The Negative Impact of Current Foreign Relations Practices and Proposed Reforms

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According to Peter Nadin, a writer for the Australian Quarterly, the United Nations "has seen an almost 400% increase in membership since 1945" (Nadin, 2019). Nadin asserts that this increase in membership has led to polarity, with each state wanting to promote its own interests (Nadin, 2009). Individual interests, and the desire to uphold these, result in foreign policy practices centered around personal gain rather than the benefit of the global community. These practices underscore the antithetical nature of current foreign policies, as instead of furthering United Nations (UN) goals of upholding positive international interactions, these attitudes result in the perpetuation of harm towards other nations and their citizens. The issues discussed in this paper will focus on the cultural, social, and ethical implications of foreign policy practices based on personal gain. Furthermore, feasible solutions to these problems will be outlined as well. Now, more than ever, it is of paramount importance to reform harmful foreign relations policies. Throughout the past century, these policies have resulted in countless global and regional conflicts, bringing about unparalleled destruction. To bring about peace, and to realign with UN goals, these practices must be carefully scrutinized. The need for feasible reforms to foreign relations practices is more evident than ever, and to create tailored solutions both successes and failures of foreign relations policies must be considered, especially how the negative impact they have had on cultures and individuals throughout history can be avoided in the future.

The Negative Impact of Foreign Policies on Individual Rights

Oftentimes, the implementation of harmful, selfish foreign policies can encroach upon the rights of individuals in other countries. During the 1900s, the United States and the Soviet Union supported opposing groups in wars in other nations, aiming to further their own respective ideologies. According to Ruairidh Wood, who has a security studies degree from Birmingham City University, "the proxy war…disregarded reconstruction of the country…provided justification for a defensive jihad…" (Wood, 2019). The proxy war in question was fought in Afghanistan, and led to a power vacuum that was filled by radicalist forces, like the Taliban, which capitalized on the idea of *jihad,* a holy war for protecting Islam. The Taliban then enacted policies centered around oppressing women and suppressing dissent. The U.S. actively chose to support and

remove dictators based on what was most beneficial to them, not the citizens of other nations, leading to these human rights violations. Other countries have acted similarly, such as China, which became involved in Africa due to its need for natural resources. According to Adaora Osondu-Oti, who is part of the Department of International Relations and Diplomacy at Afe Babalola University, "...the Chinese had banned union activity and began paying Zambian employees less than…minimum wage…(French 2004)" (French, 2004, as cited in Osondu-Oti, 2016). These statements highlight that China's labour laws and working conditions are abominable, and many workers' rights have been blatantly violated. Additionally, it is mentioned that "Chinese investment in Sudan's oil sector…helped Omar Al-Bashir's government…fund ethnic cleansing…" (Osondu-Oti, 2016). Funding and fueling ethnic crises is a clear violation of human rights guidelines, and basic ethics. Foreign policies based on funding personal gain over common good can only have one outcome: encroaching upon the rights of others.

The Negative Impact of Foreign Policies on Cultural Principles

However, human rights violations are not the only negative result of selfish foreign policies, as many such agendas result in the erasure of cultural principles. Modern-day scholars argue that Africa is experiencing neo-imperialism, where other countries are imposing their ideals and influence upon the continent. According to Enoch Ndem Okon and Victor Ojakorotu, part of the faculty at the University of Calabar and North-West University, respectively, "...many Africans see traditional religious practices as abominable…The celebration of Christmas, Valentine and Easter are more prominent…" (Okon & Ojakorotu, 2018). Africa has had a long-standing history of imperialism, stemming from the Scramble for Africa, when nations entered the continent for natural resources. These foreign policy practices encouraged imposition of Western cultural norms, and the continuation of such poor practices have resulted in extreme cultural erasure of African practices. Furthermore, Bangladesh has also grappled with imperialism, specifically in terms of the spread of the English language. According to Syeda Rumnaz Imam's paper, presented at the Annual Meeting of the Comparative and International Education Society, "The promotion of English as standard…enforced by

international examinations…is in direct continuity with the colonial period" (Carnoy, 1974, as cited in Imam, 2005). Western perspectives are introduced through the implementation of Western diction and language, shaping a generation that is out-of-touch with its culture and history. Imam also mentions that, "...most of the English-educated graduates cannot read or write in their mother tongue" (Imam, 2005). Once again, native language is erased and replaced with Western terminology, representing a cycle of cultural erasure that stems from perceived superiority of the Western world and its ideas, a direct result of imperialistic foreign policies. This results in a loss of cultural identity to a system focused on conformity.

Instances of Successful Foreign Policy

As we look towards reforming current systems of foreign policy, it is important to consider past successes as frameworks. According to Peter Nadin, during the Cold War, "The parties…never ceased talking to each other. Indeed, the Council allowed for…the end to the Iran-Iraq War…" (Nadin, 2019). Effective dialogue, and cooperation aimed at de-escalation for the benefit of the world order were facilitated by the work of the UN. Additionally, "Chapter XI of the UN Charter…is a testament to decolonisation" (Nadin, 2019). This Chapter states that member states must work towards ensuring the development of free political institutions in territories, encouraging freedom, not imperialism. Furthermore, in Africa's Sahel, agricultural issues have led to violent conflict. According to Gabriel Delsol's report for the International Peace Institute, "UN peacekeeping missions…have directly provided mediation support…built the capacity of host governments to prevent and manage conflict…" (Delsol, 2020). These missions focus on cooperation and providing support to other governments, similar to what the Council did during the Cold War. These are key principles of a foreign policy focused on universal welfare, and this line of thinking shapes solutions to reform harmful foreign policy practices.

Proposed Solutions and Conclusion

The ability to create reform and make change lies in two tenets: policy reform, and awareness. For one, education about global views must be promoted, encouraging the incorporation of inclusive perspectives. Carla Koppell, Reuben Brigety, and Jamille Bigio, who all have extensive experience in international affairs, suggest that, "Schools should ensure that all students are sensitized to the importance of…equity, and inclusion…to global peace…" (Koppell, Brigety, & Bigio, 2021). This article argues the first step towards change begins with future generations, who will shape practices for years to come. By creating more inclusive curricula for international affairs, students will be more aware of diverse perspectives, and will be better equipped to ensure future practices focus on the common good, thereby avoiding the destructive effects of harmful policies on other nations, as described by Wood and Osondu-Oti. Awareness, to create tangible change, must then be put into practice through policy reforms. According to a UNESCO report about the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, which aimed to preserve cultural practices, "For the Greenlandic Inuit, the 2021 inscription of their drum dancing and singing…was also an open invitation to other Inuit communities in other countries to join the inscribed element…" (UNESCO, 2024). This allows groups to strengthen their cultural identity by joining others in common cultural practices. This encourages the celebration of cultural values, countering the problems described by Imam, Okon, and Ojakorotu. Overall, as we look towards the future, awareness, increased policy reform, and historical instances should guide forthcoming foreign policies. Policies based upon only one nation's welfare result in ethical violations and cultural erasure, destroying communities. For a better and brighter future, we must shift away from a mindset of self-gain, to one of the common good.

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