowledge and understanding, as well as to the dangers inherent in discussing specific issues freely. This is the case whether they invoke foreign policy, national security, or related concepts. Their opponents also generally center their own arguments on education and the power

of free debate, with the aim of eliminating secrecy as much as possible or even of obliterating the distinction between domestic and foreign policy completely. In states without a free public sphere, or any public sphere to speak of, foreign policy usually gets translated simply as referring to matters that concern other states, much as it was under absolutist regimes.

As suggested at the outset, my analysis implies a denaturalizing of both the analytic and practice concept of foreign policy. This, in turn, matters both for how we understand foreign policy analysis and how we should study foreign policy and international relations in an age of transnational ties and globalizing civil society. When foreign policy analysis was established, it drew on a naturalized and transhistorical understanding of foreign policy as something necessarily different from other forms of policy (compare Zarakol 2017b, 268–71 on how the naturalized notion of anarchy excluded discussions about hierarchy). This also justifies the idea that foreign policy is comparable across cases. Thus, the field of foreign policy analysis generally neglects the generative effects of foreign policy: the processes that produce, and continuously constitute it, as a space of action (compare Dallmayr 1993, 110).

It follows that careful analysis should factor in the historical and geographical contingency of what counts as foreign policy. For example, scholars might examine, within or across cases, how specific issues become foreign. Likewise, any attempt at conducting comparative foreign policy analysis should reflect on the possibility and implication of foreign policy meaning different things in different states. To be clear, I do not argue that we cannot use foreign policy as an analytical concept. However, we should recognize the high likelihood of bringing unconscious conceptual baggage into the analysis. Both traditional and critical approaches would do well to acknowledge the historically specific character of the internal differentiation so critical to the emergence of foreign policy. When discussing relations between political entities before the Enlightenment, it might be more appropriate to use terms other than foreign policy to avoid importing anachronistic theoretical claims and assumptions.

My arguments matter beyond foreign policy analysis. Over the last decades, international relations has become more historically and geographically conscious. Increasingly, it is accepted that "the international" was very different relatively recently (Buzan & Lawson 2015) and that "the international" looks differently when viewed from outside of the Anglo-American sphere (Tickner and Blaney 2012). What is missing is an understanding of how people thought about what we now think of as the international in completely different terms, how our current concepts come with a historical legacy, and how concepts are lost and found in translation. Beyond the desire to avoid anachronism, two insights brought out by this analysis are particularly pressing. First, concepts like foreign policy have been crucially involved in establishing and maintaining hierarchies of gender (Towns 2010) and civilization (Zarakol and Bially Mattern 2016; Zarakol 2017a). Second, concepts like foreign policy have been translated with ambiguous meaning (Wigen 2018). Taken together, these insights suggest that the recent spatiotemporal broadening of international relations scholarship will be deficient if studies of hierarchicalized concepts and how they translate are not incorporated.

And, finally, what about the future of foreign policy? Foreign policy emerged in the handling of a specific set of challenges at a specific time. These problems—of secrecy, knowledge, and democracy—remain pressing in political debates concerning foreign affairs. The continuing development of the practice concept of foreign policy over almost three centuries suggests it isn't going to disappear any time soon. Rather, the future is likely to hold further mutations in the concept.

For example, I see no logical reason to expect that foreign policy will continue to be associated with differentiation between state and civil society. While the desire of executive powers to keep some issues secret seems to be constant, security has already replaced foreign policy as the most effective way of moving items off the political agenda. Furthermore, at many levels, civil society is now heavily involved in both the making and the execution of foreign policy (Sending and Neumann 2006; Stengel and Baumann 2017). The Google Books Ngram Viewer (2018) suggests a relatively steep decline in relative usage of foreign policy since the mid-1980s. This decline likely stems from the growing interconnection of domestic and foreign affairs, the reduced exclusiveness of foreign policy within state political discourses, and an increasing differentiation where foreign policy is split into constituent parts—each with varying degrees of desire for secrecy. On the other hand, an increasing number of entities, such as cities, diasporas, and corporations, now engage in their own foreign policy. This suggests that, much like diplomacy—but perhaps without the positive connotations (Leira 2016, 35–38)—foreign policy is also becoming a more general label for interactions between entities.

Many analysts of foreign policy already incorporate this changing landscape. They draw in more actors in their analyses of the making and execution of state foreign policy. In doing so, they de facto accept that foreign policy means something different today than what it meant some decades ago. Others focus on differentiation as the key function of foreign policy and study these processes along a multiplying number of borders, rather than exclusively national ones. To these research strategies should be added analyses of the specific functions of foreign policy. Designating something as foreign policy no longer entails the same secrecy and executive power privilege as in centuries past, but it does come with the understanding that this something is different from other forms of policy. Thus, we still need to explore how foreign policy structures conduct—what gets included and excluded by being hived off as foreign.

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