

STRATEGIES AND POSSIBILITIES FOR SMALL STATE'S FOREIGN POLICY MAKING: NETWORKS AND NETWORKING

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At the beginning of the 21st century, global mass communications and advances in new information and communication technologies have made fundamental challenges to the traditional conduct of international relations by dispersing authority to multiple terrains. According to Evan H. Potter (2002), hierarchy was giving way to networking, openness was crowding out secrecy and ideas were moving swiftly and unimpeded across a global network of governments, corporations and non-governmental organizations. These days, ongoing rapid development of information and communication technologies are making the management of state affairs even more complex and put more pressure on foreign policy decisions makers in certain ways. Since diplomacy is about how states exchange, seek and target information, the speed and availability of access to that information becomes one of the most significant issues in a modern new public diplomacy, where large quantities of news and information in real-time force governments to be real-time actors. While the state is losing its monopoly of information in the global hypermedia communication environment, there is still the belief that the state has the power to shape the contours of the international system, to project its image and voice by applying different communication strategies. International broadcasting and practices of public diplomacy via global information networks (*BBC, CNN, Deutsche Welle, France 24 etc.*) are viewed as adequate foreign policy instruments, providing dialogue and projecting the country's national values, policies and self-image, helping to create the country's great narrative, promoting negotiations and agreements (Zöllner, 2006; Gilboa, 2002; 2006).

In most cases, global international networks confine their host country's policies and serve as a soft power resource which allows preferred outcomes by the co-optive means of framing the agenda, persuasion, and positive attraction (Nye, 2011). On the other hand, international broadcasting as foreign policy strategy is more suitable for economically and politically advanced countries, so called "big powers", which have the possibilities to use a variety of instruments of foreign policy making because of their strong material resource base. A small state, as Lithuania, lacking material resources and balancing on the margins of the international politics arena is constrained to search another means of practicing foreign policy making.

Some scholars see alliance formation, networks and joint actions as adequate behaviour for a small state in international politics (Keukeleire, 2006; Naurin, 2007; Jakobsen, 2009). Others see normative power as an adequate instrument and propose specific conditions such as historical experience, forerunner reputation, rotating EU presidency or support of EU initiatives, under which a small state could become a relevant player (Arter, 2000; Balik, 2008). Norm advocacy, or promotion of the norm in order to shape behaviour of others, is also treated as a normative power and could be a valuable instrument for a small state's strategy in making foreign policy (Björkdahl, 2008).

Communication and information management also play a major role in foreign policy making. Gilboa (2002; 2006), Nye (2011) among others scholars suggest that specific communication or information strategies may serve as an instrument for message dissemination and foreign policy image promotion. (Pahlavi, 2003; Zöllner, 2006, Heine, 2006; Chong, 2007). Government-to-government reflective strategic communications, based on real-time global information monitoring of foreign policy representations of international actors (states), is seen as appropriate framework for the creation of a small state's foreign policy. This framework ensures a non-hierarchical structure for the bilateral flow of information and assures the possibility of being visible in an international arena (Latar, Asmolo & Gekker, 2010). This visibility emerges as instant communication between different actors seeking support and promotion for specific issues on an international agenda using a global media environment (i.e. official statements seeking support on climate change, global terrorism issues, lobbying for position in international organizations, etc.). Such strategy for making foreign policy gives credence for virtual alliances or a network of interest framework where power accumulation (agenda setting, image projection) is exercised through networking¹.

¹ I refer to M. Castels (2011) a network theory of power, where he approach four distinct forms of power: 1) Networking power - operates by exclusion/inclusion of organizations and individuals included in the networks over those who are not included; 2) Network power - operates by imposition of the rules of inclusion or standards of the network over its components; 3) Networked power - specific form of power exercised by certain nodes over other nodes within the network. In communication systems networks works as agenda-setting power; 4) Network-making power - the capacity to set up and program a network, decide content and format; In this article the third and fourth form of power is regarded as theoretical framework discussing small state's foreign policy communication strategies.

This constructionist view of international politics might give the possibility and space for a small country to use pro-active communication strategies in certain ways: 1) by representing its position on international media agenda 2) supporting or condemning the emerging issues and behaviour of international actors on specific international politics issues through the use of official statements and joining "specific issue" groups of states. In this manner, a small country may project its foreign policy by using pro-active information strategies, thus giving meaning to its foreign policy identity and making way for a virtual foreign policy enlargement (Chong, 2007). The rest of this essay deals with the practical insights of networks and networking in foreign policy making by presenting framing and a case study.

Framing analysis was used as a research framework to examine Lithuanian foreign policy representation and evaluation of international media, to identify similarities and differences of representation within different media contexts and identify main frames. Chong and Druckman (2007) define framing as the process by which people develop a particular conceptualization of an issue or reorient their thinking about an issue. A frame in communication organizes everyday reality by providing meaning and can be defined only in relation to a specific issue, event, or political actor (Entman, 2004). Van Gorp (2007) argues that each frame is represented by a frame package, an integrated structure of framing devices (metaphors, catchphrases, depictions,

themes, types of actors, rhetorical structure of the text) and a logical chain of reasoning devices that demonstrates the frame function to represent certain issues during the interpretation of the message, when a mental connection is made between text, the frame, and the individual schema. The reader may come up with causal inferences that are in line with the reasoning devices. This methodological framework is used as a base for research. Framing was used to analyse AFP and Interfax headlines² with foreign policy representation by various countries which emerged during the Belarusian presidential elections in 2010. Later, Lithuania's foreign policy representation on AFP and Interfax was selected for a case study and compared with messages which emerged on Belarus' main news portals (Belapan, Telegraf, Charter97.org).

After the 2010 general presidential elections in Belarus, thousands of opposition protesters moved to the streets of Minsk, Belarus's capital, demanding new elections. Riot police clashed with protesters and an opposition candidate, Vladimir Neklyayev, was seriously injured. Hundreds were arrested. The images and live coverage from the Minsk streets was the dominant news frame on the international media agenda. Western democracies and international organizations using official statements and comments which were disseminated through the international media started to express their views and evaluations of the Belarus government's disproportionate use of force against the demonstrators. In the context of making foreign policy, any state's active participation (official statements, comments) condemning the Belarus authority might be treated as a specific strategy by which a particular state is trying to take part in issue framing and issue advocacy and being visible on international arena using international media as a framework.

The case of the Belarus presidential elections has shown quite interesting results. The analysis of news headlines' content shows that EU member states, U.S. and international organizations slammed and condemned Belarus authority behaviour soon after the crackdown. The initial stage of those reactions was given by the U.S. and later on other countries joined (Poland, Germany, Italy, and France etc.). On the second day, the pressure against Belarus authority was intensified and the issue of a crackdown after elections was framed as a question of the legality of the election results and abused human rights. Later, there was a vibrant discussion about EU member states and their future relations with Belarus.

In this context, small states were also visible during the issue framing. Lithuanian and Latvian authorities expressed strong commitment to defending the fundamental principles of the international system even before this was done by key EU players (France, Germany). This move was noticed by the international me-

² Empirical research is based on analysis of the headlines of two leading news agencies, AFP and INTERFAX. Research period includes one week before Belarus presidential elections and continued one week after. There were more than two hundred headlines selected but after the criteria was applied (headline represents the view of state or its authoritative persons, evaluation, condemnation etc.) 50 were chose, which don't repeat and have no similar point of view (in English, French or Russian language).

dia. Moreover, Lithuania joined this issue framing at the beginning, soon after the U.S. had slammed Belarus authority. AFP disseminated several official statements (*Lithuania blasts Belarus over election crackdown*; *Lithuania demands Belarus free citizen detained at rally*). Interfax also observed and disseminated several messages (“*Белорусские выборы были недемократичными, провокации во время митинга оппозиции режиссированы – МИД Литвы*“, „*Литовские парламентарии призывают Минск отпустить задержанных участников митинга*). Later, those Lithuanian positions were presented with other countries’ statements and framed together as an EU and U.S. united position. The same message dissemination logic took place on the Belarus news media, which cited Interfax and AFP news messages with Lithuania’s authority position.

The findings suggest the media’s representation of the foreign policy initiatives from different countries of the Belarusian presidential elections had a particular logic displayed through several stages.

First of all, there was a specific issue – the brutal dispersion of demonstrators after the Belarus presidential elections, which led to individual condemnation by several countries and international organization. Second, international media started to present various positions by grouping them (EU member states, U.S. and Canada, condemned and demanded release of arrested people), thus forming a single and united voice expressing an evaluation of the event. This practise could be treated as the formation of a virtual network on specific issue advocacy, related to the M. Castels network theory of power where the author discusses four forms of power, particularly where he speaks about networked and network-making power. Regarding the Belarus case, countries which expressed their negative views and condemnation towards the Belarus regime formed a particular “node” which exercised power through the network-making process (issue framing and advocacy, capacity to decide content and format) over the other “node” (Belarus as undemocratic regime).

In the context of making small state foreign policy, this means that Lithuania, due to a pro-active communication strategy with international media assistants, was visible and became a part of a network or “node” (Condemnation of Belarus authority, democracy and freedom advocacy), thus possessing an ability to promote and strengthen its foreign policy image. Initiatives on specific issues were observed and disseminated by international news agencies and Byelorussian media outlets. However, this is only an initial attempt to evaluate a small state’s foreign policy initiatives and media response on a specific issue. There is a need for further research to investigate the main criteria for a small state’s visibility on international media and the possibilities of using a specific issue ad-hoc network as a strategy for foreign policy making.

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