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Performing Statehood through Crises: Citizens, Strangers, Territory

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Abstract

This article applies the growing International Relations literature on state performance and performativity to the question of how practitioners categorize different kinds of crises. The aim is to add value to the crisis literature by paying more attention to how performances are staged for multiple audiences, how statehood is produced as a collective (as opposed to an individual) body, and how and why one and the same state actor performs statehood in different ways. Drawing on interviews and participant observation, we discuss how one state apparatus, the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), performs statehood during different types of crisis. The MFA has institutionalized crisis management in three very different ways, depending on whether it defines the crisis as a security crisis, a humanitarian crisis, or a civilian crisis. Different crises have different audiences, are performed in different repertoires, and produce three different aspects of the state that we name, respectively, caretaking, do-gooding, and sovereignty. Bringing the performativity literature to the study of crises gives us a better understanding of the statecraft that goes into using crises as opportunities to make visible and strengthen the state as a presence in national and global social life. Conversely, our focus on the specificity of various state performances highlights how the performance literature stands to gain from differentiating more clearly between the straightforward performing of practices, on the one hand, and the performing of state identity by means of the same practices, on the other.

Keywords: performance, performativity, repertoires, practice, statehood, international crises, humanitarianism, Norway

Introduction

Agents exist by dint of what they do, and states are no exception. A state that does not perform will be challenged by other agents in and out of its claimed area of sovereignty. At the most basic level, this is most pronounced in states that are deemed "fragile," where other actors move in to perform core tasks associated with statehood, such as protection and welfare provision, and thereby undermine the sovereign control of the state. However, we find the same dynamics on display in all states, as statehood is confirmed and secured through actions that manifest or make the state visible and tangible beyond the taken-for-granted aspects of the state's embedding in society. At no point is this clearer than in perceived crises, for regardless of whether we place the cause of crises in the structure of the state system or in individual agents, crises challenge states to act (Hermann 1972, 187).

State action in crises has been thoroughly studied, particularly but not exclusively under the rubrics of crisis management and Foreign Policy Analysis.[1] Hermann's (1972, 13) definition of crises as situations where the survival of the political unit in question may be

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1 Foundational works include Hermann (1972), Snyder and Diesing (1977), Richardson (1994), and Brecher and Wilkenfeld (1997). For more recent overviews, see Brecher (2017) and Nabers (2017).

threatened is widely accepted. Allison's (1971) insights into the importance of bureaucratic politics to crisis management widened the scope of investigation by bringing hands-on implementation practices into the mix. We follow his lead in this regard, but instead of focusing on bureaucratic in-fighting, we highlight how bureaucrats have to perform state agency vis-à-vis publics in times of crisis. Richardson's (1994) historical study, where he seeks to identify the importance of "crisis diplomacy" relative to structural factors in shaping the likelihood of war, shares similar assumptions. Similarly, Brecher and Wilkenfeld's (1997) comprehensive study explicitly links crises to the prospect of violent conflict, detailing how contextual factors about political decisionmaking may tip the political process in one direction or the other. More recently, Boin et al. (2005) have analyzed crisis management in light of the concepts of public leadership and learning processes. Similarly, Jørgensen's (1997, 5) analysis of European crisis management since the early 1990s assesses "what has been learned about crisis management," with a focus on crises both within Europe (ex-Yugoslavia) and outside Europe (Somalia, Iraq). In a recent contribution, Kornprobst (2019) gives the literature a welcome update by highlighting how crisis management is co-managed by several states. Kornprobst's focus is on the judgements and justifications made by state leaders, not least vis-à-vis one another. This perspective captures an important dimension of crisis management, namely how a state's position relative to other states is changed by its crisis management. In a less rationalist vein, we add to this focus by demonstrating how different kinds of crises activate different parts of state performance by different types of state agents. Where Kornprobst discusses state leaders, we choose a more structural and bureaucratic focus that highlights how different contexts activate different parts of the state apparatus. In effect, different crises end up being performed as different kinds of statehood. Saying that all crises are not the same is also saying that crises do not exist independently of those who try to manage them. States define which events shall count as a crisis and which shall not. They also categorize crises.[2]

2   We are not arguing that anything goes—that crises are fully subjective. Given the existence of crisis narratives, there is a limit to the degree to which, and for how long, a state may play down, say, a loss of its own citizens' lives in a natural disaster abroad or a genocide on another continent without defining it as a crisis. However, we need not look further than the differences between how states do this today, or how a given state would have dealt with what we now call a genocide two centuries

More recent work on the "*narrativity* of crises" foregrounds their transformative potential in terms of how discourses of crises contain contradictions that must somehow be managed or reconciled, and—interestingly—how such competing narratives compel the state to act to transform the state (Hay 1999, 317). In a slightly different vein, Davis Cross (2017) shows how crises in the European Union (EU) are important because they allow for the airing of concerns by different societal actors and thereby further European integration, both indirectly and counterintuitively.

What unites these otherwise different takes on crisis management is a view of crisis as something that threatens a pre-existing actor. The state is seen to exist with a distinct set of capacities and given identity independently of the response to a crisis. The state is presumed to be there, ready to act, depending on the resources available, lessons from the past, and decisions of political leaders. We differentiate our analysis in two distinct ways. First, we do not treat the actor—the state—as necessarily *unitary*. Second, we explore what type of state emerges *from* the response to different types of crisis. We want to add to the rich literature on crisis management by drawing attention to how, parallel to the actual management of a crisis, state agency must necessarily be on official parade: The state has to answer calls to *do something*. Drawing on the literature on performance and performativity (Butler 1997; Weber 1998; Ringmar 2016), we specify how this "something" differs with type of crisis and targeted publics. For these theorists, it does not make sense to talk of an actor that pre-exists action, such as planning for and responding to crises. Rather, the subject emerges with a distinct identity through the performance of available practices. States, in this view, become states by engaging in and performing practices recognized as having to do with statehood. This adds value to the study of crises by bringing attention to how one and the same actor—the state—performs *different* identities or forms of statehood depending on the repertoire or set of practices. We also pay attention to the agency that goes into the planning and design of the very practices through which the performance of statehood takes place. Other studies of performance stress how a subject emerges through the performance of particular practices or structures—of how becoming a subject necessarily involves being "subjected" to these structures (Butler 1997). In contrast to studies of performance, however, we draw attention to the considerable resources that go into establishing and planning for the practices through which

ago, to see that state categorization of crises is a highly malleable business.

statehood is performed during crises, here drawing on some of the insights from crisis management and public policy analysis: there is, we submit, a state-specific form of agency at work in planning for and organizing the very practices through which statehood can be performed in different crisis situations. Given that crises come with an imperative to act, analyzing how states plan for, act on, and communicate about crises thus also adds value to the study of state performances and state performativity.

Drawing on interviews as well as participant observation, we discuss how one state apparatus, the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), performs statehood during different types of crisis. We find that the MFA has institutionalized crisis management in three very different ways, depending on whether the crisis at hand is defined as a security crisis, a humanitarian crisis, or a civilian crisis. These different crises have different audiences, are performed through distinct practices, and produce three distinct aspects of the state that we may respectively name the caretaker state (civilian crises), the do-gooder state (humanitarian crises), and the sovereign state (security crises).

The theoretical implications we draw from this is that core arguments in the literature about state performance should be nuanced. As it stands, this literature tends to overlook the broader array of practices through which statehood is performed. Statehood is never performed solely through one practice: a civilian crisis calls for the dispatching of diplomats and close coordination with the authorities where civilians are located, but *also* a highly structured way of communicating to domestic publics. Other crises, such as humanitarian ones, have a very different set of practices for the performance of statehood, which involves the mobilization of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to deliver food and medicine, as well as public statements to signal to both domestic and international audiences that the state is doing good for "distant strangers." To do so, we draw on the emergent literature on repertoires—the distinct bundle of practices that provide a (more or less) set array of ways of acting—through which to respond to a crisis (Goddard and Nexon 2015).

We also highlight the *state-specific* form of agency that involves investing in and designing the very practices through which the state performs itself as a particular type of actor—one that seeks to produce certainty about the polity's survival (security crises), affirm membership (civilian crises), and signal normative commitments to outsiders (humanitarian crises). An integral element of the state is that it has to communicate and demonstrate its identity to heterogeneous audiences, creating specific requirements for the narratives and rhetoric

deployed to different audiences. In order to make these points, we draw on recent insights on narratives, framing, and rhetoric (Mintz and Redd 2003; Krebs and Jackson 2007; Krebs 2015).

The rest of this article consists of three main sections. The first section introduces a new meaning of performance to International Relations (IR), places it in relation to the two already existing understandings, and introduces our case study. We have chosen to look at one state, Norway, because it is located in a region where no one type of crisis must be expected to dominate (as one may expect to be the case in, say, the Balkans or the Horn of Africa). Norway is also fairly representative of its region (Northern Europe). Since most of the literature on crisis management focuses on great powers, of which there are by definition few, it is a plus to look at a majority case (but a minus that powers that are not considered great have, again by definition, a more limited repertoire in solving crises). We have chosen to focus on one state organisation, the Norwegian MFA, because as IR scholars, we are specifically interested in how state performances are staged not only for domestic but also for foreign audiences, and MFAs remain the key orchestrators of communication with and mediation between the domestic and the international (Der Derian 1987). Following the historical overview of the Norwegian MFA and its general planning activities in first section, in the second section we look at the variation in the repertoire used to manage and respond to different types of crisis. In the final section, our conclusion, we move on to identify what our findings suggest about the performance of statehood in general, and how our findings may contribute to the broader research agenda on statehood and its performance.

Practice and Performance

The literature on practices has tended to focus on the performance of practices in terms of the recognized "competence" of the actors that engage in them (Adler and Pouliot 2011, 6). As such, there is a tendency to equate "performance" with competently "doing" or taking part in a particular practice. This overlooks how the performance in question is not just of the practices, but also of the identity or subject of the actors in question. As Barnett (2018, 324) has recently commented, failure to include a focus on meaning reduces practice theorizing to mere behavior, and so any robust account of practice needs to include both the instrumental and the existential or meaning-generating aspect. This, we think, is where an emphasis on performance has to be broadened beyond the competent

performance of *practice* to also include the performance of the *subject or identity* in question through these practices.

We follow practice theorists in defining practices as patterned and socially recognized phenomena that may be performed well or badly (Neumann 2002; Adler and Pouliot 2011; McCourt 2016). However, in order to capture the performance of the subject through these practices, we need a better sense of the specific context of the performance. We cannot simply reduce the understanding of the context to one particular practice, as if the social meaning of performance might have been inferred from that practice alone. We therefore turn to the concept of repertoire to get at the broader array of practices and narratives at work. The coiner of the concept, Charles Tilly (2008, 14), defined repertoires as a way to study performances (of contention) and their interaction within bounded time periods, and stressed that repertoires are useful to capture the fact that "people…have several pieces they can play, but not an infinity…Within that limited array, the players choose which pieces they will perform here and now, and in what order." They index previous performances within the same genre, they are instantiations of practices, and, like practices, they are being judged as to adequacy and virtuosity (Cornut 2017). Practices literally set the stage for the performance. Specific actor and audience constellations and contexts will make every performance unique, but performances are nonetheless readily recognizable. Crucially, the concrete performance is one of practices and narratives from the repertoire, but the ultimate goal is to perform a kind of subjectivity, namely statehood.

When an MFA acts on crises, it does so by performing a set of practices that are meaningful to others. Thus, while we recognize the importance of both narratives and rhetoric (Risse 2000; Mintz and Redd 2003; Krebs 2015), we treat this dimension of the process of defining and acting on crises as necessarily integral to and pre-packaged by the set of practices—or repertoires—that have been institutionalized to act on them. Responding to a security crisis involves the deployment of material resources through established practices of government deliberation and decisions, the deployment of security and military personnel according to established procedures, *and* communicating in highly structured ways via press conferences, statements, and interviews with the media. This means that we treat the meaning-producing role that narratives and rhetoric have as integral to the broader set of practices through which statehood is performed. Because we shift focus from performing the practice, to performing the state through these practices, the narrative aspect of performance and the practices that are drawn on to

effectuate it are of central importance. We therefore include a focus on narrative because the performance of statehood through a crisis involves more than mobilizing money and personnel to handle it, in the form of dispatching humanitarian aid or sending military troops. It also involves practices that are aimed at narrating to both domestic and international audiences what is being done and why.

The growing IR literature on state performance has demonstrated that states spend huge resources on staging their identity vis-à-vis one another, and has argued about the degree to which such performances are constitutive. The key debate in extant IR scholarship on performance and performers focuses on the ontic status of the performer. Empirically, the performer is usually a state. On the one hand, Ringmar (2016, 118; cf. Alexander 2011) notes that:

> performances are not representations of something else but ways of coming into the presence of ourselves. To stage something in public is to imagine publicly, and it is by imaging a public self that we come into its presence. This is not to presume the existence of some collective, metaphysical entity; it is not to believe in ghosts, but it is to believe in stagecraft. It is only as performed that international politics becomes visualisable and, thereby, imaginable and, thereby, real.

For Ringmar, the performer exists prior to the performance, and is actualized through the performance. For Weber, by contrast, 'all subjects in process (be they individual or collective) are the ontological effects of practices which are performatively enacted' (Butler 1997, 2010; cf. Latour 1988; Weber 1998, 78; Law and Singleton 2000; Duvall and Chowdhury 2011, 338; Braun, Schindler, and Wille 2018). While important philosophically, this debate does not seem to be crucial for empirical study, where the task is to understand how, as Steele (2010, 4) puts it, "[i]n an age of instantaneous and continuous global and publicized communication [the state] re-creates out in the open." The understudied questions where actors are concerned are rather which are the intended audiences, how do actors categorize performances, and how does this lead actors to perform and thus manifest or produce the state in *different* ways for different audiences and in different contexts? We thus aim to open a new line of empirical inquiry by asking how and why one and the same state organisation—in our case, the Norwegian MFA—performs the state in different ways through different types of crisis. Such an understanding of performance is available in the work of ethnologist Richard Bauman, who sees performance as:

a mode of communicative display, in which the performer signals to the audience, in effect, "hey, look at me! I'm on! Watch how skilfully and effectively I express myself". That is to say, performance rests on an assumption of responsibility to an audience for a display of communicative virtuosity, highlighting the way in which the act of discursive production is accomplished, above and beyond the additional multiple functions the communicative act may serve. In this sense of performance, then, the act of expression itself is framed as display. (Bauman 2004, 9).

Where states are concerned, the "assumption of responsibility to an audience" is not optional but is, on the contrary, obligatory for achieving whatever form of legitimacy on which the state in question depends. This holds for both democratic and nondemocratic regimes, as legitimating stories are necessary to sustain a polity over time (Beetham 1991). The particular set of practices through which state performance is done matters, as it enables and constrains actors to signal and convey meaning to different audiences. An ambassador that conveys a message to her counterparts at a multilateral meeting about a humanitarian crisis is performing a state of a particular type. A colleague of the same ambassador at home, however, performs a very different dimension of statehood when she is put in charge of managing a security or a civilian crisis, seeing that this involves relying on a different repertoire, and communicating with different audiences, domestic as well as foreign (Neumann 2012). It follows that we must begin our analysis not by identifying a "performer," but by specifying what configuration of practices is mobilized to perform what type of statehood, to which type of audience.

The working hypothesis is that, during crises, we get a glimpse of what tends to be latent rather than manifest during the normal flow of events. During crises, the state apparatus relies on particular practices to restore order and communicate in distinct ways with both foreign and domestic audiences. Armed with Mitchell's (1991; cf. Steele 2010) important insight that the state is a structural effect of practices, the state emerges as standing above society not solely through disciplinary or governmental practices (Mitchell 1991; Foucault [1977–1978] 2004) but through the design, planning and training that goes into performing statehood during crises, and to the meaning attributed to crises as disruptions of any given order that the collective singular—embodied in the state—has to step in to resolve. In this sense, crises help manifest and consolidate the state, for crises have a temporal structure—build-up, break, diffusion or protracted conflict—that calls forth a particular type of collective singular.[3]

From these two theoretical contributions emerge an empirical one, which is to capture how the *variation* in the type of statehood that is being performed by one and the same state. This is no small issue, for performing the state as a Ministry of Finance or a post office or a school (Herzfeld 1992) is something quite different from performing statehood as a Ministry of Defense or an MFA. Furthermore, and this will be our focus here, performances vary not only between state apparatuses, but also *within* any one state apparatus that is aimed at different audiences. While it may be said that the goal is to project a representation of the state controlling events, rather than of events controlling the state, there are important differences depending on the type of state to be performed, as embodying territorial control, protection of citizens abroad, or forming part of an international community to help distant strangers.

We explore these questions through an analysis of how statehood is performed depending on the practices that are established for such performance already, and by being attentive to who statehood is performed for. In so doing, we stress that while the practices on offer may be internationally institutionalized ways of doing things (cf. Meyer and Rowan 1977)—e.g., security exercises, humanitarian relief—states spend a lot of time investing in establishing these practices so as to perform the state in distinct ways. There is planning, and agency, involved in producing the practices necessary to perform statehood. We further stress the narrative and meaning-generating aspect of state performance, or what Bauman (2004) calls the "accomplishment" of communicating with an audience. We follow the so-called Copenhagen School of Security Studies in treating the way in which states articulate and respond to crises as constitutive of state identity and power (Waever 1995). According to securitization theory, any phenomenon may in principle be turned into a security concern if singled out as an ontic threat to the survival of the in-group. However, we are interested not in this process as a general one, but in how securitization of the three different types of crisis that we identify, differ with regard to the performance of different types of statehood. Emphasizing the relative contingency of performances is important, as it highlights how state actors,

3   Temporality, the manifestation of time in human existence (Hoy 2009), is a hotly debated topic in the extant literature. While most scholars focus on the short term, Brecher (e.g., Brecher and Wilkenfeld 1997, 5) privileges the long term and Richardson (1994, 12) downplays its role. For an overview, see Acuto (2011, 526–7).

while drawing on a repertoire to act out and perform different aspects of statehood, operate in settings of conflicting demands and incomplete information, and so the successful performance of statehood is an achievement (cf. Ashley 1984; Sending 2017).

The Performer: An MFA

In focusing on a foreign ministry, we are already limiting our study to one part of the state apparatus, that which is charged with managing relations with other states. This has implications for what constitutes a crisis. It is also, we think, a highly relevant consideration for the study of the performance of statehood, since MFAs are situated between the inside and the outside of the state. This boundary-location of the MFA means that it is never really able to make others do what they otherwise would not have done on their own. An MFA is always liaising with and drawing on the support of other state apparatuses to manage crises: security crises are coordinated with the military, humanitarian crises are managed through non-governmental and international organizations, and in the case of civilian crises, MFAs are dependent on legal and police support (see e.g., Friis 2012). Furthermore, to the extent that crises can have a clear international dimension, which is often the case, the MFA is the primary point of contact with other states and international actors, over which the MFA has limited influence.

There is an additional reason why crisis management within MFAs is interesting, which is to do with the epistemological parameters within which they operate. A health ministry, a transportation ministry or an energy ministry operates predominantly in a world of risk, where there are known unknowns (there may be a pandemic, a train crash or a power outage), all of which are planned for in great detail, using risk metrics to prevent and manage them. MFAs, by contrast, arguably operate in a world of uncertainty rather than risks (Blyth 2006), where the future is unknown and thus not subject to calculation of probability etc. That is, MFAs are charged with managing the state's relations with *other* states and to advance the state's interests vis-à-vis others. In this realm between states, there is not only less control over events, but also less calculability and hence uncertainty. This is the epistemic side of the inside/outside distinction, where the inside is defined in terms of risk and the ability to calculate probability and seek to control events, and the outside is a realm where such events cannot be controlled (Walker 1992).

This difference in epistemic condition is expressed in each organizational unit, where sectorally specific ministries run on specialization as per traditional bureaucratic logic, and where MFAs in many ways defy that logic: MFAs are bureaucracies, but diplomats do not see themselves as bureaucrats (Neumann 2012). An MFA is organized as a bureaucracy, but not along the lines of specialization and expertise but according to the "generalist" where diplomats circulate between different regional desks and between sectoral issues (trade, security, development, etc.). This organization reflects the particular type of agency involved in diplomacy: of diplomats always being ready to manage whatever comes their way, operating under conditions not determined by themselves, and performing and advancing the interests of the state. The military also operates in a world of uncertainty, but its modus operandi is distinct from MFAs because its activities revolve precisely around planning for and modelling different scenarios. Most MFAs do not have such capacity. MFAs are thus in a precarious position, for they are charged with maintaining the inside/outside distinction while at the same time seeking to project an image of sovereign control where such control cannot be achieved, because such sovereignty is always limited by other states' sovereignty (Onuf and Klink 1989; Holm and Sending 2018).

This is also expressed in the training and professional ethos of diplomats, as they aim at exuding an image of excelling at operating under extremely circumscribed agency—of always having to take note of what others are doing, seeking their support, negotiating with them to get things done, etc. In this sense, diplomatic agency is antithetical to sovereignty inasmuch as sovereignty is about agency and control (Chowdhury and Duvall 2014; Holm and Sending 2018), and diplomats' job description is about creating room for maneuver, of seeking alliances and collecting information about events and developments that are not caused by their own sovereign.

Repertoires of Crisis Management

Because we are also interested in the design, organization, and planning that go into the performing of statehood, we looked for how many types of crisis the Norwegian MFA prepares for. We found these to be three: security crises, humanitarian crises, and civilian crises. Drawing on knowledge accumulated through a total of five years of participant observation within the MFA as well as from an interview-based pre-study, we then interviewed fifteen diplomats who were or had been centrally placed in the planning for and execution of crises. We wanted to understand in more detail how this work was organized, and how those who undertake it think about what they are doing. As presented in Table 1,

Table 1. Norwegian diplomats' categorization of and set-up for crises

Type of crisis	Institutionalization	Communication	Allocated resources	Partner	Signaling
Security (high)	Command Centre MFA and MoD	Ambiguous internal/alarmist external	Military and diplomatic	Foreign military and diplomatic	Narrative is important, deaths expected
Humanitarian (medium)	MFA acts through others	Assurance internal/alarmist external	Monetary + diplomatic	NGO/IO	Narrative is everything, even though people die
Civilian (low)	MFA acts through consular routines, coordinating with police	Assurance internal/diplomatic public-private trade-off external	Consular + police	Police/law	Narrative is underplayed until success is secured

security, humanitarian, and civilian crises differ with regard to institutional locus, form of communication, types of resources, and partners that are relied on.

Three types of variation stand out. First, these different crises include different personnel inside the MFA, different partner institutions, and different use of resources. Second, for all three kinds of crisis, the overall preoccupation is not only with the end result, but also with the narrative that the MFA's handling of the crisis presents to the varying audiences. Third, the importance that diplomats ascribe to these audiences differs. Whereas security crises are held to play out in front of multiple audiences, humanitarian crises are performed primarily for other states and for the Norwegian public. While the performance in these two cases is primarily a public and specific one, in the case of what diplomats call civilian crises, by contrast, the aim is quiet efficiency where the communication is aimed not at the specific goal of rising to a challenge, but at the general goal of upholding the image of the state taking care of its citizens.

Not surprisingly, interviewees suggest that the MFA's crisis repertoire is strictly hierarchical, with security crises at the top, but with some ambiguity as regard the hierarchy between humanitarian and civilian crises. This ambiguity stems from the fact that whereas civilian crises are not regarded as "political" and thus are considered less important by MFA staff, they matter a lot to political leaders, whose performance of the caretaker state is important for domestic audiences. Whereas civilian crises offer the state a chance to perform how the Norwegian state is a functioning one, humanitarian crises confirm Norway as a state that forms part of an international community, which may also accrue status points (Wohlforth et al. 2018). Towering over both civilian and humanitarian crises, at the top of the hierarchy we find security crises, as already noted, which trump other crises

by performing sovereignty. Since sovereignty and territorial integrity are extensively covered in the extant literature, we focus here mostly on civilian and humanitarian crises as they have emerged over the past two decades as increasingly important for the MFA's crisis management. We do, however, end with a discussion of how the performance of statehood through security crises reveals how the practices that are put in place for managing security crises are dependent on the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). This means that these practices are typically drawn on to signal commitment to NATO, as in Norway's contributions to the operations in Afghanistan and Libya.

Crises: Civilian, Humanitarian, Security

Civilian Crises

In December 2004, a tsunami in the Indian Ocean, caused by an earthquake off Sumatra, created a dispersed humanitarian crisis. There was considerable humanitarian reaction in Norway to the estimated 240,000 deaths and measureless misery, but the global humanitarian crisis was overshadowed by a national and *civilian* one, both in public discourse and within the MFA. The main issue was stranded or disappeared Norwegian citizens (eighty-four of whom were eventually confirmed or presumed dead). The consular branch of the MFA, which had a story of handling crises concerning Norwegian nationals abroad that stretched back to the nineteenth century, was not considered to have been up to the task. In accord with the well-known adage that crises often lead to organizational change (Seeger, Sellnow, and Ulmer 2003), an official commission was formed to go through the MFA's crisis readiness.[4] As a direct response to this

4   The resulting report by the so-called Reinås Commission was an all-out attack on the MFA for having

commission's report, and building on suggestions made therein, the first institutionalization of crisis handling took place in relation to Norwegian citizens abroad, what came to be known as civilian crises.

The bout of institutionalization in the late 2000s focused, first, on the specific case of crisis that had been under scrutiny, namely what happens when Norwegian citizens abroad are assumed to be under threat, but soon came to envelop security crises as well. According to standard procedures, the Norwegian MFA approached other MFAs in order to learn how to go about this organizational change, only to find out that "they were not particularly more advanced in their thinking than we were."[5] The report about the Norwegian MFA's handling of the tsunami crisis, corroborated by anecdotal evidence from other MFAs, suggests that the Norwegian MFA is fairly typical of other MFAs, particularly European ones, in their late institutionalization of civilian crisis work.

The basic, and new, distinction made was between "operative" and "strategic" crises. Operative crises were defined as crises that could be handled locally, and left to embassies to deal with (a staff protocol was evolved). Since this is a distinction that concerns the scope of possible effects rather than the kind of crisis in question, it will not concern us further here. To take care of strategic crises, defined as cases whose repercussions might become national, a round-the-clock service center was established at the MFA and was intended to serve as the first line of contact with the public. The establishment of this mechanism is important, as it indicated that a new practice was deliberately established in order to perform a particular type of statehood. The Security Director in charge at the time described the details of this new set-up:

If the duty officer smelled a situation, she called me. I would then set up a conference, part real, part virtual, to assess if there was a need to call a staff meeting. It is more like a taskforce, but we call it staff. We have a specific protocol for how to set staff. Typically, a conference would involve the relevant embassy, the Head of the Regional Department, the Head of the Consular Section, the Head of the Communications Division. I would then advise the Secretary General to set staff. This advice is always heeded and is, on average, given about five or six times a year. It happens that the polit-

ical leadership will enhance a no-staff advice to a staff situation, but that happens once a year tops. We built a situation room, and have perfected the SOPs [Standard Operating Procedures], which give us a wide berth. We also have an "MFA team" ready at all times, to support the work of embassies. It may be deployed on a 24-hour basis, consists of health, police and military personnel and is activated perhaps once a year. We leave it to the embassies whether and when they prefer to set staff. They do drills once a year, so all of this is now institutionalised. [A] key problem is flow of information. We have come to trust a software program, CIM [Crisis Information Management], where you are given one of a number of different codes, you log in and read the incoming information yourself. It minimizes the use of telephones and unlocks time.[6]

Examples of civilian crises that have been dealt with include kidnappings, the evacuation of Norwegian citizens after natural disasters, and the evacuation of Norwegian police forces involved in peace operations abroad. There was a rapid spill-over from the case of civilian crises to security crises, in the sense that the very same situation room was rigged for such crises and a similar protocol laid down. The key difference is that the Norwegian Ministry of Defense (MoD) becomes an institutionalized partner when staff is set up regarding what are considered security crises. These diverge from civilian crises either by involving Norway only indirectly, as the Ukrainian crisis in 2014 did, or by being a military attack not only on Norwegian civilians, but also on a Norwegian asset, as was the terrorist onslaught against the multi-company gas installation in In Amenas, Algeria, in 2013, where Statoil and a number of Norwegian staff were among the 700 hostages taken (Graeger and Yennie Lindgren 2018).

Importantly, both for security crises and for civilian crises, the MFA has established procedures and protocol that enrol actors external to it. For security crises, there is one set of routines to set staff, which involves close collaboration with the Ministry of Defense. There have been few of this kind since World War II in Norway. The only ones that came close to a pure security

been unprepared for and amateurish in its handling of the tsunami crisis. The report is available at http://flash.vg.no/filer/evalueringsutvalget/rapport.pdf.
5   Interview with Head of Department, Petter Ølberg, Oslo, November 28, 2014. Ølberg oversaw the institutionalization in 2005 and returned to be Security Director in 2013–2014.

6   Interview with Petter Ølberg, November 28, 2014. To further underline the extent of institutionalization, it should be noted that, before 2005, the MFA had one, and only one, officer on night telephone duty. An often referred-to incident from 1968, when the duty officer did not deem the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia to be important enough for him to wake the Foreign Minister, is often used internally to bring out the importance of institutionalization.

crisis where Norwegian territorial integrity or assets abroad were in play were, in addition to In Amenas, a shooting at the Hotel Serena in Kabul when the Norwegian Foreign Minister was there (2014), and—possibly—the so-called "Elektron" case (in 2005) where two Norwegian coastguard inspectors who boarded the Russian fishing boat *Elektron* in international waters were not permitted to leave as the boat went back to Russian waters. For these matters, a standardized set of procedures has been established, involving close cooperation between the MFA and the Ministry of Defense.

For civilian crises, state performance is very much controlled from top to bottom by the state itself, often through a separate protocol. It calls for the inclusion of representatives from the police and also insurance companies. The Norwegian MFA has established separate protocols and routines to ensure coordination and speed in a way that established bureaucratic practice does not facilitate. These crises used to be dealt with by different parts of the organization—the Consular Section and the Security Division, respectively—but were institutionalized along similar lines. Moreover, in both civilian and security crises, the MFA is positioned as a coordinating unit, but where different organizational units—and the practices they embody—are enrolled to perform different facets of the state.

Humanitarian Crises

Humanitarian crises are dealt with rather differently. During the Cold War, humanitarian work of all stripes was treated as part of a wider development complex, which was organized in a separate directorate and coordinated by the MFA's Second Political Section.[7] After the end of the Cold War, this portfolio was lifted to the fore (Neumann 2015). An integral part of the institutionalization of a distinct repertoire for humanitarian crises came when the previous section, covering both human rights and humanitarian issues, was split into two separate sections. According to the last head of the section before the split, humanitarian crises were overwhelmingly delegated to the United Nations (UN) and to NGOs:

> We always spoke about humanitarian development. … We authorized the UN to take care of it all (*gav dem in blanco-fullmakt*). There could be an earthquake in the morning, and in the evening, we could say that Norway is already helping out. … We listened to the

High Commissioner [for Refugees]. We gave them a lot of money for blankets and the like, so when we heard on the radio that Norway did its part, it was not because we had been particularly clever … We also had very close ties to the NGOs.[8]

A recent head of section confirmed this picture in describing the style of work, adding that relying on the distribution of funding to other actors—the UN and NGOs—is the single most important practice through which to perform statehood in humanitarian crises:

> The budget now stands at NOK 3 billion, an all-time high and around 10 percent of the overall development budget. When the humanitarian budget is ready at the beginning of the year, we draw up priority document (*prioriteringsnotat*), complete with a reserve, and present it to the political leadership. All our case handlers have direct contacts into the UN system. Appeals keep coming. The newly implemented UN system of dividing crises into three levels is a help. At present, four crises are rated as level-three crises: South Sudan, CAR [Central African Republic], Syria, Iraq. A level-three status activates a certain coordinating system, releases personnel and money and also calls for more analysis. When the UN appeals to us specifically, we usually respond. … We also have appeals from national and international NGOs.[9]

The specifics of this set-up are of interest, because they tell us something about the planning and design of practices through which statehood of this type can be performed in the way that it is: humanitarian aid is allocated through large, often Norwegian, humanitarian NGOs with which the MFA has a so-called Framework Agreement, and also through the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), a UN-coordinated relief fund that is used to disperse funds quickly. The allocation of funds is made early in each calendar year, and the whole section is engaged in producing the "Allocation Document" (*Fordelingsnotatet*) in January. This key document spells out which countries/crises will receive funding and which organizations will handle what. About 15 percent is kept in reserve every year for contingencies. The bulk of funding goes either to three large humanitarian NGOs in Norway with which the MFA has a Framework Agreement, or to UN agencies, such as United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the UN Secretariat's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

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7   To be more specific, the directorate grew out of a development project, was turned into a separate ministry in 1984 and integrated into the MFA in 1990 (Kolsrud 2008, 428–36).

8   Telephone interview, September 12, 2014; interview, September 4, 2014, Oslo.
9   Interview, October 31, 2014, Oslo.

Three points are worth highlighting regarding the Framework Agreement. First, it allows the MFA, in the words of one former head of the humanitarian (HUM) section, "to operate more regularly in dealing with a crisis. If there is a crisis, we already have the Framework Agreements in place so that the Foreign Minister can declare very quickly that 'Norway is already contributing…"[10] Note here the emphasis on being able to respond quickly, and how the bureaucratic machinery has developed a way to respond to demands for proper organizational practices while also being seen to act quickly. This is achieved by outsourcing the actual response to NGOs, where the Framework Agreement makes it possible for the MFA to sit down with the relevant NGOs to determine what should be prioritized etc., which bypasses conventional bureaucratic rules for the use of public funds. Note, also, that the response is defined as a speech act, as a public statement from the Foreign Minister, and not as delivering aid per se. The distinct mode of humanitarian crisis management is therefore shaped by the practice of channeling large funds quickly, and by the practice of the MFA stepping into the national public to give meaning to and explain what is going on, and what Norway is doing to address it. The emphasis is on the time it takes for the Foreign Minister to be able to say that "Norway is already contributing with X…to this crisis." This is also the case for the CERF, which is organized by the Emergency Relief Coordinator—the head of OCHA. For the CERF, the time it takes for the Foreign Minister to be able to declare that Norway is doing something is even shorter, since the funds are already transferred and it is decided by the CERF Secretariat in New York how much of the funds should be used by which UN agency.

Second, the active use of the Framework Agreement and the CERF is also a testament to how the state can present itself to a domestic audience as being a moral one in helping distant strangers, at the same time as the responsibility of the state is detached from the efficacy of such relief. In one of the more critical and systems-defining reviews of the humanitarian system in decades—the one that was commissioned after the Rwanda genocide in 1994—the target of criticism was not the performance or behavior of states and MFAs, but of humanitarian organizations, which had allegedly failed to establish proper accountability mechanisms, etc. By conducting humanitarian crisis management at a distance, through NGOs and international organizations, states gain credible deniability, and may project a sovereignty-enforcing image of being on top of events.

Third, humanitarian crises represent a way to transfer economic capital to political capital—to gain access to other key states as a player in dealing with international crises (Neumann 2015; Sending 2015). In contrast to many other comparable foreign ministries, however, such as Sweden's and Denmark's, Norwegian humanitarian funding is not placed in a separate development directorate. Rather, it has always been closely linked to the Foreign Minister and is, as one informant put it, "used to advance broader Norwegian interests: we have prioritized Sudan, Afghanistan, Palestine, etc., because we have had interests beyond humanitarian ones. Of course, the modality of offering humanitarian assistance is in keeping with humanitarian principles (neutrality, impartiality, etc.), but we have always linked funding decisions to political interests."[11]

The linking of humanitarian aims to political interests is one that, for the MFA, appears self-evident and unproblematic. It is a testament to how the establishment and evolution of a repertoire come to shape the articulation and use of humanitarian funds: it is used selectively to invest in humanitarian relief in some countries that are considered important for Norwegian interests overall. These "interests" are process-oriented, as humanitarian funding is seen as a ticket to meetings and arenas where Norway would otherwise not have had access, such as the quartet that coordinates assistance to Palestinian authorities, Norway's key role in mediating the Sudan/South Sudan conflict, and also its diverse involvement in Afghanistan.[12]

Security Crises

What about security crises? In the case of Norway, there has been no real security crisis since the end of World War II. Nonetheless, Norway has participated both in the military operation in Afghanistan and in Libya. In the former case, Norwegian forces managed a so-called "Provincial Reconstruction Team" (PRT) for several years, and some Special Forces are still present in Kabul to serve as advisers to Afghani Special Forces. In the latter case, six F-16 fighter jets participated in the aerial bombing following the UN Security Council Resolution 1973 (2011) to use "all necessary means" to protect civilians. In both cases, the MFA was heavily involved in managing discussions with NATO allies, following debates in London, Washington, Paris, and Brussels. In the case of Afghanistan, participation in the military operation and in state-building efforts was aimed at demonstrating the Norwegian state as a loyal and competent NATO ally. As the government-commissioned report noted, this was the primary objective of the operation, and it took precedence over other objectives, such as helping Afghanistan

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10   Interview B, January 13, 2015, New York.

11   Interview B, January 13, 2015, New York.
12   Quotes from NOU (2018, 73–6), our translation.

develop into a more stable state, and fighting terrorism (NOU 2016). A document that is presented as a state document actually states that a Norwegian security concern, namely to maintain Norway's standing as a good ally, is more important than what Norwegian agents actually do on the ground in Afghanistan. The debates about this operation also show how being a loyal ally was under-communicated domestically, and less important objectives such as helping Afghanistan were over-communicated. This was a performance of statehood that rested on two contradictory logics: one drawing heavily on the humanitarian one, emphasizing the help to distant strangers; and one drawing on the idea of demonstrating commitment to NATO allies.

Similarly, the Libya operation emerged as a security crisis only to the extent that it formed part of a broader discourse among key allies that action had to be taken to protect civilians also in faraway places. Here, too, however, there was a tension: vis-à-vis the Norwegian public, the participation in the bombing campaign was linked directly to the fact that the UN Security Council resolution had to be implemented. This was said to be important for Norwegian sovereignty, as it would uphold the image of a "rules-based order" (NOU 2018, 76). The Foreign Minister and the rest of the government had initially been against using military force in Libya. When the Security Council passed Resolution 1973, however, the Foreign Minister changed his position, arguing that "this is now something completely different, a broad UN-resolution with authorization of political, civilian and military measures." The Prime Minister similarly presented the decision to participate in the operation by stressing that, "Our engagement builds on a long tradition in Norwegian foreign policy, namely support to a UN-led world order where the use of force is regulated by the UN Charter, and with a decision by the UN Security Council."[13] As the report notes, however, this public emphasis on the UN as a pillar of Norwegian security and sovereignty sits uneasily with Norway's participation in NATO decisions to effectively stretch the mandate of 1973 beyond the "protection of civilians" to also facilitate "regime change." This is of interest in this context for two reasons. First, the performance of statehood here takes place via an international operation, where the

justification for the mobilization of military resources is linked directly either to being a good NATO ally, or to the idea of a "rules-based" order anchored in the UN. In this sense, the availability of practices for the upholding of territorial sovereignty is used for tasks not linked to such sovereignty, but to credible signaling to NATO allies. Second, the availability of practices that exist for the performance of statehood—via NATO cooperation and via the UN—pulls the narrative and the meaning-making in different directions: public narratives, aimed at a domestic audience, stress the protection of civilians and humanitarian values, whereas diplomatic and military communication aimed at NATO allies stress commitment to objectives advanced by France and others to go further, beyond the UN mandate, to push indirectly for "regime change." This suggests, paradoxically, that the performance of statehood through security crises, which is at the top of the hierarchy, is highly circumscribed, fundamentally shaped by practices where other sovereigns are more important.

We conclude that there are striking differences between how different crises are defined and handled by the MFA. What the MFA calls security crises is defined in-house, remains at the heart of the MFA's work and is handled in conjunction with the Ministry of Defense. So-called civilian crises, those that concern Norwegians abroad, are handled in-house. Humanitarian crises, on the other hand, are defined and handled by others. While we are definitely talking about three distinct practices here, in all three cases, the MFA puts on ceaseless efforts to project an image to the world of how events do not faze the state. On the contrary, the state assumes "responsibility to an audience for a display of communicative virtuosity, highlighting the way in which the act of discursive production is accomplished" (Bauman 2004, 9). In a word, it performs. Diplomats see such performance as an integral part of the job, and have no compunctions in saying so. States need to be seen as controlling events, and this controlling of events is constitutive of state sovereignty. Table 1 sums up what diplomats told us regarding their thinking about and institutionalizing of different types of crisis.

Performing the State

The analysis above yielded a fairly detailed view of how the three different kinds of crisis that the MFA handles are organized, and how diplomats think about preparing for them and implementing action. Diplomats think of crisis management as a series of discretely ordered tasks whose solving has to be performed—that is, solved in such a way that the MFA acquits itself well. The

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13 Our analysis so far suggests that security crises may be further classified in terms of the degree to which they form an ontic threat, beginning from a need to demonstrate allegiance to patrons and other allies (Afghanistan, Libya), via a need to demonstrate sovereignty over state territory (*Elektron*), to a need to fight for survival.

diplomats' own understanding of crises dovetails nicely with Bauman's (2004, 9) Bakhtinian understanding of performance as resting "on an assumption of responsibility to an audience for a display of communicative virtuosity, highlighting the way in which the act of discursive production is accomplished, above and beyond the additional multiple functions the communicative act may serve."

During a humanitarian crisis, by contrast, the state to be performed is the good international citizen. The emphasis is on diplomatic communication to other states, on the one hand, and to own citizens about outside agency, on the other. By contrast, the state to be performed during civilian crises is one where the agency of the state is circumscribed and where the audience is purely domestic. It is the domestic side of the state that has to operate to control events on its outside, and so there has to be a balancing between public communication and total control, but this depends on private communication with foreign entities and with the private individuals concerned, about the steps being taken to manage the situation.

There are variable configurations between two sets of practices for acting on crises. On the one hand, we have a set of practices such as paying an amount earmarked for humanitarian crisis to a UN agency, bringing a stranded Norwegian citizen from a disaster area to an airport, etc. On the other hand, we have practices that are focused on defining the meaning of such performance in terms of state *identity*, such as communicating to the media, diplomats speaking about a humanitarian crisis at a civil society-organized event, diplomats meeting a homecoming citizen at the airport, etc.

In civilian crises, the focus is squarely on problem solving. The job is to get Norwegian nationals home, which is defined as having them back with their feet on Norwegian territory. Performing statehood here takes an everyday form. There is little of the bravado that the MFA displays while solving security and humanitarian crises. On the contrary, there is a sense of quiet cool to the state's handling of events, which is due not only to the need for more privacy in the handling of these cases, but also to the wide repertoire, complete with a variegated set of resources, that is at the state's disposal. Civilian crises are handled in a matter-of-fact manner and the narrative takes the form of toned-down statements from the Foreign Ministry in part because the scope for agency is substantial, and the state's control is not in question. However, there is a difference between the performance of statehood externally—which is about handling consular affairs with as little ruffle as possible—and the performance of statehood domestically, which thrives on public commentary and the portrayal of a state that is in control.

A recent case in point is the return of Joshua French from an eight-year prison sentence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) to Norway on Independence Day, May 17, 2017, when the Foreign Minister and Prime Minister held an extra-ordinary press conference to inform the public that French was now safely back where he belonged. What is performed on such occasions is not crisis management as such—that has already been taken care of—but rather state identity, as performed through crisis management, to a grateful society.

Humanitarian crises are different. Here, the narratives developed are maximalist and aim to portray an image of state agency under conditions where such agency is highly limited, and where repertoire is limited by the fact that the state acts through intermediaries, notably international and non-governmental organizations. The Foreign Minister's role is mainly one of commenting on events rather than acting on them internally, and to gain recognition and status externally. Most of the funds go through international organizations. The financial allocation practices serve a double purpose: they are crisis-managing practices performed on victims, which may then be recycled as identity practices that add up to a "Norway as a good citizen of the international community and a pillar of its multilateralism." In lieu of diplomatic representation and negotiations on behalf of a set of national interests, diplomatic processes are on this reading filled with advocacy in the name of "humanity" and claimed universals. The very outsourcing to the UN is itself a state performance for the domestic audience and other states to watch. Furthermore, the Norwegian state makes certain that it keeps some resources at the ready, so that performances may also be staged by the Norwegian state direct, within states that are handpicked for political reasons. These performances are put on specifically for chosen countries and specific audiences, which is a clear break with humanitarian discourse, which says that people shall be helped according to need, as distinct from factors such as citizenship and showcase-ability.

On top of the hierarchy of crises within the MFA, we find security crises.[14] Security crises form part of the broader set of repertoires that involve the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Justice and these ministries' relevant directorates, such as the National Security

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14   Our analysis so far suggests that security crises may be further classified in terms of the degree to which they form an ontic threat, beginning from a need to demonstrate allegiance to patrons and other allies (Afghanistan, Libya), via a need to demonstrate sovereignty over state territory (*Elektron*), to a need to fight for survival.

Table 2. The relationship between signaling to audience and result orientation in the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Type of crises	Signaling	Results
Security	Narrative is important, deaths expected	Results matter, but subordinate to demonstrating loyalty to allies
Humanitarian	Narrative is everything, even though people die.	Humanitarian results less important than diplomatic ones
Civilian	Narrative is underplayed until success is secured	Results matter, but organized around bringing civilians home safely

Authority. The MFA's role in this broader set-up is as a responsible ministry for Norwegian security interests and communication with other states, which means that the assessment of other states' possible reactions to the actual handling of a crisis is of central importance. One case is illustrative, namely the "Elektron" case in October, 2005, where the Norwegian coastguard sent two inspectors on board a Russian fishing boat called *Elektron*. The inspectors found that *Elektron* was not operating according to established rules for fishing. The boat's captain then set course for the Russian maritime border with the two inspectors on board, and the coastguard followed suit, with orders to shoot cold grenades to stop it, and also Norwegian Special Forces on their way in a helicopter to possibly board the ship to get the two inspectors out. In this process, the MFA's role was to define the legal parameters for the coastguard's operations, communicate with the flag state (Russia), and provide advice to the coastguard and other relevant authorities about what course of action to take. The communication to the public was done by the Foreign Minister, and the MFA communicated with Russian counterparts. While not a crisis as regards territorial integrity per se, it was a crisis of a very different character than the typical humanitarian and civilian crises because of the stakes involved vis-à-vis Russia. The MFA's role was one of orchestrating the rest of the government's apparatus to perform internal and external statehood at the same time. The performance of a central aspect of statehood—managing and controlling economic activity in the Barents Sea and protecting its citizens performing such tasks—was in fact subordinated to the performance of external-diplomatic statehood. Norway signaled to Russia that it did not want to escalate the situation, and left it to Russian authorities to stop the ship on the Russian side of the border and hand it over to the Norwegian coastguard (Søgaard and Hagen 2014, 7–8).

We think the privileging of external-diplomatic over territorial and economic statehood in this case is an important indication of how security crises are more open-ended, and also more dependent on externally defined practices for the performance of statehood. As is well known, leading German inter-war lawyer, Carl Schmitt, defined the sovereign as he who decides over the exception (Schmitt [1922] 1985). The whole point of his linkage of sovereignty to decisions about exceptions hailed from his legal framing of the issue. As Huysmans (2008, 169) has argued, Schmitt was primarily interested in the "relation between actual power and legally highest power," which Schmitt calls "the problem of sovereignty" (Schmitt [1922] 1985, 18). Here we are not interested in the legal framing of crises or exceptions, nor in the distinction between the normative and the factual, but in how security crises afford the state leeway to *perform* statehood *qua* sovereign. Defending sovereignty is not only the obvious *raison d'état*, it is also the state's very *raison d'être*, and so the distinct repertoire relied on to perform it varies much more than in other types of crisis. The findings of the strategic analysis are summed up in Table 2 below.

Conclusion

States are performative, both in the sense that their way of getting things done is on display, and in the sense that their very existence depends on their ability to perform. As instantiations of practices, performances are strongly context-dependent. It follows that empirical analyses of state performance cannot simply begin with a focus on a certain state or even a certain state apparatus, but must begin by identifying the multitude of practices within which the performance of statehood, and of a particular state identity, occurs.

Given that crises confront states with an imperative to act, the study of crises is a particularly fertile ground for demonstrating how state performance works. Indeed, in this article we have tried to show that the performance of statehood is distinct in part because of the design and planning that go into it. We have demonstrated how, for example, within one state and one state apparatus,

namely the Norwegian MFA, there exist three distinct repertoires of practices, developed over time, for handling three different kinds of crisis.

To summarize: MFAs design and organize for themselves, and through others, practices through which to perform statehood (Neumann 2002). In the case of civilian crises, this narrative is squarely centered on moving citizens from the outside of the state to the inside of the state. A minimal version of this narrative is to lend money to the citizens so that they may buy airline tickets to get home. A maximum version may involve the use of coercive power to apprehend nationals abroad and repatriate them under armed guard (for an example of the latter, see Haugevik 2018). Either way, the narrative culminates not with the enhanced wellbeing of the citizens in question as such, but with their return to Norwegian territory; the story ends with a plane's touch-down on a Norwegian airport (and perhaps a reunification with family and friends). In the case of humanitarian crises, the narrative is about performing international good citizenship and defining the meaning of statehood in terms of benevolence also for distant strangers. Finally, regarding security crises, the leeway for state performance is maximum, allowing for a broad range of configurations between acting on the crisis, on the one hand, and giving meaning to and performing identity, on the other. This, we hypothesize, is because the narrative is grander—organized around sovereignty.

We have levelled three charges against extant IR literature on state performance and state performativity. The first one is that it is insufficiently attentive to the time and effort that goes into the planning for and execution of state performances, which involves both acting on the crisis *and* defining its meaning to different audiences. Following Bauman's (2004) stress on the narrative aspect has allowed us to bring out this aspect of performativity, where extant approaches in IR do not. Second, we have argued that the extant literature comes up short in specifying exactly what it is that different state performances actually perform. We have demonstrated in some detail how three different aspects of the state—the caretaking of citizens, universal do-gooding, and (in lesser detail because it is so well established) sovereignty—are being performed in different contexts. Third, and building on the previous point, we have demonstrated how these differences in performance across contexts are due to different national and internal discursive settings, different repertoires of practices, and different national and international constellations of actors.

In this article, we have focused on the practices through which one state has performed during crises, and have highlighted how security and humanitarian crises are managed through practices that are institutionalized within international organizations and humanitarian NGOs. This means that in order to stand above events and signal sovereignty as control, the state must rely on practices not under its own direct control. The different ways in which statehood is performed through drawing on practices controlled by others seems an important area for further research, not least to get at what type of state emerges from such performances. For example, for a number of states, the performance of statehood throughout the 2008 financial crisis was dependent on the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the G20, and focused to a considerable degree on rescuing private banks that were deemed to be "too big to fail."

Our analysis only goes so far in addressing the broader phenomenon of how statehood is performed. We have not dealt with the question of how pre-existing expectations of the state shape what counts as competent performance, nor with the significant variation between different states, depending on political history and socio-economic resources, in what counts as successfully handling a crisis. Moreover, there are differences between domestic and international audiences: a state may handle a crisis well as seen by its own citizens, but be criticized for it by other states. For example, Russia's handling of the 2002 terrorist attack in a Moscow theatre seems overall to have been perceived as necessary by domestic audiences, but was criticized for its heavy-handedness by Western states. Different audiences will judge the same performance on different merits. Anticipating this, a performer will often attempt to perform differently for different audiences, so-called "multiple signaling" (Musgrave and Nexon 2018). Further steps in studying state performance of crises would therefore be to study when, how, and why different audiences find such performances convincing, and how states perform the same crisis differently for different implied audiences. And yet, given that all present states are at least nominally under an obligation to perform statehood by tending to citizens in distress and threats to their sovereignty, our basic framework for studying state performance of crises should be universally generalizable. However, different states will define different events as crises, states differ in the degree to which they define global humanitarian crises as their responsibility, and other states may have additional categories of crises than the ones discussed here (for example, religiously defined crises). The immediate area of validity for our analysis should therefore be the so-called like-minded middle powers: the Nordic states, the Netherlands, Belgium, Canada, probably New Zealand, and Australia. Even here, we would expect that slight adjustments of the framework would be needed.

When applied further afield, say to other middle powers of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) or to powers of a different size, we would expect further adjustments to be called for.

The study of security and of foreign policy typically assumes the unproblematized social existence of the state whose security or foreign policy is being analyzed. Our analysis flips the coin and asks what type of state emerges through the performance of the myriad of practices that are in place for e.g. advancing foreign policy objectives either bilaterally or multilaterally, or for maintaining alliances with a security provider. We need to complement agentic analyses with more structural analyses that may more easily capture that the state is relationally determined, contingent on available practices, and polyphonous vis-à-vis the audiences for whom the state is performed.

Acknowledgments

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