



FACULTY OF JURIDICAL SCIENCES

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Lecture- 10



LECTURE 10 BALANCE OF POWER

Whenever the term Balance of Power is used without qualification, it refers to an actual state of affairs in which power is distributed among nations with approximately equality” — Hans. J. Morgenthau.

“Unmanaged struggle for power can be a source of war in international relations.”

Such a realization stands universally recognized and it has led to the development of certain devices of power management. One such device has been Balance of Power. In fact, Balance of Power has been traditionally an important fact of international relations. It has been guiding the decisions and policies of nations. Since the 17th century Several scholars regard it as the best guide for securing the goals of national interest without getting involved in war. Upto the first half of twentieth century, Balance of Power was regarded as being the only known modern device of international management of power.

“Balance of Power is a nearly fundamental law of politics as it is possible to find.” — Martin Wright

Palmer and Perkins also hold that balance of power principle has been “a basic principle of international relations.

What is Balance of Power?

It is indeed very difficult to define Balance of Power. It has been defined it differently by different scholars.

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“The trouble with Balance of Power is not that it has no meaning, but that it has too many meanings.” —Innis L. Claude Jr.

Some writers define it in terms of equilibrium where as others in terms of “preponderance” or “disequilibrium”. Some define it as a principle of action while others define it as a policy or system.

Some Popular Definitions of Balance of Power:

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(1) “Balance of Power is such a ‘just equilibrium’ in power among the members of the family of nations as will prevent any one of them from becoming sufficiently strong to enforce its will upon others.” —Sidney B. Fay

(2) “Balance of Power is an equilibrium or a certain amount of stability in power relations that under favourable conditions is produced by an alliance of states or by other devices.” —George Schwarzenberger

(3) “Balance of Power is such a system in which some nations regulate their power relations without any interference by any big power. As such it is a decentralized system in which power and policies remain in the hands of constituting units.” —Inis Claude

(4) Balance of Power means “the maintenance of such a just equilibrium between the members of the family of nations as should prevent any one of them from becoming sufficiently strong to impose its will upon the rest.” —Lord Castlereagh

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(5) “Whenever the term Balance of Power is used without qualification, it refers to an actual state of affairs in which power is distributed among nations with approximately equality.” —Hans. J. Morgenthau

All these definitions clearly reflect that Balance of Power is defined differently by different scholars. It is very difficult to give or select a uniformly acceptable definition. This difficulty makes it essential for us to study the features of Balance of Power.