

## APPENDIX A10 WHAT INFLUENCES FOREIGN POLICY?

Making foreign policy is a matter of making decisions and choosing among options and priorities. One of these decisions is what goals a state should pursue in its relations with other states. A plan is then drawn up to show how these goals are to be achieved. This is not a precise plan detailing each step of the way, but rather a broad outline of how a state's goals can best be achieved. When a specific decision has to be made, such as whether or not to allow foreign military bases into your country, this decision is made with foreign policy goals in mind. Throughout this decision-making process, there are influences or factors which will affect which goals are set, and what policies are chosen.

Trying to determine what specific influences shape particular foreign policy decisions is a difficult task. If, however, one looks at foreign policy as a more long-term plan or pattern of behaviour, it is easier to pick out influences which have affected policy over time. Some of these influences which affect the foreign policy of all states are:

- 1) **Geography**--Where is the state located? Who are its neighbours? What natural resources does a state possess? If a state is an island, it does not have to fear a land invasion. If a state is surrounded by several neighbours, it may well have to consider the possibility of invasion.
- 2) **Public Opinion**--In democratic countries where people have a choice of who will govern, it is clear that public opinion has some influence on foreign policy. If the public has strong views about an issue in foreign policy (for instance, whether or not the country should have nuclear weapons), leaders will pay attention because they want to be elected again. Even in countries where one cannot choose the government, some attention must be paid to public opinion. No government will last if it does not maintain a sufficient amount of support with at least some of the population.
- 3) **Policies of Other States**--A state's foreign policy must take into account the foreign policy of other states. This is especially true if another state's foreign policy has a direct impact on your country. For instance, if your neighbour's goal is to dominate and control all surrounding countries, you would have to react. You might respond by making security the most important goal of your foreign policy and carry out this goal by building a large and powerful army.
- 4) **Power**--When one speaks of power in the relationships between states, it often means military power. Some people argue that the greatest influence on foreign policy is power and the ability to force or influence other countries to accept your demands. There are, however, other ways to measure and think about power. Power can be measured by the strength of an economy, the degree of sophistication of a country's technology or

even the size of the population. The success of a country's foreign policy will be influenced by the country's power, and the power of the countries it must deal with.

- 5) History--Previous experience dealing with other countries is another influence. This experience provides leaders with ideas as to which countries they should beware of, which countries they share common interests with, and what problems might arise in the future.
- 6) Economics--What does the state produce? Who are its major trading partners? What industries dominate the economy? Who owns these industries? The economy and the wealth and jobs it produces for people is a major concern of political leaders. Since most economies depend on trade with other countries in order to grow, foreign policy usually takes into account the impact a particular decision may have on the economy.
- 7) Ideology--Ideology is a system of beliefs. These are important beliefs which affect many aspects of a person's and state's behaviour. For instance, the dominant ideology in Canada is based on such ideas as democracy, free enterprise, and the equal treatment of everyone before the law. An ideology helps one interpret events and decide how to react to them.
- 8) Views of Leaders--The personal views of those people responsible for making foreign policy will have an influence on that policy. These views will be blended in with those influences mentioned above.