

## **The impact of geo-strategic factors on shaping the National Interest of Algerian Foreign Policy**

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**Abstract---**The study of national interest as an analytical unit for interpreting the external behavior of the state, and its application to Algeria, demonstrates that states act within the international system in accordance with the imperatives of their national interests. Despite increasing convergence among political units in the international system and the rise of economic globalization, the post-Cold War period witnessed a noticeable decline in the ideological dimension of foreign policy, while the concept of interest re-emerged prominently as the principal reference point for foreign policy orientation. All diplomatic activities of the state are directed toward fulfilling and safeguarding its national interests at the global level. What characterizes the modern era is that Algeria's national interest has developed new, highly effective mechanisms operating within broader frameworks than those previously adopted by the state. These frameworks and mechanisms include renewed or newly established economic institutions, as well as regional and international economic blocs. At first glance, the emergence of international economic blocs may appear to diminish the significance of the national interest and to signal a shift from national interest toward a collective interest of the international system. However, this interpretation is inaccurate. The driving force behind the creation of these blocs remains the national interests of the state, as the state increasingly faces limitations in achieving its interests independently, unlike earlier historical periods. As a result, it must integrate into networks of regional and international relations to meet its objectives and satisfy domestic demands. Organizations and blocs thus constitute new mechanisms for articulating the national interest of the state. The state is the actor that creates these blocs, and they cannot function in ways that contradict its interests. Whenever a bloc or organization diverges from the interests of the state, this leads either to the state's withdrawal or to the bloc's gradual suspension and erosion until it loses effectiveness.

**Keywords---**National interest, foreign policy, geo-strategy, strategy.

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### **How to Cite:**

Zaouchi, S. (2025). The impact of geo-strategic factors on shaping the National Interest of Algerian Foreign Policy. *The International Tax Journal*, 52(6), 4897–4909. Retrieved from <https://internationaltaxjournal.online/index.php/itj/article/view/466>

The International tax journal ISSN: 0097-7314 E-ISSN: 3066-2370 © 2025

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Submitted: 06 July 2025 | Revised: 04 November 2025 | Accepted: 05 December 2025

## Introduction

The national interest Algeria seeks to protect through geo-strategic variables in the modern era is national security and survival, driven by a persistent sense of the need for continuous security. Algeria operates under a condition of enduring insecurity, which represents one of the most influential motivators for states in shaping their policies.

A new mechanism for defending the national interest has emerged within Algerian foreign policy: safeguarding cultural identity and refusing to compromise it in order to maintain the political system and ensure its continuity. In addition, cultural identity provides legitimacy for the continued presence of political elites, whether in positions of authority or opposition. This factor constitutes one of the political instruments employed by Algerian foreign policy in managing both internal and external affairs. Within this framework, the following central question is posed:

**How do geo-strategic factors influence the shaping of the national interest in Algerian foreign policy?**

### Study Methodology:

Among the most suitable methods for analyzing the impact of geo-strategic factors on shaping the national interest of Algerian foreign policy is the descriptive-analytical approach. This approach is defined as a method for describing the studied phenomenon and portraying it quantitatively through the collection of standardized information related to the problem, followed by its classification, analysis, and rigorous examination. Other definitions characterize it as an approach based on depicting a phenomenon in order to identify its causes, the factors influencing it, and the derivation of generalizable conclusions. This is accomplished according to a specific research plan that includes the systematic collection, organization, and analytical processing of data.

### Study Axes:

Axis 1: Defining the major concepts: "Foreign Policy – Strategy"

Axis 2: Determinants of Algerian foreign policy in the modern era

Axis 3: Sources of Algerian foreign policy

Axis 4: Algerian foreign policy and the issue of national interest

### First Axis: Defining the Major Concepts "Foreign Policy – Strategy"

#### First: Foreign Policy

The general concept of foreign policy refers to any behavior undertaken by the state beyond its geographical borders. However, numerous scholars and researchers have provided diverse definitions of foreign policy. Some interpret foreign policy as "determined by its objectives, described through the national interests pursued by a state's activities within the international environment and its relations with the units of the international system."

Kenneth Thompson argues that foreign policy "is defined through ideological and analytical perspectives.

The first assumes that policies formulated by states toward the external world are expressions of prevailing political, social, and religious beliefs. Foreign policy is then classified as democratic, authoritarian, liberal, socialist, peace-oriented, or aggressive. The second assumes that foreign policy comprises several components, including the state's historical traditions, geographical location, national interest, security objectives, and needs."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Kenneth Thompson, "Theories of Foreign Policy and Its Dilemmas," in: *Foreign Policy: Methods*, ed. Roy McCredis (New York, Beirut: Franklin Printing and Publishing Corporation, 1961), p. 459.

Foreign policy is also defined as “the sum of actions and reactions undertaken by the state in the international environment to achieve objectives that may be specified within the range of tools available to that state.”<sup>2</sup>

Another definition describes it as “the art of managing interactions with other states in accordance with national interests.”<sup>3</sup>

This final definition distinguishes between foreign policy as an action undertaken by decision-makers in the international environment, expressing specific positions and decisions, and the process of formulating foreign policy, which progresses through multiple stages until it produces the final action derived from them. This process involves several elements: foreign policy objectives, state resources, information, institutions, and national interest.

## **Second: Strategy**

The epistemological extensions of the term “strategy” evolved across a long trajectory of strategic thought. In the Greek era, it was consistently associated with the art of managing military affairs and commanding the army. Its origin is linked to the Latin term *Strategus*, referring to the military commander in ancient Athens and also a member of the war council, in addition to the term *Stratos*, meaning the army.

During the Roman era, the term *strategia* became widespread and was used by Roman historians to indicate “territories under the authority of the military commander.” In French culture, the term *Stratégiquewas* employed by the French military thinker Count Guibert to denote military campaigns aimed at controlling territories or engaging in conflict with others.<sup>4</sup>

Across these various derivations and epistemological developments, the profound meaning of the term “strategy” becomes apparent: it encapsulates behavioral ingenuity and intelligent action aimed at achieving the fundamental objectives of politics through the instrument of war. Strategic behavior constitutes deliberate and calculated conduct designed to realize essential political aims through mechanisms of organized violence. In broader contexts, the term “strategic” also describes an individual who possesses precise awareness of their actions by adopting a sequence of practical measures that directly guide them toward specific and clearly defined objectives, measures commonly described as “strategic steps.”

Mao Zedong stated: “Wherever there is war, there exists an overall condition for war, and studying the laws governing war and controlling its overall condition is the task of strategy.” Likewise, the “United States Armed Forces Staff” defines strategy as “the art and science of employing the state’s armed forces for the purpose of achieving national policy objectives through force or the threat of its use.”

## **Second Axis: Determinants of Algerian Foreign Policy in the Modern Era**

### **The pursuit of national security**

The pursuit of security constitutes a natural behavior for Algeria, as it does for any state, regardless of size. This pursuit is especially pronounced for Algeria due to its historically rich background marked by critical turning points, as well as its extensive interests within and beyond its national borders, all of which require protective security systems. Another factor intensifying Algeria’s pursuit of security is its susceptibility or fear of external aggression, an outlook shaped by its historical experiences.

The greater a state’s history of warfare, the larger its security responsibilities become for safeguarding its territories and borders. This constitutes a fundamental motive for allocating substantial annual budgets

<sup>2</sup>Shams Ali Muhammad, *Political Science* (Tripoli: Al-Dar Al-Jamahiriya for Publishing, Distribution, and Advertising, 1988), p. 341.

<sup>3</sup>Badwi Muhammad Taha, *Introduction to the Science of International Relations* (Beirut: Dar Al-Nahda Al-Arabiya, 1972), p. 39.

<sup>4</sup>Tiha Von Ghycky, Bolko Von Oetinger, and Christopher Bassford, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 30–32.

to military expenditures and armament programs. Such expenditures tend to rise as the state grows more powerful, except in specific cases where strategic security responsibilities fall under the authority of another state for historical reasons, for instance, Japan under the security umbrella of the United States.

Major powers such as the United States, Russia, China, Britain, and France devote considerable financial, human, and material resources to what their governments, elites, and populations regard as essential for securing national safety. Even in the absence of imminent threats to their national security, military spending continues. John Mearsheimer<sup>5</sup> attributes the tendency toward increased security expenditures to the phenomenon of security competition, in which military spending by one state inevitably stimulates similar or greater spending by another (particularly neighboring states), on the assumption that inter-state relations are characterized by profound suspicion and uncertainty regarding each other's intentions.

### **Economic Interests**

The activities of Algeria's foreign policy incorporate economic objectives that it seeks to protect and advance, including the preservation of its investments abroad, safeguarding its companies operating overseas, ensuring the continuous flow of resources required for its industries, stimulating inter-state trade, entering international markets, benefiting from technological development, transferring economic expertise, and addressing all factors capable of strengthening its economy and meeting the economic needs of its population.

These vital objectives, historically pursued during the era of imperial expansion through domination and military control, are currently achieved through structured negotiations among states and the establishment of economic arrangements, such as those within the World Trade Organization, which facilitate economic cooperation and protect state interests through peaceful institutional mechanisms.

Economic interests for Algeria in the modern era also encompass the economic functions of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the routine protection of trade, the security of transportation and travel for its citizens abroad, and the organization of the state's external national activities. Additionally, they include the protection, development, and acquisition of long-term foreign investments, such as iron and copper mining projects and oil exploration.

These interests have become a crucial component of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' responsibilities due to the significant expansion of national companies with branches worldwide. Available data indicate that the scope and market share of industrial companies are steadily expanding across borders and in nearly all economic sectors.

A central strategy in this context is the effort to persuade external partners of the attractive investment opportunities available within Algeria and to maintain open international channels in order to secure diverse sources of funding for the national budget while simultaneously reducing debt burdens. The success of this strategy is linked to the achievement of preliminary security objectives, which contribute to establishing internal stability, an essential condition for attracting foreign investment and stimulating economic engagement.

Beyond the international movement of goods and capital, economic interests in foreign policy also include the acquisition of property rights to land, buildings, mining resources, and production units; participation in global markets; and maintaining the country's oil reserves in international markets as a guarantee supporting various external economic interactions of the state.<sup>6</sup>

### **Sociological and Psychological Dimensions**

<sup>5</sup>John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York, London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2003), pp. 12–17.

<sup>6</sup>Karl W. Deutsch, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 102–105.

The general premise underlying this element is that Algeria's foreign policy in the modern era ultimately reflects the state's sociological and psychological structure, consisting of diverse groups with varying interests, public opinion orientations, and foundational social characteristics. The state's foreign policy also embodies a range of sociological and psychological meanings associated with the national characteristics that Algeria seeks to present to the world through its embassies.

This constitutes the stereotypical image that distinguishes Algeria as an entity and that it aims to project in order to gain respect and recognition from other states. Although such meanings do not always appear explicitly in the official work of diplomatic missions, their indicators can be observed in the activities of cultural attachés abroad and in the celebration of national holidays. These practices are also connected to notions of social status, professional role, collective self-image, self-respect, perceptions acquired from the global environment, the sense of belonging to the community, the affirmation of dignity, and the symbolic meanings embedded in past and present positions.

The Algerian Revolution, for example, has provided powerful symbolic content shaping the direction of foreign policy over the past three decades, whether through support for global liberation movements, advocacy for just causes worldwide, alignment with the Non-Aligned Movement, or endorsement of the causes of the Global South. Such considerations are closely linked to the reference framework from which the state's external behavioral patterns emerge and which defines the symbolic identity of the entity interacting with other actors. Although explicit expressions of these considerations may weaken at times due to urgent circumstances or the particular nature of decision-makers, they continue to influence the underlying mindset that guides foreign policy formulation.

Furthermore, the sociological characteristics of the Algerian state affect the formulation of external choices to a significant degree, particularly in open democratic contexts. This influence is reflected in public opinion orientations and in groups participating in domestic political interactions that consider it necessary to extend their interests into the sphere of foreign relations.

### **The Influence of Individuals in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs**

At the fourth level of analyzing the determinants of Algeria's foreign policy in the modern era appears the role of individuals and key decision-makers occupying various positions within the bureaucratic structure of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. These actors exert growing influence, reflected in the variation of foreign policy preferences and the prioritization of certain options over others depending on the succession of decision-makers in influential positions. This influence largely emerges as a natural consequence of the extensive or limited recruitment of personnel and the appointment of leaders within core decision-making circles, including the Minister of Foreign Affairs, deputies, and advisers.

From another perspective, substantive decisions are produced across multiple levels of the hierarchical leadership structure. A decision may originate from preliminary proposals drafted by lower-level Algerian officials within diplomatic missions abroad, and these proposals undergo successive revisions until they evolve into policy options adopted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or even by the highest executive authority.

Due to accumulated professional experience and the growing specialization of officials, it is not necessary for all decision-makers to participate in the formulation of every decision. Rather, the process becomes concentrated in the hands of leaders who possess geographical or functional responsibility for the issue under consideration. If the Minister of Foreign Affairs must articulate a position regarding an external matter, only the leaders responsible for the diplomatic posts relevant to the issue participate in the deliberations.

Their perspectives may be considered or disregarded, as such choices ultimately fall within the judgment of the senior authority. In other instances, the principal decision-maker may find it appropriate to approve proposals in their original form without subjecting them to amendment, particularly when the proposals pertain to technical or economic matters. Political decisions, however, are typically determined at the senior leadership level and may even be presented directly to the head of state.

This entire process unfolds within the ministry through a combination of opportunity, administrative practice, and professional competence rather than through a rigidly structured sequence of filtering and evaluation procedures. Tradition and accumulated experience often play a significant role in ensuring the coherence of new decisions with previous ones, and officials within external missions and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs rely on such precedents and treat them with considerable attention. The practice of major statecraft in all countries relies heavily on completing prior efforts and reviewing earlier positions.

Rarely is there available time for deep reflection that produces entirely new beginnings. Furthermore, officials at all levels within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs remain sensitive to institutional consensus and the broader political environment. They are typically aware of implicit understandings regarding issues and of practically established perceptions that delineate the boundaries between acceptable and unacceptable policy recommendations. Within these constraints, they advance only those proposals they believe are most likely to endure the subsequent stages of screening and evaluation.

Additionally, department heads and senior officials rely on institutional memory and administrative judgment to ensure that the formulated policy is consistent with the positions of other ministries and aligned with current state policies. Thus, most functions of the Algerian Ministry of Foreign Affairs correspond directly with preceding decisions and draw upon them in the formulation of future policies. On the other hand, the decision-making process becomes more complex when consultation is required with other ministries, such as the Ministry of Defense, or when bodies with significant influence on national decision-making become involved. In certain circumstances, specific decisions remain confined to the Presidency of the Republic or the Office of the Prime Minister, while the Minister of Foreign Affairs and some of his assistants participate only in a contributory capacity. This occurs in situations involving international crises, national emergencies, strategic choices affecting the state as a whole, accession to military alliances, or issues classified within the domain of high politics.<sup>7</sup>

### **Third Axis: Sources of Algerian Foreign Policy Making**

#### **First: The Objectives of Foreign Policy**

Algeria's foreign policy encompasses external positions adopted by decision-makers with the intention of achieving a wide sequence of objectives. These positions are shaped by their perceptions of the contextual circumstances in which they operate, including geography, economic realities, demographic characteristics, political structure, culture, traditions, and the status of military strategy. At the same time, foreign policy positions are influenced by the presence and behavior of other entities operating within the same international environment, meaning that foreign policy stances are constrained by external considerations as well. This collection of factors can be described as the international environment surrounding decision-makers. The elements within this environment interact continuously, and interaction also takes place among different environments themselves.

Decision-makers possess numerous tools for pursuing these objectives; however, they also face constraints linked to both the domestic and international environments. These constraints influence decision-makers when selecting among available instruments. Choices are further shaped by the procedures and mechanisms through which alternatives are evaluated and selected.

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<sup>7</sup>Karl W. Deutsch, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 108–110.

## 1. Security Objectives

Logically, the primary influence on foreign policy in terms of defining objectives stems from the strong desire to pursue goals that hold priority for decision-makers. These objectives include the attainment of security, the promotion of welfare, and the preservation or advancement of values. The pursuit of security constitutes a constant concern, as the foreign policies of all states are shaped by it, particularly in their relations with other states.

## 2. Achieving Welfare

The fundamental objective of the Algerian state, seeking the highest possible level of welfare and strength, serves as a major influence on foreign policy, as no state is wholly self-sufficient. The notion of self-sufficiency holds meaning only in relation to the aspirations of the population of the state or region. A state may be described as politically self-sufficient only when it can, through its own resources, provide all the needs and desires of its population.

These necessities may include the resources required for security, stability, employment, and health. Whenever complete security is absent, whenever aspirations and expectations increase alongside the means to satisfy them (particularly when expenditures exceed income), and whenever a state lacks fixed supplies of essential materials and resources, political self-sufficiency becomes unattainable.

A sense of deficiency persists, whether concerning materials, food, markets, capital, or technical expertise, and here foreign policy acts to provide these needs. Shortages in the latter two areas particularly characterize developing states, which, through their foreign policies, seek to conclude various agreements with developed states in order to compensate for these deficiencies and enhance skills across different sectors.

## 3. Value-Based Objectives

Foreign policy objectives further include the desire to preserve and promote Algeria's political values, based on the assumption that each state possesses distinct political values derived from its historical trajectory, which may span centuries, from significant historical events, from its foundational origins, and from the cultural and symbolic content embedded within society.

## 4. Values and Change

Policies may also be revised due to a desire among decision-makers to introduce changes in the relationships among international actors or to alter the actors themselves; conversely, they may resist revising policies if decision-makers are satisfied with the number and nature of actors and the relationships that bind them. Since no international relationship is permanent, maintaining the status quo indefinitely is impossible. Such revisions or resistance to change are guided by the values held by decision-makers as representatives of their nations and by the symbolic content of their positions, whether conservative or oriented toward transformation.

## Second: Social Structure and Cultural Patterns

The cultural content and domestic social structure of Algeria increasingly influence the formation of foreign policy preferences, based on the assumption that foreign policy constitutes a natural reflection of domestic concerns<sup>8</sup>. This assumption forms the core of analysis among proponents of the neo-liberal approach to foreign policy, who stand in sharp contrast to the realist approach<sup>9</sup>, which neither focuses on the nature of the domestic structure of the state nor attributes importance to it in foreign policy analysis.

One of the strongest proponents of the role of societal sources in determining the nature of a state's foreign policy is James Rosenau,<sup>10</sup> who identifies these sources within the non-governmental dimensions of the political system that influence its external behavior. These include foundational value

<sup>8</sup>Richard Little, "International Regimes," in *The Globalization of World Politics: An Introduction to International Relations*, ed. John Baylis and Steve Smith, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 306–307.

<sup>9</sup>Kenneth Waltz, "Explaining War," in *International Relations Theory: Realism, Pluralism, Globalism*, 2nd ed., ed. Paul R. Viotti & Mark V. Kappa (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1993), pp. 121–128.

<sup>10</sup>James N. Rosenau, *The National Interest*, in: James Barker and Michel Smith (Great Britain: Holmes McDougall, 1970), p. 186.

orientations, the degree of national unity, levels of industrialization and complex technological development, cultural symbols, the historical experience of the population, and all elements from which society derives the spirit of its conduct and which serve as guides for political behavior. This perspective suggests that the internal forces of society, groups, parties, and values, shape the foreign policy of the Algerian state more profoundly than external influences.

In a theoretical paradox, Marxism and neo-Marxism<sup>11</sup> share with neo-liberalism the fundamental premise that foreign policy constitutes an extension of the state's domestic societal components. However, they diverge significantly in substance: Marxism focuses on the role of class struggle and the mode of production in shaping foreign policy, whereas neo-liberalism emphasizes the nature of the democratic system, the social composition of society, and democratic pluralism in the formulation of foreign policy.

On another analytical front, certain scholars, particularly those aligned with the Marxist approach to international relations,<sup>12</sup> argue that domestic economic considerations, the expansion of the production market, population growth, and economic crises create imperatives for global expansion within a state's foreign policy.<sup>13</sup>

### **Third: Public Opinion**

Democratic theory begins with the assumption that citizens will remain informed about proposed choices or policies concerning the daily issues that affect their lives. Based on this awareness, they select those whom they believe will best represent their beliefs in elected governments or parliaments. Applying this assumption to the Algerian case, the Algerian people expect that their views and preferences will be taken into account when policies are announced by leaders during candidacy declarations or election campaigns, on the premise that leaders are chosen to represent their voters and to serve their interests.

All democratic constitutions affirm the importance of public consent and elections within the broader political process and in legitimizing governmental authority. The Algerian Constitution, for example, highlights the central role of Algerian citizens in forming the government under which they choose to live, beginning its legislative framework with the phrase "We the People."

In general, political theory in democratic societies asserts that public policy is conditioned by the availability of public approval<sup>14</sup>. Despite the appeal of this theoretical framework, numerous theorists and analysts of foreign policy raise substantive questions regarding the actual contribution of the population to shaping the state's foreign policy positions. Among these are the following: Do public preferences in foreign policy genuinely reflect the will of the majority? Or is the relationship far more complex and nuanced? Are changes in foreign policy a direct function of shifts in public opinion? Or do decision-makers formulate policies first and then seek to persuade the population? Additionally, is the public truly capable of participating in the making of foreign policy, or does this function remain largely beyond its capacity?<sup>15</sup>

<sup>11</sup>Vicky Randall and Robin Theobald, *Political Change and Underdevelopment* (Great Britain: Anchor Brendon Ltd., 1985), pp. 153–156.

<sup>12</sup>Frans J. Schuurman, "Introduction: Development Theory in the 1990s," in *Beyond the Impasse: New Directions in Development Theory*, ed. Frans J. Schuurman (Great Britain: Biddles Ltd., Guildford and King's Lynn, 1996), pp. 3–4.

<sup>13</sup>Charles W. Kegley Jr. and Eugene R. Wittkopf, *American Foreign Policy: Pattern and Process*, 4th ed. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991), pp. 19–20.

<sup>14</sup>Steven L. Lamy, "Contemporary Mainstream Approaches: Neo-Realism and Neo-Liberalism," in *The Globalization of World Politics: An Introduction to International Relations*, ed. John Baylis and Steve Smith, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 188–190.

<sup>15</sup>Charles W. Kegley Jr. and Eugene R., *Op. Cit.*, pp. 280–281.

#### Fourth Axis: Algerian Foreign Policy and the Question of National Interest

##### The Concept of National Interest

The concept of the national interest has generated extensive debate among scholars and researchers due to the difficulty of assigning it a unified definition applicable to all contexts. This complexity arises because states differ fundamentally in determining what constitutes national interest in foreign policy.

Although the term is not new in political science literature, its revival in the twentieth century is largely attributed to the realist school, which centered its analysis of international behavior on the national interest as the principal unit of analysis. Scholars and researchers have expressed divergent perspectives regarding the definition of this concept.

MilhemQaryan (1970) contends that interest consists of “those considerations that determine the behavior of power in shaping and deciding political conduct,” attributing to it three characteristics: vagueness, irrationality, and literary ambiguity.<sup>16</sup>

Rosenau differentiates between national interest as an analytical tool and national interest as an instrument of political action. As an analytical tool, it is “used to describe, explain, and evaluate the sources and effectiveness of a state’s foreign policy.” As a tool of political action, however, “it is employed to justify, condemn, or propose a particular policy.”

Hans Morgenthau asserts that national interest is “power in the sense that it is linked to the issue of national survival, and therefore constitutes the essence of politics.”

Wolfer maintains that “national interest is what determines foreign policy, since such policy is formulated for the collective interests of the nation, and not merely the interests of individuals.”<sup>17</sup>

Samuel P. Huntington asserts that “national interest must be consistent with the nature of the state, and its definition is derived from the state’s national identity... National interest represents the best common concern of all or most Americans. A fundamental national interest is one for which blood and money are sacrificed to defend it...”<sup>18</sup>

Daniel Papp (1994) <sup>19</sup>argues that “the interests of the state are referred to as the national interest, while the means and methods of achieving those interests constitute national policy.” He maintains that the concept of national interest may encompass “economic development and the achievement of welfare, the promotion of foreign trade, and international competitiveness in the economic sphere. It may also include the ideology of the state, meaning that the national interest of a state may lie in disseminating its ideology across the world. The concept may further refer to increasing power, which corresponds to the realist conception of national interest...”<sup>20</sup>

Haim Shaked and his colleagues (1980), drawing on their study of U.S. foreign policy, define national interest as “the continued preservation of the state’s independence along with its institutions, the protection of its values, and the achievement of economic welfare for its citizens,” emphasizing that national security constitutes the highest priority within the hierarchy of national interest.

There are also those who define national interest as “what the nation decides, wisely or not, through its foreign decision-making process. Such a decision is undoubtedly subject to change, and leaders may, due to external circumstances or the influence of public opinion, be compelled to revise their views or even be removed from office and replaced by leaders holding entirely different perspectives...”<sup>21</sup>

<sup>16</sup>MilhemQaryan, *Political Realism* (Beirut: Dar Al-Nahar Publishing, 1970), p. 110.

<sup>17</sup>James N. Rosenau, *The National Interest*, in: James Barker and Michel Smith (Great Britain: Holmes McDougall, 1970), p. 186.

<sup>18</sup>Samuel P. Huntington, “The Erosion of American National Interests,” *Foreign Affairs*, 76 (September/October 1997), p. 5.

<sup>19</sup>Daniel Papp, *Contemporary International Relations* (Toronto: Maxwell Macmillan Canada, 1994), p. 29.

<sup>20</sup>Wallace Irwin Jr., *Lights on American Policy in the World*, trans. Nour Al-Din Al-Zarari and Nour Al-Din Khalil (Cairo: Arab Record Foundation, 1986), pp. 19–22.

<sup>21</sup>Jack Plano and Roy Olton, *The International Relations Dictionary* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1969), p. 128.

Jacques Plano considers the concept of national interest to refer to “a general notion extending to elements related to the state's fundamental needs. It includes state survival, independence, territorial integrity, security, and economic welfare.”<sup>22</sup>

Another definition views national interest as “a tool for describing, explaining, and evaluating the sources and effectiveness of foreign policy, or for justifying, denouncing, or proposing a policy. National interest is also seen as the driving force behind national survival. Thus, national interest becomes the essence of state policy.”<sup>23</sup>

National interest is also regarded as a benefit or advantage gained from an action or outcome. The assertion that something is in a person's interest may differ from that person's needs or desires. Perceived interests may form the basis for demands for political action within the system, and shared interests may lead to the formation of organized groups advancing joint demands on specific matters. From the overview of scholars' and researchers' definitions of national interest, it becomes evident that each focuses on a particular dimension of the concept. This variation likely results from differences in the ways states define their national interests in foreign policy, as well as variation in prioritizing the hierarchy of interests from one state to another.

However, there is near-unanimous agreement among researchers regarding the existence of a minimum core of national interests that must be preserved. These include the survival of the state as a political entity, the integrity of its territory, the protection of its independence and sovereignty, and a minimum threshold of food security.

At a surface level, the term “national interest” appears to express what benefits the nation as a whole or the goals it seeks to achieve through its interactions with other units in the international system. Yet the concept may also reflect the desires of decision-makers (as in Machiavelli's perspective), their motives, and the personal characteristics of political leaders. In some instances, certain foreign policy positions are difficult to justify except by referring to the motivations, personalities, and aspirations of leaders for control, influence, and dominance over others.

This interpretation applies to wars initiated by political leaders without consulting their populations, such as the wars waged by Napoleon Bonaparte (Emperor of France) or Adolf Hitler (Head of Government of Germany). Thus, interpreting national interest in foreign policy, while receiving increasing scholarly attention, also generates considerable debate and complexity when attempting to explain and analyze state behavior in foreign affairs, as well as understanding and interpreting international relations and patterns of interaction among global actors.

This controversy led Hans Morgenthau, the leading figure of the classical realist school, to adopt the concept of “national interest” as the primary unit for analyzing international behavior. He maintains that states act in the international sphere exclusively in accordance with what their national interests dictate. These interests differ from one state to another.

Some states have not yet surpassed the basic threshold of security, sovereignty, and stability; thus, their national interest concentrates on issues of security, the protection of sovereignty, the attainment of stability, and the pursuit of international legitimacy. Other states, having overcome these fundamental challenges, seek hegemony, influence, and the expansion of their interests beyond their territorial boundaries. In such cases, the concept of national interest becomes synonymous with the concept of

<sup>22</sup>Abdel Moneim Mashat, “The Impact of the Gulf War on the Concept of National Security,” *Journal of Social Sciences*, 21, no. 3 (April 1993).

<sup>23</sup>Joffre Robert and Alistair Edwards, *The Modern Dictionary of Political Analysis*, trans. Samir Abdul Rahim Al-Jalabi (Beirut: Arab Encyclopedia House, 1999), p. 221.

power, indicating that national interest reflects the pursuit, enhancement, and preservation of power. This variation in the meaning of national interest generates substantial debate, particularly regarding the extent to which the concept is suitable as a unit for analyzing, interpreting, and understanding state behavior in the international domain.

Owing to the evolution of the use of the concept of national interest in Algeria's foreign policy, the concept has acquired a contradictory character between its theoretical and practical dimensions. The theoretical dimension suggests that national interest is an internal matter confined within the geographic boundaries of the state and directed toward its citizens, thereby falling under state sovereignty and its legal framework.

In contrast, the practical dimension demonstrates that the concept necessarily extends beyond the state's geographical borders. Indeed, realists conceptualized it from the outset as a notion operating outside the state's territorial limits. This extension implies expanding state sovereignty beyond its borders without enlarging its physical territory. Inevitably, this creates a contradiction with the sovereignty of other states: either these states concede parts of their sovereignty, indicating an alignment of interests, or they resist the influence and extended sovereignty of external actors, generating conflict that may escalate into war, reflecting a collision of interests.

In short, the national interest of a given state extends into the territories of numerous other states. It generates no concern when interests coincide, yet it provokes debate and tension when they diverge. War represents an expression of a collision between two national interests, whereas cooperation and integration signal convergence and harmony of interests among states.

Amid the realist school's emphasis on using national interest as the principal unit for analyzing foreign policy, and amid ongoing debates concerning the suitability of this concept, its variability from one political unit to another, and its extension beyond national borders, national interest may be defined in the foreign policy of the state as follows: those interests related to protecting the independence and sovereignty of the state, securing its geographical borders, ensuring internal stability, and meeting the economic needs of its citizens.

### **National Interest as a Determinant of Foreign Policy**

Contemporary Algerian foreign policy comprises a series of positions adopted by various governmental departments. These positions are also articulated by institutions operating at the international level, those that hold relevance for other states, including international groups, supranational organizations, and, on occasion, even individuals. The term policy may encompass a sequence of positions and principles that influence these objectives or the goals states seek to achieve through their foreign policies. The intended purposes of these positions are presumed to serve what is commonly referred to as the national interest.

Accordingly, Algerian foreign policy may be defined as a series of positions adopted by the various departments of government in their interactions with other institutions operating at the international level, with the aim of achieving the national interest. Thus, a position adopted by decision-makers, and consequently by the state, may be considered consistent with the national interest if it serves the genuine interest of the state as understood by decision-makers and foreign policy analysts.<sup>24</sup>

### **General Conclusion:**

A methodological difficulty arises from the extensive accumulation of knowledge in the field of foreign policy analysis, particularly regarding the transformations occurring in international relations and the

<sup>24</sup>P. A. Reynolds, *An Introduction to International Relations*, 5th ed. (London: Longman Group Limited, 1978), pp. 35–40.

ongoing debate concerning the role and limits of the state. Examining Algerian foreign policy in the modern era suggests the centrality of the state in international relations. However, this perception is challenged by the concept of the international community, which emphasizes transnational social, cultural, political, and economic relations among groups and individuals in international politics while reducing the significance of state-to-state interactions. It is also challenged by liberal theoretical frameworks that advocate a secondary role for the state in international relations and prioritize constructivist interpretations centered on the individual.

Nevertheless, the essential element in analyzing Algerian foreign policy rests on the assumption that the most influential actor in the international system, the entity responsible for organizing global arrangements, including the establishment of international organizations, is the state. States are the architects of interdependence policies. The logical conclusion is that such activities fall within the realm of foreign policy. Indeed, the prevailing trend in contemporary international relations theories, including post-constructivist approaches, maintains that the role of the state has strengthened rather than weakened in comparison to other international actors.

Modern Algerian foreign policy is not merely the output of the government at the apex of the political system; rather, it is the product of multiple sources and actors that exert varying degrees of influence depending on the issue at stake, the interests involved, and the urgency of circumstances. In this sense, the government, or state decision-makers, constitutes only one among several influential actors. Consequently, foreign policy represents a process rather than a singular behavior, meaning that it is produced through multiple stages and across various levels.

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