

An Abstract of an Article on the CONCEPT OF FOREIGN POLICY: A STUDY OF EFFECTING OR DETERMINING FACTORS

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International politics consists of the sum of the foreign policies of different states. To be able to understand such Politics and / or policies one should examine the different, and important, policy decisions.

The foreign policy of any state is no longer considered to be exclusively a direct reaction to external stimuli or the result of changing conditions in world politics. It is rather a combination of the former and the internal circumstances of the state. As such, changes in a country's foreign policy may be, in part, a reflection of socio-economic development or the political-institutional changes in the country. Thus, it can be assumed that a combination of different factors

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make a state's foreign policy and, consequently, a change in one of these factors may mean a change in the foreign policy behaviour of the state.

The author of this article discusses four of these factors: geography, economy, public opinion, and the decision makers. The author does not intend this to be a case study, but, rather, attempts to clarify his arguments by giving examples.

Geography has, in the past, been treated as an important factor in determining, or at least influencing, a country's foreign policy. Such treatment is the subject of geopolitics, a subject that studies geography and its influence on the foreign political actions of a country. The author examines some of the theories presented in geopolitics and, in addition, tries to show the importance of the different dimensions of geography such as location, size, topography, and the climate.

The writer also explores the role which the economy plays in effecting the decisions of a country's foreign policy. The assumption is that the economic factor plays a major role in the international relations of any country, for it is usually through its economic means that a country may be able to convince, reward, or punish other countries. Moreover, the economic resources are essential for the

military capability of a state and this, in turn is necessary for national security and an independent policy.

It is usually acceptable to present as a hypothesis that a country with "great economic capabilities" has more external influence than a country with lesser economic capabilities. What constitutes "great economic capabilities" is, however, the problem. One can select several economic indicators which can be utilized to determine the degree of economic capacity a certain country has in relation to other countries in the world. These indicators include, among other, the gross national product, per capita income, foreign trade, employment, and the overall economic condition of the country.

The third factor discussed in this article is public opinion. The public element in general and the impact of public opinion on politics in particular have been the concern of many studies. The writer of this article indicates the significance of the public in foreign policy decision and how this significance can be examined and analyzed.

The influence of public opinion on foreign policy should not imply that public opinion has a direct effect in making foreign policy decisions. However, the public may provide certain constraints on governmental actions and reactions on foreign policy decisions during any period of time.

The fourth factor is the leadership or the decision makers. While study of foreign policy decision makers has been the concern of political science students and foreign policy analysts, they have differed in the kind of emphasis adopted in their analysis.

In studying the leadership factor, one notices the existence of two environments. the operational and the psychological.

The psychological environment is the result of the social and educational background. so any study concerning the decision makers and their role in foreign policy may be divided into three parts: first, the study of socio-educational background of the decision makers; second, the study of the ideologies and political beliefs which the decision makers hold; third, the study of the effect of these ideologies and socio-educational background on the decision making process.

In conclusion, it is important to understand the different factors in the country's foreign policy, for once we comprehend those factors we may be able to understand why certain decisions are taken while others are not. Furthermore, the analyst may then easily predict what kind of action and/or reaction a country is expected to take.