

# Foreign Policy Mechanism in USA: Role of Stakeholders

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## Abstract

*Contrary to other liberal democracies in the world, the foreign policy in US is made in a very clumsy way. The constitution of USA has put the president and congress into constant tug of war over the issue of making US foreign policy. Constitutionally, the department of foreign affairs, the bureaucracy, the president, the congress, media and public opinion are given special role to frame the US foreign policy. The constitution has built a bulwark against the despotic and tyrannical tendencies against any of these stakeholders. Apart from the compulsory role of all the said departments, much space is given to some external factors like UN, International law, NATO and the special interests of other US business and strategic partners to put pressure at numerous dimensions and aspects on US foreign policy mechanism. Consequently, it is difficult to figure out the more efficient stake holders involved in foreign policy formulation process in USA.*

**Keywords:** (Congress, Diplomacy, Foreign Policy, Stake holders, Realism, Bureaucracy)

## Introduction

Foreign policy formulation strategy in US is the essence of foreign policy choices by means of which goals are established and the policies to achieve them are shaped. These choices are mainly the pursuance of liberal international order, nuclear proliferation, durable peace and stability in Afghanistan and Pakistan, free market economy and global war on terror. The foreign policy politics is the process of these choices and the making of foreign policy through the institutions and aimed the societal influences of the US political system.

This research paper in its first part, will primarily discuss the basic concept of foreign policy which is the rudimentary theme of this paper. In this regard the second part of this paper focuses the role of different state level institutions in foreign policy formulation process in US. In this portion the role of different stakeholders like Congress, US President and foreign ministry shall be thoroughly converse to understand their role in the mechanism foreign policy in US.

Strategically, Foreign policy is used by government as a guideline for their action in the international scenario. It outlines the goals which the statesmen have agreed to pursue in a given relationship or situation. (Adler and Hass, 1990)

States establish manifold secretarial structures to communicate their foreign policies. Different institutions and stakeholders amass information about a state of affairs through numerous channels such as writing memoranda to outline potential substitutes for action, holding meetings to discuss the issue in various confidential meetings. Many political scientists have endeavored to define some states regarding their foreign policies in the context of their cultural and political history. For instance, the Soviet Union (now Russian Federation) frequently experienced destructive land invasions over the centuries (culminating into World War II) while the United States due to their isolationistic policy relished two centuries of safety mechanism and did not take active part in global politics. Thus the military power of the Soviet Union, and its control of buffer states in Eastern Europe, seemed self-protective to Soviet leaders but appeared antagonistic to the US leaders.

Before the emergence of the representative democracy, diplomats and soldier jointly used to formulate foreign policy maintaining highest level of secrecy. Thus masses could not participate in or influence the formulation of foreign policy of their respective states. For instance, the history of Europe substantiates such secret diplomatic practices until the World War I and several treaties were signed without considering the wishes of the people concerned.

However the maturity and culmination of the democratic system has reformed this notion entirely and now democratic institutions like legislatures, the media, various interest groups and public opinion have come on front position and are playing their significant roles in making of foreign policy. Similarly, the cultures and religious beliefs of the people deeply affect the shaping and reshaping of foreign policies of several governments. Moreover, the executive office of the government is no longer wholly sovereign in delineating and executing foreign policy. Thus the presence of these institutions is a foremost constraint on the part of rulers regarding their function of making foreign policy. In modern states all the stakeholders are answerable to masses for all their actions in decision making with regard to foreign policy.

Many forces function at different phases in the formulation of foreign policies. These policies are, first, highly affected by the individuals who have their say in decision making, secondly the type of government and society wherein they are serving, and lastly by the external or global factors. Thus, foreign policy formulation entirely opposes realists' hypothesis who claims that framing of foreign policy is exclusively state action at institutional level. Foreign

policy always zooms in various domestic and international issues that are the actual limitations on designing foreign policy.

The differences between or among the processes to formulate foreign policies adopted by different states are found due to different factors such as the kind of government practiced in the state; whether it is a military dictatorship or communist rule, or it is one party, bi-party or even multiparty polity, comparatively, democratic states, sharing values and interests, are likely to collaborate better with each other than with non-democratic states. (Almond, 1950)

To summarize it can be said that foreign policy is the multidimensional product of a complex process. Foreign policy formulation is the result of the competing ideas, challenging domestic interests and competing government institutions. Thus no single character, body or institution or any principle of foreign policy regulates the foreign policy mechanism in a state.

Generally, states verbalize foreign policies to reach unity as it has to address a concern or to decide something about any region round the world. Thus the states through their foreign policy attempt to attain the target of incorporating the interests of its people and to pursue solid and reliable policies.

### **Role of Stakeholders in Making Foreign Policy in US**

Due to the presence of principle of separation of powers in US political system, the framers of the constitution divided the powers of the foreign policy formulation among the three branches of the government; executive, legislature and judiciary. The executive is responsible for the formulation of foreign policy, while the legislature is to supervise the policy. For example, all the treaties of the executive are subject to ratification by Senate, and the judiciary has to monitor the differences found between the executive and the legislature and also to interpret the constitution.

The most significant players in the making of foreign policy are the President, Secretary of State who is the principal advisor to the President on issues related to foreign policy, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the National Security Advisor to the President, the Secretary of Defense and Director of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). The Director of the CIA provides the other important members of the foreign policy formulation board with the latest information on world events. These players are the backbone of the National Security Council (NSC). NSC is the apex body of foreign policy making in US. The founding fathers of

the constitution deliberately introduced a system of checks and balances and limited them to act autonomously.

### **President's Role in the Mechanism of US Foreign Policy**

President is the actual head of the executive branch of the government and is the vital player in the formulation of foreign policy. He with the assistance of Secretary of state, NSC and his cabinet formulate the policy. Being the supreme commander of the US armed forces, he can send troops anywhere around the world, and regarding legislation he is empowered with veto by the constitution. Furthermore, Congress also enjoys the authority to declare war as per its War Powers Act, but still the US President can deploy troops for 30 days without congressional authorization.

The US President influences the foreign policy formulation in the following ways:

i. Experience and Proficiency

Normally only those presidents can play an operative role in foreign policy formulation that have extensive experience and knowledge about both national and global politics. And likewise he has worked on some key positions in the arena of international affairs. For example, George W. Bush advantageously influenced foreign policy decision making because he had worked as the Director of CIA, Ambassador to the UN and chief of the liaison office in China.

After the independence of US, four of her first six presidents had served beforehand as Secretary of State. Those were:

- a. Thomas Jefferson
- b. James Munroe
- c. John Quincy Adams.
- d. James Madison

American presidents usually have such a commanding position in their political structure that they decide the destinies of the US people. Whenever in the history it was blessed with extensively experienced leaders as their presidents such as Truman, Munroe, and Woodrow Wilson etc., America enjoyed operative control over the global politics. This is the reason why various foreign policy difficulties have been originated due to inefficiency of presidents like Ronald Reagan and Bill Clinton.

## **ii. Character of President as an individual**

Secondly, President's personal character also influences decision making in foreign policy. Though personal character of stakeholders seldom affects the foreign policy, still in some cases it does influence foreign policy. For example, Woodrow Wilson's reluctance to compromise with opponents in the senate on the treaty of Versailles has been traced partially to his -uprightness along with other deeply ingrained personality traits. Equally, Richard Nixon's personality considerably affected his decision making in framing the foreign policy, as Nixon was humiliated by his opponents in Watergate scandal. He had a rigorous tendency for secrecy and was zealous for concentration of power. Thus Nixon did not want to end the Vietnam War although it was failing.

## **iii. President's outlook about world**

Belief system claims that The President is competent enough to understand a situation and then respond as per the demands of the national and international community.

Belief system can be understood in terms of three primary components:

1. The analytical component of the understanding of the international system: what principal threats are faced by the US?
2. The normative component of the national interest hierarchy: how are the essential objectives of power, peace, prosperity and principles are ranked?
3. The instrumental component of an elementary strategy: given both the conception of the global system and the national interest pyramid? What prime strategy could be pursued?

For comprehending belief system, we must compare Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan. The dissimilarities in their point of views about the world are crystal clear. In 1977, taking over the office, Carter was convinced about the end of the cold war.

America's Grand National interest can be expounded in the following four Ps order,

1. Power
  2. Peace
  3. Prosperity
  4. Principles (ideals, values and beliefs that the US had claimed) to stand for in the world).
- (Jentelsson, 2007)

In this hierarchy, Jimmy Carter put principals and piece on top.

Carter's rudimentary foreign policy stratagem was non-interventionism. On the contrary, Reagan defined the world in bipolar terms and his presidential election campaign in 1980s against Carter oozed Cold War theme. He ranked power higher than peace in the national interest hierarchy and accentuated the principles of anti-communism. Therefore, he was entirely averse to Carter's concept of human rights. In addition, Reagan's strategy was categorically interventionist and military.

#### **iv. President's influence in Framing Foreign Policy as an executive and as a Politician**

Presidents in US, doubtlessly, are the notable politicians, so this is another significant factor that political stature of President also affects foreign policy. This can work in different ways. Seeing problems at homeland, Presidents may turn to foreign policy in an attempt to draw on the reputation of international leadership to strengthen their domestic standing. And sometimes being pressurized for paying little attention to the domestic affairs, presidents give less emphasis to foreign policy. Election years also affect and politicize foreign policy. (Art, 1973)

#### **Role of Senior Foreign Policy Advisors in US**

There are four major portfolios with regard to senior foreign policy Advisors in US:

1. The National Security Advisor
2. The Secretary of State
3. The Secretary of Defense
4. The CIA Director (Post 2004, the Director of National Intelligence).

The roles of these advisors in foreign policy making have been identified due to several factors such as their personal worth, their bureaucratic expertise and relationship with the President. For example, Henry Kissinger, a Harvard University professor, served as National Security Advisor in President Nixon's first term of presidency.

Another factor is whether consensus or conflict prevails among the senior advisors. Consensus does not imply impeccable harmony, but it does connote a usual sense of team work and collegiality. President George W. Bush's team of advisors is the good example of team work and unanimity. Secretary of state James Baker, National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft, Dick Cheney, Secretary of defense, and Colin Powell, Chairman of the Joint Chief of Staff, were well familiar with each other and had also functioned as team in earlier administrations.

Conflict also resulted several times among the Senior Advisors. Again, Kissinger is a perfect specimen. While he was serving in the Nixon administration as Nixon's Security Advisor, Kissinger clashed with William Rogers, Secretary of State, repeatedly. Similarly when he was President Ford's Secretary of State, he conflicted with James Schlesinger, Defense Secretary. Due to his colossal capability, Kissinger won at fronts. But the impression of these differences was rather undesirable and such high level dissension proved ineffective for larger domestic consensus.

### **Role of Congress in Foreign Policy Formulation**

In US, Congress is the bicameral legislature that consists of Senate (Upper House) and House of Representatives (Lower House) .This is exclusive feature of the political system of United States that it has the strongest upper House of the world that is entrusted with massive powers regarding legislation.

Congress is conferred with a vital role in the formulation of US foreign policy. Like president, Congress is equally empowered to influence foreign policy formulation process in US. Congressional support is always sought for a successful foreign policy. Differences between Congress and the President may lead to complete fiasco of the policy. Senate is not only entitled for the confirmation of the treaties signed by the president, but it also extends approval to appointments of ambassadors and other senior officials.

Congress controls the foreign policy through its two standing committees: Senate Foreign Relations Committee and the House International committee. The responsibilities of the committees include analysis of foreign policies of other states and sanction of budget to international affairs. Regarding the failure of legislation for foreign aid by the congress, sometimes Appropriation Committee's role grows more vibrant in the process of foreign policy formulation.

Besides these committees, some other committees such as Select Intelligent Committee of both Houses monitor the activities of CIA and other intelligent agencies, the House National security Committee and the Senate Arms Services Committee which decides defense matters play active role regarding foreign policy decision making. Equally, another committee of the House of Representatives and the Senate Financial Committee have the duty to decide about the trade and bills.

No doubt, President enjoys greater say in shaping foreign policy in the US., but the Congress and predominantly the senate put substantial limitations over the powers and functions of the president which is a matter of great concern in mechanism of foreign policy. History testifies that at times the US Congress obligated the executive to bend to the motives of deputies and senators. For instance, President Woodrow Wilson desired to become a member of League of Nations, but the US Senate repudiated to endorse the president's proposal, and subsequently the US refrained from becoming a member of League of Nations in spite of the fact that President Woodrow Wilson was one among those pioneers who dropped the idea of that International Organization. (Bartles, 1991)

In the same way, Lyndon B. Johnson was obliged by the US Congress to end Vietnam War on the plea that war was not in larger interests of the US citizens. The US Congress approved the War Powers Act in 1973 making it obligatory that the approval of the congress shall be a must in declaring war. (Bennet, 1994) The President, in such a case, was entitled to send US troops only for 30 days even without seeking the approval of the Senate. Congress also held back President Ronald Reagan from secret intervention in EL-Salvador in 1975 that also led to the resignation of two dominant figures of his administration that were held responsible for the policy.

Such a multifaceted policy formulation has both positive and negative sides. Its positive aspect refers to the momentous check of Congress over the authority of the president and thus the President cannot misuse his powers. Thus every policy of the administration must be supported by the congress. The formulation of the policy is prudently planned because of possible censure from the Congress. Irrespective of the multifariousness of the formulation of the foreign policy, there is grander stability, lucidness and likelihood of the foreign policy decision-making processes since the disparate bodies of government carry out their duties in their bounds. Moreover, the Congress hardly differs from the policy framed by the President. It is merely in an unusual situation that they react to the policies of administrative branch. (Dahl, 1961). Next, the negative aspect includes the loss of confidentiality, flexibility and the strain of achieving bipartite support. Both the Congress and the Senate sometimes exhibit a fickle-mindedness through evading unilateralist bills against particular countries, causing difficulty for the US administration to adopt a supple policy. For example, recently, the Congress passed various bills against China on nearly all subjects from trade to non-proliferation that put the US government

in a great predicament on how to continue a normal foreign policy with China. (Hartley and Russet, 1992) And due to media, secrecy cannot be guaranteed because senators and representatives disclose congressional information to media. Thus the differences among the two political parties give birth to the narrow interests on the part of politicians that subsequently create hurdles in framing a balanced foreign policy.

### **Role of Bureaucracy in Foreign Policy Formulation (US Department Of Foreign Affairs)**

Bureaucracy is one of the most prominent stakeholders in foreign policy formulation. The diplomats can be ranked highest on the list. Almost all states preserve foreign service of diplomats who serve in different capacities in embassies in the capital cities of foreign countries and in consulates established in big cities other than their capitals. By the same token, some diplomats are appointed at home to assist and orchestrate foreign policy. In some countries, diplomats are appointed on political grounds and they abandon their offices with the change in governments. While in some states they are appointed on the basis of carrier policy. States also engage ambassadors as their authorized representatives to other states and to global organizations. All these diplomatic activities are organized through ministry for foreign affairs. This ministry in the US is called US State Department.

The bureaucracy of foreign affairs is celestial and intricate. We can describe it in the following five levels.

1. National Security Council, State, Defense and Homeland Security: These departments are apportioned with the duty of primary foreign affairs.
2. Commerce, Agriculture, Treasury, State's Bureau Economic Affairs, International Trade Commission, US Trade Representative,. These departments are involved in foreign economic policy.
3. Agency for International Development, Human Rights and Labor. State's Bureau of Democracy, Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), National Security Agency, Defense Intelligence Agency and Counter Terrorism Center are the agencies that are founded for the motive of intelligence and investigation.
4. The Environmental protection Agency on global environmental issues, the Office of National Drug Control Policy on international narcotics policy, the Centers for disease Control and prevention on the infectious diseases are those offices that are not only founded for formulation

of domestic policies in their fields concerned but they have also been given noteworthy role in making foreign policy.

These departments influence foreign policy in normal situation while in the time of high level crisis or threat such as 9/11, the executive is bestowed with extraordinary powers to tackle unusual circumstances. In such cases presidents are required to decide and act promptly. For this presidents generally consult their reliable advisors. The best illustration of effective decision making in this sort of situations is the Cuban Missile Crisis.

### **Influence of Public Opinion in Framing Foreign Policy in US**

Two different schools of thought exist regarding role of public opinion in formulation of foreign policy namely realist school of thought and liberalists. Realists opine that public opinion being unpredictable, emotive, lacking rationality and structure slightly affects formulation of foreign policy. (Holsti, 1996) Liberalist voice that it is because of public opinion that on many occasions foreign policy gets of stability, rationality and coherence. Therefore, a bunch of leaders feel the necessity of considering public opinion during the process of decision making, whereas some leaders ignore public opinion in foreign policy formulation.

In the United States, public opinion influences foreign policy in five basic ways. These are:

#### **1. Setting Parameters**

It implies that public opinion sets restrictions on the range of the president's policy choices via assessments done by presidential advisors of what is acceptable to the public and what not. For example, US policy towards Saddam Hussein in the 1980s the period of the Persian Gulf War, prior to his was emerging as an enemy. During Saddam's war with Iran (1980 to 1988), the Reagan administration extended extensive support to Iraq on the plea that the "enemy of my enemy is my friend" (Keohane, 1984). When the war concluded, US reclined from Iraq due to Saddam's assault on Kurds using chemical weapons against them.

#### **2. Centripetal Pull**

Public opinion leaves molding effect on foreign policy via centripetal pull towards the center on presidents who are required to form supportive coalitions. This centripetal pull is effective on the

presidents who were inclined either too far to the left or too far to the right to attain adequate political support. (Keohane and Milner, 1996) For instance, President Jimmy Carter's foreign policy reputation largely generated doubts such as where he was "tough" enough, the public attempted to balance this distress by expressing low level of approval of Carter's Soviet Policy in its mollifying phases (1977-78), and higher level of backing when Carter demeanor became harsh in mid-1978-80.

### **3. Impact on Congress**

Congress is highly sensitive to feeling of masses on foreign policy concerns. Normally, Congress pays attention to those sections of public opinion which are the most voiced and politically compelling. Hubert H. Humphrey, former senator, who was a prominent figure from 1940 to 1978, censured many of his coworkers for being "POPPS" or what he called "Public Opinion Polls Politicians", on foreign policy. (Jentleson 2007)

### **4. Impact of Public Opinion on Diplomatic Negotiations**

Public opinion leaves its impression on diplomatic negotiations in two ways: firstly, when agreements, decisions or treaties are concluded, and secondly in the course of diplomatic negotiations. Therefore, US diplomats need to know how their negotiations are affected by domestic affairs in US. This sort of influence bonds the negotiators' hands in ways that are politically famous but flawed in policy terms. (Krasner, 1972).

### **5. Presidential Elections and Public Opinion**

Finally, public opinion influences foreign policy in the United States via presidential elections. There are three types of electoral effects on foreign policy:

- i. The issue must be circulated via survey questions is to be greatly silent. There must be substantial differences between the positions of the Republican and Democratic contenders.
- ii. The public awareness in these dissimilarities must be obvious.
- iii. President Bush was considerably popular during Iraq War in 2006, but with the elongated war his popularity decreased; the voters toppled his power in Congress. (Krasner, 1978). By the 2008 elections, his party had lost power in the Senate, the House of Representatives as well as the presidency. Briefly, the Republican Party lost everything which it had attained in the start of Iraq War.

## **Role of Military Industrial Complex in Foreign Policy Making In US**

In 1962, the term ‘military industrial complex’ was coined by President Dwight Eisenhower. This term means gigantic interconnected net of governmental agencies, industrial corporations and research institutions operating together to supply a nation’s martial forces. Military industrial complex was a counter stratagem to the developing significance of technology like nuclear weapons, electronics and of logistics in Cold War military planning. Because of the political power of these elements at domestic level, the ‘military industrial complex’ was a prevailing influence on foreign policy in both Soviet Union and the United States during Cold War era.

Countries at war have bonded together their technological and economic capability for the War effort. But all through the Cold War era, military technology was acquired on a vast scale in “peacetime” as the superpowers competition to enlarge their base of modern refined technology and the disastrous weapons. This arms race created incomparable job for scientists and engineers to produce deadly weapons of war. In response to the Soviet satellite *Sputnik* in 1957, the United States increased its budget to be spend on development and research and developed groundbreaking science education programs.

In the United States, the universities and other scientific research organizations that obtain military research contracts are a chief source of financial support for scientists. Early fiscal assistance for the Strategic Defense Initiative (or Star Wars) was offered to each military service branch, NASA, the Department of Energy, and hundreds of private suppliers.

Supervisors in military industries, with excellent industrial expertise, are regularly assigned with government portfolios and are held responsible for military equipment purchase, assessments and then return to their corporations again. Mostly, it is known as ‘*revolving door*’. (Monroe, 1979). In democratic states, these industries also mold public opinion via advertisements that fastens their products to patriotism. American military industries also fund generously countrywide campaigns of politicians who vote on military budgets, and also bribe Pentagon officers as well.

## **Impact of Media on Foreign Policy Devising in US**

Currently, mass media has explosively developed the interaction between the television journalists and the US foreign policy formulators and made it more vibrant and influential. In

the last few years, the influence of international media has enormously increased. Media molds the US foreign policy in two ways, i.e. substance of US foreign policy and the formulation Process.

On a historic day in 1980, the US political system unaffectedly experienced a great change. For 24 hours, news media technology namely Cable News Network (CNN) and communication satellites were installed due which online news reports were presented electronically with the help of artificial planets. This change influenced highly the public minds. This enabled them to watch fresh and factual images of the ravenous miserable individuals and dead and injured US soldiers. These live and recorded transmissions easily triggered the US citizens to demand their leaders to take action. Media experts and journalists are exercising overwhelming power over the formulation and implementation of US foreign policy.

### **Conclusion**

Foreign policy politics is the course by which the choices of foreign policy stratagems are made. It is much more multifarious than the conventional wisdom depicts. (Jentleson, 2007). The basic patterns in this regard are of the consensus and conflicts, with positive and negative variations of each in terms of their effects on policy making in US. The basic framework of this research paper has laid out for foreign policy politics is a structural one. It has mainly focused the role of principle political institutions involved in foreign policy formulation i.e. the political executive, the nonpolitical executive and the congress. Apart from these nucleus branches of US political system the media, public opinion and some external factors like international organizations and international law are given much space in influencing foreign policy formulation process in US.

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