

ANSWER KEY & MARKING SCHEME · CBSE CLASS 12**US Hegemony in World Politics**

Political Science · Chapter 3 · Use this with the Board Paper · Companion to Quick Drill

HOW TO USE

Attempt the Board Paper first (closed-book, full time). Then come here. For 2-mark+ questions, compare your answer to the model. For 3-4 mark questions, also consult the **Topper Templates** below — these show the exact step-by-step structure that scores full marks per CBSE marking-scheme conventions.

MODEL ANSWERS · BOARD PAPER**Section A — VSA (1 mark × 4)****Q1. By what code-name is the First Gulf War (1991) known? [1 mark]****Ans:** Operation Desert Storm.**Q2. In which country was Operation Enduring Freedom (2001) launched? [1 mark]****Ans:** Afghanistan (against the Taliban and Al-Qaeda).**Q3. Name any two of the three senses in which 'hegemony' is used. [1 mark]****Ans:** Any two of: hard/military power, structural power, soft/cultural power.**Q4. On what date did the 9/11 attacks occur? [1 mark]****Ans:** 11 September 2001.**Section B — SA-I (3 marks × 2)****Q5. Describe the First Gulf War (1991) and the idea of a 'New World Order'. [3 marks]****Ans:** (1) TRIGGER: In August 1990 Iraq, under Saddam Hussein, INVADED and occupied KUWAIT. (2) RESPONSE: The UN Security Council authorised the use of force, and a US-led coalition of 34 COUNTRIES launched OPERATION DESERT STORM (Jan-Feb 1991, commanded by General Norman Schwarzkopf), swiftly expelling Iraq from Kuwait. The US bore only part of the cost (Germany, Japan, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait paid much of it). (3) NEW WORLD ORDER: US President George H. W. Bush described the emerging US-led international system as a 'New World Order' — the first dramatic demonstration of American hegemony in the post-Cold-War, unipolar world.**Q6. How can US hegemony be overcome? Mention any three strategies. [3 marks]****Ans:** (1) BANDWAGON STRATEGY: extract benefits by operating WITHIN the hegemonic system instead of opposing it — gaining access to its market, technology and security. (2) THE 'HIDE' STRATEGY: stay OUT OF THE WAY of the dominant power, keeping a low profile to avoid hostile attention while building one's own strength (as China long did). (3) BALANCE OF POWER: build a COUNTERVAILING COALITION of states (China, the EU, Russia, India) whose combined weight checks the hegemon. (Additionally, NON-STATE actors — MNCs, NGOs and global civil society — can resist hegemonic policies from below.)**Section C — SA-II (5 marks × 3)****Q7. Explain the three senses in which the term 'hegemony' is used in world politics. [5 marks]****Ans:** After the USSR's collapse in 1991, the US became the SOLE SUPERPOWER, and its dominance — 'hegemony' — operates in THREE senses. (1) HEGEMONY AS HARD / MILITARY POWER: overwhelming military superiority — the US spends more on defence than the next several powers combined, with unmatched force-projection (carriers, precision weapons, global bases), demonstrated in the 1991 Gulf War and the 2003 Iraq war. (2) HEGEMONY AS STRUCTURAL POWER: the dominant state shapes the global economic STRUCTURE — the Bretton Woods institutions (IMF, World Bank), the WTO, the US DOLLAR as the world's reserve currency, and the US Navy keeping global SEA-LANES open as a 'global public good'. (3) HEGEMONY AS SOFT / CULTURAL POWER: the ability to make others WANT what the hegemon wants through ATTRACTION rather than force — Hollywood, blue jeans, fast food, leading universities, the 'American dream'. CONCLUSION: US hegemony is durable precisely because it combines all three — military reach, control of the economic structure, and cultural attraction — reinforcing one another. Reducing hegemony to military might alone misses two-thirds of the concept.

Q8. Examine the major constraints on the exercise of American power. [5 marks]

Ans: Although the US is the sole superpower, its power is NOT unlimited; NCERT identifies three constraints that operate largely from WITHIN the American system. (1) THE INSTITUTIONAL ARCHITECTURE OF THE US STATE: the constitution divides power among the EXECUTIVE (President), the LEGISLATURE (Congress) and the JUDICIARY — this SEPARATION OF POWERS makes unlimited, unilateral military action difficult, since Congress controls funds and can scrutinise war policy and courts can review executive action. (2) THE OPEN NATURE OF AMERICAN SOCIETY AND ITS FREE PRESS: a deep tradition of individual liberty, suspicion of unchecked government, and a vigorous independent MEDIA mean that long, costly or unjust wars are exposed, public opinion turns and protests follow (as over Vietnam and Iraq) — a domestic brake on military adventures. (3) NATO AND THE COMMUNITY OF DEMOCRACIES: the only body that could moderate US power is the alliance of democratic states; because the US prefers to act WITH allies (to share cost and gain legitimacy), it must accommodate their views. CONCLUSION: the most effective limits on US power come not from external rivals but from WITHIN its own constitution, open society and alliance commitments.

Q9. Discuss the events of 9/11 and the 'Global War on Terror', including the operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. [5 marks]

Ans: 9/11: On 11 SEPTEMBER 2001, the Al-Qaeda network hijacked four aircraft, destroying the WORLD TRADE CENTER twin towers in New York and striking the PENTAGON — the most spectacular attack ever on US soil. RESPONSE: President George W. Bush declared a 'GLOBAL WAR ON TERROR', pursuing suspects across the world, sometimes overriding sovereignty, with secret detentions (Guantanamo Bay) and 'extraordinary renditions'. AFGHANISTAN: In October 2001 the US launched OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM against the TALIBAN regime (which sheltered Al-Qaeda and Osama bin Laden), toppling the Taliban government. IRAQ: On 19 March 2003 the US led OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM, invading Iraq to oust Saddam Hussein on the (never-substantiated) claim of 'weapons of mass destruction'. Crucially this war LACKED explicit UN Security Council authorisation; the US assembled a 'COALITION OF THE WILLING' of 40+ countries. SIGNIFICANCE: the costly Iraq occupation fuelled insurgency and exposed the LIMITS, not just the reach, of American hegemony — an example of imperial over-reach.

★ TOPPER ANSWER TEMPLATES

3 TEMPLATES · MEMORISE THE FORMAT

★ TOPPER TEMPLATE — 5-mark: 'Explain the three senses in which the term hegemony is used.'

Annual

Step 1
[1 mark] **Define hegemony + the unipolar context**

After the collapse of the USSR in 1991, the United States emerged as the SOLE SUPERPOWER in a UNIPOLAR world — a position of 'hegemony' meaning the leadership or dominance of one state over the international system. NCERT explains that hegemony operates in THREE distinct senses.

Step 2
[2 marks] **Hard power + Structural power**

(1) HEGEMONY AS HARD / MILITARY POWER: the US enjoys overwhelming military superiority — it spends more on defence than the next several powers combined, possesses unmatched force-projection (aircraft carriers, precision weapons), and demonstrated it in the 1991 Gulf War and the 2003 Iraq war. (2) HEGEMONY AS STRUCTURAL POWER: the dominant state provides and shapes the global economic STRUCTURE — the Bretton Woods system, the IMF, World Bank and WTO, the US dollar as the world's reserve currency, and the US Navy securing the global sea-lanes of trade. The hegemon supplies 'global public goods' that everyone uses.

Step 3
[1 mark] **Soft power**

(3) HEGEMONY AS SOFT / CULTURAL POWER: the capacity to make others WANT what the hegemon wants through ATTRACTION rather than force — American culture, ideas and values pervade the world (Hollywood, blue jeans, fast food, the 'American dream', US universities). This 'manufacture of consent' makes US dominance appear natural and desirable.

Step 4
[1 mark] **Conclusion**

Thus hegemony is far more than military might: it is a combination of HARD (military), STRUCTURAL (economic-institutional) and SOFT (cultural) power. The endurance of US hegemony rests on all three working together.

COMMON LOSS OF MARKS:

- Reducing hegemony to military power only (loses 2 of 3 senses).
- Not giving an example for each sense.
- Confusing structural power (economic institutions) with hard power.
- Missing the concluding integration of all three.

★ **TOPPER TEMPLATE — 5-mark: 'Examine the constraints on the exercise of American power.'**

Annual

Step 1 [1 mark]	Set up — even a hegemon is constrained	Although the US is the sole superpower, its power is NOT unlimited. NCERT identifies three structural constraints that operate largely from WITHIN the American system itself.
Step 2 [2 marks]	Institutional architecture + open society	(1) THE INSTITUTIONAL ARCHITECTURE OF THE US STATE: the American constitution divides power among the EXECUTIVE (President), the LEGISLATURE (Congress) and the JUDICIARY. This SEPARATION OF POWERS makes it hard for the President to use military power unilaterally and without limit; Congress controls funds and can question war policy. (2) THE OPEN NATURE OF AMERICAN SOCIETY AND ITS FREE PRESS: the US has a tradition of individual freedom, scepticism of state authority, and a FREE, critical MEDIA. Public opinion and a probing press act as a domestic check on long, costly or unjust military adventures.
Step 3 [1 mark]	NATO / allies	(3) NATO AND THE COMMUNITY OF DEMOCRACIES: the only organisation that could possibly moderate US power is the alliance of democratic states. The US itself relies heavily on its ALLIES and prefers to work through alliances like NATO; this dependence on partners and shared institutions tempers purely unilateral action.
Step 4 [1 mark]	Conclusion	Hence American power is checked from within — by its own constitutional structure, its open society and free press, and its reliance on allies — rather than only by external rivals. These internal constraints are a distinctive feature of US hegemony.

COMMON LOSS OF MARKS:

- Listing external rivals (China/Russia) instead of the THREE internal constraints NCERT specifies.
- Not naming separation of powers explicitly.
- Forgetting the free press / open society constraint.
- Missing NATO / allies as the third constraint.

★ **TOPPER TEMPLATE — 5-mark: 'How can US hegemony be overcome? Discuss the available strategies.'**

Annual

Step 1 [1 mark]	Frame the question	Other states and non-state actors have several STRATEGIES to limit, resist or live with US hegemony, ranging from cooperation to balancing.
Step 2 [2 marks]	Bandwagon + hide	(1) THE BANDWAGON STRATEGY: instead of opposing the hegemon, a state EXTRACTS BENEFITS by operating WITHIN the hegemonic system — taking advantage of the opportunities it creates (trade access, technology, investment). (2) THE 'HIDE' STRATEGY: a state STAYS OUT OF THE WAY of the dominant power — keeping a low profile so as not to attract the hegemon's hostile attention. China has at times pursued a version of this 'lie low and grow' approach.
Step 3 [1 mark]	Balance of power	(3) THE BALANCE-OF-POWER STRATEGY: states build COUNTERVAILING COALITIONS — a grouping of powers (such as a rising China, the European Union, Russia, India) whose combined weight can check the hegemon and prevent it from acting without limit.
Step 4 [1 mark]	Non-state actors + conclusion	Beyond states, NCERT stresses NON-STATE ACTORS: MULTINATIONAL CORPORATIONS, NGOs, social movements, the media and a transnational CIVIL SOCIETY can resist and reshape hegemonic policies from within global society. In the long run, hegemony is restrained by this mix of bandwagoning, balancing and bottom-up civil-society pressure rather than by any single rival.

COMMON LOSS OF MARKS:

- Offering 'neutrality' or 'do nothing' as a strategy (not in NCERT).
- Missing the non-state-actor / civil-society dimension.
- Confusing bandwagon (cooperate-and-benefit) with balance of power (counter-coalition).
- Not naming concrete actors (China, EU, MNCs).

MARKING SCHEME — GENERAL NOTES

- Specific names + dates + operation names mandatory for full marks.
- Get the operation names right: Desert Storm 1991 vs Iraqi Freedom 2003 vs Enduring Freedom 2001 — swapping them loses 1 mark.
- The 'three senses' answer must give an example for EACH sense (hard/structural/soft).
- Constraints must be the THREE NCERT ones (US institutions / open society + free press / NATO-allies), not external rivals.
- Concluding statement on 5-markers = 1 mark.