

Foreign Policy: Meaning, Dimensions and Instruments

- **Defining the Building Blocks of Foreign Policy**

- The first step in defining what we mean by foreign policy is to disaggregate the concept and individually define the component terms.
- Generally, there is a distinction between foreign policy and domestic policy.
- “Foreign” means “belonging or connected to a country which is not your own”. It also applies to a policy toward the outside world or outside a state’s territorial borders. Foreign also denotes dealing with or involved with a country or countries other than your own.
- “Domestic” simply means “relating to a person's own country”. It applies to a policy made for the internal political system.
- Ordinarily, going to war with another country; signing an international trade agreement, or aiding a rebel insurgency in another country are in the domains of foreign policy.
- Such policies as taxes, education standards, and civil rights fall within the confines of domestic policy

- In the recent past, this distinction between foreign and domestic policy was easier to make, but contemporary politics and globalization have blurred the line between what is foreign and what is domestic.
- In contemporary global setting, seemingly domestic issues transform into global issues.
- For example, the revolutionary uprising in Libya that threatened the rule of authoritarian leader Muammar Gadhafi in early 2011 began as a domestic issue.
- Anti-government protesters launched a rebellion in the eastern part of Libya, and Gadhafi's forces responded with a military crackdown. However, as reports of vicious attacks against the rebels and civilians circulated throughout the media, social networks, and blogs, western governments re-framed the civil war as a humanitarian crisis demanding international response.

- The United Nations Security Council voted to impose a no-fly zone over Libya, and members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and a few Arab states launched airstrikes to protect civilians.
- By mid- 2011, countries like the United States and Germany were engaged in delivery of humanitarian supplies, while Italy and France deployed military advisors to assist the rebels in the civil war. What began as a domestic uprising quickly became a foreign policy issue for Libya and many other countries in the world.
- Another example of this blurring between foreign and domestic issues is when governments make policies that have wider implications.
- For example, Government safety standards are typically aimed at the citizens of a country, but they also shape the amount and type of products exporting countries produce.

- When the Standard Organization of Nigeria (SON) or NAFDAC issues an alert regarding any chemical used in manufacturing products, exports to Nigeria from countries producing such products will be adversely affected.
- So, when countries make domestic policies that have the effect of changing the interactions between states, the line defining international and domestic policymaking is unclear.
- Today's economic interdependence means more policies have consequences inside and outside state borders.
- This does not mean that there is no longer a difference between foreign and domestic policy.
- The parameter to determine which policy should be regarded as foreign or domestic is *intended target* of the policy.

- For instance, if the primary target of a policy lies outside the country's borders, it is considered foreign policy, even if it has secondary consequences for politics inside the country.
- If the intention of new economic policy is to alter the trade balance with another country by placing restrictions on imports, we consider that foreign policy.
- Similarly, if the primary target is inside the country, it is considered domestic policy, even if it affects others outside the country's borders.
- Many policies, of course, have multiple targets. In such cases, a single policy can be both foreign and domestic.
- It should be noted that the targets of foreign policy are not limited to other countries.
- Foreign policy may be targeted at specific individuals such as a particular leader, non-state actors such as international organizations, human rights groups working across borders, multinational corporations, terrorist groups, other states, the international environment, or the global economy

- Let us further clarify the term “policy.”
- In general terms, the concept of policy denotes “a program of actions adopted by a person, group, or government, or the set of principles on which they are based”.
- It also connotes “a set of ideas or a plan of what to do in particular situations that has been agreed officially by a group of people, a business organization, a government or a political party”.
- Policy can include observable behaviours by countries, such as the Nigerian commitment to stop Boko Haram, or verbal pronouncements that do not necessarily lead to follow-up action.
- As you can see, foreign policy is not limited to military or security policy. It also includes such areas as foreign economic policy, international environmental policy, and human rights policy.

- Who makes policy? The answer to this question is also an important part of the definition of “foreign policy.”
- Although there are many players in the international arena (such as individuals, businesses, non-governmental organizations MNCs and international organizations) whose actions are intended to influence targets outside their countries’ borders, they do not make foreign policy.
- Certainly, their actions are “foreign,” and they may be regarded as foreign policy actors, yet we rarely consider their actions as “policy.”
- The term “policy” is typically reserved for the actions of governments, government institutions, and government officials.
- A point that must be noted is that when we refer to “countries” or “states” in a discussion of foreign policy, we are referring to the governments or the officials that act in their name.

- What then is foreign policy?
- **Joy Ogwu** (2005) defines foreign policy as the relations between sovereign actors in the international system.
- Thus, foreign policy objectives can be understood as a range of intended actions as well as a set of strategies adopted by some sovereign actors with the express purpose of influencing the behaviour of other sovereign actors within the international system.
- According to **Wittkopt et al** (2003), foreign policy embraces the goals that the nation's officials seek to attain abroad, the values that give rise to those objectives, and the means or instruments used to pursue them.

- Foreign policy has also been described as the courses of action adopted by a nation in the interest of the welfare of its peoples.
- In other words, the foreign policy of a state is pursued by the state, in the interest of the welfare of its people.
- **Keith R. Legg and James Morrison** define “foreign policy as a set of explicit objective with regards to the world beyond the borders of a given social unit, and a set of strategies and tactics designed to achieve these objectives”.
- Also **Joseph Frankel** defines foreign policy as consisting of decisive actions which involve to some appreciable extent relations between one state and the others.
- A Marxist definition of foreign policy should also be mentioned. Foreign policy is explained as the policy of the ruling class of a State, which is directed towards the outside, i.e. towards the external relations of the State. It comprises the principles, responsibilities and aims of the State in the area of international relations with other States, with groups of States, and with international organisations and movements. It also comprises the means and methods for their achievement.

- **Elements of the Concept of Foreign Policy**
- 1) Although the State and its organs are the major players in the foreign policy arena, there is a wide circle of other important actors actively present in the international relations of the globalised world.
- Certainly, their activities influence foreign policy, but their actions are not foreign policy. If these non-state actors and their activities in the international arena were considered as foreign policy, then any activity of anyone in the international environment would be foreign policy.
- This would also render it impossible to separate foreign policy from other activities in the international arena.
- Thus, foreign policy is an activity of the State.

- 2) Foreign policy is managed in the name of the State and for the State by the organs authorised for this particular function.
- Every State marks out with its own constitutional and legal arrangements the duties and responsibilities of its organs in foreign policy.
- 3) Foreign policy of every State is influenced by the international environment, in particular by decisions made by international organisations of which it is a member.
- As a member of international organisations the State takes part in the decision-making process of their bodies. After such decisions have been taken (e.g. UN resolutions, decisions of the EU, NATO, etc.), they frame the foreign policies of Member States, regardless of whether they supported or opposed them.

- 4) Foreign policy, being in the reality of international life a continuous confrontation with the interests (and the power and influence) of other States, can be neither 'linear' nor 'systematic'. It is a constant process of undertaking one's own initiatives and adapting to the initiatives of others. This process depends heavily on fluctuating conditions, on the balance of power, as well as on its own internal stability and long-term interests.
- 5) By means of foreign policy, the State seeks to establish its views and its interests in the international community and in relation to other States. It seeks to establish its values, it attempts to safeguard its security and welfare as well as its power and influence.
- 6) The foreign policy ambitions of every State comes up against certain restrictions. These restrictions can be internal (endogenous), i.e. arising from within the State itself, from its socio-economic structure, from its size and power, from the degree of its development, from its political and social stability, etc. Restrictions can also be external (exogenous). The latter arise from characteristics of the international environment, conditions in the international community, the geopolitical position of the State, relations with neighbours, relations in its region, etc. In achieving its goals and interests, every foreign policy has to adapt to the reality that such restrictions, both domestic and international, exist.

- 7) In the enforcement of a country's self-interest (when confronted with influences and restrictions of an either exogenous or endogenous nature, above all with the interests of other countries) there are various means that can be employed in the foreign policy of any State, or rather are available to those who take and implement foreign policy decisions.
- These means can be divided into the means of persuasion and means of enforcement; the latter are primarily a reflection of the military, economic and political strength of the State. It is mainly large and powerful countries that hold the means of enforcement, whereas the means of persuasion are available to all countries.
- The means of persuasion are nonetheless particularly important for small and less strong States whose means of enforcement are limited, if they exist at all. The means of enforcement available to the majority of contemporary States to achieve their foreign policy goals are modest and in consequence they have to rely primarily, if not exclusively, on the means of persuasion.

Means of Actualizing the Foreign Policy of States

- All the various measures, both material and immaterial, direct and indirect that are used to achieve foreign policy goals can be identified as means of foreign policy.
- With these measures, States and their organs authorised to pursue foreign policy put forward and defend the interests of their own country in its relations with other countries.
- The admissibility, manner, and conditions for the use of foreign policy means are usually governed by international law. International law either interdicts, limits or allows, and regulates the use of the means of foreign policy.
- The means of foreign policy can be divided into direct and indirect.

- ***Indirect Foreign Policy Means***
- Indirect means of foreign policy are the reflection of the position of a country in the international community.
- A country can put them to good use and rely on them when it promotes or protects its own interests.
- Among indirect means, the following should be listed:
 - the country's international status;
 - its membership in international organisations;
 - its alliances;
 - the credibility and reputation it enjoys in international public opinion, and ultimately,
 - the image of its political, economic, and military power.
- These indirect means are usually not considered foreign policy means that a country can use in its foreign policy activities, but they provide the background for the use of those other means which are regarded as direct means of foreign policy.

- ***Direct Foreign Policy Means***

- Direct means are the means which are usually dealt with and defined both in the theory and practice of foreign policy as 'means of foreign policy'.
- The direct means of foreign policy are usually divided into the ***means of coercion*** and the ***means of persuasion***.
- The means of coercion are those used in a country's foreign policy in an attempt to force another country to behave in a certain way, to abandon or change certain practices, or to meet the requests of the country which is using the means of coercion (enforcement).
- The means of coercion are rarely used even by those States that have them in their possession.
- In addition, the use of some of the means of coercion is limited or prohibited by international law.
- The use of the means of coercion is also risky because it may lead to complications, if not even to conflict, in the relationship with the country against which they are being used and in the relationship with its friends and allies as well.

- The consequences of the use of coercion are usually far-reaching. Often the use of such means is not only in contradiction with international law but also with the prevailing political views and expectations at home and abroad, and with public opinion, since international problems, disagreements, disputes, and conflicts should be approached, in principle, by means of dialogue, without the threat or the use of coercion.
- In contemporary international life therefore, the use of the means of coercion as a means of foreign policy is a rare exception rather than the rule. In the past, i.e. in the period before the League of Nations and the UN, countries enjoyed a virtually unlimited choice of foreign policy means as an expression of their sovereignty.
- In order to achieve foreign policy objectives, they also resorted to measures such as the occupation of another country's territory, demonstrations of power, especially with naval forces (e.g. the bombardment of a port or the threat of it), punitive armed expeditions or even declarations of war. Countries had the *ius belli gerendi*, i.e. the general right to resort to war, the right to use force, if they had a real or an imaginary 'just' reason, the *casus belli iustus*.
- Since 1945, States have been bound by international law, i.e. by the UN Charter, to resolve their disputes peacefully.

- In contemporary international life, the right to use the means of coercion has been transferred, to a large extent, to the authority of international organizations, especially the UN Security Council.
- This holds true particularly for the use of armed forces and threats thereof.
- Under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, the Security Council is the only organ that is entitled to authorize the use of armed force in international relations.
- Likewise, other means of coercion, such as various sanctions or embargoes, are normally imposed by decisions of international organizations, especially the UN Security Council, and by decisions of regional international organizations.
- Examples of this are plentiful: UN sanctions against the racist South Africa during the apartheid period, sanctions against Iran for non-compliance with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the UN Security Council requests concerning its nuclear program, and the UN Security Council embargo on arms exports to the countries of the former Yugoslavia during the war in Croatia and Bosnia.
- Coercive actions of international organizations are not only more effective than the use of the means of coercion by individual States, but, as a rule, their legitimacy is subject to fewer, if any, challenges.

- The foreign policy means available also to smaller countries are thus almost exclusively the ‘means of persuasion’.
- These are:
 - ❖ diplomacy,
 - ❖ negotiations,
 - ❖ appeals to international law,
 - ❖ the realization of foreign policy objectives through dialogue and cooperation, or through a third party, i.e. through mediation, arbitration, or international courts.
- The implementation of foreign policy objectives by means of persuasion is normally a lengthy process. However, solutions reached by these means of foreign policy are normally more durable and in most cases contribute to good relations and long-term solutions.

- The choice of ‘hard’ (means of coercion) and ‘soft’ (means of persuasion) foreign policy means to achieve a specific objective is in the hands of those who make decisions in foreign policy in a State.
- Those are the organs of State which we defined as foreign policy decision-making bodies: *the Parliament, the Government, the Head of State, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.*
- In the case of the means of persuasion, the decisions that are taken are usually carried out by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, diplomatic missions and consular services, as well as permanent missions to international organizations, by applying diplomatic techniques and other appropriate measures.
- In the use of the means of coercion, other organs of the State are also engaged, such as the Armed Forces, Secret Services, even Economic and Financial Departments, and Customs Services if economic means of coercion are applied.