

2025 Y6 GP: Power (Part 1)

Why consider Power, What is Power, Origins/Sources of power, Who wields Power (Stakeholders), Manifestations/Examples of Power

Essential Questions (EQs) in the Theme of Power

Essential questions are open-ended, thought-provoking questions that help to foster deeper questioning about a subject/theme. These questions often prompt you to think deeper about the **central tensions** in the subject/theme, as well as investigate the **relationships between concepts**, and **analysis of changes**, if any, **across time and societies**.

In answering these questions, we deepen our understanding of the concept(s) involved, which would enable us to **see and appreciate the connections across topics** – e.g. *How are the central ideas/tensions in the theme of Power observed across different topics such as International Relations, Politics and Governance, the Media, Science and Technology, Religion etc.?*

Think about the following EQs as you delve into Part 1 of the lecture series on Power. Jot down your ideas, connections with case studies/examples of power at work, and questions about the theme as you learn.

Organisation of Notes – Part 1's Lecture on Power will explore the following EQs:

1. **Why study the theme of power?**
2. **Definition:** What is power?
3. **Origins/Sources** of power: Where does power come from? Who/what accords/bestows power?
4. **Stakeholders:** Who has power? In what aspects?
5. **Manifestations/Examples of Power:** How is power seen/used around us? What are the different ways in which power plays out in individuals' lives, in society and in the world around us?

1. Why study the theme of Power?

A) “GP is Life” → Ubiquity of Power in our lives:

- ‘I need a *power* nap now!’ - Power is a need intrinsic to humans
- ‘The *Power* of Love’ (song title, theme in books) - Power can exert its influence through emotions that motivate actions → for good or bad, depending on the extremity of the emotion and purpose
- ‘By the *power* invested in me’ (solemnising marriage) - Power can be enshrined in our enactment of rituals and ceremonies
- ‘The *power* of attorney’ - Power can be summoned through legal rights and processes
- ‘The *powers* that be’ - Power is felt by the individual as an invisible hand that governs all aspects of our lives, and can inspire fear / conformity.
- ‘Hard *power*’ - A concept: What does this mean?
- ‘Soft *power*’ - A concept: What does this mean?
- ‘Power struggle’ - Conflicts often arise from / involve some form of ‘power struggle’, when there is an imbalance of power

B) Practical application in GP → Past year A Level questions that examine the theme of power across topics:

- ★ Analyse the questions below: What do you notice about how these essay questions invite us to analyse the issue through using power as a thematic lens?

A Level Essay Question	How Power can be used as a lens to unpack and approach the question
1. Assess the extent to which all people in your society have the opportunity to achieve their full potential. (2023) 2. 'Young people want to change the world because they do not know it is impossible.' How far do you agree? (2023) 3. To that extent can individuals shape their own lives when the world is so unpredictable? (2022) 4. Assess the impact of foreign films or foreign TV programmes on the culture of your society. (2009) 5. Does the presence of a foreign power ever help a country with problems? (2008) 6. 'The <u>pen</u> is mightier than the <u>sword</u>.' Can <u>written language</u> really be so powerful? (2007) 7. '<u>Advertisements</u> are often entertaining, but they rarely affect consumer choice.' Is this your experience? (2007) 8. Have <u>multinational businesses</u> had a positive or negative impact on your society? (2004) 9. '<u>Statistics</u> measure everything but prove nothing.' Discuss. (2003) 10. 'In today's world, power is determined by economic success, not <u>military might</u>.' (1997)	We are asked to consider the <u>extent to which</u> X is <u>really</u> able to / can effect / influence an action / outcome. The issue in the question centres on whether something has power in reality (considering a specific condition or constraints), or in today's context (considering modern developments / shifts).
1. 'Power these days lies more with the <u>people</u> than the <u>politicians</u>.' To what extent is this true? (2021) 2. Is <u>modern technology</u> a benefit or threat to democracy? (2020) 3. Consider the view that <u>social media</u> has more influence than politicians. (2019) 4. Do <u>events</u>, rather than politicians, shape the future? (2017) 5. How far should <u>religion</u> influence political decisions? (2009)	We are asked to consider the relationships between stakeholders who wield power. The issue in the question centres on examining the balance of power between various <u>stakeholders</u> - we are asked to compare the relative power / influence of two entities to decide which is more influential and why. Sometimes the question invites us to debate about whether this balance of power is justifiable (desirable and/or moral).

6. 'The more <u>science</u> advances, the more <u>religion</u> will decline.' To what extent do you agree? (2008) 7. '<u>People</u>, not <u>the government</u>, should decide how to organise their lives.' Is this a fair comment? (2004)	
1. Evaluate the claim that <u>sports personalities</u> make good role models <u>for young people</u>. (2023) 2. How far should <u>firms</u> be allowed to limit their <u>workers' rights</u> when profits are at stake? (2014) 3. 'The most influential <u>individuals</u> in history are those who have caused the most harm.' How far would you accept this view? (2012) 4. As long as <u>people in the public eye</u> do their job well, does it matter what they do in private? (2009) 5. How far should <u>a state</u> have a right to monitor the actions of <u>people within its borders</u>? (2007) 6. To what extent should <u>the State</u> involve itself in the world of <u>business</u>? (2005) 7. '<u>Advertising</u> encourages a desire for products which people do not actually need.' Discuss. (2004) 8. Should <u>the police</u> have unlimited powers when dealing with <u>crime</u>? (2002)	We are asked to examine power alongside issues of ethics, control and responsibility (the thematic lens of Control and Responsibility will be covered in subsequent lectures).

2. A) Definition: What is Power?

Food for thought:

- How much power do **you** think you have, **as an individual and young person in your society, and in the world today?**
- What makes you say so?
- What **factors** might you have considered in deciding whether, and to what extent, you are empowered?

To me, having power means...

Power can most simply be understood as **one's ability to exert control or influence over other people and the events that take place around them**.

- For individuals, companies, governments and nations, more power often translates to a better chance of **protecting and securing their own interests**, whatever they may be.
- For nations especially, the power they amass **increases their ability to deal with the complex challenges** they face. These could take the form of societal problems they face back home, diplomatic issues they run into internationally or even unforeseen black swan events that cause global disruptions. **Power provides the resources, networks and influence needed to prepare for and overcome these challenges.**

2. B) Degree of Power – Spectrum of navigating extremes (Power~~less~~ vs. Power~~ful~~)

Who has power?

What makes one powerful?

What renders one powerless?

Where does power come from?

Who / what accords / bestows power to / on a stakeholder?



Utterly Power~~less~~

Absolutely Power~~ful~~

What **disempowerment** entails:

What **empowerment** entails:

• Entirely unable to have a say in what the desired outcomes should be. • Completely unable, incapable of managing and influencing processes that lead to an outcome. • Subjected to the mercy and influences of external forces beyond one's control. • Completely unable to circumvent / override external forces to contain and manage its effects. Ill-equipped (not having the ability and resources) to overcome these challenges or unpredictable factors. External forces or parties determine the course of one's efforts, derailing them and deciding the outcome of one's actions.	• Fully able to have a say in what the desired outcomes should be. • Fully able to, capable of managing and influencing processes that lead to an outcome. • Fully able to respond effectively to external forces. • Fully able to circumvent / override external forces to contain and manage its effects. Well-equipped with the means (ability and resources) to overcome these challenges or unpredictable factors. One's efforts are able to fully achieve the planned and desired outcomes.
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3. Origins / Sources of Power: What accords / gives someone or something power?

- ★ *Is power intrinsic / innate / inherent in someone or something? Is it inherited / earned (through...)?*
- ★ *Who / what bestows power on someone or something?*

Origins / Sources of Power: What Gives Someone or Something Power?

- **Position / Authority:** Power derived from a role or status within a structure (e.g., a king, CEO, government official).
- **Resources / Wealth:** Economic power — control over material resources, money, or capital.
- **Knowledge / Expertise:** Intellectual or technical power — having information or specialised skills others lack.
- **Force / Coercion:** Physical power — military strength, violence, or the capacity to enforce through force.
- **Influence / Charisma:** Social power — personal appeal, persuasion, or the ability to inspire or mobilise others.
- **Network / Relationships:** Power through alliances, connections, and collective support.
- **Cultural / Symbolic Power:** Power derived from shaping values, norms, and meaning (e.g., media, religion, art).
- **Legitimacy / Recognition:** Power granted by collective belief in one's right to lead or influence.

Intrinsic vs. Earned Power

- **Intrinsic Power:** Some argue that personal traits like charisma, intelligence, or physical strength can give an individual a “natural” power. This can overlap with biological, psychological, or social dynamics.
- **Inherited Power:** Power can be passed down through lineage (e.g., monarchy, dynasties) or through wealth and privilege.
- **Earned Power:** Often acquired through effort, competence, or achievement (e.g., climbing a corporate ladder, winning elections, or mastering a craft).

In reality, power is usually a blend of these — *for example, a politician's charisma (intrinsic) may help him win an election (earned), while his family's wealth (inherited) funds his campaign.*

Who / What Bestows Power?

- **Institutions:** Governments, legal systems, corporations, and religious bodies officially allocate power.
- **The People:** Societal consent or public support often underpins power.
- **Elites / Networks:** Power is frequently brokered within elite circles or influential groups.
- **Nature / Circumstance:** Sometimes, context (e.g., being in the right place at the right time) or natural talent gives power.
- **Violence / Force:** Power can be seized through conquest, revolution, or intimidation.

4. Stakeholders who wield power:

- ★ *Who has power?*
- ★ *Origins / Sources: Where does their power come from? How is power accorded to, or acquired by these stakeholders?*
- ★ *Manifestations / Examples of Power: How is power seen / used around us by these stakeholders?*

Recap from Stakeholder Lecture series: Selected Stakeholders who wield / harness power to achieve certain intents

- ★ Non-Governmental and Transnational Organisations
- ★ The Government
- ★ Corporations
- ★ The Media
- ★ Religious authorities / organisations *(to be covered in Power Part 2)*
- ★ Individuals or Groups of self-organised individuals who form entities that exert influence in society *(to be covered in Power Part 2)*

***Note #1:** The **family as a social institution does exert significant influence in shaping individuals** in terms of their socialisation and general developmental prospects. However, for the parameters of power covered in this lecture series (looking chiefly at how power is felt and balanced at the global and national level, tied with concerns of control and responsibility) , we will not be analysing the power of the family unit and its interactions with other stakeholders. This is not to discount the family as a vital and influential institution.

****Note #2:** Part 2 of the lecture series will explore the balance of power across these stakeholders amidst the changing face of power, examining the implications this holds on the management of power.

1) Non-Governmental and Transnational Organisations

A. Origins/Sources of Power – How NGOs / TNOs **Acquire** Power

1. Moral Authority and Credibility:

- NGOs often gain power **by positioning themselves as defenders** of human rights, environmental protection, or humanitarian causes, **appealing to global values and ethics**.
- Their **perceived impartiality** compared to governments or corporations gives them **credibility**.
- Example: **Amnesty International** – Known for its work exposing human rights violations. Its moral standing has given it influence over public opinion and policymakers.

2. Expertise and Data:

- NGOs amass **specialised knowledge, research, and data**, making them authoritative voices in certain fields.
- Example: **World Health Organisation (WHO)** – During global health crises like COVID-19, WHO's data collection, advisories, and health guidelines shaped international responses.

3. Global Networks and Partnerships:

- NGOs **leverage cross-border networks and alliances** with other NGOs, media, and even governments to **amplify their influence**.
- Example: **Greenpeace** – Uses global networks to stage high-profile environmental campaigns (e.g., anti-whaling and climate action), pressuring governments and corporations.

4. Public Mobilisation and Advocacy:

- NGOs have **mastered using media and social platforms to mobilise public support**, pressuring governments and corporations.
- Example: **Extinction Rebellion** – Uses non-violent civil disobedience to demand urgent action on climate change, capturing media attention and influencing policy debates.

5. Funding and Financial Influence:

- Large NGOs attract **funding from donors, philanthropists, and international bodies**, giving them the **resources to operate across multiple countries**.
- Example: **Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation** – Their vast financial resources allow them to influence global health policies, including vaccine distribution and disease eradication.

B. Examples of Power – How NGOs / TNOs **Apply / Exercise** Power

1. Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Response:

- NGOs can **bypass state bureaucracy** to **provide direct aid** in war zones, natural disasters, and health crises.
- Example: **Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders)** – Operates in conflict zones like Syria and Afghanistan, providing medical aid where governments fail.

2. Shaping Global Policies:

- NGOs **participate in international forums** like the United Nations, **influencing treaties and agreements**.
- Example: **The Paris Agreement (2015) – Environmental NGOs lobbied heavily** to secure commitments from governments on reducing carbon emissions.

3. Holding Corporations Accountable:

- NGOs **expose corporate malpractices, forcing companies to adopt** ethical and sustainable practices.
- Example: **Oxfam** – Exposed labour abuses in global supply chains, prompting reforms in major corporations like Nestlé and Unilever. For instance, **Behind the Brands Campaign** since 2013,

where Oxfam evaluated and pressured the top 10 global food and beverage companies, including Nestlé and Unilever, to improve their policies on workers' rights, land use, and environmental impact.

4. Pressuring Governments:

- NGOs use public campaigns and legal action to **challenge unjust policies and human rights abuses**.
- Example: **Human Rights Watch (HRW)** – Documents abuses globally, applying pressure on authoritarian regimes and influencing Western governments' foreign policies. For instance, exposing **human rights abuses in Saudi Arabia** since 2018. HRW's sustained reports on Saudi Arabia's human rights violations, including the treatment of women, migrant workers, and political dissidents, built international pressure. This, **along with the murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi**, led to global condemnation and forced Western governments like Germany to re-evaluate arms sales and diplomatic ties with Saudi Arabia.

5. Influencing Public Opinion:

- NGOs use media and social networks to **shape public perceptions** and **mobilise grassroots support**.
- Example: **Greenpeace**, as a globally recognised NGO, has consistently shifted public attitudes towards environmental issues, from whaling to climate change and deforestation. **Brent Spar Oil Platform (1995)** – Greenpeace's campaign against Shell's plan to dispose of an oil platform in the North Sea led to public backlash and boycotts. Shell reversed its decision, and the event increased corporate and public awareness about environmental responsibility. **Anti-Whaling Protests** – Greenpeace's dramatic confrontations with Japanese whaling ships captured global media attention. This raised public consciousness about whaling and pressured governments to adopt stricter conservation policies.

2) The Government

B. Origins/Sources of Power – How Governments **Acquire** Power

1. Political Legitimacy

A government's ability to maintain power largely depends on its legitimacy, which can come from:

- **Democratic Elections** – Representative democracies like the US and the UK **gain power through popular mandate**, where elected officials govern on behalf of the people.
- **Lawfulness** – Governments that abide by **legal procedures** (such as constitutional monarchies, or upholding the rule of law in ensuring fairness and justice) reinforce their right to govern.
- **Competence** – Governments that effectively manage the economy, maintain stability, and deliver public services secure their legitimacy. The **extent to which they are able to perform their duty** effectively **to meet the people's needs** often influences the success of their re-election.

2. Force and Coercion

In some cases, governments come to power through force rather than democratic processes:

- **Military Coups** – Military juntas (e.g., Myanmar) seize power by **overthrowing existing governments**.
- **One-Party Rule** – In a one-party state like China, power is maintained through **silencing / exclusion of political opposition**.

3. Political and Social Structures

(I) Governments **inherit** power by:

- **Hereditary political structures – Monarchies:** a system under which the head of state – the person formally at the summit of public life – inherits their office from their parents, holding it until they die (or perhaps retire), when it passes down to their heir.
 - 1) **Absolute:** Political system based on the **undivided sovereignty** or **autocratic rule** of a **single person**. Power is **inherited by bloodline**, and the monarch alone holds the power to make all the rules. Unlike the constitutional monarchy, people living under the rule of absolute monarchs do not have the power. (e.g. Saudi Arabia)
 - 2) **Constitutional:** Power is **shared with a constitutionally organised government**. The monarch may be the **de facto head of state or a purely ceremonial leader**. The constitution allocates the rest of the government's power to the legislature and judiciary. Power is **inherited by bloodline**, however this **power is limited by laws and the law-making bodies elected by the people** (e.g. the UK, Netherlands, Belgium, Spain, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Japan, Cambodia, Thailand, Jordan)

(II) Governments **entrench** power by:

- **Influencing Institutions** – Ruling parties **appoint loyalists to key positions** in bureaucracy, judiciary, and state-controlled organisations (e.g., Singapore's People's Association).
- **Controlling Public Narratives** – Governments shape public perception through **media control** and propaganda.

B. Examples of Power – How Governments *Apply / Exercise* Power

1. Legislative and Executive Authority

- Governments use **legislative power (making laws)** and **executive power (implementing policies)** to shape society.
- *In authoritarian regimes*, laws may be used to **suppress dissent** (e.g., China's National Security Law in Hong Kong).
- *In democracies*, governments balance power with **checks and balances**, though **political gridlock** can arise (e.g., the US Congress obstructing presidential policies).

2. Economic Power

- Governments **control national wealth** through taxation, spending, and investment in public services.
- *State Capitalism* (e.g., China, Singapore) allows governments to **regulate key industries** while promoting economic growth.

3. Control of Law Enforcement and the Military

- Governments **enforce** laws through **policing and military control**.
- *Democratic states* have independent judicial systems to check government power.
- *Autocratic states* may use **security forces to suppress opposition** (e.g., Myanmar's military crackdown on protests).

4. Regulation of Society

Governments shape behaviour through regulation:

- Strict bans (e.g., anti-drug laws in Singapore)
- Soft nudges (e.g., Singapore's Nutri-Grade system for sugary drinks)
- Surveillance laws (e.g., China's social credit system)

3) Corporations

A legal entity that is separate and distinct from its owners. Under the law, corporations possess many of the same rights and responsibilities as individuals – they can enter contracts, loan and borrow money, sue and be sued, hire employees, own assets, and pay taxes.

By virtue of their privileged position as the nexus between governments and other stakeholders such as scientists / researchers and individual consumers, corporations wield considerable power.

A. Origins/Sources of Power – How Corporations **Acquire Power**

Sources of power: Generally, the bigger the size of the company, the more resources they have, and consequently, the more impact they can be assumed to have on the lives of individuals and societies, and thus the more power they hold.

The following factors explain why and how corporations typically come to hold such great power:

1. **Global presence** (Multinational Companies): Exerting **cross-border influence** through **extensive spread of its operations** in numerous countries. Some MNCs deviate from the expected rules of conduct in host countries by **exploiting the gaps and inconsistencies in regulations, laws, and customs**. → They may pose a challenge to the power of local governments in this regard.
2. **Financial muscle** (Investors and Shareholders): Financially resourceful, some companies easily having **financial backing across industries through leveraging their pool of investors and shareholders**. → Example: **Mergers and Acquisitions** – Large corporations acquire competitors to consolidate power: Disney acquiring Marvel, Lucasfilm, and 21st Century Fox to dominate the entertainment industry.
3. **Bargaining power** (Over the mass of workers it employs): **Employing vast numbers of workers** locally and abroad, corporations exert significant influence over the **remuneration, working conditions and labour rights** of their employees. → Example: **Lobbying and Government Ties** – Corporations influence policies that favour them: Coca-Cola lobbying the U.S. government during WWII to ensure global market expansion.
4. **Technological expertise** (Spearheading R&D, innovations and partnerships with other companies or technological giants): **Access to and direct funding of cutting edge technology** to **refine products and services**, and **shape market trends and consumer wants**.

B. Types of Corporations and their Degree of Power

The **degree** of **power** and **control** a firm has over the market, its consumers and the external environment depends on the market structures in which it operates under.



Power is **dispersed** among firms

Power is **concentrated** in few or one firm(s)

Free Enterprise (Capitalism)

- Free market system where there is a **low barrier to entry** for competitors.
- Competition through the **existence of alternatives** for products and services lead to more competitive (cheaper) prices and varied offerings.
- **Fairer and fierce competition** for market share ensures **power is not concentrated** in one or a few firms.
- *Example: Existence of small businesses and independent brands*

Oligopoly

- A few firms control the pricing and supply of a particular good or service.
- **Interdependent** relationship where **output and pricing are set as a bloc - collusion** to set price may at times happen.
- **Some barriers of entry** into industry.
- *Example: Soft drink industry (Coca-Cola & Pepsi), tech industry (Apple & Samsung).*

Monopoly

- **One supplier** provides a particular good or service.
- The monopoly (dominant firm) exerts control over the market.
- Power is seen in how **prices and supply are fixed by the monopoly**.
- *Example: Google's dominance as an online search engine and advertising platform.*

C. Examples of Power – How Corporations Apply / Exercise Power

1. Consumer Manipulation and Market Control

- **Product Life Cycle Control:** Companies decide **when to phase out or extend products' expiration** date to **encourage more consumption**. Example: Apple's product updates and **planned obsolescence in the technology**.
- **The Illusion of Choice:** Even when multiple brands exist, they are **often owned by the same parent company** (e.g., Nestlé, Unilever, and Procter & Gamble owning multiple competing brands).

2. Workforce and Economic Domination

- **Worker Rights vs. Profit:** Large firms **limit labor rights** to maximise profits. Example: Amazon's strict warehouse conditions and anti-union policies.
- **Control Over Supply Chains:** Corporations **dictate global supply chains**, influencing **wages and working conditions** in developing countries (e.g., fast fashion industry like Shein and Zara).

3. Social and Political Influence

- **Media and Narrative Shaping:** Corporations **control narratives** through **advertising and sponsorship**. Example: Super Bowl advertisements as a 'battlefield' for corporate influence.

4) The Media (Traditional and New Media)

The power of the media lies in its ability to influence individuals, intervene in domestic and global political posturing, and fundamentally how societies create value propositions and perceive ongoing developments.

A. How the Media **Acquires** + **Applies** Power

1. Information Gatekeeping and **Agenda Setting**:

- **The media's ability to withhold information through censorship** can shape public knowledge and opinion on matters: *"...power knows the truth already, and is busy concealing it"* – Noam Chomsky.
- Traditional media outlets such as newspapers and television historically held the **power to decide what issues are highlighted (agenda-setting) and how they are framed**.
- Example: Media reports on how local governments respond to international crises **can influence how citizens come to regard the efficacy and political legitimacy** of their elected governments. → Russian news outlets' reporting on the war with Ukraine vs. some international news outlets' more sympathetic stance towards Ukraine.

2. Corporate Consolidation, **Setting the Value Proposition** (e.g. Promoting Consumerism), **Surveillance Capitalism**:

- Similar to the oligopoly structure of corporations, large media conglomerates dominate the industry, prioritising profit over public interest.
- Example: Media Consolidation in the USA and Europe – The concentration of media ownership (e.g., **Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation**) **reduces diversity of perspectives** and can lead to **biased reporting that aligns with corporate or political interests**.
- **Defines aspirational standards** (societal metrics that set the expectations of what we should all desire and strive towards attaining, typically **fed off highlighting what individuals' insecurities of perceived 'lack' or 'need'**) → Advertising and entertainment media heavily influence what abstract concepts like "happiness", "success" or "beauty" literally look like, though these are usually indulging in more **consumerist behaviours to meet materialistic indicators**.
- New media platforms like Facebook and Google **accumulate vast amounts of personal data**, granting them power to **influence user behaviour through targeted advertising and content personalisation**.
- Example: **Cambridge Analytica Scandal (2016)** – Data harvested from Facebook was weaponised to influence voter behaviour in the US presidential election and Brexit referendum, **undermining democratic processes**.

3. Investigative Power (function as the **Fourth Estate / Political Watchdog** and **Fifth Estate / Whistleblowing**):

- Traditional media still retains investigative capacity, often **revealing hidden corruption or political failings**.
- Example: **Panama Papers (2016)** – A global investigation **exposed offshore tax havens used by politicians and elites**. This highlighted the media's ability to uncover hidden networks of power, but also revealed that media exposés may not always lead to significant political change in authoritarian or resilient regimes.
- New media platforms empower **whistleblowers** and **citizen journalists** to expose abuses.
- Example: **Julian Assange and WikiLeaks** – Released classified government documents, exposing military misconduct and diplomatic secrets, **challenging state control over information**.

4. Instrument of **Soft Power** and Political Suasion through **Digital Diplomacy**:

- Countries leverage traditional media to **project cultural and political values globally**.
- Media exports such as films, television shows, music, and books can be powerful tools for **cultural diplomacy**. These creative exports disseminate values and lifestyles around the globe, which can lead to a **favourable perception** of the exporting country, enhancing its soft power.
- Example: **South Korea's Hallyu Wave** – Exports of Korean films, music (K-pop), and dramas boosted South Korea's cultural influence and soft power, improving its global image and fostering diplomatic ties.
- **Digital Diplomacy**: Governments use social media to **shape international narratives** and **interact with global audiences**.
- Example: **Sweden's "Call a Swede" Campaign (2016)** – Allowed foreigners to speak with ordinary Swedes, promoting the nation's values of openness and free speech.

So what...? Why should we care about power, its origins and expressions? How does that affect us as individuals living in today's world?

Perhaps it is valuable to consider Michel Foucault's views on power in the modern world:

1. **Power is Everywhere:** Foucault argued that **power is not centralised or solely in the hands of authorities** but **operates throughout society**. It is embedded in everyday interactions, institutions, and practices. Power is not just repressive (e.g. laws, punishments), but productive — it shapes knowledge, identities, and social norms. → *How am I shaped by the powers that be / various stakeholders in how I understand myself, my place in society, and what I am empowered or disempowered to do?*

2. **Power and Knowledge:** For Foucault, power and knowledge are intertwined. He coined the term “power/knowledge” to describe how **power creates and sustains knowledge systems, and knowledge, in turn, reinforces power**. Discourses — **systems of knowledge** — **are tools of power** because they shape what is seen as true or normal in a society. For instance, scientific knowledge, medicine, or psychology can control and regulate individuals. → *How do I know whether to trust these bodies of knowledge?*

3. **Disciplinary Power:** Foucault introduced the concept of disciplinary power, which focuses on the ways in which institutions (like schools, prisons, and hospitals) shape individuals through **surveillance and control**. Instead of relying on brute force, disciplinary power operates through **subtle techniques** like observation, normalisation, and the internalisation of rules, **making individuals self-regulate**. → *How is my value system, behaviours subconsciously shaped by invisible forces that make me conform?*

4. **Panopticism:** One of Foucault's most famous metaphors for modern power is the “**panopticon**”, a **design for a prison where inmates are constantly visible to a central observer**. This represents how modern societies exert control through surveillance. The idea is that **people internalise the feeling of being watched, leading them to regulate their own behaviour, even without direct coercion**. → *Beyond the stakeholders covered in Part 1 of the Power lecture series, are there now emerging sources of power who now exert a strong influence in policing the behaviour of individuals in today's world?*

5. **Power and Resistance:** Foucault believed that **power always generates resistance**. Since power is so diffuse, resistance can emerge in many forms, both large and small. Resistance is **not just about overthrowing authorities**, but can be found in **subtle actions or alternatives to dominant discourses**. → *What is the relationship between power, resistance, and the manifestation of conflicts in today's polarised world?*

In sum, for Foucault, **power is relational, not hierarchical**, and operates in all aspects of life. It is **productive** — shaping individuals and societies **through networks of knowledge and surveillance** — **rather than through overt force**.

★ **Food for thought:** Consider how Foucault's ideas can be applied to analysing power dynamics between stakeholders in the modern world.

Post-Lecture: Summary of Learning

What did I initially <u>know</u> about Power as a concept?	What do I <u>want to know/learn</u> about the theme of Power? What <u>questions</u> do I have about this concept?	What have I <u>learnt</u> about Power (as a concept, its origins and stakeholders)?

Application to Seminar: Using ideas concerning the origins and expressions of power, evaluate the degree of power invested in a stakeholder.

1. 'Bringing power to the people.' To what extent does this statement reflect the media today? (2020 DHS Y6 MYE)
2. 'Social media activism is never effective.' Discuss. (2023 DHS Y5 Promos)
3. 'Corporations are better than governments at improving our quality of life.' Do you agree? (2019 DHS Y6 MYE)
4. Does sport really promote equality? (2021 DHS Y6 MYE)

"With great power comes great responsibility" - Spider-Man

~

Absolute power corrupts absolutely - Lord Acton

[To be continued in Part 2 of the Power Lecture series]