

Research paper on why is the us, and not the european union, a superpower

[Parts of the World](#), [European Union](#)



Why is the US, and not the European Union, a superpower?

Since the end of the great World Wars and the infamous Cold War, the United States has been referred as the world's only 'superpower', capable of deterring any opposition and leading the international community in any issue. Even at present, the US remains at the helm of the international community in political, economic, and social context. However, many experts believe that the European Union should be considered a superpower despite the losses it had acquired in the great wars since Europe is now united under one flag unlike before. The EU is also a frontrunner when it comes to international policy-making, especially now as many issues are now placed forward in the globe. Nonetheless, the United States still retain the title as a superpower because of its political, economic, military, and cultural capacity that the European Union still yet needs to address given the issues influencing the European affairs at present time.

According to Simon (2001) a 'superpower' was used in the end of the Second World War to refer to nations that had achieved unmatched dominance in the international community, whether in a political or economic aspect. The term was popularized sometime in the 1960s to showcase as to how both the United States and the Soviet Union had showcased its power and advancement over other nations. A superpower also has the capacity to project its influence wherever in the globe and may attain the status of being a hegemon. Miller (2006) cited that the basic components of what makes a superpower can be analyzed through four axes of power: military, economic, political and cultural powers. Britain can be considered the first prototype superpower given the country's economic,

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military, and political power in the 19th century. It was also highly advanced as compared to its European neighbors, making it the first hegemon from 1815 to the 20th century. However, the United States had replaced Britain after the Second World War due to the losses Europe occur in the first and second World Wars.

In the present context, it is debated that the US is no longer the only superpower present in the globe as the European Union is also at the verge of a breakthrough in becoming rival with the US in the four aspects that can qualify them as a superpower. However, the US has several advantages which makes it a superpower and not the European Union. In the political aspect, both nations vary in their political influence in the international community. In the case of the European Union, there is still an issue as to what identity it plays in the international community. According to Meimeth and Goler (2011), the EU's actions could be considered both precise and vague considering that its actions against internal and external factors hampers its capacities to act on issues regarding foreign and security policy creation in the international level. Since the EU still is a growing institution, there is still a debate as to how it should act: should it act as a great power in a multi-polar context or as a civilian power. With this in mind, this disables the EU from handling challenges and conflicts with a sharp mind and political capacity. The EU's member states are still debating as to how wide the scope of influence the EU should play as well in the international arena as seen in the difference of ideals between its two major leaders France and Germany. Currently, the EU is under a " progress trap" which it must free itself from if it wants to influence international political affairs in the same extent as the

United States. Another problem that the EU faces and therefore influences its chance to be a superpower is the international dismissal it receives in aiding other nations. Nations such as the United States and other industrialized countries have rejected the EU's claims of striving for uni-polarity as it may give way to the EU to influence domestic affairs. In this case, it causes conflict between the EU and the other members of the international community, therefore disabling the EU from playing a large influence in terms of political issues.

However, in the case of the United States, it had influenced the distribution of responsibilities between members of the international community as the only superpower as stated by Byers and Nolte (2009). The US has been an active actor when it comes to international law making. One example, when the US Congress had drafted its version of Uruguay Round Final Act which founded the World Trade Organization, its domestic version had ensured that the provisions of the Act would not be inconsistent with any US law. The legislation had become a key move to call other nations to incorporate or internalize international law domestically by other nations. The US' presence in the international community had also introduced multilateral cooperation that do not exist in other nations, therefore ensuring that the US has political influence in these nations. Once international political issues coincide with the US's action, international law and politics is well-supported as the US' backing also calls for the support of other nations. The US also plays a key role in international politics due to the fact it maintains peace throughout the country, something that the EU has yet to address given the nature of its military and political power. According to Smith (2010), the US maintains the

concept of independence throughout the international community, ensuring that all countries address political freedom and support liberty. Smith also states that while the US cannot create a foreign policy that would ultimately disregard its own political voice, the US plays a special role in the world in becoming an example of foreign policies that is guided by permanent purpose and commitment.

In an economic aspect, the US and the EU differ in their official economic capacity and role in the world economy. In the case of the EU, Donici, Ionel and Incaltarau (2010) stated that the EU is considered the largest trading power that can compete with the US and China, achieving 40% of total global trade rates and can match the US' GDP index. It is also considered the second largest economic power, following the United States and is considerably one of the richest regions after the superpower. However, there is a question persisting in the EU with regards to how they should improve their status as an economic power much like how they are still arguing over their political role in the world stage. The EU also cannot be considered a superpower for the fact that it still is sustained by the United States and Japan given the nature of the enlargement, which affected the GDP capacity of the Union. Some of the recently acceded nations also influenced the Union's overall world economic position as some, like Romania, only sustain a low share of the overall GDP of the region. The analysis also showcased that the EU still has to settle technological and economic policy gap to enable their economy to balance out and compete against economies such as the United States. The overall economic crisis in the EU due to the monetary policy also influences EU's chances of being considered a

superpower as there is a lack of matching solutions and workable alternatives to ensure that countries on crisis can sustain their economies and the currency.

Despite the economic recession happening around the globe, as stated by Niblett (2009), the United States still holds up to a \$14. 5 trillion GDP record in 2008 and is still sustained by its population of 300 million people, who support a GDP per capita of over \$48, 000. The European Union only sustains a GDP per capita of over \$33, 800 million despite the population of 495 million under its territory. The US is also self-sustaining in its own extent, possessing 10% of the world's crude oil and coal reserves. It is also one of the largest food producers and agricultural exporters, aiding nations such as the European Union. Although there is a growing recession, the US' multinational companies and financial institutions are still the leading companies handling foreign investments throughout the globe, as the currency remains the largest reserve currency throughout many nations. Given the outreach of the US' financial institutions and multinational companies, the US also controls consumer and financial markets and taking out these US companies, it is likely that it would seriously affect other countries and their economies. The US also possesses the largest voting capacity in the International Monetary Fund and World Bank. The country is also the known biggest contributor to the international community's budget. Finally, the United States is considerable as a superpower because of its military capacity. In the case of the European Union, Keohane and Blommestijn (2009) stated that the region has spent €209. 7 billion worth of defense expenditure in 2009 to improve its defense capabilities. Despite the

high budget given towards defense improvement, the EU had decreased its military capacities such as tanks (10, 000), aircrafts (from 3, 800 in 1999 to 2, 400 in 2009) and helicopters (from 4, 700 in 1999 to 3, 500 in 2009). Most of the retained units of the European Union are allotted for peacekeeping missions, but some of these military equipment is unusable in some nations such as in Germany and Italy. It is also noted that the EU defense capability is limited given the lack of transport planes, which prevents them in aiding regions such as South East Asia. On the other hand, the CIA World Factbook (2013) stated the United States' military capability is not just reserved to peacekeeping and humanitarian actions. The US is recorded to have the highest military budget, expenditure and capability which enables them to act immediately in any crisis. The US military has 313, 847, 465 people since 2012 with almost 120, 022, 084 troops ready for service. In terms of weaponry, the United States has all types of military weaponry from land systems to naval systems, capable of responding in land, air, water, and providing logistics in any region around the globe. This permits the United States to influence regional conflicts despite its territory. Since 2012, the country has a defense budget of over \$689, 591, 000, 000, enabling them to sustain almost a million military weaponry and aid those in service. Posen (2005) added that given the budget and capability of the US military service, it allows the US to influence international politics around the globe and prevent other insurgent nations from advancing. Aside from this, Niblett (2009) added that the United States also possess a network of bases, and is a signatory to many bilateral security treaties and alliances that allows the US to move into regions in case of emergencies. It also aids in the US War on

Terrorism, as the US could secure a region with its highly sophisticated weaponry and human resource to ensure that international security is sustained.

As the international community continues to see a shift in power and influence between the developing nations, it is visible that the US still has indomitable influence throughout the globe in all four axes of power that makes it a capable and undefeated superpower. The international community is seen defaulting to the United States on matters of political, economic, military, and cultural importance and without the US support, it is likely that international action would not sustain its grip and influence. While the EU can be already considered a superpower, it still needs to assert a couple of changes to its political, military, and economic capacity that can sustain any adversity in both regional and international aspect. Given a few years, it may be possible that the EU could be a second superpower to match with the United States. At the present time, the United States is still undisputed as a superpower despite the economic and political issues it has to face in its own region.

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