

What is a Superpower?

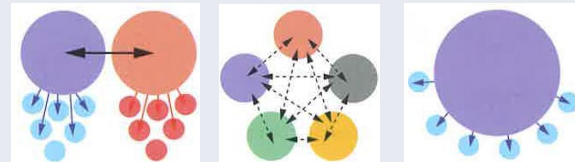
Definition: A nation with the capacity to project dominating power and influence around the world, sometimes in more than one place at once.



- Mackinder's 'Heartland' Theory (1904) to explain geographical balance of power.
- Whoever controls Asian/European landmass ('Heartland/Pivot' area) would have the resources and ability to control the rest of the world

Changing Centre of Power

Patterns of power



Bi-polar

Multi-polar

Uni-polar

Patterns of power change over time

- 1815:** British navy unmatched – easy to maintain control over colonies, resources, protect trade routes
- 1820:** British Industrial Revolution begins – economic growth and expansion
- 1880-1913:** Scramble for Africa – Europeans vying for control of colonies. British Empire largest.
- 1914-1919:** WWI
- 1939-1945:** WWII – fight for power (and ideology) – brief multi-polar world order - hit to British pre-eminence
- 1945:** Cold War begins – bi-polar world order – USA/USSR
- 1947:** India's Independence – loss of colony for UK
- 1955-1975:** Vietnam War – American involvement abroad – proxy war
- 1960:** Nigerian Independence from UK – loss of colony
- 1976:** End of communism in China (death of Mao Zedong) – China 'switches on' and opens up to world trade – economic growth due to industrialisation and TNCs
- 1991:** Dissolution of USSR/end of Cold War – end of bi-polar era. USA uni-polar world order beings.
- 2001-2014:** Americans in Afghanistan – evidence of global reach of USA

Characteristics of Superpowers

1. Physical size and position	Land mass, landlocked/water access, border neighbours.	1. Russia (17 million km ²) 2. Canada (10 million km ²) 3. USA (9.8 million km ²)
2. Economic power and influence	GDP, investment, TNCs, powerful currency, organisations (G20)	% of GDP in 2015 (USA 22.4%, EU 18.4%, China 13.4%, Japan 6.2%)
3. Demographic factors	Population size, labour force, market for sales	1. China (1.86 billion) 2. India (1.33 billion) 3. USA (327 million)
4. Political factors	Allies, OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development), G8/20	G8: Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, UK, USA
5. Military Strength	Military/defence/R&D budget, size of army, how far weaponry can travel	Largest military spending budgets: USA, China, Saudi Arabia
6. Cultural Influence	News, entertainment, language spoken	Largest TNCs are mainly American or Chinese.
7. Natural Resources	Oil/metal resources, energy production, OPEC influence over oil prices	Most resources owned by TNCs (Sinopec – China, Shell/BP – UK, Saudi Aramco – Saudi Arabia, Exxon Mobil – USA)



Emerging Powers

BRICs are playing a more significant role in global economic/political systems and environmental governance (G20 and UN Climate Change Conference).

Strengths	Weaknesses
Brazil: Hosted World Cup and Olympics, biodiversity, ½ of S. America's GDP, energy independent	Economy suffers from boom/bust, small military, relies on primary products, deforestation
Russia: Large army, nuclear capacity, oil/gas, UN Security Council, 9 th largest economy	Tough relationship with the 'West', inequality, ageing population, pollution
India: Large, young (English, educated) population = economic potential, nuclear armed military	Widespread poverty, poor infrastructure, pollution, debt, conflict with Pakistan
China: Highly educated (IT) large population, modern infrastructure, large GDP, large military, global investor	Relies on imports, ageing population, debt, authoritarian government, few global brands, largest CO ² emitter



Theories of Development

1. Modernisation ('Take Off') Theory

Preconditions for take-off (financial and infrastructural) must be met for change from traditional society to modern consumer society.

2. Dependency Theory

Core (developed) nations keep periphery (developing) in a state of dependency based on flows of goods and money.

3. World Systems Theory

Nations split (flexibly) into core/semi-periphery/periphery with goods and money flowing between them.

Neo-Colonialism

Definition: the use of economic, political, cultural, or other pressures to control or influence other countries, especially former dependencies.

Cold War USA/USSR using neo-colonialism and proxy wars to compete for power.

China/Africa Contemporary example of neo-colonial control

Advantages: debt-relief, China gets raw materials (ex. Oil), development of infrastructure (schools, roads, railways), loan packages, low price of Chinese goods, jobs, technology transfer

Disadvantages: local African producers undercut, influencing African governments, poor working conditions and low wages, tied aid



Hard Power
Use of force to exert influence, aggressive, coercive

'Smart' power combines both

- Military action (or threat)
- Economic sanctions and diplomatic actions
- Coercive policy (tied aid, trade agreements)
- Political influence, moral authority

Soft Power
Persuade, attract, appeal, and lobbying to gain power

BBC

McDonald's

- Cultural attractiveness

Influences on the Economy

IGOs – arose at end of WWII (capitalism vs. communism). Unequal voting rights for superpowers in IGOs – extend influence.		
1. IMF	-1944 -Global stability -Loans to developing nations	✗ Unequal voting rights (USA 16.5%) ✗ Loan conditions - impossible for developing nations to repay
2. World Bank	-1944 -Loans to developing nations to encourage industrialisation	✗ Benefits mostly TNCs ✗ Loans in 70s/80s funded rainforest clearance and had impossible conditions of repayment
3. WEF	-1971, Davos -Switzerland -Conference to discuss, promote globalisation	✗ Not actionable, just a forum for discussion among elites (business, political, academic)
4. WTO	-1995 -Reduce barriers to global trade -free-trade agreements	✗ Poor countries not protected as cheaper imports undercut locals

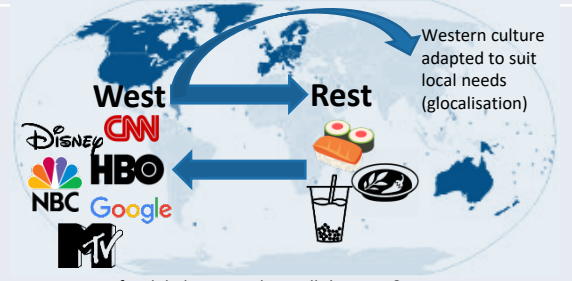
TNCs (Transnational Corporations) – operate in many countries around the world, often with HQ in developed, Western countries.

5. TNCs	-Been around since 17 th C -Now bigger than ever -Shifting to Asia	✗ Desire for profit drives everything – not held accountable otherwise ✗ Some have profits larger than entire countries - powerful
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Cultural Influence (Food, Arts, Media)

Culture - Ideas, social behaviour and customs of a society.	'Westernisation' - Process of becoming familiar with or converting to the customs and practices of the West	Hybridization - the blending of elements from different cultures leading to the creation of a new culture – dilution of distinctive cultures
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A form of 'soft' power to exert influence around the world. With the dominance of the USA/EU in cultural power, some people have referred to the 'Westernisation' of global culture. Top 6 global media TNCs have all originated in the USA.



Emergence of a global mono-culture all the same? Homogenization.

Global Politics – Financial, Military, Climate Crisis'

United Nations (UN): formed after WWII as a peace-making and discussion forum, IGO, had 193 members as of 2016, improve human rights (social and economic development) and assist in humanitarian disasters.

- UN Security Council – prevent conflict, 5 permanent members (with veto power) and 10 rotating. Authorizes peacekeeping missions.
- International Court of Justice (ICJ) – settles disputes between member nations, judges represent emerging/superpowers from each region
- Conference of Parties (COP) – meets annually to manage progress on climate change action (ex. Paris Agreement, 2015)

North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO): formed 1949 at start of Cold War, attack on one member is an attack on all, diminished influence since until recently – Russian involvement in Crimea, Ukraine – now extra troops stationed

Australia, New Zealand and United States Security Treaty (ANZUS): 1951 treaty that has allowed the USA to maintain influence in the Pacific

European Union (EU): founded in 1956 as a trading alliance, now also involves free movement of people, common currency, reduce inequality between members

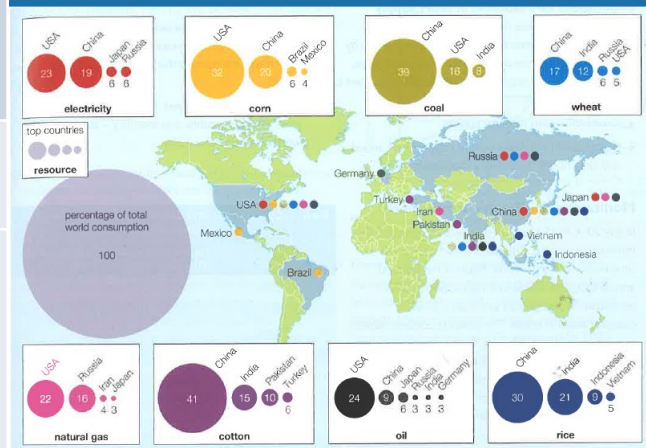
North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA): USA/Canada/Mexico, relates to economic concerns, no free movement

Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN): formed in 1967, includes ten Southeast Asian nations for greater cooperation for economic growth

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC): established 1988, monitors peer-reviewed articles and presents to the UN to understand risks associated with climate change

Increase interdependence Global geopolitical stability Global solutions for global problems Wider pool of resources for success Prevent conflict Cooperation for economic growth		Bureaucratic 'red tape' - inefficient decisions Too large – unwieldy systems Huge budgets Biased towards developed countries Only as good as weakest link
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Superpowers and the Environment



Increasing demand for resources (food, fossil fuels, water, minerals) linked to increasing global population and rising global middle class. Leading to pollution, deforestation, habitat destruction, climate change, erosion etc.

Global Agreements on CO₂ Emissions – Varying Commitments

Paris Agreement (2015): -Signed by 195 countries -Goal to limit global temperature increase to well below 2 °C above pre-industrial levels; and to pursue efforts to limit the increase to 1.5 °C -Individual targets for individual countries with regular monitoring -Not legally binding	USA: Originally a key signatory of the agreement under Obama with an ambitious plan to reduce emissions, but Trump has since pulled USA out of agreement. Some American governors are still making progress though. <div style="text-align: right; color: red; font-weight: bold;">↓</div>	China: Up until 2010 lots of people in China were sceptical about climate change. Now, the majority believe it exists, and have renewed their efforts to reduce emissions through investment in renewables. <div style="text-align: right; color: green; font-weight: bold;">↑</div>
	Russia: Supported agreement despite scepticism about climate change. Most still believe that Russia isn't actually in favour and is making little effort to make change. <div style="text-align: right; color: red; font-weight: bold;">↓</div>	EU: reflects belief of majority of Europeans that climate change is a serious problem. Has been at the forefront of climate initiatives and makes grants towards renewables. <div style="text-align: right; color: green; font-weight: bold;">↑</div>

Contested Spaces

Arctic	Intellectual Property - China
-200 nautical mile limit allows countries to control seabed and access resources -ownership disputed -Arctic contains 1/8 th of world's untapped oil, 1/4 of natural gas -important route for shipping 'over the top' as more sea ice melts -fishing industry	-Counterfeit goods – infringe on patent rights held by the inventors – estimated to be nearly half a trillion dollars / year -Footwear (24%) most counterfeited good -More than 60% of counterfeit goods originate in China. USA hardest hit – most infringements to intellectual property -As much as 5% of goods imported to EU are fakes -Goods trafficked through major transport hubs and areas of weak governance, organised crime

Crimea and South China Sea

-Tensions over territory/influence and resources -Crimea: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Previously under USSR rule, then independent, and then annexed in 2014 by Russia. Ethnically Russian, but not treated well by Russia. Evidence of Russian expansion /power. -South China Sea: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> China claims the sea as their own, though disputed among other countries. Contains 28 billion barrels of oil, fishing resources, shipping lanes. 	-Tension/conflict in the Middle East may present challenges to global superpowers (but likely only regional influence) -Significant energy resources, overly reliant – OPEC founding nations – 13% of world gas supplied by Qatar and 18% of oil reserves in Saudi Arabia (85% of GDP) -Militarily – nuclear capabilities (Iran), 60% of all drones produced in Israel, Saudi Arabia 3 rd largest army in the world -Internally rife with conflict (religious/ethnic tensions) and varying alliances with USA
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Challenges Within Superpowers

Current developed world powers are struggling with internal challenges. UK/EU and USA are <u>both</u> struggling with deindustrialisation (ex. Rust Belt, USA and 'The North', UK), financial crisis of 2007-08, political polarization, ageing populations, and race tensions in some regions.	
UK/EU: -By 2025 1/5 th of the population will be over 65 -USD \$597bn in annual military spending -74% of the adult population is overweight -Low (3-4%) unemployment, but higher in the EU -Significant spending on healthcare	USA -Reliance on imported oil and gas, some of which comes from Russia -Bank bailouts have increased national debts -Massive military spending (US \$576 billion) -Differing perspectives on space exploration

Looking to the Future?

Unipolar: continued USA dominant and interdependence	Global Governance: increased cooperation through IGOs	Multi-Polar: increased influence of BRICs, less USA power
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