

3.6 Balance of Power

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

Total: 11 marks

KEY WORDS balance of power 均势

Objective

Build the skills to explain the **balance of power** 均势.

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

1 Worked examples

Study these first. Each one shows the method for a task used later.

■ 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.

■ 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.

■ Maintenance

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

■ 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.

2 Practice

2.1 State what the balance of power principle asserts. [2]

2.2 Explain why alliances shift under this principle. [2]

2.3 A treaty transfers a province to a weaker state.

(a) State the purpose. [1]

(b) State what this shows about how territory was treated. [1]

3 Exam-style questions

3.1 Under the balance of power, states combine against [1]

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

3.2 A limitation of the principle is that it says nothing about [1]

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

3.3 Two states of different confessions ally against a third.

(a) State what this indicates. [1]

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

[2]

Solutions

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

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

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

3.1 B. relative strength determines the target.

3.2 B. it is a principle about external distribution only.

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