

NATURE OF NATIONAL INTEREST

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INTRODUCTION:

- ◉ The concept of national interest emerged with the evolution of nation state system in the modern times.
- ◉ National interest is what the states seek to protect or achieve in relation to each other.
- ◉ The main purpose of foreign policy is to conduct foreign relations to protect national interests and promote them to the best possible advantage.
- ◉ As the national interests of nations keep changing, their foreign policies also undergo changes.
- ◉ In order to promote national interests, nations use various instruments such as diplomacy, propaganda, imperialism, economic instruments, alliances, war and so on.
- ◉ However, the difficulty with the national interests is that in many cases it conflicts with the global ideals.

NATURE OF NATIONAL INTEREST:

- ◎ Following are some important features of national interests, viz. -
 1. The concept of national interests emerged with the evolution of nation-state system,
 2. The concept of national interest finds an important place in the realist approach to the study of international relations.
 3. It is a vague concept and difficult to define,
 4. National interests are not static but dynamic concept.
 5. National interests constitutes the goals of foreign policy of a state,
 6. National interests of a nation are determined by multiple factors,
 7. The national interests of a nation can be divided into vital interests and no-vital interests.

1. NATIONAL INTERESTS EMERGED WITH THE EVOLUTION OF NATION-STATE SYSTEM:

- The history of the concept of national interest can be traced to the evolution of the modern state system.
- In other words, no national interests are possible without the very existence these states.
- National interest is what the states seek to protect or achieve in relation to each other.
- Nations chart their national interests in accordance with their priorities which also reflects their stakes in international politics like - security, power, prestige, economic sufficiency, self-preservation and so on.

2. NATIONAL INTERESTS FINDS AN IMPORTANT PLACE IN THE REALIST APPROACH TO I.N. RELATIONS:

- The concept of national interest finds an important place in the realist approach to the study of international relations.
- Realism is a set of ideas which take into account the implications of security and power factors.
- The realist school define politics as the struggle for power and attached lot of significance to national interests in which term this struggle must be understood.
- It is the national interests, not moral principles, should guide our foreign policy and relations.
- Thus states act in their national interest.

3. IT IS A VAGUE CONCEPT:

- ◉ It is a vague concept and hence very difficult to define it precisely.
- ◉ Many scholars have defined national interest in different ways.
- ◉ One of the difficulty in defining national interest is due to the fact that it comes into clash with the global ideals.
- ◉ The national interest represents the wide interests of the people of a nation as a whole and not the narrow interests of the rulers.
- ◉ According to realists, a state's position in the international system determines its national interest and predicts its foreign policy.

4. IT IS NOT STATIC BUT A DYNAMIC CONCEPT:

- ◉ National interest is not static but dynamic.
- ◉ It is usually subject to continuous change due to many reasons and factors
- ◉ It could be due to change in governments or interests of the most influential groups or a general change in the international situation like globalization or shift from bi-polarity to multi-polarity, etc.

5. NATIONAL INTERESTS

CONSTITUTES THE GOALS OF FOREIGN POLICY OF A STATE:

- ◉ National interests form the aims of foreign policy.
- ◉ These aims may be divided into goals and objectives.
- ◉ Both goals and objectives differ from each other with regard to the time span covered by them.
- ◉ A goal is set in terms of the maximum time span that can be anticipated analytically, where as an objective is only immediate or short range in terms of time.

6. NATIONAL INTERESTS OF A NATION ARE DETERMINED BY MULTIPLE FACTORS:

- ◉ Nations arrange their priorities on the basis of their resources.
- ◉ No nation has unlimited resources, so priorities have to be ordered.
- ◉ For example, a nation threatened by its neighbors puts security top of its agenda, but a nation which is relatively secure, may concentrate on its economic development.
- ◉ National interests of a nation and their priorities are based on realistic projections in domestic politics as well as international politics.

NATION CAN BE DIVIDED INTO VITAL INTERESTS AND NON-VITAL INTERESTS.

- The national interests of a nation can be divided into vital interests and non-vital interests.
- Vital interests are those for which the state is not willing to make any compromise and even prepared to go to war. They are also regarded as permanent or primary interests.
- These includes the protection of territorial integrity or sometimes national prestige.
- The interests that are considered as less vital or secondary are those for which they would not go to war, but want to see them fulfilled, such as improvement in trade or cultural contacts.
- Vital interests may be described as he goals and the secondary interests as the objectives of foreign policy.