

The Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the Transforming World Politics: Between Isomorphism and Path Dependence

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Summary

This article explores the contemporary organization and functions of the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and the ways in which it responds to the transforming world politics. In contemporary foreign policy management discourse, the study of the foreign ministry — its organization, role, functions and position within national foreign policy and diplomatic systems — constitutes a central theme. This is because patterns of change within its structure, processes and operation can provide significant evidence regarding the state's responses to systemic change, as well as its fundamental assumptions about world politics. There is no uniformity of opinion in the literature regarding foreign ministries' responses to the changing policy milieu. On the one hand there are observations and arguments that view the foreign ministry as adaptive and retaining its centrality in national foreign policy systems, while on the other hand there are suggestions that the transforming world politics have diminished its significance, leading to its decline. Evidence gathered through a series of interviews with Greek diplomats indicates no discernible trend towards a decline of the Greek MFA. The data rather demonstrate that this Greek diplomatic institution, similar to other European foreign ministries, is in a process of adapting to its contemporary operational environment, but that this process is slow because of its organizational culture.

Keywords

Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Greek international policy coordination, crisis management, Greek economic diplomacy

Introduction

There is nothing new in the proposition that national structures for the conduct of foreign policy and diplomacy have been in a process of profound change, especially since the end of the Cold War. The dominant argument in the literature regarding the role, structures and functions of contemporary foreign policy institutions is that they are faced with a number of challenges stemming from a

transforming world politics.¹ Much of the discourse concerns the acceleration of the process of change with the overlapping forces of globalization and regionalization, which urge governments to reflect upon and reorganize their foreign policy machineries and, most importantly, their foreign ministries. It is precisely such developments that have provided the context for this article, which undertakes the exploration of the Greek Foreign Ministry (MFA) *vis-à-vis* the transforming world politics of the twenty-first century.

Any discussion of the context of the transforming world politics must start with an understanding of the transformation of the fabric of the international political environment, which has occurred through the combination of concurrent and complex processes of globalization and regionalization.² These processes have weakened international and domestic policy divides and pooled into the foreign policy process government departments of a previously domestic mandate. This has transformed the fabric of the milieu in which foreign policy institutions operate by bringing significant growth in the spectrum of international policy that they have to handle.³ In the emergent policy milieu, the need for coordination and management of horizontal policy areas — ranging from day-to-day operational issues to management of international crises and international development — has challenged traditional hierarchical foreign policy structures, which are deemed as no longer effective.⁴ As a result, states, which are under increasing demands to perform internationally, have embarked on a process of rearranging their foreign policy institutions, and the area that they often reorganize is the foreign ministry.⁵

Studies of states' foreign policy institutions have yielded varying conclusions regarding governmental responses to the changing international policy environment. In practice, many governments around the world are adapting their foreign policy systems to meet changing international demands. Yet states have undertaken different courses of adaptation. Some have undergone significant change and adaptation, while others have not, with their national foreign policy structures remaining shaped by historical factors.⁶ Manners and Whitman suggest that

¹ Mark Webber and Michael Smith, *Foreign Policy in a Transformed World* (Harlow: Pearson Education, 2002).

² Jan Aart Scholte, 'From Government to Governance: Transition to a New Diplomacy', in Andrew Cooper, Brian Hocking and William Maley (eds), *Global Governance and Diplomacy: Worlds Apart* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), pp. 39-60 at pp. 42-43.

³ Webber and Smith, *Foreign Policy in a Transformed World*.

⁴ Peter Harder, Canada's Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, *Globalization and the Modern MFA: Implications for Foreign Affairs Canada*, 7th Annual Diplomatic Forum, 30 September, 2004, available online at <http://fac-aec.gc.ca/department/deputy-minister-speeches-2004-09-30-en.asp> [27 July 2007]; and Andrew Cooper, 'Vertical Limits: A Foreign Ministry of the Future', *Journal of Canadian Studies*, winter 2001.

⁵ Justin Robertson and Maurice East (eds), *Diplomacy and Developing Nations: Post-Cold War Foreign Policy-making Structures and Processes* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), p. 2.

⁶ Robertson and East (eds), *Diplomacy and Developing Nations*, p. 2.

research on EU member states' foreign policy institutions demonstrated that they are generally notorious for their conservatism and resistance to change, while the foreign ministry is not considered as a highly adaptive institution.⁷ Those ministries remain compartmentalized by function, imbued with verticality in terms of design, and inculcated with traditional perceptions of foreign policy. A number of reasons can explain foreign ministries' resistance to change, ranging from their organizational and bureaucratic culture to membership of the European Union (EU), which allows less flexibility, or to the persistence of high politics on the national agenda.

Hocking disputes those claims on the grounds that such conclusions ignore changes that have occurred in some European foreign policy systems and foreign ministries over recent decades, namely the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) in the United Kingdom and the foreign ministries of Finland, Denmark, Germany and Sweden.⁸ Such changes involve foreign ministries' responses to expanding policy tasks such as international policy coordination, aid and development, as well as expectations by civil society and the business community. Berridge observes that European foreign ministries have displayed not only extraordinary resilience but a significant degree of adaptability.⁹

Adaptability becomes manifest with foreign ministries taking on new functions and expanding their organizational structure to embrace newly added issue-areas such as environmental, developmental and economic areas — in addition to their traditional political preoccupations — in their effort to retain their relevance in the new operational environment.¹⁰ This is closely related to the tendency that has been observed in large foreign ministries¹¹ such as those of Canada, Australia, Thailand, India and the United States to embrace horizontal organizational models, with increased emphasis on international policy coordination as well as reorganization around the principle of functionality, which is added to the traditional principle of territoriality, thus responding to increased economic interdependence and globalization.¹² The respective literature suggests that foreign

⁷ Ian Manners and Richard Whitman, 'Introduction', in Ian Manners and Richard Whitman (eds), *The Foreign Policies of European Union Member States* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), pp. 1-16.

⁸ Brian Hocking and David Spence (eds), *Foreign Ministries in the EU: Integrating Diplomats* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002); and Brian Hocking (ed.), *Foreign Ministries: Change and Adaptation* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2nd edition 2005), p. 5.

⁹ G.R. Berridge, *The Counter-Revolution in Diplomatic Practice and Other Essays* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p. 8.

¹⁰ Jonathan Moses and Torbjørn Knutsen, 'Inside Out: Globalization and the Reorganization of Foreign Affairs Ministries', *Cooperation and Conflict*, vol. 36, no. 4, 2001, pp. 355-380 at p. 360.

¹¹ Foreign ministries are categorized as large or small based on the numbers of employees and the number of overseas missions.

¹² Paulette Enjalran and Philippe Husson, 'France, The Ministry of Foreign Affairs: "Something New, but Which is the Legitimate Continuation of our Past..." (Paul Claudel — *Le soulier de satin*)', in Brian Hocking (ed.), *Foreign Ministries: Change and Adaptation* (London: Macmillan, 1999), pp. 59-74 at

ministries, in the course of their adaptation, tend to reorganize their structure and role and to embrace the horizontal functions that are identified with economic diplomacy, international policy coordination, crisis management and international development and aid.

Evaluations of the responses of national foreign policy systems to the transformation of world politics to date have largely focused on Western industrialized foreign policy systems¹³ and it is therefore unclear to what extent the aforementioned themes are relevant to smaller states. Those themes, however, do provide us with the key areas in which foreign ministries develop in their synchronization with the emergent world order. In other words, these themes shape the research agenda for the exploration of contemporary foreign ministries. Based on this, this investigation of the Greek MFA is guided by the issues noted above and has been achieved through the means of 51 interviews with Greek officials.

The interviews were conducted during the period from 2008 to 2011 and used semi-structured open-ended questions, largely covering three areas of enquiry. Firstly, the MFA's responses to the aforementioned themes that emerge from the respective literature and foreign ministry reports; secondly, general operational/organizational and bureaucratic aspects that are specific to respective departments; and thirdly, officials' experiences and perceptions of change in their department and the MFA in its entirety. Interviews were held with officials at the Greek MFA's headquarters in Athens, the ministries of Development and Defence, at the Secretariat for Communication and Information, the MFA's Diplomatic Academy and in a number of overseas missions, such as the Permanent Representation of Greece to the EU and Greek embassies and consulates in Brussels and London.

This exploration of the MFA's responses to the changing world politics was facilitated by new institutionalist approaches, which focus on the analysis of organizational responses to changing operational environments. New institutionalism, as discussed below, can offer some very interesting insights with regard to some of the challenges that states confront in their management of foreign policy in the twenty-first century, as those are reflected in the institutional responses and character of their foreign ministry as an organization.¹⁴

p. 60; and Richard Cooper, 'Economic Interdependence and Foreign Policy in the 1970s', in James Barber and Michael Smith (eds), *The Nature of Foreign Policy: A Reader* (Edinburgh and Milton Keynes: Holmes McDougall, with the Open University Press, 1974), pp. 150-158 at p. 155.

¹³ Robertson and East, *Diplomacy and Developing Nations*, p. 1.

¹⁴ Brian Hocking, 'What is the Foreign Ministry?', in Kishan Rana and Jovan Kurbalija (eds), *Foreign Ministries: Managing Diplomatic Networks and Optimizing Value* (Malta and Geneva: DiploFoundation, 2007), pp. 3-4.

New Institutionalism's Insights on the Foreign Ministry's Adaptability

New institutionalism,¹⁵ having become one of the most popular approaches in modern organization theory, seems to inform concepts of globalization and regionalization well — particularly Europeanization — as forces that shape a new operational/policy environment and adds complementary explanatory value with reference to their impact on domestic institutions.¹⁶ States may be subjected to similar dynamics, but their individual responses differ because of national organizational traditions and bureaucratic cultures. The hypotheses drawn from the analysis of the impact of globalization and Europeanization on foreign policy systems have been examined in an extensive body of literature.¹⁷ From these a variety of patterns emerge with regard to institutional adaptability.

Questions regarding the Greek foreign ministry's adaptability have been tested against a number of foreign ministries within and outside Europe and have come to constitute a central theme in the study of foreign affairs.¹⁸ In the literature there is no uniformity of opinion regarding the responses of the foreign ministry *vis-à-vis* pressures stemming from the transforming international policy environments; rather different patterns are drawn from similar bodies of evidence. The aforementioned patterns find, variously, evidence on the one hand of change and

¹⁵ New institutionalism, or else neo-institutionalism, is mostly defined by the work of March and Olsen. See James March and Johan Olsen, 'The Institutional Dynamics of International Political Orders', *International Organization*, vol. 52, no. 4, 1998, pp. 943-969; James March and Johan Olsen, 'Institutional Perspectives on Political Institutions', *Governance: An International Journal of Policy and Administration*, 1996, vol. 9, no. 3, pp. 247-264; and James March and Johan Olsen, 'The New Institutionalism: Organizational Factors in Political Life', *The American Political Science Review*, 1984, vol. 78, no. 3, pp. 734-749. New institutionalism was boosted in the 1990s by studies employing Europeanist approaches, which, as mentioned above, tried to explain the impact of European integration on domestic institutions. According to Aspinwall and Schneider, new institutionalism views institutions in broader terms than old institutionalism, which saw them as formal rules, procedures and organizations of government such as the legal system of courts. The explanatory lens of new institutionalism extends beyond formal organizations to encompass formal and informal processes and patterns of structured interaction between groups as institutions themselves, while at the same time reinforcing aspects of traditional thinking, which describe institutional approaches in the study of government and politics as the 'historic heart' of the subject. See Mark Aspinwall and Gerald Schneider (eds), *The Rules of Integration: Institutional Approach to the Study of Europe* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001, pp. 1-18).

¹⁶ Guy Peters, *Institutional Theory: Problems and Prospects* (Princeton, NJ: Institute for Advanced Studies, July 2000), p. 1.

¹⁷ See Hocking and Spence, *Foreign Ministries in the EU*; Hocking, *Foreign Ministries*; Simon Bulmer and Martin Burch, 'The "Europeanization" of Central Government: The UK and Germany in Historical Institutional Perspective', in Mark Aspinwall and Gerald Schneider (eds), *The Rules of Integration: Institutional Approach to the Study of Europe* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), pp. 73-96; Hussein Kassim, Guy Peters and Vincent Wright (eds), *The National Coordination of EU Policy: The Domestic Level* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); Manners and Whitman, *The Foreign Policies of European Union Member States*; Simon Bulmer, 'The Governance of the European Union: A New Institutional Approach', *Journal of Public Policy*, vol. 13, no. 4, 1994, pp. 351-380; and Simon Bulmer, 'Institutions and Policy Change in the European Communities: The Case of Merger Control', *Public Administration*, vol. 72, no. 3, 1994, pp. 423-444.

¹⁸ See Hocking and Spence, *Foreign Ministries in the EU*; and Hocking, *Foreign Ministries*.

adaptation, and on the other hand of resistance to change and 'stickiness' to prior institutional arrangements and commitments.¹⁹

More specifically, on the one hand, there are observations and arguments that — drawing on Europeanization literature — suggest that the foreign ministry as a foreign policy institution is in decline because of its loss of monopoly in the management of foreign policy or, in other words, because of the direct involvement of other domestic ministries.²⁰ More specifically, with the EU having altered relationships among its member states, what was once considered foreign has effectively become domestic, resulting in domestic ministries being involved in foreign policy-making. Such assumptions also relate to globalist and transformational diplomacy literatures, which respectively question the primacy of the state and the relevance of traditional foreign policy systems built around foreign ministries. These approaches, together with developments in information technology, suggest foreign ministry 'disintermediation'²¹ — that is, the bypassing of the foreign ministry — which is deemed a symbol of the time when interactions were channelled through official diplomatic networks.²²

On the other hand, there are arguments shaped by critics of the decline thesis, according to which the role of the foreign ministry both in the global and European policy milieus has been strengthened because of its resilience and adaptability, which becomes manifest with the foreign ministry taking on new functions and responsibilities and extending its scope and structure. From such assumptions, significant literature has evolved that explores the foreign ministry from a new institutionalist perspective. New institutionalist approaches suggest that the foreign ministry, similarly to other institutions, is resilient and undergoes significant change and adaptation.²³ In order to understand the two general trends, this article employs two explanatory tools that are inherent in new institutionalism's toolkit. These are isomorphism and path dependence, which can explain change and resistance to change, respectively.

¹⁹ The term 'stickiness' is elaborated upon in Aspinwall and Schneider (eds), *The Rules of Integration*, pp. 73-96 at p. 12.

²⁰ David Spence, 'The Evolving Role of Foreign Ministries in the Conduct of European Union Affairs', in Brian Hocking and David Spence (eds), *Foreign Ministries in the European Union: Integrating Diplomats* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, revised edition, 2005), pp. 18-36; and Richard Langhorne, 'Full Circle: New Principles and Old Consequences in the Modern Diplomatic System', *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, vol. 11, no. 1, 2000, pp. 33-46.

²¹ Josef Batora, *Foreign Ministries and the Information Revolution: Going Virtual?* (Boston, MA: Martinus Nijhoff, 2009); and Jamie Metz, 'Network Diplomacy', *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs*, winter/spring 2001, pp. 77-88.

²² Moses and Knutsen, 'Inside Out'.

²³ Batora, *Foreign Ministries and the Information Revolution*; G.R. Berridge, 'The Counter-Revolution in Diplomatic Practice', *Quaderni di Scienza Politica*; Cooper, 'Vertical Limits'; and Jan Melissen, 'Introduction', in Jan Melissen (ed.), *Innovation in Diplomatic Practice* (London: Macmillan, 1999).

Responses to questions regarding organizational change and transformation come from thinkers who suggest that a key mechanism by which institutionalism understands and explains change and adaptation is *'institutional isomorphism'*.²⁴ Institutional isomorphism, or *'transformation as adaptation to operational environments'*, serves organizations' survival and preservation²⁵ and their aspiration to become larger and more resourceful.²⁶ Isomorphism, according to Meyer and Rowan,²⁷ refers more specifically to the tendency of organizations to coordinate their actions based on the complex networks in which they are embedded through boundary-spanning exchanges.

Institutions such as the foreign ministry therefore tend to adapt to and reflect the environments in which they operate and with which they are in constant exchange,²⁸ by engaging in new activities and undergoing significant functional and organizational spanning.²⁹

At the same time, however, evidence suggests that a number of foreign ministries present a trend of resisting change, effectively translating into persistence over existing organizational models and patterns linked to traditional and geopolitical approaches to the management of foreign policy. Such trends can be explained by path dependence. Path dependence — referring to *'particular courses of action which, once introduced, may be impossible to reverse'*³⁰ — explains the persistence of such courses of action in that their *'self-reinforcing positive feedback'* renders transition to different courses of action very difficult.

These two strands of institutionalism that explain change and resistance to change are employed as a framework to facilitate the exploration of the Greek MFA. Previous sections of this article established that, according to the literature, a number of foreign ministries in Western advanced states are, variously, adapting to international policy developments. Such adaptability becomes evident with a foreign ministry's structural reorganization, as well as functional expansion, which is commonly identified with the addition of functions of economic diplomacy,

²⁴ Giovanni Capoccia and R. Daniel Keleman, 'The Study of Critical Junctures: Theory, Narrative and Counterfactuals in Historical Institutionalism', *World Politics*, vol. 59, April 2007, pp. 341-369; and John Meyer and Brian Rowan, 'Institutionalized Organizations: Formal Structure and Ceremony', in Walter Powell and Paul DiMaggio (eds), *The New Institutionalism in Organizational Analysis* (Chicago, IL, and London: University of Chicago Press, 1991), pp. 41-62.

²⁵ Powell and DiMaggio, *The New Institutionalism in Organizational Analysis*.

²⁶ March and Olsen, 'The New Institutionalism', p. 738.

²⁷ Meyer and Rowan, 'Institutionalised Organizations'.

²⁸ Stephen Krasner, 'Approaches to the State: Alternative Conceptions and Historical Dynamics', *Comparative Politics*, vol. 16, no. 2, 1984, pp. 223-246.

²⁹ Hocking, 'Rethinking the "New" Public Diplomacy', in Jan Melissen (ed.), *The New Public Diplomacy: Soft Power and International Relations* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); and Moses and Knutsen, 'Inside Out'.

³⁰ Paul Pierson, 'Increasing Returns, Path Dependence, and the Study of Politics', *American Political Science Review*, vol. 94, no. 2, 2000, pp. 251-267 at p. 251.

international policy coordination, crisis management and international development and aid. The sections that follow aim to explore, firstly, whether the Greek MFA has developed in these areas and, if so, in what ways; and secondly, its relevance to the main assumptions about foreign ministries.

The Organizational and Functional Expansion of the MFA

The MFA in Organizational Terms

The MFA — one of the seven ministries created at the time of the founding of the Hellenic State in 1833 — has always played a key role in defending and promoting Greek interests overseas. The ministry has undergone significant change since the 1974 restoration of democracy in Greece, reflecting Greek governments' efforts to reform Greece's foreign policy system, in which the MFA has always been central. In post-dictatorial Greece, the MFA has been reformed three times in an attempt to fine-tune the ministry with international policy developments. The three reforms took place in 1976,³¹ in 1998³² and in 2007³³ and, according to interviewees, a new organizational reform is currently being drafted. According to MFA officials, the revised structure of the MFA that emerged from the reforms, especially the 2007 reform, has significantly expanded the structure of the ministry, adding organizational units and functions that reflect the MFA's engagement in new policy areas. Central objectives of the 2007 reforms were the promotion of economic diplomacy to be the core pillar of the MFA, the crystallization of the functions of crisis management and international development and aid under its organizational aegis and the centralization of international policy coordination in its structure. Officials at the newly founded section for International Economic Relations suggested that the addition of the new economic and horizontal functions alter significantly the character of the MFA, synchronizing it with globalization and other modern European ministries.

Before the series of reforms conducted during the early 2000s — which amounted to the general reform that was introduced with the 2007 Charter — the MFA's structure was rather limited and traditional, in that it focused on bilateral relations and geographical regions. The structure is illustrated in Fig. 1.

The 2007 Charter — aiming at modernizing the ministry's structure and reflecting the increased international engagements of Greek governments — introduced a number of new organizational units and functions. The new structure comprises seven directorates-general (DGs) as follows:

³¹) Law 419/1976.

³²) Law 2594/1998.

³³) Law 3566/2007.

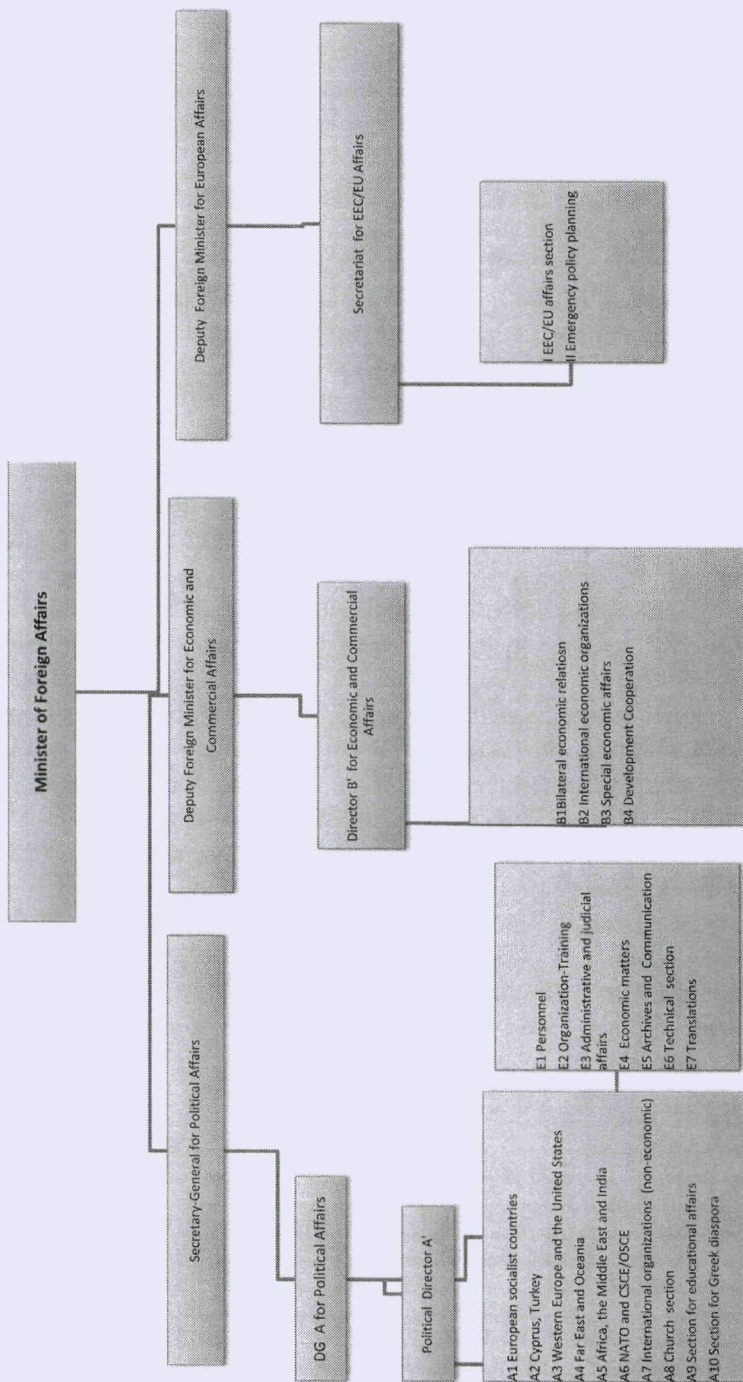


Fig. 1. The Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs: organization chart prior to 2000.

1. DG-A Political Affairs
2. DG-B International Economic Relations
3. DG-C European Affairs
4. DG-YDAS International Development Cooperation and Hellenic Aid
5. DG-D International Organizations, International Security and Cooperation
6. DG-E Cultural, Religious and Consular Affairs
7. DG-ST Personnel, Administrative Organization and Financial Management

The new multi-pillar and more complex organization of the MFA rests on the following three criteria: first, the distinction between bilateral and multilateral issues; second, the thematic distinction, which to date has effectively meant a division between political and economic matters; and third, the division into geographic desks.³⁴ Besides the aforementioned DGs and secretariats, which constitute the skeleton of the MFA, there are a number of services, offices and diplomatic cabinets to support the ministry's political leadership — that is, the foreign minister, deputy and alternate ministers. In addition, there are three General Secretariats³⁵ — namely, the General Secretariat for Political Affairs, the General Secretariat for European Affairs and the General Secretariat for International Economic Relations, with the latter being introduced only in 2002. The secretariats are headed respectively by the Secretary-General for Political Affairs (SG), the Secretary-General for European affairs (SG-EU) and the Secretary-General for International Economic relations (SG-IER). The Secretary-General for Political Affairs is always a diplomat of ambassadorial rank and heads the entirety of the bureaucratic hierarchy of the MFA, including the overseas diplomatic service,³⁶ while the latter two can be either diplomats of ambassadorial rank or political persons appointed by a joint decision of the prime minister and the foreign minister (under Law 3566/2007 Art. 3), thus depending on the political government of the day.³⁷ The new structure of the MFA is depicted in Fig. 2. It is important to note that all interviewees confirmed that there is no official organizational chart of the MFA and that the two charts presented in this article have been collated by the author, with evidence gathered from the interviews with MFA officials.

³⁴ Marilena Griva, *The Greek MFA: Historical Evolution of Organization and Current Charter* [in Greek] (Athens: National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, School of Law, Economics and Political Science, Department of Political Science and Public Administration, 2008) p. 24.

³⁵ There have been instances when there were four general secretariats, with the fourth being a General Secretariat for Greek Expatriates.

³⁶ Domna Dontas, 'The Greek Foreign Ministry', in Zara Steiner (ed.), *The Times Survey of Foreign Ministries of the World* (London: Times Books, 1982), pp. 259-274 at p. 269.

³⁷ Argyris Passas, 'The Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the Transforming European Union Institutional and Political System' [in Greek], in Konstantinos Arvanitopoulos and Marilena Koppa (eds), *Thirty Years of Greek Foreign Policy, 1974-2004* (Athens: Livanis, 2005), pp. 356-376 at p. 366.

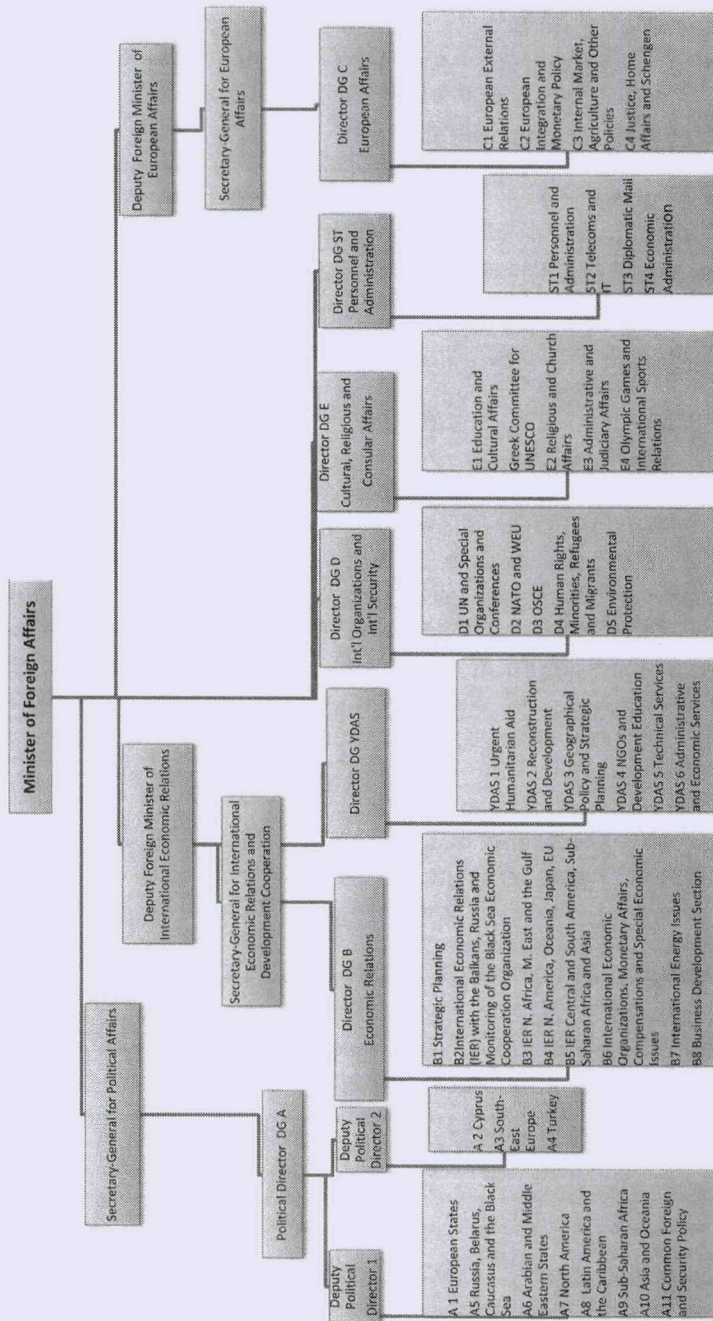


Fig. 2. The Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs: organization chart post-2007.

The intensified modernization efforts and expansion of the MFA in the last decade involved the introduction of a number of new functions that correspond to policy areas that have become central in Greek foreign policy in the twenty-first century. All of the interviewed MFA officials argued that the ultimate transformative change of the MFA as a response to globalization and regionalization was the organizational restructuring of the ministry on the basis of economic diplomacy. The shift of its traditional 'high politics' profile towards policy and diplomacy of horizontal economic substance in its international relations came as a result of normalization of relations in the post-Cold War era and the development of global and regional cooperation in sectoral and economic policies, especially within the context of the European Union.³⁸

Economic Diplomacy

Economic diplomacy — which until recently in Greece has been understood as a synonym of commercial diplomacy — was the 'Cinderella' of Greek foreign policy prior to 2007, with its management brushed aside to economic and commercial offices.³⁹ The 2007 Charter, however, heralded an attitudinal change and an aspiration to make a deep macroscopic and strategic intersection materialize in the organization of the MFA, as well as a strategic turn towards economic diplomacy.⁴⁰ More specifically, the MFA became the primary governmental vehicle in the management of foreign economic relations and the promotion of Greek business interests overseas.⁴¹ For this purpose, the ministry was expanded with the addition of the competence of foreign economic diplomacy, together with its bureaucratic section, the 'Economic and Commercial Affairs' section, which until 2002 belonged to the Ministry of National Economy (MNEC). Centralizing the competence of foreign economic diplomacy under the MFA's institutional structure marked a strategy to transform its mandate from political to economic as well as horizontal/productive.⁴² The changing direction in the MFA's mission towards horizontal economic policies is considered by its officials to be a colossal change, and the transfer of the economic competence contributed to the ministry's transformation.

In bureaucratic terms, however, the transfer of the competence of economic diplomacy to the MFA has been considered 'awkward and bound to create

³⁸) Charis Karabarounis, *Via the Diplomatic Route: The Historical and Institutional Framework of the Formation of the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs* [in Greek] (Athens: Sideris, 2007), p. 207.

³⁹) Interview at the section of Geographic Policy and Strategic Planning, YDAS-DG International Development Cooperation, MFA, Athens 2008.

⁴⁰) Interview at the section of Geographic Policy and Strategic Planning, YDAS-DG International Development Cooperation, MFA, Athens 2008.

⁴¹) Dora Bakoyianni, *Greek Foreign Minister's Address on the New Online Services of the MFA for the Support of the Business Community and Civil Society* (Athens: MFA Reports, 12 January 2009).

⁴²) Karabarounis, *Via the Diplomatic Route*, p. 200.

overlaps and grey areas of competence'.⁴³ According to MFA officials, although this process of 'fermentation and merging' of the political and economic dimensions of foreign policy was deemed to be a necessary step towards more integrated approaches to the management and organization of foreign policy, it brought about bureaucratic antagonism and overlaps by creating a grey area at the interface between political and economic diplomacy.⁴⁴ This phenomenon is discussed later in this article.

International Development Cooperation and Aid

Another new function consolidating Greek engagement in new policy areas, whilst at the same time displaying elements of the MFA's fine-tuning with international developments, is this of international development cooperation under the heading of DG-YDAS. YDAS, or else Hellenic Aid,⁴⁵ comprises six directorates — namely humanitarian aid, rehabilitation and development, strategic planning, NGOs' development education, technical services and administrative services — and heralds a significant qualitative change in the Greek foreign policy agenda. Hellenic Aid, which is the national coordinator for the Greek International Cooperation Policy, constitutes one of the three main pillars of contemporary Greek foreign policy in the twenty-first century. The addition of the function as a distinct pillar of International Development and Cooperation and Hellenic Aid in the organizational structure of the MFA reflects the changing substance of Greek foreign policy, which aims to expand its scope beyond high politics and extend its reach to civil society.⁴⁶ For this purpose, the Greek International Cooperation Policy has aligned its action with the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC), and promotes its renewed and alternative approach to diplomacy while enhancing its soft power overseas.⁴⁷

The portfolios for development cooperation and aid, together with the respective bureaucratic section, were initially transferred from the MNEC to the MFA in 2002 and the function was later fully assimilated in the MFA's organizational structure. YDAS officials pointed out that this new function heralds a new era for Greek diplomacy, as it promotes an image of 'good will' abroad that is removed

⁴³ Interview with commercial attaché at the Greek Economic and Commercial Office, New York, 2009.

⁴⁴ For an analysis of theories of organizational conflict in the case of the transfer of competence of economic diplomacy to the MFA, see Vasilis Sitaras, 'Demarcating the Competence of Diplomats and Trade Attachés (Economic and Trade Affairs)', *Rixikelefthou Quarterly Review for Administrative Reform*, no. 3, July-September 2005, pp. 10-20.

⁴⁵ YDAS was set up with Law 2731/1999 (*Governmental Gazette* 138 A').

⁴⁶ Hellenic Aid, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Greece, *Yearly Report of Greek Bilateral and Multilateral National Development Cooperation and Aid* (Athens: Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs, October 2007).

⁴⁷ Hellenic Aid, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Greece, *Yearly Report of Greek Bilateral and Multilateral National Development Cooperation and Aid*, p. 8.

from traditional and glorious Greek antiquity and that thus strengthens its political and economic relationships. A YDAS official characterized the creation of the secretariat as:

[...] the concrete proof of Greek governments' realization that the changing international environment increases demands for allocating funds in international policy and enhancing your soft power. We have moved away from our traditional national security concerns. Only international stability, cooperation and sympathy⁴⁸ can guarantee our national existence.⁴⁹

Hellenic Aid works together very closely with: a) Greek and other embassies and consular offices; b) NGOs; c) international organizations; d) other domestic ministries such as the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Defence (MoD); and e) domestic municipalities. Hellenic Aid has fostered the MFA's intensive cooperation with other parts of the Greek government, but also with non-governmental agents. An interviewee at the DG-YDAS stated that 'such multi-layered cooperation is a new thing for Greece, despite our long tradition in offering humanitarian aid on an ad-hoc basis'.⁵⁰

International Crisis Management

International crisis management constitutes another policy area toward which the functions of the MFA have expanded. The function formed part of the MFA's central organizational structure in the 1998 reforms and was further consolidated in the 2007 Charter. This function reinforces the overarching position of the MFA in the international policy bureaucratic coordination scheme, as elaborated below, and reasserts the primacy of the MFA in civilian protection both at home and abroad. An official at the Secretary-General's office argued that the competence of crisis management is of great significance for the MFA because — besides the value of its effective results — it also represents a new era of horizontal cooperation between the MFA, the overseas missions, domestic and foreign government departments.

Diplomats at the Secretary-General's office explain that the action of the crisis management unit relies by definition on the effective cooperation of a multiplicity of agents. The crisis management unit receives information concerning crises from Greek and foreign embassies, NGOs and international organizations. Crisis cases that reach the unit in the form of 'requests' are assessed at the Secretary-General's office and then forwarded to the Prime Minister's office, where action is jointly decided. The crisis unit makes a case for the appropriate level of response and draws up an 'action plan'. This translates into setting up a committee that

⁴⁸) The term 'sympathy' was used in its original Greek meaning, which refers to likeability.

⁴⁹) Interview with DG YDAS Director, MFA Athens, 2008.

⁵⁰) Interview with the Head of the section for Humanitarian Aid, YDAS-DG International Development Cooperation, MFA Athens, 2008.

comprises lead ministries and other government departments under the supervision of the crisis unit and the Secretary-General. The unit puts in place an ad-hoc channel of communication between the agents and those who submitted the request, international organizations where they are involved, NGOs and other government departments.

The unit works closely with the EU Civil Protection Agency and Situation Centre⁵¹ and has seconded civil protection representatives to the Permanent Representation of Greece to the EU as a response to the increasing demands for managing international crises. It has to be mentioned, however, that even though Greek governments have realized the importance of international crisis management, the specific function does not enjoy a high-priority status on the Greek foreign policy agenda. The significance of this function for Greece, as for other countries of similar size and economy, should not be compared with the significance that it receives in large countries. Greece is not directly involved in a large number of international crises. For this reason it does not prioritize a holistic strategic approach to international crisis management, in the sense of strategically reorganizing its overseas missions to support this function. Rather, the function remains operative centrally, where action is ad hoc and directed by the MFA's political leadership and coordinated by its crisis management unit.⁵²

International Policy Coordination

As the previous sections demonstrated, international policy coordination constitutes a key function undertaken by foreign ministries in their process of adaptation, as well as in their effort to maintain their primacy amid other government departments in the management of international policy. International policy coordination in Greece, as elsewhere, has been seriously challenged by both globalization and membership of the EU. The MFA's given operational and organizational culture, characterized by persisting hierarchy and compartmentalization, confronted the Ministry with unprecedented challenges in the face of increasing demands for the horizontal management of cross-cutting policies.⁵³

International policy coordination has been considered a prestigious bureaucratic task for Greek governments and caused friction and antagonism among Greek government departments. Coordination of foreign and international policy in Greece has been characteristically dichotomized between the MFA and the MNEC, with the former in charge of coordinating traditional foreign policy, associated with high politics and issues of national and territorial significance, and the latter associated with coordinating sectoral/European and economic

⁵¹ MFA Charter, 2007, art. 14, Law 3566/2007.

⁵² Interview at the Crisis Management Unit, MFA Athens, 2008.

⁵³ Interviews at the section for General Coordination, COREPER II, Permanent Representation of Greece to the EU, 2009 and 2010.

policies.⁵⁴ This was translated into a two-headed system, established by Law 1104/80, in which external policy coordination was split, based on policy substance, into a political or technical branch and allocated respectively to the MFA and the MNEC.⁵⁵

In an attempt to pursue a more integrated approach to foreign policy by merging its political and economic dimensions, and in order to establish the pre-eminence of the MFA in overseeing the management of Greek external policy in its entirety, the latest MFA reforms assumed the function of international policy coordination from the MNEC. This transfer crystallized the primacy of the MFA *vis-à-vis* the rest of Greek bureaucracy and made it the *primus inter pares* coordinator of all Greek external policies. Article 5 of the standing 2007 Charter stipulates the role of the MFA, which *inter alia* involves the monitoring of bilateral and international policies, economic, cultural and other matters, as well as matters of international security and consultation of the government in the form of recommendations (para. 2). Paragraph 7 of the same article provides for the coordination of ministries and departments with regards to formulation, implementation and assessment of both European (representing the wider spectrum of sectoral and economic policy) and foreign policy (in the sense of traditional high politics).⁵⁶

MFA officials argued that the assumption of the function of international policy coordination reaffirms the MFA's primacy in the Greek foreign policy system. Most importantly, however, it signifies the understanding of the importance of integrating Greek foreign policy, the management of which has been traditionally split into two distinct arms, namely a political and a sectoral/economic arm. This fusion in coordination is perceived by Greek officials as a very important step in the face of the pressing demands posed by globalization and the 'economization' of foreign policy.

In reality, according to a number of MFA officials at Directorates-General B, C and YDAS, the centralization of international policy coordination in the MFA has not provided evidence to date to support the strengthening of the bureaucratic scheme for international policy coordination in Greece. In practice,

⁵⁴ During the pre-accession negotiations for Greek entry to the EC, the leading role in European policy coordination was allocated to the Ministry of Coordination (MCo) — renamed in 1982 as the Ministry of National Economy (MNEC) on the grounds that EC policy would concern issues of economic and technical nature. See Passas, 'The Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the Transforming European Union', p. 365. After Greek accession to the EC in 1981, the role of the MNEC was limited to coordination of the technical/economic ministries as well as adjustment of the Greek economy to the EC, while policy coordination for political matters of the EC was transferred to the MFA.

⁵⁵ I.D. Anastopoulos, 'Structures and Functions of Greek Public Administration in the Framework of the European Communities (The Greek Paradigm)' [in Greek], *Greek Review of European Law [Elliniki Epitheorisi Evropaikou Dikaiou]*, no. 2-3, 1986, pp. 633-661 at p. 642.

⁵⁶ The coordinating role of the MFA was provided for in Presidential Decree 230/1998 (*Greek National Gazette*, FEK 177/1998), art. 1 para z.

the traditional compartmentalization of Greek foreign policy into political and economic/sectoral fractions persists and renders coordination ineffective. Greek foreign policy bureaucracy in general and the organization of the MFA in particular have not been able to tackle effectively the increasingly cross-cutting substance of foreign policy. Officials have argued that this becomes evident with the insulation of the two segments of foreign policy in terms of their management and organization. For many MFA officials, the integration process between the different aspects of economic, international and traditional foreign policy is at an embryonic stage in Greece. An MFA official stated that:

2000-2010 has been the decade that started the merging of traditional foreign and international/economic policies in Greece. International policy is becoming equally important with our traditional foreign policy concerns! The older approach of distinction between political and economic/technical issues has caused major coordination stringency but is expected to change gradually. Besides, realization of the need to merge the two has been the main linchpin of the reorganization of the MFA.⁵⁷

The MFA's Bureaucratic Culture: Elements of Hierarchy and Co-responsibility

Previous sections focused on the MFA's latest reforms, which introduced a significant expansion in the ministry's organization and functions. The reorganization of its structure and the assumption of new functions constitute significant change that the MFA has undergone in the process of adapting to international policy developments, suggesting transformation of the ministry. Interviews, however, drew an additional image of the MFA, according to which its persisting organizational culture of hierarchy and compartmentalization hinder the process of transformation, rendering it slow. A characteristic example of hierarchy concerns the integration of the function of economic diplomacy in the MFA.

As elaborated above, the 2007 reform promoted economic diplomacy as the core function of the MFA. This development triggered a process of change in the organization and character of the institution and aimed at the integration of the two distinct arms of Greek foreign policy, namely the political and economic. According to MFA officials, however, the intended integration has not been achieved and the division between politics and economics seems to persist, both in organizational and operational terms. This becomes evident in the insulation of the two functions within the ministry and their arrangement in distinct hierarchical organizational units, which are disengaged from any kind of horizontal cooperation. Such hierarchy, which is also present among the other organizational units, leads to bureaucratic co-responsibility and overlaps.

⁵⁷ Interview at DG-B7 International Energy Security, MFA Athens, 2010.

Co-responsibility, which is defined by MFA officials as 'several DGs being in charge of coordinating the same matter', arguably constitutes 'the product of hierarchy and a serious pathology of the MFA'. Acute operational hierarchy⁵⁸ and the lack of porosity between the different organizational silos of the MFA are associated to traditionalist and hierarchical approaches to foreign policy, according to which 'technical/economic and political' issues fit in different vertical organizational compartments.⁵⁹

The phenomena of co-responsibility and bureaucratic overlaps especially emerge when cross-cutting policies that fall within the EU remit are managed. This is because the ministry's post-2007 revised structure distinguishes between the three EU pillars. DG-C is responsible for issues under pillars one and three, whereas DG-A is responsible for pillar two. DG-C is headed by the Secretary-General for EU affairs and is under the supervision of the alternate Minister for EU Affairs, whereas DG-A is headed by the Secretary-General and comes under the direct supervision of the Foreign Minister. Issues of Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), for instance, constitute the subject of both DG-A11, its Political Director and Secretary-General, and the DG-C, its European Director and Secretary-General for the EU.

The persistence of the traditional division between high and low politics is still acutely present in the MFA, as in most EU member states. This reinforces a fragmented structure within the MFA, which leads to grey areas between different functions. Officials emphasized that problems occur with regards to management and representation when issues of a dual nature — of added political and economic substance — are at hand. In such instances, the management of dual (if not more complex) issues is ineffective, as it falls within a grey area of unclear responsibility and shared competence, which results in lack of action and overlaps.⁶⁰ An official at the economic and commerce office in New York stated that the problem of bureaucratic hierarchy has been seriously aggravated in the MFA over recent years, with globalization presenting the ministry with a number of new cross-cutting policies. All of the officials agreed that 'the intended fusion between economics and politics is on the way but not there yet'.

⁵⁸ According to this hierarchical operational scheme, sub-sections of all DGs refer to their director, who in turn refers to the director-general of their DG, who then liaises with the respective secretary-general and deputy foreign minister.

⁵⁹ Cooper, *Vertical Limits*'.

⁶⁰ Interview at the Greek Economic and Commerce Office, New York, 2009; interview with the Head of DG-B7 International Energy Security, 2009; and interview with the Director at DG-B8 Business Development, 2009.

The Character of the Greek MFA: Caught between Institutional Isomorphism and Path Dependence

Based on the premise that patterns of change within foreign ministries' structure and operation provide significant evidence regarding a state's responses to external systemic change and reflect states' fundamental assumptions about world politics, investigating the Greek MFA provides significant evidence with regard to the management of Greek foreign policy in the context of transforming world politics. Taken together, evidence gathered in the course of the interviews produced a dual image of the Greek MFA. The first image, largely implying that the MFA embraces contemporary foreign policy developments, is one transformation in response to the changing international policy milieu. The second image, which is closely related to the wider Greek politico-administrative culture, depicts the MFA as being traditionalist in that it presents a compartmentalized organizational model that is infused with elements of bureaucratic hierarchy. The two images providing elements of both change and resistance to change, constitute valid accounts, and are considered to be complementary in their depiction of the Greek MFA's contemporary character.

Employing institutionalist thinking functioned as a catalyst in this process by reconciling the two images. This is because new institutionalist isomorphism proved very helpful in understanding the course of change and adaptation that has been undertaken by the MFA in order to adapt to the complex interdependent environment in which it operates. In this context, isomorphism informed the first image of the foreign ministry, which supports a case of adaptation through the undertaking of new functions and roles. More specifically, the MFA demonstrates evidence of transformation by adapting its organization and functions to the changing international demands. The latest reforms, besides indicating the MFA's attempts to reflect the changing operational environment, also constitute evidence of the MFA's intention to preserve its role and significance, and become larger and stronger.

At the same time, path dependence facilitated the understanding of the second image of the MFA, shaped by the set of evidence that depicted the MFA as persistently traditionalist and hierarchical in organization and operation, as opposed to integrationist. Path dependence aided the explanation of the persistence of certain Greek organizational pathologies, such as hierarchy and co-responsibility, which condition and slow down the Greek MFA's adaptation. Arguably, the MFA demonstrates a certain degree of path dependence, expressed through what Aspinwall and Schneider⁶¹ term 'stickiness to prior organizational patterns', associated with persistence over traditionalism and hierarchy in foreign policy

⁶¹ Aspinwall and Schneider, *The Rules of Integration*, p. 12.

organization. From the two images of the MFA elaborated above, a number of conclusions can be drawn with regard to its responses to the transforming world politics and its place within the literature.

Conclusion: Whither the MFA?

Based on the premise that the structure and role of the foreign ministry in the context of transforming world politics reflect the ways in which states respond to changes taking place in the international policy milieu, studying the Greek MFA presents some very interesting conclusions. Overall, the MFA seems to have benefited from the processes of globalization and regionalization in that it has been strengthened by the addition of European and international policy processes to its structure. As a matter of fact, the MFA has ensured pre-eminence within the national foreign policy machinery in shaping and coordinating Greek foreign policy in both the context of globalization and supranationality in the EU.

In the wider discussion of strong and weak foreign ministries,⁶² the Greek MFA can be classified as a strong foreign ministry in that it occupies the most significant position in the national foreign policy bureaucracy. Beyond doubt, forces of change and transformation have challenged its role and significance, but the MFA still remains at the epicentre of the national foreign policy system. With the MFA perceived as the main Greek bureaucratic agent that is focused on the external environment, change and adaptation in its organization reflect the need to respond to international developments. The MFA has effectively been in search of a new identity, role and functions with which to extend its reach towards new international policy areas, as well as an expanded and refined organizational structure to reflect the complexity of its international tasks.

The MFA's process of adaptation seems to focus on organizational and functional change in policy areas that preoccupy a number of advanced Western and European foreign ministries, such as international crisis management, economic diplomacy, international development cooperation and international policy coordination. Institutional change and adaptation, developed through a series of organizational and functional expansions, have been incremental and based on existing practices. Based on the premise that adaptability is manifested by the foreign ministry taking on new tasks and functions with the aim of becoming more competitive in a number of newly added issue-areas, it can be concluded that the MFA has been deeply engaged in a process of change and adaptation.

Similarly to other EU foreign ministries and a number of small non-EU states, the Greek MFA presents a certain degree of resistance to change because of its organizational culture, which allows less flexibility and adheres partly to a tradi-

⁶² Hocking and Spence, *Foreign Ministries in the European Union*.

tional understanding of foreign policy that appears disengaged from economic policies and associated with high politics. In spite of the MFA's adaptation as reflected through the complexity of its new structure, the persistence of a hierarchical model of organization and operation indicates that the Greek MFA is still far from adopting an integrated approach to the organization and management of foreign policy. This is because the MFA has retained a traditional approach to foreign policy organization, dividing foreign policy into vertical organizational compartments, which remain insulated from one another because of a persistent hierarchical *modus operandi*.

Therefore, in response to globalist approaches that see the foreign ministry shifting towards horizontal/integrated models of organization, the Greek MFA qualifies for a rather different organizational paradigm. According to this paradigm, different issue-areas of foreign policy are managed by distinct organizational units that are organized on the basis of parallel silos representing different compartments of foreign policy. The MFA effectively appears to conform to images of foreign ministries that remain compartmentalized by function and imbued with verticality in terms of design and inculcated with traditional perceptions of foreign policy. Such images seem to explain well the relation between structure and operation of the MFA, which — by retaining the model of vertical silos — prevents the development of networked policy environments and poses obstacles to policy coordination. This leads to questions concerning the position of the MFA in terms of debates about assumptions of decline versus non-decline.

With assumptions in the literature over the foreign ministry's declining role focusing on the loss of its monopoly or disintermediation of the foreign ministry over the management of foreign policy, the image of the contemporary Greek MFA demonstrates that it does not accord with such assumptions. Evidence of its adaptability, as discussed in the previous sections, challenges the conventional arguments regarding the MFA's decline. The course of adaptation that the Greek MFA has embarked upon provides substantial evidence that not only is the MFA not declining, but it is actually being strengthened by becoming more complex in structure and operation to reflect the changing policy environment in which it operates. For instance, the assumption of the function of economic diplomacy follows examples of other large foreign ministries, which have reintegrated trade and foreign policy into a single department as a way of responding to the growing significance of economics in foreign policy. The same applies to the function of international policy coordination and crisis management, which — when allocated to the foreign ministry — are indicative of its strengthening position.

With regard to the added European and international dimensions to traditional foreign policy in the Greek MFA, it seems that these have not occurred at the expense of the MFA but have instead contributed to the MFA's growth as a stronger political actor. At the same time, the aforementioned dimensions helped to develop added international policy dimensions to the MFA, because its reach

extended to a number of new international and economic policies. With its skills expanding into new policy areas, the MFA remains at the centre of Greek international policy engagements and is transforming, albeit slowly, into a modern foreign policy actor with increasing international competence. Strong evidence of this has been provided by interviews with Greek MFA officials, which suggest that despite the MFA's traditional organizational culture, it is engaged in a process of change and adaptation aimed at finding its place in a renewed and modern Greek foreign policy system.

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