

Exercise walk-through

Balance of Power ■ 3.6

eXercise

You must be able to

- state what the balance of power principle asserts
- explain how it guided alliance decisions
- describe how war and treaty maintained it
- state one limitation of the principle

Method — The principle

No single state should become strong enough to dominate the others; states therefore combine against whichever is strongest, regardless of confession or dynastic sympathy.

Method — Alliance logic

Because the target is the strongest power rather than a permanent enemy, alliances shift as relative strength shifts. Yesterday's ally becomes today's target without any change of principle.

Method — Maintenance

Coalitions fought the leading power, and treaties redistributed territory to restore equilibrium. Territory changed hands as a counterweight, not only as a prize.

Method — A limitation

The principle says nothing about the internal conduct of states and can be satisfied by an arrangement nobody living under it would choose.

Practice 2.1 ■ 2 marks

State what the balance of power principle asserts.

Solution 2.1

Method: Alliance logic

Worked steps

that no single state should be strong enough to dominate the others **B1**, so states combine against whichever is strongest **B1**.

Practice 2.2 ■ 2 marks

Explain why alliances shift under this principle.

Solution 2.2

Method: Alliance logic

Worked steps

the target is relative strength, not a permanent enemy **B1**, so as strength shifts the alignment shifts with it **B1**.

Practice 2.3 ■ 1 mark

A treaty transfers a province to a weaker state.

- (a) State the purpose.
- (b) State what this shows about how territory was treated.

Solution 2.3

Worked steps

(a) to restore equilibrium by strengthening the weaker side **B1**. (b) territory was used as a counterweight, not only as a prize **B1**.

Exam-style 3.1 ■ 1 mark

Under the balance of power, states combine against

- A** a permanent enemy
- B** whichever state is strongest
- C** their own allies always
- D** the smallest state

Solution 3.1

Method: The principle

- A a permanent enemy
- B whichever state is strongest 
- C their own allies always
- D the smallest state

Worked steps

- B. relative strength determines the target.

Exam-style 3.2 ■ 1 mark

A limitation of the principle is that it says nothing about

- A** territory
- B** the internal conduct of states
- C** alliances
- D** warfare

Solution 3.2

Method: A limitation

A territory

B the internal conduct of states



C alliances

D warfare

Worked steps

B. it is a principle about external distribution only.

Exam-style 3.3 ■ 1 mark

Two states of different confessions ally against a third.

(a) State what this indicates.

(b) Explain how the balance of power accounts for it.

Solution 3.3

Worked steps

(a) that confession did not determine alignment **B1**. (b) the principle directs states against the strongest power **B1**, which overrides confessional sympathy when the two conflict **B1**.