

SUBJECT: POLITICAL SCIENCE III
COURSE: BA LLB SEMESTER III
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MODULE: MODULE V, BALANCE OF POWER

Structure:

- Methods of maintaining balance of power

Methods of maintaining balance of power

The following are the ways or methods of maintaining the balance of power.

1. Alliances and counter alliances:

Alliances are a necessary function of the balance of power operating with a multistage system. The rival groups in the balance of power system have three choices in order to maintain and improve their relative power positions.

i). They can increase their own power, ii) they can add to their power the power of the other nations iii) they can withhold the power of other nations from the opponents. If they make the first choice, they embark upon an armament race. If they make second and third choices, they purpose a policy of alliance.

Alliances generally lead to counter alliances. When an alliance is specifically or indirectly directed against some states, it is quite natural that they will not remain as silent spectators. For example the triple alliance of 1882 between Germany, Austro Hungary and Italy led to a rival alliance, triple entente 1907 between Britain, France and Russia. Alliances may be both offensive and defensive. While an offensive alliance seeks to upset the balance in favour of its members a defensive alliance aims at restoring peace.

2. Armament and disarmament:

Power is a relative term which is determined in the context of a particular nation or a group of nations. In the event of an impending danger from the enemy, every nation tries to maximise its power. The direct way of maintaining the balance is to increase one's own power in relation to power of one's opponents. When there is a great disparity between power position of two nations, it is not possible for the weaker one to increase its own power to the level of its rival. This method of maintaining the balance can be resorted to only when there is a rough parity in the power position the rivals.

Like armament, disarmament can restore a balance of power one can succeed in keeping its rival disarmed one preserves the balance in one's favour. But in practice disarmament as such has rarely been resorted to except in case of defeated powers on the conclusion of general war. For example the effort on the part of the allied powers after the first world war was to keep Germany permanently weak.

3. Acquisition of territory :

Acquisition of fresh territories is also a method of balance of power. This is made possible either by occupying neighbouring territories by Israel is considered by the latter as essential for its security and the preservation of the balance of power.

4. Compensation and partition:

A state increases its power by acquisition of new territories and thus balance is tilted in its favour. When such things occurs the other side also takes immediate steps to increase own power in compensation in order to preserve the balance. When some powerful nations occupy the territories of small nations, the powerful nations cannot tolerate this act. They place a condition either to share its under such conditions the powerful rival nations divide small nations swallow their share of prey.

The partition of Poland and later on its division between Russia, Prussia and Austria in a well known example of the Policy of compensation and partition. This principles is seen in the division of Germany, Korea and Vietnam. Each great power becomes a beneficiary and weak state their victim.

5. Creation of buffer states:

The creation of a buffer state is also a technique of maintaining the balance of power. A buffer sate is a natural zone sandwiched between two powerful nations. It is usually a weak state. Its function is to keep two giants apart and thus reduce the chances of friction between them. Poland has been the traditional buffer between Russia and Germany. Tibet has been buffer between China and British India. Thus the buffer state acts as a balancing force between the two powerful rivals because neither of them can allow the other to absorb the buffer. But the balance can also be maintained if the two giants decide to decide the buffer zone between them. Buffer states have been often vanished this way.

Objects of balance of power

The advocates of the balance of power have suggested the following main purposes of the balance of power.

1. Preservation of independent of states

The balance of power aims at such distribution of power among the state, that no single state or group of states becomes so powerful as to enforce its will upon the others. The balance pf power helps to achieve stability nations to conquer or acquire control over small and weaker nations and they would probably be swallowed up of one ambitious state were allowed to achieve great superiority of power. But if there happen to be two or more powerful states none of them will tolerate the other to become more powerful. Each of the big powers will see to it that none of them commits aggression against the small and weak powers. Taylor remarks “No one state has ever been strong enough to eat up all the rest and

the mutual jealousy of the great powers has preserved even the small states, which could not have preserved themselves”. Thus the security and independence of all the states is assured.

2. Preservation of peaces:

Between peace and security, security will get priority over peace, because security is the first condition of peace. If security is in danger , peace shall have to be scarified. If big powers start absorbing small ones first and second world wars. Advocates of the balance of power believed that the balance of power causes peace and so long as the balance is maintained, peace is assured. If balance as maintained neither there will be aggressions, nor was and therefore peace would automatically be established.

3. Maintenance of international law

Balance of power is essential to the maintenance of international law. Regarding the relation between international law and balance of power Oppenheim writes “Balance of power is an indispensable condition of the very existence of international law. A law of nations can exist only if there can be an equilibrium , a balance of power between the members of the family of nations”.