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# US Hegemony in World Politics

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## ABSTRACT

*This article discusses on the US dominance in world Politics. The era after 1991 left US as the only superpower but its hegemony could be seen prior to that. It further discusses the multiple aspects of US dominance and the current challenges that the US provides to the Present world. It provides a brief about American Hyperpower, Oil Politics, and US dominance in other arenas. The article also gives insight into the supremacy of the US in the educational, social, and cultural fields. It also discusses India's relationship with the US and Chinese dominance as an alternative to US hegemony.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

As hegemony is an important part of the global politics and in recent days as states try to dominate the world it is very important to have some basic knowledge about hegemony<sup>3</sup>. As Robert cox said “hegemony means the exercise of power by a state in which cooperation of less powerful states is gained by rewarding their consent rather than coercing compliance by the threat or application of punishment (Cox 1984). But this definition of hegemony cannot be applied to the hegemony of some states. As states have used and might use coercion against other states, hegemony does include the use of military and violent force within its ambit.

It can be said that after the end of the cold war America was left without no other superpowers to challenge it and therefore its rule after the period of 1991 can be said to be the hegemony of America. But the effect of US hegemony couldn't be seen explicitly from the period after 1991. it was the actions of the US that the world later came on to understand that the US was living in a period of Hegemony.

Some basic factors that depict that US has hegemony over the world are the use of the word America in place of the United States of America. The word America depicts the whole continent of America and not only the United States of America. And therefore, the use of such kind of words shows the influence of America over the whole world.

The influence of America in modern society can be said to be one where western imperialism

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<sup>3</sup> SØRENSEN, GEORG. “Hegemony and World Orders.” *Cooperation and Conflict*, vol. 36, no. 3, 2001, pp. 306–11. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/45084036>. Accessed 10 Oct. 2022.

in the world is taking over the place of indigenous cultures. Western imperialism is one which most of the influence is there is of America.

The hegemonic rule of America can be said to start after the first Gulf war happened. The following can be said to be the events of the First Gulf War. In this case it can be seen to be one-

When Iraq invaded Kuwait and decided not to release Kuwait, then the UN launched an operation against Kuwait. The UN operation was said as operation Desert storm. The military used in this operation came from the coalition of troops that America arranged for the war. The question might arise of what could be said as the US hegemony in this case. Here an important fact was that most of the coalition forces and military used for the war were from the US. The first gulf war divulged an important fact-that the US which had donated 75% of the military forces was far better in terms of technology used in the war. This war thus disclosed an important fact to the world-that is the technological gap that was there between US and other countries.

The hegemonic Rule during the Clinton Era-After the war Bill Clinton lost elections. But during the years Clinton was there America's dominance could be seen in Yugoslavia and more particularly in Kosovo. The stationing of NATO Forces, predominantly led by the US in the territory of Kosovo shows the influence that America had on other provinces and territories of the World. Other actions include its bombing in Kosovo, Dar-e Salem and other parts of the world. The actions taken by US can be said to be an egregious violation of the international laws of the world.<sup>4</sup>

During the time of Bush Administration, it could be said that America was not only influential in terms of its military capabilities. Rather its interests in the Persian Gulf, its interests for protecting the stability in Europe can be said to be one where America could see itself as a superpower.

The view point of People of America can also be taken into consideration, but it can be said that. During the cold war, it could be said that 67% favoured America's involvement in the war. And subsequently also majority of Americans were in support of having America having an international role to play in the world affairs. Thus, this role of America to play in the world affairs can be said to be one where America acted like a hegemon.

America didn't act like a hegemon only during the Clinton years but in the present era especially

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<sup>4</sup>NCERT. *Contemporary World Politics*. National Council Of Educational Research And Training, 2019.

after the year 2000 it can be said that American hegemony is there in the form of what we call as western imperialism. As Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said, "America cannot solve the most pressing problems on our own, and the world cannot solve them without America."<sup>5</sup> This shows that the leaders of America have supremacy in the way they speak and this is some way depicts the hegemony of America. The recent hegemony of America has been developed with the use of smart power-which rather entails a combination of both hard and soft power. In 2007 former U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage had written a book with the title of Powers to lead.<sup>6</sup> This showed a combination of both the hard and soft power that America could use in controlling the world. A series of combinations of all these military, economic, cultural and smart power defines what is called as the hegemony of America over the whole world.

### 9/11<sup>7</sup>

On September 11, 2001, four American commercial aeroplanes were hijacked by 19 individuals from various Arab nations shortly after take-off, and they were then used to crash into significant US structures. The North and South Towers of the New York City's World Trade Centre were each struck by one plane. The Pentagon, which houses the US Defence Department's headquarters in Arlington, Virginia, was struck by a third aircraft. The fourth plane, which was probably headed for the US Congress's Capitol, crashed in a Pennsylvanian field. The assaults are now often referred to as "9/11." The assaults resulted in close to 3,000 fatalities. They have been contrasted with the Japanese assault on Pearl Harbour in 1941 and British burning of Washington, DC in 1814 concerning their frightening effect on Americans. However, in terms of fatalities, 9/11 was the most serious incident to occur on US territory since the nation's inception in 1776.

After 9/11, the US reacted with speed and ferocity. George W. Bush, a member of the Republican Party and the son of the previous president George H.W. Bush, replaced Clinton as president of the United States. In contrast to Clinton, Bush had a considerably more pessimistic perspective on US interests and strategies for advancing them. The US started "Operation Enduring Freedom" against everyone believed to be responsible for this assault, primarily Al-Qaeda and the Taliban government in Afghanistan, as part of its "Global War on Terror." The

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<sup>5</sup> Nye, Joseph S. "Get Smart: Combining Hard and Soft Power." *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 88, no. 4, 2009, pp. 160–63. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20699631>. Accessed 8 Oct. 2022.

<sup>6</sup> Wilson, Ernest J. "Hard Power, Soft Power, Smart Power." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, vol. 616, 2008, pp. 110–24. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25097997>. Accessed 9 Oct. 2022.

<sup>7</sup> Klein, Adam. "CASE STUDY: THE 9/11 ATTACKS." *The Costs of Terror: The Economic Consequences of Global Terrorism*, Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, 2007, pp. 3–5. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep10062.4>. Accessed 5 Oct. 2022.

Taliban rule was quickly ousted, but Al-Qaeda and its remnants have continued to pose a threat, as seen by the numerous terrorist acts, they have subsequently carried out against Western targets. The US military imprisoned people in secret prisons after making arrests throughout the globe, sometimes without the knowledge of the governments of the people being detained. Some of them were sent to Guantanamo Bay, a US Naval facility in Cuba, where the detainees were not protected by US law, international law, or the laws of their home nations. Even the UN officials were prohibited from meeting with these detainees.

## **II. THE OIL POLITICS AND THE DOMINANCE OF US**

The US policy in the middle-east and oil rich regions is very important to understand the different facets of the US hegemony.<sup>8</sup> Till the recent times especially after the Covid times America has tried to contain the rise of Iran and Iraq. It has tried to stop India and other countries from buying the Iranian oil by putting over sanctions. It has aimed at maintaining both the indigenous and foreign interests of US in the oil-supply arena.

The evolution and start of the international oil market though has changed the dynamics of the post-cold war era but still it can be said the dominance of the US continues. Most countries who rely on the gulf oil try to maintain a favourable terms and conditions with the US. The US-Saudi Arabia relations are also important in this context. It is because while the US tries to influence Saudi Arabia it tries to control the oil market.<sup>9</sup> The US moreover after the Russia-Ukraine crisis has tried to stop the use of Rubble from the international markets and tried to coerce the European countries for not buying Russian oil and gas. Thus, it can be said that in the contemporary era US dominance continues and goes on.

## **III. HEGEMONY AS HARD POWER**

The term "hegemony" has its origins in classical Greek. The word, which originally meant Athens' dominant position in comparison to the other Greek city-states, suggests the leadership or domination of one state. Therefore, the relationship, pattern, and balance of military strength between nations is related to the first meaning of hegemony. This idea of hegemony as a result of military dominance is particularly pertinent to the US's current standing and role in international affairs. The overwhelming supremacy of US military might serve as the foundation for current US authority. It is both absolute and relative that America now dominates the military. In absolute terms, the US has military capabilities that can reach every location on

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<sup>8</sup> Bromley, Simon. "Oil and the Middle East: The End of US Hegemony?" *Middle East Report*, no. 208, 1998, pp. 19–22. JSTOR, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3013404>. Accessed 7 Oct. 2022.

<sup>9</sup> Thomas, K. T. "THE US, IRAQ AND OIL POLITICS." *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, vol. 67, 2006, pp. 901–09. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44148009>. Accessed 10 Oct. 2022.

Earth precisely, lethally, and in real time, devastating the enemy while providing the most protection for its own soldiers from the risks of war.

But it can be said that the military power that America has flows from the economic power of America that America has in terms of its trade and exports all over the world. From the article by Paul Kennedy on “The rise and fall of great powers”, it can be said that America was the fastest growing economy since the 1980’s and accounted for one-fifth of the global output since then. America’s economy at a point could be said twice as large as the economy of Japan which was the second largest economy then. Thus, it can be said that America continued to enjoy a dominant position in terms of its economy and military power.<sup>10</sup>

The fact that no other force in the world now comes close to matching the US's total capabilities, though, is even more amazing.

The US currently invests most in military than the following twelve powers put together. Additionally, a considerable portion of the Pentagon's budget is spent on technology, sometimes known as military R&D.

As a result, the US's military superiority is not merely the result of larger military spending, but also of a qualitative divide, a technical gap that no other state can now possibly cross. The military supremacy of US is also enhanced by the fact that it is the country which regulates the enhancement of Uranium in Iran, which influences other countries to have no-nuclear policy and tries to bring countries within the NPT (Nuclear non-proliferation treaty). Moreover after the 2000’s the US has been further involved in a process of enhanced militarization and has tried to control the Arms through the use of Arms.

The “covert military and intelligence operations” that have been blasted off by the US also demonstrate the fact that US in a clandestine way tries to control over the world.

Similar to this, it is obvious that the US has the power to punish and discourage.

Policing an occupied region is an area where US military capability has so far been demonstrated to have significant deficiencies.

America’s military power especially after the cold war has increased due to its increased economic assistance to the world. When in 1996 Beijing attacked Taiwan, a single American carrier battle group changed Beijing’s mind-set. Thus American supremacy doesn’t only influence particular countries but rather it also holds a significant influence over the relations

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<sup>10</sup> Tyler, Gus. *Challenge*, vol. 31, no. 5, 1988, pp. 60–64. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40720446>. Accessed 1 Oct. 2022.

between neighbouring countries.

In the world geopolitics, especially in the era after USSR disintegrated and it was NATO which continued on, it could be said that the supremacy of America increased thereafter. Of all the five biggest NATO countries it was the US which spent the largest percentage of its GDP on its defence in 1998. The US spent about 3.2 percent of its GDP on defence, while European allies spent around 2.1% of their GDP on defence. And thus, the US derived a lot of advantages from its greater spending in the NATO such as prestige and a greater say over the management of affairs in NATO.

But it can be said is not free without its problems. For example, the US invasion of Iraq exposed a number of American weaknesses. The US has been unable to compel the Iraqi people to surrender to the US-led coalition's occupying forces. But we need a historical context to truly comprehend the nature of American weakness. The only four purposes for which imperial governments have ever employed military force were to conquer, dissuade, punish, and police. The American military is mighty, as seen by the invasion of Iraq.

#### **IV. THE AMERICAN HYPERPOWER**

In the current world one thing that can be said for sure is that the Hegemony that is enjoyed by America is unique. Now the question arise of this dominance is unique. Often, we have heard the term of Pax-Americana that is the dominance of US. It can also be said that the concept of free market and a capitalist world was given by the US only. India for instance opened up its market and similarly many other countries did. Thus, it can be said that the concept of free-market economy which dominates over the world can be said to be an American concept.

The concept of MNC's and the capitalist market which dominates over the world can be said as a feature of the American society itself. For example-we already know that Google dominates the search sphere, twitter dominates the social media world and WhatsApp dominates the messaging world. These are all nothing but a sheer dominance of America in all spheres of life. Moreover, it is not only these companies that take over the world but they also attract people from all over the world. Take the instance of the millions of Indians migrating to America to complete their higher studies and join the multinational companies. This can be said as the huge influence that America has all over the world. We all might have heard of the meme “ padhega India Badhega America”. This meme illustrates the fact that when India reads America develops.

The Internet is another illustration of a worldwide public utility was in fact started by the US military. The US military started the Internet as the result of research project in 1950's, despite

the fact that it is now thought to have made the virtual world of the WWW (World Wide Web) feasible. Even today, a worldwide network of satellites, the majority of that are controlled by the US govt, supports the Internet.

The American dominance is not only in terms of its military, internet and economy but it also dominates in the sphere of currency. The US Dollar can be said to be the unsurpassed currency in the century.<sup>11</sup> Recently the Indian currency value depreciated in comparison to the American currency. And guess what this is? This is nothing but America's Federal Reserve supremacy all over the world. Thus the terms of weighing a particular currency, formulating the monetary and fiscal policy- In every case the governments use the Dollar as the benchmark. And hence this neo-imperialism is nothing but American supremacy all over the world. The use of dollar as the international fiat Currency can be said as a public good which America uses for its supremacy and economic benefit. For example, when Indian currency depreciates, then with one dollar in hand Americans can buy more amount of economic goods and thus get more amount of economic benefit.

Moreover, when the market gets to decide the fate of currencies all over the world and the benchmark is the US dollar, then US competitiveness grows and its exports increase while other currencies fall. Another fact which shows its supremacy is that more no. of foreigners invests in America than Americans themselves.

The seignorage of the US dollar has in other words allowed it to float debt and print money in any way it wants thereby influencing other countries. Moreover, the world supports the use of dollar because of the vast dollar reserves that the countries have with them. Thus, a monetary diplomacy and a realistic supremacy in currency is held by America.

The US in the present day tries to allege that Russia has violated the international norms and the law of the UN by starting the Russia Ukraine war. But the September 11 attacks which the US started in favour of a "preventive war" and violated the humanitarian law; state sovereignty can be also be said as an act done against the UN charter. The US tries to be biased towards itself and stringent in enforcing the norms against the other countries.

## **V. HEGEMONY AS STRUCTURAL POWER**

Hegemony in its second sense is considerably unlike from hegemony in its first. It results from a certain interpretation of the global economy. The core tenet is that a hegemon or dominating

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<sup>11</sup> Thomas Costigan, et al. "The US Dollar as the Global Reserve Currency: Implications for US Hegemony." *World Review of Political Economy*, vol. 8, no. 1, 2017, pp. 104–22. *JSTOR*, <https://doi.org/10.13169/worlrevipoli.econ.8.1.0104>. Accessed 10 Oct. 2022.

power is necessary for the development and maintenance of an open world economy. The hegemon must be able to uphold the international order and have the will and ability to create certain rules for it. The hegemon typically does this to its own benefit, but frequently to its relative disadvantage as its rivals profit from the openness of the global economy without bearing the expenses of sustaining it. The US's contribution to the provision of international public goods is indicative of hegemony in the second meaning. Those products that may be enjoyed by one person without affecting the amount of the item accessible for another person are referred to be public goods. Public goods include things like clean air and safe roads. The reference of a global public good in the context of the global economy such as sea lanes of communication (SLOCs), the sea routes that are often utilised by commercial ships. Without open SLOCs, free commerce in a global economy would not be conceivable.

The foundation of the law of the sea and guarantee of freedom of navigation in international seas is provided by the hegemon's naval might. The US Navy has filled this duty since the Second World War, when British naval might began to decrease.

We all aware that the US has a presence in every country, every industry, and every field of technology. The US continues to account for a massive 21% of the global GDP. If statistics on intra-European Union trade is included, the US accounts for over 14% of global commerce. There is hardly a single industry in the global economy where an American company does not rank among the "top three."

It's crucial to keep in mind that the US's structural power—the ability to influence how the world economy is structured—is inextricably linked to the country's economic dominance. After all, US after World War II US established the Bretton Woods system which continues to serve as the foundation of the global economy.

The US's dominance in international organisations shows how America uses these organisations to meet its own agendas and interests. It can be said that America used these international organisations in different fields of international peace and security. For example, its military actions on countries and targeted support to few countries shows its multilateral approach. More can be given by the US when it gets a chance to dominate these international organisations and institutions. The institutional framework of the Bretton woods and the IMF can be said to be given by the US. This is nothing but “American exceptionalism”—the belief that American values and practices are universally valid and superior.

The World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF), and World Trade Organization (WTO) might thus be seen as the by-products of American hegemony. The Master's in Business

Administration degree is a prime illustration of US structural dominance (MBA). It is peculiarly American to think of business as a vocation that relies on abilities that may be learned in a university. The Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania opened its doors as the first business school in the world in 1881. Around 1900, the first MBA programmes were introduced. Only in 1950 was the first MBA programme outside of the US founded. In the modern world, the MBA is recognised as a distinguished academic degree in every nation.

## **VI. HEGEMONY AS SOFT POWER**

However, it is incorrect to only evaluate the military and economic aspects of US hegemony without taking the ideological or cultural aspect into account. The ability to "create consent" lies at the heart of this third definition of hegemony. Hegemony denotes class superiority in this context, notably in the political, social, and ideological arenas.

Hegemony emerges once dominant class or nation can win the assent of overwhelmed classes, by convincing the ruled classes to see the world in a way good for the power of the prevailing class.

This idea of hegemony, which has been applied to the sphere of politics, contends that a dominating state uses both ideological and military means to influence the behaviour of rival and weaker powers. Powerful countries particularly its desire to maintain its dominance, are supported by influences on the weaker nations' behaviour. In other words, consent complements coercion and is frequently more successful than the latter.

The US's supremacy in the globe today is founded not just on its economic might and military might, but also on its cultural brilliance. From the book *US hegemony and international Organisations*, it can be learnt that ideological supremacy of the US flows from the fact that leaders of African and Latin American countries support the ideology of the US. And these ways America exercises considerable political influence on other countries.<sup>12</sup>

The majority of people's and societies' dreams across the world are of the good life and personal achievement. By customs that are common in USA in the 20th century.

The most alluring and strong culture on the planet that people believe is that of America. The capacity to convince rather than impose one's will be what is referred to as "soft power." Hegemony becomes so ingrained in our lives that we eventually stop noticing it, just as we stop noticing the nearby rivers, birds, and trees. Hard power battles between the US and the Soviet

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<sup>12</sup> Nye, Joseph S. "Soft Power and American Foreign Policy." *Political Science Quarterly*, vol. 119, no. 2, 2004, pp. 255–70. *JSTOR*, <https://doi.org/10.2307/20202345>. Accessed 8 Oct. 2022.

Union were challenging for the US to win during the Cold War. The US achieved great success in the areas of structural power and soft power. Even if the Soviet Union's centrally planned economy offered a different example of internal economic organisation, the global economy remained a world capitalist economy during the Cold War.

However, it was soft power that finally gave the US the upper hand. The Soviet Union's experience with blue jeans demonstrates how the US was able to use a cultural commodity to construct a generational split in Soviet society.

Moreover, it can be said that the root of U.S national security lies in the fact of legitimising its own foreign policy at both diplomatic and domestic levels. The concept of sanctions that it imposes on countries can also be said to be a step in that process. The ideological supremacy in the capitalist system that US tries to force upon the world can be also be said as an important facet of the US Supremacy.

But it can be said that political & ideological movements that helped in the rise of communism posed great threats to the dominance of America. And therefore, the present US policies have tried to bring in the cold war realities and foster a sense of US hegemony. In this context it can be said that the political leadership in America which tries to influence the whole world is significant. "The internally legitimising political culture" of the US is very important to understand in this context. Some scholars point it as the dominance of the US that is re-emerging after the 1970's. The hegemony of US while using the military power has also enhanced its political culture. For example, when George Bush administration launched the US war on terrorism it helped in side-lining the intolerance that continues in the political culture of the US. Take the instance- we might believe that America fosters individualism, enhances political economic freedom of an individual supports' human rights & fights against terrorism, but it can be said that at the same time we ignore the events of gun killings that happen in America. Liberal Gun control laws in US have spread a sense of fear in the blacks of America. The Blacks are being humiliated by the white. Remember the case of George Floyd who was strangled for 9 mins and 26 seconds.

Thus, the US tries to influence the world despite the happenings and killings that happen in Minnesota and Texas.

## **VII. PRESENT DAY TACTICS AND INDIA'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THAT OF US**

India's relationship with the US has changed a lot from the period of cold war till the contemporary period. India though had adopted the non-alignment policy during the cold war, it was in more favourable terms with Russia than US.

The two very important factors that tie India-US relationship today is the relationship in the field of technological dimension and flow of citizens between the two countries. The Indian-American diaspora can be said as one of the largest in the world in terms of the no. of people flowing between the two countries.

It can be said that America has a clear supremacy on the Indians and their mindset. This can be illustrated from the fact that many Indian students aspire to read or continue with their higher education in Harvard or oxford universities despite the fact that India has good universities to pursue M.A, masters or PhD degree.

### **VIII. RECENT TRENDS AND CHALLENGES TO US HEGEMONY**

In the current era-especially after the emergence of a multipolar world, it can be said that there are many countries which challenge the dominance of the US. While it can be said that some policy makers believe that Americas military, economic & technological developments are so huge that it might be difficult to counter them others view this as a wrong theory and support the fact that US dominance in the current era is only momentary.

In the current era, there's the rise of a great power which might pose a threat to the dominance of US. It is non-other than China. <sup>13</sup>From the 1980's onwards China continuously achieved a growth rate of 10% year on thereby increasing its economic supremacy. Further it can be said that China is the country which provides the cheapest labour and that is the reason why most MNC's prefer for having it as a production point.

And as it can be already seen that there's a very important link between the economy and military power it can also be said that China's economic growth would also enhance its military power and thereby enhance it to have a greater say in the geopolitics of the current world. Moreover, as the US has been monitoring China's rise it can be said that China poses a real alternative to the US in terms of military, economy and political strength.<sup>14</sup>

And moreover, China's constant denial to American political, ideological systems was viewed by the US as threat to its vested interests of developing as a Superpower. Some political analysts have rather called this as a power transition effect that is happening in the current world. Moreover, America's influence on the East-Asia continues to erode if China develops as great power. Some scholars point out this increased dominance of China as a "declining hegemon"

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<sup>13</sup> Layne, Christopher. "China's Challenge to US Hegemony." *Current History*, vol. 107, no. 705, 2008, pp. 13–18. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/45318491>. Accessed 10 Oct. 2022.

<sup>14</sup> Zhang, Baohui. "AMERICAN HEGEMONY AND CHINA'S U.S. POLICY." *Asian Perspective*, vol. 28, no. 3, 2004, pp. 87–113. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42704468>. Accessed 7 Oct. 2022.

theory which America faces. Therefore, scholars and analysts have advised the US on following a strategic balancing policy which would curtail the flow of investment technology from America to US and help in reducing the trade deficit that America enjoys with the US.

Thus, it can be said that in this twenty-first century, the emergence of great powers actually poses a threat to the dominance of the US. And especially the rise of other big powers like Japan and India in Asia poses a threat to the supremacy of China in the Asian Affairs.

## **IX. CONCLUSION**

Thus it can be said that American hegemony is a multi-faceted term that is comprised of the various aspects of US hegemony after the end of the world war and to say more specifically after the end of the USSR. The military attacks and arms force of the US could be said as its biggest power supremacy but at the same time, these could be said to be a demerit in a way that it faced various problems due to its excessive militarization.

The period, especially after George W. Bush, came into power and the phased militarization, and the recognition of American hyperpower-the enforcement of the Bush Doctrine which reinforces American hegemony all over the world, could be said as one where the hegemony of America went to the highest peak. While it can be said that leaders like bush focused on hard power to enhance American supremacy, leaders like Clinton used the soft power issues like democracy promotion, human rights protection, and many other things.

Not only in the military arena but America has come a long way to dominate the world in the economic, cultural, and educational arena and therefore it awaits a long way to the fact that this hegemony of America can ever end.

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