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## Non-State Actors and Foreign Policy

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The rise of non-state (international, private, and transnational) actors in global politics has far-reaching consequences for foreign policy theory and practice. In order to remain able to explain foreign policy also in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, foreign policy research needs to take into account the growing importance of nonstate actors. A good way to do this would be to engage the literature on globalization and global governance. Both fields would benefit from such an exchange of ideas because their respective strengths could cancel out each other's weaknesses. Foreign policy research on one hand has a strong track record explaining foreign policy outcomes, using a broad range of theoretical concepts but almost completely ignores non-state actors. This is highly problematic for at least two reasons: Firstly, foreign policy is increasingly made in international organizations and intergovernmental and transnational governance networks instead of national institutions like foreign ministries. Secondly, also the latter increasingly open up to, and involve, non-state actors in their policymaking procedures. Thus, if foreign policy research wants to avoid becoming marginalized in the future, it needs to take into account this change. However, especially systemic approaches like neorealism or constructivism have difficulties adapting to the new reality of foreign policy. Not only do they explicitly stress the importance of states at the expense of non-state actors, which are only of marginal interest to them, as is global governance. Moreover, they also conceptualize states unitary actors which forecloses the possibility of examining the involvement of non-state actors in states' decision-making processes. Agency-based approaches such as Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA) fare much better, at least in principle. FPA scholars stress the importance of disaggregating the state and looking at the individuals and group dynamics that influence their decision making. However, while this commitment to opening up the state allows for a great deal more flexibility *vis-à-vis* different types of actors, FPA research has so far remained state-centric and only very recently turned to non-state actors. On the other hand, non-state actors' involvement in policymaking is the strong suit of the literature on globalization and global governance, which has spent a lot of time and effort analyzing various forms of "hybrid" governance. At the same time, however, this literature has been rather descriptive, so far mainly systematizing different governance arrangements and the conditions under which non-state actors are included in governance arrangements. This literature could profit from foreign policy research's rich theoretical knowledge in explaining policy outcomes in hybrid governance networks and IOs.

Foreign policy researchers should take non-state actors seriously. In this regard three avenues in particular are relevant for future research : (1) comparative empirical research to establish the

extent of non-state actors' participation in foreign policymaking across different countries and governance arrangements (2) explanatory studies that analyze the conditions under which non-state actors are involved in states' foreign policymaking processes and (3) the normative implications of increased hybrid foreign policymaking for democratic legitimacy.

*Keywords:* foreign policy analysis, non-state actors, globalization, global governance, international organizations, non-governmental organizations, multinational corporations, IR theory, hybrid governance, democratic legitimacy

## **Introduction**

Despite its important contributions to our understanding of how foreign policies are produced and which factors shape them, foreign policy research remains largely state-centric, while almost completely ignoring the increasing importance of non-state actors (Baumann and Stengel, 2014; Hellmann and Jørgensen, 2015b; Risse, 2013a). This is problematic because there is good reason to assume that non-state actors are actually highly relevant for foreign policy, mainly for two reasons: Firstly they present "rival" actors that states have to take into account (Chong, 2002). Secondly, non-state actors are increasingly involved in hybrid forms of (also foreign) policymaking. Non-state actors already are important foreign policy actors, and if foreign policy research wants to avoid becoming marginalized, it needs to start including them in the analysis. The best way to do this, is to engage with the literature on globalization and global governance. This body of work focuses precisely on the issues foreign policy research has ignored, namely non-state actors' independent activities in global politics and their increased involvement in arrangements of "hybrid governance," involving both state and non-state actors (Colona and Jaffe, 2016). This literature however has mainly focused on policy issues commonly associated with 'domestic' politics, while "ignor[ing] foreign policy altogether" (Hill, 2016, p. x). Thus, both bodies of literature have strengths and blindspots that could potentially cancel each other out, if dialogue were to ensue.

For the purposes of this study, foreign policy can be understood broadly to refer to "the sum of official external relations conducted by an independent actor (usually but not exclusively a state) in international relations" (Hill, 2016, p. 4; see also Cohen and Harris, 1975, p. 383). Foreign policy research comprises any academic study of foreign policy, while the term Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA) refers to the subfield of International Relations (IR) that focuses

specifically on foreign policy decision making (Carlsnaes, 2013). Globalization is understood here as “the extension of boundaries of social transactions beyond national borders” (Zangl and Zürn, 1999, p. 140). Global governance refers to processes of governing that are designed to solve “denationalized” problems (Zürn 2013, p. 408) and often involve both state and non-state actors (Dingwerth and Pattberg, 2006; Rhodes, 2007; Rosenau and Czempiel, 1992). Non-state actors may be distinguished from state actors based on the public/private dichotomy and the distinction between actors whose authority – an actor’s ability to “successfully claim the right to perform regulatory functions like the formulation of rules and rule monitoring or enforcement” (Zürnet al., 2012, p. 70) – is limited to a specific national territory and those whose authority is not limited to a single territory (Genschel and Zangl, 2008, 2011).<sup>1</sup> State actors are entities under public law whose authority is limited to a specific national territory, while international actors’ authority extends beyond the territory of one state (for example international organizations (IOs)). Private actors are entities under private law whose authority is limited to a specific national territory, transnational actors are those not limited in such a way. The term non-state actor thus is used here as an umbrella term for private, international and transnational actors (Genschel and Zangl, 2008, 2011).

The remainder of this article is divided in four sections. The following section will discuss globalization and the move from international politics to global governance. Foreign policy is increasingly made not within the ‘traditional’ state institutions of foreign policy (e.g. ministries) but in IOs and governance networks. However, the traditional institutions have not been completely marginalized either, but we can observe a trend towards hybridization, that is, the inclusion of non-state actors. This is what the subsequent section focuses on, distinguishing four different types of non-state actor involvement in state institutions concerned with foreign policy. Moving from the object level of foreign policy to the meta level of academic research, different theoretical approaches in foreign policy research will then be probed as to how well they may be able to cope with the challenge of recognizing the importance of non-state actors. This will, finally, lead to a sketch of promising avenues for future research.

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<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that the two are heuristic distinctions that are not that clear-cut in practice. Neither the distinction between public and private (Peterson, 2000) nor between the inside and outside of a state (and, hence, between the domestic and the international) is unproblematic, for both analytic and political reasons (Eriksson and Rhinard, 2009; Walker, 1993; Zürn, 2013).

## Globalization and Global Governance: Hybrid Policymaking for Denationalized Problems

Recognizing the importance of non-state actors is not *per se* a new insight in IR. Already in the 1970s, the interdependence literature acknowledged that world politics was not exclusively a domain of states and their representatives (Keohane and Nye, 2001). But more recently, non-state actors have received attention in the context of globalization and global governance. There is widespread agreement in IR that an increasing amount of social transactions (financial, communication, transportation, etc.) takes place across borders.<sup>2</sup>

Along with the denationalization of social transactions we can observe the proliferation of non-state actors like IOs, multinational corporations, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) or criminal networks in global politics, which pursue their own goals independent of states.<sup>3</sup> These goals might well go hand in hand with (some) states' policy aims, but they can equally conflict with them. Thus, non-state actors can be valuable allies but they can equally hamper the implementation of states' foreign policies or in extreme cases force even great powers to adapt their foreign policies. The terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon in 2001, and on different locations in Paris are extreme examples in this regard, but also actions on a smaller scale can become a significant enough nuisance for states to force them to act. Examples include cyber attacks, piracy or various forms of transnational organized crime (see e.g. Kahler 2015). Due to space constraints, however, we will limit the following discussion to cooperation between state and non-state actors, while leaving "uncooperative" non-state actors largely aside.

Moreover, some non-state actors also increasingly exert authority, that is, they are involved in regulatory activities. Most obviously, IOs are important actors in global politics, with political authority and agency independent of states (Avant et al., 2010; Barnett and Finnemore, 2004; Barnett and Sikkink, 2008; Genschel and Zangl, 2013; Zürn et al., 2012). While certain actions like market reforms enforced by the International Monetary Fund or the World Bank and United Nations (UN) sanctions often reflect the interests of powerful states, many UN organizations are active around the globe without votes in the Security Council. Moreover, supranational institutions like the World Trade Organization or the International Criminal

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<sup>2</sup> This process should however not be understood as unidirectional, uncontested or truly global in nature, which is why some observers prefer to speak of "societal denationalization" (Zürn, 2013, p. 403).

<sup>3</sup> As the example of the East India Company shows, this is not an entirely new phenomenon (Robins, 2002). Neither are NGOs entirely novel (Davies, 2014).

Court not only influence foreign policy but sometimes enforce decisions against the interests of even powerful states (Gruber, 2000; Martin and Simmons, 2013, p. 337; Tallberg, 2004). The authority of international actors is not limited to 'soft' policy fields but actually extends well into security affairs (Genschel and Jachtenfuchs, 2016; Herschinger et al., 2011; Mayer, 2011). More and more government functions are assigned to international actors. Europeanization (Börzel and Risse, 2000; Bulmer and Burch, 2005; Gross, 2009) and European foreign policy (see Jørgensen et al., 2015) are prominent examples. Moreover, within NATO and the EU at least, there is a general trend (in part also for financial reasons) towards the pooling and integration of capabilities (Mayer, 2014). Equally, international judges (Madsen, 2014) and civil servants (Sending, 2014) to some extent display state-independent action, which in part is due to organization cultures. IOs for one have become so independent of their state members that scholars have begun, in Barnett and Sikkink's words, "to worry that runaway IOs might become modern-day Frankenstein's, where the inventors are no longer able to control their creation" (Barnett and Sikkink, 2008, p. 757). In addition to decision-making within formal IOs, foreign policy also takes place as a form of network governance (Goodin et al., 2008; Risse, 2013a). Here, policy emerges as the result of policymaking in intergovernmental and interbureaucratic networks like the G7/G8 or informal coordination within IOs like NATO (Gstöhl, 2007; Kahler, 2015; Slaughter, 2004).<sup>4</sup> Although these networks consist of state actors, the movement of decision making from a setting involving officials of just one national government to one involving multiple ones presents a shift in the "decision unit" (Hermann, 2001, p. 48). Put simply, decisions about, say, US foreign policy are then partially prepared by, for example, French bureaucrats, and made involving also British government officials. It seems only natural that such decisions will differ from decisions made solely involving US officials.

Furthermore, one can observe a trend towards what has been called "transnational governance" (Risse, 2013b, p. 426), which refers to governance involving private and/or transnational actors, not just international ones. To begin with, transnational actors like NGOs (Gerstbauer, 2005), business companies (Kolk and Lenfant, 2012; Tsingou, 2014; Wolf et al., 2007) and scientific experts (Haas, 1992; Kauppi, 2014; Sending, 2015) pursue their own

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<sup>4</sup> Intergovernmental networks refer to networks of high government officials from different states (e.g. ministers, heads of government or state, national security advisors, heads of intelligence agencies and so on), interbureaucratic networks to lower-level officials like bureaucrats (Bauman and Stengel, 2014; Krotz, 2010, p. 152).

agendas (see Jönsson and Tallberg, 2010; Risse, 2013b; Risse-Kappen, 1995b). As the activities of terrorist groups like al Qaeda or the so-called 'Islamic State' (or Daesh) most clearly demonstrate, these activities can significantly impact the foreign policies of even the most powerful states (Kahler, 2015). Moreover, like international actors transnational and private actors often also exert authority (Hall and Biersteker, 2002; Pauly and Grande, 2005). Aside from public-private partnerships, private and transnational authority mainly manifests itself in hybrid, transnational governance networks involving state and non-state actors (Dingwerth and Pattberg, 2006; Held and Koenig-Archibugi, 2003; Marchetti, 2016; Ougaard and Leander, 2010). In addition, IOs have increasingly opened up to transnational actors like scientific experts, businesses and NGOs (Tallberg et al., 2013). Transnational and private actors are increasingly involved in decision making within IOs, although the extent to which they have access varies significantly (Steffek, 2010; Tallberg et al., 2014). Importantly, this also extends well into the provision of security, both externally and internally, and scholars have begun speaking about specific forms of "security governance" (Krahmann, 2003; Abrahamsen and Williams, 2011). Nevertheless, the exact extent of this "power shift" (Mathews, 1997) from state actors towards non-state actors continues to be disputed.<sup>5</sup>

The move towards "governance beyond the nation-state" (Zürn, 1998) is to a large part the result of the emergence of denationalized problems that cannot be solved by individual states on their own (Mayntz, 2002; Reinicke, 1999; Stone, 2008). Problems like climate change cannot be addressed even by the most powerful actors alone but require international and transnational cooperation. Moreover, due to the fact that they are not territorially bound, non-state actors are only to a limited extent subject to governmental control. For example, if a multinational corporation is facing tax increases or strong environmental regulations, it can in principle move its headquarters to a different country, as can a transnational NGO facing governmental repression. As a consequence, involving these actors – in public-private partnerships, for instance (Ohanyan, 2009; Schäferhoff et al, 2009) – is sometimes the best way to address the problem.<sup>6</sup> What is important to note about networked governance is that – in

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<sup>5</sup> While some authors argue that the state is becoming obsolete (Ohmae, 1995; Strange, 1996), others claim that globalization does not change much (Gilpin, 2000; Waltz, 1999). More recently, studies have begun to examine the precise nature and extent of the alleged change of Western statehood (e.g. Genschel and Zangl, 2013; Leibfried et al., 2015).

<sup>6</sup> This is not to say that one should accept the "crude 'business school' version" of globalization according to which national governments have no choice but to fulfil economic actors' demands (Watson and Hay, 2003, p. 289). Nor is it to say that governments could not in principle restrict people from leaving their country.

contrast to the “hierarchical control model” (Mayntz, 2002, p. 21) familiar from traditional notions of public administration and foreign policymaking (Stoker, 2006, pp. 43-45) – it involves non-hierarchical modes of decision making and policy implementation. Because no single actor is “in command” within these networks (Goodin et al., 2008, p. 865), this mode of governance involves much more arguing/persuasion and bargaining (Goodin et al., 2008; Müller, 2004; Risse, 2000, 2013a).

### **Non-State Actors and “Traditional” Foreign Policymaking within State Institutions**

In addition to being independent players and participants in global governance arrangements, non-state actors are also increasingly included in ‘traditional’ national foreign policymaking within state institutions like foreign offices or defense ministries. So similar to hybrid governance, one can observe a trend towards the hybridization of traditional foreign policy and its institutions as well. Again, it should be kept in mind that this is largely an analytical distinction, while in reality, these processes will be intertwined.<sup>7</sup>

We can distinguish different types of non-state actors’ involvement in foreign policymaking within national (state) institutions, based on juxtaposing indirect and direct as well as formal and informal involvement. The direct/indirect dimension refers to whether non-state actors are participating in the institutionalized processes of foreign policymaking (Risse, 2013a, p. 177), to pick an extreme case, in cabinet meetings or in the National Security Council. Indirect involvement on the other hand refers to activities like lobbying or advocacy, without inclusion in official decision-making bodies. Admittedly, this is a question of degree rather than a binary category. Not only does influence depend on which decision-making body non-state actors are represented in, but also access varies in terms of, for example, depth with actors having voting rights, visiting status in all or some meetings, or no access at all (with respect to IOs Tallberg et al., 2014). By formal interaction between state and non-state actors and their representatives we mean interaction that takes place in official forums designated for that purpose, such as advisory boards or hearings in Congress. Informal interaction refers to interaction outside such designated forums, for example if decision-makers and lobbyist meet for lunch.

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<sup>7</sup> Needless to say, to the extent that the representatives of these institutions are included in intergovernmental and interbureaucratic networks and work with their counterparts in IOs, also the traditional institutions of foreign policy are being disaggregated.

**Table 1: Examples for different types of hybrid foreign policymaking**

	<b>Direct</b>	<b>Indirect</b>
<b>Formal</b>	Inclusion in decision-making structures	Hearings of interest groups in parliament, scientific policy advice, diplomacy
<b>Informal</b>	Some forms of corruption	Media reporting, academic publishing, lobbying and advocacy, expert consultations

*Source: authors' illustration*

Indirect involvement is not a new issue. Students of foreign policy have examined the influence of ethnic (Haney and Vanderbush, 1999), religious (Haynes, 2014) business or other interest groups on foreign policy (LaPira, 2014; Milner and Tingley, 2015, ch. 3). The influence in particular of the business community has also been documented by quantitative studies (Jacobs and Page, 2005). Much lobbying takes place informally, but organized interest groups are often also invited to testify in (formal) parliamentary hearings as experts, and thus have the opportunity to voice their concerns (Milner and Tingley, 2015, ch. 3). In this context, in particular transnational advocacy coalitions and social movements are interesting, which have received significant attention in the literature (Bloodgood, 2011; Hanegraaff et al., 2015; Keck and Sikkink, 1998; Tarrow, 2011). An additional indirect influence that has been discussed to some extent in the literature are epistemic communities, that is, expert networks (Antoniades, 2003; Cross, 2013; Haas, 1992). Importantly, not only scientific experts and bureaucrats influence how policy issues come to be understood but also NGOs who influence, mainly via informal channels, for example the EU's Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP) (Dembinski and Joachim, 2014; Joachim and Dembinski, 2011). Although their influence is still mainly restricted to the implementation phase, NGOs continuously "expand the space for their participation" in CSDP, establishing working relations and gaining credibility as information sources (Shapovalova, 2016, p. 327). This also applies to the US. As Stoddard (2006) has shown, US intervention decisions are often based on information provided by NGOs. In the context of concrete operations, for example disaster relief operations, state actors often work hand in hand with private and transnational actors and rely on their information for operational planning, including not just IOs and NGOs but also business companies.<sup>8</sup> As

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<sup>8</sup> For example, in the context of the 2015 Nepal earthquake, private companies like the German logistics company DHL provided US armed forces and other government agencies with intelligence and local expertise



mentioned above, the media also exerts influence on foreign policymaking, for example in agenda setting and framing (Soroka, 2003; Walgrave et al., 2008; Wolfe et al., 2013). Like ordinary citizens, policymakers gain a large chunk of their information from the media (Avey and Desch, 2014), and as a consequence issue selection and framing influence how issues come to be understood and are weighed (Wolfe et al., 2013).

A newer development is the direct involvement of non-state actors in the domestic institutions in charge of a state's foreign policy. Not only do leaders of business companies, NGOs and academic institutions often go (temporarily or permanently) into government service,<sup>9</sup> their organizations are also increasingly directly involved in national policymaking. The most common form is the delegation of foreign policy tasks to non-state actors, especially with respect to policy implementation, the process by which decisions are put into action (Brighi and Hill, 2008, p. 117). In this context, the most (in)famous example are private military and security companies (PMSCs) who have taken over core functions in armed forces of many Western countries (e.g. Avant, 2005; Leander, 2011; Singer, 2008). PMSCs not only offer training, maintenance and other essentially non-military services but also provide protection for state officials, are involved in interrogations and other intelligence operations, and have in many ways become indispensable in certain areas, for instance technology-heavy areas like communications or weapons maintenance (Singer, 2008). Equally, IOs, corporations and NGOs increasingly employ the services of PMSCs (Baum and McGahan, 2013; Singer, 2008) and other contractors. Another example for non-state actor involvement is so-called "compound warfare," in which regular forces work in cooperation with irregular ones (Krieg, 2016, p. 99), like for instance coalition forces with the Northern Alliance in the overthrow of the Taliban in 2001. Equally, governments often rely on NGOs for the implementation of their policies (Bush, 2016). In contrast to what the policy cycle model might suggest, in practice implementation is not a distinct phase of policymaking. Rather, policy formulation, decision making, implementation and evaluation are usually intertwined, which means that policies are constantly adapted in ongoing processes. This way, information and feedback by surrogates also feeds back into policymaking (Brighi and Hill, 2008).

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(Dorman and Latham, 2016, p. 58).

<sup>9</sup> Academics often move into government service for some time (Henry Kissinger, Condoleezza Rice and Stephen Krasner are only a few among many examples), as do business leaders, if less often (the current US President Trump and his Secretary of State Rex Tillerson just being two examples), and under the leadership of Robin Cook, the British Foreign Office hired officers from NGOs like Amnesty International and Save the Children (Neumann, 2015, p. 54).

However, states not only rely on non-state actors for mere implementation purposes. Instead, the latter are involved in all stages of the policy process. As mentioned above, this begins with problem representation/framing and agenda setting, but also includes policy formulation and decision making as well as evaluation (see Jann and Wegrich, 2007). The increasing reliance on surrogates for foreign-policy implementation – whether private contractors, NGOs or IOs – also increases the need for coordination, which means that non-state surrogates need to be involved at least to some extent also in the planning of policies (Porteous, 2005; Stengel and Weller, 2010). This is clearly visible in US defense policy. Here, the significant reliance on contractors, not just PMSCs but a broad range of other commercial service providers, has led to the realization, at least among US armed forces personnel, that it requires closer coordination already in the planning phase, since “[f]ailure to integrate OCS [Operational Contract Support] increases the cost and reduces the precision, efficiency, and effectiveness of military efforts” (Dorman and Latham, 2016, p. 55). Much of this coordination still takes place on an informal, ad hoc basis, but state actors also increasingly include representatives of non-state actors into decision-making structures. The least ‘invasive’ form of direct non-state actor participation are advisory boards, through which governments institutionalize access to expertise. One example is the US State Department’s International Security Advisory Board whose task is to provide “the Department with independent insight and advice on all aspects of arms control, disarmament, nonproliferation, international security, and related aspects of public diplomacy”.<sup>10</sup> The board consists of members of academic institutions, think tanks, foundations (for example the Ploughshares Fund) and leaders of business companies (e.g. Hart International, a risk management firm). Moreover, representatives of business companies are often directly involved in the making of foreign economic policy through integration in institutions or inclusion in trade delegations (Breslin, 2004; EUISS, 2010; Kundnani, 2011). One additional way in which private actors can gain significant influence on foreign policy is by getting access to elected office. Usually, policymakers are expected to further the public interest, and there are numerous provisions in place to remove politicians from their private business during their term in office, with the aim of avoiding corruption. However, as the media debate about the extent to which US foreign policy is driven by President Donald Trump’s own private business interests makes clear, even democracies are not entirely safe

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<sup>10</sup> <http://www.state.gov/t/avc/isab/>

from the appropriation of public offices by its incumbents (Pillar, 2017; on corruption Ross, 2014). Overall, in many fields non-state actors increasingly “act as policy generators and are directly involved in decision-making and implementation of policy” (EUISS, 2010, p. 40). Moreover, policy documents call for further increased involvement of non-state actors. The 2015 British National Security Strategy for example calls for increased outsourcing in the defense sector and stresses the importance of the private sector for cyber security and the response to “[g]lobal risks and rising instability” (HM Government, 2015, pp. 33, 40, 67). Equally, the 2015 US National Security Strategy vowed to “continuously expand the scope of cooperation to encompass other state partners, non-state and private actors, and international institutions” and to increase the resilience of US society through a “Whole of Community approach, bringing together all elements of our society—individuals, local communities, the private and non-profit sectors, faith-based organizations, and all levels of government” (The White House, 2015, pp. 3, 8). Equally, non-state actors of different sorts are involved in policy evaluation, whether under contract by state and international actors or on their own initiative. Thus, a large amount of research is being produced that evaluates different aspects of policy in regards to their effectiveness, for example in the field of CSDP or individual national policies .<sup>11</sup>

Overall, non-state actors’ involvement not simply includes implementation services but spans the full policy cycle, including, for example, strategic advice provided by former general officers working for PMSCs (Singer, 2008). Moreover, non-state actors’ involvement is not limited to indirect modes like lobbying and advocacy anymore, but these actors are increasingly included in decision-making structures. Overall, as Keukeleire and Schunz (2015, p. 69f) rightly point out, the situation presented by the changed, multi-layered foreign-policy landscape is indeed far more complicated than Putnamian “two-level games” (Putnam, 1988) would suggest.

### **FP(A) and Non-State Actors: Are Theoretical Approaches Up to the Challenge?**

So far we have tried to establish that non-state actors play an important role not just in matters

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<sup>11</sup> One could criticize this type of research as the kind of “problem-solving” theory that Cox (1981, p. 128) considered problematic. More specifically with respect to CSDP, Chamlian (2016, p. 395) has argued that much of the CSDP literature uncritically reproduces the assumption that the EU should become more, not less active to counter allegedly new transnational threats like terrorism.

of domestic politics but also in foreign policy, both as independent actors and as cooperation partners involved in states' foreign policies. This section turns to the question to what extent foreign policy studies, in particular theoretically, are prepared to address this significant shift in how foreign policy is conducted today. Following Hellmann and Jørgensen (2015), we distinguish here between (1) systemic and (2) agency-based approaches.

### *Systemic Approaches*

To begin with, part of the theory-oriented research on foreign policy consists of attempts to utilize insights from IR's "grand theories" (Holsti, 1971, p. 166) to explain a particular foreign policy decision and/or outcome.<sup>12</sup> In light of space limitations, this section focuses on neorealism (or structural realism), "conventional" constructivism (Hopf, 1998) and liberalism, arguably the most prominent systemic IR theories.<sup>13</sup> Although primarily designed to explain general patterns of state interaction (Waltz 1996; Wendt 1999, p. 11), scholars have used, or argued for the use of, systemic theories to try to explain foreign policy (Baumann et al. , 1999; Elman, 1996; Flockhart, 2012; Houghton, 2007; Mearsheimer, 2001; Rittberger, 2001; Wivel, 2005). Although a rejection of systemic theories' utility for foreign policy studies *per se* seems premature, they do have significant problems with the inclusion of non-state actors. In this regard, mainly two problems are relevant: state centrism and the unitary actor assumption.

To begin with, neorealist foreign policy studies, whether "offensive" (Mearsheimer, 2001) or "neo-classical" (McLean, 2016; Rathbun, 2008; Rose, 1998; Schweller, 2004; Taliaferro, 2006),<sup>14</sup> share basic neorealist assumptions, most notably the anarchic structure of the international system, the centrality of states, their struggle for survival, insecurity about other actors' intentions and so on (Mearsheimer, 2001, ch. 2; Waltz, 1979, ch. 5, 6).<sup>15</sup> Since for neorealists, states are the main actors and will remain so for the foreseeable time (Gilpin, 2000; Waltz,

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<sup>12</sup> Whether decisions or outcomes/behavior should be the explanandum of foreign policy studies is subject to debate (Carlsnaes, 2013).

<sup>13</sup> IR theory is of course more diverse than our selection suggests. We refrain from including institutionalism, English School or critical systemic approaches because (a) these approaches have either not been as prominent in the study of foreign policy (institutionalism, English School) or have an entirely different, and often incompatible, conception of what it means to offer an explanation (critical approaches).

<sup>14</sup> The second group is sometimes also referred to as "post-classical" (Brooks, 1997) or "modified" (Baumann et al., 1999) realism.

<sup>15</sup> Neo-classical accounts combine basic realist assumptions with domestic politics, while Mearsheimer's only modification to Waltz's original account is to argue that great powers actually strive for hegemony instead of just a moderate amount of power – hence the label of "offensive" realism. So for Mearsheimer, great powers have aggressive intentions.

1999), it basically declares non-state actors outside its area of responsibility. IOs are mere vehicles for states to push through their agendas (Mearsheimer, 1994/95), and transnational and private are of marginal importance compared to states. From a realist perspective, non-state actors are only relevant in regard to their potential involvement in state behavior. Here a second problem comes into play, namely the unitary actor assumption. According to neorealism, the anarchic structure of the international system turns states into “like units”(Waltz, 1997, p. 913), providing strong incentives for them to behave in a similar fashion. Put simply, states behave like billiard balls on a pool table (Krasner, 1982), and understanding their actions does not require to open them up. That excludes potential non-state involvement from the start. By allowing for at least some opening up of the black box of the state, post-classical realists are in a better position to account for non-state actors, at least their involvement in states’ foreign policies.<sup>16</sup> Still, the question remains to what extent such an account would still be strictly realist (Legro and Moravcsik, 1999, 2000). It is highly doubtful whether non-state actors could be integrated into a neorealist framework without giving up its bedrock assumptions (but then, neorealists would probably rather dispute the need to turn to actors other than states). So, overall, neorealism does not provide the best starting point to examine the empirical developments we have sketched out above.

Constructivist accounts, at least in their Wendtian articulation, fare little better. Like Waltz, Wendt insists on the primacy of states and thus, like neorealism, declares itself not in charge of non-state actors. Similar to Waltz, Wendt conceptualizes the state as a unitary actor, not a disaggregated one that would allow for the analysis of hybrid foreign policymaking.<sup>17</sup> Indeed, insofar as at least Wendt has argued in favor of understanding states as persons, conventional constructivism even goes beyond neorealism in the commitment to the state-as-actor.<sup>18</sup>

One exception in this regard is liberalism as (re)formulated most prominently by Moravcsik (1997) in the 1990s. According to liberalism, state action on the international level is mainly the result of the interplay of the different states’ preferences. Importantly, states’ preferences

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<sup>16</sup> Certainly, examining non-state actors as independent player still falls outside the theory’s purview.

<sup>17</sup> It should be noted though that Wendt has since then not only provided a critique of his own work (Wendt, 2006), turned more towards poststructuralism in some works (Wendt and Duvall, 2008) and, most recently, focused on quantum theory (Wendt, 2015), so it is questionable to what extent the critique provided here still applies to his current theoretical positions. Certainly, if we conceptualize of humans as “walking wave functions” (Wendt, 2015, p. 3), it does not matter much if they act within state structures or NGOs.

<sup>18</sup> To be precise, for neorealists the assumption of states as actors is an instrumental and not an ontological one. As opposed to that, Wendt made a (philosophically) realist argument in support of state personhood (Wendt, 2004, 2005).

themselves are not the result of external system pressures (like anarchy) but depend on the interests of the most influential societal actors. This in principle allows for an incorporation of non-state actors. The main vehicle through which the interests of societal actors translate into states' preferences are "[r]epresentative institutions and practices" such as elections, which Moravcsik conceives of as a "transmission belt" (Moravcsik, 1997, p. 518). By understanding states primarily as transmission belts, liberalism allows for non-state actors to exert influence on decision-makers. Still, liberalism directs our attention mainly to elections, not so much to dynamics within different organizations, decision-making bodies and so on that would allow us to examine precisely what it means if non-state actors get a seat at the table – independent of any democratic procedures.

### *Agency-based Approaches*

The second large group in theory-oriented foreign policy research consists of agency-based approaches. This includes mainly FPA, the agent-specific subfield of foreign policy research, which has become particularly prominent in the US (Breuning, 2007; Hudson, 2014; Mintz and DeRouen, 2010). FPA is a theoretically rather eclectic field that utilizes insights from a number of different (sub-)disciplines. The combining frame for FPA scholars is their focus on decision-making procedures. That is, FPA scholars stress the importance, quite contrary to realists, to open up and disaggregate the black box of the state and to look into how individuals, groups, organizations and their cultures affect the making of foreign policy (Snyder et al., 2002). More specifically, one can distinguish between studies that examine individual-level factors and those that focus primarily on interaction between individuals and groups within government. Individual-level studies are often strongly influenced by political psychology, highlighting the importance of cognitive processes and personality traits. Much of this type of research is strongly influenced by political psychology (for an overview, see Houghton 2017). A core argument of these types of studies is that, quite contrary to systemic approaches, it matters a great deal who is in charge because personality and cognitive abilities cannot be ignored (Byman and Pollack, 2001; Hermann, 2001). Foreign policymaking in particular is often characterized by high cognitive pressures (stress, lack of time and information, high stakes, etc., see Renshon and Renshon, 2008), and in such situations people tend to rely on cognitive shortcuts, core beliefs and worldviews (Jervis 2006, p. 650), which opens up the possibility of

all kinds of decisions that are by no means perfectly rational. Also, individual personalities differ, for example in regard to their tendency towards risk taking or aversion, the level of self confidence or the need for power, and this influences decision-making. The second group of studies points to the importance of the interplay between different groups in government, broadly understood. This includes for example research on (small) group dynamics, such as groupthink (Janis, 1972) or group conflicts (Hermann and Hermann, 1989; Hermann et al., 2001). Similarly, from an FPA perspective foreign policy is often the product not of systemic pressures or the functional requirements of the specific policy problem at hand but of bureaucratic turf wars (Allison and Zelikow, 1999), organizational cultures and other factors. Overall, FPA directs our attention to individuals and group dynamics within not-so-unitary states, and policy outcomes are often not determined by the problem-adequateness of different policies (as one might initially expect) but by factors that, frankly, have little to do with the nature of the problem at hand. This in principle gives FPA an advantage in the analysis of decision-making in disaggregated organizations, whether they are states or non-state actors, as well as in hybrid governance networks. Moreover, the theoretical eclecticism and process orientation of FPA makes it easier to connect to policy analysis and the governance literature, which already focusses on hybrid governance arrangements. Baumann and Stengel (2014) have argued that theoretical concepts from the FPA toolkit like beliefs and cognitive shortcuts, framing effects (Mintz and Redd, 2003) and problem representation (Sylvan, 1998), groupthink or organizational turf wars and cultures could also be applied to non-state actors' decision-making as well as to hybrid foreign policymaking involving both state and non-state actors. After all, given that at the heart of state and non-state actors's decision making are human beings, the dynamics of group decision-making as well as individual-level factors should not fundamentally differ between the two. However, FPA scholars have so far remained focused on decision dynamics within states and only very recently turned their attention to non-state actors (Alden and Aran, 2017; Hill, 2016).<sup>19</sup>

## **Conclusion: Outline of a Preliminary Research Agenda**

An intensified dialogue between the analysis of foreign policy and the governance literature

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<sup>19</sup> The only exception, to our knowledge, are studies of terrorist leaders (Mintz et al., 2006) and, notably, the established research program on European foreign policy (e.g. Jørgensen et al., 2015).

is needed, which so far have largely ignored each other (Alden and Aran, 2017; Baumann and Stengel, 2014; Risse, 2013a). Such a dialogue may give way to a research agenda comprising three key elements: (1) a systematic inventory of state/non-state actor relationships in foreign policy; (2) research into the factors that influence non-state actor participation in foreign policymaking; and (3) increased efforts to grasp the consequences of the “changing politics of foreign policy” (Hill, 2003) for democratic legitimacy.

#### *Taking Stock of Variation: Towards a Taxonomy of Foreign Policy Actors and their Interactions*

Analyzing foreign policy in the era of globalization has to begin with systematic, comparative research that examines the actual extent of non-state actors’ involvement in foreign-policymaking. As far as global governance is concerned, there already exists a significant body of research. Scholars have examined the increased proliferation of network governance, the reasons for states’ increased reliance on IOs (Keohane, 1982; Tallberg et al., 2016) and networks and the factors that influence the inclusion of transnational actors (Jönsson and Tallberg, 2010; Tallberg, 2010; Tallberg et al., 2013, 2014). However, what is still pending is an analysis to what extent non-state actors are involved in states foreign-policymaking procedures and institutions. Such an analysis has to cover a number of dimensions.

- Firstly, what is needed are cross-national comparisons to establish whether there is significant variation on a country-by-country basis. Such analyses should deploy fine-grained analytical frameworks that allow to distinguish between different types and degrees of participation (say, whether a non-state actor has voting rights or observer status), similar to the literature on NGO access to IOs (Tallberg et al., 2014).
- Secondly, empirical studies need to establish variation across different fields of foreign policy. Certain fields of foreign policy (most notably security policy) simply are more secretive than others, and it is reasonable to assume that this limits access.
- Thirdly, actor involvement has to be classified according to the type of non-state actor involved. At the very least, we need to distinguish between international, transnational and private actors, but other dimensions might be equally helpful (say, between profit-oriented businesses and nonprofits).

#### *Explaining Hybrid Foreign Policymaking: What Influences Externalization, Access and Participation?*



Based on such an empirical inventory, scholars could then begin to explain various aspects of new forms of foreign policymaking. Two avenues seem particularly fruitful here. Firstly, scholars should attempt to analyze foreign policy outcomes, (1) produced by non-state actors acting alone, (2) global governance arrangements and (3) changed national decision-making processes. This is a field where the mainly descriptive global governance literature could also benefit from theoretically oriented research in foreign policy. Foreign policy scholars already have a broad range of theoretical concepts at their disposal with which they can explain policy outcomes.

Secondly, taking, among others, the literature on transnational relations (Risse-Kappen, 1995a) and the opening up of IOs (Tallberg et al., 2013) as a starting point, scholars could examine under which conditions national governments choose to include non-state actors. Factors that seem likely to exert an influence include:

- the type of non-state actor and its resources;
- the regime type and the specific domestic political structures of the respective country;
- political and organizational cultures;
- the policy field and the degree of its international institutionalization;
- the stage of the policy process.

The most important argument highlighted in the literature on global governance is a functional one: actors are included in governance networks because they can offer something that states need (resources, information, geographical access, legitimacy), and regimes emerge because they help states solve policy problems (Abbott et al., 2016; Abbott and Snidal, 1998; Keohane, 1982; Reinicke, 1998; Stone, 2008; Tallberg et al., 2014; Zürn, 2013). Which exact resources an actor can offer will vary significantly. The second factor highlighted in the literature is the regime type and the political opportunity structures of specific states. Studies highlight that democratic standards among member states influence whether transnational actors are included (Tallberg et al., 2014), and it is reasonable to assume that this also holds with respect to states individually. In addition, other, more specific characteristics of the political system are highlighted in the literature, for instance the degree of fragmentation: the higher the degree of fragmentation, the greater the chance that transnational actors can offer resources that are in need (Nölke, 2017, p. 784f). Studies on the conditions of success for lobbying have equally highlighted institutional setup and the relative influence of different government bodies (Dür et al., 2015). Aside from political institutions that regulate access, also

'softer' factors like culture will arguably influence which types of actors have more or less access to which governments. For instance, it seems likely that the extent to which the involvement of private actors is generally considered positive (in terms of efficiency or effectiveness, for example) or negative (in terms of, say, democratic legitimacy) in a particular political culture influences private actors' involvement in foreign policymaking. The hypothesis that privatization will lead to increased efficiency does, despite its widespread acceptance, not necessarily bear out everywhere, so this is more of a culturally influenced expectation than one based on systematic evidence. A similar issue is the involvement of international actors, which is arguably also influenced by cultural factors like for instance whether restraints on unilateral wiggle room are commonly deemed acceptable. In regards to the latter, for example, one could hypothesize that Germany with its strong multilateral tradition in foreign policy (e.g. Baumann, 2006; Maull, 2001) would be much more open to both, IO involvement and coordination with other states in intergovernmental/interbureaucratic networks, than for example the United States with its strong tradition of exceptionalism (e.g. Ceaser, 2012; Lipset, 1997; Onuf, 2012). Equally, studies on the involvement of transnational actors in CSDP have pointed to organizational cultures as a significant factor in determining access (Shapovalova, 2016).

As mentioned above, variation can also be expected across policy fields. Different fields of foreign policy vary in terms of access even within the government, with security policy and intelligence matters being the most secretive, and as a result, access will vary. Moreover, there are likely to be interactive effects to be involved between policy field and the type of actor. For example, NATO as an international actor is intimately involved in all stages of the making of its member states' security policy, as is the EU, while other international actors will be involved to a lesser extent. Similarly, a defense contractor that has personnel with the required security clearances will likely have easier access in security policy than an NGO, while the playing field in environmental politics will likely be at least level, if not skewed towards NGOs (the involvement of PMSCs might be seen as a potential militarization of environmental politics). Furthermore, it seems reasonable to expect that non-state actors' participation will depend on the stage of the policy process (Shapovalova, 2016). For example, states may be more likely to include non-state actors in the implementation stage than in the formulation of policy goals. Arguably, it is easier for states to utilize non-state actors (through delegation or orchestration, Abbott et al., 2016) to implement their foreign policy goals than to have them

participate in the formulation of those goals in the first place.

*Assessing Normative Consequences: Non-state Actors' Involvement, Democratic Legitimacy and Accountability*

Finally, the increasing involvement of non-state actors in foreign policymaking also brings to the fore interesting normative questions, in particular with regard to democratic legitimacy. Traditionally, foreign policy used to be thought of as an area of policy that, as opposed to other policy fields, was not, and should not be, influenced by the public and its special interests because it concerned “national interests [...] and more fundamental values” than are at stake in domestic politics (Cohen, 1968, p. 530) and should be left to enlightened statesmen (*sic!*) that had the national interest in mind (Carlsnaes, 2013, p. 300). Nevertheless, it has been rightly pointed out not only that the public is not remotely as flimsy in its opinions as it was once made out to be (Holsti, 1992; Milner and Tingley, 2013) but also that it shares moral responsibility also for the foreign policies conducted in its name (Krippendorff, 2000). Thus, there is no reason to exclude normative considerations from the analysis of foreign policy.<sup>20</sup> Normative consideration with respect to changing modes of governance have been a central concern with respect to EU (Moravcsik, 2006) and global governance (Dingwerth, 2014; Kuyper, 2016; Nasiritousi et al., 2015; Sørensen and Torfing, 2005; Zürn, 2016). Newer studies highlight the increased politicization of IOs, which goes along with their increased authority (Zürn, 2014; Zürn et al., 2012). With respect to foreign policy, normative considerations have been mainly discussed with respect to PMSCs and the privatization of the state monopoly of force (e.g. De Nevers, 2009; Leander, 2011). To the extent that foreign policymaking within domestic structures is also increasingly influenced by non-state actors, most of which are not legitimated through democratic procedures,<sup>21</sup> the study of foreign policy might also profit from increased normative engagement.

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<sup>20</sup> Similarly, Sjusen (2015) has called for increased attention to normative aspects in the study of European foreign policy.

<sup>21</sup> This is not to say that this is the only potential source of legitimacy (see e.g. Scharpf, 1999).

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