

Interest

In the discourse of politics, the concept of interest is a contested and problematic idea. Though it has a range of meanings, 'interest' is a significant example of a word with specialized legal and economic senses which, within a particular social and economic history, has been extended to a very general meaning.

Although its etymology is complex and difficult to trace, it is possible to use the word 'interest' in both its objective sense (a general or natural concern, having an objective right, claim or stake in something) and its subjective sense (a general curiosity or having the power to attract curiosity or attention). This is a distinction now preserved in the negatives disinterested (not affected by objective involvement in a matter – impartial) and uninterested (not being attracted to something or having no power to attract – a subjective judgment).

National Interest

According to Hans J. Morgenthau, the idea of the national interest, in general, resembles the constitution of the United States of America in two points: general welfare and due process clauses. Thus, the idea of the national interest has two factors: One is rationally demanded and, therefore, of necessity; the other is changeable and decided by situations. In a world consisting of many competing and opposing nations for power, their survivals are their necessary and minimum requisites. Thus, all nations do what they cannot help but do: protect their physical, political and cultural identity against encroachments by other nations.

Evolution of the Concept

It took a long time before a national interest was recognized and became the basic starting point in foreign policy making. During the Renaissance, Niccolò Machiavelli in Italy, Jean Bodin in France, Hugo Grotius in Holland and Thomas Hobbes in England gave prominence to the concept of national interest. They all believed that a state's political behaviour should be subject to concerns of national interest. Moreover, they elaborated on the rationale for taking the national interest into account in the development of foreign policy. But none of them denied God, or "divine right," as a factor. They could not completely break away from the idea that a monarch's power was derived from God. They still believed that individual monarchs represented the nation's interest and that the monarch was the locus of the most fundamental interest of a country — sovereignty. During the French Enlightenment, Rousseau raised the theory of 'people's sovereignty' in his book "The Social Contract". This was great progress from the notion that national interests belonged to the individual monarch. Rousseau believed a country was a political body that consisted of all the people and was based upon a social contract. The people were the custodians of sovereignty which was the most fundamental national interest and was based upon the will of the total populace.

Kinds of National Interest

According to Morgenthau, there are six types of National Interest:

- Primary interest
- Secondary interest
- Permanent interest
- Variable interest
- General \ common interest

- Specific interest
- **Primary Interest**
The primary interests of a nation include the preservation of physical, political and Cultural identity of the state against possible encroachments from outside powers. These interests are permanent and the state must defend these at all costs. No compromise of these interests is possible.
- **Secondary Interest**
The Secondary Interests though less important than the first one is quite vital to the existence of the state. These include the protection of the citizens abroad and ensuring of diplomatic immunities for the diplomatic staff.
- **Permanent Interests**
Permanent Interests refer to the relatively constant and "long term" interest of the state. The change in the permanent interests, if any, is rather slow. An example of this type of national interest is provided by the determination of Britain to maintain freedom of navigation during the past few centuries for the protection of her overseas Colonies and growing trade.
- **Variable Interests**
The variable Interests refer to those Interests of a nation that a nation considers vital for a national good in a given set of circumstances. In this sense, the variable interests can diverge from both Primary and Permanent Interests. The variable Interests of a state are largely determined by the Personalities, Public opinion, Sectional Interests, Partisan Politics, and Political and Moral folkways.
- **General Interests**
The general interests of a nation refer to those positive conditions that can be applied to a large number of nations or in several specified fields such as economic, trade and diplomatic intercourse etc., for example, it was the general national interest of Britain to maintain balance of the European Continent.
- **Specific Interests**
The Specific Interests although the logical outgrowth of the general interest -are defined in terms of time or space. For example, Britain has considered it a specific national interest to maintain the independence of the lower countries for the sake of the preservation of a balance of power in Europe.

In addition to the above six types of national interest Prof. Robinson refers to three other interests that he describes as, "International Interest". These include the identical interests, complementary interests and conflicting interests that are as under.

- **The Identical Interests:** The Identical Interests refer to Interests that are held in common by a number of states. For example, both the United States and Britain have been interested that Europe should not be dominated by any single power.
- **The complementary Interests: The Complementary Interests** of the nations refer to those interests that though not identical, can form the basis of agreement on some specific issues. For example, Britain was interested in the independence of Portugal against Spain because she wanted to control the region of the Atlantic

Ocean. Likewise, Portugal was interested in the British maritime hegemony because this was a safe means of defense against Spain.

- **The conflicting Interests:** The Interests other than identical and complementary interest fall in the category of conflicting interests. It may be noted that the conflicting interests are not fixed and undergo a change due to the force of events and diplomacy. Thus, the present time conflicting interests may become complementary interests. Likewise, complementary interests and identical Interest can also get transformed into conflicting Interests

Methods for Its Promotion

A. Coercive Methods

According to Beard, the coercive measures adopted by the states for the enforcement of national interest broadly fall into two categories:

1. The measure taken within the state which do not infringe directly upon the state against whom they are taken such as acts of non-intercourse; embargoes; boycotts and retaliation, etc.
2. Measures directly operating against the state which are the object of enforcement procedure such as seizure and confiscation of the property of the offending state, suspicion of operation of treaties, etc.

B. Diplomatic Negotiations

Diplomatic negotiations are used to reconcile the divergent interests of the state through the process of 'give and take'. Diplomacy is universally accepted means for securing national interests. It is through diplomacy that the foreign policy of a nation travels to other nations. It seeks to secure the goals of national interest as defined by foreign policy. It is recognized means for furthering national interests. Diplomats establish contacts with the decision-makers and diplomats of other nations and conduct negotiations for achieving the desired goals and objectives of national interests. The art of diplomacy involves the presentation of the goals and objectives of national interests in such a way as can persuade the others to accept these as just and rightful demands of the nation. Diplomats use persuasion and threats, reward, and threats of denial of rewards as the means for exercising power and securing goals of national interests as defined by foreign policy of the nation. Diplomatic negotiations constitute the most effective means of conflict resolution for reconciling the divergent interest of state. Through mutual give and take, accommodation and reconciliation, diplomacy tries to secure the desired goals and objectives of national interests. Diplomacy is universally recognised and most frequently used means. However, all the objectives and goals of national interest cannot be secured through diplomacy. Diplomacy cannot use force or war for securing the ends. It cannot be effective where there are big or total disagreements. The Sino-Indian boundary dispute is an example in this respect. Similarly, diplomacy has failed to resolve Indo-Pak differences over Kashmir. In fact, diplomacy has always to be supplemented by other means of securing the national interest.

C. Economic Aid

This method can be used only by an affluent state. Such states provide financial support to the less developed states. The rich and developed nations of our times are using economic aid and loans as a means for securing their interests in international relations. The existence of a very wide gap

between the rich and the poor countries provides a big opportunity to the rich for promoting their national interest via a vis poor nation. The dependence of the poor and lowly developed nations upon the rich and developed nation for the import of industrial goods, technological, know – how, foreign aid, armaments and for selling raw materials, has been responsible for strengthening the role of economic instruments of foreign policy. U.S.A. has always used the grant of loans and aid as means for securing goals of its national interest. After the Second World War, it used the economic aid programme under the Marshall Plan to secure an extension of its influence in Europe. Similarly, the then Soviet Union used economic assistance to communist states of Europe as a means for preserving its interests in Europe. Now the Soviet (CIS) countries find themselves dependent on Western aid. Foreign aid, control over international economic institutions and several other fiscal means are currently being used by the rich nations to secure the goals of their national interests. Even developing countries must depend upon these means for securing her interests with respect to small and underdeveloped countries.

D. Alliances and Treaties

Alliances and Treaties are concluded by two or more states for securing their common interests. This device is mostly used for securing identical or complimentary interests. However, even conflictual interest may lead to alliances and treaties with like-minded states against the common enemies or opponents. Alliances and treaties make it a legal obligation for the members of the alliances to work for the promotion of agreed common interest. The alliances may be concluded for serving a specific interest or for securing several common interests. The nature of an alliance depends upon the nature of interest which is sought to be achieved. Accordingly, the alliances are either military or economic in nature. The need for securing the security of capitalist democratic states against the expanding „communist Menace“ led to the creation of military alliances like NATO, SEATO, CENTO, ANJUS etc. Likewise, the need to meet the threat to socialism led to the conclusion of Warsaw Pact among the communist countries. The need for economic reconstruction of Europe after Second Economic Community and several other economic agencies.

E. Propaganda

According to Frankel, “Propaganda is a systematic attempt to affect the minds; emotions and actions of a given group for a specific public purpose.” The important method for securing of national interest is propaganda. Propaganda is the art of salesmanship. It is the art of convincing others about the justness of the goals and objectives or end which are desired to be secured. It consists of an attempt to impress upon nations the necessity of securing the goals which the nation wishes to achieve. In the words of Frankel “Propaganda is a systematic attempt to affect the minds, emotions and actions of a given groups for a specific public purpose.” It is directly addressed to the people of other states and its aim is always to secure the selfish interests which are governed exclusively by the national interest of the propagandist. The revolutionary progress in the means of communications in the recent times has increased the scope of propaganda as a means. Through Radio, Television, Newspaper, special publication, Video films a nation attempts to project its goals as the just and necessary goals. It tries to attract other nations towards its way of life and culture. The foreign information services of various nations are the propaganda agencies which continuously work for projecting the images of their respective nations. Hitler and Mussolini made a big use of propaganda as the technique for expanding their influence in Europe. U.S.A uses

propaganda against communism as a means for checking Soviet influences in world politics. As such propaganda is another popular means for promoting national interest.

F. Collective Security

The system of collective security which operates on the principle that international peace and security is the common objective to be secured by all the states through collective action against any violation of internal peace and security. It also restricts the national power.

National Interest & Foreign Policy

In the late 19th century, Alfred T. Mahan pointed out that national interest is the first consideration of foreign policy. While making clear the relationship between national interest and foreign policy, he said, "A nation's self interest is both the legal and the fundamental basis of national policy. It does not need to be dressed up, but when it is exercised, it needs to be properly explained. But as a principle, it does not need any serious explanation to prove its rationality."

According to Morgenthau:

"Objectives of a foreign policy must be defined in terms of the national interest."

According to Reynolds:

"Since self-extending heterogeneous values of unlimited range must almost certainly lead to major armed conflict, national interest must require their limitations. National interest cannot, therefore, always in all circumstances be identified with the values of the community; and when to this is added disagreement above the basic general purposes for which human exist. The difficulty of giving any generally applicable empirical content to the notions of national interest becomes apparent."

A country's foreign policy consists of self-interest strategies chosen by the state to safeguard its national interests and to achieve its own goals through relations with other countries. The approaches are employed strategically to interact with other countries. For example, the US foreign policy has an aggressive posture toward oil-rich states because her national interest. Contrarily, Chinese foreign policy is based on soft diplomacy; mutual cooperation and accommodationist behaviour.

Moreover, in recent times, due to the growing level of globalization and transnational activities, states also have to interact with non-state actors. The aforementioned interaction is evaluated and monitored in an attempt to maximize the benefits of multilateral international cooperation. Since national interests are paramount, foreign policies are designed by the government through high-level decision-making processes. National interest accomplishments can occur as a result of peaceful cooperation with other nations or through exploitation.

Conclusion

The concept of *raison d'état* (reason of State) is an important one in international relations where pursuit of national interest is the foundation of the realist school. National interest is used in both political analyses and political actions. As an analytic tool, it is employed to describe, explain or

evaluate the sources or the adequacy of a nation's foreign policy. As an instrument of political actions, it serves as a means of justifying, denouncing or proposing policies. Both usages, in other words, refer to what is best for a national society.