

## **Explanation:**

### **2.1. Defining National Interest**

**National Interest:** National interest is the foundation that justifies a country's actions and policies towards other nations on the international stage. It encompasses a set of values, goals, and objectives that a country aims to achieve in its international relations, serving as the primary driving force behind the formulation of foreign policy. However, there exist controversies regarding the precise meaning, scope, and contents of national interests, leading to ongoing debates in the field.

**Holsti's Definition:** A. K. Holsti defines national interest as "an image of the future state of affairs and future set of conditions that governments, through individual policymakers, aspire to bring about by wielding influence abroad and by changing or sustaining the behaviors of other states." This definition highlights that national interest is linked to the ambitions of governments and emphasizes the use of power as the primary instrument to implement these ambitions.

**Seabury's Definitions:** Another scholar, Seabury, provides both normative and descriptive definitions of national interest. In the normative sense, national interest is related to the purposes a nation should seek to realize in the conduct of its foreign relations. In the descriptive sense, it is those purposes that the nation, through its leadership, appears to pursue persistently over time.

**Objective vs. Subjective Debate:** There is a significant division of opinion in the field of international relations regarding whether national interest can be defined objectively or whether it is a subjective enterprise—an art rather than a science. This debate has historical roots in Plato's philosophy, where he argued for the role of philosopher kings in making wise and well-informed decisions for the collective good of the state.

**Complications in Identifying National Interest:** Identifying national interest is complicated by the fact that foreign policy decisions are not always clear-cut and rational. Policies may emerge from internal political and bureaucratic debates, with multiple conflicting criteria competing for priority. Additionally, official statements made for propaganda purposes can obscure the true motives behind state actions.

**Criteria for Defining National Interest:** Various criteria contribute to the definition of national interest, including operational philosophy, moral and legal criteria, pragmatic criteria, ideological criteria, professional advancement, partisan criteria, bureaucratic-interest criteria, ethnic/racial criteria, class-status criteria, and foreign-dependency criteria.

## **Exam Questions:**

1. **Define national interest and its significance in shaping foreign policy.**
2. **Discuss Holsti's definition of national interest and the role of power in its implementation.**
3. **Explain Seabury's normative and descriptive definitions of national interest.**