Identifying Parameters of Foreign Policy Change:
A Synthetic Approach

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Abstract

The paper examines parameters of foreign policy change, clustering them according to their nature (structural or conjunctural) and origin (domestic or international). Domestic structural parameters comprise the politico-institutional setting and advocacy groups in support of alternative foreign policy options. We identify conducive to change domestic political settings by looking at the ‘authoritative decision unit’ and its insulation from political dependencies. Advocacy groups comprise adherents to an alternative political culture, socio-economic groups with divergent views and interests, and policy entrepreneurs in position to engineer foreign policy change. International structural parameters refer on the one hand to systemic changes that may bring about a foreign policy realignment and on the other hand the country’s role in the international system (e.g. participation in international organizations) that may activate foreign policy changes through socialization processes. Conjunctural parameters, either domestic or international, account for unexpected developments that may upset the existing status quo (i.e. death or succession of political leader, human disasters and humanitarian crises, international security crises, etc.). We discuss these parameters by reference to two case studies: the incremental Greek-Turkish rapprochement following the Greek foreign policy shift in the late 1990s and the Israeli re-orientation that enabled the signing of the Oslo Peace Agreement in the early 1990s.

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Introduction
How do we account for foreign policy change? Which political environments are more conducive to it and which parameters increase its likelihood? Foreign policy studies have long tended to focus on continuity and stability with only sporadic attempts to account for change. Dynamic aspects of foreign policy were overlooked theoretically and analytically for a long time due to the bipolar Cold War rigidity and a heavy preoccupation with the stabilizing effects of interdependence (Holsti 1982: 8) as well as doubts about the generalizability value of any case-specific findings (Gilpin 1981: 4-6). Systemic changes in international politics and paradigm shifts in the discipline have seemingly reversed this trend with a few, more recent contributions addressing more recently the issue of foreign policy change directly (Rynhold 2007, Walsh 2006, Gustavsson 1999, Rosati 1994, Skidmore 1994, Carlsnaes 1993, Hermann 1990, etc). Although these contributions offer useful insights on the dynamics of foreign policy change, they approach the issue from very different perspectives, offering a kaleidoscope rather than a coherent set of parameters.

It is possible to discern at least four graduated levels of foreign policy change (Hermann 1990: 5-6). Adjustment and program changes entail tactical movements in the realization stage of a policy or in the methods and means used to meet a foreign policy objective. In both cases, what is done and how is done changes, but not the essence or the policy objectives. Problem/goal and international orientation changes refer to more strategic and fundamental changes in the conceptualization of a foreign policy problem/goal or the redirection of a country’s approach to world affairs and position in the international system. Such changes entail the replacement or abandonment of the initial problem/goal and the deriving foreign policy objectives, which may ultimately take the form of an overall international re-orientation of the state and the simultaneous alteration of many of its policies and objectives.

In this paper, we offer a synthetic approach mostly relevant to the last two categories of foreign policy change. We provide an analytical typology of parameters from both rational choice and cultural approaches to foreign policy making. Our framework draws on the more elaborated and structured literature on public policy reform to cluster the identified parameters of foreign policy change according to their domestic or international origins and structural or conjunctural nature. Domestic structural parameters comprise the domestic political setting and the existence of advocacy groups in support of alternative foreign policy options. International
structural parameters that induce a foreign policy change refer on the one hand to systemic changes that may bring about a foreign policy realignment and on the other hand the country’s position in (and relationship with) the international system. In this analysis, we add parameters of conjunctural nature, either domestic or international, to account for unexpected developments that may upset the existing status quo and trigger foreign policy changes (i.e. death or succession of political leader, human disasters and humanitarian crises, international security crises, etc.).

We illustrate the appropriateness of the analytical typology by reference to two case studies in the post-Cold War era: the incremental Greek-Turkish rapprochement following the Greek foreign policy shift in the late 1990s and the Israeli re-orientation that enabled the Oslo Peace Agreement in the early 1990s. In each case, we discuss the identified parameters and examine their relative weight in accounting for the foreign policy change and possible interactions. Both cases are primary examples of major foreign policy realignment and constitute the outcome of complex and multidimensional processes. The two case studies illustrate best our main argument that foreign policy change has various origins and therefore we need a synthetic analytical approach to better capture change dynamics.

In the following section, we elaborate on our analytical framework, before turning to our two case studies. We conclude by revisiting the typology of parameters and discussing their interplay.

**Parameters of Foreign Policy Change: An Analytical Typology**

Public policy reform may have both domestic and international origins. International origins entail the various forms of conditionality policy applied by states or international organizations that render assistance or enhanced relations conditional to domestic policy adjustment (Stallings 1992). They may also entail the spreading of a specific policy paradigm to a country or broader international policy paradigm shifts (Legro 2000). With regards to domestic origins, two main analytical approaches have emerged: a liberal one focusing on socio-political preferences and interest groups, and an institutionalist one looking primarily at domestic institutional arrangements (Haggard 2000: 21-22). Additional insights on the domestic origins of policy change have highlighted the implementation stage of reforms and the importance of building consensus around reform strategies as condition for their political sustainability (Stiglitz 2000: 556, 571). In that respect, political stability and government
effectiveness are crucial parameters not only at the initiation stage but also at the implementation stage, when the initial reform impetus needs to be translated into actual policy outcomes.

Acknowledging the idiosyncratic features of foreign policy making, the public policy reform literature offers useful insights on foreign policy change. Along the lines of public policy reform analysis, we cluster the change-inducing parameters in four groups, according to their domestic or international origins and their structural or conjunctural nature (see Table1).

**Domestic structural** parameters refer to the domestic political and institutional setting as well as advocacy groups of an alternative foreign policy course. The former cluster focuses mainly on the foreign policy making process and the latter mostly on the collective or individual sources of alternative policy input. The policy making process constitutes a distinct level of foreign policy analysis, which captures the ‘aggregation function’ of the multiple societal inputs, ceteris paribus systemic constraints (Hagan 2001: 5-6). The aggregation function assumes an authoritative decision unit, namely an individual or a set of individuals with the ability and authority to make a decision and commit the resources of a society on a foreign policy issue. Three types of such decision units can be identified: the powerful leader (e.g. monarch, dictator, a predominant political figure in a democratic system), the single group (e.g. Politburo in the former Soviet Union, a group of Army officers collectively engaged in a military coup, Cabinet under a Prime Minister with a collective policy-making style, etc.) and the multitude of autonomous actors (e.g. coalition governments, actors with veto power over foreign policy decisions, etc.) (Hermann 2001: 47-8, 57-64). The form and properties of each unit as well as its capacity to induce foreign policy change vary according to the existing political and institutional structures (number of formal and/or informal veto points, scope of societal involvement, electoral system, policy-making style of the leader, etc.). Autonomy and insulation of the unit from political dependencies (i.e. Army, veto power actors, electoral concerns, coalition partners, etc.) create a policy-making environment more conducive to change. For example, in a democratic regime, foreign policy change is more likely to occur in cases of strong, single-party governments with a Prime Minister dominating decision-making in the Cabinet, few or no veto points (by a President, Constitutional Court or other), and small societal involvement or interest.
The second cluster of domestic structural parameters consists of *advocacy groups* in support of an alternative foreign policy course of action. We identify at least three categories of such groups: first, adherents to an alternative *political culture* and foreign policy orientation; second, *socio-economic groups* with divergent views and preferences; third, *policy entrepreneurs*, who constitute potential authoritative decision units and may engineer foreign policy change. The three groups may have overlapping membership, like for example a policy entrepreneur adherent of an alternative political culture. The general proposition is that the stronger these groups emerge in the domestic political arena in terms of membership, voice and potential influence over policy outcomes, the more probable foreign policy change becomes.

*Political culture* and in particular the subset of attitudes related to security issues denotes the overall orientation toward and assumptions about the system of international relations within a particular country (Duffield 1994: 179). It entails a specific conceptualization of foreign and security policy, a deriving prioritization of objectives, and a predisposition of societal and political elites toward certain actions and policy instruments. Given the deep-rooted effects of culture in social activities, political culture has been long associated with continuity rather than change in foreign policy (Duffield 1999: 770-2). However, there is a constant current of empirical and theoretical studies, illustrating how social actors with alternative collective identities and aspiring to alternative norms can initiate major foreign policy changes (Rynhold 2007, Finnemore and Sikkink 2001, Barnett 1999, Adler 1997, Herman 1996, etc.).

*Socio-economic groups* with alternative preferences may also advocate foreign policy change. Along a liberal account of international relations, most international agreements with economic and political implications have a distributive aspect, which triggers private and aggregate welfare shifts in domestic constituencies (Milner and Keohane 1996: 15-6). According to conditions of domestic political enfranchisement and relative political power, the alternative preferences of individual groups may become predominant ones and induce foreign policy change (Evans 1993: 414). Furthermore, socio-economic groups operate within domestic society, the collective actoriness of which is expressed through public opinion. Public opinion delimits the outer boundaries of national foreign policy and may thus constitute an important constraint to or facilitator of foreign policy change (K. J. Holsti 1995: 260-5, O.R. Holsti 1992, Risse-Kappen 1991).
Policy entrepreneurs initiating foreign policy change are usually political figures with special skills, vision and/or leadership capacity, who manage to overcome the inertia of previous foreign policy action (cf. Byman and Pollack 2001, Hermann et al. 2001, Solomon 1997). The origins of their preference divergence and the drive of their policy differentiation can be located in a different understanding, conceptualization, and prioritization of international challenges, stemming from their belief systems, cognitive factors and other idiosyncratic features (Moravcsik 1993: 30, Hermann 1980).

International structural parameters refer to and emanate from the state’s participation in the international system. We identify two potential origins of foreign policy change, the first one related with the state’s interaction with the system and the second one with developments in the structural features of the system *per se*. Starting from the latter, very much like (neo)realist theorists have argued, systemic factors delimit and constraint foreign and security policy. Systemic changes may lead to a re-conceptualization of security threats and challenges, a re-prioritization of foreign policy objectives, and the emergence of new means of actions and foreign policy options. Therefore, systemic changes may well bring about major foreign policy realignments. To name only the most recent and obvious example, the demise of the Soviet Union and the collapse of the bipolar world opened up a broad new range of foreign policy options for U.S., Germany and the countries of Central and Eastern Union previously unavailable (Duffield 1994).

The state’s position and role in the system may induce foreign policy change through at least three mechanisms. First, states interact within the system with friends and foes and are susceptible to changes in their course of foreign policy action. In the old bipolar system where the preoccupation with the balance of power dominated foreign policy endeavors, realignment and shifting alliances were the rule rather than the exception. Domestic upheavals that bring about radical foreign policy shifts in one country impose a differentiated response by the other countries with an interest in the region (e.g. the American repositioning after the Islamic revolution and Shah dethronement in Iran). Second, within the framework of such interaction, states may aspire to membership in an international organization, closer engagement with other states or integration in the international system more generally. Potential strengthening of relations is usually offered through positive (economic and political incentives – ‘carrots’) or negative (sanctions – ‘sticks’) forms of conditionality policy,
imposing changes in the foreign policy of the candidate state. While traditionally associated with international economic organizations (Killick 1998), the use of political conditionality has grown impressively in recent years, evolving into a primary instrument for the international community to exercise exogenous pressures for political and institutional isomorphism (Checkel 2000). The European Union in particular relies extensively on conditionality policy in its relations with candidate countries and other world partners (Schimmelfennig et al. 2003, Grabbe 1999, Smith 1997). Third, participation in international organizations may activate foreign policy changes through socialization processes. Assuming an international organization has a distinctive normative and cultural base, membership in it entails if not an a priori adherence to its norms and values, at least their gradual internalization. The level of institutional embeddedness in an international organization (membership continuity and commitment) as well as the depth and scope of interaction constitute important parameters that determine the effect of such socialization processes and may lead to foreign policy redirection.

In sum, the more fundamental and wide-ranging systemic changes are, the more probable it is they lead to major foreign policy changes. Further foreign policy changes may occur as a result of the state’s interaction with other states and international organizations through mechanisms of policy adjustment, conditionality policies and socialization processes.

**Conjunctural** parameters of domestic and international origins refer to unforeseen events with an impact on one or more of the structural parameters discussed above. Such developments generate conditions of crisis and open an ‘opportunity window’ for policy reform (Boin et al. 2005, Keeler 1993). Domestically, they may take the form, for example, of a leadership change due to death or succession, with the new incumbent aspiring to an alternative course of foreign policy action. Or a political and/or security upheaval like a military coup, an anti-authoritarian uprise or terrorist activities that may alter the domestic, political and institutional setting, the foreign policy inputs of societal actors, or the structure and attitudes of the authoritative decision unit. Or a humanitarian disaster that may generate public sympathy and pave the way for foreign policy realignment toward an adversary, like the ‘earthquake diplomacy’ in the late 1990s that has contributed to the Greek-Turkish rapprochement (Rumelili 2003). An international security crisis may take the form of a political or military imbroglio with a rival country or a problematic
response to an international challenge. Such crises highlight the inappropriateness of past policies to deal with new international developments and trigger a re-evaluation of current policies and practices (Walsh 2006). Thus, domestic or international crises that indicate policy failures may lead to foreign policy change.

In the following section, we will discuss these parameters by reference to our two case studies, namely the incremental Greek-Turkish rapprochement following the Greek foreign policy shift in the late 1990s and the Israeli re-orientation that enabled the Oslo Peace Agreement in the early 1990s.

**Accounting for the U-Turn in the Greek-Turkish Relations**

*Setting the Background*

The Greek foreign policy in the last quarter of the 20th century was largely ‘managerial’ or status quo prone, abandoning earlier revisionist attitudes especially in the first half of the century (Couloumbis and Yannas 1996). The Cold War environment and Greece’s (and Turkey’s) NATO participation imposed for a long time a specific security prioritisation giving emphasis to the ‘threat from the north’. It was only after the 1974 Cyprus imbroglio that Greece’s foreign and security policy re-oriented to the ‘threat from the east’, signalling the beginning of an intense relationship with Turkey that escalated occasionally very close to total military engagement (Papahadjopoulos 1998).

In this latter stage, the EC/EU framework became one of the main Greek foreign policy reference points, especially after the Greek accession to the –then- EEC in 1981 (Rumelili 2004, Kavakas 2000). Once inside the club, Greece vehemently and consistently opposed the enhancement of the EU-Turkish relationship in the 1980s and most part of the 1990s by blocking financial support to the frail Turkish economy and most importantly rejecting the Turkish candidacy for EU membership. As a result, Greece was portrayed for long as the sole culprit for the lack of progress in the EC/EU-Turkish relations, allowing several EC/EU partners to hide their own concerns behind the cloak of Greek intransigence (Reuter 2000: 3).

Thus, the Greek consent to the Turkish EU candidacy at the Helsinki European Council, in December 1999, was heralded as a major shift in the Greek foreign policy. The ‘package deal’ agreement comprised three components: an explicit EU commitment on the accession of Cyprus in the EU even without prior
settlement of the island’s inter-communal conflict, addressing the International Court within a reasonable time frame for the settlement of the bilateral seabed dispute, and a concrete ‘roadmap’ for the Turkish accession to the EU. The Greek stance in Helsinki marked the culmination of a process of gradual transformation from a conflicting to a more constructive foreign policy approach. Among other components, this transformation entailed the full communitarization of the Greek-Turkish relationship, counting on engagement and socialization effects to bring about eventually the normalization of bilateral relations (Tsakonas 2009, Heraclides 2004).

International Structural Parameters
The cataclysmic 1989 events had a three-fold impact on the Greek foreign policy re-orientation vis-à-vis Turkey. First, the turmoil in the Balkan region posed new challenges for Greece, unleashing the old specter of Balkan nationalism and irredentism and nurturing the perennial Greek ‘insecurity syndrome’ (Prodromou 1997: 129). The transitional Balkan fluidity necessitated the re-orientation of the Greek security doctrine with due consideration required for the new strategic conditions at the Northern borders. Such a development suggested the overstretching of available national resources to counter existing or perceived threats and dangers, leading incrementally to a new strategic thinking that entailed a more engaging and less conflicting approach towards Turkey.

Second, the EU articulated incrementally in the 1990s an enlargement policy to fill in the political void that had emerged in Central and Eastern Europe. In the past, the EU had accepted new members on a case-by-case basis. The number of candidates necessitated a more coherent response and the articulation of specific membership criteria. The eligibility criteria, set out in the Copenhagen European Council in 1993, constituted the cornerstone of the EU’s conditionality approach to enlargement, linking EU membership with domestic reforms in the candidate countries and adjustment to the EU norms and modus operandi. Given Turkey’s urge for a closer relationship with the EU and eventual membership, the enlargement process and the conditionality approach provided the overarching policy framework and the necessary instruments for the communitarization of the Greek-Turkish relations and the Greek foreign policy shift.

Third, one of the fundamental components of the Helsinki package deal, which substantiated the Greek foreign policy shift, was Cyprus’ accession to the EU.
To get to this point, Cyprus had first to make its own foreign policy shift and apply for EU membership, a prospect that had been repeatedly rejected in the past by the Cypriot political leadership so as not to impede the negotiations for the settlement of the island’s political problem in the Cold War environment (Kranidiotis and Kokkonis 1990). The systemic changes addressed these concerns and paved the way for the Cypriot application in 1990; from that point onwards the enhancement of the Cypriot candidacy became one of the main priorities of the Greek foreign policy, laying the base for the Helsinki agreement. However, the island’s political problem triggered concerns among EU partners about Cyprus’ accession, fearing that the EU would import the problem and further complicate the EU-Turkish relationship. In order to ensure Cyprus’ EU trajectory, the Greek strategy entailed synergistic linkages with other EU ‘history-making’ negotiations and instrumental use of other countries’ urge to enlargement progress (Ioakimidis 1996: 75).

Besides the systemic changes brought about by the 1989 events, the Greek membership in the European integration process has had a tangible impact on the Greek foreign policy style and approach. The ‘europeanization’ effect, which became more evident in the second half of the 1990s, suggested a shift from the formalistic rhetorical style of the past to a more engaging, more pragmatic and more problem solving oriented Greek foreign policy (Economides 2005, Tsardanidis and Stavridis 2005, Ioakimidis 2000: 365-66). The new approach can be partly attributed to the ever deepening institutional embeddness in the EU architecture and the ongoing political socialisation in the European foreign policy structures, norms and values as well as the eventual take off of the learning process for the Greek administration and the diplomatic service (Kavakas 2000: 145-49, cf. Manners and Whitman 2000).

**Domestic Structural Parameters**

To avoid fragmentation and political instability, the post-1974 Greek political and electoral system has nurtured in most cases strong parliamentary majorities and single party governments. The preference for powerful, unified executive and the charismatic figures that reigned political parties contributed to the increasing concentration of power in the hands of the Prime Minister. In that respect, the Prime Minister evolved from *primus inter pares* to *primus solus* within the cabinet, minimising the role and autonomy of other ministers. Therefore, changes in the Prime Ministerial post may entail substantial policy shifts even if there is no Party alteration
in power. In the foreign policy domain, in particular, limited institutionalization and the personalized policy-making style and ethos suggest that a change of the person in office may spell, more often than not, abrupt changes in the foreign policy pursuits, strategies and objectives (Ioakimidis 1999: 156).

Such change at the very centre of the Greek political system occurred after the domination of the ‘modernisation’ fraction in the succession race within the ruling PASOK party in the mid-1990s. The fraction, led by C. Simitis, ran on a political platform of economic and societal modernisation, expressing an alternative political culture against the ‘underdog’ strata of the population (Diamandouros 1997: 32). The ‘modernisation period’ marked the shift from the socialist-populist period to one characterised by pragmatism, a managerial discourse and a technocratic approach to policy-making. They were all packed in a project for the rationalisation and Europeanisation of the Greek society and economy, as well as Greece’s gradual reinstatement at the EU level especially through economic convergence with the European partners and EMU membership (Lyrintzis 2005: 250, Tsoukalis 2000: 40-41). The latter became the central point of reference for the readjustment of PASOK’s ideological, programmatic and social profile as well as the major national priority of this period (Moschonas 2001: 14). In such a political environment, an adversarial and conflict-prone foreign policy would have endangered Greece’s chances to achieve structural reform and EMU membership. Hence, the re-prioritization of Greek foreign policy objectives after the 1996 ‘change of guards’ in PASOK brought along a partial albeit substantial strategic re-conceptualisation, which got flesh and bones with a considerable time lag and only after the intra-partisan solidification of the ‘modernisation faction’ sidelined political concerns and opposition. This re-conceptualisation took off after the change of leadership at the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the beginning of 1999, bringing forward G. A. Papandreou, an ardent supporter of a more engaging and constructive relationship with Turkey, who orchestrated the Greek foreign policy shift especially regarding the European future of Turkey (Rumelili 2003, cf. Papandreou 1999).

Thus, it is possible to identify two sets of domestic structural parameters to account for the Greek foreign policy shift. First, the institutional features of the Greek political system provide to a large extent an insulated environment for the authoritative decision unit to initiate a policy turn, not only by means of the Prime Minister’s domination but also through the personalized style of foreign policy-
making. Second, in the 1990s, the Greek society featured the ascendancy of an alternative political culture in the domestic political arena, substantiated especially through the new leadership in the PASOK ruling party. The political forces associated with this culture shared a different perspective of the country’s policy priorities as well as a different, more consensual and engaging approach to foreign policy. Political entrepreneurship of the new leadership first in the Prime Ministerial office and subsequently at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs contributed substantially to the foreign policy shift.

Conjunctural Parameters

Three significant events in the 1990s paved the way for the Greek U-turn. First, the octogenarian Prime Minister and founder of the PASOK party, A. Papandreou, resigned from his post due to health problems at the end of 1995, opening the succession race that culminated in the rise of the ‘modernization fraction’ in power, as discussed earlier. This development, the timing of which could not have been predicted, would not have been possible under the previous leadership. Thus, it opened a ‘window of opportunity’ for the proponents of the alternative domestic political culture to come into power and initiate at a later stage the foreign policy change.

Second, the Imia/Kardak imbroglio in January 1996 brought Greece and Turkey on the brink of war, illustrating the failure of earlier approaches to Turkey’s containment and jeopardizing the new, EMU-related, policy priorities (Georgiades 2000). The escalation to an armed conflict was avoided only after US rapid intervention, highlighting for yet another time the inefficiency of EU structures to cope with a security crisis. It manifested the Greek vulnerability vis-à-vis Turkey, ripening the conditions for a new approach to the bilateral relations.

Third, the incremental Greek-Turkish rapprochement brought about in its early stages agreements for the establishment of bilateral committees at high-ranking, administrative and diplomatic level. However, these committees were limited to ‘low-politics’ issues of mutual interest keeping ‘high politics’ (i.e. Cyprus and the status at the Aegean Sea) out of the agenda. The devastating earthquakes in August and September 1999 in the two countries led to an outburst of popular solidarity across the Aegean Sea, assisting the build up of mutual confidence. The ‘earthquake diplomacy’ used instrumentally the mutual public sympathy caused by these humanitarian
disasters to counter long-lasting and history-driven negative stereotypes. This conducive, domestic environment increased substantially the political feasibility of the Greek foreign policy shift, which would have been considered in the past tantamount to political suicide for any Greek government.

**The Making of the 1993 Oslo Accords: A Major Change in Israeli Foreign Policy**

*Setting the Background*

The negotiation and adoption of the Oslo Accords in August 1993 constituted a major change in Israel’s foreign policy. It marked a radical shift from its previous hard-line foreign policy towards the Palestinians in three ways. First, in negotiating and signing the Oslo Accords, Israel reversed its long-held rejection of PLO as a negotiating partner. The decision to hold direct talks with the PLO, as the authentic representative of the Palestinian people, constituted a diplomatic revolution in Israel’s foreign policy (Shlaim 2001: 512). All Israeli Governments (since the capture of the West Bank and Gaza Strip in 1967) had consistently rejected the PLO as a negotiating partner in the past, seeking to negotiate instead with alternative partners, such as Jordan, Lebanon and Syria or even delegations of local Palestinians from the West Bank. Second, in Oslo, Israel officially recognized the legitimate and political rights of the Palestinian people while in return the PLO renounced terrorism and recognized Israel’s right to exist in peace and security. Third, in Oslo, Israel put an end to its long-standing opposition to territorial compromise by expressing its will to enhance the peace process in the region along with PLO (Makovsky 1996)

To recall, up to Oslo Israel had no intention to commit to a peace process, only to register a presence in the negotiations. In Oslo, Rabin, the Prime Minister of Israel and leader of the Labor Party, agreed with the PLO for a withdrawal of Israeli forces from parts of the Gaza Strip and West Bank and affirmed the Palestinian right of self-government within those areas through the creation of a Palestinian Authority. The Palestinian rule was to last for a five-year interim period to be granted in stages during which a permanent agreement would be negotiated. Remaining difficult and controversial issues, like the status of Jerusalem, Israeli settlements, security and borders, were deliberately excluded from the Accords and left to be decided later.

*International Structural Parameters*
The end of the Cold War with the consequential collapse of bipolarism and the Gulf War in 1991 created permissive conditions for Israel’s initiative to change course in its foreign policy. First, a systemic change occurred in the Middle East as the US emerged as the supreme, undisputed, extra-regional power in the region. To consolidate its dominant role in the Middle East in the wake of the Gulf War, the US had to show its ability to affect events in the region. It had to do it in such a way that would appeal not only to Israel but also to the major Arab states with which the sole superpower, having entered a military alliance during the Gulf War, wanted to maintain strategic relations. One way to do so was to accede to one of the most basic demands of the Arab states, namely to put pressure on Israel to change its ‘no-dialogue policy’ and enter into serious negotiations with its Arab adversaries with a view to promoting the peace process.

An analysis of the international structural parameters that led to change in Israeli foreign policy would be inadequate without taking into account how Israeli decision-makers perceived their country to be weakened—militarily, strategically and politically—in the new order created in the region. Despite the fact that the 1991 Gulf War crippled Iraq as a serious threat, Israel found itself in a weakened military position for the first time since 1967. The Gulf war did much to persuade the Israelis that their reliance on their armed forces to defend their territory had been overstated. Israel felt during the Gulf crisis, when it was subjected to missile attacks launched from Iraqi territory, that it is not militarily self-sufficient but it had to rely more than ever before on the US for its defense (Kelman 1997: 187). Furthermore, the Israeli perception that the country’s potential role as a ‘strategic asset’ for the US in the Middle East had become, after the end of the Cold War, less significant, had heightened their sense of insecurity and dependence on the US (Kelman 1997:187; Barnett 1999: 18). These circumstances and concerns over maintaining close relationship with the US increased Israel’s vulnerability to US pressures for a foreign policy reversal and engagement in a peace process.

At the same time, the Rabin government rightly perceived that the Gulf War had caused serious division among the Arab states that had supported the coalition forces under the US command and those having stood aside or supported Iraq. As Peres, the Foreign Affairs Minister in the Rabin government, put it “…no longer were the Arab States inevitably united among themselves and against Israel. An Arab state
has engaged in naked aggression against a sister state. An international coalition, including Arab states, had been formed to beat back the aggressor” (Peres 1995: 277).

It had become also apparent to the Rabin Government that all these structural changes had weakened the PLO. The dissolution of the Soviet Union deprived PLO from its most important diplomatic patron. Furthermore, Arafat’s stand in favor of Saddam Hussein not only caused much international opprobrium but also resulted in the cutting off of financial assistance from the Gulf states, like Saudi Arabia and Kuwait (Bercovitch 1997: 224). For the Israelis, a politically and financially weaker PLO was a potentially more malleable and receptive negotiating partner. If Israel wanted a deal with the Palestinians, it could no longer avoid the PLO; the alternative would be a rejectionist and more radical section of Palestinians, like Hamas, which would be worse, as far as Israel was concerned, than PLO.

Domestic Structural Parameters

A second set of parameters accounting for change in Israeli foreign policy focuses on domestic politics. Domestic politics in Israel revolve around coalition, party and electoral politics (Arian 1998:74). Because of Israel’s proportional electoral system, a single Israeli party seldom enjoys an absolute majority in the Israeli Parliament (Knesset). That means that both major parties (Likud or Labor Party) govern routinely in cooperation with smaller parties or rarely in cooperation with each other in coalitions of national unity. The most important foreign and security policy issues remain in the competence of the Prime Minister, who usually comes from the largest party in the Knesset. Prime Ministers have also tended to take on the defense portfolio, thus removing a potential source of intra-governmental opposition in the making of foreign and security policy. In that respect, the Prime Minister plays a very influential, though by no means exclusive, role in the decision-making process (Barnett 1999: 17). Heading the coalition that rules the Knesset, the Prime Minister has to take into consideration intra-coalition politics and make the necessary compromises to ensure the coalition’s political viability.

The 1992 electoral victory of the Labor Party, headed by Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, served as the triggering event for Israel’s foreign policy U-turn. The Party ran on a political platform of re-conceptualization and reprioritization of security-related national objectives, associated politically with an alternative, more
engaging, political culture against the traditional ‘hawkish’ one (Inbar 1991). This platform emanated from a fraction within the Labor party, consisted mainly of a younger generation of politicians that had been less engaged in war and conflict than the old guard and, consequently, less associated with realist security approaches (Hazan 2000: 375). The new approach entailed a cultural shift vis-à-vis the ‘threat from the Arab world’ (Rynhold 2007: 428-432). In contrast to the conflict-prone foreign and security policy of the earlier years based on containing conflicts through military strength, the new political culture embraced engagement in combination with a willingness to take calculated risks for building peace with the ‘enemy’ through real dialogue and compromises.

The outbreak of the first Palestinian Intifada, in 1987, contributed to the ascendance and consolidation of the alternative political culture by generating serious security concerns to the Israeli public and a broad criticism over crisis management. In this environment, Rabin’s political entrepreneurship was critical in two respects: first, he orchestrated the Labor party’s rupture with the old approach in response to the changing public attitude. As a result, the Party advocated in the 1992 national elections ‘territorial compromise’ to resolve the conflict, promising an agreement with Palestinians within six to nine months. Second, in the post-electoral stage, he held against opposition expressed by the hawkish fraction of the Labor Party and formed a Labor-led coalition government with the leftist party of Meretz, with whom they shared, the same foreign policy aspirations (Rynhold 2007: 430-2). Despite Rabin’s initial reluctance to negotiate with PLO, Israel accepted Arafat as a negotiating partner, partly due to pragmatic interest and partly due to the broad public appeal of the expected peace (Auerbach and Greenbaum 2000: 42-8; Hazan 2000: 373). After all, Rabin’s political survival as both Prime Minister heading the coalition government and as leader of the Labor Party depended on delivering the promised agreement with the Palestinians (Kelman 1997: 188).

Conjunctural Parameters

The political ascendance of the new culture was incremental; it gained overwhelming support among Labor party cadres, including major political figures such as Rabin and Peres, only after the outbreak of the 1987 Intifada. The Palestinian uprising against Israel’s occupation of Gaza and West Bank led to the transformation of the Arab-Israeli conflict from an interstate to an intra-state dispute. More importantly, it
had a very negative impact on the Israeli economy and society and generated serious security concerns among Israeli citizens (Makovsky 1995: 88-9; Ezrahi 1997: 71-2). As a result, the Israeli public became critical of the exclusive reliance on military force to solve Israel’s problems (including those created by Intifada) and more amenable to a peaceful accommodation with the Palestinians. The shock caused by Intifada made the domestic political setting more receptive to foreign policy change, illustrating the limits of the previous policy and highlighting the need for a new approach (Rynhold 2007: 426; Auerbach and Greenbaum 200:37-45). In that respect, it created an ‘opportunity window’ for Israel’s political entrepreneurs. By its impact on public opinion, the Intifada reinforced the proponents of the alternative political culture within the Labor Party, thus accelerating its political transformation and final embracement of the new approach.

Conclusions

The two case studies illustrate the variety of parameters at play that lead to foreign policy reorientation. The list may not be exclusive but is at least theoretically driven based on the public policy reform literature. Revisiting the synthetic analytical framework in view of the empirical evidence, we should point out two important qualifications. First, as regards the sources of alternative foreign policy input, we need to be more cautious on their impact; they do not lead teleologically to foreign policy change but rather their input is filtered through the existing institutional and policy-making structures. For example, societal input may play a minimal role in a totalitarian regime or a policy entrepreneur in office may be coalition-bound or with a fragile governmental majority and thus not in position to initiate foreign policy change. Second, we should not a priori consider coalition governments to constitute an obstacle to foreign policy shift; actually, as the Israeli case suggests, foreign policy reorientation may forge a coalition, triggering rather than hindering change.

These two framework-specific qualifications lead to two more general comments on the interplay among the identified parameters and the way ahead in studying foreign policy change. First, it is very difficult to account for change or attribute it to a single factor or by reference to a single theoretical paradigm. Most of the times it is even difficult to identify the relative weight of each parameter, not least because they constitute a single set with many linkages. For example, the realist paradigm would emphasize the collapse of the bipolar world as the most important
parameter in the two cases discussed. The constructivist school of thought would tend to focus on the adherence to and ascendance of a new policy paradigm and political culture associated with a generational shift and socialization effects. Institutionalists would prefer the policy-making dimension with the quest for the power locus and the authoritative decision unit, electoral and coalition politics, and political enfranchisement of socioeconomic interest groups. But is it possible to isolate the impact of one parameter against the other? And if we do so in quest of theoretical and methodological purity, how close to reality is our achieved outcome?

Second, we need to stress that our interest and focus lays in foreign policy shift as exhibited in a given domestic and international political environment and not the sustainability or viability of such change. We analyze national critical junctures in the foreign policy domain without claiming that these changes are necessarily consolidated in the long run or that they may not be upturned when one of the change-inducing parameters disappears. The causal mechanisms of transforming foreign policy change to a new foreign policy path may differ and equally so may differ the importance of the identified parameters.
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<th>ORIGINS of PARAMETERS</th>
<th>DOMESTIC</th>
<th>INTERNATIONAL</th>
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| POLITICAL AND INSTITUTIONAL SETTING AND POLICY MAKING PROCESS | autonomy and insulation of ‘authoritative decision unit’ from political dependencies | systemic changes:  
- re-prioritization of foreign policy objectives  
- new threats and challenges  
- new means of action and foreign policy options  
participation in international system:  
- institutional embeddedness in IOs triggers socialization effects  
- conditionality policy (sanctions and benefits) | international security crisis (that highlights previous policy’s failure) (e.g. Imia crisis, Palestinien Intifada, etc.) |
| ADVOCACY GROUPS | alternative political culture; socio-economic interest groups; policy entrepreneurs | | |
| CHANGE OF LEADERSHIP | due to death or succession | | |
| POLITICAL AND SECURITY UPEHAVAL | (anti-authoritarian uprise; terrorist action; etc.) | | |
| HUMAN CRISIS - HUMANITARIAN DISASTER | (e.g. ‘earthquake diplomacy’) | | |
References


Tsakonas, P. (2009) The Incomplete Breakthrough in Greek-Turkish Relations: Grasping Greece’s Socialization Strategy (London:???)
