

B.A.L.L.B. 6th semester

unit:1st

topic:concept of power in international relations

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Power

In International Relations

Definition of Power

- Power is one of the essentially contested concepts in the study of international relations (Evans, Newnham, The Penguin Dictionary of International Relations)
- “The concept of Power is one of the most troublesome in the field of international politics” (Robert Gilpin)
- Power, like a host of other important concepts in IR, is an essentially contested concept – it means quite different things to different people (Brian C. Schmidt)
- At its simplest, power in interstate relations may be defined as a state’s ability to control, or at least influence, other states or the outcome of events. (Key Concepts of IR)

dimensions of Power

- The *internal* dimension corresponds to the dictionary definition of power as a capacity for action. A state is powerful to the extent that it is insulated from outside influence or coercion in the formulation and implementation of policy. A common synonym for the internal dimension of power is autonomy.

dimensions of Power

- The *external* dimension corresponds to the dictionary definition of power as a capacity to control the behaviour of others; to enforce compliance. Such influence need not be actively exercised; it need only be acknowledged by others, implicitly or explicitly, to be effective. It also need not be exercised with conscious intent; the behaviour of others can be influenced simply as a by-product of powerful acts.

distinction of Power

- *Structural power* confers the power to decide how things shall be done, the power to shape frameworks within which states relate to one another, relate to people, or relate to corporate enterprises.

distinction of Power

- *Relative power* is more, or less, if one party is also determining the surrounding structure of the relationship. Four separate but related structures of power in international relations:
 - the *knowledge structure* refers to the power to influence the ideas of others;
 - the *financial structure* refers to the power to restrict or facilitate their access to credit;
 - the *security structure* shapes their prospects for security;
 - the *production structure* affects their chances of a better life as producers and as consumers.

Tradition of Power

- **David Baldwin** describes the *two dominant traditions of power analysis* in International Relations: in terms of *elements of national power approach* which depicts power as resources and the *relational power approach*, which depicts power as an actual or potential relationship.

National power approach

- Proponents of the elements-of-national power approach equate power with possession of specific resources.

All of the important resources that a state possesses are typically combined in some fashion to determine its overall aggregate power. The resources that are most often used as an indicator of national power include the level of military expenditure, gross domestic product, size of the armed forces, size of the territory and population.

Relational power approach

- This approach was championed by behavioral – oriented political scientists during the 1950s and 1960s. According to Robert Dahl, who was an influential advocate of the relational conception of power, “A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do”.
- Fundamental to the relational conception of power is the ability to demonstrate a change in outcomes.
- Power as a set of material resources is deemed to be less important than the actual ability of Actor A to change the behavior of actor B.

E. H. Carr

- Carr argued that power is indivisible, yet he claimed that for purposes of discussion it could be divided into three categories: military power, economic power, and power over opinion.
- Yet because of the ever-present possibility of war breaking out, Carr argued that military power was the most important form of power in international politics... "The supreme importance of instrument lies in the fact that the *ultima ratio* of power in international politics is war"

Hans J. Morgenthau

- “International Politics, like all politics is a struggle for power”
- “Whatever the ultimate aims of international politics, power is always the immediate aim”
- When we speak of power we mean man’s control over the minds and actions of other men... this is a psychological relation between those who exercise it and those over whom it is exercised.”