

Analysis of national interest and foreign policy politics essay



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At the heart of any national interest lays its security, in order states to survive they must protect their security, by any means available to them, the threats to national security can be both external and internal. External threats can include any threat that comes from competing nations and enemies of the state.

Internal threats can come from groups with political aims of overthrowing the government, “ even though the aim of security in national interest doesn’t always mean protecting the states territorial boundaries, nor the repulsion of foreign attack. In some cases nation may be required to sacrifice some of its territory, or renounce some of its claims, in order to preserve another, more intrinsic element of the state”(Orme, 5).

States create economic developments by promoting foreign investment, modernising their economy from low-income based economy to high-income based economy, such as building infrastructure, investing in technology, research and development. Without social development economic development can’t be fulfilled. States invest in education, access to public health, gender equalities, and civil societies.

States don't further their national interest by becoming self centred , in this day and age where the world is a global village states can't afford to ignore the rest of the world, therefore states look far beyond their states and consider other factors that are important to their national interest, economically, socially and politically.

The above mentioned characteristics identifies national interest of a state and its components, the question is how do states promote their national interest?, states promote their national interest through foreign policy, thus foreign policy is the sum of an actor's goals and purposive actions in global politics." Foreign policy consists of those discrete official actions of the authoritative decision maker's of a nation's government, or their agents, which are intended by the decision makers to influence the behaviour of international actors external to their own polity." In practice, foreign decisions are not made by single leaders in isolation, but it is a cumulative process that involves, interest groups, domestic issues, bureaucracies, leadership, and so on. Therefore foreign policy is the means and national interest is the end.

Countries conduct their foreign policy through many channels that are available to them, namely diplomacy, force, track11 diplomacy, communication, and so on. Countries when shaping their foreign policy take into account many factors that are important, such as, geography, the size of the population, the level of economic development, political tradition, domestic environment, internal environment, military capability, and national character.

Diplomacy:

Diplomacy is the main channel through which foreign policy is conducted, diplomacy has existed throughout the history from the ancient Greeks to the African tribal systems all used diplomacy to solve disputes and to defuse potential conflicts. " Diplomacy involves negotiation to manage relations among states. It is perhaps the most prominent tool in foreign policy available to actors for managing disputes. Diplomats in foreign offices and ministries often argue exhausting peaceful efforts to achieve goals before resorting to war and try to achieve compromises with adversaries to prevent conflict"(Mansbach, Rafferty : 363). Countries that have the means such as the United States appoint ambassadors virtually anywhere in the world to represent their interest, poor countries that don't have the means rely on their UN ambassador to meet and discuss issues in New York with other UN ambassadors from all over the world. Over time diplomats come and go but countries maintain diplomatic missions abroad. " The role of the diplomats is to assess their country's objectives given its actual and potential power to gauge other states objectives in light to their power. Diplomats must also assess the extent to which their country's objectives are compatible with those of other countries and then decide whether to use persuasion, compromise, or treat of force to pursue their country's end. " (Mansbach, Rafferty: 365).

Force:

If diplomacy fails then the use of force is the last resort. It is the choice of last resort because of the destructive nature of wars, on human's and economies.

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The following are the three strategies for managing conflict that require the threat to use military force; defence, deterrence, and compliance. Each of these involves to a different degree, using force in a different way.

Defence is to repel an attack, defence may be passive or active, passive defence employs civil defences, bunkers, hardening of weapons systems, and increasing weaponry systems.

While active defence involves directing military force against a potential or an actual attacker and may include missile defence, pre-emptive and preventive war. In pre-emptive strike state anticipates an imminent attack and strikes first to gain the upper-hand, whereas in preventive strike it anticipates an attack in the distant future, and therefore attacks the adversary before they gain the capability to strike.

Deterrence is to prevent an enemy to attack in the first place. Deterrence is less expensive than defence, because it may not always lead to war, but the threat of war may influence an adversary to take a different course of action, rather than confrontation. Actors usually exercise the three C's of deterrence, namely communication, capabilities and credibility, which means actors communicate to their adversary and inform them the path they have chosen will indeed lead to conflict, and demonstrate their capabilities if they don't change course, third the threats must be credible.

Compliance unlike deterrence, which involves the passive use of force, compliance also called coercive diplomacy, uses limited force to make an actor alter its behaviour or undo certain things already done. Successful compliance convinces an enemy of the following.

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There is urgency about complying with the demand to alter its behaviour

The coercing actor is more highly motivated than the opponent; and

The consequences of staying the course will be escalation and still greater pain for the adversary.

This is called bargaining in simple terms, if the enemy fails to comply, the coercing actor must decide whether to back down or intensify the use of force.

This is precisely what the United States and its allies are doing in relation to Iran, to convince the Iranian regime to abandon their nuclear ambitions.

Track II diplomacy:

States use un-official channels to conduct their foreign policy and further their national interest, these include cultural exchanges, people to people movements, conducting this type of diplomacy states show that their government is not hostile to the others. For example some may argue that if the line that divides the Indian sub-continent was removed and the follow of people is allowed between Pakistan and India that would have reduced a lot of the tension between the two nuclear armed nations and could create an atmosphere of understanding, co-operation, interaction and mutual respect.

Communication:

“ Communication is a major instrument of foreign policy, it can be in the form of propaganda, or what is called external publicity, the purpose of propaganda is to inform people and governments abroad of the policies,

achievements, institutions, and values of the state concerned and to convert international public opinion, as far as possible, to its own point of view” (Bandyopadhyay: 24). For example United States uses Voice of America to broadcast their messages, in many different languages around the globe.

Other components that contribute the making of foreign policy are

Geography and Size: shaping foreign policy states consider their geographic locations, and also the size of their population.

Level of economic development: states take into account when shaping their foreign policy according to their economic capabilities.

Political tradition: how states conduct their foreign policy is dictated by the political tradition of that state

Domestic environment:

International environment:

Military strength: military capability is the ultimate decision to go to war.

National character:

In considering all these factors mentioned above. Foreign policy is the means in which national interest has to be promoted, and according to the realist, the success and failure of foreign policy must be judged, by, if the national interest of the state was promoted.

Realist argue, the nature of international politics, revolves around power, in a self help environment; states seek to further their national interest by acquiring sufficient military capabilities, to deter attacks by potential enemies, any actor in international politics their aim is to demonstrate their power, or to maintain their power, or to further their power, with power actors can only maintain their position and influence by it. Thus the priority of every state is to promote national interest and for that matter to acquire power.

I agree with the realist point of view when it comes to power and prestige, Americans dominate the rest of the world not because they have the largest population in the world, but they are the strongest nation, economically, militarily, technologically and the US president is often referred to as the most powerful man in the world. American influence in the world touches every part of this globe, shaping policies, furthering their interest.