

# Economic Strategy in: Supremacy 2020

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Supremacy 2020 is deceptively simple. The rules are easy. A child could play it but don't jump to conclusions. There is far more going on here than you may realize. The economic engine in this game is actually very sophisticated. Many new players don't even realize the economic forces at play. It is crucial to understand how the economy works and how it relates to your power base as a superpower. Let's take a closer look at this interaction.

The first confusing thing to new players is money. In most games, money = power. It's simple. Who is winning? The player with the most money. Have more money? You can build more troops and beat everybody. You win! This doesn't work in Supremacy 2020. Technically, money is essentially worthless. A big stack of money does not mean you are a superpower. It does not mean you can project military force around the world and control events. It's just a pile of paper. Money is simply a medium of exchange.

Ok, so what is power based on then? Who is ahead? Who is winning? This is what it boils down to: After the Trading phase, who has the most resource sets? Complete sets: 1 mineral, 1 oil, 1 grain. There is a second part to this: At the end of the turn, how many complete sets of resources did they use? Did they actually spend those sets down during the turn? That's what you want to see in your production. Ideally, you want to see all your resources maxed out at the end of every trading session. At the end of every turn, you want to see these spent down to 0. That is an economy running at full throttle. You are at maximum economic output. Are you making the best use these 'spent' resources? Are your military forces and maneuvers being squandered? This is another matter. For now we are focused on economics.

Notice that according to this definition, we need to max out our Strategic Reserves every turn. We didn't say how. Technically this is true. How do you get those resources? You could buy them on the market with your big stacks of cash. In directly, this is how money can be important. You can trade with other players to get them. Your allies may cut you low rate deals on them. These are all options but they still leave you vulnerable don't they? What if your cash runs out? What if your allies suddenly don't feel like trading anymore? Maybe they still like you, they are just engaged in a war of their own now and don't have any resources to spare. These options are good back up plans. What you really need is your own production system that you can rely on. You need companies! Your company cards are the foundation of your power base. That is why they are worth so much in victory points: essentially double their actual cash value.

So if you want to be a true superpower, you better have enough companies to crank out 12 of each resource every turn. The sooner you can get your economic engine cranking at full speed the better. Now having cards that total 12 of everything sounds simple but it's not enough. These companies actually have to produce. Where are these companies? In Supremacy 2020 you pull them randomly from the deck. They could be anywhere in the world! Some countries, like the US or China are blessed with lots of resources or company cards within their borders. Other countries are resource poor. Take Japan for example. There are no natural resources in Japan. Japan must import all of their raw materials from elsewhere. This makes their economy extremely vulnerable.

Even with players like the US, the card draw is random. There are lots of resource companies in the US but does the US player pull them? Odds are many of these companies will be owned by other players: foreign owned companies. Technically, these resources are produced in the US but they fill up other player's Strategic Reserves. Well hang on, they are in US territory aren't they? Can't the US seize them and take over those companies? Yes, of course. In game terms it's called 'seizure' but that isn't very civilized behavior is it? Who's company did you just effectively steal? Whoever researched, developed and paid for that capital investment isn't likely to be happy. In fact, this is the cause of most wars in Supremacy 2020.

Before you seize someone else's assets, know that there will be hell to pay. Do you have companies in their territory? If you do, you can rest assured that they will be yanked at the first chance. Oh, you don't? You're untouchable, huh? No worries? Yeah, for right now but you are pulling more cards later right? Where will those be? If they don't end up in enemy territory, they will end up next to enemy territory in easy range. You can also bet that they will be conducting diplomatic efforts to form an alliance against your bad form. Maybe one of their new allies will seize your company and give it to them.

Here is another

Now back to your power base. Companies that total 12 of everything are no good unless they produce. They are likely scattered around the globe. They don't produce if another player seizes them. What protects them from being seized? Your Armies. How do they get there? Navies. Armies are the core of your military strength but it takes Navies to project your power where you need it. Your companies will also not produce if they are blockaded. Your Navies will keep shipping lanes open to ensure your cargo arrives.

Notice how these are interdependent. You need a steady supply of resources to build a strong military force. You need a strong military force to ensure a steady supply of resources. If things go bad, this can quickly spiral out of control. Remember Nazi Germany at the end of WWII? This problem can get very ugly.

That covers income, what about expense? In many games, to win you need to get lots of cash and then sit on it. Build it up. Accumulate the most. Not in Supremacy. It's only good if you spend it. Spending is good. It theoretically makes you more powerful. (unless you squander it somehow) What do you build? To start, you can build stacks of Armies and Navies. That alone does not project military power. In many games during your turn, bang! All your pieces go flying in all directions attacking everything in sight. Not so in Supremacy 2020. The Strategic Reserve track also neatly simulates logistics. The military needs supplies, supplies, supplies! Conducting offensive operations is very expensive. Vehicles and aircraft need fuel. (oil) All units need ordinance. (minerals) Troops need uniforms, boots and food. (grain) Every attack must be 'paid' for with a set of supplies. You will need these same supplies to build new units to replace combat loses. Are you conducting naval moves or strategic (rail) redeployments? That costs extra oil. Moving Armies costs grain. Building ICBMs costs minerals.

Everything takes resources. They go quick! It is critical to strike a careful balance. New players often get caught up in the excitement of battle, blowing all of their resources moving and attacking. Guess what? At the end of the turn they have no resources left to build new units with! This will leave their front paper thin next turn. You can also get out of balance in the other direction. Some players spend

all their money building new units so they 'look' strong everywhere but guess what? They don't have anything to move with! One unexpected attack or breakthrough and their forces cannot respond! They are effectively frozen in place. No fuel!

There are plenty of things that can go wrong. Notice also how you need complete sets of resources to attack and build: 1 mineral, 1 oil, 1 grain. What if you have 10 oils, 10 grains but only 2 minerals? How many attacks can you launch? 2 but that's only if you don't build anything! Ah..... Can you see how production can be used as a weapon? Where does the enemy get their resources? Do they have any strategic weaknesses we can exploit? We don't need to take all their companies to destroy their economic base. We can focus on 1 sector of it. Again, remember how the Allies concentrated bombing efforts on the Ploesti oil fields in Romania during WWII? Why? Because that blew out a huge portion of the Nazi fuel production. Without fuel, the panzers can't roll and the Stukas can't soar. What good are weapon platforms that can't operate?

Excellent, so money is completely useless right? Well, not exactly. You need money to pay the troops. They don't fight for free. You must pay salaries to all Armies and Navies at the beginning of each turn or they are disbanded!! You will also need money to buy resources from the world market when your production falls short. New players often find themselves running short of cash after a few turns. It is easy to spend. How do you get it back? You don't automatically just get free money every turn. You have to make it! What? How do you do that? The old fashioned way. There are 2 basic options. First you can produce something and sell it for a profit. Second, trade: buy low and sell high for a profit. This is actually very realistic if you think about it. Yes, the government gets money from tax dollars but where do those tax dollars come from? They only come from a private economy earning a profit, right? Try as you may, this is an ultimate economic truth.

Communist régimes don't want to believe this and they try all sorts of contortions to get out of it but it's all in vain. It's like gravity. It's still there even if you don't believe in it. Your economy must produce a profit somehow. You can have a few bad quarters but eventually your whole machine is going to break down if you aren't making money. You are going to have to strike a balance here somehow. This is the old guns vs butter dilemma. Yes, you want to build lots of military forces but the entire economy can't be about that. There has to be some kind of private economy going on the side here that is actually bringing home the bacon. That's what makes this whole thing work.

There is one more thing for us to consider with economics: debt. If real power comes from building and spending lots of resources, then we should take on maximum debt right? This will allow us to buy and build more things more quickly! Yes, technically that is correct. Until your national debt gets high and you can't afford the interest payments. Then you are bankrupt and out of the game! Debt is a matter of national security. If you get up to \$10 trillion in debt or more, you are in serious trouble. At this point, you almost have to take out loans just to make payments on your interest! Bank payments will slowly strangle your economy. No economy = no power.

The impact of debt is relative. Keep an eye on the debt levels of other players. You are \$5 trillion in debt but so is everybody else. That's not a big deal. Most other players hold \$5 trillion in bonds but you are \$5 trillion in debt? That is a big problem. It is ok to go deep into debt temporarily. Just make sure you have a good solid plan to pay it back down quickly or pull off a game winning move with this surge in power. If things don't pan out, you will likely be bankrupt. Remember, this works the same for other players as well. Watch out for superpowers that suddenly go deep into debt. This puts them into

a desperate situation. Desperate players become very aggressive. If you can delay and keep them bogged down for a turn or two, they will soon collapse of their own weight!

Should you load up on bonds? I'm not a big fan of this. Some players like it. I figure I can put that money to better use myself. I'd rather be using it to amp up my power base. Besides, take a look at the victory conditions. Cash, loans and bonds are only worth face value. Companies and weapons systems are worth double. This brings us back around to where we started. What makes you a superpower? Lots of cash? No. How about lots of Armies, Navies, ICBMs, ABMs and companies? Now we are talking. Build up lots of those things while preventing others from doing so. This is your path to global Supremacy in 2020.

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