

## Balance of Power In 21<sup>st</sup> Century



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**Abstract-** Balance of power is an important principle of Realist thought in international relation .In Realist theory balance of power is crucial for maintaining international peace and security .According to both realist and neo realist approaches international system is characterized by anarchy and self help system .Anarchy refers to the absence of central authority in a system of sovereign states .In other words we can say that unlike sovereign government at the domestic level which maintains order international system does not have a world government who could do the same .There is no authority who could regulate the behavior of all states.According to classical realist international system represents Hobbesian state of nature where state can't trust each other for their security Given this mistrust states have to make their own arrangement through a self help system .However this self help also creates a problem and that is when one state tries to build its security apparatus other state perceive it as a direct threat to their security and it give rise to a phenomena called Security dilemma .Security dilemma is a situation where one state quest for security becomes another state source of insecurity .So according to realist in order to overcome this security dilemma states go for balance of power .However with time nature of balance of power got changed specially after the end of cold war.During cold war it was the two superpower who were balancing each other by making alliances and counter alliances .But the defeat of soviet bloc in the cold war and emergence of U.S as the sole hegemonic power put a direct challenge to the very idea of balance of power.So my essay will take a re look at how in the 21<sup>st</sup> century balance of power is taking a new shape and what are the nuances that a shaping it .But before going to it I would like to bring some theoretical consideration which is related to this whole theory of Balance of power.

**Keywords :** balance of power, analysis,Security.

**Theoretical Debate-** According to Quincy Wright who was an American Political Scientist and had done pioneer work in the field of international relation there are certain major assumption that underline the Balance of power system

- (A) Security of one state is constantly in danger of being violated by other .
- (B) A situation of balance will either deter the aggressive state from launching an attack or if commits the aggression it would help the victim state in avoiding the defeat .
- (C) Statesman can and will make their foreign policy decision intelligently on the basis of power consideration of its own and of that country also for which policy is made.

(chapter 20, international politics by U.R Ghai.)

According to Hans Morgenthau, balance of power on the international scale can operate on two pattern. First the pattern of direct opposition and second the pattern of direct competition. In the pattern of direct opposition nation A embarks its imperialist policy with regard to nation B and nation B tries to counter the policy of nation A either by continuing her policy of status quo or with an imperialist policy of its own . In the case of direct opposition one nation wants its policy to prevail upon another. Nation A tries to increase its power to such an extent that it can control the decision of B, and thus leads its imperialist policy to success . Nation B on the other hand try to increase its power to such an extent that it can resist to A pressure and thus frustrate A or else embark upon an imperialist policy of its own with a chance of success.

Secondly in the pattern of direct competition, the policy of two hostile states are not of direct opposition but rather they compete with one another to gain control over other states . Here there is a kind of contest between the two that who can won more support for its cause .

(Chapter 9, international politics edited by Rumki Basu)

Scholars of political science have also deliberatd upon various methods used for establishing and maintaining Balance of power

- (A) The adjustment of balance of Power by domestic measures . A state that feels threatened by the growing power of another state may simply bring a growth of its own power to safeguard its own position. It may build its own armaments, initiate or expand an economic programme designed to enhance its fighting capacity.
- (B) Alliances and counter alliances. Building alliances and counter alliances has been the most commonly employed method of maintaining balance of power . when two nation competing with one another add the power of other nation or even withhold the power other nation from going in favor of adversary then they can be said following a policy of alliance. Pursuing a policy of alliance is not a matter of principle but of expediency . A nation will shun alliances if it believes that it is strong enough to safeguard its vital interest or that the burden of commitment resulting from alliance is

likely to outweigh the advantages to be expected. During the cold war period both blocs tried to make alliances like NATO WARSAW pact SEATO etc.

- (C) Armament and Disarmament. The principle means by which a nation tries to maintain balance of power is armament and disarmament. The armament race in which nation A tries to keep up with and then undo the armaments of nation B and vice versa. The inevitable result of arm race is resulting in constantly increasing burden of military preparations requiring huge national budget and resulting in ever deepening fear, suspicion and insecurity. It is in view to avoid such situation of fear and insecurity and to create a stable balance of power if not permanent peace that the technique of Disarmament is devised. So disarmament is a technique of stabilizing balance of balance of power by means of proportionate reduction. The strategic arms liberation talk (SALT) between erstwhile USSR and U.S is an example of competing states agreeing for proportionate reduction of armaments.
- (D) Divide and Rule. This method is used by nation to keep their competitors weak by dividing them or keeping them divided. In modern times this policy was followed by France towards Germany. The policy of Britain towards Indian subcontinent and the policy of soviet towards rest of Europe have all been example of divide and rule.
- (E) Intervention and non intervention. This method has also been used by powerful countries which are in apposition of balancer. Intervention may range from slight deviation from neutrality to full scale military participation in a war. On the other hand non intervention policy is usually followed by small states and also by great powers who are satisfied by the existing status quo and wants to follow peaceful method to preserve the balance.
- (F) Buffer state. These are small intermediary states which are used by great powers in their balancing game of power politics for their military and strategic purpose. They are of great importance because of their cushioning effect between great powers. Great powers usually compete with one another for winning the support of buffer states by luring them with military and economic aid.

(chapter 9, international politics edited by Rumki Basu)

Difference between balance of power and collective security

- (A) Balance of power is a competitive configuration where as collective security is a cooperative system. The concept of balance of power involves a kind of competition between two rivalries. Thus it assumes the division of states into hostile camps. In contrast to this collective security talks about cooperation between members so that international peace remains secure.
- (B) In balance of power alliances are definite whereas alliances are definite whereas in collective security cooperation is general. The alliance which go with the balance of power are almost always aimed at specific potential enemy and all the allies know with which state or other blocs they have to fight whereas collective security aimed at any state which might turn aggressor

- (C) Balance of power is based on the concept of mutual fear whereas collective security is based on mutual love and cooperation .Nation enter into balance of power scenariobecause they have a common fear of threat to their security from rival state or bloc .
- (D) Finally balance of power operates in the absence of global organization whereas collective security postulates the existence of international organization.

**Analysis** - It is generally agreed that Balance of power system since its inception in 1648 to the second world war was a multipolar one .The classic case of balance of power that existed in the international system was that of the 19<sup>th</sup> century balance of power when there was five major powers namely England ,France ,Prussia,Russia and Austria.That was the era when all five major powers were engaged in the balancing process and ensured that non of them became hegemonic and international peace and security .The situation changed during cold war when international system got divided into two antagonistic blocs.Here the balance of power system was maintained by two superpower largely because of the nuclear deterrence .When the cold war ended with the disintegration of soviet union,the bipolar system got transformed into unipolar with U.S as the sole hegemonic power .Now the question is what is the importance of balance of power in this post cold war unipolar world.It is argued that certain developments like expansion of democracy,growth of interdependency among nations and rise of international institutions are necessarily promoting peaceful means of international relations and thereby rendering concepts like balance of power as futile .The proponents of neo realism however refute these arguments and contend that unipolarity is least durable out of all international power configuration and it will be replaced multipolarity.Keneth waltz for instance argued that unipolar international system is not durable for two reasons ,first the dominant power take two many task beyond their own borders thus weakening themselves in the long run .Secondly he argued that weaker states always remain concerned about the future behavior of dominant power and therefore always look after certain arrangements that could ensure their security and stability. In todays world we are already witnessing a new kind of balance of power which is economic oriented .country like china have started to grow in the international arena and it is assumed that it will come at par with U.S in the near future.Many scholars argued that developments like the formation of BRICS have been designed keeping in mind to counter the hegemonic role of U.S. Former Indian diplomat Rakesh sood in his article titled “Dual diplomacy for mission NSG” published in THE HINDU in june 2017 argued that US increasing support to India for entry into Nuclear Supplier Group which was formed by U.S herself as part of response to India’s peaceful nuclear explosion in 1974 is largely because U.S reckon India as one the main player in its Asia Pivot project.According to sood U.S leadership fully realizes that in order to counter China its paramount to keep India in to their fold.China one belt one road initiative is also seen by scholars as an effort to present herself as the alternative of us led world order .Harsh V pant who is a professor of International relation at kings college ,London and head of strategic studies at the observer research

foundation, New Delhi in his article titled “Looking for balance in power” published in The Hindu on 15<sup>th</sup> December 2017 argued that a month after India was part of the “QUAD” discussion on the sidelines of the East Asia Summit in Manila involving Japan, Australia, and the U.S. New Delhi hosted foreign ministers of the Russia and China. The Russia India and China trilateral held its 15<sup>th</sup> meeting in what was construed as New Delhi’s attempt to get a semblance of balance in its ties with Moscow and Beijing. Harsh V Pant article highlights that how India makes an attempt to create a balance on multiple fronts.

## **Conclusion**

Balance of power which according to realists is the principle means to secure international peace and security in reality is inadequate. This is exemplified by the fact that it has failed to prevent two devastating world wars and various other wars that the world has witnessed. After the second world war there was no major war despite the world was divided into two hostile blocs but it was largely because both super powers were equipped with nuclear weapons. However, both U.S.A and U.S.S.R used various small states as a pawn of their chess board. Present world system is witnessing a different balance of power which is a mixture of economic and military might. Today what we are seeing is countries are making alliances but it is not explicitly a military alliance. They are giving equal importance to both. Prominent example is of China Pakistan economic corridor (CPEC) where China along with terming Pakistan “an all weather friend” is investing huge chunks of money in Pakistan. And one of the main reasons is China feels that it needs to support Pakistan in order to balance India, specially in the growing wake of India’s growing proximity with U.S.A. But here the crucial thing is China is using its economic might to keep Pakistan on her side. This is a major change that this whole theory of B.O.P has gone through in this era. Now apart from military countries are even using their economic might in the game of balancing.

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