

## ***Analysis of Superpowers' Formation through Geopolitical Research Modeling with a Systemic Approach: A Review of Naval Power Significance with China as the Possible Superpower***

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Received: 26 April 2023

Accepted: 17 October 2023

Published: 26 March 2024

### **Abstract**

#### **Background and Theoretical Foundations:**

The analysis and evaluation of the potential power of various states in global arenas have consistently been subjects of scholarly attention and discussion within the field of international relations. This inquiry becomes particularly salient during pivotal historical moments and major shifts in global civilization, especially during periods of power transition: Which country is poised to become the next superpower? Historically, nations such as Iran, Greece, Italy, Spain, France, and England, and more recently, the United States, have played significant roles in shaping global civilization and exerting considerable influence worldwide. A key factor contributing to their power has been their maritime strength; their formidable presence at sea has historically served as an indicator of their overall power.

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**Methodology:** The objective of this article is to present a comprehensive geopolitical model designed to assess the potential power of China through a geopolitical lens. The research methodology employed is qualitative and exploratory in nature. Given the importance of geography and human agency, this study is based on an algorithm that incorporates variables grounded in geopolitical knowledge. The "power cloud probability" model conceptualizes countries as comprehensive systems employing quantitative data analysis and multi-modelling methods to examine the formation of maritime superpowers and assess China's maritime potential.

**Findings and conclusion:** This model enhances our understanding of complex geographical phenomena and facilitates the analysis of global power dynamics and influence. It provides a deeper insight into how geographical elements interact with geopolitical actors. Moreover, the modeling process streamlines research efforts by creating a structured framework for simultaneously examining multiple variables. China's emergence as a maritime superpower has been significantly influenced by its interactions with other countries, particularly the United States, its neighboring states, and nations along the Belt and Road Initiative routes. Although China has made substantial strides in enhancing its maritime capabilities, challenges persist. Its relationships with other countries will continue to play a crucial role in shaping its future maritime trajectory.

**Keywords:** Superpower, Geopolitics, System, Naval Power

## **1. Introduction**

The analysis and investigation of the potential emergence of superpowers in the global arena have consistently been focal points for scholars in political science, political geography, economics, and government officials. During periods when the relationship between societal elites and government agents is under scrutiny, this task has been entrusted to intellectuals across various disciplines within the humanities. Understanding the conditions under which a country ascends to superpower status enables agents to strategically address their geographic



weaknesses (both natural and human) domestically and to develop detailed strategic plans for their governance structures. This understanding also facilitates the exploitation of economic (trade and market), cultural, technological, and security cooperation opportunities (Costa et al., 2021). Identifying future superpowers is crucial for maintaining a country's power domestically and preserving its position on the international stage. Consequently, recognizing the potential for a country to become a superpower is of particular significance for government officials (Jarnicki, 2016).

Intellectuals and societal elites, aiming to determine whether a country will achieve superpower status in the near future, may seek alternatives to governmental intentions or adopt more classical and robust approaches. These approaches often involve examining the grand strategies of countries through their key documents and speeches or exploring historical issues and theories in a more abstract manner. In academic circles, some scholars analyze these phenomena by generalizing the insights of past thinkers or applying theories from other disciplines. Others may create empirical theses based on collected statistical data (Nagra, Mustafa, & Imran, 2019).

The primary challenge of such studies can be likened to the Iranian allegory of the elephant and the blind men, where each observer perceives only a part of the whole. To address this issue, this article aims to present a comprehensive model. The author achieves this by conducting extensive library research and descriptive analysis of 55 study models in the domains of power, crisis, and geographical space. By integrating a systemic perspective with John M. Collins' grand strategy framework and Michael Brecher's crisis management model, along with insights from political geography and geopolitics, this article proposes a geopolitical model that offers a broad and holistic view of the emergence of superpowers. This model is intended to aid officials, thinkers, and

policymakers in understanding tangible geopolitical weight and applying this understanding in political statements, doctrines, plans, and programs. The approach underpinning this model is based on a systemic perspective, as defined below.

## **2. Research Methodology**

The data collection method employed in this article is primarily library-based, wherein the author systematically utilized a range of domestic and international books and articles to develop a coherent model aligned with the study's topic. The research approach adopted in this article is interdisciplinary and involves qualitative content analysis. The interdisciplinary approach integrates the study of political geography, which has its roots in Europe, with the science of international relations, which originated in the United States.

These two disciplines, both of which are taught as academic fields in universities in Iran and globally, converge within an interdisciplinary framework to enhance geopolitical knowledge. Both fields share a common focus on the study of politics and power. However, European academics have traditionally emphasized the competitive geographical landscape of Europe, whereas American scholars have historically given less attention to geography due to the country's geographical isolation. Instead, American academic research has predominantly concentrated on the subject of governance. It was only when the United States began to engage in global competition that geographical considerations gained prominence among American scholars. It is noteworthy that theories proposed by thinkers such as Alfred Thayer Mahan emerged from military contexts and field studies, subsequently influencing the domain of political science.

Another methodological approach utilized in this article is qualitative content analysis, which facilitates the examination of geopolitical codes and the



understanding of fundamental power dynamics and international relations. The Maxqda qualitative data analysis software was employed to conduct the content analysis of the studies.

### **3. Gaps in the Literature**

The review of the extant literature concerning the potential emergence of superpower nations has consistently revolved around the analysis of prevailing geopolitical, economic, and cultural theories, as well as the examination of both hard and soft strategies and historical comparisons. The complexity inherent in these broad dimensions entails numerous variables, making their summarization and classification a challenging endeavor. Conducting specialized studies within the realm of geopolitics often necessitates the involvement of research centers that can assemble expert working groups, allocate specific budgets, and adhere to designated timelines. One effective approach to studying these extensive dimensions is through the examination of variables within a modeled framework (Team, 2015).

Modeling serves as a crucial instrument in geopolitical studies, as it enables researchers to simulate and forecast the behavior of geopolitical actors and systems. Various types of models are employed in this field, including systemic geopolitical modeling, agent-based modeling, and historical models. These models facilitate a comprehensive understanding of how geopolitical structures evolve over time and their subsequent impact on global politics (Elatskov, 2019).

Furthermore, spatial modeling has gained increasing significance in geopolitical studies due to its capacity to calculate movement in space and analyze the spatial dynamics of political activities. In summary, modeling

constitutes an invaluable tool for comprehending and predicting the behavior of geopolitical actors and systems.

## **4. Data Analysis**

### **4.1. The Importance of Modeling**

Modeling serves as an essential instrument in geopolitical studies, facilitating the simplification and comprehension of intricate geographic phenomena (Soare & Antohe, 2012). It is imperative to assess the discrepancies between geographic entities and the models employed to interpret them (Brunet, 2001; Daras & Mazis, 2017).

Geopolitical modeling significantly enhances the overall investigation by offering a framework to understand how various factors interact to shape a nation's power and influence within the international system (Morgado, 2023). These models can address a range of policy questions from a quantitative perspective, with a pronounced focus on issues related to economic development and globalization (Team, 2015). By taking into account a country's geography, natural resources, transportation systems, and neighboring communities, geopolitical analysis can yield insights into current and future trends, thereby informing policy decisions and predictions (Voss & CFA, 2016; Kim, Liu, & Desmarais, 2023).

In essence, geopolitical modeling is an invaluable tool for comprehending the intricate dynamics of power and influence in the international system. This approach ensures that researchers avoid the pitfalls of limited perspective, akin to the parable of the blind men and the elephant (Maulana Bita).

### **4.2. What is the Systemic Approach?**





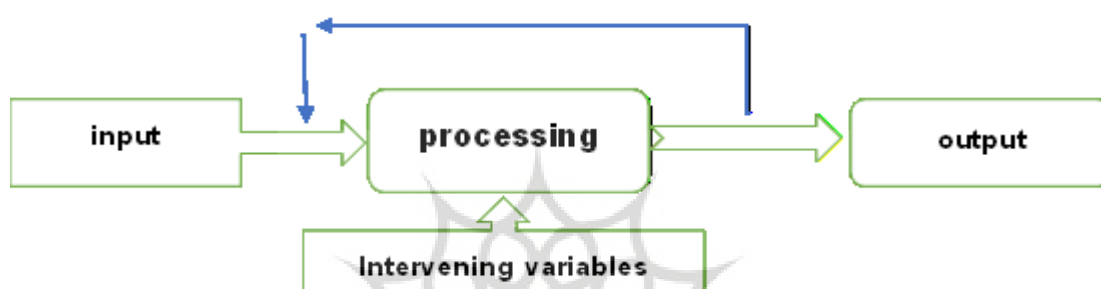
The utilization of geopolitical knowledge as input data within a system can generate power. This perspective is encapsulated in the systemic approach, which posits that countries, organizations, and processes should be viewed as systems (Akbarova, 2022). The systemic approach is one of the methodologies employed in strategic management. It aids in comprehending both the internal and external processes and relationships of an organization by emphasizing the interconnections among different elements within the system. When this approach is effectively implemented, it yields power. Moreover, the more accurately processing agents attend to their primary data, the greater the power generated. In other words, a country that can produce more power than others and maintains a lead in power production can attain and sustain superpower status (Mustafakulov, 2020).

A system comprises various components such as: 1) variables, 2) processing units, 3) output results, 4) intervening elements in processing, and 5) feedback mechanisms. Prominent thinkers who have contributed to the systemic approach and theory in the global context include Oliver Cox, Samir Amin, Giovanni Arrighi, Andre Gunder Frank, and Immanuel Wallerstein (J. Zhang et al., 2020). These scholars are associated with world-systems theory, an interdisciplinary field that seeks to understand the world system as a whole rather than focusing on individual countries or regions.

Systems thinking is an approach to reasoning and problem-solving based on the fundamental concept of a "system." The book "Systems Thinking: Building Maps for a World of Systems" by John Boardman and Brian Sauzer provides an overview of systems thinking. It explores the framework and graphical techniques for understanding and identifying new ways to more effectively solve complex problems. In this context, the system under

discussion is data-oriented and processing-oriented, characterized by input and output mechanisms (Yener & Şahin, 2023).

**Figure 1: Systemic Framework for Processing Geopolitical Knowledge**



**Note:** (source: authors)

In the study of political geography and the corresponding analysis of geopolitical knowledge, researchers encounter two critical components essential for the presentation of articles and reports: (a) the identification of the environment, which encompasses both physical geography and human geography (raw inputs), and (b) the concept of space, defined as human activities within the environment from past to present that create spatial dynamics.

Government agents in a nation-state are tasked with identifying existing anthropogenic spaces and determining the raw geographical and human environments to achieve their strategic goals. These agents are required to formulate strategies that are congruent with both the historical spatial configurations and contemporary environmental data. The alignment of decision-makers' interests and preferences with the existing environmental and spatial inputs enhances the efficacy of grand strategy formulation, thereby accelerating the emergence of power components (Azmi & Heydari, 2014).





On the international stage, this approach aids in maintaining and enhancing a country's position. The extent of a country's geopolitical influence—referred to as its geopolitical weight—relative to other countries can manifest in various effects: soft, neutral, or hard. At the outset, the author examines space and environment through a systemic lens. In this context, the processing environment is analogous to processing in computer sciences, while in human sciences, it is termed strategy. The intersection of computer science and humanities lies in their shared foundation of logical reasoning. However, while computational processing units yield precise outputs, the range of variability in human sciences is considerably broader.

#### **4.3. System Input Variables: Environment and Space**

In the field of political geography, the concepts of environment, space, and place are fundamental categories that researchers utilize in their scientific investigations. Typically, in academic articles and university theses, the third chapter is dedicated to discussing the environment, while the fourth chapter focuses on the analysis of spaces and places. However, there is considerable debate regarding the definitions and distinctions between these categories.

Yadullah Karimipour, a full professor of political geography at Khwarazmi University in Tehran, Iran, posits that environmental science is subsumed under the broader category of space. Conversely, Hossein Rabiei, an associate professor of political geography at Khwarazmi University, contends that, aside from philosophical considerations, space is a smaller unit within the larger context of the environment. Thus, a comprehensive understanding of the environment is crucial in geopolitical studies, as it elucidates the intricate interactions between political power, territory, and geographic space. Hadi Zarkani, an associate professor of political geography at Ferdowsi University

of Mashhad, argues that human presence and interactions within an environment shape the space to serve their interests.

Mohammadreza Hafeznia, a full professor at Tarbiat Modares University in Iran, defines space as a collection of places that maintain systematic relationships with one another. He views space as a segment of the Earth's surface characterized by length, width, and height. Yi-Fu Tuan, a Chinese-American geographer and full professor at the University of Minnesota, explores space and place in his book "Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience." Tuan asserts that spatial understanding emerges from comprehending one's surroundings. Extensive studies have always been necessary to differentiate between space and environment. Recent research in political geography has increasingly focused on distinguishing these two categories.

In summary, within political geography, the distinction between environment and space can be articulated as follows: Space refers to human endeavors to create preferred territories within the environment. In contrast, the environment encompasses stable geographical factors. In other words, space represents the strategies (policies, plans, programs) that humans implement to achieve their objectives within the environmental context.

**Man + the environment of stable geographical factors (human geography (raw) + natural geography) = space (in smaller dimensions of place)**

Environment: The term "environment" encompasses the natural and physical conditions such as land, water, air, and climate that influence political processes and outcomes.



Space: "Space" refers to the geographical context within which human political processes and outcomes transpire. Space is also a social construct influenced by political factors such as power dynamics, territorial boundaries, and spatial planning (Zarghani, 2010).

Throughout human history, in efforts to ensure survival and navigate power relations—whether through coexistence, crisis, conflict, or war—humans have first shaped their territories according to their needs, interests, and subjective preferences within a raw natural environment. Subsequently, they have sought to master these environments through strategic actions (Rabiei et al., 1400). Human presence within a comprehensible environment shapes spaces. Over time and on a larger scale, this presence contributes to the understanding of the spatial environments of different regions. For instance, American strategist Alfred Thayer Mahan designates areas such as Mesopotamia, the Iranian plateau, the Armenian plateau, Anatolia, and the Arabian Peninsula as the Middle East, whereas Iranian scholars refer to this region as Southwest Asia. Essentially, the presence of a thinking individual and their understanding of environmental characteristics shape spaces.

For a nation to maintain or augment its power (e.g., aspiring to become a superpower), it must consider two crucial categories as foundational inputs:

1. The Environment: This includes natural geographical factors (stable factors) such as mountains, valleys, rivers, seas, and resources, as well as human geographical factors (less stable factors) such as population size, racial composition, and population capabilities.

2. Space: This is created by historical agents and involves complex interactions that may resemble the cyclical debate of "which came first, the chicken or the egg." According to the researcher, throughout history, stable

geographical factors such as rivers and springs have attracted less stable human factors around them, thereby creating civilized spaces.

#### **4.3.1. Environmental factors**

Environmental factors encompass both geographically stable elements, known as natural geography, and less stable components, referred to as human geography (Karimipour, [Year]).

##### **4.3.1.1 Relative Position of Countries**

The relative position of countries pertains to their geographical location and features in relation to neighboring nations and natural landmarks such as oceans and rivers. This spatial context can significantly influence a country's history, culture, economy, and international relations (Popov & Cherenev, 2022). Elements such as neighboring countries, regional dynamics, and access to oceans can shape political alliances, trade agreements, and cultural exchanges. Coastal nations often benefit from trade routes and tourism opportunities, whereas landlocked countries may face economic development challenges (Jeevan et al., 2022). Navigable rivers can serve as transportation routes, sources of water, and sometimes act as natural borders between countries. Understanding the relative position of countries is essential for analyzing global affairs, international trade, and geopolitical dynamics (Vardomsky, 2023).

##### **4.3.1.2 Topography of Countries**

Topography refers to the physical features of a country's surface, including mountains, valleys, rivers, and seas. These features profoundly influence the natural environment, culture, and economy of a nation. Mountains can act as barriers, while valleys often provide fertile land suitable for agriculture. Rivers support ecosystems and facilitate trade, whereas seas impact coastlines and



weather patterns (Jacobs et al., 2022). Analyzing topography allows for a deeper understanding of a country's unique characteristics and the specific challenges and opportunities it faces. It also highlights the distribution of natural resources, the influence on weather patterns, and the impact of human activities.

#### **4.3.1.3 Mineral and Energy Resources of Countries**

Countries endowed with abundant natural resources, such as minerals, fossil fuels, or fertile land, often have enhanced opportunities for economic growth and development. However, this abundance can also lead to concerns about overexploitation and environmental degradation (Lee et al., 2023). For instance, Saudi Arabia's vast oil reserves have significantly contributed to its economic prosperity but have also raised environmental concerns due to its reliance on fossil fuels.

By understanding these environmental factors—relative position, topography, and resource endowment—scholars and policymakers can better analyze and address the complex interactions between geography and socio-political dynamics.

#### **4.3.1.4. Access to the Most Fundamental Biological Foundation**

Water is an essential and irreplaceable resource for all living organisms, underpinning human health, sanitation, agriculture, industry, and ecosystem functioning. Access to safe and clean water significantly impacts a country's economic development, security, and overall well-being. Water scarcity or unequal access can precipitate internal conflicts, political instability, and migration (Redhu & Jain, 2023). Countries with abundant or well-managed water resources may perceive themselves as more secure and potentially exert influence over nations with fewer water resources. For instance, countries

situated upstream of major rivers may possess leverage over downstream nations concerning water allocation. Reliable water resources are crucial for agriculture, industry, and energy production, thereby contributing to economic growth and prosperity. Nations with limited water resources may encounter challenges in achieving economic development, whereas those with ample water supplies may attract industry and investment. International cooperation and agreements to manage transboundary water resources are essential to avoiding conflicts (Padder & Bashir, 2023). Countries with significant water resources or advanced water management technologies may gain diplomatic influence and leadership roles in addressing global water challenges.

#### **4.3.2 Human Factors**

##### **4.3.2.1 Population**

A country's population plays a multifaceted role in its power and influence. A larger population can contribute to a more substantial labor force, increased economic power, and a larger domestic market. It can also provide a potentially larger military and foster innovation and creativity. However, a larger population can also strain resources, create social and political instability, and lead to environmental degradation (Cheng et al., 2021). The quality of the population, resource management, technological advances, and geopolitical context all influence the impact of population on national power (Niza, Bueno, & Broday, 2023). Recognizing these nuances and effectively managing a country's population is crucial for maximizing its national power.

##### **4.3.2.2 Race, Culture, and Religious Beliefs**

The roles of culture, race, and religion in countries are complex and interconnected. Culture encompasses shared values, traditions, and norms that shape national identity. Race can lead to social inequalities and discrimination





but also promotes diversity (Aung, 2016). Religion provides moral guidance and can influence social and political spheres. These factors are often intertwined, and understanding their roles is critical for addressing issues such as discrimination and promoting inclusive societies (Faleer, 2014). However, it is important to avoid generalizations and promote open dialogue and respect for different perspectives. Each country has its unique context that requires continuous learning and engagement.

#### **4.4. Examining the Existing Frameworks for Achieving Superpower Status**

Michael Brecher, a distinguished Canadian political scientist and professor in Quebec, earned his doctorate in international relations from Yale University in 1953 and subsequently joined the faculty of McGill University in 1954. His research areas include crisis theory, conflict and war, protracted conflicts/stable rivalries, foreign policy theory, international systems, and the international relations of the Middle East and South Asia. Brecher's geopolitical model for understanding the origins of war is regarded as one of the most reliable frameworks in crisis management. To create a comprehensive crisis analysis, Brecher delineated the international space, incorporating various variables at different scales. This model consists of four independent components that examine these variables systematically.

##### **4.4.1. System Properties and Global Structure Level**

At a global scale, the structural level variable pertains to the prevailing paradigm or pattern within which the world operates, influenced by key superpowers. This level encompasses the overall organization and arrangement of the international system, including relationships and interactions among its

components. For instance, some scholars in political geography view the world as undergoing a geopolitical transition, characterizing international relations as multipolar under the leadership of the United States (Sawal & Anjum, 2023). Other structural configurations are also considered but are not discussed here.

#### **4.4.2. Characteristics between Actors**

##### **4.4.2.1. Conflict Situation**

The conflict situation refers to the disputes between the target country and its neighboring or extra-regional countries. It encompasses a country's relationships with its neighbors and other global actors. Conflict situations diminish national power, as countries embroiled in multiple conflicts must allocate substantial resources to address security issues, thereby neglecting other components such as economic and cultural development (Lahiry, 2019). The economic surplus that could be invested in development is instead diverted to security expenditures, impacting the national status and power of the country. The duration, intensity, and relative strength of the involved countries influence the extent of this impact.

##### **4.4.2.2. Capability**

This dimension examines the capabilities of countries in areas such as military strength, economic power, diplomatic influence, resource availability, and communication infrastructure. "Capability" encompasses a broad spectrum of factors contributing to a country's overall power and influence in the international arena (Pomeroy & Beckley, 2019). This includes not only military prowess but also economic capacity, diplomatic skill, resource abundance, and technological advancements.

##### **4.4.2.3. Comparative Regime Analysis**



The issue of nuclear capability compares countries based on their nuclear power status. The nuclear energy debate between two countries can have both positive and negative implications for their potential to achieve superpower status. Possessing nuclear weapons can enhance a country's military power and prestige, provide greater leverage in international affairs, and deter aggression from other nations. However, the associated risks—such as catastrophic consequences and nuclear proliferation—can undermine trust and cooperation between countries (Klingelhöfer et al., 2023). The specific impact depends on various factors, including the intentions of the involved countries and the availability of alternative energy sources.

#### **4.4.2.4 Geographical Distance**

Geographical distance plays a crucial role in shaping the dynamics between hostile and competing countries. It affects their ability to exert power and influence, their vulnerability to attacks, and their potential for peaceful conflict resolution. Countries that are geographically close to each other can more easily project their power and influence, while those that are far apart face greater challenges in this regard. Proximity increases vulnerability to attacks and exposes neighboring countries to both conventional and unconventional warfare (Gartzke, 2010). Conversely, countries that are geographically distant are less vulnerable to immediate attacks and have more time to prepare for potential threats.

Geographical proximity can also facilitate conflict resolution through diplomacy and negotiation, as common interests and ease of communication are more likely. However, distant countries are more inclined to resort to force or military coercion to resolve conflicts (Zhidin, 2014). The impact of

geographical distance on superpowers depends on various factors, including military capabilities, economic power, and diplomatic relations.

For instance, advanced military technology, such as long-range missiles and cyber warfare capabilities, can mitigate the disadvantages of geographical distance. Economic power enables countries to project influence through trade and investment, while strong diplomatic relations can foster alliances and partnerships that transcend geographical barriers. Thus, while geographical distance is a significant factor, its influence is moderated by a country's overall strategic assets and capabilities.

#### **4.4.3. Characteristics of the Actor**

##### **4.4.3.1. The Age of the Regime: Historical Duration**

Examining the historical duration and type of government is crucial for understanding a country's behavior and power dynamics in the international arena. The political history of a country shapes its institutions, values, and approaches to diplomacy, negotiation, and conflict resolution (Pedrason, 2023). A thorough analysis of a country's governmental history can provide valuable insights into its international conduct and influence.

##### **4.4.3.2. Long-Standing Regimes**

Countries with long-standing regimes typically possess more established institutions, clear and consistent foreign policy goals, and a profound understanding of the international system. These countries often have extensive diplomatic experience and a nuanced comprehension of other nations' perspectives (Yörük & Gençer, 2022). Such attributes enhance their effectiveness in pursuing national interests on the global stage.

##### **4.4.3.3. Newer Regimes**



In contrast, countries with newer regimes may lack well-established institutions and display less clarity or consistency in their foreign policy objectives. These nations often have limited diplomatic experience and a restricted understanding of the international system (Hua, 1981). Consequently, they may be less effective in advancing their interests internationally and more vulnerable to external influence or manipulation.

#### **4.4.3.4. Type of Regime**

The type of regime significantly influences a country's behavior in the international arena. Democracies are generally more inclined towards compromise and multilateral cooperation, whereas authoritarian regimes may adopt a more assertive stance and pursue their interests through unilateral actions (Leeds & Davis, 1999).

#### **4.4.3.5. Duration of the Regime**

The duration of a regime also impacts its behavior on the global stage. Long-standing regimes may possess a greater sense of legitimacy and confidence, potentially making them more willing to take risks or challenge the status quo. Conversely, newer regimes may exhibit caution and risk aversion due to concerns about maintaining power (Bearce & Velasco-Guachalla, 2020).

#### **4.4.3.6. Land Size**

The size and shape of a country's landmass can influence the number of its land borders, thereby affecting strategic considerations, trade routes, and communication links. Generally, larger landmasses have more borders due to increased potential points of contact with other countries. Geographic features such as irregular coastlines or peninsulas can further increase the number of boundaries. However, exceptions exist, such as island nations or regions with

geographic limitations like mountains or deserts that limit land borders. Understanding these relationships provides insights into a country's security, trade, and diplomatic challenges in their quest for superpower status.

By integrating these factors into a comprehensive analysis, scholars can better understand the multifaceted nature of a country's potential to achieve superpower status within the global system.

#### **4.4.4. Situational Characteristics**

##### **4.4.4.1. Number of Actors and Heterogeneity**

The relationship between the number of neighboring countries and cultural heterogeneity is intricate and multifaceted. A country with numerous borders may experience increased potential for conflicts, but achieving cultural harmony can also be more challenging due to diverse cultural influences. This dynamic is influenced by several factors, including historical relationships, economic ties, and geopolitical interests (Li, 2023).

##### **4.4.4.2. Number of Actors and Conflicts**

The presence of multiple bordering countries can elevate the potential for conflict due to increased opportunities for border disputes, resource competition, ideological clashes, and historical grievances (Demir et al., 2023). For instance, the Balkan region's complex network of borders has historically been a source of tension and conflict.

##### **4.4.4.3. Heterogeneity and Cultural Cohesion**

Greater cultural heterogeneity among neighboring countries can pose significant challenges to achieving cultural cohesion. Differences in language, customs, traditions, and values can lead to misunderstandings, biases, and social





friction (Zhang, Xia, & Sun, 2021). For example, historical cultural differences have contributed to ongoing border tensions between India and Pakistan.

#### **4.4.4.4. Activity of Great Powers**

The activities of great powers within a region significantly impact the power dynamics and potential of other countries aspiring to superpower status. These activities encompass various aspects such as management techniques, doctrines, and national strategies directed towards other states. Great powers exert influence through direct means like military interventions, economic leverage, and diplomatic maneuvering, as well as indirect means such as power projection, knowledge and technology transfer, and global agenda-setting (Lemutov, 2023). Additionally, the responses of regional countries—whether through alliances, pursuing strategic autonomy, or focusing on internal development—play a crucial role in shaping these power dynamics and must be thoroughly examined in the context of assessing a country's superpower potential.

#### **4.5. Processing: Strategy Layout Unit**

The concept of strategy encompasses the art and science of planning and executing actions to achieve desired outcomes. In the context of nation-states, strategy refers to the long-term plans and actions undertaken to fulfill national objectives, which may include economic growth, national security, social development, and environmental protection (Paxton & Peace, 2020). Within the systems model, strategy represents the phase where human agency, equipped with tools and objectives, plays a pivotal role.

Strategies and tactics are typically categorized based on their implementation timeframes. Plans designed for periods shorter than one year are referred to as tactics. Conversely, strategies intended for periods exceeding

one year are termed strategic strategies. Additionally, there exist intermediate plans known as tactical-strategic strategies, which are designed for durations between one and three years (Rezende & Blackwell, 2019).

As previously elucidated, human beings formulate these strategies based on their interests, preferences, and beliefs, considering the existing human and natural environment as well as historical contexts within their territorial control. The primary aim is survival, followed by addressing needs that arise post-survival over extended periods. Thus, human agency is paramount in determining these strategies.

#### **4.5.1. Tactical Strategy**

Tactical strategies are specific, focused plans that enable organizations to achieve immediate goals. These strategies are clear, measurable, time-bound, and consistent. They are employed across various sectors, including commercial enterprises, government agencies, military operations, and non-profit organizations. Tactical strategies facilitate a focused approach, effective resource allocation, measurable progress, and consistency (Khalifa, 2021). They are essential for attaining short-term objectives and progressing towards long-term goals.

#### **4.5.2. National Strategy**

National strategy pertains to achieving objectives in the international arena. These strategies may encompass promoting trade and investment, developing foreign aid programs, participating in international organizations, or even engaging in military actions. In both peacetime and wartime, national strategy integrates and leverages all national resources to achieve national interests and goals (Evans, 2014). Within the framework of national strategy, general political strategy addresses international and domestic policy issues, while



economic strategy has both external and internal dimensions. Each element directly impacts national security to varying extents.

#### **4.5.3. Grand Strategy**

To date, no precise definition or comprehensive paradigm exists for grand strategy. In political science, it is often referred to as addressing a nation's fundamental challenges; resolving these challenges can propel a nation towards global influence. Grand strategy involves a dual focus: reflecting on historical contexts and envisioning future trajectories. For a country to ascend to superpower status, understanding its grand strategy is crucial. Two critical aspects of grand strategy are cost and the time required to achieve goals. An effective grand strategy achieves desired outcomes within a specified timeframe at minimal cost. This approach indirectly influences the geopolitical landscape of the target territory. Moreover, grand strategy should be nationalized over an extended period, aligning the country's macro-level objectives towards a specific goal that addresses its primary challenges (Scott, 2021).

Row	Types of strategies	Cost	Time	Encounter
1	tactical (military) strategy	Much	Low (core value threat)	<b>Direct</b>
2	National strategy	Much	limited	<b>direct and indirect</b>
3	Grand strategy	Low	vision 15 years old and older	<b>indirect</b>

**Table 1: The Formation of a Superpower**

**Source: (Research results)**

A superpower emerges within an environment where two primary conditions are met: (1) agents, decision-makers, and societal elites are provided with the necessary environmental and spatial inputs that form the foundation for strategic actions, and (2) these agents can adeptly guide the nation towards its political, economic, military, security, and social objectives with minimal cost and time. In essence, the synergy of human intelligence with fundamental environmental and geographic components, coupled with the implementation of a comprehensive grand strategy, propels a nation closer to superpower status (Kitchen, 2020).

The significance of cost and time in indirect confrontation is paramount in determining conflict outcomes. In any conflict scenario, one of the parties achieves its objectives by minimizing the costs and time invested. Indirect confrontation tactics—such as economic sanctions, propaganda, or political pressure—allow for this minimization. These methods typically require fewer resources than direct military engagements because they target the opponent's vulnerabilities rather than engaging in open warfare. Consequently, cost and time are crucial in assessing the effectiveness and sustainability of indirect confrontation strategies (James, 2021).

Time is also a critical factor in indirect confrontation. A strategy that involves prolonged indirect confrontation enables competing parties to mitigate adverse consequences. Instead of engaging in immediate combat, efforts can be directed towards exerting political, economic, or diplomatic pressure over an extended period. This approach can erode the opponent's resolve and increase the likelihood of achieving a favorable resolution without resorting to direct military conflict. Additionally, time allows for the consolidation of alliances and the building of public support, which can bolster the strategy of indirect confrontation and further weaken the adversary's position (Evans, 2014).



Therefore, cost and time are integral in shaping conflict outcomes through indirect confrontation methods. The consideration of financial resources and the feasibility of sustaining an all-out war influence the preference for economic or political measures over direct military conflict (Zhang, 2020).

#### **4.7. Intervening Elements**

Intervening elements within a system refer to factors or components that influence the behavior or outcome of a process. These elements can encompass both natural geography and human geography, exerting direct or indirect effects on the system's performance. Investigating these intervening elements is crucial for understanding system dynamics, identifying causal factors, enhancing implementation, and informing policy and decision-making. Such investigations can lead to more effective interventions and improved outcomes for the entire system (Murphy and Jones, 2018). Key intervening elements that can impact the grand strategy of nations include climate change, geological shifts, pandemics, and unexpected wars. For instance, the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly influenced national policies and strategies. Similarly, issues related to climate change and weather patterns are expected to play a critical role in shaping global power dynamics in the near future.

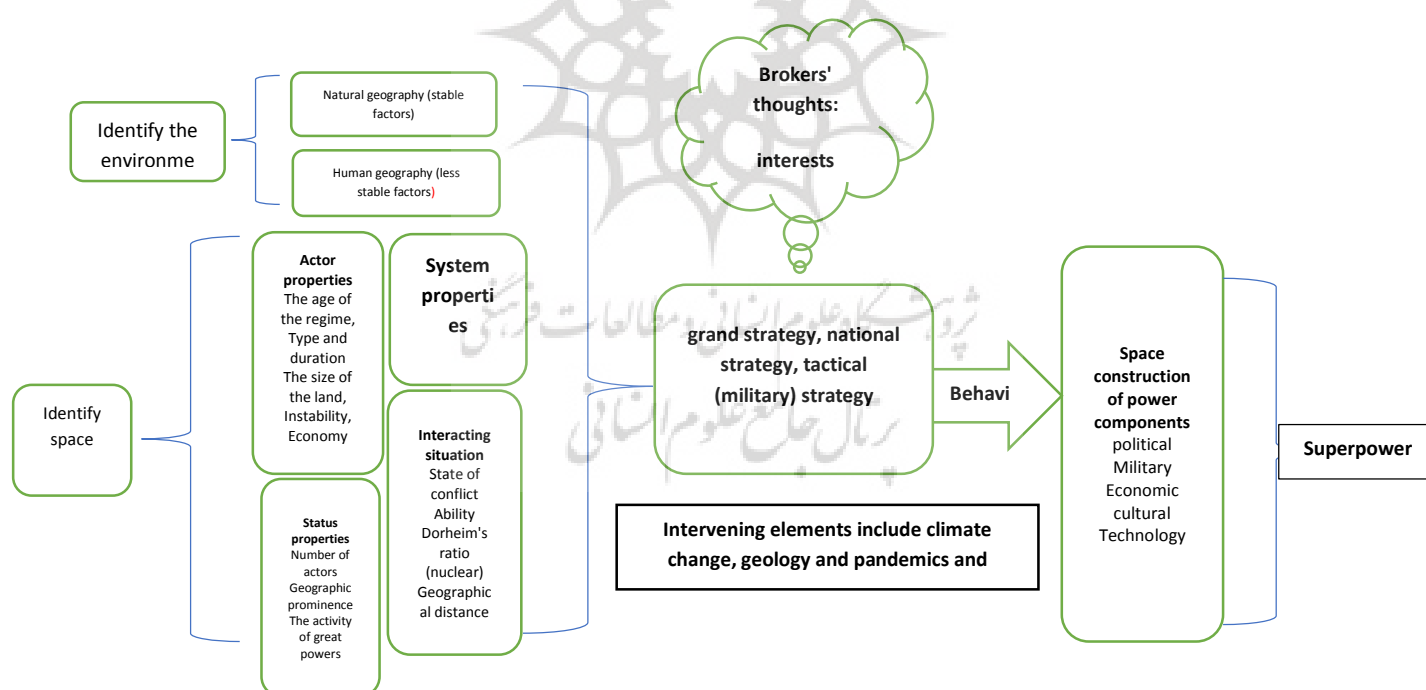
#### **4.8. Output of the Processing Unit**

A superpower is characterized by its ability to project power through a universally accepted paradigm of rules and values. Such a nation is distinguished by its possession of essential resources and primary data (economic, geographical, human, etc.) and can maintain this position over an extended period—typically half a century—with an effective strategy. A superpower exhibits three major capabilities in terms of influence:

1. Hard Influence: The ability to compel other nations to act in its favor through military or economic power.
2. Neutral Influence: The necessity for other countries to maintain relationships with the superpower due to mutual dependencies.
3. Soft Influence: The ability to attract and co-opt other nations through cultural, technological, and social appeal without coercion.

This multifaceted power manifests itself in various forms, including military, economic, t

**Figure 2: Systemic Model of Superpower Formation Based on Geopolitical and Strategic Variables**



Source: (Research results)





## **5. An Overview of the Possibility of the People's Republic of China Becoming a Maritime Superpower**

Naval superpowers have historically played a pivotal role in shaping global events. These nations have leveraged their control over maritime domains to expand their influence worldwide, utilizing trade, diplomacy, and military strength. Understanding the formation of maritime superpowers offers valuable insights into the dynamics of international relations and the factors contributing to the rise and fall of states. The emergence of maritime superpowers results from the complex interplay of various elements.

### **5.1 Environmental Factors**

Geographical advantages constitute one of these critical elements. Nations with extensive coastlines, access to navigable rivers, and natural harbors have historically enjoyed a head start in achieving maritime dominance. Additionally, a robust maritime tradition, characterized by skilled seafarers and shipbuilders, enhances a nation's capacity to establish maritime superiority. Economic prosperity derived from maritime trade is another crucial factor. Countries that capitalize on the potential of international trade by controlling maritime routes gain a significant advantage in accumulating wealth and resources (Giraldo & Adolfo, 2016).

### **5.2 Naval Power**

Naval power is the cornerstone of maritime superpowers. A formidable navy not only ensures the security of a nation's maritime interests but also enables the projection of power globally. The capability to project power and safeguard vital sea lines of communication allows maritime superpowers to exert

dominance over other countries. The development of advanced naval technologies, such as steamships and aircraft carriers, has further augmented the capabilities of maritime superpowers, enabling them to extend their reach and protect their interests in distant waters (Gartzke & Lindsay, 2020).

Maritime superpowers exert a profound impact on the global economy. Their control over strategic sea lanes facilitates trade and commerce, enabling the flow of goods and services between nations. Establishing sustainable maritime trade networks promotes economic growth by providing countries access to new markets and resources. Furthermore, maritime superpowers often establish colonies or trading posts in strategic locations, creating centers of economic activity that benefit both the superpower and its partners. The economic influence of maritime superpowers extends beyond trade, encompassing industries such as shipbuilding, logistics, and maritime services.

### **5.3 Systemic Approach**

The potential for the People's Republic of China (PRC) to become a maritime superpower can be analyzed using a systems approach that considers the interconnectedness and interdependence of various factors. This approach helps identify key factors and challenges that may influence China's emergence as a maritime superpower. The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and the "String of Pearls" strategy aim to bolster China's naval presence and enhance its influence in the South China Sea and beyond. China's military modernization efforts, including the development of advanced naval vessels, aircraft carriers, and anti-access/area denial (A2/AD) capabilities, increase the nation's ability to assert and defend its maritime interests. The People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) maintains a presence in the South China Sea, Indian Ocean, and Pacific Ocean, expanding its power projection and deterrence capabilities (Khan, 2022).



China's maritime strategy is a complex and multifaceted endeavor shaped by various internal and external factors. The Communist Party of China (CPC) plays a pivotal role in orchestrating this strategy, leveraging its control over the military, economy, and foreign policy to project sea power effectively (Yongmi, 2014).

#### **5.4 Intervening Factors**

China's maritime expansion is influenced by environmental factors such as climate change, sea level rise, and ocean acidification, which can impact coastal infrastructure, shipping lanes, and resource extraction. To address these challenges, China has invested in renewable energy, sustainable fishing practices, and environmental protection measures (Simmons et al., 2022).

#### **6. Conclusion**

The study and investigation of the potential for countries to become superpowers in the global arena have long been subjects of interest in political science, political geography, economics, and governmental discourse. Understanding when a country ascends to superpower status allows policymakers to strategically address domestic weaknesses in natural and human geography and to develop detailed plans for governmental structure, economic opportunities (trade and market), cultural and technological advancements, and security cooperation. Successful management of these areas can enable a nation to gain power and potentially achieve superpower status on the global stage.

This article aims to provide a comprehensive model for understanding the rise of countries to superpower status through the lens of geopolitical variables. By integrating and classifying information based on a systemic model, and utilizing Michael Brecher's crisis management framework alongside Janam

Collins' grand strategy perspective, this model serves as a valuable tool for scholars in political science, political geography, and related fields. It simplifies and elucidates complex geographical phenomena, offering insights into the intricate dynamics of power and influence within the international system.

Geopolitical modeling facilitates the understanding of interactions between geographic factors and geopolitical actors, helping to identify key geopolitical regions. It also provides a robust framework for conducting research involving numerous variables. By offering a broad perspective on the subject under study, geopolitical modeling prevents researchers from becoming narrowly focused.

The proposed geopolitical model incorporates two primary environmental variables and the spatial context created by previous agents. Some input variables from Michael Brecher's model are included in the environmental inputs due to their significance and lack of human intervention. The processing unit examines various tactical, national, and grand strategies, considering their advantages. The output of this system is a power space comprising economic, political, cultural, and technological factors, ultimately defining a superpower.

Uncontrollable intervening factors such as climatic and geological changes, pandemics, and unconventional warfare can also impact this system.

Regarding China's emergence as a maritime superpower, its trajectory is significantly affected by its relations with other countries, particularly the United States, its neighbors, and nations along the Belt and Road Initiative. China's expanding influence has raised concerns about a potential power imbalance in the Asia-Pacific region, leading to increased military and diplomatic tensions with the United States and its allies. It is evident that China's rise as a maritime superpower is shaped by various interconnected factors. While China has made substantial progress in enhancing its maritime



capabilities, ongoing challenges and international relations will continue to play a crucial role in shaping its maritime future.

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