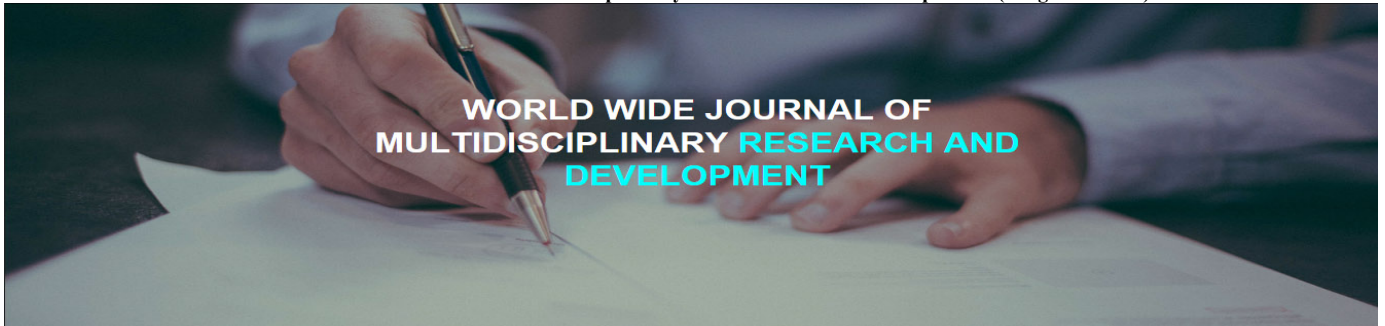




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Comparative Study of Super Powers of the World with Reference to India

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Abstract

This study evaluates and compares the super powers of the world, India (12th), Germany (4th), United Kingdom (5th), Japan (6th), Saudi Arabia (7th), Israel (8th) and Iran (9th) using the Forbes/US News methodology, which integrates leadership, economic influence, political clout, international alliances, and military strength. Supplementary data sources include GDP and demographics, military expenditure, diplomacy, soft power indices and innovation rankings. The United Kingdom ranks highest overall, driven by strong alliances, diplomatic networks, and cultural influence. Japan leads in innovation and technological capacity, balancing economic strength with pacifist defence policies. Saudi Arabia exerts regional dominance through military spending and oil-based geopolitical leverage. Israel stands out in cyber security, intelligence, and innovation despite its small size. India demonstrates strong economic and military growth but lags in diplomatic alliances and global soft power.

The findings highlight differentiated national strengths - alliances, soft power, and diplomacy for the UK; innovation and technology for Japan and Israel; military strength and energy dominance for Saudi Arabia; and economic potential for India. The study suggests that India could improve its global influence ranking by 2030 through strategic investments in diplomacy, soft power, and international collaboration. Enhanced global engagement and narrative building will be critical for India's future geopolitical trajectory.

Keywords: global influence, leadership, alliances, military strength, soft power, innovation, diplomacy.

1.1 Introduction

India, with its 1.46 billion population and GDP of \$4.2 trillion in 2025, is the world's most populous country and the fifth-largest economy. It is rapidly modernizing its military, expanding its diplomatic presence, and leading digital infrastructure projects like Digital India and India Stack. However, India's international influence remains constrained by limited global alliances, low per-capita income, institutional corruption, and soft power underutilization. Despite active participation in G20, BRICS, and the Quad, India's inconsistent foreign policy narrative and regional conflicts dilute its global clout. With significant strides in space technology - ISRO's 2024 Gaganyaan mission, digital finance, and start-up growth, over 100,000 startups, India shows promise but requires stronger diplomatic positioning, cultural exportation, and institutional reforms to climb the global power ladder.

A "superpower" in today's global order, therefore, is not solely defined by GDP size or military arsenal, but also by its ability to lead, form meaningful alliances, contribute to global governance, and influence public opinion, culture, and innovation across borders. The framework emphasizes the importance of reputation, diplomacy, strategic partnerships, innovation leadership, and geopolitical assertiveness. It enables a more nuanced understanding of global power in a multipolar world, where different countries dominate different domains of influence - economic, military, technological, cultural, and diplomatic.

As per the 2025 Forbes India Global Power Rankings, the United States retains the top position, driven by its unmatched military strength defence budget of over \$877 billion, global alliances such as NATO, and dominant cultural soft power, Hollywood, Silicon

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Valley, Ivy League institutions. China follows at rank 2, owing to its expansive manufacturing economy, GDP of \$17.7 trillion, Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), and growing military assertiveness in Asia-Pacific. Russia, ranked 3rd, continues to leverage its nuclear arsenal, regional dominance in Eastern Europe, and aggressive foreign policy, despite economic sanctions and demographic challenges. However, beyond these top-tier powers, a significant group of nations occupies the next echelon of influence. This group includes India (12th), Germany (4th), United Kingdom (5th), Japan (6th), Saudi Arabia (7th), Israel (8th), Iran (9th). These countries are recognized as regional powers with increasing global relevance due to their strategic capabilities, economic resilience, and policy-driven global engagements.

1.2 Scope of The Study

Comparative analysis across key indicators for India, Germany, United Kingdom, Japan, Saudi Arabia, Israel and Iran focus on GDP, demographics, per-capita income, trade, technology, governance, AI, agriculture, industrial & services sectors, military, and global alliances.

1.3 Objectives of The Study

1. To assess and compare the global power status of major nations.
2. To analyse the economic strength of selected countries.
3. To evaluate the military capabilities of global powers.
4. To examine diplomatic influence and alliance participation.
5. To assess innovation and R&D performance.
6. To evaluate the soft power projection of each nation through cultural exports, education, media, and global influence.
7. To understand public perception of superpower status.
8. To provide policy recommendations for emerging powers like India to strengthen their global positioning across multiple domains.

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1.5 Research Gap

Numerous studies have examined the rise of individual superpowers, particularly the United States, China, and Russia—there is a significant lack of comprehensive comparative analysis that spans both historical and contemporary periods. Most existing literature focuses narrowly on military dominance, soft power, or economic strength in isolation. However, global power dynamics in the 21st century are shaped by the convergence of multiple factors: geopolitical alliances, technological innovation (e.g., AI and cyber capabilities), scientific leadership, and institutional influence. Despite extensive work by scholars like Nye (2002), Mearsheimer (2001), and Allison (2015), few studies provide a longitudinal and multidimensional assessment of how superpower status evolves across time and regions.

Moreover, current research often neglects the role of

emerging metrics such as R&D expenditure, digital influence, environmental leadership, and startup ecosystems, factors that are increasingly central to global influence. Additionally, existing models rarely incorporate smaller power centers or middle-power coalitions that significantly influence multipolarity. This study aims to bridge these gaps by synthesizing research studies across strategic, scientific, economic, and diplomatic dimensions to build a holistic comparative framework for analyzing the world's leading powers. The research also identifies limitations in prevailing theoretical frameworks like the

Thucydides Trap, offering a more nuanced and data-driven understanding of contemporary power transitions.

1.6 Research Methodology

Research Design:

This study adopts secondary data. The secondary Data is collected from Government websites, Annual reports, RBI Bulletin, Journals, etc.

1.7 Analysis of Data

Table – 1: Table Showing Population Of Super Power Countries as on 2025.

Country	Population
India	1464 million
Germany	84.08 million
United Kingdom	69.55 million
Japan	123.10 million
Saudi Arabia	38.0 million
Israel	10 million
Iran	92.42 million

Table – 2: Table Showing Youth Population Of Super Power Countries As On 2025.

Country	Youth % (0–14)	Youth Population (0–14)
India	26.0 %	380 million
Germany	13 %	11 million
United Kingdom	18 %	12.5 million
Japan	14 %	17.2 million
Saudi Arabia	25 % ^s	8.6 million
Israel	27 %	2.7 million
Iran	23.3 %	21.5 million

Table – 3: Table Showing Literacy Rate Of Super Power Countries as on 2025.

Country	Literacy Rate (%)
India	80.9
Germany	99
United Kingdom	99
Japan	99
Saudi Arabia	97.6
Israel	92
Iran	88.96

Table – 4: Table Showing Geographical Area Of Super Power Countries as On 2025.

Country	Geographical Area (km ²)
India	3,287,263
Germany	357,022
United Kingdom	243,610
Japan	377,975
Saudi Arabia	2,149,690
Israel	22,145
Iran	1,648,195

TABLE – 5: Table Showing Gdp Of Super Power Countries as On 2025.

Country	GDP (2025, nominal USD)
India	4.19 trillion
Germany	4.53 trillion
United Kingdom	3.84 trillion
Japan	4.242 trillion
Saudi Arabia	1.29 trillion
Israel	531.2 billion
Iran	341 billion

Table – 6: Table Showing Gdp Growth Rate (%) Of Super Power Countries Year 2024-2025.

Country	GDP Growth (%)
India	6.5 %
Germany	0.2 %
United Kingdom	0.6 %
Japan	0.9 %
Saudi Arabia	2.9 %
Israel	3.9 %
Iran	-1.5 %

Table – 7: Table Showing Per-Capita Income Of Super Power Countries Financial Year 2024-25.

Country	GDP per capita
India	2,878 USD
Germany	55,800 USD
United Kingdom	54,950 USD
Japan	33,960 USD
Saudi Arabia	35,100 USD
Israel	54,190 USD
Iran	4,430 USD

Table – 8: Table Showing Unemployment Rate Of Super Power Countries year 2024-25.

Country	Period & Rate
India	5.6%
Germany	6.3%
United Kingdom	4.6%
Japan	2.5%
Saudi Arabia	2.8%
Israel	3.1%
Iran	7.2%

Table – 9: Table Showing Foreign Trade Of Super Power Countries Financial Year 2024-25.

Country	Exports (US \$ B)	Imports (US \$ B)
India	821	915
Germany	1039	918
United Kingdom	873	906
Japan	708	744
Saudi Arabia	316	266
Israel	61	91
Iran	57	72

Table 10: Table Showing Latest Official Global Innovation Index (GII) In 2024.

Country	GII 2024 Ranking
India	39th
Germany	9th
United Kingdom	5th
Japan	13th
Saudi Arabia	47th
Israel	15th
Iran	64th

Table – 11: Table Showing Information Technology Ranking Of Super Power Countries as On 2025.

Country	Overall IT Ranking
Germany	#1
United Kingdom	#2
Japan	#3
Israel	#4
India	#5
Saudi Arabia	#6
Iran	#7

Table – 12: Table Showing Research & Development Ranking Of Super Power Countries as on 2025.

Country	R&D (as % of GDP)
Israel	6.3 %
Japan	3.7 %

Germany	3.13 %
United Kingdom	2.8 %
India	0.64 %
Saudi Arabia	0.56 %
Iran	0.79 %

Table – 13: Table Showing Artificial Intelligence Ranking Of Super Power Countries as On 2025.

Country	2025 AI Position
United Kingdom	3
India	5
Germany	10
Japan	9
Israel	11
Saudi Arabia	52
Iran	65

Table – 14: Table Showing Corruption Ranking Of Super Power Countries as on 2025 By Transparency International.

Country	Global Rank (out of 180)
Germany	15th
Japan	20th
United Kingdom	20th (tie with Japan)
Israel	30th
Saudi Arabia	52nd
India	85th
Iran	136th

Table – 15: Table Showing Pollution Ranking Of Super Power Countries as on 2025 Per-Capita CO₂ Emissions, Tonnes per person (2024–25).

Country	Per capita CO2 Emissions
India	1.9 t
Germany	8 t
United Kingdom	5 t
Japan	8.5 t
Saudi Arabia	19 t
Israel	10 t
Iran	7.7 t

Table – 16: Table Showing Agriculture Ranking Of Super Power Countries as on 2025.

Country	Ranking
India	7
Japan	55
Germany	22
United Kingdom	32
Iran	20
Saudi Arabia	8
Israel	36

Table – 17: Table Showing Industry Ranking Of Super Power Countries as on 2025.

Country	Global Rank
Japan	3rd
Germany	4th
India	5th
United Kingdom	10th
Saudi Arabia	11
Israel	28
Iran	26

Table – 18: Table Showing Service Sector Ranking Of Super Power Countries as on 2025 Measured as percentage share of GDP.

Country	Service Sector Contribution (%)
United Kingdom	82
Germany	70
Japan	69
India	55
Saudi Arabia	51.3

Iran	55
Israel	80

Table – 19: Table Showing Military Spendings Of Super Power Countries for the Year 2024-25.

Country	% of GDP
India	2.3
Germany	1.9
United Kingdom	2.3
Japan	1.6
Saudi Arabia	7.1
Israel	8.8
Iran	2.1

Table – 20: Table Showing International Alliances Ranking Of Super Power Countries as on 2025.

Rank	Country	Key Alliances / Coalitions	Observation
1	United Kingdom	NATO; “Five Eyes”; G7; UN Security Council (P5); strong bilateral with US us	Core Western military and intelligence integration
2	Germany	NATO; EU; G7; G4 (UNSC reform); strong EU-US ties	Europe’s leading military and EU anchor
3	Japan	US–Japan Security Treaty; Quad; G4; strong US defence partnership	vital in Indo-Pacific stability
4	India	Major non-NATO ally to US; G4; Quad; Indo-Abrahamic (I2U2) with Israel + UAE; BRICS	Expanding global-strategy networks
5	Saudi Arabia	NATO partner; GCC military force; Islamic Military Counter-Terrorism Coalition (IMCTC)	Regional security hub
6	Israel	US top ally; I2U2 Indo-Abrahamic; major regional and US strategic partner	Tech & defence linchpin
7	Iran	Axis of Upheaval (with China, Russia); excluded from Western-led groups	Lone regional bloc with anti-West influence

Interpretation

- UK and Germany are deeply embedded in NATO and the EU, with robust security frameworks and shared defence resources.
- Japan enjoys a pivotal US alliance and is a key player in the Indo-Pacific, backed by its Quad and G4 membership.
- India’s global reach is rising rapidly: recognised as a Major non-NATO Ally by the US, active in Quad, G4, and the Indo-Abrahamic Alliance (I2U2).
- Saudi Arabia leads regional security via GCC joint forces and participates in the IMCTC under US support.
- Israel lies at the heart of US-Israel strategic alignment, tech, and military cooperation, reinforced by I2U2.
- Iran remains largely isolated from Western security architectures, instead aligning more with the Axis of Upheaval alongside Russia and China.

1.8 Findings of the Study

India, as a rising power, showed a mixed profile in the study. It was recognized for its strong military presence and innovation potential, but respondents highlighted gaps in diplomatic consistency, alliance depth, and soft power utilization. India’s score in global alliances and soft power indicates that while the country has economic and strategic weight, it needs to strengthen its global integration. Nonetheless, India's large population, growing economy, and expanding digital infrastructure position it as a potential global power in the coming decades, provided it addresses its diplomatic shortcomings. Nations like the United Kingdom, Germany, South Korea, Japan, Saudi Arabia, Israel and India are perceived to punch above their weight due to strong soft power, advanced innovation ecosystems, and strategic alliances. The UK and Japan, in particular, received high marks for

diplomacy and cultural influence, reflecting their global historical presence and sustained relevance in global governance. The findings suggest that global power in 2025 is no longer defined by military and economic factors alone, but also by a country’s ability to influence minds, form resilient alliances, and drive innovation.

1.9 Suggestions

- Suggestions for India to emerge as a global superpower**
- A. Economic Development & Infrastructure**
1. Increase R&D investment to 2%+ of GDP, especially in emerging fields like AI, space, biotechnology, and quantum computing.
 2. Boost manufacturing under ‘Make in India’ with better infrastructure, tax incentives, and labor reforms.
 3. Develop world-class logistics and digital infrastructure to enhance global competitiveness.
 4. Strengthen MSMEs and startups by simplifying regulations and expanding access to capital.
 5. Promote sustainable development and green energy, positioning India as a global leader in climate-tech.
- B. Defence & Strategic Autonomy**
6. Modernize and indigenize defence production through DRDO, private sector, and strategic partnerships.
 7. Enhance cybersecurity and space defence capabilities to match evolving threats.
 8. Increase defence diplomacy by expanding joint exercises and military cooperation agreements.
 9. Expand naval power in the Indo-Pacific to safeguard maritime interests and assert regional influence.
 10. Strengthen nuclear deterrence and strategic command systems to ensure stability and credibility.
- C. Diplomacy & International Alliances**
11. Play a leadership role in the Global South through development assistance and capacity-building.
 12. Strengthen India’s presence in multilateral forums like

the UN, G20, BRICS, Quad, SCO, and IMEC.

13. Forge stronger economic and strategic ties with Africa, ASEAN, Latin America, and Europe.
14. Pursue permanent membership in the UN Security Council by leveraging global partnerships.
15. Launch strategic communication campaigns to improve India's image abroad and counter misinformation.

D. Education, Technology & Innovation

16. Internationalize Indian higher education by attracting global talent and faculty to Indian universities.
17. Integrate vocational and digital education into mainstream curricula to future-proof the workforce.
18. Expand public-private research collaboration in AI, robotics, semiconductors, and space.
19. Encourage Indian tech firms to go global, especially in fintech, SaaS, and cybersecurity.
20. Set up global research hubs and innovation centers in collaboration with other top nations.
21. Prevent Brain Drain - talented people migrating for jobs to foreign countries.

E. Cultural Diplomacy & Soft Power

22. Promote Indian culture, cinema, yoga, and cuisine as soft power tools in foreign policy.
23. Expand the global footprint of Indian media and publishing to build narrative control.
24. Support Indian diaspora engagement through policy outreach and innovation partnerships.
25. Host global summits, expos, and academic conferences to position India as a thought leader.
26. Create an official India Soft Power Index to monitor and grow cultural, educational, and humanitarian influence worldwide.

1.10 Policy Recommendations

Policy Recommendations to Strengthen India's Global Power

1. Forge Deeper Strategic Alliances.
2. Accelerate Military Modernization.
3. Project Soft Power Globally.
4. Advance Innovation and Technology Diplomacy.
5. Improve Regional Diplomacy and Neighbour-hood Strategy.

1.11 Conclusion

The comparative study of global superpowers in 2025 reveals that India holds a paradoxical position. While it ranks high in military capacity and economic size, being the 5th-largest economy and 4th in defence spending, its overall global influence is restrained by limited alliance networks, low soft power projection, and inconsistent regional diplomacy. This imbalance between hard and soft capabilities underscores the need for India to pursue a more integrated approach to power-building.

India's aspirations to become a superpower are not unfounded. With a young population, growing technological base, and increasing international engagement, it possesses many of the foundational assets required for global leadership.

India's placement in global superpower rankings, such as Forbes' 2025 index, reveals a distinct imbalance between hard and soft components of national power. India's limited influence in international alliances, multilateral diplomacy, and soft power projection prevents it from being ranked

alongside the world's leading superpowers like the United States, China, and Russia. Despite its rich cultural heritage, democratic political system, and large diaspora, India has yet to fully leverage its soft power assets, such as Bollywood, Yoga, Ayurveda, educational outreach, and diplomatic thought leadership to influence global narratives. Prevent brain drain. Furthermore, India's inconsistent participation in global institutions and regional partnerships has restricted its ability to shape international norms and policies.

India has the potential to break into the global top 10 by 2030 if it undertakes a strategic realignment of its foreign policy objectives and enhances its global presence. This includes expanding its participation in regional and global alliances such as BRICS+, SCO, I2U2, and the G20, investing in public diplomacy, promoting Indian values and innovation, and developing a coherent national branding strategy. Strengthening cultural diplomacy through international broadcasting, scholarship programs, and think tank collaborations can amplify India's voice in global debates and negotiations, resulting in scaling up of super power top rank in the world.

1.12 Further Research

Future research should continue to track India's annual progress using updated Forbes, US News, and Global Innovation Index rankings. Additionally, scholars and policymakers must evaluate the real-world implementation of strategic policies suggested in this and other studies. Refining comparative metrics by including new dimensions like cyber power, diaspora diplomacy, and ESG influence could also provide a more holistic assessment of global power in the multipolar world order.

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