

*The Political Officer
in the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade*

- An annual business planning process which to date has served to encourage functional bureaux to see their role as setting priorities and geographic bureaux to see their role as implementing them.

In an age of globalization, it is sometimes argued, foreign ministries should spare few resources for their geographic bureaux and concentrate instead on strengthening their capacity to deal with functional issues. It is well to recall, however, that the rationale for foreign ministries does not lie in their functional expertise alone. In 1992, a study by the Institute for the Study of Diplomacy at Georgetown University noted:

“The State Department is the only cabinet department created for a geographic, rather than a functional, responsibility. This horizontal mandate cuts across the vertically integrated functions of Defense, Treasury, Commerce, and others. The role of the State Department is to coordinate the competing viewpoints of the functional departments in the context of the US government’s overall foreign policy goals ... Looking at the world geographically rather than just functionally continues to make sense. As noted in our assumptions, nations remain the principal players, even on functional issues.

“Over time, however, State has tended to blur its geographic identity by duplicating the functional expertise of other government agencies with its own functional bureaux ... Foreign Service officers must possess both area and functional skills. Their value in the policy process is maximal when they can provide insight into the situation and thinking of the foreign party that no other part of the US government possesses while simultaneously understanding and contributing to the specific functional issue under consideration ...

They should accept and benefit from the comparative advantage of issue-specific expertise in other agencies without trying to duplicate it completely .. As the policy agency, the Foreign Service is the only group in government with wide-ranging expertise in both regional affairs and functional issues. It is its ability to combine the two that allows it to shape policy on a broad basis.”⁽¹⁷⁾

Relations with other government departments

As globalization has proceeded, DFAIT’s relations with other government departments (OGDs) have grown in importance and complexity. In general, workshop participants believed relations had become more cooperative and productive over the years, but work was still required.

¹⁷ *The Foreign Service in 2001*, Institute for the Study of Diplomacy, Washington, D.C. 1992, pp. 28-29