



## A Review of National Power its Meaning and main features

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**Abstract :** 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:

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.



### **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
3. “National Power is the ability of a nation to influence the behaviour of others in accordance with its own ends. Unless a nation can do this, she may be large, she may be wealthy, she may even be great but she is not powerful.” —Organski

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 behavior of other states in accordance with one’s own will.” National Power is the currency of international relations.

### **Main Features of National Power:**

National Power has a non-stable, dynamic character and as such it has to be continuously or at least periodically and regularly evaluated for understanding the role of the nation in international relations. National power is always dynamic. A powerful nation can become less powerful or more powerful in future.

Some of the most important features of national power in politics are as follows:

1. National Power is both a Means as well as an End in International Relations:

National Power is the means to control the behaviour of other states with a view to accomplish certain ends. It is recognized as the currency with which a nation can secure the desired values—peace, security, progress, development, status, and more power. Nations use power to secure their interests in international relations. This makes power a means in relations among nations.

However, in actual practice power is pursued as an objective or as an end. Nations want power not only for their immediate but also for their future needs. They, therefore, always try to build



up a reserve of power and hence pursue power as an end. Thus, power like money is a means but it is mostly pursued as an end.

### 2. National Power is the Ability to Secure Goals of National Interest:

National Power is the ability or capacity of a nation to influence or change the behaviour of other nations with a view to secure the goals of its national interest. It is a relationship in which a powerful nation is in a position to achieve its desired goals of national interest in international relations. National Power of a nation is measured in terms of its ability to secure its goals and objectives in international relations.

### 3. National Power is Dynamic and Relative in Character:

National power is always relative to time and resources. The power of a nation has to be analyzed both through an analysis of the capabilities and ability of the nation as well as by a comparison of its national power with other nations.

Further, National Power is dynamic. It keeps on increasing or decreasing. The debacle that India suffered in the 1962-war with China, considerably reduced the national power of India in relations with other nations. But a reasonably good account in 1965 war with Pakistan followed by a decisive victory in 1971 war gave a big boost to the national power of India. In post-1971 period, India's ability to exercise influence over other nations considerably increased.

The status as one of the founding members of the Non-aligned, an important leader of the Third World and the good progress in development of technology and industrial development have further increased India's national power. Unfortunately, some domestic problems and issues have been at times adversely affected India's ability to exercise power in international relations. Internal disturbances have been acting as a limitation on India's power in international relations. Thus, India's national power has been dynamic and so has been the case of other nations.

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This depends upon the changes in the power potential of other nations as well as upon the various components of national power. The power of a nation is always relative to the powers of other nations, particularly the power of its adversaries. In 1990, the collapse of the USSR and decline in the Russian power acted as a source of increase in the US power in international relations.

#### 4. No Two Nations Have Equal Power:

Further, it must be noted that no two nations have or can have absolutely equal power. There can be only a rough equality between two equally powerful super powers or great powers or major powers. The power of a nation is always more or less than the power of every other nation.

#### 5. There Are Several Elements of National Power:

National power is often analyzed and evaluated in terms of the capabilities of a nation which are determined on the basis of several factors, like Geography, Population, Industrial Capacity, Diplomacy, Military Preparedness, Quality of Leadership and Government etc.. All these factors have to be analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively for evaluating the national power of a nation.

#### 6. Actual Power and Potential Power:

Moreover, the attempt to analyze the power of a nation must focus both on the analysis of actual power as well as potential power of a nation. Actual power is the power which is immediately available, whereas potential power is the power that can be generated in situations of crisis and times of need. It refers to the crisis- management ability as well as the possible availability of power in the years to come.

#### 7. National Power is the Currency of International Relations:

Each nation seeks to use its power for securing its national interests in international relations. It is this feature which makes us regard international relations as a process of struggle for power. The nature of this struggle for power can be analyzed only through an analysis of the national powers of various nations. The role that a nation is playing or can play in international relations



can be judged by evaluating its national power. It is also needed for understanding the national interests of nations.

In fact, the greatest of all the national interests of a nation is to maintain and increase its national power. It is the means for the fulfillment of the needs and aspirations of a nation. As such, it is on the basis of an analysis of national power that we can assess the importance and role of a nation in international politics.

#### 8. National Power is the Basis as Well as a Means of Foreign Policy:

National Power is the very basis of the foreign policy of a nation. Only that foreign policy can be effective in securing the goals of national interest which is backed by adequate national power. The ability of the statesmen and diplomats to act and react with others is again determined by the national power of their respective nations.

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