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## **Policy Entrepreneurs and Foreign Policy Decision Making**

Michael Mintrom and Joannah Luetjens

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### **Summary and Keywords**

In recent years, significant effort has been applied to understanding and empirically testing the concept of policy entrepreneurship in a range of different settings. Despite these efforts, studies to date have tended to focus on policy entrepreneurs in domestic policy settings. Few have articulated the potential role that policy entrepreneurs play in understanding foreign policy decision-making. Coupled with theories and evidence from the field of foreign policy analysis, the concept of policy entrepreneurship lends itself to analyzing how actors in the foreign policy space draw attention to problems, advance workable proposals, and link outcomes to symbolic values. This article introduces and applies a framework for the analysis of policy entrepreneurs seeking to influence foreign policy decision-making. This framework is then used to underpin illustrative case studies of foreign policy entrepreneurs. The variety of recent scholarly contributions regarding policy entrepreneurs and foreign policy suggests that many more opportunities exist for such work to be conducted in the future. This is an exciting prospect. Valuable, generalizable insights are more likely to emerge from such a collective research enterprise if the various individual contributions are informed by greater conceptual coherence.

Keywords: policy entrepreneurs, political leadership, agenda setting, diplomacy, foreign policy

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## Introduction to Policy Entrepreneurs

Policy entrepreneurs are energetic actors who work with others in and around policymaking venues to promote significant policy change.<sup>1</sup> In so doing, they exhibit well-documented regularities both in their personal dispositions and in the strategies they undertake. Policy entrepreneurs are ambitious in pursuit of a cause. They display sociability and exhibit high levels of social acuity. To secure credibility within specific policy circles, they draw on their past accomplishments and expertise, their professional connections, and whatever power or prestige they enjoy in their current positions. They are tenacious. In promoting significant policy change, policy entrepreneurs deploy several strategies. These include framing problems and redefining policy solutions, using and expanding networks, creating advocacy teams and coalitions, leading by example, and scaling up advocacy efforts to expand the scope of policy change. Even as they frequently conform to these observed regularities of disposition and strategy, policy entrepreneurs display diversity in their policy interests, where they operate, and how they engage in advocacy efforts. Historically, studies have tended to focus on policy entrepreneurs in domestic policy settings; but more studies are starting to explore the actions of policy entrepreneurs at the international level.

Careful studies of policy entrepreneurs in context can generate significant insights into foreign policy decision-making. This article first reviews what the existing literature illustrates about the work of policy entrepreneurs. It then reviews the field of foreign policy analysis and considers how such actors might contribute to foreign policy development. In the process, the context of foreign policy decision-making is discussed, especially the challenging issue of securing international agreement and securing domestic political agreement on specific policy directions. Areas of similarity and difference between policy entrepreneurship and political leadership are also examined. These preliminary sections set the scene for introducing an analytical framework designed to guide future investigations of policy entrepreneurs and foreign policy decision-making. Having established this background, three cases of policy entrepreneurs shaping foreign policy are presented. The article closes with a discussion of potential directions for future research.

## The Work of Policy Entrepreneurs

John W. Kingdon (2011) introduced the concept of the policy entrepreneur to the public policy literature in a study of domestic policy agenda setting around the United States Congress. Kingdon observed that policy entrepreneurs “could be in or out of government, in elected or appointed positions, in interest groups or research organisations. But their defining characteristic, much as in the case of a business entrepreneur, is their willingness to invest their resources—time, energy, reputation, and sometimes money—in the hope of a future return” (p. 122). Kingdon characterized the policymaking space as consisting of three more or less independent streams of activity. These are the problem stream, the politics stream, and the policy stream. Kingdon argued that certain periods arise when perceptions of problems, ideas for feasible policy solutions, and political circumstances all come into alignment. He termed these periods “windows of opportunity” (2011, p. 165), because they are propitious for promoting significant policy change. Kingdon said policy entrepreneurs often “lie in wait,” then take advantage of windows of opportunity as they emerge.

Kingdon’s memorable language made attractive the notion that policy change is often driven by specific, energetic actors who seek broad support for their policy preferences. Subsequent research has confirmed the importance of policy entrepreneurs as agents of policy change (for recent reviews, see Aflaki, Petridou, & Miles, 2015; Cohen, 2016; Gunn, 2017; Mintrom & Norman, 2009). This research—utilizing various qualitative and quantitative methods—has done much to elevate the concept of the policy entrepreneur from a loose metaphor to a tested description of a distinctive class of political actors. Detailed studies have explored the empirical validity of the concept of the policy entrepreneur. The best have assessed the degree to which observed policy changes have been influenced by the actions of policy entrepreneurs, while taking account of alternative contextual explanations of those changes (Brouwer & Biermann, 2011; Huitema & Meijerink, 2010; Mintrom, 1997A; Roberts & King, 1991; Schneider & Teske, 1992). It is now settled that the most important activities of policy entrepreneurs include identifying problems, networking in policy circles, shaping the terms of policy debates, and building coalitions to support policy change. Policy entrepreneurs display high levels of social acuity in their ability to scan and interpret their operating environment with an eye to achieving policy change (Mintrom, 2000).

Many advocacy strategies deployed by policy entrepreneurs are not novel. Other political actors—politicians, interest group leaders, and the occasional overreaching public manager—often deploy the same strategies. Policy entrepreneurs distinguish themselves by being prepared to promote policy approaches that are new within specific contexts. They do this in ways that frequently cross institutional and organizational boundaries which other actors tend to stay within. They often promote policy innovations by telling new causal stories, creating new frames of reference, or making arguments that break down traditional alignments of interests. In so doing, they display significant levels of

political energy and dexterity. Many treat their own past experiences and their established networks of contacts as scaffolding to support new ventures in the advocacy of policy change.

## Foreign Policy Analysis

In recent decades, scholars across political science—including the fields of international relations and foreign policy—have moved to better understand the human agency at the heart of institutional development and policy formulation. This “turn to ideas” has moved the field beyond crass interest-based explanations of political activity. It has given extensive recognition to how policy changes are propelled by issue framing, the social construction of meaning, and the diffusion of norms (Blyth, 2003; Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998; Wendt, 1999; Widmaier, 2007). This scholarship has placed at center stage those practices deemed consistent with those ascribed to policy entrepreneurs. While contributors to this diverse literature have used various terms to identify key actors who shape and spread policy ideas, the label of “entrepreneur” has now entered common parlance.

In celebrating the strong contemporary interest in foreign policy analysis, Valerie M. Hudson (2005) explicitly called for more “actor-specific” theorizing. According to Hudson, close study of individuals involved in foreign policy decision-making reinforces the “ground” upon which more rarefied discussions of international relations build. Seeking to capture the nature of foreign policy decision-making, Hudson observed that, “Once representations have begun to be formed by human agents in foreign policy, collective action can only follow when agreement has been reached with others that a particular representation or set of representations are the appropriate basis for state action” (2005, p. 15). In Hudson’s view, those representations that ultimately shape state action are the work of “framing/meaning entrepreneurs.” Hudson noted several studies of foreign policy entrepreneurship (e.g., Grove & Carter, 1999; Lotz, 1997), which have subsequently been joined by others (e.g., Macdonald, 2015; Marsh & Lantis, 2016; Mazarr, 2007).

## Foreign Policy Decision-Making Contexts

Political actors pursue their efforts in operating contexts that can be characterized and differentiated using a few key variables. First, political regimes can be either democratic or nondemocratic. Democratic governments lie on a continuum, and there can be great variation across them. The degree of democracy observed within a given government system will influence how much voice and influence individual citizens and groups can exercise concerning the status of current policy settings and desirable directions for policy change. Second, within broader political regimes, political institutions significantly

influence opportunities for participation in decision-making. Established forms of federalism demarcate where specific policy decisions will be made. Divisions of power at any level of government—whether the executive, the legislature, or the judiciary—also demarcate decision-making. Third, inside political institutions, established rules and procedures again shape opportunities for influencing decision-making. For example, within legislatures, voting rules, veto points, and the current party composition of the chamber and associated committees matter greatly. Fourth, political contexts are shaped by the composition and power of interest groups, prevailing ideologies and discourses, and historical legacies. All such variables shape the actions and effectiveness of every political actor, including policy entrepreneurs. Given differences in operating contexts, political actors sometimes might be able to consciously choose where they seek influence. For example, when individuals and groups desire changes in specific elements of domestic policy (for example, employment laws, standards in public schooling, or public funding of health care), they may be able to “venue shop” at the local, state, or national levels. Such strategic action can catalyze pressure for broader system change (Baumgartner & Jones, 1993).

The relative openness of any policymaking context will depend on variables like those noted above, as well as substantive policy considerations. Generally speaking, where policy areas are characterized by a high level of technical detail or decision complexity, policy discussions tend to be less open to broad public debate and more prone to domination by elites (Gormley, 1983). The development of energy policies and macroeconomic policies offers classic examples of relatively closed areas of policymaking (Kitschelt, 1986; Nohrstedt, 2008; Williamson, 1994). Foreign policy decision-making has also been long recognized as a closed, elitist area of policymaking. Beyond some limited elements of trade relationships, foreign policies of nations tend to be made by heads of state and their inner circles of advisors (including cabinet members and senior bureaucratic advisors). The relatively closed nature of foreign policy decision-making suggests we should expect to find fewer opportunities here for policy entrepreneurship than elsewhere. Two questions arise when considering policy entrepreneurs and foreign policymaking. First, given a relatively closed policymaking context, how might we distinguish between the actions of an institutionally designated political leader and those of a policy entrepreneur? Second, how do those who make decisions in relatively closed contexts gain ongoing, broader support for their chosen policy directions? The literature on foreign policy decision-making offers useful responses to both questions.

Some researchers have suggested political leadership and policy entrepreneurship are not readily distinguished from one another, especially in the case of foreign policy decision-making (Blavoukos & Bourantonis, 2012; Miroff, 2003). The suggestion is reasonable when those holding designated political offices use that office as a base from which to engage in policy entrepreneurship. In the foreign policy space, designated political leaders will often be judged—rightly or wrongly—as significant policy entrepreneurs. Some clarification is useful. First, because they are all political actors, political leaders and policy entrepreneurs will often exhibit similar dispositions and use

similar strategies. Second, in general, political leadership is a broader concept than policy entrepreneurship, given that political leadership calls for more diffuse attention to a multitude of matters. In contrast, policy entrepreneurship typically involves focusing attention for a significant period on one specific policy issue. Third, it is possible for the same person to act as a policy entrepreneur in one situation and simultaneously be a more conventional political leader in others. For example, a governor of a state in the United States will be required to perform many leadership duties that come with the designated role. Those duties all call for ensuring order and progress in the conduct of state government activities. When performance of those duties meets broadly shared expectations, it also maintains the legitimacy and power of the office of the governor. Meanwhile, governors will sometimes espouse specific preferences for policy change and use their position and influence to drive it. In such instances, they might be accurately described as policy entrepreneurs, even as they simultaneously perform their political-leadership duties as governors.

With respect to foreign policy decision-making, these observations suggest that designated political leaders—presidents, foreign ministers, or secretaries of state—may sometimes double as policy entrepreneurs. However, given its more singular issue focus, policy entrepreneurship in the foreign policy space will often be practiced by other actors who engage the designated political leaders on the issue only when the time to do so is judged appropriate. The relatively closed nature of foreign policy decision-making suggests that policy entrepreneurship will be ascribed more often to designated political leaders in this space than would happen to designated political leaders in more open policy domains. Indeed, it was in the context of United States foreign policymaking that President Harry S. Truman observed, “It is amazing what you can accomplish if you do not care who gets the credit.”

All proposals for policy change must gain support and legitimacy within relevant institutional settings. When domestic policy is made, this typically means it must receive legislative support and, ultimately, be affirmed by the executive and the judiciary. The making of foreign policy is more complex. Typically it cannot be understood without reference to domestic politics. Robert D. Putnam (1988) explored foreign policymaking—and particularly international negotiations—as a “two-level game.” Putnam stated, “At the national level, domestic groups pursue their interests by pressuring the government to adopt favorable policies, and politicians seek power by constructing coalitions among those groups. At the international level, national governments seek to maximize their own ability to satisfy domestic pressures, while minimizing the adverse consequences of foreign developments” (p. 434). For the political actors driving the decision-making, neither of the two games can be ignored. Putnam’s interest lay in accounting for areas of “entanglement” between domestic factors influencing international affairs, and vice versa. This recognition of the complex relationship between domestic and international politics opens space for careful exploration of the options analyses and trade-offs investigated by foreign policy decision-makers. For our purposes, this entanglement of the international and the domestic also invites study of how top political leaders and advisors in this space act like policy entrepreneurs. Research in this area is accelerating,

as illustrated by the cases which follow. It is now clear how research on policy entrepreneurs and foreign policy decision-making might be fruitfully advanced. Thus, an analytical framework, and illustrative cases, are presented below to guide future work.

# Policy Entrepreneurs and Foreign Policy: An Analytical Framework

In what follows, a framework for the analysis of policy entrepreneurs seeking to influence foreign policy decision-making is provided. The framework comprises three parts: (1) the foreign policy context; (2) attributes of policy entrepreneurs; and (3) strategies of policy entrepreneurs. The framework draws on insights from the literature exploring the work of policy entrepreneurs, which—as noted earlier—has so far focused mainly on their activities at the national or subnational level. As with any framework, it must be acknowledged that the general points made here will not map perfectly onto individual examples of policy entrepreneurs operating in the foreign policy space. Nonetheless, the elements of the framework are expected to sharpen analytical thinking about the practices of actors seeking to promote policy change on an international scale. They also offer a set of starting points for identifying individuals operating in foreign policy arenas who appear to fit the policy entrepreneur description.

## The Policy Context

The broader policymaking context will always prove critical for determining the likelihood of policy entrepreneurs emerging, and the success they will have in promoting policy change (Mintrom, 2000; Schneider & Teske, 1992). Given this, any analysis of policy entrepreneurship should also include analysis of other factors relevant to agenda-setting and policy change.

## Structural Conditions

In considering the policy context, a good place to begin is with an assessment of prevailing political conditions. For example, whether a country is at war, at peace, or on high alert for conflict will have significant implications for all elements of foreign policy. It will also likely have implications for the nature of the political regime. Consideration should also be given to issues around cultural or social cohesion within the country. Prevailing economic conditions can also have major implications for a country's international standing, its connections with other countries, and its capacity to effectively engage in diplomacy.

When exploring specific policymaking contexts, a key analytical question is: what are the most significant political, social, and/or economic factors that have established this context?

### **Established Interests**

Over time, prevailing political conditions tend to both reflect and reinforce established interest groups within a country. These interests can shape power relations domestically and influence how the country relates to others (Putnam, 1988). For example, in a country with a strong international trading sector, it is likely that businesses directly involved in such trade—either as exporters or importers—will seek to influence specific foreign relations. At times, analysis might benefit from historical reflection on how established interests have changed over time, and the implications of these changes for international relations.

When exploring specific policymaking contexts, key analytical questions are: what actors and interests tend to have most influence in this context, and why is that?

### **Sources of Policy Change**

In any given policy area, change tends to occur incrementally, in response to specific pressures or unforeseen developments (Lindblom, 1959). Given this, it is never appropriate to assume a direct causal relationship between policy changes and the presence and actions of policy entrepreneurs. Much policy change occurs in routine ways—think, for example, of the annual budget process. There is no point in suggesting that such change involves any policy entrepreneurship. However, from the perspective of gaining more appreciation of when and how policy entrepreneurs might make a difference, it can be valuable to understand the key historical sources of change in a given policy area. For example, in the ensuing case of the Iran nuclear deal, subtle cultural changes in Iran during the preceding decade created domestic political conditions that opened the possibility for renewed dialogue with diplomats from the United States and the European Union.

When exploring specific policymaking contexts, a key analytical question is: in the absence of any observed policy entrepreneurship, in what ways, if any, might the status quo have shifted?

### **Attributes of Policy Entrepreneurs**

Those fitting the description of a policy entrepreneur are likely to be ambitious in pursuit of a cause, to exhibit social acuity, to be able to pass a relevant credibility test, to display sociability, and to be tenacious. In their distinctive ways, the policy entrepreneurs mentioned in the following three case studies embodied all of these attributes in pursuit of their particular foreign policy goals.

### **Ambition**

Pushing a major policy agenda at the international level takes great commitment and energy. Those who do this must be driven by a bigger vision for a better future. This is what is meant by ambition. Earlier, we noted Kingdon's (2011) argument that policy entrepreneurs are defined by their willingness to invest various resources in the hope of a future return. This attribute is vital for getting others to believe in what one is seeking to do and to join one's efforts. Ambition for a particular cause supplies the "why" that explains everything else policy entrepreneurs do.

When exploring the activities of policy entrepreneurs, key analytical questions are: what evidence exists of their broader political ambitions, and how has that ambition manifested itself in this specific instance of foreign policy advocacy?

### **Social Acuity**

The essential actions of policy entrepreneurs—problem framing, building teams, and leading by example—all call for deployment of high levels of social acuity. Windows of opportunity do not come along with labels on them—they need to be perceived within complex social and political contexts. Through their social acuity, policy entrepreneurs discover how people are thinking about problems. They come to appreciate the concerns and motivations that drive others. And, they develop ideas about how to construct effective advocacy efforts, how to make most use of networks of contacts, and what kinds of political support, policy arguments, and evidence will serve them best in particular policymaking venues.

When exploring the activities of policy entrepreneurs, key analytical questions are: what evidence exists of their social acuity, and how has that social acuity manifested itself in this specific instance of foreign policy advocacy?

### **Credibility**

Policy entrepreneurship usually involves pursuing novel policy goals by building coalitions of support. To attract others to pursue their goals, policy entrepreneurs must be deemed highly credible. They can achieve credibility in a number of ways, such as through their demonstrable expertise in a particular field, or their ability to amass coalitions of support. Others will commit to a cause only where the leading figure strikes them as having what it takes to make a difference. As shown in the case below, William Hague displayed credibility with the Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative through his position as the United Kingdom's First Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs. From that position, he was able to advance the Initiative by forging alliances among traditional foreign policy "insiders" and a range of other players who were not part of the usual foreign policy establishment. Few others could have done that.

When exploring the activities of policy entrepreneurs, key analytical questions are: what evidence exists of their credibility as policy advocates, and how has that credibility been important in this specific instance of foreign policy decision-making?

### **Sociability**

Although they choose particular policy ideas to advocate, policy entrepreneurs must always consider how others will respond to what they have to offer. This is especially critical in the realm of foreign policy development. Policy entrepreneurs must possess the ability to empathize with others and understand other people's needs. This calls for high levels of sociability. Sociability is both conceptually and operationally different from social acuity. For politicians, of course, sociability is their lifeblood. It grants them the ability to go from discerning points of common interest between themselves and others to engaging with others in ways that make those others feel appreciated. Effective policy entrepreneurs use their sociability to expand their networks and build advocacy coalitions. In the process, they often help others to see how their specific efforts can contribute to the bigger vision for policy change.

When exploring the activities of policy entrepreneurs, key analytical questions are: what evidence exists of their sociability, and how has that sociability been important in this specific instance of policy advocacy?

### **Tenacity**

Tenacity is defined here as the willingness to keep working toward a bigger goal, even when that goal seems nowhere in sight. This quality is especially important for policy entrepreneurs, because policymaking contexts are often highly complex and the chances of achieving success can often seem slim. Conveying the historical significance of an advocacy effort can assist policy entrepreneurs as they seek to maintain the focus and commitment of those working with them. As our case below documents, U.S. President Barack Obama's tenacity was exhibited through his careful coordination of communications and efforts to ensure the success of the Iran nuclear deal.

When exploring the activities of policy entrepreneurs, key analytical questions are: what evidence exists of their tenacity as demonstrated in their previous professional or political activities, and how has that tenacity manifested itself in this specific instance of foreign policy decision-making?

## **Strategies of Policy Entrepreneurs**

The literature on domestic policy entrepreneurship has now established that policy entrepreneurs often pursue a particular set of strategies. We list them here as framing problems and redefining policy solutions, using and expanding networks, creating a guiding advocacy coalition, leading by example, and scaling up the advocacy effort and supporting policy change. In our case studies below, the various efforts of Barack Obama, Javier Solana, and William Hague demonstrate the value of these strategies in foreign policy development.

### **Framing Problems and Redefining Policy Solutions**

The literature on problem framing has often suggested that advocates of policy change can improve their chances of building winning coalitions if they portray problems in new ways (see, e.g., Stone, 1997). Recent work by Dewulf and Bouwen (2012) has emphasized the interactional nature of problem framing. This casts policy entrepreneurs as conversationalists who construct the meaning of situations through discussion with others, rather than as architects who establish frames in advance of discussion, with the intention of using rhetorical skills to persuade others to adopt them as is. We see this below in the case of Javier Solana, who worked tirelessly to ensure that the interests of member states were reflected in the development of European Union (E.U.) common strategies.

When exploring the activities of policy entrepreneurs, a key analytical question is: what evidence exists of their efforts to frame specific problem and redefine policy solutions?

### **Using and Expanding Networks**

Policy entrepreneurs understand that their networks of contacts represent repositories of skills and knowledge which they can draw upon to support their initiatives (Burt, 2000; Knoke, 1990; Mintrom & Vergari, 1998). In the case below of William Hague and the Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative, the major challenge involved building networks that were external to those in the traditional foreign policy space. Hague showed himself to be masterful at using both “insider” and “outsider” networks to support his policy goals. Indeed, at the launch of the Initiative, he teamed up with celebrity outsider Angela Jolie to make common ground. This signaled a willingness to go beyond established networks and engage others in nontraditional ways.

When exploring the activities of policy entrepreneurs, a key analytical question is: what evidence exists of their efforts to use and expand networks in pursuit of their broader goal of policy change?

### **Creating a Guiding Advocacy Coalition**

Like their counterparts in business, policy entrepreneurs must be team players. Individuals are often the instigators of change, but their strength does not come from the force of their ideas alone, or from their possession of superhuman powers. Rather, their real strength comes through their ability to work effectively with others. The team-building activities of policy entrepreneurs can take several forms. First, policy entrepreneurs often work in tight-knit teams composed of individuals with different knowledge and skills, who are able to offer mutual support in the pursuit of change (Mintrom, 2000; Roberts & King, 1996). Second, policy entrepreneurs make use of their personal and professional networks. Finally, policy entrepreneurs recognize the importance of creating and guiding advocacy coalitions to promote policy change (Mintrom & Vergari, 1996; Mintrom, 2013). The size of these coalitions can be crucial for demonstrating the degree of support enjoyed by a proposal for policy change. Also, the

composition of a coalition can convey the breadth and diversity of those supporters. Used effectively, the composition of a coalition can help to deflect the arguments of opponents of change (Baumgartner & Jones, 1993).

When exploring the activities of policy entrepreneurs, a key analytical question is: what evidence exists of their efforts to establish and effectively lead a guiding advocacy coalition?

### **Leading by Example**

Risk aversion among decision-makers presents a major challenge for actors seeking to promote significant policy change. Policy entrepreneurs often take actions intended to reduce perceived risks for decision-makers. A common strategy involves engaging with others to clearly demonstrate the workability of a policy proposal. Such pre-emptive actions reduce the ability of opponents to block change by engendering fears about possible consequences. The creation of working models of the proposed change serves to generate crucial information about program effectiveness and practicality. When they lead by example—taking an idea and turning it into actions themselves—policy entrepreneurs signal their genuine commitment to improved social outcomes. This can go a long way toward winning credibility with others and, hence, building momentum for change (Kotter, 1996; Quinn, 2000). Further, when policy entrepreneurs take action, they can sometimes create situations where legislators look out of touch (Mintrom, 1997B). When this happens, the risk calculations of legislators can switch from a focus on the consequences of action to a focus on the consequences of inaction.

When exploring the activities of policy entrepreneurs, a key analytical question is: what evidence exists of their efforts to lead by example in pursuit of broader policy change?

### **Scaling up the Advocacy Effort and Supporting Policy Change**

Leadership by example is vital to demonstrating credibility and making the pursuit of policy change believable. Those seeking to affect broad change must pay careful attention to scaling up their advocacy efforts. How this is done will differ from case to case. As we show below, William Hague supported scaling up by ensuring that the United Kingdom took a range of actions consistent with U.N. Security Council Resolution 1963. These well-chosen actions had cascade effects that prompted further change actions led by others elsewhere around the globe.

When exploring the activities of policy entrepreneurs, a key analytical question is: what evidence exists of their efforts to scale up advocacy efforts and promote wider policy change?

## Policy Entrepreneurs and Foreign Policy: Three Cases

Having introduced the work of policy entrepreneurs, the foreign policy decision-making context, and the analytic framework, three specific cases of policy entrepreneurs shaping foreign policy decision-making are presented here. In their different ways, the following cases show how policy entrepreneurs can influence foreign policy decision-making. The cases are not intended to confirm specific patterns of entrepreneurial behavior in the foreign policy space. Nonetheless, they together indicate that policy entrepreneurs can play important roles in shaping how countries—individually and collectively—establish and change their foreign policies, and how changes in one context might influence policy changes elsewhere.

Case selection followed three criteria. First, potential cases had to reflect the diversity of issues present in the foreign policy space. Second, potential cases had to involve challenges that could reasonably be considered strongly indicative of the kinds of challenges that will continue to be prominent in foreign policy decision-making over the decades ahead. Third, potential cases had to contain plausible evidence of success on the part of the policy entrepreneurs in their agenda setting and policy change efforts. These cases of success have been chosen as part of a theory building exercise, and future studies would benefit from looking at cases of both entrepreneurial success and failure. In the context of these criteria, cases that contain both interesting contrasts and important similarities have been selected. The cases focus on: (1) U.S. President Barack Obama and the Iran nuclear deal, (2) High Representative Javier Solana and the growing foreign policy unity and effectiveness of the European Union, and (3) the U.K. Foreign Secretary William Hague's contributions to the Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative.

### The United States and the Iran Nuclear Deal

On July 14, 2015, Iran and six world powers, known as P5+1, reached a historic nuclear deal that limited Iran's nuclear program and enhanced monitoring in exchange for relief from nuclear sanctions. While Iran began building its nuclear power program in the 1950s, concerns from the international community were raised in the early 2000s when it emerged that Iran's nuclear ambitions could go beyond peaceful intent.

In 2002, an Iranian resistance group revealed that Tehran had neglected to disclose key nuclear plants: one in Natanz to enrich uranium, the other in Arak to produce plutonium. While these fissile materials can be fuel for power reactors, they are also the raw materials for atomic bombs. This revelation initiated the Iranian nuclear dispute during Obama's presidency. As a signatory of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), Iran has long maintained its peaceful intentions and its right to develop nuclear technology to satisfy its increasing energy demands. Under the NPT, signatories are required to submit

a declaration of all nuclear materials and facilities to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), a cooperative organization responsible for verifying that countries are honoring their international legal obligations and preventing the spread of nuclear weapons.

The IAEA requested that Iran clarify this issue, as credible evidence indicated that Iran had engaged in activities that ignored its international legal obligations. Despite signing an additional safeguard protocol, the IAEA's executive board found Iran to be in noncompliance with the NPT in late 2005. This triggered the UN Security Council to impose four rounds of sanctions to pressure Iran to suspend uranium enrichment, allow tougher inspections, and cooperate fully with the IAEA. Iran continued to defy the Security Council on the grounds that it had the sovereign right to the full range of civilian nuclear work under the NPT.

In 2009, initial negotiation attempts by Barack Obama, then President of the United States, failed to result in a deal with Iran. Sanctions intensified. Around this time, respected scholars suggested any negotiated outcome would be extremely difficult to achieve and would require "relentlessly and creatively worsening Iran's no-deal options while enhancing the value of a deal to the Iranian regime" (Sebenius & Singh, 2012). By 2011, Iran had 19,000 nuclear facilities with centrifuges spinning toward bomb-making. The harsh sanctions wreaked havoc on the Iranian economy and exerted significant pressure on the regime. This contributed to the election of Hassan Rouhani as Iran's president in 2013. Rouhani's election platform recognized the untenable conditions created by the sanctions and indicated a willingness to engage in negotiations to bring relief. This created a diplomatic window of opportunity.

With respect to the Iran deal, we see the Obama administration as having engaged in significant policy entrepreneurship, with President Obama leading the effort. The result of the deal hinged on the abilities of the highly effective team of international negotiators. While each participant, including Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammed Javad Zarif and U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry, played significant roles, it is important not to conflate effective negotiation with policy entrepreneurship. Instead, the entrepreneurial efforts of the Obama administration paved the way for the negotiations to take place.

The Obama administration demonstrated considerable social acuity in determining how changing circumstances in Iran could be used to its advantage. In September 2013, Obama and Iran's newly elected President Rouhani held the first direct talks between American and Iranian leaders since the 1979 Islamic Revolution. Obama said his discussion with Rouhani had shown the "basis for resolution" of the dispute over Iran's nuclear program. The negotiation process also demonstrated high levels of tenacity. The Obama administration recognized that, in diplomacy, it is sometimes a good idea to widen the agenda so that a trade-off on one issue can be balanced by flexibility. However, this strategy was untenable given the complexity of the relationship between the United

States and Iran. Instead, all parties agreed that this should be a single-track negotiation, with its own defined set of participants, its own logic, and a clear bottom line.

Obama believed the United States should maintain a leading role in the world. However, he also recognized that the United States cannot shape events alone. By using the distinctive P5+1 negotiation track, Obama sought to reduce Iran's possibility to acquire nuclear weapons, while also being sensitive to competing domestic and international pressures.

The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action stipulated the conditions under which Iran's nuclear program may continue. In return for adhering to the conditions, nuclear-based sanctions were removed. While progress was made in the international arena, Obama faced mounting pressure from constituencies in the U.S. Congress that opposed rapprochement with Iran. Senators threatened to introduce further sanctions against Iran, a move that would have scuttled the deal. Obama also faced pressure from powerful lobby groups, like the America Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), who had promised to do everything it could to keep punitive sanctions in place.

Attending closely to the details of this complex two-level game, President Obama used every weapon in his political arsenal to ensure the Iran deal would pass domestically (Hurst, 2016). He accused Republican members of Congress of "making common cause" with Iran's hard-liners and vowed to veto any legislative attempt to derail the deal. He framed the alternatives as being either the deal or war. He made calls to undecided Democratic members of Congress, more so than he had ever done on previous legislation. Obama also held special briefings in the White House for members of Congress and talked extensively with interest groups to shore up their support. His attention and focus on this issue was unwavering.

Proponents of the deal systematically sealed off avenues of escape that some Democratic senators wished to take. One approach involved meetings with representatives of each of the members of the P5+1—China, Russia, Britain, France, and Germany—and Democratic senators. The representatives made it clear they had achieved the best deal they could, and if the United States rejected the deal there was no chance at all that their countries would maintain the tough economic sanctions. The White House also set up an "anti-war room" to keep track of the Congressional votes and carefully coordinate internal and external communications.

While the negotiations between Iran and major powers were narrow in scope, the deal they yielded held broader implications for the Middle Eastern region. The Iran nuclear deal established the precedent that, despite intense historical differences and complexities, nations can negotiate with the United States. It also demonstrated that soft power resolutions are preferable to open conflict—a result that is probably the greatest foreign policy legacy of the Obama presidency.

## **Establishing and Coordinating “European” Foreign Policy**

Sometimes policy entrepreneurs can achieve success primarily through institution-building and establishing legacies for others to follow. This case offers such an example. Since the creation of European Political Cooperation (EPC) in 1970, the European Union (E.U.) has moved increasingly closer toward its goal of greater coherence as an international actor. European integration has faced major challenges since then, such as the fall of the Berlin Wall, the end of the Cold War, and the disintegration of the former Yugoslavia. In each instance, the European Union lacked the ability to effectively implement its foreign policy objectives.

The failed European attempts to handle the violent disintegration of Yugoslavia in the 1990s led to the first major push by European foreign policymakers to actively develop a common E.U. approach to crisis management. The atrocities in the Western Balkans underscored the inadequacy of the European Union’s efforts and left it embarrassed. The episode prompted efforts to improve the effectiveness and profile of the Union’s foreign policy. The result was the Amsterdam Treaty of 1999. This Treaty laid down new principles and responsibilities in the field of common foreign and security policy (CFSP). It also introduced the new key role of a High Representative (HR) for E.U. Foreign Policy. Together with the Presidency of the Council and the European Commission, the new High Representative role put a name and a face on E.U. policy in the outside world. Adoption of the CFSP and establishment of the High Representative opened the way for achievement of a new level of foreign policy coordination among E.U. states.

The success of the CFSP in the early 2000s, and its subsequent evolutions, was driven by the inaugural High Representative, Javier Solana. We view Solana as a policy entrepreneur due to his efforts to raise the profile and build the power base of the HR role and the CFSP. Solana’s mission was to move the E.U. from uncoordinated external relations to a more strategic foreign policy. He was able to do this by capitalizing on the ambiguity of the CFSP. Solana recognized that success in this role would come only by working closely with the member states to forge relationships built on trust and respect.

From the outset, Solana was heavily reliant on member states, especially for their diplomatic networks and logistic capabilities. Solana described himself as a servant of the (then) 15 member states. As former Secretary General of NATO (1995–1999) and Spanish Foreign Minister, Solana had a strong political profile and was backed by credible operational capabilities. Solana also demonstrated high levels of sociability in his interactions with former External Affairs Commissioner Chris Patten. This allowed him to avoid rivalries anticipated by many throughout the E.U. (Dijkstra, 2009).

In 2003, Solana played a pivotal role on behalf of the E.U. in brokering a peace deal in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) between the government and ethnic Albanian insurgents. In 2001, there appeared to be “ongoing confusion” over whose voice represented the Union’s foreign policy (Coss, 2001). Many expected a much-awaited bureaucratic battle between the Council and the Commission in Macedonia, but this did

not occur (Piana, 2002, p. 213). Instead, both institutions and their representatives recognized and stayed within their competencies to ensure a deal was successfully reached.

In 2003, Solana launched the European Security Strategy (ESS). The main aim of this document was to provide strategic guidance and further unity to the development of E.U. foreign policy. To do this, the ESS had to strike a careful balance between pragmatism and inspiration. It had to be broad enough that member states could see their national interests being represented, yet specific enough to promote the concept of unity. It was designed to create the basis for good policy decision-making. It did this by focusing on the crisis-management lessons learned during the 1990s and the evolution of the international security agenda.

Solana significantly transformed the role of HR. In 1999, he was appointed to “assist the Presidency” and the Council vis-à-vis the CFSP. Under his recommendation, his successor effectively replaced the presidency and assumed a significant leadership role within the Council in relation to both CFSP and European security and defense policymaking and policy implementation. At the end of Solana’s lengthy tenure (2009), the E.U. had in place a significant set of foreign and security policy institutions and procedures that it lacked in 1999. Solana’s concerted efforts to transcend fragmented institutional structures distinguished him as more than simply being a highly effective leader.

Solana’s strategic use of networks set him apart. Given the complexity and fragmentation of his institutional environment, Solana made sure that the European Parliament, in particular, and its Committee for Foreign Affairs were kept well-informed of his activities and intentions. His efforts went beyond the strictly described minimum. After each meeting of the European Commission and of the Council, Solana reported exhaustively to the parliamentarians to ensure that their opinions were reflected in common E.U. strategies. Solana also had a Policy Unit reporting directly to him, staffed by one diplomat from each member state. Solana kept the unit small so that it could function as a network hub with both direct and deep contacts in the member states.

Solana achieved breakthroughs in E.U. foreign policy in terms of mediation and crisis management. However, his most significant entrepreneurial moves involved accurately identifying the limitations and boundaries of his role. By respecting these mandated boundaries and working effectively with others, he was able to offer strategies and solutions which bridged the expectations-capabilities gap that had plagued E.U. foreign policy efforts since the 1970s (Hill, 1993). Solana’s ability to understand and reconcile Member State’s concerns was a fundamental requirement in pursuing common foreign policy and security strategies in the E.U.

## William Hague and the Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative

Sexual violence during war and conflict is not a new phenomenon. However, its use in contemporary war and conflict appears to have increased—certainly, documentation of it has increased. Since the mass rapes that took place in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Rwanda in the 1990s, the widespread, systematic use of sexual violence has been documented in many conflicts. In 2000, the U.N. Security Council adopted its first resolution on Women, Peace and Security (WPS). Resolution 1325 recognized the impact of armed conflict on women and girls. In 2010, the U.N. Security Council adopted Resolution 1960. This called for detailed reporting within the U.N. on situations and perpetrators of sexual violence, to be monitored by the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Armed Conflict.

As British Foreign Secretary (2010–2014), William Hague incorporated international recognition and implementation of Resolution 1325 into the daily functions of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO). This third case of policy entrepreneurship and foreign policy draws from evidence reported by Sarah Davies and Jacqui True (2017). Hague framed sexual violence as a problem that could be addressed through his foreign policymaking. While visiting conflict zones as Shadow Foreign Secretary, Hague came to view sexual violence in conflict as a significant concern for the U.K. government. Once ensconced as Foreign Secretary, he gave a series of speeches setting forth his vision for a foreign policy “that promotes our national interest while recognizing that this cannot be narrowly or selfishly defined.” Hague noted the power of global networks cutting across traditional sovereignties. He argued that contemporary global politics demands greater focus on Britain’s core values: “[t]he networked world requires us to inspire other people with how we live up to our own values rather than try to impose them.”

Hague mobilized the U.K. government and the international community around his Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative (PSVI), which he launched in 2012. The launch took place at a screening of Angelina Jolie’s film *In the Land of Blood and Honey*. As well as being an American actress, Jolie was at the time Special Envoy of the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees. Launching the Initiative, Hague described his shock that only 30 individuals had been prosecuted, given that at least 50,000 rape crimes were committed during the Bosnian war. He said the Initiative was central to his foreign policy goals and to the pursuit of international peace and security. Hague sought to prioritize sexual violence as a pressing issue for the international community. He argued for leadership on the matter both inside and outside the U.N. Security Council.

Hague’s policy entrepreneurship set in motion three streams of activity. First, a U.K. team of experts was created to be deployed to armed conflict areas to prevent and respond to sexual violence, working with U.N. agencies and international humanitarian organizations to treat survivors, collect evidence, and assist with developing justice systems to prosecute perpetrators. Second, Hague’s Initiative was integrated across the work of the FCO to inform all diplomatic relationships. Hague harnessed the organizational platform of the FCO and its network of embassies to generate widespread support for the

Initiative. Third, a diplomatic campaign on preventing sexual violence in conflict was rolled out. As a prelude to Britain's Presidency of the G8 in 2013, Hague deliberately built momentum around the Initiative. Such summits were generally focused on the global economy and traditional barriers to growth and prosperity. Placing the issue of sexual violence as a threat to international peace and security on the G8 Summit agenda was unprecedented. However, with his novel framing and personal embrace of the issue, Hague was able to generate a statement of commitment from G8 leaders to ending sexual violence in conflict. Since 2012, over 20 million pounds have been allocated to the Initiative. These resources have supported program delivery by local grassroots and human rights organizations around the world. They have also contributed to international initiatives such as the International Criminal Court's Trust Fund for Victims.

Hague's leadership of the Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative again shows how well-positioned individuals can act as policy entrepreneurs and have major impact. His foreign policy helped operationalize an international regime increasing the likelihood of criminal prosecution for perpetrators and recognition, justice, and practical support for survivors. In the absence of Hague's actions, these "on the ground" changes would not have occurred as rapidly. Past U.N. Security Council Resolutions recognized sexual violence in conflict situations as matters of international security. It was only when Hague dedicated himself to the cause of ending the impunity for sexual violence in conflict that unprecedented attention, commitment and action occurred. For more discussion of this case, see Davies and True (2017).

## Directions for Future Research on Policy Entrepreneurs

The study of foreign policy decision-making has undergone important changes over the past two decades. One involves the growing recognition that sophisticated, actor-specific theory development and testing can advance our understanding of the politics of foreign policy development. Such work can support further theory development in international relations (Hudson, 2005). That insight has opened the way for foreign policy analysis to be informed by the rich body of research regarding policy entrepreneurs, agenda setting, and policy change in various domestic policy contexts.

This article reviewed what is now known of the work of policy entrepreneurs, and then discussed how the study of policy entrepreneurs and foreign policy might advance. This led to the presentation of an analytical framework and a discussion of three illustrative cases to guide further research.

It is worth noting the inclusion here of President Barack Obama as a policy entrepreneur. While presidents and top political leaders can and do act in entrepreneurial ways, they are often considered outside the realm of policy entrepreneurs. It is not the intention

here to blur the line between political leadership and policy entrepreneurship. Instead, it is worth noting that Obama purposefully committed time, resources, and energy to achieve significant policy change in the international arena. While unconventional, this inclusion highlights the ambiguity present in the foreign policy space. However, this is not the first time that Obama has been recognized for his entrepreneurial attributes and actions during his presidency. In Kingdon's (2011) epilogue, Obama's introduction of the Affordable Care Act is portrayed as a classic instance of policy entrepreneurship and is contrasted with U.S. President Bill Clinton's failed efforts to implement a universal healthcare program.

Looking to the future, the study of policy entrepreneurs and foreign policy could be fruitfully advanced in three distinct ways. First, there would be value in exploring how policy entrepreneurs can influence broader national foreign policy narratives and positions. Second, scope exists for cross-country comparisons to generate insights into when and how some policy entrepreneurs attain success in driving foreign policy change while others fail. Finally, it would be useful to investigate more closely the cross-national interactions among policy entrepreneurs that contribute to the global scaling up of policy change.

With respect to exploring how national positions on foreign policy change over time, Wesley W. Widmaier's (2007) comparison of episodes of "crusading internationalism" in U.S. foreign policy offers an excellent model for such research. The approach involves consideration of the emergence of the Cold War, based on the Truman Doctrine, and the War on Terror, based on the Bush doctrine. Noting that U.S. foreign policy has exhibited a variety of tendencies—including isolationism and pragmatism—Widmaier asked how the more hawkish tendency emerged at each of these critical junctures. Considerable value could be gained by exploring the work of policy entrepreneurs in shaping foreign policy decisions during critical junctures in other countries around the globe. When do policy entrepreneurs in one context take their cues from policy entrepreneur in other contexts? Under what conditions are more unique foreign policy positions forged?

Second, with respect to cross-country comparisons, the case study of William Hague produced by Sarah Davies and Jacqui True (2017) offers an exemplary starting point. Clearly Hague had a unique perspective and he used the power of his office to pursue his goal. Hague's work has had considerable influence beyond the United Kingdom, but less is known about instances elsewhere of similarly placed foreign policy decision-makers seeking to promote regional or global policy change. Do policy entrepreneurs need to come from countries with high global standing in order to have broad influence? What local conditions in a country might serve to aid or hinder attempts at policy entrepreneurship? Working with a small number of cases, detailed comparative work could usefully contribute to the knowledge of when and how policy entrepreneurs gain influence in driving broader policy change.

Finally, with respect to investigating cross-national interactions among policy entrepreneurs, some relevant research offers guidance for future studies. In a study of policy entrepreneurs and the state-to-state diffusion of innovation within the United States, Michael Mintrom and Sandra Vergari (1998) showed that the quality of their network connections was vital to the success of policy entrepreneurs in agenda setting and securing policy change. At the international level, Jacqui True and Michael Mintrom (2001) showed the power of network engagement for supporting country-specific adoption of gender mainstreaming initiatives. Similarly, Beth Simmon and Zachary Elkins (2004) sought to explain the global diffusion of economic liberalization policies. They found evidence consistent with widespread peer-to-peer learning. These quantitative studies of the global diffusion of policy innovations complement key contributions to the literature on international norms diffusion—where the figure of the “norm entrepreneur” has often been discussed (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998; Pace, 2007). Taking the insights into policy entrepreneurship from one body of literature and combining them with insights into the social nature of innovation diffusion from another would be a difficult but highly valuable research initiative for scholars of foreign policy. Many possibilities exist for productive theory testing and additional theory development here. In an increasingly interconnected world, it is likely that innovation diffusion initiatives will grow in their number and ambition in the future. Placing policy entrepreneurs at center stage in such studies would ground research on cross-national interactions in precisely the ways recommended by Valerie Hudson (2005).

## Conclusion

Policy entrepreneurs are energetic actors who work with others in and around policymaking venues to promote significant policy change. In so doing, they manifest regularities both in their personal dispositions and in the strategies they undertake. They also exhibit diversity in their policy interests, where they operate, and how they engage in advocacy efforts. Recent studies have started exploring the actions of policy entrepreneurs at the international level. The motivating claim here has been that careful studies of policy entrepreneurs in context can generate significant insights into foreign policy decision-making. An analytical framework was introduced to guide future investigations of policy entrepreneurs and foreign policy decision-making. The applicability of this framework was illustrated through three cases of foreign policy entrepreneurship. Many rich insights could be gained through future research that involves close explorations of policy entrepreneurs and their actions in various foreign policymaking contexts.

While this field of exploration is relatively new, it holds the potential for strengthening theories of foreign policymaking and highlighting the importance of individual human agency in the evolution of international relations. Viewed in this way, further study of policy entrepreneurs and foreign policymaking would be both intellectually exciting and

of practical relevance. Exemplary studies now exist that could serve as models for approaching such research with a variety of methodological strategies. The possibilities include historical investigations, cross-country comparative case studies, and quantitative studies of factors influencing global diffusion of specific policy innovations.

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#### **Michael Mintrom**

Department of Political Science, Monash University, Australia

#### **Joannah Luetjens**

Department of Political Science, Australia and New Zealand School of Government Ltd

