

The Relevance of Balance of Power in the Contemporary International System

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DOI: 10.56201/jpslr.v10.no6.2024.pg38.52

Abstract

This study is anchored on Balance of power and emphasizes on its relevance in the contemporary international system. This study seeks to investigate the prominence of balance of power at ensuring avoiding war only applying war as an instrument of ensuring peace as the last result. Is it still relevant, is it even in operation as a practice and not just a theory in recent times. These are the questions this study aims at probing and unveiling. The study explored the history of balance of power, concepts of balance of power, levels of balance of power and eventually, it examined it's relevance in the contemporary international system.

Keywords: *Balance of power, levels of balance of power, concepts of balance of power, Relevance of balance of power in the contemporary international system.*

1.1 Background to the Study

Balance of power is as old as international system that describes the relations amongst sovereign nations. As a concept, it has emerged as one of the most important discipline of international relations and other related fields having gained more prominence after World War II and the Cold War. The concept of balance of power can be translated into different meaning to suit various purposes. Apart from being a concept that describes the mood of balance of power is also interaction in the international system, a theory of international politics used by scholars to explain phenomena in the world. Although there are many variations of balance of power theory and

interpretations of the concept, all are premised on the minimum of a tendency and the maximum of a law like recurrent equilibrium model. According to this model, imbalances and concentrations in military and material capabilities among the great powers are checked, and the equilibrium is restored in order to ensure the survival of the major powers in the international system. The great powers have several mechanisms to restore the balance, including internal military buildup where economic wealth is converted into military power, the formation of counterbalancing alliances, passing the buck of balancing to another state, partition and compensation in post war peace settlements, and emulation. In contrast, many scholars find that secondary and tertiary states are more likely to bandwagon or join with the more powerful state or coalition of states rather than balance against it.

Based on structural realism as advanced by Kenneth Waltz Theory of International politics (1979) the self-help anarchic system and shifts in the relative distribution of capabilities mean that balances of power recurrently form in the international system. How states balance will depend on the distribution of capabilities among the great powers. In bipolar distributions of power (two great powers) states will balance through the formation of counterbalancing alliances. Finally, according to John Mearsheimer, in balanced Multipolar distributions of power (three or more equally powerful states), great powers are likely to pass the buck balancing or “buck pass” to a “buck catcher” the responsibility of balancing. In the current unipolar distribution of power distribution of power, a number of scholars contend that states are engaging in soft balancing and leash slipping rather than traditional hard balancing. Others contend that no balancing is occurring and the imbalanced or unipolar distribution is both durable and stable (Lobel, 2014).

The objective of this study is to interrogate the relevance of balance of power theory in the contemporary international system. The research question employed in this study to obtain and fulfill the desire of the study objective is “what is the relevance of balance of power theory in the contemporary international system? Further, the methodology of the study makes use of the qualitative study design infused with the accumulation of secondary sources of data such as textbooks, journals and online articles.

1.2 Brief history of balance of power

Balance of power, a concept embedded in the realist theories of international relation. This is because, when it comes to the most fundamental principles of international politics, the world is the same now as it was thousands of years ago. The realists claim that there are certain constants of international politics and one of them is balance of power which as such, is expressed throughout much recorded history. Many scholars of international relation having dissected the history of the ancient Greeks find traces of balance of power. Of such ancient history, the Athenian historian Thucydides account of the Peloponnesian War in 431BCE showcases the earliest element of balance of power. In the account of the Peloponnesian War, Thucydides did not write about balance of power explicitly.

However, some scholars argue that there might have been balance of power thinking without the exact phrase being deployed. In support of this view, Niccolò Machiavelli an Italian diplomat of the 1480s expressed his views on the importance of the relations of strength between the Italian city-states of his time. Again, scholars have also presented a convincing argument that Italy in the fifteenth century was based on a balance of power system where the city-state of Florence and its ruler Lorenzo de Medici balanced against the Republic of Venice. Although Machiavelli might not have developed a concept of the balance of power that is recognizable in our modern international system, but he did conceive the notion that in addition to “domestic” politics in each city-state, the relations between states were of importance for their security.

Although ancient scholars Thucydides and Machiavelli did not in reality mention balance of power concept, their writings and the ideas it connotes portrays the balance of power concept, declared David Hume in 1742. Hume sought to establish that the balance of power had been a common-sensical idea, reconstructing a historical tradition from the ancient Greeks up until his own time. According to Hume 1742 (1987, pp.334-337) “is founded so much on common sense and obvious reasoning, that it is impossible it could altogether have escaped antiquity”; it had “naturally discovered itself in foreign politics”: He was the first to draw the line so far back in time, for he constructed an age-old tradition of the balance of power against those seeking to question its existence.

The balance of power had been occasionally mentioned throughout the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries as a metaphor to describe a political situation. For example, Machiavelli’s friend Francesco Guicciardini, in his *Storie d’Italia* (“History of Italy”), in which he described Italy as being in a “state of balance” between the different city-states. Guicciardini had a clearer conception of balance of power unlike his other ancient counterparts.

The Treaty of Utrecht of 1713 the inauguration of this golden age established peace after the War of the Spanish Succession, and included the balance of power as a core principle in the treaty text. This was adopted as a prevention remedy to curtail Spain or France from growing too powerful and unleashing a tyranny that would dominate Europe and all of its states’ for instance, in 1705 fearing that France would take over Spain, the British queen, Anne, said that “if the French king continues Master of the Spanish Monarchy, the Balance of Power in Europe is utterly destroyed”, and he would be able to become a despotic ruler of the whole world (Parliament 1967-1830:6-9). This is the main reason why the balance of power was included as a core principle of the European conduct of states after Utrecht.

Britain in the past 300 years used the balance of power concept the most amongst other European powers. Britain played the role of a “balance” in the system of European states. To establish a balance, one should aid the weak, and Britain conceived of itself as the country that could tip the scales in any one direction, as they saw fit. The role played by Britain as the balance gave Britain an unprecedented power, not only as a Great power in Europe, but also as the decisive weight in the scale (Anderson, 2018). It became Britain’s duty to make certain that no one could become a “universal monarch”, ruling the entire continent by aiding the weak part as the power constellations on the continent changed. Britain protected Europe, and thereby, protected herself, by means of

the balance of power. This is because; many political leaders and diplomats who played central roles in developing and using the balance of power concept came from Britain.

In Europe, the balance of power concept was considered as an associational concept. Europe was considered as a kind of federation, where every state had and shared politeness, manners, science, liberty in common and the protection against arbitrary rule. In the work of Northwick (1773:403) “those who have ever heard of the balance of power will consider the states of Europe... as forming one great republic, which interest itself in the concerns of every individual states”. Even so, wars would sometimes be necessary in order to maintain or adjust a stable balance of power. No wonder, war has been described as one of the nature of balance of power. In the case of Napoleon in the nineteenth century who threatened the European country with despotic French rule. The goal of a peaceful and stable balance justified the means. That the balance of power meant occasional Great Power Wars was the basis for why the United States would oppose the balance of power and the “old diplomacy” in the twentieth century. Having gained an inextinguishable knowledge on the historical roots of balance of power, what then is balance of power as a concept or theory. This, would be discussed in the review of literature, explaining its meaning in detail and exposing to light other relevant attributes pertaining to balance of power including balance of power in today’s (21st century) international politics. This would give us the backdrop towards uprooting its relevance.

2.1 Literature Review

2.1.1 The emergence of balance of power as a theory in international relation

The Cold War marked a period in the international system where the balance of power principle, as developed by generations of diplomats in Europe, was introduced to the United States in the context of a search for a comprehensive theory of international politics. U.S scholars took the practices of European diplomats as their cue to develop the theory we now know as Realism in International Relations (the practice of diplomats should be the ultimate reality test for any theory). Traditional diplomatic practices had to be systematized and made readily available for some sort of theoretical and scientific generalization, and the balance-of-power principle was seen as ideal for that purpose. Here, two realist scholar’s standout. They are Hans Morgenthau and Kenneth Waltz.

According to Morgenthau, just as human beings, a state follows a drive for power and domination. This behaviour can be mitigated by the balance of power, ensuring some degree of stability and order, even in an environment of self-seeking egoistic states (Morten, 2018). Morgenthau in his argument proposed that the balance of power and the policies aimed at establishing and maintaining it were crucial for the stability of international politics. He believes also, that the balance of power is not a balance of power, but the result of a struggle for power, which every nation must fight for superiority. However, superiority should not be fought, so many diplomats

have used the concept of “P” in the past (Morten, 2018). The pursuit of superiority is dangerous because it can lead to war and competition. This is one of the ambiguities in the work of Morgenthau, which works with very different definitions and consequences, sometimes encountering a balance of power

Based on this contradictions in the work of Morgenthau, Kenneth Waltz therefore aimed to establish the balance of power as a theory on a more consistent and scientific level. Waltz, in his Theory of International Politics, maintains that the balance of power is the closest we come to a “distinctively political theory of international politics” (1979:117). The balance of power is the theory of realists international politics.

This is because of the structure of international politics in which countries remain in international anarchy is a small country, the ability to protect which is to counter the powerful forces that threaten it. He said that as the only superpower, international politics with the United States is not normal (or all countries) historically have worked to right the balance when one actor threatens to become too big (Morten, 2018).

Waltz’s wants to present a simpler theory, not focusing on each component of the system (all other countries with different characteristics and foreign policy), but focusing on the whole, the structure in which the system operates. As each country has a greater desire to survive; it is assumed that all countries function the same as part of the system. They have different skills. Some countries are strong, while others are less likely. However, if all nations learn from successful nations in the system, a balance of power will ultimately be achieved. Consequently, Waltz’s theory of power relations is related to how the anarchist system, characterized by self-sufficiency, imposes restrictions on the state. Unlike previous theorists, the balance of power is determined not by skillful diplomatic actions or political traditions, but by repeated political models, which are called international structures. Regardless of whether politicians or diplomats want it or not, a balance of power will appear.

In 1757, Autoine Piquet argues that balance is not an equality of physical strength, but that “balance can only be accurately estimated with more rational and reasonable use”. The power that others control better – is “constant power” because it can beneficially change the real balance and opinion. However, in the mid-1700s we see one of the preachers of another Waltz. The balance between inside and out is different (internal and external balancing).

Waltz believes that balancing can be done both externally and internally. Internal balance means protecting and strengthening yourself so that you can compete more effectively, for example, deploying a country’s resources for weapons, extracting resources, properly managing the country and preventing unrest and intrusion. The state is balanced with the outside world, creating alliances with others in order to prevent its growth. Even if cooperation between countries is difficult due to common threats or existing threats, countries can suspend disputes and join forces against a dominant nation.

Although this report holds a strong position in the field of international relations, today's authors question the classical theory of such a balance of power. John Merschiemer, cited in Morten, (2018), who supports "offensive realism", makes Waltz's statements clearer. Waltz's self-defense. Mersheimer argued that maintaining the status quo was by no means a successful strategy. Collaboration is impossible. The structure of the international system is forcing countries to compete relentlessly to improve the balance of power. Therefore, there is always the probability of occurrence of defects through the combination of power balance. Therefore, he believes that all countries always tirelessly participate in domestic incentives. The state must use all its resources to increase its power, in order to keep up with international competition. There is no time to settle.

2.1.2 Definitions of Balance of Power by International Relations Scholars

Balance of power theory in simple terms refers to the concept that can be used interpret a relative power position of states as actors in international relations. With its emphasis on the cultivation of power and the utilization of power for resolving the problem of power, it appears to be a sensible way of action in an international society, where nations are governed by their national interest and prejudices. The balance of power is central to the system of political power. His strength and life are always determined by the later (Encyclopedia of Political Science, 1937). Due to the many variations of the concept, like Wight cited in Encyclopedia of Political Science (1937), likely observed, the notion of the balance of power is notoriously full of confusions. It is used as a policy, as a system, as a status and as a symbol. It is also used at times as propaganda ploy. Example is evident in Donald Trump president of U.S.A speech. He accuses China for the manufacturing of Covid-19 as a biological weapon. In effecting and causing panic in world just to create a change in the world power order (balance of power).

Castleagh cited by Wight (1991:169), define balance of power as "the maintenance of such a just equilibrium between the members of the family of nations as should prevent any of them becoming sufficiently strong to impose its will upon the rest. Fay (1930) defines balance of power as "just equilibrium in power among the members of the family of nations as will prevent any one of them from becoming sufficiently strong to enforce its will upon the others". Based on the above definitions, balance of power conditions are

- a) An equality or equilibrium of power among states resulting in balance.
- b) A distribution of power in which some states, are stronger than other, and
- c) Any distribution of power among state (Encyclopedia of Political Science, 1937).

The balance of power is also called the international political system. In this regard, the balance of power is a kind of consensus on the functioning of international relations in the multilateral world. Martin White, A.J.P. Taylor and Charles Lersche use this term as a system. Many other scientists do not use this concept as a concept, but only as a symbol of realism in international relations. This use is based on the idea that the balance of power is only the result of the influence of power in international relations.

Claude (1960, p.13), balance of power refers to a situation in which power is literally "balanced by equivalent power".

2.1.3 The nature of balance of power

Palmer and Perkins (1954, pp. 218-219), gives us an overview that describes the major features of balance of power. They are:

1. **The existence of equilibrium in power relations:** The term balance of power suggests equilibrium which is subject to constant, ceaseless change. In short, though it stands for equilibrium, it also involves some disequilibrium. That is why scholars define it as a just equilibriums or some sort of equilibrium in power relations.
2. **Temporary and unstable:** In practice, a balance of power always proves to be temporary and unstable. A particular balance of power survives only for a short time.
3. **To be actively achieved:** The balance of power has to be achieved of men. It is not a gift of God states cannot afford to wait until it happens. They have to secure it through their efforts.
4. **Favours Status Quo:** Balance of power favours status quo in power positions of major powers. It seeks to maintain a balance in their power relations. However, in order to be effective, a foreign policy of balance of power must be changing and dynamic.
5. **The test of balance of power is War:** Areal balance of power seldom exists. The only test of a balance is war and when war breaks out the balance comes to an end. War is a situation which balance of power seeks to prevent and when it breaks out, balance of power comes to an end.
6. **Balance of power is not a device of peace:** Balance of power is not a primary device of peace because it admits war as a means for maintaining balance.
7. **Big powers as actors of balance of power:** In a balance of power system, the big states or powerful states are the players. The small states or less powerful states are either spectators or the victims of the game.
8. **The multiplicity of states as an essential condition:** Balance of power system operates when there are present a number of major powers, each of which is determined to maintain a particular balance or equilibrium in their power relations.
9. **National interest is its basis:** Balance of power is a policy that can be adopted by any state. The real basis that leads to this policy is national interest in a given environment.

2.1.4 The concepts of balance of power

Balance of power can manifest in various ways and Paul, Wirts and Fortmann (2004, p. 2) present three concepts of balance of power.

1. **Hard balancing:** This refers to a strategy often exhibited by states engaged in intense interstate rivalry. States thus, adopts strategies to build and update their military capabilities, as well as create and maintain formal alliances and counter-alliances to match the capabilities of their key opponents. The traditional realist and neorealist conceptions of balancing are mainly confined to hard balancing.

2. **Soft balancing:** It involves tacit balancing short of formal alliances. It occurs when states generally develop ententes or limited security understandings with one another to balance a potentially threatening state or a rising power. Soft balancing is often based on a limited arms buildup, adhoc cooperative exercises, or collaboration in regional or international institutions, these policies may be converted to open, hard-balancing strategies if and when security competition becomes intense and the powerful states becomes threaten icy.
3. **Asymmetric balancing:** This refers to the efforts made by nation-states to balance and contain indirect threats posed by subnational actors such as terrorists group that do not have the ability to challenge key states using conventional military capabilities or strategies. Asymmetric balancing also refers to the other side of the coin that is, to efforts by subnational actors and their state sponsors to challenge and weaken established states using asymmetric means such as terrorism.

2.1.5 Levels of balance of power

Balance of power operates most preeminently in the military, political and economic relations of states. Balance of power also has global (systematic) and regional (sub systemic) dimensions.

1. **Balance of power at the systemic level:** From the perspective of balance of power theorists, the power preponderance of a single state or of a coalition of states in highly undesirable because the preponderant actors is likely to engage in aggressive behavior. Hegemony of a single power would encourage that state to impose its will on others. By contrast, theorists suggest that peace is generally preserved when equilibrium of power exists among great powers. In a state of equilibrium, no single state or coalition of states possess overwhelming power and thereby the incentive to launch war against weaker states. Power parity among states prevents war because no actor can expect victory, because the defender, *ceteris paribus*, is assumed to have a three to one advantage over the attacker. Although risk-acceptant actors have been known to devise strategies to overcome the advantages inherent in defense, most potential attackers prudently desist from offensive action, realizing that the chances of military victory are limited and that war initiation is riddled with uncertainties.
2. **The balance of power at the sub systemic (regional) level:** The balance of power dynamics that affect great powers and global politics are also relevant to regional subsystems. In the regions it is the rising power of a regional state or regional coalition of actor's gains too much military power within a region, that actor or coalition may undertake aggressive and predatory behavior toward neighboring states. To counteract such a danger, coalitions of regional states can form balances with or without the association of extra-regional great-power states. The other method for balancing a rising regional power is to acquire or modernize weapons that could balance the capabilities of a neighbor who has or is about to obtain a military advantage through its own innovation or through procurement of arms from abroad. The objective of regional balancing is to generate a stable distribution of power with the arm of preventive war. To achieve balance of power, according to Patrick Morgan cited in Paul, Wirtz and Fortmann (2004), regional states tend to "put great emphasis on autonomy and manipulate their relationships primarily on the basis of relative

power capabilities”. One must admit that regional powers are less autonomous than great powers, and often it is the later that undertake policies that preserve or upset regional balances.

2.1.6 The major assumptions of balance of power

1. No nation is to be totally eliminated in war. War is aimed only at the weakening of power of the violator of the balance. After war a new balance of power system is achieved. The basic principle of balance of power is that excessive power anywhere in the system is a threat to the existence of others and that the most effective antidote to power is power.
2. When a nation finds that a particular preponderance of power is increasing menacingly, it gets prepared to go to war for maintaining the balance.
3. A nation following balance of power is prepared to change its alliances or treaties if the circumstances may so demand.
4. Balance of power assumes that “balance” will either deter the threatening state from launching an attack or permit the victim to avoid defeat if an attack should occur.
5. Balance of power assumes that states are determined to protect their vital rights and interests by all means, including war.
6. Secondly, vital interests of the states are threatened.
7. The relative power position of states can be measured with a degree of accuracy.
8. The statesmen can, and they do make foreign policy decisions intelligently on basis of power considerations from the above discussion of the features assumptions, dimensions, and nature of balance of powers shows that balance of powers is a device of power management which is used by several major powers from maintaining a balance in their power relations. In this process, they maintain a sort of equilibrium in their power relations and do not permit any state to violate the balance. In case any state tries to disturb or violate the balance of power, the other states individually or collectively or is a group can take action, including war, for weakening the power of the violator as well as for restoring the balance.

2.2 Method of balance of power

1. **Compensation:** It is also known as territorial compensation. It usually entails the annexation or division of the territory of the state whose power is considered dangerous for the balance. In the 17th and 18th centuries this device was regularly used for maintaining a balance of power which used to get disturbed by the territorial acquisitions of any nation. Example, in the later part of the 19th century, and after each of the two World Wars of the 20th century, territorial compensation was used as a device for wearing the powers of the states whose actions had led to a violation of the balance. It was applied by the colonial powers for justifying their actions aimed at maintaining their imperial possessions.
2. **Alliances and counter alliances:** Alliance-making is regarded as a principal method of balance of power. Alliance is a device by which a combination of nations creates a favourable balance of power by entering into military or security pacts aimed at augmenting their own strength vis-à-vis the power of their opponents. However, an alliance among a group of nations, almost always, leads to the establishment of a counter alliance

by the opponents. Examples are the NATO, SEATO, WARSAW PACU in the post-1945 period that emerged as devices of balance of power.

3. **Intervention and non-intervention:** Intervention is a dictatorial interference in the internal affairs of another state/states with a view to change or maintain a particular desired situation which is considered to be harmful or useful to the competing opponents, sometimes during war between two states no attempt is made by other states to intervene. This is done for making the two warring states weaker. Examples are British intervention in Greece, the US intervention in Grenada, Nicaragua, Cuba, Korea, Vietnam, and erstwhile.
4. **Divide and rule:** The policy of divide and rule has also been a method of balance of power. It has been a time honoured policy of weakening the opponents. It is resorted to by all such nations who try to make or keep their competitors weak by keeping them divided or by dividing them. The French policy towards Germany and the British policy towards the European continent can be cited as the examples of this method.
5. **Buffer states or zones:** Balance of power set up a buffer state between two rivals or opponents. Buffers are areas which are weak, which possess considerable strategic importance to two or more strong powers. Buffer is a small state created or maintained as a separating state between two competing powers in order to minimize the chances of clash, hence helps in the maintenance of balance.
6. **Armaments and disarmaments:** Arms race between two competitors can lead to a highly dangerous situation which can accidentally cause a war which is a danger to world peace and security. Disarmaments and Arms Control are regarded as better devices for maintaining and strengthening world peace and security.
7. **The holder of the balance or the balancer:** The system of balance of power may consist of two rivals plus a third element "holder" of the balance or the balancer. The balancer is a nation or a group of nations which remains aloof from the policies of the two rivals or opponents and plays the role of "the laughing third party".

3.1 DATA ANALYSIS/PRESENTATION OF DATA

Having examined critically, the history, meaning, dimensions, factors and of course the logic behind balance of power. The scholar uncovering the relevance of balance of power in the contemporary international system will present the following data on balance of power in the contemporary times, reasons while role in the international system has reduced and the criticism of balance of power. Only then, will the researcher be able to determine if balance of power has any relevance in the contemporary international system.

3.1.1 Balance of power in contemporary international system.

The balance of power has been used throughout history, both in practice and theory, and is still with us. Today, the most debated theoretical question is why have no states? Why is the world order in a state of unbalance? Is this unprecedented in the history of world policies or does it reflect a fault in our balance-of-power theories?

According to Anderson, (2018) whilst the balance of power is still on the agenda for scholarship, also in the world of practical politics, we still see the occasional mention of a balance of power. In 2002, one year after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, President Bush's assistant for National Security Affairs, Condoleezza Rice, delivered a lecture entitled "A Balance of power that favours freedom" (Rice 2002 cited in Anderson, 2018). Presidents Bush's National Security strategy, she explained, "calls on America to use our position of unparalleled strength and influence to create a balance of power that favours freedom" against "tyrants" and "terrorists". The Obama administration argued for an "East Asia-Pacific Rebalance", "Positioning the United states to better promote its interests as the center of global politics" (US Department of state, 2013 as cited in Anderson, 2018), china has invoked the supposed ancient roots of the balance of powers concept, arguing that the United states and China, "the incumbent superpower and the biggest rising developing nation, "face the dilemma of falling into the Thucydides Trap" referring to the Melian Dialogue. Thucydides stated that the strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must, taken to be an expression of the idea that changes in the balance of power lead to war. In the context of increasing Russian assertiveness in the 2010s, we can also find frequent references in the media to the balance of power in the Mediterranean, the Middle east and globally. The balance of power is and has been important and useful, both as a theory and as politics, a concept to use to formulate policy positions, and a concept from which to distance one.

3.2 Reasons while the role of balance of power in the international system as reduced

1. Balance of power ensure the end of the era of European domination and the dawn of era of global politics from a narrow European dominated international system to a global system which includes Asia, Africa and Latin American states who enjoy prominence and importance world politics is no longer centered on Europe for it now only constitutes only one small segment of international politics.
2. Due to the end of classical balance of power in the 1815-1914, the intellectual consensus that characterized European nations has ceased to exist-each major power now seeks to protect its interest as universal interests and hence tries to impose these upon others. The use of propoganda and ideology as instruments of national policy has increased manifold. This has further checked the importance of balance of power.
3. Unlike diplomacy and war which use to be the sole means of conducting foreign policies, the rise of propoganda, psychological and political warfare as instruments of national policy has risen.
4. The bipolarity of cold war period and the new era of Unipolarity have reduced the chances of balance of power whose working requires the existence of flexibility in power relations, alliances and treaties. Presently, Unipolarity characterizes the international system.
5. The disappearance of a single balancer replaced by the rise two super powers reduced the chances of balance of power politics during 1945-91. Traditionally, Britain used to play such role in Europe but the decline in the power of Britain in the post-war period compelled it to abandon its role of balancer between the USA and USSR.

3.3 Criticism of balance of power

1. Balance of power does not necessarily bring peace. During its golden days, it failed to prevent the domination of small states by the big states. It was not successful in preserving the security of small states. In fact, in the past, wars have been fought in the name of preservation of balance of power.
2. States are not static units. Each state always tries to secure more and more national power system. Another point that must be raised about the balance of power is that nations are not static units. They increase their power through military aggressions, seizure of territory and alliances. They can change their power from within by improving social organization, by industrializing and by mobilizing internal resources.
3. A preponderance of power in the hands of one state or group of states does not necessarily threaten world peace or the independence of any nation. The Unipolarism resulting from the collapse of one super power (USA) has not in any way disturbed international peace and security or power balance. In contemporary times the preponderance of one state is a reality and yet there is peace and peaceful coexistence.
4. The concept of balance of power is based upon a narrow view of international relations: It regards power-relations as the whole of international relations. It gives near total importance to preservation of self and national-interest as the motives of all state actions.

4.1 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This study is premised on uncovering the usefulness or relevance of balance of power in the contemporary international system. Historical facts and events prove that balance of power both as a theory and as politics played an important role in the old system of relations. This fact cannot be disproved but however, an old concepts such as this “BOP” that predates the international system, is it still relevant?

The relevance of BOP in the contemporary international system

1. **A source of stability in international relations:** Balance of power provides stability to international relations. It is a device of effective power management and peace. During the past 400 years it was successful, at most of the times, in preserving peace. Balance of power has many a times, prevented war. War breaks out only when any state assumes excessive power.
2. **BOP ensures multiplicity of states:** Since balance of power postulates the presence of a number of major international actors (7 or 8 even more), it ensures multiplicity of nations and their active participation in preserving balances in international relations.
3. **BOP suits the real nature of international relation:** Balance of power is in tune with the dynamic nature of international relations. It helps continuous adjustments and readjustments in relations without any grave risk of war among states.
4. **BOP guarantees the freedom of small states:** BOP ensure the preservation of small and weak states. Its rule that no nation is to be completely eliminated, favours the continued existence of all states. Each state feels secure about its security in the balance of power system.

5. **Balance of power discourages war:** Balance of power discourages war because each state knows that any attempt to become unduly powerful shall invoke an action, even war, by all other states and hence, it keeps its ambitions under control.
6. **A source of peace in international relations:** BOP is always a source of peace and order in international relations. It supports status quo in relations. Between 1815-1914 it successfully prevented war. Even today, in the 2020's we see BOP has prevented U.S.A and North Korea possible war outbreak.

4.2 RECOMMENDATION

The United States should become more and more the implementer of the diplomatic balance of power of the whole globe, without resorting to war and conflict. This is very important because, looking at the politics of the international scenario one could see notice that other major great powers are merely waiting for the USA to exhaust itself militarily, financially, and existentially, so that knocking it over would be an easy task.

This is why the USA needs to pull out or cease from rampant military adventurism and instead focus on forging alliances and working relationships with the other great powers and to avoid any and all military conflict, completely and finally.

4.3 Conclusion

Balance of power theory in contemporary times presents a better sense of appeal of balancing versus its alternative (war). Thereby, preventing outright war which will be more devastating than any previous wars the world has experienced. In the table below, variables are considered the dominant powers, which of the policies is rational when a major power is confronted with a dominant power that it considers to be a threat in the short run and even in the long terms.

Table 1.1

Shorthand/Typology of Policy Options

	<i>Economic Components</i>	<i>Military Components</i>
<i>External Balancing</i>	Strengthen oneself and one's allies through trade; exclude enemies.	Find allies; join weaker alliance
<i>Internal Balancing</i>	Strengthen oneself through economic development; exclude all others.	Arms race
<i>Bandwagoning</i>	Develop ties to dominant power; wait for future.	Join dominant power's alliance
<i>Buck-Passing</i>	Free ride —increase one's wealth, not power, in short run.	Neutrality
<i>Appeasement</i>	Make concessions while building oneself up for	Make concessions

the long run.

Source: Paul, Wirtz & Fortmann, (2004).

The external balancing, it involves the formation of allies through trade and military alliance. It is a scenario that is portrayed by multipolarity in the world today. The relationship between weaker nations like Cameroon, Mali, Nigeria, etc, with the dominant power, U.S.A. This illustrates the military component of external balancing. The economic sanction placed on North Korea by U.S.A under president Donald Trump in recent times in favour of South Korea, Israel, Japan and other states also depicts. External balancing U.S.A seeks to strengthen its self and her allies through trade while excluding her perceived enemies. In contemporary, balance of power theory the intention, or the perceived intention of a major power, determines whether balancing will be preferred by secondary states over other options such as bandwagoning.

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