Writing on Foreign Policy: Actionable tips and writing strategies

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Getting started:

Do you have a TOPIC that you want to write about relating to foreign policy/international affairs?

Do you have a unique perspective/argument you’d like to articulate?

What format do you hope to write? [op-ed, blog, journal, etc.]

Where would you like to publish?

What is CHALLENGING about writing on foreign policy/international affairs?
Common challenges:

- New topic/worried about being “right”
- Difficulty finding a unique perspective/new argument

Useful solutions:
- Bring your passion
- Be personal
- Find a third side
→ Add your voice.
Writing about foreign policy is about entering into the debate:
Learning about the debate:

Useful tools to familiarize yourself with the debate:
- Twitter – for news gathering, reports, studies, following relevant experts, access to the debate.
- Other shortcuts: [Example: http://blogs.ft.com/the-world/]
- Gain expertise in your subject through: work, research papers, internships, volunteering – all give confidence and knowledge.
- Talk to people who work in your field.
Writing **strategy**: Understand your **topic**

First – Do you have an **ongoing** or **current** topic?
- Ongoing – example: Climate change.
- Current – example: Nuclear deal with Iran.

**For current topics** – timeliness is an issue – need to enter debate in real time.
**For ongoing topics** – need to make writing timely – connect to current topics, anniversaries, seasons, other events, in first paragraph.
Writing **strategy**: Preparing for publication

**Read:**

- Writers on your topic.
- Styles that you would like to emulate.
- Publications you aspire to write for.
- Publications that are stepping stones to your ideal publication.

Understand your goals – publishing in general vs. building authority on your topic.
- If publishing – you can go off topic, when you have other ideas, give them an hour of your time.
- If building authority – focus on outside expertise building, and build reservoir of ongoing pieces.
Read: Tips from other writers:

- **Make foreign policy personal:** [http://www.bostonglobe.com/opinion/2012/06/03/the-world-needs-more-women-columnists/k4YBJFXFJwjYE0cVPCBnSI/story.html](http://www.bostonglobe.com/opinion/2012/06/03/the-world-needs-more-women-columnists/k4YBJFXFJwjYE0cVPCBnSI/story.html)

- **Empathize with your reader & don’t be afraid of being wrong:** [http://foreignpolicy.com/2013/02/15/on-writing-well/](http://foreignpolicy.com/2013/02/15/on-writing-well/)

- **Who is your audience?:** Are you attempting to influence academics, policymakers, or bridge the gap and influence both? And target a general interest audience?: [http://foreignpolicy.com/2012/11/28/is-the-scholar-policy-gap-really-so-big/](http://foreignpolicy.com/2012/11/28/is-the-scholar-policy-gap-really-so-big/)

- **Consider geopolitics/understand the map:**