# The Influence of International Environment on Foreign Policy

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## Abstract

The study examines the influence of international environment on foreign policy, with specific consideration to the nature of international environment as it influences countries foreign policy formulation. The Indentifies and discussed the factors that operates in the international environment and how these factor shape foreign policy formulation by states. This study adopts secondary source of data collection, which is basically relying on existing literatures on the research topic. The study is qualitative in nature and the methods of analysis are historical, descriptive and analytical. For theoretical analysis, the study adopted Interdependence theory, which depicts relationship between states in the international system that are dependent on one another for survival. The study find out that, some factors in the international environment such as power structure, international organizations, reaction of other states, world public opinion, geographical location, climate change, military capability and others plays significant role in influencing foreign policy formulation by states. The study finds out that no nation survives in isolation. That state will continue to need one another to expand her growth and development and to solve a particular challenging situation. The study also finds out that international environment will continue to influence foreign policy formulation by states. The study concludes that state will continue to formulate foreign policy in other to expand her frontiers within the international environment and the international environment will continue to shape states foreign policies formulation beyond her boarders. The study recommends that there is the need for state to coordinate their foreign policies in order to correct the extent of disequilibrium at every sphere of their relations with others. That state should develop her domestics' policy to facilitate interdependence relations in their foreign policy formulation.

**Key words:** Foreign Policy, International Environment, Internal environment, International Relations and Development.

## Introduction

The Conditions in which states operates in a foreign policy situation originate either from the international community (beyond state borders–foreign environment) or from within the state (domestic environment) and offer opportunities or constraints for state's desired foreign policy action. There are several objectives that may motivate a government's foreign policy. Among other reasons, foreign policy may be directed for defence and security, for economic benefit, or to provide assistance to states that need it. All foreign policy objectives are interconnected and contribute to a single, comprehensive foreign policy for each state. Unlike domestic policy, foreign policy issues tend to arise suddenly in response to developments and major events in foreign countries or international environment. Foreign policy is central for a country's role within the world economy and international trade. Economic foreign policy issues may include the establishment of trade agreements, the distribution of foreign aid, and the management of imports and exports. Apart from the state interest factors, there are some key external environmental factors that shaping's state foreign policy. This shall be the major thrust of discussion of this paper. However, it is imperative to conceptualise the concept of foreign policy.

## Conceptual Clarification

### Foreign Policy

The concept of foreign policy is devoid of a monolithic definition and has been variously defined by many scholars such as in the words of Dipo (2004) a simplistic interpretation of foreign policy could be a national policy being pursued beyond the ambits of the domestic environment, the use of external relations as a replacement concept for foreign policy. This implies that in the pursuit of such policy, there must be interactions and relations between the particular state/state actors and the rest of the world. Scholars and foreign policy experts have provided authoritative definitional constructs for the concept of foreign policy. According to Holsti (1983:19) foreign policy is defined as the actions of state towards its external environment" this definition is somewhat similar to Northedge's definition of foreign policy as the "interplay between the inside and the outside"

(Northedge:1968:5). The two views underline the imperative of international and relational process and behaviour between states in the international system.

Foreign policy is the set of decisions and actions that make up the public policy of a government to protect the well-being of its citizens and represent their national interests before other countries and subjects of international law. In the view of Crabb (1972:1) foreign is conceived as the national objective to be achieved and means of achieving them". While Frankel put foreign policy as the dynamics process of interaction between the changing domestic demands and supports and the changing external environment. To Adeniran, he perceived foreign policy beyond an attitudinal issue but extends further to involve the connection of the motives and benefits that underpinned states relations. According to him, he opines that foreign policy are the "goals and objectives which a nation seeks to achieve and the means at her disposal to achieving them". Viewing from this perspective Adeniran sees goals means as the basic ingredients of foreign policy. (Adeniran:1983:185).

International relations remains an integral part of foreign policy discussion, its invariably impossible to discuss foreign policy without recourse to international relations. Foreign policy is anchored on established international relations or perhaps at time foreign policy also influence the relationship states establishes across her boarder. Why is international relations important in foreign policy? International relations allows nations to cooperate with one another, pool resources, and share information as a way to face global issues that go beyond any particular country or region. Contemporary global issues include pandemics, terrorism, and the environment. More so, Foreign policy analysis (FPA) is a field of inquiry that aims to understand and explain how foreign policy is made and who shapes it, but is also interested in outcomes, their impact and the assessment of performance.

**International Environment**

The international environment is a complex network of economic, political, legal, and cultural forces that shape how states, organisations and individual conduct international relations. It consists of external and internal factors that impact a country's success or failure in different relations. The primary elements in the

international business environment are as follows: Economic Stability which involves analysing factors such as GDP growth rates, inflation, currency exchange rates, and trade barriers and political Stability political instability is another significant factor to consider when expanding abroad. Shailja (2023)

According to Shailja (2023) he referred the international environment as somewhat international business environment (IBE) which refers to the intricate economic, political, legal, and cultural network influencing how state, organizations engage in international business activities. It comprises external and internal factors that impact a company's success or failure in various markets. This concept involves comprehending the global influences that affect businesses of all sizes. These components shape how companies conduct their operations and decisions, encompassing macroeconomic trends and geopolitical tensions. With globalisation, businesses have expanded beyond local or regional markets, bringing about new opportunities and challenges. He stressed further to indentify the Primary Elements in the International Environment as it affect states foreign policy formulation are as follows

Economic Stability this involves analysing factors such as GDP growth rates, inflation, currency exchange rates, and trade barriers. When selecting target nations for operations or investment, countries must consider how a country's economy may impact its cost structures and profitability. Political instability is another significant factor to consider when formulating foreign or expanding abroad. States must be aware of uprisings, wars, and other forms of conflict that can disrupt her operations. Additionally, government policies regarding taxes, regulations, and labour laws must be considered. Geography is crucial in logistics, market access, and staff recruitment. The accessibility of natural resources, such as oil or minerals, must also be considered based on the countries involved. Finally Technology is increasingly important in international business operations due to communication and digital infrastructure advancements. States in international environment must understand how adopting new technologies might impact their competitive landscape or create new product or service opportunities. Shailja (2023)

**Literature Review**

A comprehensive understanding of international environmental politics requires attention to foreign policy, with emphasis on how they can help us to better understand foreign policy in the environmental issue area. International agreements on environmental issues are the result of the coordination of states' foreign policies. To understand the international politics of the environment requires attention to the institutional, social, economic, and cognitive factors that determine foreign policies. Although nearly every foreign policy bears on environmental concerns, the focus is on the policies that states adopt centered on humanity's relationship to the natural world and ecology.

Scholarship on environmental policy and foreign policy has not developed distinctive schools of thought. However, organizing scholarship according to a theoretically grounded typology reveals affinities among various scholarly works: systemic, societal, and state-centric approaches can be grouped according to whether they emphasize power, interests, or cognitive factors. Most studies of environmental foreign policy are oriented toward problem solving identifying discrete problems in existing institutional arrangements and pointing toward solutions to these problems that do not question the institutions fundamentally.
This orientation may not be adequate if crossing planetary boundaries leads to environmental challenges so severe that current institutions cannot cope. Climate change poses just such a challenge, and the rising concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere means a future crisis is predictable. Thus, scholars might be best advised to orient toward critical theory, which seeks feasible alternatives to existing arrangements. The study of foreign policy toward the environment would be most useful in helping scholars and policy makers to identify and surmount barriers to transformational changes that would enable humanity to cope with future environmental crisis.

**Some outlined International Environment Factors as they influence Foreign Policy**

**Power Structure**

According to Ukhami et al (2021:13) The modern state system has been in existence since 1648 Treaty of Westphalia. The modern state system includes major, middling, and small powers. All states conduct their own foreign policies. One

primary objective of each county's foreign policy is to maintain its own political independence and security. In the traditional multi-polar system, it was easier for states to switch sides and gain maximum gains from all sides. Thus Italy used this skill deftly and switched sides during the height of World War I to gain its share in the post war colonial arrangement. During the bipolar world system, however, the ideological fault lines were more clearly marked, and it was not easy for states to switch sides frequently. Thus during the cold war, the countries of the Eastern Europe under the security umbrella of the Warsaw Pact were under the direct influence of the former Soviet Union. And the countries of the Western Europe together with the US and Canada entered into an alliance known as North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). The states were faithfully wedded to their respective alliances, and any signs of freedom were strictly checked by the two superpowers. The demise of the Soviet Union and the advent of the Uni-polar world has its own system dynamics. In his word then American president Bush stated that "is either with us or against us" sort of declaration made many states from the margins of the system to come forward and play effective roles in the so-called Global War on Terrorism (GWOT). The perennial issue of north and south divides, the categorisation of the world into classes. (Ukhami et al 2021:13) First, second and third world countries or by infraction, developed, developing and underdeveloped world. Therefore power structure in the international arena remains one of the major external factors that shape countries foreign policy formulation.

**International Organizations**

The role and importance of international institutions as instruments of states" foreign policies, and the political, military, functional, economic and humanitarian roles played principally by the United Nations in international relations cannot be overestimated. These international organizations to varying degrees serve as modifiers of state behaviour and as independent actors in their own right. They have profound impact on the determination of the foreign policy of a state. No state can decide and conduct its policy arbitrarily to the detriment of other states. UN and other multilateral forums come to the rescue of the aggressed state. Usually sanctions are imposed which in some cases become very effective provided the international community imposes them sincerely. This also evident in Africa, the African Union (AU), ECOWAS and other international organisation

continue to put up policies and guide to check the conduct of states within African region. However, this organisation lacks the power of enforcement of sanction on erring state. This remains the major challenge and has continued to pose questions on the strength and influence of international organisations on state foreign policies. (Ukhami et al 2021:13). For example, the various coup d'etat in some African states, regional organisation has not been able to reinstate ousted democratic government back to power. Also Ukraine invasion by Russia., the UN has not being able to stop Russia. The north Korean government continue to build weapon of mass destruction (WMD) which includes nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons despite arms control policy of the United Nations.

**Reactions of other States**

The global system is fast transforming into a society of states state where each and every individual states has regard for the rights of other states. Being sensible to the sensibilities of other states, no state can adopt a unilateral policy. It has to take into account, and accommodate, if possible, the interests of the other stake-holders as well. India and the US have to take stock of Pakistani interests in Afghanistan. They are also cognizant of the fact that no plan for Afghanistan can work until and unless Pakistan is taken aboard in this regard. In 1939, Hitler embarked upon the course of aggression vis-à-vis Poland and didn't assess and anticipate British reaction to such a misadventure. This led to disastrous consequents for Germany and the Global system generally speaking. Pakistan though not fully comfortable with being a willing partner in the Global War on Terror, has to be committed to the same owing to international concerns and being apprehensive of international backlash. (Barkdul 2017)

According to the English School of thought, the international society remains the fortune of the international system. That states within the international system should rather form a society in other to facilitate and strengthen state bond and to aid cordial relationship among states. The reactions of state in Europe and around the world toward Russia has its significant impact of the subsequent foreign relations of Ukraine, ditto Russia (Barkdul 2017)

**World Public Opinion**

Similarly the state, while formulating its foreign policy has to take into account the world public opinion. World public opinion is more effective when it is supported by the domestic public opinion of the given state. Israel usually flouts agreements and canons of international law with a least regard for them, but in the process it has lost international goodwill. Power is not about military hardware or nukes and ammunitions; its equally important component is a state prestige known as soft power. It is well known that the US administration was made to effect changes in its Vietnam policy largely due to hostile world public opinion. What countries of the international system are saying about a particular country has it impact on formulation of foreign policy towards that country by others. The contemporary situation and discussions about a state has it impact on states formulation of foreign policy. For example world public opinion today does not favour Russia invasion of Ukraine and thus states are redirecting or relapsing formulating any foreign policy towards Russia. Also world public opinion is divided over the Israeli/Hamas wars while this event has redirect the focus of some countries like Iran and others towards Israel.

**Alliances and International Treaties (Bilateral and Multilateral)**

This is also an external influence on a foreign policy. Alliance is a means by which some nations pool their powers or agree to pool their powers in the event of a particular situation. Alliances serve as instruments of foreign policies. The extensive and intensive system of alliances that emerged in the Post-1945 period had a big impact on the foreign policies of all the nations. During 1945-90 both the United States and the USSR, recognized and used alliances as the means for consolidating their respective positions. Their foreign policies, as well as the foreign policies of their allies were always governed by the goal to secure new partners in their respective alliances and to maintain and consolidate the alliance partnerships. Even now, after the demise of Warsaw Pact, the U.S.A. continues to consider NATO as the mainstay of its foreign policy in Europe. NATO‟s support to the US decision to declare a war against Taliban‟s Afghanistan decidedly gave strength to the US foreign policy. However, many other nations, the Non-aligned nations, still continue to regard alliances as a source of tension and distrust and their foreign policies are still governed by the anti-alliance principle. Recently, another factor has become an external influential factor in Foreign Policy- making.

The realization for mutual inter-dependence has given birth to a large number of regional organizations, arrangements, agreements and trading blocs. European Union, Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) and several others have been major players in international economic relations. (Barkdul 2017)

The foreign policy of every nation is now becoming conscious of these organizations, trading blocs and economic and trade agreements. The pressures of NPT & CTBT and the decisions of WTO on every foreign policy is a well-known fact. Hence, international treaties, pacts, trading blocs and alliances also constitute external factor of foreign policy. All these are the major external inputs or factors of foreign policy. These are popularly called the determinants of Foreign Policy. One thing must be, however, clearly understood that all these factors are inter-related and interdependent. These act together or in combination as external influence, for the making and implementation of a foreign policy. None of these is an independent determinant of Foreign Policy. All these factors have to be analysed together for understanding the nature and objective of external influence on Foreign Policy of each nation.

**Geographical Location**

The geopolitical location of a state is one of the external determinants on its foreign policy. It matters where on the globe a country is located. It matters whether the country has natural frontiers: that is whether it is protected by oceans, high mountains, or deserts. It matters who one's neighbours are and whether a given country is territorially large, populous, affluent, and well-governed. For instance, Kenya's foreign policy in the region has been shaped by factors such as the presence of overlapping ethnic community across borders and being a littoral state of the Indian Ocean which influences relations with landlocked neighbours. Also Nigeria is locate in the hub of Africa with arable land and other natural resource that attract other countries like China and other countries of the west to formulate foreign policies that could foster continuous relationship with Nigeria

**Multinational Corporations**

Another external factor to foreign policy formulation is the activities of multinational corporations. And such corporations are usually headquartered or based in the developed countries with a network of subsidiaries in the developing countries, and also influence such developing country's foreign policy. The multinationals are sometimes used as instruments of influencing the behaviour of states. In the mid-1970s, Nigeria, for example, had to nationalize British petroleum and Barclays bank over British policy in support of the then apartheid south Africa. (Saleh 2010)

**Liberation Movements**

Liberation movements also influence foreign policy decisions by attracting sympathy from other states. Some examples include the Palestinian liberation movements such as Hamas and Fatah which had their origin from the Palestinian liberation organization (PLO). They often get financial assistance and diplomatic support especially from the Arabs states. Nigeria has also in the past supported liberation movements such as the African national congress (ANC), SWAPO and POLISARIO. (Barkdul 2017)

**Theoretical Framework**

The adoption of interdependence theory to explain why states needs one another in the international environment and the imperativeness of foreign policy formulation by states. One of the classic theories in the social and behavioural sciences is interdependence theory, originally developed by John Thibaut and Harold Kelley (1959). Over the past decades, this theory has been extended, first by Kelley and Thibaut (1978) and then by others (Kelley et al., 2003), into a comprehensive theory of social interaction. Interdependence most simply defined means mutual dependence. Interdependence in world politics refers to situations characterized by reciprocal effects among countries or among actors in different countries (Kelley et al, 2003). Interdependence theory proposes to model many everyday interactions in order to understand how states and individual actors make choices and how both personal and social factors such as international environment influence these choices and situations. Paul et al (2015) identified three main components of team interdependence which are task, goal and outcome.

The adoption of the interdependence theory to the study explains that, no state across the globe can survive in isolation, state are in continuous need to address one social disorder or national need and thus must formulate foreign policy she believes could help her in resolving these problem. States therefore in are quest to solving internal problems or advance her frontiers will study the international environment from the power structure to other factors discussed above to carefully considers the choice of her foreign policy direction. Interdependence theory explains further on mutual benefits for states in international relations, by these states ensure thorough study of the international environment in other to direct her foreign policy towards other states where there is assurance of mutually beneficial outcome.

**Discussion of Findings**

The study finds out that the understanding of international environment is crucial to state formulation of foreign policy. That international environment does have significant influence in the direction of state foreign policy. That contemporary issues in the international system and reactions of other state towards the affected states has significant influence in shaping the direction of states foreign policy.

The interdependence nature of the international and the understanding of the fact that no states can survive in isolation made state formation of foreign policies unavoidable. However, in her calculative attempt to formulate foreign polices state must take into cognisance the situation of a particular state of interest and be sure of the assurance of the realisation of her foreign policy.

**Conclusion**

Apparently, drawing from the above discussion that foreign policy of a country is determined by a number of factors. As most of these factors are of changing nature, so with their evolution or transformation, foreign policies of countries also keep on changing. In addition to these factors, certain developments at the international level such as development of thermo-nuclear technology, onset of cold war and military alliances, elimination of colonialism have exercised profound influence on the foreign policies of different countries. The creation of United Nations has also left a mark on the foreign policies of different countries. The end of cold war influenced the states in every region of the world to modify their foreign policies

in according with the changing dynamics of the world. Post 9/11 has a similar effect on the states. Pakistan had to make very important strategic readjustments in the wake of these terrorist attacks on the world trade centre and Pentagon. In short it can be said that apart from the national determinants of foreign policy, international environment which are external factors play an important role in the formulation and orientation of the foreign policy of a state.

**Recommendation**

The objectives of any state give direction to its foreign policies. Such objectives may vary greatly but all states should seek to preserve themselves, maintain their independence, and security and territorial integrity. To attain its set goals and interests in foreign policy, a state must continue to seek effective strategies in its approach to foreign policy depending on its power, objectives and leadership. These objectives should be to promote economic development, while maintaining its traditional core principles and norms of non-alignment, non-interference in internal affairs of other states, good neighbourliness and peaceful settlement of disputes. It is also imperative to state that state domestic or internal situations plays significant role in shaping foreign policy formulations. The internal issues within a particular state do inform her consideration of these external factors in her quest to formulate foreign policies to assist in resolving the internal issues. Internal issues could range from insecurity, climate change, invasion, natural disaster anarchy and others. Therefore, the realisation of the importance of international environment in formulating state foreign policies in other to achieve her aims and objectives.

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