

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:

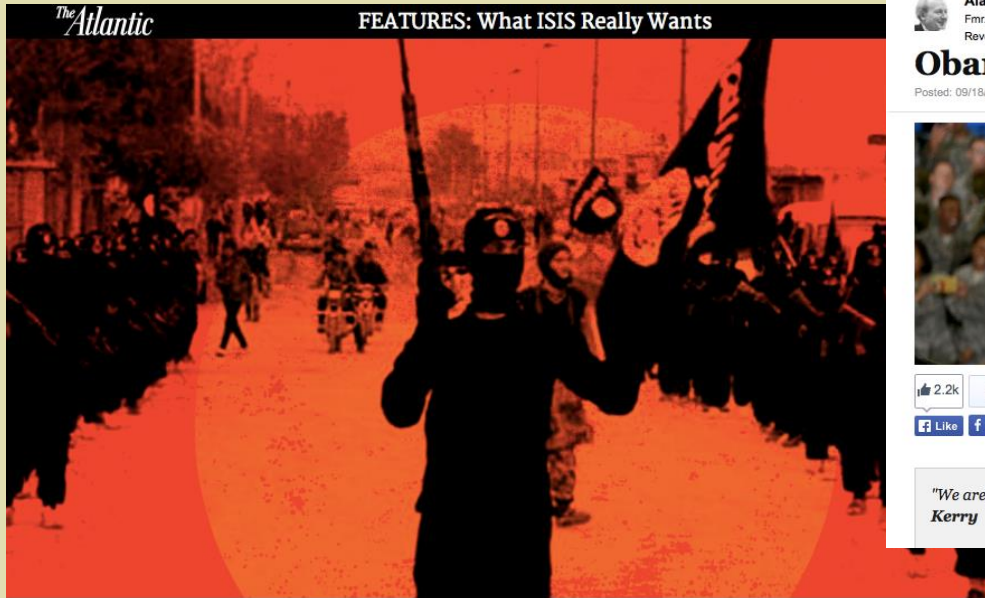
- New topic/worried about being “right”; concern about level of expertise
- Difficulty finding a unique perspective/new argument

Useful solutions:

- Bring your passion
 - Be personal
 - Find a third side
- Add your voice



Writing about foreign policy is about entering into the debate:



What ISIS Really Wants

 **Alastair Crooke** · Become a fan
Fmr. MI-6 agent; Author, 'Resistance: The Essence of Islamic Revolution'

Obama Is Wrong That ISIS Is 'Not Islamic'

Posted: 09/18/2014 5:14 pm EDT | Updated: 11/18/2014 5:59 am EST



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Opinions

The limits of the 'Islamic' label



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"We are fighting an ideology, not a religion,"
Kerry



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In this undated file photo, fighters from the Islamic State group pray at the Tabqa air base in Syria. (Uncredited/AP)



By **Fareed Zakaria** Opinion writer February 19


The debate can be found in a variety of formats:

Let Voters Decide the Court's Future

By ORRIN G. HATCH MARCH 28, 2016






Stephen Crowley/The New York Times


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LAW

Joe Biden Criticizes Senate Refusal To Consider Obama Supreme Court Nominee

Updated March 24, 2016 · 6:59 PM ET
Published March 24, 2016 · 4:30 PM ET

 NINA TOTENBERG  

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All Things Considered 1:11

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Vice President Biden spoke Thursday on the Senate's refusal to hold hearings on the nomination of Merrick Garland to the Supreme Court, touching on his past statements on election year appointments.

the WHITE HOUSE PRES  BRIEFING

President Obama's Supreme Court Nomination

 **MEET MERRICK GARLAND**
PRESIDENT OBAMA'S SUPREME COURT NOMINEE

Meet the President's Nominee
Chief Judge Merrick B. Garland is President Obama's nominee to the Supreme Court.

[Watch on YouTube](#)

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 – interviews, speaking events, online chats.

Once you have a handle on the debate, you can make a unique argument, or find a third side, with confidence.

Writing strategy: Understand your topic

First – Do you have an ongoing or current topic?

Ongoing – example: Climate change.

Current – example: Fighting terrorism in Europe.

For ongoing topics – need to make writing timely – connect to current topics, anniversaries, seasons, other events, in first paragraph.

For current topics – timeliness is an issue – need to enter debate in real time.

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 (follow paths of writers).

Understand your goals:

-Publishing in general: you can go off topic. When you have other ideas, give them an hour of your time.

Building authority on your topic: Focus on building expertise, 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>
- **Empathize with your reader & don't be afraid of being wrong:**
<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/>
- **Consider geopolitics/understand the map:**
<http://foreignpolicy.com/2013/04/16/how-geography-explains-the-united-states/>
<http://www.csmonitor.com/2005/0802/p13s01-bogn.html>
<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/world/author-robert-kaplan-explains-why-geography-matters/article4593404/>