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World Power Dynamics and US Dominance in it

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In order to better understand the concept of US hegemony, this research paper will examine its historical context, contemporary problems, and possible future developments. US hegemony describes the country's dominant position in the world's political, economic, and military sectors, which allows it to exert influence and direct international affairs. Beginning with the development of organisations like the United Nations and the Bretton Woods system after World War II, the research traces the origins of US hegemony. The paper then looks at the major difficulties that US hegemony has faced, both at the domestic and international levels. Maintaining US hegemonic power is difficult due to internal factors such as domestic politics, economic changes, and shifting demographics. External dangers to the American-led order include the growth of regional superpowers like China and Russia. It examines a number of possibilities, including the cohabitation of several superpowers, a move towards a more multipolar system, or the continued dominance of the United States through adaptive tactics and alliances. The paper also looks at how US hegemony may affect regional security arrangements, economic interdependence, and global governance. This paper's overall goal is to thoroughly examine US hegemony, taking into account its historical roots, current difficulties, and possibilities for continuation or change in the years to come.

Keywords: *hegemony, world power, military supremacy, economic influence, political control, unipolar world, global leadership.*

INTRODUCTION

Hegemony refers to the dominance or leadership of one country or a group of countries over others, whether by political, economic, or cultural means. It is a notion that has gained widespread acceptance in international relations and has significantly influenced the development of the current world order. The term 'hegemony' derives from the Greek word 'hegemonia' that denoted one city-state's dominance over others in terms of politics and the armed forces.¹ However, the concept of hegemony in modern politics has been broadened to include more varied kinds of dominance and control.²

US hegemony refers to the country's dominant position in the world's political and economic system. It is characterized by a combination of military, economic, and cultural influence that enables the US to direct and control world affairs.³ The United States became the most powerful country in the world after the Second World War. It had a powerful military, an advanced economy, and a broad alliance and cooperation network. The US was in an unprecedented position of dominance that gave it tremendous control over world affairs.

US hegemony's military power is one of its most important components. With a vast network of military installations across the world and a highly advanced technological force, the United States has the greatest defence budget in the world. This military dominance allows the US to project power and intervene in conflicts around the world, shaping the outcome to its advantage. Along with its military might, the United States has a large economic influence. It has the biggest economy in the world, a sophisticated financial system, and powerful enterprises that rule over international markets. Since the US dollar is the most often used currency in worldwide trade, the US has tremendous power over questions of international economic policy.

Furthermore, the spread of American culture and ideals contributes to the maintenance of US hegemony. A lot of other cultures have been influenced by American popular culture, which

¹ Rob Kitchin and Nigel Thrift, *International Encyclopedia of Human Geography* (Elsevier Science 2009)

² *Ibid*

³ *Ibid*

includes television, music, and movies. The promotion and adoption of American ideas like democracy, human rights, and free-market capitalism have also been widespread around the world.

EMERGENCE OF US HEGEMONY

The emergence of US hegemony took place after World War II, specifically during the period of the Cold War (1945-1991). The United States rose as a global superpower, economically, militarily, and politically. The US played a dominant role in shaping the post-war international order, establishing global institutions like the United Nations, World Bank, and International Monetary Fund. It also extended its influence through the establishment of military alliances like NATO and by utilizing its economic power through initiatives like the Marshall Plan. The US emerged as a global leader, challenging the Soviet Union's influence and promoting its own democratic capitalist model. US hegemony began in 1991 after the USSR's strength vanished from the global scene, although it did not immediately start to behave in a hegemonic way.

PROCESS OF ESTABLISHING US HEGEMONY

1. Iraq Invasion: On August 2, 1990, Iraq, led by Saddam Hussein, invaded Kuwait and immediately gained control of and took over the nation. After numerous diplomatic efforts to convince Iraq to stop its aggression failed, the United Nations approved the use of force to liberate Kuwait.

Operation Desert Storm was started in January 1991 by the United States and a coalition of many other nations in order to drive Iraq out to Kuwait and reclaim its freedom. Protecting Kuwait's sovereignty and preventing Iraq from seizing substantial portions of the global oil reserves were the key motivations for this operation.

2. First Gulf War: The First Gulf War was fought by a massive coalition of 660,000 soldiers from 34 nations, who ultimately destroyed Iraq. This war was also called a computer war or Video Game war due to the use of smart bombs and widespread television coverage. The majority of the soldiers in the UN operation, 'Operation Desert Storm' were Americans. The UN coalition

forces were commanded by an American general by the name of 'Norman Schwarzkopf' and roughly 75% of the soldiers from American forces were included in the UN forces⁴.

THIS WAR HAD A SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON THE US HEGEMONY:

Military Dominance: Throughout the conflict, the US proved its superiority on the battlefield by successfully leading a coalition of 35 nations to free Kuwait from Iraqi rule. This demonstrated the US as the world's leading military power, demonstrating its dominance and capacity to project force internationally.

Global Leadership: Assuming the coalition's leadership position, the US supervised military operations and provided strategic guidance. This established its status as the world's hegemon by demonstrating its capacity to marshal worldwide support and direct multinational efforts.

Regional Influence: The US's involvement in the Gulf War confirmed its commitment to preserving the Middle East's stability, which is strategically important due to its oil wealth and geographic location. The US strengthened its status as a major power in the Middle East and increased its influence in the area by taking the lead in the attempt to stop Iraq's aggressiveness.

Economic Control: The US's ability to safeguard its economic interests, particularly the stability of the world oil market, was on full display during the First Gulf War. Due to US military participation, oil continued to flow freely despite Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, which helped to stabilise the world's energy markets. This affected the stability of the global economy and further strengthened US economic dominance.

International Relations: The Gulf War's victorious outcome improved the US's image and credibility abroad. The US's dedication to preserving international law, respecting sovereign rights, and resistance to aggression were made clear. As a result, it increased its diplomatic influence and promoted international collaboration, strengthening its hegemonic position.

⁴ *Ibid*

The First Gulf War considerably increased US hegemony by demonstrating its military strength, capacity for leadership, regional influence, economic dominance, and international standing. It contributed to the idea that the US is the world's most powerful nation by acting as a potent example of US power projection.

1. The Clinton Year: George H.W. Bush was defeated by Democratic Party candidate William Jefferson (Bill) Clinton in the 1992 US presidential elections. Eight more years of Bill Clinton's rule followed after his 1996 re-election. During the Clinton era, the United States was withdrawing into domestic issues and had not committed itself fully to international politics. The Clinton administration gave 'soft issues' like advancing democracy, combating climate change, and promoting international trade priority over 'hard politics' like military might and security. The biggest military incident happened in 1999 as a result of Yugoslavian aggression against the province of Kosovo's mostly Albanian people.

For more than two months, the air forces of the NATO nations bombed targets in and around Yugoslavia, forcing Slobodan Milosevic's government to fall and station a NATO force in Kosovo. The 1998 bombings of the US embassies in Nairobi, Kenya and Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania, drew another massive military response from the US. The bombs were attributed to Al-Qaeda, a terrorist group that has been greatly inspired by extreme Islamist ideologies. Operation Infinite Reach directed a series of cruise missile attacks on Al-Qaeda terrorist targets in the Sudan and Afghanistan. In this instance, neither the UN sanctions nor the rules of international law concerned the US. Some of the targets reportedly included non-terrorist civilian facilities.

2. The Attack of 9/11: On September 11, 2001, just after take-off, 19 Arab hijackers took control of four American commercial aircraft, causing them to crash into significant US buildings. The World Trade Centre in New York's North and South Towers were struck by the same aeroplane. The Pentagon, which houses the US Defence Department in Arlington, Virginia, was struck by the third plane. On its way to the US Congress's Capitol building, the fourth plane is believed to have crashed in a Pennsylvanian field. Nearly 3,000 people were killed in the attacks.

The attack on September 11, 2001, commonly known as 9/11, had significant implications for US hegemony.⁵ While it may be more accurate to say that the attack challenged US hegemony rather than bolstered it, it did have some unintended consequences that indirectly contributed to the continuation of American dominance.

War on Terror: The United States started the War on Terror in reaction to the 9/11 attacks, which resulted in military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. With these initiatives, terrorist networks were to be destroyed, the Taliban was to be driven from power in Afghanistan, and Saddam Hussein was to be overthrown in Iraq. The rapid defeat of both the Taliban and Saddam Hussein's government by the US military showcased its military superiority and restored its status as a global superpower.

Military Capabilities: The 9/11 attacks were a major challenge for military modernization and expansion. The US raised its defence budget, made investments in the creation of brand-new weapons, and improved its terrorism capabilities. As a result, the United States was able to preserve its military dominance, which is essential to maintaining global dominance.

Intelligence and Surveillance: The attacks made the US intelligence and security equipment significantly more vulnerable. In response, the US made significant investments in technologies for gathering intelligence, sharing information, and surveillance. The US was able to project influence and maintain control over international security because of the rise of its intelligence community, which also increased its global reach and surveillance capabilities.

Diplomatic Support: Following the attacks, the United States received a great deal of sympathy and support internationally. A variety of aid was sent, including military, intelligence, and diplomatic collaboration. By strengthening its international alliances and partnerships, the US hegemony was supported during this temporary wave of solidarity.

⁵ Peter L Bergen, 'September 11 attacks' (*Britannica*) <<https://www.britannica.com/event/September-11-attacks>> accessed 05 December 2023

However, the 9/11 attacks also posed a few challenges to US hegemony including the following:

Erosion of Trust: The attacks' unexpected made people doubt the efficiency of US intelligence and security agencies. The United States' reputation as a dependable hegemonic power suffered due to the failure to stop such a terrible event, which damaged confidence in its capacity to defend its citizens and allies.

Costly Engagements: For the US, the extended military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq turned out to be expensive activities. The wars consumed a lot of resources – both material and human – and provoked internal arguments and Criticism of US imperialism on a worldwide scale.

Rise of New Powers: Due to the emphasis on terrorism and military operations, other strategic issues, such as the rise of rising superpowers like China and Russia, have received less attention and funding. Due to the US's volatility, these nations were able to take advantage of these voids and expand their influence both locally and internationally. Overall, despite the fact that the 9/11 attacks put US hegemony to the test, American control was indirectly maintained through the country's following acts. The difficulties and unexpected consequences of the reaction to the attacks, however, have also had a variety of negative effects on US hegemony.⁶

The Iraq Invasion: With the intention of overthrowing Saddam Hussein's administration in Iraq, the US began Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003. It was intended to end Saddam's alleged possession of WMDs and bring democracy and stability to the area. Due to the operation, the US and its allies occupied Iraq for a number of years, which resulted in the installation of a new government.

⁶ Patrick Jackson, 'September 11 attacks: What happened on 9/11?' *BBC News* (3 August 2021) <<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-57698668>> accessed 18 December 2023

CHALLENGES TO US HEGEMONY IN THE 21ST CENTURY

The challenges to US hegemony in the 21st century come from a number of sources, including the emergence of China, economic competition, non-state actors, technological developments, global issues, and shifting global attitudes. The United States must modify its strategy and participate in cooperative frameworks in a multipolar world with competing power centres in order to preserve influence and address global concerns. These challenges are:

Rise of China: China's rapid economic development and military modernisation have put the United States' economic and military supremacy under threat. The Belt and Road Initiative by China desires to establish a new global commerce network that could reduce US influence in some areas⁷. The US hegemony is also threatened by China's growing aggressiveness in territorial disputes in the South China Sea and its expanding influence in international organizations like the World Trade Organization.

Economic Competitors: The rise of new global economies like India and the European Union puts the US economy's hegemony in danger. These areas have the potential to slowly decrease US influence and output in the world economy. Additionally, the dominance of the US dollar as the world reserve currency may be threatened by the usage of alternative currencies, like the euro, in international commercial transactions.

Terrorism and Non-State Actors: Non-state actors, including international terrorist groups, put the concept of state-centric hegemony under challenge. These organizations are able to operate internationally, take advantage of contemporary communication tools, and take advantage of political and social instability to achieve their goals. International cooperation is now necessary in response to the terrorist threat, and US resources have been diverted from traditional power projection capabilities.⁸

⁷ Chas W. Freeman, 'China's Challenge to American Hegemony' (*Middle East Policy Council*) <<https://mepc.org/speeches/chinas-challenge-american-hegemony>> accessed 17 December 2023

⁸ Giorgio Romano Schutte, 'The challenge to US hegemony and the Gilpin Dilemma' (2021) 64(1) *Revista Brasileira de Política Internacional*

Technological Advances: Rapid advancements in technology have democratized access to information and given people and non-state actors more leverage to question established power systems. For instance, cyber warfare enables weaker players to target and impair vital infrastructure, thus destroying America's technological advantage.

Climate Change and Global Issues: Global problems that call for cooperation, such as pandemics, international criminal organizations, and climate change, pose a challenge to the ability of the United States to maintain hegemony. These challenges often call for international cooperation and can show the limits of a single nation's authority.

Shifting global Perspectives: The United States' reputation has been damaged by its military actions, such as the Iraq War, and controversial practices, like the use of torture and widespread monitoring. These perspectives may make the United States become less legitimate and morally superior on the world stage, which would limit its ability to maintain hegemonic power.

US HEGEMONY AS A HARD POWER

The military's hegemonic position in the nation is defined as hard power. The US maintains its position of power and influence in international affairs as a result of its extensive and powerful forces.

The following are some characteristics of US hegemony as a hard power:

- To match the military prowess of the US is almost impossible. The United States invests a lot of money in its military. Research and development for the military also receives a lot of funding.
- Anywhere in the world can be reached precisely and fatally by American weapons. It can harm its opponents the most while protecting its own forces as much as possible from opposing attacks.
- The military power of the US is unmatched by any other nation in the world.

- Along with having superior weapons and equipment, it also makes significant investments in military research and development.⁹

US HEGEMONY AS STRUCTURAL POWER

If a hegemon promotes the development and survival of a global economy, it possesses structural power. The US is a hegemonic structural power because:

- The US has contributed significantly to the provision of international public goods. Public goods are items that one person uses without lowering the amount of those items available to another.
- Roads and clean air are two examples of public goods. Merchant ships employ sea lanes of communication (SLOCs) in the global economy. Without open SLOCs, free trade in a global economy would not be possible.¹⁰

US HEGEMONY AS SOFT POWER

A nation becomes a soft power when it develops its cultural dominance throughout the world in different defined forms.

The following dimensions of the US's hegemonic soft power have emerged:

- Today, the US is powerful not only militarily, and economically, but also culturally.
- People's and societies' dreams are inspired by American practises from the 20th century.
- America is the most dominant civilization on Earth and is referred to as having 'soft power' since it can influence others rather than impose its will.¹¹

CRITICS OF US HEGEMONY

US hegemony has been criticized in a number of ways including:

⁹ 'Hegemony: Hard, Structural and Soft Power' (*Unacademy*) <<https://unacademy.com/content/upsc/study-material/ncert-notes/hegemony-hard-structural-and-soft-power/>> accessed 18 December 2023

¹⁰ *Ibid*

¹¹ *Ibid*

Lack of Respect for Sovereignty: According to critics, the US frequently fails to respect the sovereignty of other countries by interfering militarily, enacting economic penalties, or overthrowing governments that do not serve its objectives. This act of invading another country's territory is viewed as a power abuse that harms relations between nations.¹²

Economic Exploitation: The US's status as a worldwide economic leader is frequently criticized for exploiting other nations through strategies including employment outsourcing, market manipulation, and the promotion of unfair trade agreements. As a result of this economic hegemony, some countries may experience imbalances and inequities that put them at risk of poverty and dependency while benefiting the US¹³.

Cultural Imperialism: According to critics, US hegemony encourages the spread of American values and culture, which reduces native cultures and traditions in other nations. It is believed that the hegemony of American media, technology, and consumer goods represents a kind of cultural imperialism that diminishes diversity in culture and homogenizes societies.¹⁴

Interventionism and Militarism: US military actions in a number of nations have come under criticism for what some see as a disrespect for human rights, international law, and the effects on civilian populations. Critics contend that rather than promoting world peace and stability, US hegemony helps maintain a cycle of militarism and conflict.

Inequitable Global Governance: According to critics, the US, the world's leading power, wields excessive influence over institutions including the United Nations, World Bank, and International Monetary Fund. The voice and agency of other nations in international decision-making processes are diminished by this influence, which is viewed as being undemocratic.

Climate Change and the Destruction of the Environment: Critics argue that US hegemony contributes to climate change and environmental degradation by prioritizing short-term economic concerns above long-term sustainability. Global efforts to solve these urgent

¹² 'US Hegemony and Its Perils' (Peninsula Foundation) <<https://www.thepeninsula.org.in/2023/02/24/u-s-hegemony-and-its-perils/>> accessed 18 December 2023

¹³ *Ibid*

¹⁴ *Ibid*

challenges are viewed as being hampered by the US's withdrawal from international climate agreements, its reliance on fossil fuels, and its opposition to some environmental regulations.

SUGGESTIONS

There are a few suggestions for maintaining the US hegemony:

Multilateral Engagement: To work with other countries on various concerns, the US should take an active part in international forums including the United Nations, World Trade Organisation, and other global organizations. This strategy would enable the US to influence foreign policies and develop a more open international system.

Developing Alliances: The US should keep developing alliances with nations that share its principles for democracy and its strategic objectives. These alliances, like NATO and the Five Eyes intelligence-sharing system, can offer a collaborative framework for addressing security issues and furthering shared economic objectives.

Economic Engagement: The US should actively participate in trade agreements and partnerships both locally and internationally. This strategy would advance the US economy, encourage mutual gain, strengthen American economic dominance, and reduce its dependence on particular markets.

Promoting Human Rights and Democracy: The US may use its influence to advance democratic principles, human rights, and the rule of law. The US can strengthen its soft power and win the trust and support of other countries by promoting these values around the world and supporting initiatives for democratic administration.

Leadership on Climate Change: Maintaining one's global influence requires taking the lead in addressing climate change. The US may favourably impact global discourse and cooperation by promoting efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, supporting clean energy technology, and collaborating internationally on environmental concerns.

It's important to remember that views on maintaining US hegemony may differ and that every suggestion must be implemented after giving due thought to a wide range of political, economic, and social concerns.

CONCLUSION

The term 'United States hegemony' describes the country's hegemonic position and influence in world politics, economics, and military affairs. The United States emerged as the top superpower during the post-World War II era, influencing international affairs and exercising great control over international institutions and policies.

In conclusion, the world order has been significantly impacted by American hegemony. It has made it possible for the United States to project its influence and interests around the globe, influencing security arrangements, trade agreements, and conventions. However, the idea of US hegemony has also drawn criticism, with worries expressed about the likelihood of power abuse, the erosion of other countries' sovereignty, and unilateral decision-making.

The future of American hegemony is still up in the air as the world stage keeps changing. US supremacy is threatened and given chances by the growth of rising nations, shifting geopolitical dynamics, and evolving global issues. For the United States to sustain its power and adjust to a shifting international system, it will be essential to navigate these complexities and engage in constructive multilateralism.