

# Political Constraints on the Balance of Power: Institutional Obstacles to Military Coalitions in the Nuclear Age

## Abstract

The balance of power is a central concept in international relations theory, but it is often misunderstood. Many scholars and policymakers assume that the balance of power is simply a matter of military capabilities. However, as this article argues, the balance of power is also a matter of political will and institutional capacity.



## Unanswered Threats: Political Constraints on the Balance of Power (Princeton Studies in International History and Politics) (Princeton Studies in International History and Politics, 125) by Randall L. Schweller

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The rise of nuclear weapons in the twentieth century has made states more reluctant to form military coalitions. The risks of nuclear war are simply too high. As a result, the balance of power is less stable and less predictable than it was in the past.

The rise of international institutions has also made it more difficult to coordinate military action. In the past, states could form military coalitions relatively easily. However, today, states are more likely to work through international institutions, such as the United Nations, to resolve their disputes. This makes it more difficult to build the consensus necessary for military action.

As a result of these two factors, the balance of power is less effective at deterring aggression than it was in the past. This has implications for our understanding of international relations and for the future of nuclear deterrence.

The balance of power is a central concept in international relations theory. It refers to the distribution of power among states in the international system. A balance of power is said to exist when no one state or group of states is so powerful that it can dominate the others.

The balance of power has been a major factor in international relations for centuries. In the sixteenth century, the European powers developed a system of balance of power that helped to prevent any one state from becoming too powerful. This system was based on the principle of equilibrium, which held that each state should be strong enough to defend itself against its rivals, but not so strong that it could threaten the others.

The balance of power continued to be a major factor in international relations in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The two world wars were fought in part over the issue of the balance of power. In the Cold War, the United States and the Soviet Union maintained a balance of power through a system of nuclear deterrence.

The rise of nuclear weapons in the twentieth century has had a profound impact on the balance of power. The risks of nuclear war are so high that states are less willing to engage in military conflict. This has led to a more stable balance of power, but it has also made it more difficult to deter aggression.

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## **The Nuclear Revolution and the Balance of Power**

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In the past, states could use military force to achieve their goals without fear of nuclear retaliation. However, today, the risks of nuclear war are so high that states are much more cautious about using military force. This has led to a decline in the use of military force in international relations.

The nuclear revolution has also made it more difficult to deter aggression. In the past, states could deter aggression by threatening to use military force. However, today, the risks of nuclear war are so high that states are less willing to use military force, even in self-defense. This has made it more difficult for states to deter aggression.

As a result of the nuclear revolution, the balance of power is less effective at deterring aggression than it was in the past. This has implications for our understanding of international relations and for the future of nuclear deterrence.

### **The Rise of International Institutions and the Balance of Power**

The rise of international institutions has also had a significant impact on the balance of power. In the past, states could form military coalitions relatively easily. However, today, states are more likely to work through international institutions, such as the United Nations, to resolve their disputes. This makes it more difficult to build the consensus necessary for military action.

In the past, states could form military coalitions relatively easily. They could do this by signing treaties or by simply agreeing to cooperate. However, today, it is more difficult for states to form military coalitions. This is because states are more likely to work through international institutions, such as the United Nations, to resolve their disputes.

International institutions make it more difficult for states to form military coalitions because they provide a forum for dialogue and cooperation. States are more likely to be willing to resolve their disputes through international institutions than through military conflict. This is because

international institutions provide a safe and neutral space for states to negotiate and compromise.

As a result of the rise of international institutions, it is more difficult for states to build the consensus necessary for military action. This has implications for our understanding of international relations and for the future of nuclear deterrence.

The balance of power is a central concept in international relations theory. However, it is often misunderstood. Many scholars and policymakers assume that the balance of power is simply a matter of military capabilities. However, as this article has argued, the balance of power is also a matter of political will and institutional capacity.

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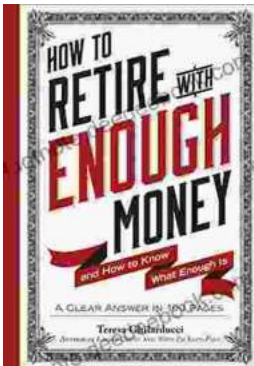
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