

HSST POLITICAL SCIENCE

Part V: INTERNATIONAL POLITICS

MODULE III: LIMITATIONS OF NATIONAL POWER

NATIONAL POWER

Power

- “Power is the power of man on others” and as a “man’s control over the minds and actions of other men.” **Morgenthau**
- “Power is the capacity to impose one’s will on others by reliance on effective sanctions in case of non-compliance.” **Schwarzenberger**

National Power

- National Power is the **ability or capability of a nation to secure the goals and objectives of its national interests in relation with other nations.**
- It involves the capacity to use force or threat of use of force or influence over others for securing the goals of national interest.
- It is an important component in international politics.

Definition of National Power

- **Padelford and Lincoln** define, “National Power is that combination of power and capability of a state which the state uses for fulfilling its national interests and goals.”
- **Hartman** defines, “National Power denotes the ability of a nation to fulfill national goals. It tells us as to how much powerful or weak a particular nation is in securing its national goals.”
- **Organski** defines, “National Power is the ability of a nation to influence the behavior of others in accordance with its own ends. Unless a nation can do this, she may be large, she may be wealthy, she may even be great but she is not powerful”.
- **Charles** defines “The ability to make a man to do what one wants and not to do what one does not want”

Factors of National Power

- National Power of a nation is dependent upon several factors which are together called the components or elements or determinants of national power.
- **Frankel** calls these as **capabilities or capability** factors. It is also termed as ‘**Determinants of National Power/ single factor or element is a determinant of National Power.**
- **Hans Morgenthau** has classified these into two parts **permanent and temporary elements.**
- **Organski** has preferred to classify these into the **natural and social determinants.**

- Palmer and Perkins, Charles O. Lerche, Abdul Said, Theodore A, Coulombis and James H. Wolfe have classified these elements into two parts; **Tangible and Intangible Elements**
- The former category includes those elements which can be assessed in **quantitative terms and latter** such elements as are **ideational and psychological and cannot be quantified**.
- Geography, raw material, natural resources, population and technology are the tangible elements, whereas ideology, morale, leadership, personality, organizational efficiency and quality of diplomacy are the intangible elements.

Elements of National Power

1. Geography

2. Natural Resources

- Raw Materials
- Food

3. Population

4. Economic Development and Industrial Capacity

5. Technology

6. Military Preparedness

7. Ideology

8. Leadership

9. Organization and Quality of Government

10. National Character and Morale

11. Diplomacy

1. Geography

- It is the most important elements of National Power. Geography is the most stable, tangible, permanent and natural element. Its importance as a factor of national power can be judged from the fact that Geo-political scientists, like Moodie, Spykman, Haushofer, Mackinder and others, regard Geography as the determinant of international politics.
- The importance of geography in international relations **Napoleon**, observed. **“The foreign policy of a country is determined by its geography.”** Geography is however neither an independent determinant of national power nor of foreign policy. It is just an element of National Power.

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- To understand Nature and Role of Geography as an Element of National Power we need to understand importance of **Maps, size, location, climate, topography and boundaries** of a state.
- **Maps** are always geographical in nature. These are sometimes used by nations to justify a particular course of policy or action as well as to reject the views of other nations.
- **Size** is another geographical element of national power. The large size of a country can accommodate a large population, offer better natural resources and raw materials, and can be more helpful in the defense of the country. A large size can help the country to defend by retreat in the event of an attack. It is definitely more, rather very difficult for a state to defeat a big country.
- **Location** of a nation can be as helping as well as a hindering factor for its national power. It determines whether a nation can be a sea-power or not.
- **Climate** determines the food production, economy and even the culture of a nation. It can be a source of big limitation or help for the human capabilities.
- The nature of terrain, together with other geographical elements, **topography** is an important factor of national power. Terrain can influence the power of a state and its potential for offence, defense and growth. A nation with plane and artificial boundaries can be an easy victim of expansionism on the part of a powerful nation.
- **Boundary** is also a geographic factor of national power. Settled and natural boundaries are always a source of friendly and cooperative relations among the nations of a region. Undefined and disputed boundaries are potent sources of conflict which weakens national power

2. Natural Resources

- Natural resources are indeed “**gifts of nature of established utility.**”
- The industrial and military capabilities of a nation as well as its economic well-being are dependent upon the existence of natural resources.
- Self-sufficiency in certain key resources can be a big source of power of a nation. **Natural resources, in the form of minerals, fertile soil, flora and fauna**, through planned exploitation and use always make a nation powerful.
- Role of National Resources as a factor of National Power Morgenthau discuss it in two parts: Raw Materials and Food.
- **Raw Materials:** Raw materials can be further sub-divided into three categories:
 - ✓ **Minerals** - Coal, Petrol, Iron, Copper, Zinc, Tin, Manganese, Uranium etc.
 - ✓ **Natural Products** - Rubber, Jute, Bamboo, Medicinal Plants, Wood Pulp, Wood, Plants, Colors, Varnishes, Forest Products etc., and
 - ✓ **Animal Product** -Milk, Eggs, Meat, Wool, Hides, Feathers, Silk etc.

3. Food

Food indeed is an important element of national power. Food determines policies. The existence of large stocks of food grains and surplus food production can be a source of vital strength of a nation. A nation deficient in food production can rarely become a major power. “Nations self-sufficient in food are better placed than nations which import food.”-Morgenthau

4. Population

It is a basic element which affects national power is population. Manpower continues to be a key factor which determines the industrial and military capacities of a nation and its status as a power in international relations. Manpower alone can exploit the natural resources and utilize these for the satisfaction of national needs. Geographical hindrances can be overcome by men. Scientific and industrial development cannot be accomplished without men.

5. Economic Development and Industrial Capacity

- Economic power is a vitally important part of national power of a nation because it is the means for military power and the basis for welfare, prosperity and development of its people. A nation with developed, healthy and growing economy alone can be a great power in world politics. Effective economic organization and planning are essential qualities of a powerful nation. Poverty is always a source of limitation of power. It is this factor which has been largely forcing most of the developing countries of the Third World to live with neo-colonialism.
- Industrial capacity of a nation is thus an important factor of national power. Industrial backwardness, despite the possession of raw materials, can be a source of weakness for any nation. The USA, Russia and India have almost equal coal and iron resources, but some weakness industrial capacity in India has been responsible for her comparatively less powerful position. Since her independence, India has been trying conceitedly to develop her industrial capacity and technology for increasing her power and role in international relations.

6. Technology

Technology is the application of knowledge of science for promoting human welfare. It is the ability to use scientific inventions for the promotion of human welfare. Progress in engineering and industrial production is directly related to the nature and level of technology. It has been the advanced technological ability that has largely contributed to the prosperity and power of the developed countries. The level of technological advancement determines the power-status of a nation. A nation backed by highly developed and advanced technology alone can be recognized as a developed nation.

7. Military Preparedness:

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- Military power is a vitally important part of national power of a state.
- The importance of **military factor as an element of national power** can be judged from the fact that many persons regard these synonymous.
- Military power is not national power; nevertheless it is an important part of national power which contributes to its strength and effectiveness.
- Military preparedness is a background factor for the success of a foreign policy and it is a tangible factor capable of supporting the foreign policy and promoting national interest.

8. Ideology

- **Ideology is an intangible element of national power.** It can be a source of both friendship and enmity in international relations. “Ideas and ideologies are elements of the power of a state.
- **Ideology helps a nation to influence the exercise of its power.**
- The ideology of democratic socialism helped India to establish friendly and cooperative relations with the democratic west and the socialist east.
- It also acted as a source of popular support for the Government of India.

9. Leadership

- **Leadership of a nation is an important human element of national power.** The utilization of man power resources, natural resources, raw materials, technology, industrial capacity, military power and ideology for strengthening the national power of a state is dependent upon the qualities of the leadership that runs the government of the state.
- **The quality of leadership determines the nature and extent of power that a nation can use for securing its national interests.**
- Efficient, devoted and mature leadership can be a source of national power in the sense that a judicious use of power can surely increase the national power and its operational effectiveness. National Power really means the ability of national leaders and decision-makers.

10. Organization and Quality of Government

It is the business of government to coordinate direct, control men and material resources for securing power for fulfilling goals of national interest. A well-organized and **well-functioning democratic government can be an enduring and helpful factor of national power.**

11. National Character and Morale

- National Character is an important but intangible element of national power is national character. **National character is a collective name for referring to the traits of the people, their attitude and aptitude towards work and national needs.** National character undoubtedly influences national power as it manifests qualitative make up of the people in their actual behavior.

- National morale is also an element of national power. **National morale, in the context of national power, refers to ‘the degree of determination with which a nation supports the foreign policy of its government in peace and war, it permeates all activities of a nation, its agriculture and industrial productions as well as its military establishments and diplomatic service.’** (Morgenthau).
- A high and healthy national morale can be a big source of power which can lead to successful use of power for securing the national interest.
- National character and morale are elements of national power but their role can be positive or negative. Further, their evaluation as factors of national power must be done with reference to other human and material factors. The intangibility of these factors particularly, national character must also be kept in mind.

12. Diplomacy

Diplomacy is another important element of national power. Hans J. Morgenthau regards it as the most important, though unstable element of national power. **Diplomacy is the means of foreign policy and as such helps it to achieve better results through judicious hard work and persuasion in international relations.** Success of foreign policy of a nation largely depends upon the quality of Diplomacy that takes it to foreign capitals.

Diplomacy of high quality can bring the ends and means of foreign policy into harmony with the available resources of national power. It can trap the hidden sources of national strength and transform these fully and squarely into political realities.

The role of diplomacy as an element of national power has undergone a big change in contemporary times. **Diplomacy of high quality can effectively contribute towards an effective and successful exercise of national power.**

LIMITATIONS ON NATIONAL POWER

- ✓ Balance of Power
- ✓ International Law
- ✓ International Morality
- ✓ World Public Opinion
- ✓ International Organizations
- ✓ Collective Security:
- ✓ Disarmament and Arms Control

❖ Balance of Power

- Balance of Power is a device of both power management and limitation of power. Its underlying principle is that the power of several equally powerful actors can be a source of limitation on their powers. The major actors should maintain a sort of balance in their power positions.

- No state should try to become unduly powerful as can endanger the balance. If a state becomes or tries to become unduly powerful, another state or states should collectively pool their powers and create a preponderance of power against the offending state. Through use of force or coercion or other devices, these states should act to reduce the power of the threatening state and restore the balance.
- No state should be eliminated completely but the power of the state should be kept under control in the name of 'balance'. Balance of power places restraints upon the states by preventing all attempts at an unjustified increase of power on the part of any member of the balance of power system.
- This concept was used in the 19th century by the major European states for adjusting their relations. This system was successful in preventing the outbreak of any major war during 1815-1914 periods. Currently the device of Balance of Power is used only at the regional or sub-regional level. At the global level it has lost much of its relevance and applicability.

❖ **International Law**

- International Law is the body of rules that the nation-states accept as binding upon them, and which regulates their behavior in international relations.
- It is an important limitation on the power of a nation. It directs and controls the behavior of the nations engaged in international relations.
- International law constitutes a legal framework for the orderly conduct of international relations both in times of peace and war. Backed by common consent, natural law, international morality, world public opinion and its utility, International law acts as a major limitation on the misuse of power by the states. It enunciates the dos and don'ts for the states.
- It declares war as an illegal means for the promotion of interests. It lays down rules for the establishment and conduct of diplomatic relations. Violations of International Law can invoke sanctions against the violating states.
- International Law is a weak law. It is not backed by force. It is also subject to different interpretations. It often fails to meet the pressure exerted by a powerful nation pursuing aggressive nationalism. Its objective is to secure international peace, security and development, by securing orderly international relations through the prevention of use of force, war and violence. However, its weakness as a law, rather half-law, and half-morality, tends to limit its role as a limiting factor of national power.

❖ **International Morality**

- In human behavior in a society is regulated by a set of moral norms or rules, likewise behavior of states in the international environment is limited by International Morality.
- International community accepts certain values-peace, order, equality, goodness, mutual help, respect for life and liberty of all, and respect for Human Rights of all, as right and good values which must be accepted and followed by all states.

- International Morality is “a generally accepted moral code of conduct which nations usually follow in international relations”. It acts as a limitation on the national power of each state.
- It has played a role in strengthening human consciousness against war i.e. against misuse of national power.

❖ World Public Opinion

- It has emerged as an important factor of international relations. The presence of strong global peace movements, strong movements in favor of Nuclear Arms Control and Disarmament, a very strong and healthy global movement for the preservation of Earth’s ecological balance, the environment protection movements, Human Rights protection movements and several other such movements clearly show the presence of a strong World Public Opinion.
- It is now fast emerging as a big limitation on national power.
- World Public Opinion for the protection of Human Rights and Freedoms of all by all the countries has been a source or big influence on the role of national power in international relations.
- World Public Opinion is a limiting factor in itself. It often fails to neutralize or forcefully control strong and aggressive nationalism. It has failed to prevent the US war against Iraq.

❖ International Organizations

- It specifies certain means for pacific settlement of disputes among the member states. It provides for collective security of peace in times of war and aggression .The United Nations constitutes a global platform for the conduct of international relations in a peaceful and orderly manner. Nations are bound by the UN Charter and they are expected to use their powers only in accordance with the dictates of the UN Charter.
- Along with the multipurpose United Nations, there have emerged several well organized international and regional organizations like UNESCO, who, ilo, unicef, which guide, direct and control the actions of their member states in various spheres of activity. Some Regional Organizations also act as a source of limitation on the national power of each member state.
- Living in this age of international interdependence which is characterized by the existence of several powerful non-state actors, the modern nation-state very often finds its power limited. This fact has also been a source a big limitation, or check against the misuse of power by the states. However, the continued love and respect for sovereignty and nationalism continues to keep the role of international organization and non- state actors limited.

❖ Collective Security

- It is a device of power-management which also acts as a limitation on national power.

- The system of Collective Security is based on the principle that international peace and security is the common objective to be secured by all the states through collective action against any violation by any state or states.
- It is a device of power management and its purpose is to maintain international peace and security by the collective efforts of all the states.

❖ **Disarmament and Arms Control**

- Military power is a formidable dimension of national power and armaments form a formidable part of military power, Arms Control and Disarmament are regarded as devices of limiting the national power.
- Arms Control refers to the control over and limitation or reduction or control of the arms race, particularly the nuclear arms race, through internationally agreed decisions, policies and plans. Disarmament refers to the liquidation, gradually or in one stroke, of the huge stockpiles of arms and ammunition which the nation- states have come to possess till today.
- Arms Control and Disarmament are based on the belief that by eliminating or reducing the possession and production of weapons, the military power of a nation i.e. the national power of the state can be limited.
- Arms Control and Disarmament can be a source of limitation upon the national power of the states. The decision to adopt arms control and limited disarmament due to internal economic necessities has decidedly limited the role of power in contemporary international relations.