

Balance of Power

Political Science

How states respond to a rising power.

Balancing

- Build capability, or form alliances
- Aims to prevent dominance
- More likely for strong states
- More likely when threat is nearby
- Internal or external means

Bandwagoning

- Align with the rising power
- Aims to share the gains or avoid harm
- More likely for weak states
- More likely with no available allies
- Accepts subordination

THE DIFFERENCE THAT MATTERS

States tend to balance against threat rather than raw power: proximity, intent and offensive capability all matter.

Educational reference. Whether balancing is automatic or requires deliberate statecraft is a long-running debate.