Foreign Policy Change and International Norms

Foreign Policy Change and International Norms: A Conceptual Framework

Samuel Brazys (University College Dublin), Juliet Kaarbo (University of Edinburgh), and Diana Panke (Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg)

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ABSTRACT

Foreign policy change (FPC) is an important topic and has therefore attracted much scholarly attention. Yet, literature has largely overlooked how FPC is related to international norms. This special issue seeks to add value to the field of foreign policy analysis by strengthening the empirical literature linking FPC and international norms. The papers in this issue tease out the intervening factors in facilitating the relationship between foreign policy change and the international norm. The introductory article introduces the conceptual framework which draws on both the structure-agency and "push-pull" debates to provide the cohesive analytical structure for the issue.

INTRODUCTION

The end of World War II and the end of the Cold War triggered significant cooperation beyond the nation-state and, accordingly, the number of international institutions has increased immensely. As a result, the current international system is densely regulated and few policy areas are not covered by one or more international institutions, organizations or regimes. These structures are often predicated on and enshrine international norms, which at their core entail shared notions about standards for appropriate behavior, and which can be formalized and codified (e.g. as being part of UN resolutions, conventions or international treaties) or more informal and less codified (e.g. customary rights/international law). As the international system is characterized by a multitude of international norms this special issue considers the extent to which these norms and changes in these norms are related to *changes* in foreign policy and vice-versa.

Foreign policy change (FPC) has attracted scholarly attention for decades. Already in the early 1980s, Goldmann (1982) and Holsti (1982) examined foreign policy change in the context of détente and the Cold War. The literature expanded in the 1990s with a string of articles starting with Hermann (1990: 3) who both provided a schematic for identifying different types of FPC and highlighted four 'agents' of FPC: leaders, bureaucracies, changes in domestic constituencies, and external shocks. Other seminal pieces include Carlsnaes (1992) who introduced the agency-structure problem to FPA, Risse-Kappen (1994) who brought ideational components more squarely to the fore as drivers of FPC, Rosati, Hagan, and Sampson III (1994) who examined the political dynamics of foreign policy redefinition, and Gustavsson (1999: 74) who reviewed existing models of FPC and proposed a further model based on 'fundamental structural conditions, strategic political leadership, and the presence of a crisis of some kind.' More contemporary literature on FPC pushes scholars to

think more carefully about the 'carriers and barriers' to FPC (Kleistra and Mayer 2001), sequencing in the foreign policy decision making *process* (Ozkececi-Tanner, 2006; Kuperman, 2006), the relationship between cultural shifts and FPC (Rynhold, 2007), the domestic determinants of FPC in small states (Doeser, 2011), and the interplay between motivation and process in FPC (Lee, 2012).

Independently, international relations scholars, as part of the 'Constructivist Turn' (Checkel, 1998), have paid increasing attention to the role of norms in international relations over the past 20 years. Canonical works by Finnemore (1996), Checkel (1997), Legro (1997), Finnemore and Skikink (1998), and Ruggie (1998) defined norms, argued that they 'mattered' and discussed how they might influence state behavior. On this basis, norm researchers broadened their agenda and examined norm dynamics as well as norm contestation (Wunderlich et al. (2013), Panke and Petersohn (2011), Wiener (2009; 2012), Cortell and Davis (2005)). In this special issue the authors draw on these understandings to conceptualize norms broadly as shared understandings of appropriate standards of behavior.

Despite the importance of these two literatures over the past three decades, there has been surprisingly little work bringing these strands together. Goldmann (1982: 253) did examine norms, but primarily in a role of acting as foreign policy 'stabilizers' rather than driving FPC. Other notable exceptions include Klotz (1995) who examined norms of 'racial equality' when considering states' foreign policy towards South Africa, Boekle et al. (1999) who argued that FPC in post-unification Germany would only occur if the relevant norm had also changed, and Shannon (2000) and Shannon and Keller (2007) who consider how and why leaders violate norms in the context of the US invasions of Panama and Iraq. More recently, Stevenson (2011) examined how international climate change norms prompted shifts in India's foreign policy. In a symposium on foreign policy analysis edited by Garrison (2003)

numerous contributors alluded to the role of international norms influencing foreign policy choices. Similarly, Rynhold (2007: 420) points to a literature that demonstrates 'how norms and collective identities are important in the initiation of major foreign policy changes' The recent resurgence in research on role theory also links normative role structures in international society with foreign policies and foreign policy change (Cantir and Kaarbo 2012; Wehner and Theis 2014). Yet, despite recognition of the potential for interplay between FPC and norms there is a dearth of detailed empirical work dedicated to understanding the nuance of the relationship. Ignoring this gap leaves a potential blind spot in understanding the determinants of FPC or international norms, respectively.

The papers in this special issue strive address this gap by strengthening the empirical literature linking FPC and international norms. They do so in two ways, by considering when FPC is prompted by the emergence and persistence of international norms and when FPC creates a norm entrepreneur who works to enshrine or strengthen an international norm. Crucially, in order to tease out this relationship, the articles in this issue consider what variables at the domestic or international level act as *intervening* factors in facilitating the relationship between foreign policy change and the international norm. In doing so, the papers explore important causal mechanisms between international norms and FPC. The section below briefly sketches a conceptual framework for understanding these intervening factors before the subsequent section provides a brief overview of the articles in the issue. This introduction concludes with generalized thoughts about the findings from the issue and the future direction of the research stream.

Conceptualizing International Norms and Foreign Policy Change

There are a variety of factors which influence the way that international norms and FPC interact. To systematically conceptualize these intervening variables we draw on two dichotomies which are commonly employed in the international relations literature. Wendt (1987) most famously highlighted the structure and agency problem in international relations – setting off decades of debate over how to understand and interpret international politics and the establishment of the Constructivist school of thought. As alluded to above, structure and agency was brought into foreign policy analysis by Carlsnaes (1992: 245) who considered 'the interplay over time between interpretive, purposive agents and a structural domain defined in terms of both constraining and enabling properties'. Carlsnaes (1992) elaborated on the ways in which agency and structure combined to shape foreign policy. This dichotomy forms the first arm of our investigatory framework. The second arm draws on international relations literature that considers domestic *push* and international *pull* factors in the context of international negotiations and/or multi-level governance[1]. The logic from these arguments is that both 'bottom up' push and 'top down' pull pressures, in isolation or through interplay, can influence how states behave in the international arena.

In combining the two frameworks we consider both *polities* and *politics* at both the domestic and international levels. *Polities* provide the *structures* in which FPC and international norms interact. We consider both normative and institutional polities, where the former consists of the 'norm environment', embodying both the substance and the context of the norm, at either the domestic or international level. Changes in the norm environment echo Hermann's (1990) notion of the 'external shock' which, as Doeser and Eidenfalk (2013) describe, can open a 'window of opportunity' for FPC. At the domestic level, the institutional polity consists of the institutional structure and distribution of power, including, for example, the type of domestic regime, the presence and structure of the governing coalition, or the relationship, if any, between the executive and legislative branches of government. The importance of these

structures for building 'winning coalitions' for FPC was identified as early as Risse-Kappen (1994: 187). At the international level, the polity consists of the presence and structure of international institutions or organizations, including membership or decision-making rules (Panke, 2013).

Agency manifests in domestic and international *politics*. At the domestic level this is evidenced through changes in government or coalition, by electoral means or otherwise, and the extent to which these changes are the result of pressure by domestic constituencies and organized interests and agents' strategies in decision making processes. Again, these domestic features recall Hermann's (1990) leaders, bureaucracy, and domestic restructuring as drivers of FPC. At the international level, politics consists of international negotiating dynamics, where states may be lobbied by non-state actors such as multi-national corporations (MNCs), civil-society organizations (CSOs), international bureaucrats, or other states that may employ incentive or sanction techniques to secure a favored negotiation outcome (Panke, 2013, 2014). These dimensions are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Conceptual Framing for International Norms and FPC

	Domestic level (Push):	International level (Pull):
Polity (Structure)	• Domestic norm environment • Political Institutions (institutional setup and distribution of power)	• International norm environment • Political Institutions (institutional setup and distribution of power)
Politics (Agency)	• Government changes • Domestic lobbying	• International negotiation • State, IO, or non-state lobbying

The papers in this special issue provide in-depth insights into how factors in one or more of these cells act as intervening variables in the relationship between international norms and FPC. Most papers examine FPC as the outcome. They study how the factors in Table 1 serve to transmit the norm which ultimately forms the basis of the FPC. Structural changes in the language or meaning of the norm may change its acceptability to an existing government and its domestic interests, opening the space for a FPC. Alternatively, a changed government may find itself aligned with an existing international norm and change foreign policy which had previously been unaligned with that norm, or vice-versa. An external actor may strongly lobby a state, or indeed diplomat, to engage in FPC, but the success of this effort may depend on the domestic institutional structure. For instance, it may be easier to find allies and thus induce FPC in a coalition government than a single party government. Highly constrained diplomats may be less amenable to autonomously engaging in FPC vis-à-vis those with a freer hand. Alternatively, when considering the establishment or change of the international norm as the outcome, a state's foreign policy may be more or less successful to this end depending

on the strength of its internal consensus which may impact how effective it is in lobbying other states.

Table 1 depicts a relationship between FPC and international norms that is characterized by complexity. If any of the push or full factors changes, this opens a window of opportunity for political leaders to change their state's foreign policy course of action (Doeser and Eidenfalk, 2013). There are several ways in which structure and agency can interact such that international norms prompt FPC, or vice-versa. The multicausality of this framework highlights the need for careful empirical work that evaluates how intervening mechanisms operate. The papers in this issue represent the beginnings of efforts to that end.

Investigating Foreign Policy Change and International Norms.

The seven papers in this special issue investigate the push and pull factors put forward in Table 1. One paper focuses primarily on domestic intervening variables, two focus mainly on international variables, while four consider both domestic and international factors. Likewise, while all of the papers examine *politics,* five also explicitly focus on the *polities* in which FPC is occurring. The papers investigate how these factors operate in the context of a variety of international norms, including norms on crime and punishment, sovereignty and recognition, troop deployment and intervention, elections and democratization, trade liberalization, and human rights.

Kaarbo (this issue) examines how the make-up of domestic coalition governments influences the potential for FPC regarding international norms. Using two case studies - Japanese adoption of norms of trade liberalization with respect to rice and the Turkish ban on the death penalty – Kaarbo explores how coalition governments (domestic *politics* and *polity*) interact

with international political pressure that is channeled through international institutions in the international *polity* (the GATT/WTO, and the EU, respectively). One of Kaarbo's main findings is that while various scope conditions can influence the likelihood of coalition governments engaging in FPC, coalition governments may be prone to significant delays in government responsiveness to international norms.

In the one paper in the issue which focuses on the international norm as *outcome*, Jakobi (this issue) examines how U.S. foreign policy strategy has changed in order to establish, more or less successfully, global anti-crime norms in the areas of money laundering, corruption, and human trafficking. Jakobi focuses on how domestic institutional structures (*polity*) interact with the domestic norm environment, political structures and political actors, to determine the type of foreign policy approach adopted (a FPC) in order to promote the norm internationally. Jakobi finds that activists and business are important domestic drivers FPC for states that would be international norm *entrepreneurs*.

Dukalskis (this issue) also examines international norms of criminality, but through the lens of an international organization (*polity*), the International Criminal Court (ICC). Dukalskis uses a novel metric of 'Normative Disposition Indicators' (NDIs) to measure foreign policy orientation, and changes therein, of five African states towards the Court. Dukalskis shows that domestic leadership changes (*politics*) and developments in regional and international *politics* influence the states' foreign policy orientations.

Like Dukalskis, Hecht (this issue) studies an international organization, the United Nation General Assembly (UNGA). However, rather than capturing states' foreign policy orientations *towards* the organization, Hecht uses this international *polity* as an action arena in which to consider FPC on international norms regarding UN support for elections and

democratization. Indeed, Hecht finds that how the UN operationalizes the norm has a significant influence on inducing FPC of the member states with regard to the norm. Considerations are also given to the international *politics* as various norm entrepreneurs seek to build coalitions around their particular conceptions of the norms, and to the role of the domestic *polity*, in particular the states' conceptualizations of their democratic identity.

The international sovereignty norm also features in Kursani (this issue) who explores the FPC with regards to Macedonia's and Montenegro's recognition of Kosovo. Kursani's analysis centers on how Macedonia and Montenegro coordinated their action internationally in order to avoid potential sanctions from a third state, Serbia (international *politics*). Key to Kursani's argument is that a 'window of opportunity' opened which allowed cooperative action between Macedonia and Montenegro in their FPCs.

Focusing on interventions, Peltner (this issue) considers how competition between the international norms of state sovereignty and human rights influenced the British FPC to a more interventionist role. Peltner shows how, over time, the norm environment surrounding the human rights norm evolved (international *polity*) including the development of the 'responsibility to protect' (R2P) norm. This new understanding, combined with a change in the British government (domestic *politics*) which was more receptive to humanitarian intervention while simultaneously less concerned with sovereignty norms, set a new course for British foreign policy.

Like Hecht, Brazys and Panke (this issue) also study FPC in relation to norms dealt with in the UNGA. They examine the conditions under which states engage in FPC on norms brought to a vote in the UNGA. Focusing on vote-shifts (FPC) on norms of non-proliferation and human rights, Brazys and Panke explore a range of domestic and international determinants.

With respect to nuclear non-proliferation they find a strong incentive to avoid isolation in the international *politics* regarding the norm. States that risk being singled out either lobby hard to encourage other states to change their foreign policy and join them in shirking the norm, or engage in FPC themselves to come into alignment with the international community. With regards to international human rights norms, Brazys and Panke find that FPC will occur when the context of the normative environment surrounding the human rights abuse changes (i.e. an abusive government is ousted) or as a result of domestic government change (*politics*) that results in a shift from a government which fails to condemn human rights abuses, or vice-versa.

Conclusions

The papers in this special issue represent an important contribution to the nascent empirical literature that examines how international norms interact with foreign policy change. Building on decades of thought regarding factors for FPC and the role of norms in international politics, these contributions illuminate a number of intervening causal pathways by which norms can influence FPC, or vice-versa. In many ways, these papers engage in explorative, inductive, plausibility probes that scholars can build upon in further empirical and theoretical research. Four conclusions can be drawn from this collection.

First, it is clear that international norms matter for FPC. In every case presented in the contributions of this special issue, the international norm had a profound influence in promoting or constraining the state foreign policy under question. Changing foreign policy to conform to or spurn international norms can provide domestic political cover, signal like-mindedness with a broader international community, and/or promote the normative beliefs of

governments or leaders. At a minimum, international norms can serve a *functional* purpose for states seeking to change their foreign policy. At the other extreme, international norms become the primary reason for FPC.

Second, while the papers make clear that norms matter for FPC, they also firmly establish that the *way* in which international norms are important is widely diverse. This multicausality was expected from our conceptual framework, and the papers validate this supposition. In some cases domestic politics are the prime driver for changing state foreign policy orientation towards an international norm. In other cases, international pressure or cooperation appears to be the principle cause, finally, in yet other instances the disposition of specific political leaders with respect to a norm is what facilitates the FPC. Indeed, it seems that while there are a number of intervening factors that are *sufficient* for norm-based FPC, none of these factors appears *necessary*.

Third, the equifinality of how international norms interact with FPC is consistent with observations in the field of foreign policy analysis that foreign policy decision-making processes in general are characterized by complexity and are often highly dependent on the personal and contextual environments in which the decisions are made (Hagan and Hermann 2005; Hudson, 2005; Kaarbo 2015). The complexity evidenced by articles in this issue will hopefully prompt researchers of FPC to continue to develop more fine-grained theories on international norms and FPC, which clearly specify under what conditions and in what circumstances different intervening factors become conducive for translating international norms into foreign policy change. This research agenda holds great promise for further understanding of how international ideas can transform state action.

Taken together, this Special Issue suggests that FPC dynamics cluster in regard to the policy area to which an international norm belongs. Most strikingly, there seems to be a difference between high and low politics. FPC tends to be less frequent and less swift with international high politics norms as compared to international low politics norms. In high politics (e.g. nuclear non-proliferation, military intervention, troop deployment, sovereignty and state recognition) there are fewer change agents (NGOs, etc.) and the international structure is less volatile not the least since the big powers remain constant as there are no fundamental shifts in the distribution of military power. In low politics (democratization, trade liberalization, human rights, death penalty, international criminal norms), by contrast, FPC tends to be more frequent and swifter, not the least as the number of domestic and international change agents (NGOs, organized interests, trade unions, functional associations) is considerably higher and as the international structure is more strongly in flux due to the high number of international and regional institutions operating in the area and the vertical and horizontal exchange of ideas and norms (policy diffusion) amongst these institutions (Börzel and Risse, 2012), Strange (1996).

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[1]C.f. Marks, and Hooghe.*Multi-Level Governance and European Integration*. Scholars of MLG draw on insights of neo-institutional approaches, which highlight that institutional rules on all levels influence but do not determine actor behavior (March, James G., and Johan P. Olsen. (1998) The Institutional Dynamics of International Political Orders. *International Organization* 52:943-69, Immergut, Ellen M. (1998) The Theoretical Core of the New Institutionalism. *Politics and Society* 26:5-34.), on liberal approaches to IR, which content that states' international behavior is influenced by domestic considerations or constraints (Putnam, Robert. (1988) Diplomacy and Domestic Politics. The Logic of Two-Level Games. *International Organization* 42:427-60, Lehman, Howard P., and Jennifer L. McCoy. (1992) The Dynamics of the Two-Level Bargaining Game. The 1988 Brazilian Debt Negotiations. *World Politics* 44:600-44.)