

**B.A.L.L.B. 6<sup>th</sup> semester  
political science  
UNIT:2nd  
TOPIC:NATIONAL POWER,its  
meaning and defination**

DR.MUKTA JAIN  
INSTITUTE OF LAW  
DATE:1/4/2020

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.

### Meaning of National Power:

We can understand the meaning of National Power by first analyzing the meaning and nature of power:

### What is Power?

It is not easy to explain the meaning of 'Power', more particularly in the context of human relations. We are encountered with many different explanations in various disciplines. Even within a single social discipline, Power is defined in several different ways

Some social scientists define it as the use of force whereas many others explain it as the capacity to secure the desired goals through the use of force or threat of use of force or even by exercising influence.

1. “Power is the power of man on others” and as a “man’s control over the minds and actions of other men.” —Morgenthau
2. “Power is the capacity to impose one’s will on others by reliance on effective sanctions in case of non-compliance.” —Schwarzenberger
3. “Power is the ability to exercise such control as to make others do what they otherwise would not do by rewarding or promising to reward them, or by depriving or threatening to deprive them of something they value.” —Charles P. Schleicher


On the basis of these definitions we can say that power in the context of human relations is the capacity and ability to secure a desired and intended effect or gain by means of use of force, influence or control.

What is National Power?

After having understood the meaning of power, it becomes quite easy to define National Power.

1. “National Power is that combination of power and capability of a state which the state uses for fulfilling its national interests and goals.” —Padelford and Lincoln
2. “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.” —Hartman

In simple words, it can be said that 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. In this way, we can define National Power as “the ability to control the behaviour of other states in accordance with one’s own will.” National Power is the currency of international relations.

A world map showing continents and oceans. The map is centered on the Atlantic Ocean. Two text overlays are present: one in the upper half and one in the lower half, both in white, bold, italicized font. The map labels include 'Arctic Ocean', 'Pacific Ocean', 'Atlantic Ocean', 'RUSSIAN FEDERATION', 'CANADA', 'UNITED STATES OF AMERICA', 'INDIA', and 'AUSTRALIA'.

***National power is the ability or capacity of a nation to influence or change the behavior of other nations with a view to secure the goals of its national interest.***

***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.***

## Nature of National Power

For understanding the nature of National Power let us know the meaning of the terms 'National' and 'Power':

### 1. National:

In common usage the term 'National' means pertaining to the nation. As such national power means the power of a nation. However, in the context of national power the term 'nation' does not bear the same meaning as is the case in Political Science. Political Science defines nation as a group of population bound by a strong sense of nationality based upon common race, religion, motherland, language, history, culture, economic needs etc.

In the context of national powers, the term nation stands for the power of the group of decision makers, statesmen and diplomats who exercises power on behalf of the nation. More specifically, it is the power of the decision-makers who formulate and implement the foreign policy of the nation and thereby attempt to secure national goals.

National Power does not mean the power of the entire population of the state. It is only a psychological link that makes the people regard the power of the decision-makers as their own power. An increase in the power of a nation really means an increase in the power of the decision-makers, statesmen and diplomats of the nation to secure the goals of national interest. Hence, when we speak of national power in international politics, we really refer to the power of decision-makers of a nation in terms of their ability to secure the national interest of their nation.

## 2. Power:

For understanding the nature of power in the context of National Power, let us distinguish between Power and Force, Power and Influence, Force and Influence, and its several other features.

### A. Power and Force:

Force means physical force, violence in the form of police action, imprisonment, punishment or war. Power means a psychological relationship of control which is backed by the use of force, or threat of use of force. When physical force, war and other means involving the use of military power or police power is actually used to secure certain objectives, power stands replaced by force.

Wolfe and Coulomb's equate "force with military capacity of a nation, either in reserve or actualized." They regard power as "a wider concept that not only includes the threat or the actual use of force but may also rely on positive and non-violent means of persuasion, such as economic rewards, acts of cooperation and ideological solidarity."

## B. Power and Influence:

There exists a subtle difference between Power and Influence. Both are intimately related terms with similar variables and sources, and even in respect of the desired end. Both involve the ability to produce an intended change or effect in the behaviour of others. However, the two are not the same. Power involves a use of force or threat of use of force. Political Power or Legal Power is backed by authority or sovereignty of the state.

Influence involves the attempt to change the behaviour of others through persuasion and not by threats or force. The scope of influence is wider than the scope of power and it is more democratic than power. Nations try to influence other nations but in the ultimate sense the success is determined by the capacity to use force or threat of use of force.

Hence, it is power and not influence which is the real currency of International Politics. Role of influence is subservient to power. Only those nations have influence which are powerful nations. Thus, power is neither force nor influence. But at the time it involves, in one form or the other, both force and influence.