

SUBJECT: POLITICAL SCIENCE III

COURSE: BA LLB SEMESTER III

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MODULE: MODULE 3, NATIONAL POWER AND ITS ELEMENTS

Structure:

- Meaning and definitions of National Power
- Various Tangible elements of National Power

NATIONAL POWER

Power has been the epicentre of human relations from the very inception of humanity. Power plays an important role in International relations and it is an essential element of politics. The status of state in the International sphere is determined not by its civilisation or culture but by its physical force. The dictionary meaning of the term power is “that in a person or thing which enables them to act on other persons or things”.

In International relations power may broadly, be defined as the capacity or ability of a states or to control their behaviour for the purpose of promoting its own vital interest. power in the formal sense, according to **Hartmann** means” the strength of capacity that a sovereign state can use to achieve its nation as interests. **George Schwarzenberger** defined it as “the capacity to impose one’s will on others by reliance on effective sanctions in case of none compliance” **Palmer and Perkins** observed “To the totality of a states effectiveness in world politics, we apply the term power”.

Power is a phenomenon of all relationships, and political relationship is no exception to this rule. Power has been defined by **Hans Morgenthau** as "Man's control over minds and actions of other man." But, as minds cannot be seen, power can be determined by the behaviour of individuals and states. In a very broad sense, power has been defined "as the ability or capacity to control others and get them to do what one wants them to do and also to see that they do not do what one does not want them to do." In international relations, power is the ability of a state to make its will prevail and to enforce respect and command obedience from other states. This is how Professor **Mahendra Kumar** has explained power of the states. Simply speaking, power is an ability which may not be exercised. But, when exercised, this ability enables a state to control the behaviour of other states.

Power is the most central concept of international politics. But it is not always easy to define it. Still definitions have been given. **Coulombis** and **Wolfe** define power as "an

umbrella concept that denotes anything that establishes and maintains the control of Actor A over Actor B." This definition widens the meaning of the concept of power.

Power has three important ingredients. They are force, influence and authority. According to **Coulombis** and **Wolfe**, authority means voluntary compliance by Actor B of the wishes of Actor A, out of respect, affection, etc. Influence has been defined as use of instruments of persuasion, short of force, by Actor A to get its wishes accepted by Actor B. Finally, force implies coercion by Actor A of Actor B in pursuit of political objectives of Actor A. This, power is a combination of authority (voluntary compliance), Influence (Compliance through persuasion) and force (use of coercive methods).

Elements of National Power

1. Tangible Elements

- (a) **Population** : It is generally believed that states with large population are more powerful. Large population enables a country not only to have strong armed forces, but to have manpower for various economic activities also. But, it is not essential that large population will make for power. China, during nineteenth century, had much less power than Britain which is a less populous state. Contemporary Israel with less than 50 lakh people has proved to be an effective power. She has even acquired nuclear capability. Thus, as Coulombis and Wolfe say, "A population that is healthy, well-fed, unified, evenly spaced, well informed is likely to be much more powerful than a population that is badly nourished, diseased, overcrowded, illiterate, disunited and disloyal."
- (b) **Territory** is the second tangible element of power. Some writers refer to geography as an element, and include territory within 'geography'. Most important among this element are size of a country, its climate, topography and its location. Normally, it is believed that a country large in size would be more powerful than smaller states. A large size not only enables the country to have vast areas under agricultural production and to have industrial growth, but also provide scope for a defensive army to manoeuvre and retreat, allow enemy to enter, then hit it back, encircle it and defeat it. But, a smaller state may at times becomes more powerful. Mere measurement of area is no guarantee of power to a state. Israel is a striking example of a small state that has demonstrated a disproportionately large amount of military power. On the other hand, Canada with its frozen waters and Brazil with its jungles have never been big powers.
- (c) **Climate** of a country also influences its power. Thus, frozen Antarctica and the deserts of Sahara are obviously not suitable for power, although with the potential of uranium for nuclear power, even deserts where uranium is found have assumed importance. A lot depends on the location and topography of a country. Foreign policy makers find

Location to be a key determinant. Topographic features determine boundaries between nations. Whereas artificially created boundaries, as between India and Pakistan or Germany and France, can weaken the position; the natural frontiers such as high mountains and sea help the power of a state.

(d) **Natural Resources** constitute another element of power. Possession of natural resources such as oil, uranium and various minerals add to the power of a state. Today, importance of oil-rich Gulf has increased. Besides those possessing items like coal and iron can enhance their power. Nations can improve their power, if on account of their natural resources, they can give rewards in the form of minerals, agricultural products or manufactured goods.

(e) **Military:** The fifth tangible element of power is that of military strength. This relates to the conventional notion that power is backed by military force. The military strength of a given nation-state can be measured in terms of funds expended for defence and security purposes. A related factor is location outside its territory. Such military mobility hinges on the nation-state's ability to sustain military operations on land, sea and air. The ultimate success of the nation-states, however, would depend on intangible factors such as preparedness, training, leadership, morale, etc. which affect the performance of armed forces in a given situation.

The discussion of tangible elements of power brings out clearly that such elements are necessary to generate capability of the nation-states in a sovereign state-system. But this is not sufficient to ensure that capabilities would lead to the overall strength of the nation-states. We need to specify the intangible elements of power that contribute in a most critical way to the overall capability of the sovereign state.

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