

Lecture No (8).

Foreign Policy and Security

Foreign policy and security are practical international problems. They are not the same problem, but they are related, as the question of how to secure the national interest is a foreign policy decision. It is the problem of deciding on a policy, and knowing policies other states will decide on.

What economic, diplomatic, and security policy is in the best interest of the state? What foreign policy needs to be taken in response to the changing policies of foreign powers? These are practical problems.

Foreign policy is, in a manner of looking at it, the problem of deciding on what relations one state will have and seek with other state and non-state actors. Creating relations of alliance, war, or economic integration is the foreign policy realm. Creating these relations in a way that works together and benefits the national interest is the practical problem.

Formulating a working policy, in a system of multiple simultaneously shifting policies, is difficult and can lead to disasters. The policy of “appeasement”, for instance, by Britain towards Fascist Germany,

granted minor concessions for the interest of peace, but in the end, did not achieve its goal. Was the policy misguided? Could a different set of policies avoided the Second World War? Will a set of policies going on today lead to a third world war?

International security is the search for safety by states. Preventing the ability of state and non-state actors to harm or E-International Relations
ISSN 2053-8626 Page 5/12 Student Feature - A Brief Introduction to the Study of International Relations Written by A.C. McKeil jeopardize the safety of the state is the problematic of international security. The technologies of security are numerous and increasingly elaborate, ranging from walls to cyber armies and thermonuclear arsenals. The problem is partly one of developing and acquiring these technologies, but the practical problem of security is more about the question of where to direct these technologies – which people, things, and states to direct the security apparatus towards. Not every thing can be secured from every thing. One of the best ideas to be produced from the study of IR, that every student should know, is the idea of the “security dilemma”. This is the idea that

when states adopt a policy and acquire technologies to increase their security, this makes other states insecure so bringing these other state to respond by increasing their security, and so back and forth, secure and insecure. If, for example, one state acquires a nuclear weapon, the other will too. Stuck in the dilemma, can they ever be safe? This question of direction also makes the security problem a political problem. What is and is not an issue of national security, who and what is put into a security relation with the state, is a highly political and complicated problem. Much of this political problem concerns the extent to which security impinges on other goods – democratic liberties, for instance. It also intersects with identity troubles, where the security apparatus is directed towards patriarchal, racist, and class based domination and exclusion. Who and what is safe from who in this game of national security?