

United States' Strategies to Maintain Unipolar Hegemony in a Multipolar World Order and its Challenges

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Abstract

This study analyzes the strategies adopted by the United States (US) to maintain its unipolar dominance in an evolving multipolar world order, along with the challenges it faces. The US seeks to reinforce its global leadership through initiatives such as the proposed Board of Peace, military interventions, and extensive global military presence. Its defense capabilities, overseas military bases, and strategic interventions demonstrate its continued reliance on hard power to influence global politics and deter rival states. Additionally, US economic dominance—centered on the global role of the dollar and its influence over institutions like the IMF and World Bank—remains a key pillar of its hegemony. However, this dominance is increasingly challenged by the rise of China, the resurgence of Russia, and the growing influence of emerging powers like India, along with alternative platforms such as BRICS. The study concludes that the global order is in a transitional phase, shifting from unipolarity toward a more complex and competitive multipolar system.

Keywords – Unipolar Hegemony, Multipolar World Order, U.S. Foreign Policy, Military Dominance, Economic Power

Introduction

After the end of the Cold War, a fundamental and historic transformation was observed in global politics. In 1991, the collapse of the Soviet Union brought an end to the bipolar international system that had persisted for nearly five decades. As a result, the United States emerged as the sole global superpower, and international politics transitioned into a unipolar structure. This period is often referred to in international relations as the “Unipolar Moment,” during which the United States exercised near-unparalleled dominance in terms of military strength, economic influence, technological superiority, and cultural reach. Within this unipolar system, the United States played a crucial role in global governance through various international institutions such as the United Nations, the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund. This era also witnessed the acceleration of globalization, which significantly facilitated the spread of American economic and cultural models.

However, with the onset of the 21st century, this unipolar world order began to gradually change. The international system is gradually moving toward a multipolar structure, where multiple powerful states shape global politics through both competition and cooperation. Nevertheless, the United States continues to adopt various strategies to maintain its dominance, including strengthening military alliances, increasing investment in technological innovation, enhancing its strategic presence in the Indo-Pacific region, and using economic sanctions and diplomatic pressure to limit the influence of rival powers.

Literature Review

Habib, M. Et. Al (2026) in research paper ‘The Rise of Multipolarity and the Decline of US Hegemony’ shows that the international system is shifting to a more Complicated multipolar system instead of a unipolar one dominated by the United States. The Issue of the US hegemony has steadily been put to the test by the emergence of new powers and the re-positioning . Recent years have changed global politics and diluted the monopoly of the US due to the increased strength of China and India economically, the rise of Russia and the growing power of regional powers. Not only are these new forces developing economic and military strength, but they are also attempting to gain strategic leverage in the areas of the region and worldwide.

Aslam, A. (2025) in research paper entitle ‘Power Shifts In The 21st Century: The Rise Of Multipolarity In International Relations’ stated that the twenty-first century has witnessed significant transformations in the global distribution of power, challenging the traditional dominance of a unipolar world led by the United States. The emerging international order is increasingly characterized by multipolarity, in which several States and regional blocs exercise considerable influence in shaping global politics. Study also stated that The rise of China, the resurgence of Russia, the resilience of the European Union, and the growing role of India and other emerging powers collectively demonstrate that the global system is becoming more diverse.

Ashraf, N ,(2023) in research paper entitle “Revisiting international relations legacy on hegemony: The decline of American hegemony from comparative perspectives” revealed that after the 9/11 attacks, and especially following the 2008 global financial crisis, American global leadership (hegemony) began to clearly weaken. The depletion of US military and economic capabilities following the war on terrorism – along with the rise of other international powers such as China – is considered one of the main reasons for the American leadership’s crisis in the world order.

Research Objectives

To analyse US strategies and challenges to maintain unipolar dominance and hegemony.

Methodology

The present study is a mixture of descriptive and analytical research based on secondary sources. The secondary data are collected from different journals, articles, newspaper reports, book etc.

The United States’ Strategy to Maintain Unipolar Dominance:

America aims to become a global guardian through the establishment of the ‘Board of Peace.’ The board was proposed by US President Donald Trump in September 2025 and its establishment was announced by Trump on January 2026. It was established to end the war between Palestine and Israel. While the board’s primary focus was on post-war reconstruction in Gaza, its charter revealed that the organization has a mandate to “secure enduring peace” in other conflict zones, too. Member states would be limited to three-year terms unless they pay \$1 billion each to fund the board’s activities and earn permanent membership, the charter says. However the draft charter for this organization does not specify a fixed term for its president leadership, meaning US president could potentially chair the board for life. This establishes America’s dominance in the Board of Peace. Despite the United Nations (UN) existence, a separate board was established for peace, which is also an American initiative—reflecting America’s prior plan to become a global leader.

On January 3, 2026, the United States launched “Operation Absolute Resolve,” a military intervention in which US forces attacked Venezuela and captured President Nicolás Maduro and his wife, Cilia Flores. Entering a sovereign country and capturing its head of state violates international norms. It shows that the US considers itself to be ‘above the law.’ The use of massive military force in this operation was not just an action, but a message: ‘We can intervene in any country at will.’ Following the operation, a new leadership was installed in Venezuela. All of this clearly reflects America’s hegemonic behavior. Also, United States’ continuous military intervention in the Middle East is another example of its efforts to maintain its hegemony.

Despite the emergence of a multipolar world order, the United States continues to use military power as one of its primary instruments for maintaining its unipolar hegemony. Military capability serves not merely for defense, but also acts as an effective means of exerting influence in international politics, containing rival powers, and establishing global leadership.

United States has built the world's most powerful military force. The country is enhancing its military power through record-breaking investment in the defense sector, the innovation of state-of-the-art technologies, and increased arms production. It has by far the largest number of overseas military bases, operating an estimated 750 bases in at least 80 countries (as of 2021). Major concentrations are in Japan, Germany, and South Korea, aimed at global power projection and strategic alliance commitments.

Through the display of military might, the United States conveys a global message that it remains the primary arbiter of the international security order. The presence of US military bases, naval fleets, and air forces across various regions of the world further reinforces this message. Above all, for the United States, military power is not merely a means of ensuring security, but rather a strategic instrument through which it seeks to maintain its global hegemony.

The economic power of the United States plays a fundamental role in maintaining its global dominance. One of the most significant aspects of this dominance is the influence of the US Dollar as the world's primary reserve currency. Since most international trade transactions are conducted in dollars, the United States occupies a central position in the global economy. As a result, the United States can borrow more easily and exert substantial influence over the international financial system.

Moreover, the United States holds considerable influence within major international financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. These institutions provide loans to developing countries, often with conditions that promote market liberalization and privatization. Through these mechanisms, the United States is able to indirectly shape the economic policies of other nations and reinforce a liberal capitalist order.

Challenges:

In the contemporary international system, the United States continues to be one of the most dominant powers. However, its unipolar dominance is increasingly being challenged. In the military sphere, the United States still holds the leading position in the world. Its massive defense budget, advanced military technology, and widespread global military presence make it superior to any other state.

In the economic sphere, the United States maintains its influence by preserving the dollar as the global currency. However, China's economic rise and its initiatives to establish alternative trade frameworks are challenging this dominance. Significant shifts are gradually taking place in the balance of power. Multiple powers—particularly China, Russia, and India—are expanding their influence at both regional and global levels. Platforms such as BRICS are creating an alternative economic and diplomatic arena for developing nations, thereby eroding the hegemonic influence of Western-dominated institutions. Concurrently, countries of the Global South are pursuing a multifaceted diplomacy—rather than aligning themselves exclusively with any single power—which is rendering the international system increasingly multipolar.

From a geopolitical perspective, Russia's resurgence has added a new dimension to the international order. The Russia-Ukraine War has further accentuated the power struggle within global politics. This conflict is not merely regional; rather, it has also impacted the global balance of power. Russia's stance against its allies demonstrates that the world is no longer governed by a single leadership. The United States' own inherent limitations are also undermining its dominance. Prolonged military interventions have damaged the United States' image on the international stage and raised questions regarding its moral leadership.

Conclusion

The current global order is undergoing a transitional phase. The rise of powers such as China, Russia, and India is steering the world toward a new framework in which multiple powers will simultaneously exert influence. Consequently, the contemporary global order cannot be characterized as strictly unipolar or multipolar; rather, it resides in an intermediate or transitional stage. The future trajectory of this global system will depend on the mutual relationships among various powers,

strategic competition, cooperation, and their collective capacity to address global crises. This shifting reality is rendering international politics increasingly complex, competitive, and, simultaneously, interdependent.

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