



IDENTIFYING FOREIGN POLICY OBJECTIVES

ROTMUN
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Effective Research – Foreign Policy Objectives

A Model United Nations Conference can be an overwhelming experience. There are colleagues you know, and delegates you got to know. You have interesting conversations, you make some friends, you have spirited debates. You can come to see the MUN as a meeting of young and energetic minds bent to overturn the messy politics of the past and become literally a model for a fresh United Nations, with a spirit of international and personal cooperation as a loadstone.

This series of assumptions is, of course, utterly absurd.

The heart of the MUN is debate and the heart of debate is competition. You are, thankfully, not charged with being role models for international diplomats to follow.

You are charged with winning.

And that isn't very different from how diplomats of the United Nations in the real world act. No country in the world sends their representatives and delegations to the various forums of the United Nations out of an undying love for the UN. They see some benefit coming to themselves as a result of their participation in the proceedings of this international forum.

Peace and global security is a mutual interest of all countries. Procuring humanitarian and developmental aid is an interest common to several countries of the third world. Implementing freetrade systems for economic expansion is an interest to several countries of the developed world. Every country seeks to win something out of each session of the United Nations that they attend. Their national interests are tied to their domestic conditions, policies, history, socio-economic status, traditional allies and adversaries, and other such antecedents determine the goals they seek to achieve out of each session.

If they achieve those goals, they win.

If you achieve their goals, you win.

So how are you going to start getting your hands dirty?

Do nothing just for the sake of it. Understand the difference between policies and objectives. Policies serve objectives. Satisfying your hunger is an objective, eating a steak is the policy you follow to fulfill that objective. You could pursue other policies – burgers, biryani, brains (only applicable to cannibals and zombies) but you have to reach that objective one way or another. Policies are flexible, objectives are not.

A lot of your country's actions (signing or not signing a particular treaty or protocol; calling on a particular course of action; promoting a particular initiative; or remaining ambiguous over an issue that affects international security) are policies that serve your country's objectives. So you better be sure as all Hades as to what your country objectives are.



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If Israel is pursuing nuclear ambiguity, their objective is national security. If you can further serve the objective of national security without nuclear ambiguity, you win – and nuclear ambiguity (a foreign policy) is expendable, whereas national security (a foreign policy objective) is non-negotiable. How do you find that out? Look at Israel's history, and its current geographical circumstances, with the threats emanating from these aforementioned two-fold conditions.

Why will smaller countries follow the stances of larger countries blindly? Take a look at the economic aid going into those smaller countries.

Why will East Timor unswervingly take the side of self-determination in the cases of Kashmir, Palestine, Kosovo, Quebec and Baluchistan? Because it is still trying to convince its own people that gaining independence was a good thing for the nation, despite the trying circumstances its people are suffering through.

Why will the United Kingdom try to promote humanity, justice and all-things-good today? To compensate its people for the damage to their pride caused by austerity and divert their attention towards the success of its government.

Countries act for a reason. If you know the reason, you can reverse-engineer their actions. Every nation in the world comes to the platform with a certain agenda, that may or may not be formally stated, which you – as the nation's representative – must further during the discussions and deliberations of committee proceedings. Take a look at the historical trend of your country's participation in international politics. Therein, you will see generalized trends or overriding principles that your country believes in and has applied in various different scenarios. That is what you need to be augmenting and fighting for.

That is the purpose of your research. If you have served that purpose, you have conducted effective research.

YOU WILL NEED TO GET FAMILIAR WITH THE POLICY OBJECTIVES OF THE COUNTRY YOU ARE REPRESENTING – VERY FAMILIAR – AND THEN RUTHLESSLY, UNSWERVINGLY, UNQUESTIONINGLY CAJOLE, MANIPULATE AND BULLY THOSE OBJECTIVES OVER EVERYONE ELSE'S.