

WRAP Exams · wrapexams.com

Prelims PYQ, Mains model answers, and copy evaluation. Write to the desk for this paper, a doubt, or the AI waitlist.

ask@wrapexams.com · +91 85951 84903 · wrapexams.com

Q4(c)

Discuss the various constraints on American hegemony today. Which of these are likely to become more prominent in the future?

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2023 · PSIR GS 2 · 15 marks · Changing International Political Order

Changing International Political Order: Rise of super powers; strategic and ideological Bipolarity, arms race and Cold War; Nuclear threat; Non-aligned movement; Collapse of the Soviet Union; Unipolarity and American hegemony; relevance of non-alignment in the contemporary world.

Core demand of the question

- Examine the constraints on American hegemony in the present and for the future
- Write at 15-mark length

Revision summary

US hegemony mixed force, money, alliances, and a claim to liberal rules.

China's rise, the Afghanistan end in August 2021, and WTO-era rule disputes are present constraints.

Cox treats hegemony as consent as well as power; consent is thinner now.

Keohane allows cooperation after hegemony, which also means others will not wait on Washington.

The future is contested primacy, not automatic Chinese succession.

Introduction

American hegemony after 1945 combined military reach, the dollar, alliance networks, and a claim to organise liberal rules. Constraints now come from other centres of capability, from institutions the United States itself built, and from domestic politics. The future is a thicker multipolarity, not an automatic Chinese replacement.

Body**What hegemony meant**

- Charles Kindleberger and later hegemonic-stability arguments treated a lead State as the supplier of open trade and reserve currency.
- **Robert Cox** added that hegemony is also consent around production and ideas, not only ships and bases.
- The United States after 1991 looked unipolar in military terms. That moment was already shorter than the word empire suggested.

Present constraints

- China's industrial, naval, and technological rise in Asia is the first peer-scale challenge in that region, which is why the **Quad** exists.

- Russia's war on Ukraine showed both US alliance leadership in NATO and the limit of global isolation of a nuclear P5 member.
- The WTO appellate crisis, industrial subsidies, and export controls show that Washington will not always live under the rules it designed. Keohane's After Hegemony already argued that cooperation can persist without a single hegemon, and also that the hegemon may defect.
- Wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, ending with the Taliban takeover of Kabul in August 2021, displayed the limit of military primacy in political reconstruction.
- Domestic polarisation, debt, and industrial capacity gaps constrain long campaigns and even the making of trade agreements.

Future

- Demographic and military advantages remain large. The dollar and alliance system have not collapsed.
- **Future constraint is diffusion:** EU regulation, Indian and Global South preference for multi-alignment, and issue-based clubs such as I2U2 and the Quad rather than a single US-led map.
- **Offensive-realist reading:** the United States will try to stop a Chinese regional hegemon. Defensive-realist reading: over-extension is the risk.
- The likely future is contested primacy, not a clean handover and not a restored 1990s unipolarity.

Flow diagram

US post-1945 hegemony -> China Asia rise
US post-1945 hegemony -> Long wars 2021 Kabul
US post-1945 hegemony -> Institutions and domestic limits
China Asia rise -> Contested primacy
Long wars 2021 Kabul -> Contested primacy
Institutions and domestic limits -> Contested primacy

Conclusion

American hegemony is constrained by China's rise, by the political failure of long wars, by rule-breaking in the very institutions Washington built, and by US domestic limits. The future is competitive multipolarity in which the United States remains first in many capabilities but not the organiser of a settled consent.

Facts & figures

Unipolar moment

Early 1990s military and diplomatic lead after the Soviet collapse, shorter than a durable world-empire.

August 2021 Kabul

Taliban takeover as US and allied forces left Afghanistan, a visible limit of primacy.

Quad

Australia, India, Japan, United States consultation aimed at a free and open Indo-Pacific amid China's rise.

Robert Keohane, After Hegemony

Regimes can facilitate cooperation even when a single hegemon no longer supplies all order.

Robert Cox

Hegemony as a fit of material power, institutions, and ideas; crisis when that fit breaks.

WRAP Exams · Write. Read. Analyse. Practice. · <https://wrapexams.com/upsc/mains-answers/psir-gs-2/2023/discuss-the-various-constraints-on-american-hegemony-today-which-of-these-are-likely-to-become-more-prominent-in-the-future/>
· ask@wrapexams.com · wrapexams.com