



NATIONAL POWER AND ITS DETERMINANTS: AN ANALYSIS

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Abstract: International relations are the Relations among States. The relation of a state with other states depends on its national power. National power of a state is determined by various factors. This paper is an attempt to understand and analyze the role of these factors in shaping national power.

Key words: National power, International, State, Foreign policy, world politics.

Introduction:

National power is an important aspect of International Relations. National Power is the power which a State has in international arena. Power in simple terms can be defined as the ability to control the actions of others. It is the capacity to impose will on others. In other words, power is the capacity to accomplish goals. National Power is the power of a state to realize its foreign policy goals in world politics. It is the capacity of a State to impose its will on other States. National power is the capacity of a state to control the behavior of other states. It is the national power which decides the prestige and the respect of a state in world politics. National power decides the relation of a state with other states. In simple terms National power can be defined as the strength, ability or capacity of a state in International Politics. It is on the basis of National power States in the world are regarded as Superpowers, Great powers or weak states. Since National power is the only criteria to decide the status of a state in world politics, every State in the world tries to increase its power. Though every State tries to increase its power very few states are successful in this direction. In this background this paper makes an effort to understand the factors which makes a state to attain National power in international arena.

Objectives:

1. To understand the importance of National power.
2. To explore the factors which determines National power.
3. To understand the use of National power by States to accomplish its foreign policy goals.

Determinants of National power:

National power is shaped by various factors. These factors can be inherent or acquired. The inherent factors are the geographical condition of a state like its location, climate, topography, natural resources, population, national character whereas the acquired factors are mainly technology, morale, leadership, economic development, military strength etc. National power is not constant in nature it keeps changing based on the changing aspect of certain

factors of National power. Due to fluctuating characteristic of certain elements of National power a super power can lose its power in world politics where as it can make weak or medium powered states to become dominant in world politics.

The effects of important determinants of national power in increasing or decreasing the power of a Nation can be analyzed as follows:

Geographical factors: Geography is gift of nature; it is an inherent factor. The importance of geography in international relations is increasingly accepted by scholars in international politics. Geography consists of four important parts namely, Size, Climate, Location and topography.

Size: Size is an important factor in determining National power. Large size of a state can be beneficial in different ways. Large size can protect a State in war, it is difficult to conquer a large State. It also helps a State to accommodate more population and can also have more natural resources. However, there are exceptions to this, in few instances States with small sizes also have made great progress in World politics like Great Britan, Japan. Along with the size a state should have enough usable land, resources as well as good climate.

Climate: Climate is also very important to increase the power of a State. A State should have moderate climate which should not be very hot or cold. Moderate climate can increase labour productivity as well as agricultural production. This will have the effects of improving the economic prosperity of a state.

Location: Location of a state can effect its power. Location can be natural protection for a state if it is an Island Nation located far from other States. It can also turn the state into a naval Power. The land locked States will have more boarders and as such it has to give more importance to security or it has to follow the policy of neutrality in world politics. However, this aspect is limited in contemporary world due to technological advancement.

Topography: Topography can also influence the power of a State. The existence of Rivers, lakes, mountains can provide a natural protection to a state from aggression of foreign powers. It can also enrich the natural resources for a state. Nevertheless, this factor also has its limitations due to modern technological warfare.

Natural Resources: Natural Resources are an important source of national power. Natural resources like minerals, water sources, fertile soil can help a state to be self sufficient in industrial production as well as in food production. If a state has minerals like oil, steel, uranium, it can be great asset in its economic prosperity and self-sufficiency it can also reduce its dependency on other States. However along with natural resources the state should also have technical know-how and managerial skill to use its resources for its benefit. Natural resources combined with technical and managerial skill can be great asset for a State to gain National power.

Population: Population of a state can also determine National power. As far as population is concerned both quantity and quality are important. Population size should be large enough to provide for its workforce as well as military. Many States in the world though rich in natural resources are finding population scarcity and they are importing people from other states for their labour force. Due to population scarcity many states are not able to build large armies. Along with population size quality of the people is also important. People should be healthy, disciplined, hardworking and responsible. If there is sufficient and well managed population is available for a state it can increase its National Power.

Economic development: Economic prosperity can lead to national power. Poverty can make a state to depend on other states which will reduce its national power. If a state is able to provide employment to its people, has sufficient foreign exchange, more per capita income, has developed infrastructure, housing etc. it need not depend on other states for loans or aids which will have substantial impact on the power of a State. If a state has economic affluence, it can successfully use Economic Instruments of Foreign policy and can enrich its power in world politics.

Industrial Development: Industrially developed nations can acquire national power much more easily than non-industrial Nations. Development of heavy industries can lead to more employment, more income for the state.

Industrial development can lead to technological growth and more exports. Industrialized State can be self sufficient in manufactured goods and its dependency on other states will reduce. Industrialized States can make less industrialized States to depend on it and can realize its foreign policy goals easily.

Technological development: Technology is very important in the contemporary world. A state which has edge over other states in technology can easily have more National power. Superior technological skill in fields such as space, defense, communication can be an asset for a State. A State with advanced technical skill can achieve great progress in transport and communication. It can also lead to advanced military force. The present warfare is mainly based on technological skill. In the present world Dominance of USA is mainly powered by its technological skill. It is having edge over other states in communication and information technology as well as in the field of space and defense technology which makes other states to depend on it. Thus, a nation which has superior technical skill can acquire more power in world politics.

Military Force: The power of a state is measured in its military preparedness. A State with strong military force can claim more power in international politics. A State which is powered by sophisticated weapons like missiles, nuclear warheads, submarines etc. can be a dominant power in world politics. Along with superior weapons State should also have good military planning and leadership. It is also essential to have large number of defense personnel to operate the machinery in battleground. Well trained, skilled soldiers in sufficient quantity is required along with cutting-edge technologically sophisticated weapons and military planning. In the present world States which has sophisticated weapons, military leadership and good quality and quantity of soldiers are having more national power.

Quality of Leadership: National power also depends on the quality of leadership. If a State has good leadership, it can increase national power. It is the leadership which utilizes the natural resources, formulates foreign policy goals and implements it. It is the leaders who formulates strategic plans and take political decisions. The Leadership quality should be such that it should bring respect for the state in international forums. Leaders should be able to increase the prestige of the State in world politics through their foresightedness, maturity and statesmanship.

National character: Many scholars in international politics argue that national character is an important factor in increasing National power. National character is the common attitude, common behavior of people in a particular State. It is believed that Americans are people with adventures spirit and innovation, where as British are people with common sense and Japanese are known for their nationalism and Russians are for persistence¹ It is believed that these National traits have the impact on increasing or decreasing national power.

Diplomacy: Good diplomatic skills can also contribute for increase in national power. It is the diplomacy which plays an important role in implementing foreign policy of a State. Diplomatic skills of a state can help the state to enter meaningful alliances, get foreign aid and support from other states.

Conclusion:

National Power plays an important in the relation of a state with other states. It is the national power which decides the position, prestige and benefits a state can get in the world. The National power is decided by the availability of the factors mentioned above. However single factor cannot determine the power of a State, it is the combination of various factors that can contribute for national power.

¹ ibid

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