



Edexcel AS and A level Geography

Topic Booklet for Area of Study 4: Human Systems and Geopolitics, Topic 7: Superpowers

Practical support to help you deliver this Edexcel specification

Our specifications offer an issues-based approach to studying geography, enabling students to explore and evaluate contemporary geographical questions and issues such as the consequences of globalisation, responses to hazards, water insecurity and climate change. The specification content gives students the opportunity to develop an in-depth understanding of physical and human geography, to understand the complexity of people and environment questions and issues, and to become critical, reflective and independent learners.

The AS and A levels in Geography are linear, and all assessments are at the end of the course. The AS Assessment will be at the end of the first year, and the A level Assessment will be at the end of the second year.

The specification has been designed so that the content is clear and that it is manageable for centres to deliver within the guided learning hours over a one-year (AS level) or two-year (A level) period.

The guided learning hours are 180 for an AS level and 360, over two years, for an A level. This document provides a topic guide for teaching Topic 7: Superpowers, and can be adapted by centres to fit their own contexts and teaching styles. It has been produced as an example approach and is not intended to be prescriptive. The topic guides indicate resources that you can use to support your teaching. These are only suggestions and you are encouraged to use a wide range of resources to suit the needs of your own students.

The advised teaching time for Topic 7 is 18 guided learning hours; i.e. roughly 6 hours per enquiry question (EQ). This requires some blending together of the detailed content. In the guidance below, suggestions are made about contextualisation or stretch challenges that may be suitable for more able students, as well as expected lesson outcomes for those less able. Please note that these are suggestions only and not specific syllabus requirements.

Each enquiry question is broken down into three sections, beginning with a quick overview of the breadth of the enquiry question followed by a more detailed explanation of the key concepts and processes, examples of teaching strategies, guidance on integrating geographical skills, and a summary of the key terminology required. The structure is suggestive, not prescriptive.



Synoptic linkages and case study nesting

Our synoptic themes help students see 'the bigger picture', by encouraging them to make geographical links between topics and issues. To enable this, and support exam preparations, we've continued to signpost 'Players' (P), 'Attitudes and Actions' (A) and 'Futures and Uncertainties' (F) throughout the specification content.

Key synoptic links here are with Topic 3: Globalisation. In covering Topic 3, students will be aware of the interdependence between countries in today's increasingly globalised world. They will understand the role of IGOs, TNCs and national governments in both political and economic decision-making, and how this can make some states more wealthy and powerful than others. They will also have learnt about cultural globalisation, giving them some insight into the soft power that forms a key part of superpower strength.

Topics 5 and 6: The Water Cycle and Water Insecurity and The Carbon Cycle and Energy Security, also link to this topic. Both Topics 5 and 6 look at the rising demand for resources and the social, economic, environmental and political impacts of insecurity, including rising tensions between nations.

Finally, centres are required to choose between Topics 8A: Health, Human Rights and Intervention, and 8B: Migration, Identity and Sovereignty, both of which link well with Superpowers. In 8A, students study the role of IGOs once again, as well as the impact of neoliberal policies on development. Topic 8A also studies different forms of geopolitical and military intervention, which would provide students with examples of superpowers and emerging nations exerting their influence globally, along with an evaluation of the mixed success of such actions.

On the other hand, in Topic 8B students study contested borders, so may have looked at the Russia-Ukraine conflict, and also the role of colonialism and its demise in shaping the modern world. Students will study the role of IGOs in detail, again looking at different forms of geopolitical intervention, and also how IGOs work to manage global environmental problems with varying success. Finally, students will look at political tensions in the BRIC and other emerging nations.

There are a number of case studies that will overlap between topics, a key example being China. The rapid growth of China will be relevant in many topics, looking at the causes and impacts both locally and globally. IGOs such as the UN, IMF and World Bank, and trade blocs such as the EU and NAFTA will also be studied in many different topics within the course. Case studies of water and energy conflict, such as the Middle East, OPEC and Russia-Ukraine, could be used in several topics.



Introduction

Overview

This topic requires an understanding of global superpowers and the characteristics that create a superpower. Certain countries and organisations extend more influence globally than others, and this pattern of dominance changes over time. Superpowers play a key role in the global economy, global politics and the environment, and contradicting ideas can lead to tensions and geopolitical implications.

- EQ1: What are superpowers and how have they changed over time?
- EQ2: What are the impacts of superpowers on the global economy, political systems and the physical environment?
- EQ3: What spheres of influence are contested by superpowers and what are the implications of this?

The aim of this topic pack is to provide an overview of the geopolitical landscape with which students will need to become familiar. This is a popular topic from the Edexcel 2008 GCE specification, and includes much of what was studied before, as well as some new ideas and concepts. The ideas studied here will build on those studied in the year 1 Topic 3: Globalisation, and help to put key ideas from other topics into context. This will enable students to gain a more holistic understanding of geography, as well as being up to date with topical geopolitical issues and challenges.

EQ1: What are superpowers and how have they changed over time?

Teaching approach over 6 hours

Lesson 1 (1hr)	Definitions and characteristics of superpowers, emerging powers and regional powers. How superpowers extend their influence globally, and how mechanisms for maintaining power have changed over time (Key ideas 7.1a, b, c)
Lesson 2 (1hr)	Patterns of power change over time – the British Empire (Key ideas 7.1c and 7.2a)
Lesson 3 (1hr)	Patterns of power change over time – Cold War era and emergence of China. Geopolitical implications of changing patterns of power (Key ideas 7.2b and c)
Lesson 4 (2hrs)	Emerging countries – the rise of the BRIC nations and their strengths and weaknesses (Key ideas 7.3a and b)
Lesson 5 (1hr)	Development theory and changing patterns of power (Key idea 7.3c)



Lesson 1: Definitions and characteristics of superpowers, emerging powers and regional powers

Overview

The relative power of different countries can be considered in terms of their economic power, political power, military power and cultural power. Other characteristics should also be taken into account, such as demographics, access to natural resources, location, neighbouring countries, etc. Students can rank these different aspects of power in order of importance (Key idea 7.1a).

Students will need to consider different mechanisms of maintaining power, from 'hard' power to 'soft' power. There has been a shift in terms of the relative importance of these different types of power (Key ideas 7.1b and c).

More able students might consider different interpretations of 'hard' and 'soft' power on a spectrum, and research examples of the use of different types of power.

Less able students should be able to recognise what constitutes strengths and weaknesses in terms of different characteristics of power.

Key concepts and processes

There are several key pillars of power that determine the relative superpower status of different countries. However, these are not clear-cut and there are numerous characteristics that could be considered when judging the level of global influence an individual country has.

Countries also have a number of tools at their disposal in terms of extending their global influence and maintaining their power. These mechanisms of maintaining power sit on a spectrum from 'hard' to 'soft' power, and vary in their effectiveness. 'Hard' power is defined as power through force or coercion and is likely to involve military power or economic sanctions. For example, Britain's expansionist policy in the imperial era would be considered 'hard' power, as would military actions taken in Iraq and Afghanistan. Economic sanctions such as those taken against Iran to try to prevent it from developing its military nuclear capability would also be an example of 'hard' power. 'Soft' power, on the other hand, is exerting influence through favour and persuasion, and is therefore likely to be based on cultural power. The global dominance of the USA through TNCs such as Coca Cola and McDonald's, as well as media, TV, films, etc. would all be examples of 'soft' power. It is argued that true superpowers need to combine both a 'hard' and 'soft' power approach to become a 'smart' power.

Mackinder's geostrategic location theory, also known as Heartland Theory, was introduced in the early twentieth century. The theory is based on the idea of a 'pivot area' or 'Heartland' covering a large portion of the Eurasian continent. Mackinder theorised that whichever country held political control over this Heartland region would in turn exert dominance over the rest of the world. This theory is based on the key premise that control over land equates to political power and so is essentially geographical in its outlook. Mackinder's theory has received much criticism since its publication, and some would argue that its applicability to today's geopolitical landscape is questionable. On the other hand, it is claimed that the theory has



influenced key foreign policies on a global scale and so remains highly relevant and influential today.

Guidance on teaching

Giving students country flags and/or country profiles and asking them to rank them in order of power can be a good starter for this topic. Another alternative would be to use top trumps. Students can mind map and rank characteristics of superpowers, with less able students perhaps being supported with a card sort or diamond 9 activity.

Students will then need to consider how these could be categorised on a spectrum from 'hard' to 'soft' power. It will be important that students grasp that there is not a hard and fast definition of 'hard' and 'soft' power and that the concepts exist on a continuum, with different degrees of persuasion and coercion for each action taken.

Students need to construct power indexes using complex data sets, so could use websites such as the [CIA World Factbook](#), the [BBC News Country Profiles](#) and this [Soft Power Index](#) from ComRes, or [this one](#) from the Institute for Government.

There is a four-mark question in the SAMs which could be used to consolidate this content: 'Explain why defence spending is seen as crucial to the development of superpower status.' Students could also write their own four-mark questions and mark schemes (using the SAMs example to guide them) on characteristics of superpowers, and swap with a partner for some peer assessment. It is also worth looking at examples of essay questions from past Edexcel 6GE03 papers to give students extra practice.

Lesson 2: Patterns of power change over time – the British Empire

Overview

The British Empire maintained its power during the imperial era by direct colonial control. Students will need to be aware of the timeline of the rise and fall of the British Empire, and the causes of this (Key ideas 7.1c and 7.2a).

More able students might consider the role of 'soft' power, as well as 'hard' power, in the dominance of the British Empire.

Less able students should be able to describe when the British Empire gained and lost its superpower status and explain the causes of these changes.

Key concepts and processes

As patterns of power change over time, there may be one, two or multiple superpowers extending their power globally. This would be referred to as a uni-polar, bi-polar or multi-polar world. The existence of different numbers of superpowers and the relationships between them can affect geopolitical stability and the prospects of peace and war.

The British Empire was a superpower, which at its height reigned over nearly one quarter of the world's land surface and more than a quarter of its population. During



this period, the world was considered to be uni-polar. This links to Mackinder's theory discussed above, and could also be linked to Frank's dependency theory (outlined below), due to the relationship the UK had with its colonies. It is interesting to consider the relative importance of 'hard' and 'soft' power in the UK's global dominance during the Empire period.

Guidance on teaching

Students need to be aware of the extent of British dominance (i.e. its sphere of influence and alliances) during the imperial era. A simple mapping exercise can help to illustrate this, and this can be supported through animations such as this one from [The Map as History](#) website, or alternatively [this one](#).

In 1947, India gained independence from Britain, marking the beginning of the end for the British Empire. It can be useful to look at India as a case study to help students grasp more clearly how direct control was used by the British. It is important that students are aware of the historical context and the importance of the Second World War in the collapse of British imperial power. Many Geography A level students last studied history in Year 9, and so it really is vital to start from the beginning.

Lesson 3: Patterns of power change over time – Cold War era and the emergence of China

Overview

Following the decline of the British Empire, there were several changes in patterns of power which brought about varying degrees of geopolitical stability and risk. Over time, indirect control has become a more important way of maintaining and extending power (Key ideas 7.2b and c).

More able students might consider the shift from 'hard' to 'soft' power, but also examine the use of 'soft' power in the past, and the continuing importance of 'hard' power today. They could research examples to support this.

Less able students should be able to outline a timeline of changes in patterns of power, and give reasons for these changes.

Key concepts and processes

After the decline of the British Empire, a bi-polar era began with the USSR and the USA as the two key superpowers in the Cold War era. As the capitalist USA and communist USSR sought to extend their influence globally, this led to geopolitical instability and proxy wars in many different parts of the world, such as the Korean peninsula and Vietnam. The fall of the USSR in 1991 meant a return to a uni-polar world, with the USA as the world superpower. During this uni-polar era, the use of 'soft' power by the USA has been crucial in maintaining their hegemony, though this is now threatened by the rise of China. Neo-colonial mechanisms, such as the use of tariffs and taxes to control trade, and Chinese investment in Africa will need to be examined.



Guidance on teaching

Again, students will need some historical context on the opposing ideologies of the USSR and USA, and China in the twenty-first century. They will need to look at characteristics of both states, and be aware of examples of them extending their influence globally. Students will need to be able to outline and explain the causes of changes in patterns of power, and examine how and why the use of 'soft' power has become more and more significant over time.

Students need to map past, present and future spheres of influence and alliances using world maps. This could be done by assigning each group or pair a different element of power to map and present to others, e.g. USA military presence overseas, locations of McDonald's restaurants, Commonwealth nations, NATO countries, etc. It is worth looking at 6GE03 exam papers from the legacy specification for useful resources.

Students will need to be aware that different patterns of power have brought about varying degrees of geopolitical stability and risk. For example, the Cold War period led to instability and proxy wars in many parts of the world, as mentioned above.

Lesson 4: Emerging countries – the rise of the BRIC nations

Overview

In recent years, a number of emerging countries such as the BRIC nations (Brazil, Russia, India, China) have grown significantly in power and influence. Each country has its own strengths and weaknesses, which change over time. These countries are increasingly influential in global economic and political systems, as well as environmental governance (Key ideas 7.3a and b).

More able students might research then rank the relative power of BRIC nations, both now and in the future, based on current and projected characteristics which affect their 'hard' and 'soft' power status.

Less able students should be able to outline strengths and weaknesses of each BRIC nation.

Key concepts and processes

Jim O'Neill coined the acronym BRIC in 2001 to identify four large and fast-growing economies that were likely to have an increasing global influence in the future. The rise of the BRIC nations marks a shift towards a potentially multi-polar world in future. This could have both positive and negative impacts on the rest of the world in terms of political stability, economic growth and environmental governance.

There are a number of other key country groupings that could be considered here such as the MINT nations (Mexico, Indonesia, Nigeria and Turkey), said to be the next economic giants. The MINTs also form part of the 'Next Eleven' (along with Iran, Egypt, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Philippines, Vietnam and South Korea), a group of eleven countries identified by Goldman Sachs as having the potential to be the largest economies of the twenty-first century. The BBC has produced a series of radio programmes on the MINTs, found [here](#), which could be useful. Many other



groupings such as the Maghreb countries, the African Lions and the CIVETS could all be explored. It is important to stay up to date as power patterns evolve.

Guidance on teaching

Students will need to be able to outline the strengths and weaknesses (economic, political, military, cultural, demographic and environmental) of each country. This could be done as an individual or group research task, followed by presentations or a marketplace activity. Google Docs could be used to allow students to collaborate and share more easily. It might be useful to support less able students by modelling the task and demonstrating the type of information required using a card sort activity or teacher presentation perhaps.

Once information has been shared, students need to consider the impact of the BRIC nations on the rest of the world. In terms of political stability, students could look at the Russia-Ukraine conflict; for impact of economic growth, the role of China in Africa could be investigated; and for environmental governance, students could look at the role of the BRIC nations at the Paris 2015 COP21 climate agreement.

Lesson 5: Development theory and changing patterns of power

Overview

Development theory can be used to help explain why patterns of power have changed over time. Students need to look at world systems theory, dependency theory and modernisation theory (Key idea 7.3c).

More able students might critique each of the theories, providing real-world examples to support.

Less able students should be able to describe and explain each of the theories, linking to real-world examples.

Key concepts and processes

Modernisation theory was developed by Rostow in 1960. It is a five-stage model that outlines five phases that countries must pass through to develop and gain more power.

Dependency theory was put forward by Frank in 1966. It split the world into developed core countries and underdeveloped peripheral countries. He suggested that the relationship between the core and periphery helps to maintain and increase the power of the core countries whilst the peripheral countries remain weak.

The final theory, world systems theory, was popularised in the 1970s by Wallerstein. His was a three-tier model with the core, periphery and semi-periphery. Wallerstein argued that cycles of growth and stagnation which typify capitalist development allow some countries to shift between the tiers, becoming more or less powerful, thereby leading to changing patterns of power over time.



Guidance on teaching

Students can often struggle to apply theories to the real world, so it is important to exemplify the application of the theories. It is worth recapping the theories regularly with quizzes, quick Q&A, or games such as Pictionary or Articulate to help students gain a solid understanding of the theories.

Key vocabulary for EQ1

Key term	Definition
Superpower	A state or organisation that is able to extend a dominant influence globally.
Emerging power	A state or organisation that is growing significantly in power and beginning to extend a more global influence.
Regional power	A state or organisation with a sphere of influence that tends to be continental rather than global.
'Hard' power	Power through force or coercion.
'Soft' power	Power through favour or persuasion.
Hegemony	Leadership or dominance, especially by one state or organisation.
Colonialism	The acquisition of political control over a territory by another country, and the subsequent settlement of that territory.
Neo-colonialism	The use of economic, political and cultural power to influence other countries.
Direct control	Maintaining control through 'hard' power, e.g. colonialism.
Indirect control	Maintaining control through 'soft' power, e.g. neo-colonialism.
Uni-polar	A world with a single, dominant superpower.
Bi-polar	A world with two dominant superpowers.
Multi-polar	A world with a multitude of superpowers.
Geopolitical	Referring to the influence of geographical factors on international relations.



Resources

- There is a TED talk [here](#) from Joseph Nye called 'Global power shifts'.
- There is a TED talk [here](#) from Martin Jacques called 'Understanding the rise of China'.
- The BBC News website provides [Country Profiles](#) which can be used to research measures of power and development of different countries.
- The [CIA World Factbook](#) is an alternative source of data to construct power indexes.
- There is a BBC radio series on the MINT countries, which can be found [here](#).
- The Economist has an article on 'soft' power [here](#). There are many other useful articles in The Economist, making it a good source, especially for more able students.

EQ2: What are the impacts of superpowers on the global economy, political systems and the physical environment?

Teaching approach over 6 hours

Lesson 6 (1hr)	Superpower influence on the global economy through IGOs (Key idea 7.4a)
Lesson 7 (1hr)	Superpower influence on the global economy through TNCs and culture (Key ideas 7.4b and c)
Lesson 8 (2hrs)	Role of superpowers and emerging nations in international decision-making (Key ideas 7.5a, b and c)
Lesson 9 (1hr)	Superpowers and the environment (Key ideas 7.6a and b)
Lesson 10 (1hr)	Emerging nations – impact on economy and environment (Key idea 7.6c)

Lesson 6: Superpower influence on the global economy through IGOs

Overview

Superpowers work to promote free trade and capitalism through a variety of IGOs such as the World Bank, IMF, WTO and World Economic Forum (Key idea 7.4a).

More able students could evaluate actions of IGOs and their impact on the global economic system.

Less able students should be able to name examples of IGOs and explain how they affect the global economy.



Key concepts and processes

There are a variety of inter-governmental organisations, many of which were created by western global superpowers at the Bretton Woods Conference in the USA in 1944. The aim was to set up institutions that would prevent future wars as well as stabilise and boost the global economy. Through these IGOs, the USA and EU are able to exert considerable influence over the global economy. Some argue that this allows superpowers to maintain their power at the expense of other countries. Often, powers such as the USA and EU vote with each other, allowing them to push through policies in their own interest.

Guidance on teaching

It is important that students are able to exemplify the role of IGOs, and how they have enabled superpowers to exert such a significant influence over the global economic system. There are plenty of opportunities for synoptic links, with the role of IGOs in located examples from other topics being referred to here, whilst being taught elsewhere, or vice versa. One example is the role of the IMF and WTO in implementing structural adjustment policies and encouraging privatisation and removal of subsidies and trade restrictions, such as in Bolivia or Senegal.

Students need to use graphs of world trade growth with linear and logarithmic scales. There are plenty of useful [graphs](#) from the WTO and [The Economist](#) which could be used, as well as this logarithmic scale [graph](#) from the WTO demonstrating the link between free trade and global economic growth.

Lesson 7: Superpower influence on the global economy through TNCs and culture

Overview

TNCs are key players in the global economy, and are largely owned by superpowers and emerging powers. Through TNCs, superpowers are able to exert their influence both economically and culturally, thus maintaining and increasing their status (Key ideas 7.4b and c).

More able students could compare TNCs from the USA and emerging powers such as China and India, and consider how these TNCs have had positive and negative economic and cultural impacts for different players.

Less able students should be able to give named examples of TNCs and provide details of their impact on economic wealth and culture.

Key concepts and processes

Transnational corporations allow superpowers and emerging powers to spread their influence globally, both in terms of economics and culture. Through mergers and acquisitions, TNCs have been growing rapidly and some of the largest TNCs now have annual profits that exceed the GDPs of many lower and middle income countries.



TNCs can dominate the economic landscape in terms of production and sales, making it possible for them to affect the pricing of commodities, affecting trade and controlling technologies. TNCs also exert control of technology globally through patents, with companies such as IBM regularly registering the highest number of patents per year. Through their often much-needed investment in developing countries, TNCs may influence government policies, both directly and indirectly. Easily recognisable, language-free global brands such as McDonald's and Nike, and global media corporations such as Disney, cause the spread of western culture throughout the rest of the world.

Guidance on teaching

An engaging starter could be to have a logos quiz to identify the top ten richest TNCs and name the country they are from. Forbes update their list each year; their latest list can be found [here](#).

Students will be familiar with the role of TNCs from their work on globalisation in Topic 3, so there is plenty of opportunity for synoptic links and revision. Students could investigate the history of TNCs, and find out what proportion of the world's production and sales they control. They can look at the expansion of TNCs across the world, such as the growth of McDonald's or Samsung – which countries did they expand to first; how and why?

Companies such as McDonald's now operate in more than 100 countries, with over 30,000 restaurants serving more than 68 million people daily. McDonald's is able to exert influence both through the food it sells, and also the values and culture it represents. Students could also consider the idea of reverse colonialism, with the Indian TNC Tata buying out British companies such as Corus and Jaguar Land Rover, and its recent announcement to withdraw from all of its UK operations, putting thousands of British jobs at risk.

Lesson 8: Role of superpowers and emerging nations in international decision-making

Overview

Superpowers and emerging nations play a key role in international decision-making concerning people and the physical environment. They can heavily influence the international response to conflicts, humanitarian crises and issues such as climate change. Through military, economic and environmental alliances, as well as the UN, superpowers and emerging nations can dramatically affect people's well-being, the environment and geopolitical stability (Key ideas 7.5a, b, c).

More able students could critique a number of global alliances and organisations, consider which are most and least effective, and which superpowers gain most from them.

Less able students should be able to name examples of global alliances and organisations, and explain how they affect international decision-making.



Key concepts and processes

Many of the global alliances and organisations mentioned here, such as NATO, the UN, EU and NAFTA, were orchestrated by the current superpowers. Superpowers are able to exert considerable influence over social, economic, political and environmental issues via these institutions.

The UN is probably the most influential and best-known international alliance in the world. It was set up in 1945 to prevent war and settle disputes, though its remit has widened considerably since to incorporate issues such as climate change, sustainable development, human rights, terrorism, gender equality, and much more.

Guidance on teaching

Students will need to examine each of the alliances and organisations mentioned in the detailed content (see spec). This could be done as a research and feedback exercise, or students could be given information on a particular organisation/alliance and become an expert before sharing the information through a speed-dating activity. The students need to know what each one is, some background information (when it was set up etc.), and be able to give examples of its global impact. Those mentioned in the detailed content are:

- military – the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and the Australia, New Zealand and United States Security Treaty (ANZUS)
- economic – the EU, NAFTA and ASEAN
- environmental – IPCC
- political – the UN (Security Council, International Court of Justice, peacekeeping missions and climate change conferences).

Again, there are a number of synoptic links with Topic 3: Globalisation and Topic 6: The Carbon Cycle and Energy Security.

Lesson 9: Superpowers and the environment

Overview

Superpowers tend to have huge resource demands (food, fossil fuels and minerals). This can cause environmental damage and a significant contribution to carbon emissions and global warming (Key idea 7.6a).

Some superpowers are more willing to act than others in order to reduce carbon emissions and reach global agreements on environmental issues (Key idea 7.6b).

More able students could look at trends in the changing resource demands of some of the key players (USA, EU, China, India), and evaluate the actions taken by each.

Less able students should be able to outline the changing resource demands of superpowers and give examples of the environmental impacts of these demands.

Key concepts and processes

Superpowers and emerging nations have increased their wealth and standard of living dramatically, leading to an accelerating rise in the demand for energy and



other resources. This can cause both local and global environmental damage, from localised river pollution to climate change and global sea level rise.

Providing these resources can lead to deforestation and desertification, as well as scarring the landscape during mining, not to mention the carbon footprint associated with the transportation of some of these goods. As demands for energy grow ever higher, more environmentally sensitive areas such as the Arctic could be exploited, with unconventional sources and methods such as fracking growing more popular, and energy pathways becoming more complex and risky.

Some superpowers such as the EU have become global leaders in tackling climate change, with the EU 20:20:20 targets and the EU Emissions Trading Scheme (EU ETS), which was the first major carbon trading market and remains the biggest one today. In comparison, it could be argued that the USA has been more reluctant to lead on climate change, with its failure to ratify the 1997 Kyoto Protocol and its recent shift towards unconventional sources of energy. In the meantime, the rise of China led to it becoming the world's largest carbon emitter in 2007, and it accounts for half of the world's annual coal consumption. China's acute problems with air pollution have been well documented in the media, with headlines such as 'China's "airpocalypse" kills 350,000 to 500,000 each year'. Recently, however, some commentators are claiming they are seeing a shift in China's approach to climate change, with China becoming a world leader in renewable energies. It is important to stay up to date; for instance, [these statements](#) made by the USA and China since Paris 2015 may be subject to change as the US presidential election approaches.

Guidance on teaching

There are plenty of synoptic links here with Topic 3: Globalisation and Topic 6: The Carbon Cycle and Energy Security. Students could be allocated different countries to investigate, working independently or in small groups perhaps.

Students need to map emissions and resource consumption using proportional symbols. You can find an [animation](#) of changes in world coal consumption from the U.S. Energy Information Administration, and it is also well worth looking at the International Energy Agency's [energy atlas](#), which has over 40 maps available. Changes in global oil consumption, particularly since the oil price drop, would be interesting to investigate, and [these](#) resources from the Global Energy Statistical Yearbook could help.

Lesson 10: Emerging nations – impact on economy and environment

Overview

The growth in middle-class consumption in emerging nations affects the availability and cost of key resources, as well as having environmental implications (Key idea 7.6c).

More able students could evaluate the impacts of growth in resource consumption.

Less able students should be able to outline trends in growth of middle classes and resource consumption in emerging nations, and give details of some impacts.



Key concepts and processes

The recent and predicted growth in resource consumption is huge. China and India already consume large proportions of global resources, and this trend is set to continue and even accelerate due to their large populations and continued rapid economic growth. China's middle class has now overtaken that of the USA to become the largest in the world, and some say as many as 500 million Chinese could enter the global middle classes over the next decade. At a global level, consumption of food is predicted to rise by 70–100% by 2050, and energy consumption is expected to increase by 30–60% by 2050. The 2016 6GE03 paper and resource booklet could be useful resources here.

Guidance on teaching

There are clear synoptic links with Topic 3: Globalisation, Topic 5: The Water Cycle and Water Insecurity, and Topic 6: The Carbon Cycle and Energy Security. Depending on order of teaching, this lesson could be a useful opportunity to revise with a quick-fire quiz and timed teamwork, to produce revision resources in order to recap key case studies.

Key vocabulary for EQ2

Key term	Definition
Capitalism	An economic and political system where trade and industry are controlled by private owners for profit, rather than by the state.
Neoliberalism	Advocates privatisation, free trade and reduced state intervention.
Westernisation	Global spread of western ideas, beliefs and practices.
Culture	The ideas, customs, beliefs and behaviours of a group of people.
Geostrategy	Strategy to deal with geopolitical problems.

Resources

- The IMF has produced a [factsheet](#) that outlines the role of the IMF and the World Bank.
- The Bretton Woods Project outlines key concerns about the IMF and the World Bank [here](#).
- The International Energy Agency has a useful document called [Key World Energy Statistics 2015](#).
- The Economist has useful articles such as [this one](#) on the rise of the Chinese middle class.



EQ3: What spheres of influence are contested by superpowers and what are the implications of this?

Teaching approach over 6 hours

Lesson 11 (1hr)	Tensions and conflict in economic, environmental and political spheres (Key ideas 7.7a and b)
Lesson 12 (1hr)	Conflict in the South and East China Seas or Russia/Europe (Key idea 7.7c)
Lesson 13 (2hrs)	Changing relationships between developing nations and superpowers lead to tensions on different scales and multiple fronts (Key ideas 7.8a, b and c)
Lesson 14 (1hr)	Existing superpowers face economic problems that could undermine their power (Key ideas 7.9a and b)
Lesson 15 (1hr)	Superpower futures (Key idea 7.9c)

Lessons 11 and 12: Tensions and conflict in economic, environmental and political spheres; Conflict in the South and East China Seas

Overview

Tensions can arise over the acquisition and exploitation of physical resources (e.g. Arctic oil and gas), as well as intellectual property rights and control over territory (Key ideas 7.7a, b and c).

More able students could evaluate the current and potential conflicts between superpowers.

Less able students should be able to describe and explain a number of tensions and conflicts between superpowers.

Key concepts and processes

Tensions between superpowers are nothing unusual, though some would argue the recent shifts in patterns of power and the emergence of multiple potential superpowers has led to an increasingly unstable geopolitical landscape.

The importance of intellectual property rights has grown significantly since the 1990s, with the globalisation of technology as well as rapid breakthroughs in new technologies. In addition, the rise of emerging nations has provided a key market for counterfeit goods, one of the most prevalent ways to violate international property rights. Some commentators have argued that these countries have a weak ability to protect intellectual property rights, and little or no interest in doing so. An estimated 5–10% of world trade is in counterfeit goods. This is thought to cost hundreds of thousands of jobs in places such as the USA and EU, and hundreds of billions in lost revenue for businesses every year. China is accused of being a leading violator of intellectual property rights, leading to heightened tensions.



There are also tensions over territories and physical resources such as those in the South and East China Seas. China, Japan, Vietnam, the Philippines, Taiwan, Malaysia and Brunei all have competing claims for both island chains and sovereignty over ocean areas. The islands may have natural mineral reserves, while the sea is a major shipping route and home to vital fishing grounds which support the livelihoods of people within the region. Tensions have risen dramatically over the last few years due to China's programme of island-building and increasing naval patrols.

In some cases, these tensions have resulted in open conflict such as that between Western Russia and Eastern Europe. Students will look at the Russia-Ukraine conflict when studying Topic 6: The Carbon Cycle and Energy Security.

Guidance on teaching

Students will be familiar with the idea of conflicts over resources from their work on Topic 5: The Water Cycle and Water Insecurity, and Topic 6: The Carbon Cycle and Energy Security. They will be less aware of issues surrounding intellectual property rights, so an engaging starter could be to see if they can spot the counterfeit item in a photo quiz. They can then go on to consider the implications of counterfeiting on different players globally.

There are useful articles from BBC news on conflict in the [South China Sea](#) and in the [East China Sea](#), which provide useful background information for students' detailed case study. It is also worth looking at the 2013 6GE03 from the legacy specification.

Lesson 13: Changing relationships between developing nations and superpowers lead to tensions on different scales

Overview

Increasing economic ties between emerging nations and the developing world, such as those between China and African countries, can bring both opportunities and challenges. As Asian countries such as India and China grow in economic importance, this can increase the geopolitical influence of the region, but also lead to tensions within the region (Key ideas 7.8a and b).

Tensions in the Middle East present an ongoing challenge to superpowers and emerging powers due to complex geopolitical relations, alongside the key role they play in global energy supply (Key idea 7.8c).

More able students could evaluate the positive and negative impacts of the rise of China and India, locally, regionally and globally.

Less able students should be able to outline the growing economic ties between China and Africa, and detail some of the advantages and disadvantages.

Key concepts and processes

China's investment into the African continent has grown exponentially in recent times. In order to fuel its rapid economic development, China needs to secure a reliable supply of raw materials and a growing market for its manufactured goods.



China is now Africa's largest trade partner, buying about one-third of its oil from the continent. In 1980, trade between China and Africa totalled around \$1 billion. In 2015, it totalled over \$160 billion. This can generate both opportunities and challenges within Africa and China. This is a frequent theme in The Economist and articles such as [this one](#), and [this one](#) from the BBC might be useful.

The concurrent rise of China and India has increased their geopolitical influence. Both are keen to reform global governance institutions to reflect the new balance of power. This is evidenced through the creation of the G20 in 1999 and the BRICS New Development Bank. The bank will likely create competition for existing institutions such as the World Bank and IMF, both of which are dominated by the traditional western superpowers. However, the rise of China and India has also led to economic and political tensions within the region such as that in the South and East China Seas. There are many useful articles on this topic such as [this](#) from the WEF, and it is also worth looking at the Superpowers section on 6GE03 papers from the legacy specification, such as [2016](#) and [2013](#).

Students may already have some knowledge on tensions in the Middle East from Topics 5 and 6: The Water Cycle and Water Insecurity and The Carbon Cycle and Energy Security. This will give them an opportunity to consolidate this knowledge and consider how this links to superpowers.

Guidance on teaching

There is an interesting documentary from the BBC called '[The Chinese are Coming](#)', which gives students a memorable insight into this case study. Students tend to find these issues really interesting as they shed some light on things they will regularly have seen in the media, but may know little about.

Students need to plot the changing location of the world's economic centre of gravity on world maps. This [article](#) from Business Insider is a useful example.

Lesson 14: Existing superpowers face economic problems which could undermine their power

Overview

The USA and EU face economic problems that challenge their power. The economic costs of maintaining global military power and space exploration are questioned in some existing superpowers (Key ideas 7.9a and b).

More able students could evaluate the economic problems in the USA and EU, as well as the costs and benefits of maintaining global military power and space exploration.

Less able students should be able to outline and explain economic problems facing the USA and EU.

Key concepts and processes

As the world's economic centre of gravity has shifted eastwards, traditional superpowers in the west have faced numerous economic problems such as debt, unemployment and economic restructuring. Due to the global shift of manufacturing



taking advantage of cheap labour, tax breaks and relaxed health/safety and environmental regulations, primarily in SE Asia, areas of deindustrialisation and deprivation have developed in the west. Students will have studied places such as Detroit and Liverpool in Topic 3: Globalisation, and possibly Topic 4A: Regenerating Places. There has been a shift away from the production of goods, leading to the USA having a significant trade deficit. National debt in these countries has increased too, and it is well publicised that China owns a significant proportion of the USA's debt, arguably compromising US hegemony. Unemployment has been a huge challenge, especially following the 2008 global financial crisis, which led to unemployment rates peaking at around 10% in the USA and around 11% in the EU. It is also worth following the latest UK decisions about Hinkley Point funding from China. This [BBC article](#) may be useful.

Guidance on teaching

Students could rank or complete a diamond 9 activity of economic problems and challenges faced by the USA and EU. A debate about whether or not to invest in space exploration and/or nuclear weapons could be held. These will be ideas that students are relatively familiar with from their prior learning in this topic, as well as the others mentioned above.

Lesson 15: Superpower futures

Overview

Patterns of power continue to change, and the future balance of global power in 2030 and 2050 is uncertain. There are a range of possible scenarios, such as continued US dominance, a bi-polar world, with the US and China as the key superpowers, or a multi-polar future, with a number of nations and organisations exerting considerable influence across the world (Key idea 7.9c).

More able students could evaluate the likelihood of different superpower futures in 2030 and 2050, giving reasons for differences and supporting ideas with evidence.

Less able students should be able to outline and explain some range of potential superpower futures.

Key concepts and processes

The global pattern of power is changing. However, it is very difficult to predict how it will change due to the number of variables and unknowns. Students will need to use various data sources that they used earlier on in the topic, and combine these with future projections in order to devise plausible and justifiable future superpower scenarios.

Guidance on teaching

With this being the final lesson of the topic, it could be useful to generate discussion through using an opinion line, where students share whether they think the future will be uni-polar, bi-polar or multi-polar, and give reasons for their answer. Students can consolidate knowledge and evaluation skills by developing counter-arguments to each other's points.



Students need to analyse future Gross Domestic Product (GDP) using data from different sources such as PwC, Standard Chartered, the World Bank, etc. More able students could consider why the predictions might vary.

Key vocabulary for EQ3

Key term	Definition
Spheres of influence	The global extent of a country or organisation's power.
Interdependence	The dependence of two or more nations or organisations on each other.
Economic restructuring	Shifting from an economy based on one sector, e.g. primary or secondary, to an economy based on another sector, e.g. secondary or tertiary.

Resources

- This is a [link](#) to the report from the McKinsey Global Institute on their research into the changing location of the world's economic centre of gravity.
- You can find GDP predictions [here](#) from PwC and [here](#) from HSBC.

More able students could be given these links, while it may be more useful to provide shorter, printed sections for less able students. There are numerous other sources available.