



FACULTY OF JURIDICAL SCIENCES

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Lecture- 36



End of the era of European Domination and the dawn of era of Global Politics:

The structure of international politics has undergone a radical change from the classical period. From a narrow European dominated international system it has come to be a truly global system in which Asian, African and Latin American states enjoy a new and added importance. Today Europe is no longer the centre of world politics. European politics constitutes only one small segment of international politics. This changes has considerably reduced the operation ability of balance of power.

(2) Changes in Psychological Environment:

The characteristic moral and intellectual consensus that characterised European nations during the classical period of Balance of Power (1815-1914) has ceased to exist. Each major power now seeks to protect its interests as universal interests and hence tries to impose these upon others. The use of propaganda and ideology as instruments of national policy has increased manifold. This development has further checked the importance of balance of power.

(3) Rise of Propaganda, Psychological and Political Warfare as instruments of National Policy:

Previously, diplomacy and war used to be the chief means of conducting foreign policies. The decline of diplomacy, rise of new diplomacy and the new fear of war as a means, have brought into operation two new devices- Propaganda and Political warfare, as the instruments of national policy. These have in turn reduced the popularity and role of balance of power principle in international relations.

(4) Emergence of Ideology as a Factor of International Relations:

The new importance of ideology and other less tangible but, nevertheless, important elements of national power have further created unfavorable conditions for the operation of balance of power.

(5) Reduction in the Number of Major Powers:

The most obvious structural change that has seriously limited the role of balance of power has been the numerical reduction of the players of power-politics game. For its operation, Balance of Power needs the presence of a number of major power actors. The presence of two superpowers during 1945-91 discouraged the operation of balance of power and now there is present only one super power in the world.

(6) The Bipolarity of Cold War period and the new era of Unipolarity:

The bipolarity (presence of two super powers and their blocs) that emerged in the cold war period reduced the flexibility of the international system. It reduced the chances of balance of power whose working requires the existence of flexibility in power relations, alliances and treaties. Presently unipolarity characterizes the international system.

(7) The End of the Era of Colonialism and Imperialism:

Another big change in the structure of balance of power has been the disappearance of imperialism and colonialism: It has limited the scope for the exercise of power by the European powers, who in the past always worked as the key players of the principle Balance of Power.

(8) Disappearance of the “Balancer”:

The rise of two super powers the disappearance of the “holder of balance” or the “balancer” considerably reduced the chances of balance of power politics during 1945-91. Traditionally, Britain used to play such a role in Europe. The sharp and big decline in the power of Britain in the post-war period compelled it to abandon its role of balancer between the two super powers. No other nation or even a group of nations was successful

in acting as a balancer between the USA and the (erstwhile) USSR. The absence of a balancer further reduced the role of balance of power in post-war international relations.

(9) Change of Concept of War into Total War:

The emergence of nuclear weapons and other revolutionary developments in war technology has produced a big change in the nature of war. The replacement of war by Total War has made war the most dreaded situation in international relations. This has forced nations to reject war as an instrument of balance of power which rests upon the assumption that nations can even go to war for preserving or restoring the balance.

(10) The Emergence of Global Actors:

The rise of the United Nations and several other international and regional actors in international relations has given a new look to the international relations of our times. The presence of the UN has made a big change in the structure and functioning of the international system. With a provision for collective security of international peace and security, the United Nations constitutes a better source of peace. Due to all these changes in international relations, Balance of Power has come to suffer a big decline. It has definitely lost much of its relevance.

In contemporary times, Balance of Power has ceased to be a fully relevant and credible principle of international relations. However, it still retains a presence in international relations, more particularly, in the sphere of regional relations among states.
