

Chapter Two

Understanding Foreign Policy and Diplomacy

Introduction

- Foreign policy of a state is the actions, decisions and goals that states pursue towards the outside world?
- FP is shaped by both external/systemic factors and internal factors.
- International regimes, international organizations, the prevalence of great powers at international level are some of systemic factors that impinges on the foreign policy of a state.
- Internally, the economic, technological and military capabilities of states heavily affect foreign policy.
- Individually, the **idiosyncrasy**/characteristics of leaders contributes much in affecting the foreign policy making and implementation of a country.
- the pursuit of national interest is the single deriving force of states' FP.
- NI =to protect &to maximize NI

2.1. Defining National Interest

- National interest is the *raison de`tat*, (the reason of state), to justify its actions and policy towards other states at international level. **It answers the question why the state exists?**
- **NI** refers to set of **values, orientation, goals** and **objectives** a given country would like to achieve in its international relations.
- NI can be interpreted from **realist** and **idealist** views; from **external** and **internal** dimension.
- **Power** or the ability to influence the behaviors of other states is underscored as the primary instrument to implement national interest.
- **Power** could be **Soft** or **hard** power.

Debates about NI

- **Prescriptive** of **descriptive** i.e., should seek vs. seek permanently
- Is it **objective** or **Subjective**- i.e., is science or art which leads to different interpretations
e.g. Egypt has been following an objective NI to secure constant flow of the Nile waters
- who should pursue NI? i.e., **individual, group** or **institutions**

eg. In US Foreign policy there is a **liberal** and multilateral approach to **foreign policy** and **NI**
eg. **Atlantic Council, Foreign Policy, RAND corporation** which shape US foreign policy .

Whereas in non-liberal and undemocratic countries there is closed door and conservative approach to foreign policy and NI.

Hence, foreign policy and NI is only vested interest of the leader or party in power.

Criteria to Defining National Interest

- Colmbis (1984) developed a multiplicity of criteria in defining NI

1. Operational Philosophy

- refers style of operation on time, location, your orientation toward the world around us
- Introduce major new practices, policies, and institutions and discontinue older ones

2. Ideological Criteria

- employ ideological criteria and establish foreign relations on the basis of ideology
- identify their friends or enemies countries using the litmus test of ideology.
E.g. During cold war, the ideology of communism and capitalism had been the basis to establish cooperation or conflict with countries.
- Hence, national interest may be shaped by underlying ideological orientations of the regime in power.

Ethiopia was the ally of US right up to the 1974 revolution.

Ethiopia changed its ally to the USSR and became one of USSR's satellites to 1989.

3. Moral and Legal Criteria:

moral refers to acting **honestly** and making your public decision accordingly
involves keeping your promise, treaties, living and letting others live, avoiding exploitation and uneven development.

legally means, abiding by the rules of international law if identified and accepted commonly.
If there are lacunas (gaps) and no international regimes have been developed, then you act in a general sprit of equity and justice

4. Pragmatic Criteria

- Looks events around the world with sense of prudence and with sort of rationality.
- Basis on the scientific analysis of cost and benefit or merit and demerit to NI.
- It does not consider normative issues while making foreign policy decision.

5. Professional Advancement Criteria:

action may be manipulated and adjusted in consideration of ones professional survival and growth, i.e., ones career and personal success.

6. Partisan Criteria

Here you tend to equate the survival and the success of your political party, or ethnic or religious origin with the survival and success of your country.

eg. Iran's supreme religious council

- Bureaucratic criteria to prioritize the policy issues. You may tend to equate the interest of your organization (the army, the foreign office, and so forth) with the national interest.

e.g.. Egypt's military establishment; Iran's revolutionary guard

7. Foreign Dependency Criteria

- applies to developing countries, which were under colonialism, and after **political independence**, kept their ties with their ex-masters via dependency and neocolonialism.
- The countries are still dependent on their ex-colonial states for technical aid, expertise and technology, sometimes even for their security and survival
- French colonies (Francophone) are still dependent on France
- British has also influence in its former colonies via the institution of countries of **Common Wealth**.

Because of the above conflicting criteria, one can conclude that national interest is not a purely scientific endeavor that results in optimal advantage for states. On the contrary, determination of national interest appears to be a product of conflicting wills ambitions, motivations, needs, and demands of both domestic and foreign forces.

8. Realist foreign policy: Pragmatic Criteria

- Is adopted by the realist school of thought
- Realism rejects the ideological, legal and moral criteria to **set, define** and **shape** the contents of national interest.
- Hans Morgenthau advised leaders to prioritize pragmatic criteria when defining national interest and employing foreign policy.
- Morgenthau defines national interest in terms of **pursuits of power**.
- And power is about establishing control or influencing the behaviors of others, either diplomatically (soft) or use of coercion (hard).
- For Morgenthau, International politics is a struggle among states and thus the prime interest of state is survival and security among other things. So, national interest in the competitive and anarchical international environment should be objectively defined in terms of ensuring survival and security of a state, than talking about justice and morality.
- Morgenthau emphatically argues that **pragmatism** and **practical necessity** should be the guiding principle, than any legal, ideological or moral criteria, of foreign policy of state.
- The range and scope of national interest and foreign policy of a country should be proportional to their capabilities.
- so, **pragmatism** and **prudence** should be the virtue of leaders and foreign policy and decision makers. Otherwise other criteria lead to foreign policy crisis, chaos and destruction.
- A good diplomat according to Morgenthau is a **rational diplomat** and a rational diplomat is a **prudent diplomat**.
- **Prudence** is the ability to assess **capability**, **one's needs** and **aspirations** while carefully balancing them against the needs and aspirations of other.

Idealist foreign policy approach

- idealists have strong belief in the relevance of **legal, ideological** and **moral** elements as the constituting elements of national interest.
 - Argues that specific actions and objective of foreign policy have often been derived from general moral and legal guidelines and principles.
 - Argues that such policies as the **formation of alliance, declaration of**
 - **war, covert foreign intervention, humanitarian intervention, foreign aid** and others have always been justified on moral and legal grounds.
- Realists, however, fail to recognize and prescribe solutions for addressing global problems because of the exclusive emphasis given to the state and national interest only. This is called **state-centric** foreign policy approach.

So, national interest reflects the marriage of different criteria that include legal and moral criteria, ideological criteria and prudence or pragmatism practical necessities on the ground.