

National Interest and Foreign Policy: The Case of Kosovo

MSc. Alfred Marleku

E-mail: alfredmarleku@gmail.com

Doi:10.5901/mjss.2013.v4n3p415

Abstract

The aim of this paper is to provide an account of the concept of national interest and, at the same time, to examine choices that Kosovo confronts as it seeks to define its national interests. The first part of the papers offers a short theoretical overview of the concept of national interest. Whereas, in the second part is outlined a model of a Kosovo's platform/strategy of national interest. Types of national interest, upon which the paper is based, are as defined by Hans J. Morgenthau. The paper argues that, if a country has not defined properly its national interests, then its foreign politics is not properly structured, and as a consequence, it is uncompetitive in international area. Therefore, in order to avoid ad hoc approach of conducting foreign politics, Kosovo must established its strategy/platform of national interests which, before everything, is based on the principles of democratic state whose aim is to protect the interests of its citizens and to consolidate democracy in the region.

Keywords: national interest; Kosovo; strategy/platform of national interest; foreign policy.

1. Introduction

All countries, whether they are small or big, need to build their foreign policy upon the platform of national interest. In absence of an articulated platform/strategy of national interest, this paper undertakes an in depth analysis on the Kosovo's national interests and, based on the theories developed by Hans J. Morgenthau, suggests a version of Kosovo's Platform/Strategy of National Interest. According to Morgenthau national interests are conceptualised in four main categories: based on their importance they are distinguished in *vital* and *secondary interests*; based on the duration, *temporary* and *permanent interests*; based on specificity they are distinguished in *specific* and *general interests* and lastly, based on compatibility national interests can be *complementary* and *conflicting*. In doing so, the paper hypothesis that if a state does not have a consolidated Platform/Strategy of National Interest which reflects values and interests of its society, then its foreign policy would be guided not by a rational and systematic foreign policy, but rather by an issue by issue approach.

The paper approaches its topic by first outlining what main authors of IR have to say about national interest, focused mainly on how Hans J. Morgenthau – one of the authors of IR representing Realist theory – divides and defines levels of national interest. The paper then, in a second part, provides a version of Kosovo's national interest.

National interest – theoretical background

"England has neither permanent friends nor permanent enemies; she has permanent interests"
~Lord Palmerston~

The term of "national interest" has been used by statesman and scholars since the founding the nation-states to describe the aspiration and goals of sovereign entities in the international area (Neuchterlein, 1976). The history of the concept 'interest', conceived as a diplomatic tool, traces back its roots at the earliest stage of the evolution of the modern state in Italy and England around sixteenth and seventeenth century. One of the earliest thinkers of the modern theories in this regard is Nicolo Machiavelli. In his most famous book, *The Prince*, Machiavelli predicted the emergence of interest as an organizing principle for thought on international relations, in two important ways: first, the prince has to know when to not use the power, as well as when to use it (Clinton, 1994). You may have splendid moral goals, argued Machiavelli, but without sufficient power and the willingness to use it, you will accomplish nothing (Roskin, 1994). Another scholar who contributed to the national interest approach is Clausewitz. According to him, all state behaviour is motivated by it needs to survive and prosper. "To safeguard its interests the states must rationally decide to go to war. Ultimately war, however, if foolish, for it serves no national interest" (Clausewitz, 1976, p. 88).

Most of the books dealing with international relations treated national interest and contain definitions of it. Furthermore, there are scholars who have written entire book on this subject, such as: Hans Morgenthau, Charles Beard, Joseph Frankel etc. For this reason, there is no accepted definition on the national interest among scholars. In the simplest form national interest is defined as the perceived needs and desire of one sovereign state in relation to other sovereign states comprising the external environment (Neuchterlein, 1976). In addition to this, the concept of 'national interest' is the most used concept in all departments of international relations everywhere. "It seems crisp, clear, objective: what's good for nation as a whole in international affairs. (What's good for a nation as a whole in domestic affairs is the *public* interest" (Roskin, 1994, p. 1).

1.1 Morgenthau and levels of national interest

Hans J. Morgenthau saw two levels of national interest: *the vital (primary)* and the *secondary*. According to him, to preserve the first, which concern the fundamental physical existence of the state, there can be no compromise or hesitation about going to war. All nations must defend these interests at any price, he continues. He is sure that vital national interests are relatively easy to define for every state security as a free and independent nation and protection of institutions, people, and fundamental values in most of the cases are perceived as vital for each country, be it small or large (1962). On the other hand, secondary interests, those over which one may seek to negotiate or compromise, are harder to be defined. Typically, they fall outside of the first category and represent no threat to state sovereignty. Potentially, Morgenthau believes that these interests can grow in the minds of statesman until they seem to be vital (Roskin, 1994).

In addition to this, Morgenthau – and other realist scholars too – distinguishes between *temporary* and *permanent* interests (Morgenthau, 1952), *specific* and *general* interests, and *complementary* and *conflicting* interests (Roskin, 1994). Permanent interests are relatively constant over a long period of time. Variable or temporary interests are what a national chooses to regard as its national interest at any particular time. General interests are those that a country applies in a positive manner to a large geographic area, to a large number of nations, or in several specific fields. Specific interests are closely defined in time or space and often are the logical outgrowth of general interests (Nitoiu, 2009).

Three kinds of adjectives are needed in order to describe the national interest. These adjectives can be described as: primary, permanent and specific, or secondary, temporary and general. Defence of human rights in a distant land, for example, might be permanent, general and secondary. "That is if you have a long-term commitment to human rights, but without any quarrel with a specific country, certainly not one that would damage your overall relations or weaken your power" (Roskin, 1994, p. 5).

Kosovo's national interests

Levels of National Interests developed by Hans J. Morgenthau are used and adopted accordingly to construct Kosovo's National Interests. In order to clarify these levels, a table below is constructed. The table is adopted from the table designed by the Michael G. Roskin on his famous study: *National Interest: Form Abstraction to Strategy*.

Table: Types of National Interest¹

National Interest		
Importance	Vital	Protecting the territorial integrity and successfully overcoming challenges of the transition
	Secondary	Protection of Kosovo's citizens abroad
Duration	Temporary	Support for United States in its political undertakings around the globe
	Permanent	Establishing friendly and cooperation relationships with its neighbours
Specificity	Specific	Strong and close relationships with United states of America
	General	Contributing in the consolidation of democracy in South Eastern Europe
Compatibility	Complementary	Improving/normalizing relations with Republic of Serbia
	Conflicting	Memorandum of the Serbian Academy of Science and Arts on ethnic cleansing on Kosovo

¹ The table is adapted from the table designed by: Michael G. Roskin, *National Interest: Form Abstraction to Strategy* (Strategic Studies Institute, USA, 1994), 6.

1.2 Vital and Secondary Interest

Vital interest of a country, according to Morgenthau, concerns the nation's physical, political and cultural identity. Based on this explanation, vital (primary) interest of Kosovo is its survival as a state within its constituted borders and to deal successfully with challenges of transition. The immediate threat to Kosovo's survival is largely internal in character. This appears to be a matter of domestic politics and internal organisation, however viewed through the lenses of the national power and national security, this vital interest can have significant implications in Kosovo's foreign policy and its place in the international realm too. The principle preserving Kosovo's independence and territorial integrity within its constituted borders, projecting stability and fight in defence of its interests against perceived external threats is vital interest which should be considered as a foundation stone of the platform on Kosovo National Interest. Therefore, the Kosovo's foreign policy should always be committed to the protection of this vital interest. This means that, Kosovo institutions should be the only legislative and executive authority within its territory, by being independent from any legal authority of other states, but always in accordance and by respecting international law (Gruda, 2003).

On the other hand, according to Morgenthau, secondary interests represent no threat to state sovereignty. However, their importance to the platform of national interest of Kosovo should not be minimized nor marginalized. Secondary interests in time can be converted in vital interest and can represent threat for a country, concludes Morgenthau. If this is translated in the Kosovo's case, these interests have to do, first of all, with the protection of Kosovo citizens abroad. Special attention should be paid to protect the interests of ethnic Albanians living in southern Serbia: Preshevë, Medvegjë, Bujanoc, as well as Albanians living in Republic of Macedonia. While the political situation of Albanians in the Republic of Macedonia is moving slowly toward the improvement, Albanians in Preshevë, Bujanoc and Medvegjë are facing various forms of national discrimination. Total population of Albanians living in these three municipalities is considered to be over 100,000. The Albanian's fundamental and minority right in these municipalities are persistently and systematically violated from Serbia. The population there experience permanent discrimination in education, employment and integration.

In addition to this, Kosovo's Strategy/Platform of National Interest, have to consider very seriously Kosovo's Diaspora. Kosovo is a country with a very large Diaspora community. A common, yet disputed, figure shows that around 800,000 of Kosovo Albanians live abroad, mainly in Germany (300,000) and Switzerland (155,000+?) (Haxhikadria, 2009). The role of Diaspora in supporting the parallel system of governance (school system, health system etc.) during the Milosevic regime in 90's, was vital. Besides, the Diaspora provided crucial support to the liberation struggle of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) during the war of 1998-1999 (Peci, 2007). Kosovo is still significantly depended on the remittances from Diaspora. About 70% of emigrants send to their families in Kosovo (Mustafa, 2007). Statistics shows that seventy percent of emigrants visit Kosovo contributing to increases in aggregate consumption with their spending during the stay (Mustafa, 2007).

Protection interests of Kosovo citizens abroad, in accordance with international norms and standards, creation of necessary consular services as well supporting them to preserve their national and cultural identity (Peci, 2007) must be the *secondary interest* of Kosovo's Strategy of National Interests. Additionally, another issue where the Kosovo must be focused is to consider its Diaspora as a great potential of human resources. In this regard, Kosovo Government with its agencies through the 'Brain Gain' approach must offer the possibility to Kosovar professionals and businessmen living abroad to return and invest in Kosovo. "Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other relevant Kosovo authorities need to change their attitude and provide feasible policies that will transform Kosovar communities abroad from a donation mechanism into a credible partner in the economic development of Kosovo" (Peci, 2007, p. 22).

1.3 General and Specific Interests

Essential part of the framework of general interests for Kosovo is the consolidation of democracy in South Eastern Europe (SEE). The system of democratic regimes has started to be implemented in most of the countries of SEE. However, the installed democracy in the countries of this region is still fragile and highly sensitive to external actors and factors too. Taking into the consideration these circumstances, Kosovo and its institutions dealing with foreign policy, should play constructive role in the consolidation of the democracy, respectively in the consolidation of democratic system of governance in SEE. This task is not easy considering the fact that many countries in the region, not to a distant past, used to have dictatorial regimes which presented threat for the stability of the region itself and beyond. Some of these countries used to fight with each other for more than a decade. Therefore, the conditions for deployment, and as a consequence, consolidation of democracy in this region are not so suitable. In this regard, priority should be given to

economic development and its recovery. Economic development would serve as a catalyst for accelerating the democratization of the region. Without free and developed economy, the long term objectives for consolidation of democracy and integration into the North-Atlantic structures of SEE countries can hardly be achieved.

One of the small states foreign policy behaviours which authors identified is to rely on superpowers mostly for protection, partnerships and resources (Hey, 2003). According to Robert Keohane, small power usually recognize that it cannot obtain security by use of its own capabilities, for this reason it must rely fundamentally on the aid of other larger states to do so (1969). Usually this relationship between smaller states and larger states can be achieved by establishing alliance with each other. "Typically, small states seeks alliances in order to increase their security on the basis of the major power guarantees to protect their territories and populations against military aggression" (Krause & Singer, 2001, p. 18). Considering insecure and limited capacities and resources in having a consolidated, independent and powerful foreign policy, specific interest, within the platform of the national interest of Kosovo as a small state, should be in maintaining strong and permanent relationships with the United States of America. This does not mean not to maintain close relations with Europe, because one of the Kosovo's main objectives is to become member of European Union. United States helped Kosovo to be liberated from Serbian occupation and to accomplish its aspiration of becoming independent country. Therefore, Kosovo with all the possessing capacities must support United States in its political undertakings around the world. By doing so, Kosovo will challenge seriously the theory of Samuel P. Huntington, "Clash of Civilization", according to which world after the Cold War will be characterized by conflict between civilizations, particularly between Islam and Christian civilizations (Huntington, 1996). Even though most of the Kosovo citizens belong to the religion of Islam, Kosovo will be lined up in defence of western civilization. This would prove once again the pro western orientation of Kosovo as a small state.

1.4 Complementary Interests

Two countries, even allies, seldom have identical national interests. However, the best situation is that their interests will be complementary. Morgenthau defines complementary interests between countries as not identical interest that countries may share, but as interests which countries are capable of forming the basis for agreement on specific issues. This assumption is explained in the best manner by the example below.

"The United States and Albania, for instance, may have had a common interest in opposing Serbian "ethnic cleansing" but the U.S. interest is a general, temporary and secondary one concerning human rights and regional stability. The Albanian interest is a specific, permanent and possibly vital one of forming a Greater Albania that would include Serbian-held Kosovo with its Albanian Majority. Our [United States] interests may run parallel for a time, but we must never mistake Albanian interests for U.S. interests" (Roskin, 1994, p. 6).

Complementary interest within the platform of Kosovo's national interest is the improvement/normalization of relationships with Republic of Serbia. This step would be reasonable for many reasons. Within the southern Serbia (Preshevë Valley) lives a large number Albanians, their social and political conditions and opportunities would be improved significantly if Kosovo and Serbia have normal relationships with each other. The improvement of relations between these two countries (Kosovo and Serbia), would have impact in making the region more peaceful and secure. Since these two states are neighbouring countries, economic cooperation between them would be inevitable. The establishment of economical relation and cooperation should proceed with the establishment and the improvement of political relations. Beside, the economic development of South Easter Europe countries is considered as a precondition for integration into the European Union and other Euro-Atlantics structures.

1.5 Conflicting Interests

Even though often happens that countries have some interests that are complementary with other countries, nevertheless there are cases where – duo to the fact that countries see things differently – interests might be conflicting. For instance, when NATO members cooperate to block the Soviet threat, but clash over who will lead the alliance (Roskin, 1994). Conflicting interests, Morgenthau argues, are those interests for which there can be no cooperation. In this context, within the platform of Kosovo's national interest, conflicting interest is the "Memorandum of Serbian Academy of Science and Arts" on Kosovo ethnic cleansing, which document is still part of the Serbian official politics. This Memorandum is formulated by the major ideologist of Serbia – Vaso Cubrilovic, whereas is widely promoted by the most well known Serbian academic – Dobrica Cosic (Islami, 2010).

Official politics of Serbia must publicly denounce and renounce this Memorandum. It is very difficult to have good and stable relationships between Kosovo and Serbia, as long as Belgrade's official politics is based on the principles of this Memorandum and on the principles derived from it. The abolishment of Memorandum is a prerequisite for the establishment of bilateral relations between Kosovo and Serbia. After all, the existence of this Memorandum itself is meaningless. Aspirations for Euro Atlantic integration and the existence of a Memorandum which promotes ethnic cleansing of Kosovo Albanians, are two directions diametrically opposed with each other. It is inconceivable that a country which declares to be democratic, to have territorial claims toward a neighbouring state.

Conclusion

The results of this thesis have confirmed the hypothesis that: if a state does not have a consolidated Platform/Strategy of National Interest which reflects values and interests of its society, then its foreign policy would be not guided by a rational and systematic foreign policy, but rather by an issue by issue approach. Kosovo institutions dealing with the formulation of foreign policy have failed to develop a Platform/Strategy of National Interest. This document with a high importance, which should reflect interests of Kosovo's citizens and values of Kosovo society, will serve as a guide for decision-makers to identify properly interests and priorities of Kosovo abroad and will avoid the tendency in taking actions in foreign policy based on the issue by issue and day by day approach, but would create sufficient condition for a general hierarchy of a reasonable, systematic and rational formulated interests which would determine Kosovo's foreign policy behaviour with the final aim of improving Kosovo's position in international arena.

References

- Haxhikadrija, A. (2009). *Assessing the Role of Diaspora on Kosovo's Development*. Luzern: Forum for Democratic Initiative.
- Clausewitz, C. (1976). *On War*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976.
- Nitoiu, C. (2009). The European Union Brings a Balance of Power in the Black Sea Region. Vol. 9, No. 3., *Romanian Journal of European Affairs*. pp. 54-55.
- Clinton, D. (1994). *The Two Faces of National Interest*. Louisiana; Louisiana State University Press.
- Neuchterlein, D. (1976) National Interest and Foreign Policy: A conceptual Framework for Analysis and Decision-making, Vol. 2, No. 3, *British Journal of International Studies*. p. 246.
- Morgenthau, H. (1952). Another 'Great Debate': The National Interest of the United States. Vol. 46. No. 4., *The American Political Science Review*. p. 973.
- Morgenthau, H. (1962). *The Impasse of American Foreign Policy*. Chicago; Chicago, University of Chicago Press.
- Islami, H. (2010). *Nga Ideja Deri te realizimi i Spastrimeve Etnike të Shqiptarëve*, [Online] Available: <http://www.forumshqiptar.com/showthread.php?t=30381> (October 2, 2010).
- Hey, J. (2003). *Small States in World Politics: Explaining Foreign Policy Behaviour*. Colorado; Lynne Rienner.
- Peci, L. (2007). Kosovo's Foreign Policy: Strategic factors, Objectives and Challenges. *Kosovo's Foreign Policy: Kosovo's Post Status Foreign Policy*. Prishtina; KFOS. pp. 9-55.
- Roskin, M. (1994). *National Interest: Form Abstraction to Strategy*. USA; Strategic Studies Institute.
- Mustafa, M. (2007). *Diaspora and Migration Policies*. Prishtina; Forum 2015.
- Keohane, O.R. (1969). Lilliputians' Dilemma: Small States in International Politics. Vol. 23, No.2, *International Organization*. pp. 291-310.
- Huntington, S. P. (1996). *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. New York; A Touchstone Book: Simon & Schuster.
- Krause, V. & Singer, D. (2001). Minor Powers, Alliance, and Armed Conflict: Some Preliminary Patterns. in Reiter, E. & Gartner, H. (Eds.), *Small States and Alliances*. (pp. 15-25). New York; Physica-Verlag Heidelberg.
- Grudah, Z. (2003). *E Drejta Ndërkombëtare Publike*, Prishina; Koha.

