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Then, in the latter part of the 20th century, diplomats were confronted with a third set of issues, *global* issues which borders cannot contain: mass population movements, transcontinental threats to the environment, transnational health pandemics, human rights, international terrorism, and international crime such as drug trafficking, illicit arms sales and money-laundering.

Diplomats as “globalists”

As the global agenda has expanded, the role of diplomats has changed commensurately. Diplomats have always been more than just “internationalists” versed in the affairs of other countries. Throughout the 20th century, they were at the very centre of government decision-making, advising on national policy to protect and promote security and other interests affected by developments abroad. But as distinctions between foreign and domestic policy have disappeared, diplomats have begun to play a role in “domestic” decision-making as well. Today, their roles include helping to articulate national positions which reconcile various domestic and international interests, crafting coherent strategies to pursue national interests abroad, and managing the implementation of those strategies. These are challenging roles, placing diplomats in the often unenviable position of searching for common ground among stakeholders, injecting unwanted “external considerations” into domestic policy deliberations, promoting “the national interest” over more parochial concerns -- and running the risk of alienating all parties in the process.

Along with the challenges and complexities of coordinating national positions, globalization has also confronted diplomats with new and unprecedented demands on their knowledge and skills. Diplomats now have to be as versed in domestic as in international affairs, and able to operate effectively in both policy environments. One consequence has been the aggravation of an age-old problem: determining whether diplomats should be mostly “generalists” or “specialists”. There seems little doubt that foreign ministries will always need individuals with broad perspective and competencies to manage the bulk of day-to-day issues, as well as individuals with specialized knowledge and skills to handle emerging or technically complex issues. The latter group might include full-time employees, individuals on contract, and officers seconded from other government departments or from the private sector. In some cases, a foreign ministry might also second employees out to acquire a measure of expertise which could later be brought back to the organization.

But while debate over the proper mix continues, there are powerful arguments being presented for the development of a new corps of “globalists”. Globalists are neither generalists with only superficial understanding of particular disciplines, nor specialists with limited knowledge beyond their area of expertise. They constitute, in fact, a new breed -- masters of the global scene with in-depth knowledge of all of its dimensions.