



## A Study of Dimensions and methods of exercising National Powers

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**Abstract :** The three forms of national power are inseparable from each other. Without economic power no nation can develop her military power, and without the latter no nation can play an active role in international relations.

Psychological power can be enduringly and really effective only when it is backed by economic and military power.

Some of the major dimensions of national power in international politics are as follows:

1. Military Power
2. Economic Power
3. Psychological Power.

### *1. Military Power:*

Military power is an important form of national power. It is regarded as absolutely essential for achieving the objective of security of the nation. For every nation, security is the most vital element of its national interest. In fact, it is the primary concern of every nation to work for securing her security.

The possibility of violation of security of a nation through war and aggression by other nations is always considered as a distinct possibility and hence every nation gives first priority to her security. For keeping her security against possible violations, each nation maintains an army. Military power is regarded as the key means for securing the security and territorial integrity of each nation.

Military power is as such a vital part of national power. The role and importance of a state in international relations depends upon its military power. No state can get recognition as a super power or big power without becoming a big military power. The USA is a super power and it is a formidable military power. Japan and Germany are big economic powers but are not recognized as super powers or great powers because they are weak military powers.





While evaluating military power of a nation we have to take into account the other two forms (Economic Power and Psychological Power) of national power, the elements of military power and the military power of other nations. Russia, the successor state of erstwhile USSR continues to be a nuclear power but it is no longer accepted as a super power because of its economic weakness. China is a big military power and yet it is not recognized as a super power.

### ***2. Economic Power:***

Economic power is the second important form of national power. It is constituted by the ability of a nation to satisfy its own needs and to control the behaviour of other states by affording or denying access to economic goods and services. The economic means of foreign policy are today the most vital means which a state can use for influencing the actions and behaviour of other states. No state can become a military power without having adequate economic power.

“Economic power is inseparable from military power, for it is one of its basic components, to say that under conditions of modern warfare, economic power is military power is only a slight exaggeration.” —Palmer and Perkins

Economic power is used by rich and developed nations to influence other states by granting them economic aid and loans. It is also through its economic power that the rich states try to secure their interests in international relations. It is used both as a means to induce as well as to coerce through economic pressure for securing a desired change in the behaviour of other states.

In fact, in contemporary times, economic power has come to be recognized as even more important form of national power than military power. The example of Japan can be quoted as a proof. Lack of economic power has been a basic factor behind the weak power positions of the Third World countries.

While evaluating the economic power of a nation one has to take into account such factors as raw material, natural resources, food stocks, industrial and technological capacity, G.N.P., trade surplus, means of transport and communication, GDP, GDP per capita etc. However, economic power of a nation when not backed by military power and psychological power is not very effective in international relations.

### ***3. Psychological Power:***



Psychological power means the power of opinion and image of the nation. The role of propaganda and persuasive negotiations in international relations is a well known fact. These means are used by the states for securing an intended change in the behaviour of other states.

The improvement in the means of communications, increased influence of mass media and public opinion on foreign policy, the emergence of the age of open and conference diplomacy, the popularity of alternative ideologies the increase in people to people contacts, the role of NGOs and social movements, and the increased role of propaganda and publicity in international relations, have all increased the role of this dimension of National Power.

By the use of psychological and cultural means a nation always tries to influence the people and leaders of other nations. The ability to influence others through systematic publicity and educational and cultural relations constitutes the psychological part of the national power of a nation.

### **Methods of Exercising National Power:**

Each nation uses its national power for securing its national interests, and goals of foreign policy. It is used by the nation through four basic means Persuasion, Rewards, Punishment and Force.

#### ***1. Persuasion:***

Persuasion is a very effective method of exercising national power. The art of persuasion consists in defining and logically explaining a particular problem or issue or dispute to other nations or any other nation. An attempt is made to persuade other nations to adopt a particular and desired view or perception of the nature of issues involved in any bilateral or multilateral problem or dispute or issue.

Here the attempt is to convince others about the reasonableness and justness of the policies of the nation. Diplomacy basically uses persuasion as a method of securing support for the foreign policy that it represents.

Persuasion is widely used by diplomats and statesmen for securing the desired and defined objectives of the foreign policy. It is an effective method of exercising power. But success in persuasion can be achieved only when it is supplemented by other methods and when it is backed by a strong national power and effective foreign policy.



## **2. Rewards:**

The second popular method of exercising power is the offering of rewards. These rewards can be material or economic or psychological. A nation can give material help to another nation in times of crisis or even otherwise. The practice of giving economic aid and easy loans or grants-in-aid is another method of winning support and inducing a change in the behavior of other states.

The token support or grant of certain honors to the statesmen, philosophers, artists, scientists and educationists of other nations also serve as psychological rewards intended to keep the other states friendly and cooperative.

The lease of territories or a military bases or equipment—industrial or military, transit and trade facilities and grant of right to allow passage of ships are some of the other forms of rewards which a state can offer to other states for securing a desired change in their behaviors. The USA is currently rewarding Pakistan for supporting US operations against terrorists in Afghanistan.

## **3. Punishment:**

A third way of exercising power is punishment. A powerful nation can inflict punishment on an offending or unhelpful state by imposing economic sanctions or norms or policies or placing trade restrictions or ensuring a denial of a possible reward. Denial or reduction in foreign aid or loan or refusal to export certain items or technology can be used by a powerful nation for inflicting a punishment or pressure on other nations.

Thus punishment can be used by a powerful nation for exercising its power over other states. In actual practice the powerful nations use threat of punishment as a method and refrain from actual imposition of punishment. The recourse to punishment can cause a reaction and thus harm the interest of the state resorting to punishment as a method of exercising its power.

The most effective punishment is the one which secures the desired objective of a state without the actual infliction of punishment on other states. Threat of punishment is a better method of exercise of national power than its actual infliction.

## **4. Force:**



The last method of exercising power is the actual use of force or physical violence. By the use of military power or physical force, a powerful nation can compel a desired change in the behaviour of another nation. As a method of exercising power, force is related to punishment.

When punitive action is actually taken against another nation, it becomes a case of use of force. However, when only threat of punitive action is given without the actual use of physical violence against the other state, it becomes a case of exercise of power through the use of punishment. As such the difference between force and punishment is in the actual use of force versus the threat of use of force.

Physical force or violence can be used by resorting to war or acts of reprisals and retortion by a powerful state. Resort to war is the extreme form of exercise of force (Power) in international relation. It is indeed a risky and dangerous method, which can seriously limit and damage the national power of the state which resorts to war. This consideration makes the resort to war as a method of exercising power as the last resort.

**Conclusion :** Each nation uses these four basic means for exercising her national power in international relations. These are used simultaneously for securing the desired objectives or goals of the foreign policy of a nation. However, presently nations try to make a minimum use of the method of force because they prefer to follow the principles of peaceful co-existence and peaceful conflict-resolution. The use of national power is always governed by the objective of securing the goals of national interest of the nation.

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