

Unit 2 / Section G: Balance of Power

Key Considerations:

1. BOP only relative to nation-state system
2. Power itself is relative
3. "the enemy of my enemy is my friend"

BOP refers to:

1. condition of relative equilibrium of dist. of power
2. when equilibrium is disturbed or threatened, other nations form a coalition against the threat; in a sense, it is a coalition of the "weak"
3. power used as a "bargaining chip" to serve a nation's own self-interests; idea is to make yourself indispensable in order to get things
4. Basic objective of statesmen practicing BOP is to preserve their own independence of action (an act of sovereignty)
5. each (thus, all) nation attempts to throw its weight around where it is most needed so that its own importance may be enhanced
6. purpose of BOP is *NOT* to preserve peace, but rather, to preserve sovereignty and independence of ind. States
7. the actions of many states as individuals *WITHIN* a system of all states thus maintaining the overall *STABILITY* of the system and each nation's place within the system: thus much maneuvering by states:
 - a. intricate combinations of alliances
 - b. alliances quickly / easily made and broken
 - c. ideology unimportant (totally secular)
 - d. raison d' 'etat ("real politik")
8. to question the legit. Of one nation in system is to question the legit. of the entire system

yet- what is stable? Depends on dist. of power
uni-polar / bi-polar / multi-polar

The Grand Monarque and the Balance of Power

France emerges as the dominant power post Thirty years War

- They used a balance of power concept to rise in power
- The balance of power concept will be used against them

Louis XIV

- Inherited throne in 1643 (5 years old)
- Assumed power in 1661 (23 years old)
- Died 1715

Leader of a powerful France (preview of modern nation-state)

1. Secular society
2. Promotion of modern natural sciences
3. Use of capitalist concepts
4. Modern state
5. Parliamentary government
6. Some degree of manufacturing

Big international question regarding the fate of Spanish possessions in the context of the overall decline of Spain

- Spanish Armada defeated 1588
- Loss of power 1648
- Hapsburgs forever divided and HRE not unified

Charles II assumes throne in 1665 / dies 1700

Louis XIV poised to benefit from vacancy of Spanish throne

- He married Charles' sister
- Wants to push eastward to Rhine River / annex Spanish Netherlands
- Wants to obtain Spanish inheritance for himself

Europe had already begun to reject "universal power"

1. No "universal" church
2. No "universal" Hapsburg monarchy
3. No "universal" Bourbon monarchy