



Study of Foreign Policy in International Relations

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Abstract: Foreign Policy decision-making is agreed to be one of the greatest instrument at a state’s disposal to pursue its national interests. It is considered as a full political activity of states. A good Foreign Policy would obviously lead a state in fulfilling its national interests and acquiring rightful place among comity of nations. As such the study of Foreign Policy forms an important part of International Studies. However, the first problem that one faces in the study of Foreign Policy is the problem of definition or clear meaning of the term. When used, it is either out of context or entails a different meaning. As such, it becomes a “neglected concept” as most people dealing with the subject have felt confident that they knew what foreign policy was. This neglect has been one of the most serious obstacles to providing more adequate and comprehensive explanations of Foreign Policy. This article, seeks to provide a comprehensive meaning about the concept of Foreign Policy, and also look into some of the things that determines the foreign policy decision-making of a country. This work, will give many students, researchers and policy makers a good idea of what foreign policy entails and how such policy decisions are being made.

ISSN : 2348-5612 © URR



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Keywords: Foreign policy; Decision-making; State; Interest; Determinants; Internal; External

What is Foreign Policy?

After the treaty of Westphalia and the end of the First and Second World War, the international system has witnessed an increasing growth in the development of nation states. The end product of this development is thus, the creation of an interaction between these nation states. In addition, the establishment of United Nations and the process of decolonization that has liberated many states into sovereign entities have further provided the impetus to interrelationships among states. Such has resulted into the formation of ‘foreign policies’. With the aim of determining and identifying the decisions, strategies, and ends of interaction of a state with another [1]. Furthermore, the modern world of “globalization”; the “widening, deepening and speeding up of global interconnectedness” has increased this interrelationships or interactions among states. Hence, there is unanimity among scholars on the necessity of a “foreign policy” for each state, since no state will like to function in complete isolation. This made scholars like Feliks Gross, to say that even a decision to have no relations with a particular state is also a foreign policy. A state without a foreign policy has been compared to a ship in the deep sea without any knowledge of directions. Thus, foreign policy leads a state in fulfilling its national interests and acquiring rightful place among comity of nations.

The term foreign policy has been defined in various ways by scholars; however, they are certain that it is concerned with behavior of a state towards other states. Hermann for instance, defined foreign policy as “the discrete purposeful action that results from the political level decision of an individual or group of individuals. It is the observable artifact of a political level decision. It is not the decision, but a product of the decision.” By this, it can be seen that Hermann defines foreign policy as the behaviour of states.

According to Joseph Frankel, “foreign policy consists of decisions and actions, which involves to some appreciable extent relations between one state and others”. By this, foreign policy involves set of actions that are made within state’s borders, intended towards forces existing outside the country’s borders. It comprises