

National interest essay

[Business](#), [Management](#)



National interest is not easy a concept to define. This is because it has been interpreted and understood differently by different people in various situations. The concept takes many forms and definitions. The major phases of the concept are: the survival of a nation, the welfare of a nation as a whole and most paramount the security of a nation (Benjamin et al, 1999). National interest is a common term during political campaigns. The political aspirants use the term in an attempt to describe their foreign policy package. They use the term national policy to demonstrate their attachment to their nation-the degree of patriotism and where they will place the country internationally. It may be very complicated to understand why national interest is being given so much prominence in the world of today where globalization is the trend. It is indeed not easy especially in the fields of economics and finance, to explain the role of this concept, especially now that all things are going global. The countries are becoming so inter-reliant. International trade and investments have virtually done away with our borders. This paper makes attempts at trying to explain national interest especially in the context of the United States of America with special reference to the efforts of the US government to espouse the country's national interest.

The concept of national interest

The concept of national interest began in France. It was and still is used in defining the country's goals and objectives. It covers all the aspirations of a country ranging from political aspirations to economic and even military objectives. Before the world wars the concept of national interest was not given much prominence following the stable international environment back

then. During the world wars, the concept implicitly took root as each country was struggling to protect its national wealth and citizens. Some of the countries lost a great deal. A good example is Turkey- the proverbial sick man of Europe. After evaluating the possible losses associated with the armed conflict, the governments across the world saw the need to protect its borders for the security of its people and status (Frankel, 1990).

Many countries joined the world war for different reasons. However, towards the end of the conflict national interest became predominant. The decisions by some countries to quit the war cited national interest. The leaders argued that they found it necessary to withdraw from the war for the reason of the state-what has come to be popularly referred to as *raison d'état* in French (Frankel, 1990). Much as the concept of national interest has no one clear definition, from the foregoing one gets a rough idea of what the concept is all about. Used in the political sense, it is usually used by politicians in explaining where they plan to place the state in the international scene. It is characteristic of all American presidents to care for the national interest of the nation through whatever means (Snow, 2010).

Political scientists have argued that national interest is actually public interest taken to the international scene. Public interest is the welfare of the general populace. It is used differently in various disciplines. Some things done by individuals may seem and are indeed wrong but when they are judged with public interest at heart, they look and indeed are right.

Moreover, the US government has always treated some classes of information with so many reservations citing public interest as the major reason (Gierzynski, 1992). It is for this reason then, that they decide to keep

secret the information gathered by intelligence agencies such as the Central Intelligence Agency. The argument is that some forms of information may adversely impact on the public.

The role of the United States government in promoting national interest

The government of the United States of America is the most effective and efficient when it comes to the upholding of national interest (Gierzynski, 1992). The government comes out more conspicuously than any other in safeguarding its citizens' wellbeing. Even so, quite a number of American citizens are not for the idea, especially the methods used by the government to uphold the said national interest. This has been seen a number of times. One thing that political analysts find to be unique about the United States' idea of national interest is the fact that they take their superpower status to be part and parcel of national interest. The administration may engage in some otherwise unjustified acts in a bid to maintain the country's superpower status and cite national interest.

Much as holding on to the position of the world's number one and arguably only superpower is important, it is noteworthy that the government of the US does more impairment than good in the process. The activities of the United States of America's government in the Middle East are, according to human rights agencies, the most unjustified of all things. The United States military personnel have been in the region for over a decade. The presence of the Americans in the east has hindered the region's development and the people's ability to determine their future and destiny. The indirect control over Afghanistan, over reasons of public interest has not received any

justification yet. People fail to understand why, three administrations down the line; the government of the United States of America is still sending troops to Afghanistan. President Barrack Obama, on the first day of December the year 2009 said in a speech that it was in national interest that he was sending an extra thirty thousand United States to Afghanistan (Snow, 2010).

According to President Obama, the troops would withdraw after eighteen months- a word the government did not live up to. It may be important to do things that are in line with public interest but then, in his book National Security for a New Era, Pearson argues that opportunity and capacity of others to determine their future should be respected. He further explains the need to safeguard human life in the process of upholding national interest. When there are other options, killing people should come as a last resort. The government should resort to killing, not as a revenge mission but as a last resort if only to safeguard public and by extension national interest.

Comparison between the administration of Andrew Johnson and that of Abraham Lincoln and the factors that made them

Abraham Lincoln, the 16th president of the United States of America, is ranked among the top three favorites of the American people. Abraham was in power as from the third month of 1861 to the fourth month of 1865. The president, after assassination was succeeded by Andrew Johnson, a man who has come to be referred to as the worst American President. The American people did not find it easy to understand the policies and thinking of Johnson. Unlike his predecessor, the man was an extreme racist. He went public about

it and campaigned for those congressmen who were likely to support his racist and pro-slavery ideas. His administration that back then embraced the idea of the north has come to be termed as the worst and most insensitive government in the US history (Benjamin et al, 1999).

The fact that Abraham Lincoln was against slavery made him an enemy of a few people from North America who were for the ideas of slave trade.

Abraham had all the interest of the nation at heart and argued that for America to achieve prosperity and become a world leader in all sectors, all leaders had to give priority to national interest and abandon the ideas of racism and slavery. According to Lincoln, slavery and racism were meant for individual gains and not national prosperity (Gierzynski, 1992). His administration therefore was for the abolition of the slavery and liberalization of the people. In holding the country together, Lincoln remained in control of the country during its darkest moment- the civil strife that has come to be referred to as the moral disaster.

In enhancing national interest, Abraham Lincoln pushed for the landmark emancipation proclamation through which slave trade was done away with.

His efforts to reunify the North and the South brought him out as a nationalist who was ready to subordinate individual interest to national interest. The administration of the Abraham Lincoln achieved Economic modernization for the country as well (Snow, 2010). His successor was an extreme racist, almost sadist that did not make any effort to uphold the welfare of the people that had been freed from slavery. Johnson subordinated national interest to individual interest by supporting the ideas of the North and forsaking the South-the people that had elected him into

power. Andrew Johnson is known for his word that, for the whites to be in government was a God-given right (Frankel, 1990). His tendency to act contrary to national interest gave him the reputation of a self-centered politician.

When he took to power, President Johnson disappointed the nation by not being able to restore calm and peace after the end of the civil crisis. The war was among the most detrimental happenings in the history of the country. After the war all that the citizens wanted were peaceful environments that could enable them get back on track and rebuild the economy. This called for a good administration that could be supportive enough to bring the people together by reunifying the north and the south. Regrettably, they were to be disappointed by the incompetence and inefficiencies of the Johnson administration. The government was full of such negative factors as racism, discrimination and moral corruption (Frankel, 1990). This was contrary to the ideas of the Abraham administration that was anti-slavery, anti-racist and democratic.

In conclusion, it is worth noting that the extent to which a country's administration interprets and understands the concepts of national interest determines the degree of prosperity the country is likely achieve (Benjamin et al, 1999). Where the government embraces negative ways as the means of implementing and promoting the idea of national interest, the country is less likely to prosper.

References

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