

The first axis: Definition of Great power concept

The notion of great powers came about to distinguish between the most and least powerful states. Historically the concept emerged during the age of colonization and trade in the sixteenth century. IT gained currency after the 1648 Peace of Westphalia and the Congress of Vienna in 1815.

German historian Leopold von Ranke suggested in 1833 that a great power “must be able to maintain itself against all others, even when they are united,” .Since the 20th century, the study of international relations has focused variously on great powers’ exertion of both military strength and economic resourcefulness to achieve hegemonic influence.

After World War II devastated most of the great powers of Europe, the United States and the Soviet Union were left as the major powers in the global arena (“superpowers”). After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the superpower status of the United States was challenged primarily by the rise of Russia and China as great powers. Other sizable countries with emerging economies, like Brazil, India, and South Africa demonstrated rising influence in this period. The European Union, has also challenged the unipolarity of the United States’ influence by means of its considerable area, population, and wealth.

A great power, often referred to as a superpower, is a nation that possesses significant influence in international affairs through political, economic, or military means. A great power, or superpower, is a nation that can exert its power and influence on international affairs through political, economic, or military means. There are no established criteria for what classifies a nation as a great power, and as such, any list is highly subjective.

Prior to World War II, the combination of a strong economy and military was largely considered essential for a nation to become a great power. After the war, however, several nations with limited military might, such as Germany and Japan, focused on building an economic advantage to achieve great power status.

Unlike other states, great powers possess a capacity to shape not only their immediate surroundings but the global order itself – defining the rules, norms and structures that govern international politics. Historically, they have been seen as the architects of world systems, exercising influence far beyond their neighborhoods.

The concept of great powers is a complex one, with traditional definitions focusing on wealthy states with economic power, large military capabilities, and involvement in the international system's economic and security matters. However, the study of great powers has been influenced by the realist tradition, which defines them in terms of their relative power to other states. Power is measured in terms of relative military powers, economic power, and potential power, including factors such as population size, raw materials reserves, technological levels, educational development, and unused fertile territory.

The possession of nuclear weapons has also played a significant role in determining which states are major powers in the international system. The international community generally distrusts minor powers pursuing nuclear weapons.

Great power differ from regional powers, whose influence is largely confined to specific areas. Nations such as Turkey, India, Australia, Brazil and Japan are influential within their neighborhoods. But they lack the global reach of the U.S. or China to fundamentally alter the international system.

The roles of these regional powers is often defined by stabilizing their regions, addressing local challenges or acting as intermediaries in great power competition.

In the twenty-first century, economic power, rather than military might, became the primary force behind global influence. The United States remains the world's dominant economy and wields considerable political power, but China's booming markets have given it a global influence. Germany and Japan, two nations

left without strong militaries since World War II, have turned their focus on economic matters into positions of global power.

Russia remains an international player even after being stripped of G8 status after it annexed the Crimean peninsula in 2014. The United Kingdom and France are still powerful nations, despite being considered to have slipped from the ranks of great powers by some observers. India's fast-growing economy and the oil wealth of Saudi Arabia and Iran have also given those nations consideration as great powers.