

# 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:



## 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**



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

# 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>
- **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/>