

Downfall Of US Hegemony: Confrontation from China

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Abstract:

USA hegemony is gradually declining in recent times and facing challenges from emerging nations like China. China is expanding its trade relations and infrastructure projects in developing countries. USA's declining interest in some regions and China's expansionist foreign policy are the two key factors that put the ball in the court of China. However, the USA is concerned about the growing influence of China in trade, economic ties, development projects, and financial support all over the world. In this paper, we are going to discuss how China is substituting the USA in different continents of the world and providing alternatives to the countries which were previously dependent on the USA. The increasing role of China as a mediator as in the case of Saudi Arabia and Iran is a recent example has enhanced its position as a global mediator and possibly a major player in solving the Russia-Ukraine crisis in the future. USA defeat from the Taliban in Afghanistan and Chinese engagement with the Taliban government has already questioned the USA's dominance in West Asia. The same in the other region of the world which we'll be going to discuss further in this paper presents the question of Whether the Hegemony of the USA is ending and how China is challenging it.

Keywords: USA, Hegemony, Superpower, China, Dominance, World Organisations.

Introduction:

The world order is normally considered unipolar, bipolar, and multipolar. After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1992 i.e. Cold War, the United States remained the only Superpower left in the world however the dominance of the USA in world order can also be traced before the Cold War when the USA engaged in World War I when Germany attacked the passenger and merchant ships of USA in 1914 and that's accelerated the motives of Woodrow Wilson to engaged in World War I (Usahistory.gov.in) the role of USA in the World War I played a very significant role in defeating the central power. but it is also true that the USSR is also continuously competing with the US in every field whether it is the nuclear arms race, space exploration development, and most important the race of promoting the ideology of socialism against capitalism.

European power cannot neglect the significance of US support to tackle the Soviet Union and that's the reason the only competitor existed for the USA was the Soviet Union after the Cold War the USA proved that their idea of development and its power cannot Be compared with any other nation and it emerged as a sole superpower in the international Or can also be considered as the establishment of US hegemony.

However several countries that emerged after the 1990s like China India South Asian countries especially China somewhere challenged the USA in the 21st century whether it is in the acceleration of

arms and ammunition, economy and trade investment in African, or Asian countries where previously the USA was the only option, space exploration, soft power, etc by observing this wide engagement of China in the world USA cannot blink its eyes to ignore the fact that China can be detrimental to its position in future. However, the prevailing view among policymakers and foreign policy scholars is that it will take a long time for China to challenge the USA's economic, military, and technological advancements (Christopher Lyne).

In this paper we will be going to discuss that does US hegemony is in its last stage? Or whether the world is moving towards the period where the new emerging power like China is replacing US hegemony all over the world. also, we will be going to discuss how China is penetrating every continent of the world and proving it as an alternative to US hegemony in that area. Then we look at how China is increasing its military, economy, and technological resources to dominate its position at the global level.

Establishment of US Hegemony:

With the World's largest economy with hundreds of overseas military bases and the leadership position in almost all the world institutions, largest expenditure on defence, the united states is an undenied hegemonic of the world (Rosenthal, 2021).

Certain factors led to becoming US Hegemony, they are as followings:

1. Immigration:

The USA was a land that was full of opportunities and the migrants from Europe, Africa, and Asia came with their brilliant minds and their diverse culture and contributed their ideas of innovations, research, and developments which largely benefitted the USA. By 1500 the migrations from Europeans, Spanish, and French had begun and their settlements in the USA, Some of the settlers also came to US as the pilgrims who wanted freedom of religion. Immigrants also came from West Africa as slaves. Another wave of immigration occurred around 1818-1865 and these newcomers are mostly from Northern Europe like Ireland who came because of famine in their region. Immigrants also came from the Asian continents in the 18-19th century. So we can see How migration from different parts of the world constituted a majority population in the USA and as a result the Cultural, Economical, Sociological, and Political development took place in the USA which immensely benefitted America.

2. Geography:

The size of the USA is approx 10 million km² with a population of merely 32 Crores. The USA is surrounded by the oceans from the two sides which makes it very difficult to invade it through sea routes also if we consider the invasion by the land it is surrounded by Canada and Mexico in the North and South respectively which covers a very wide area and it is not possible for any country to cover the whole boundary. Initially, the USA was prominently based on agriculture due to its fertile lands and the soil that is rich in natural resources. The USA is also not sharing its boundaries with so many countries which also prevents it from unnecessary conflict and it preserves its wealth for other strategic goals.

3. Wars:

The USA fought many wars but they are mostly confined to their continent but in WW I got the opportunity to participate at the global level and to show the world its military capability. When Europe was engaged in war USA profited by selling goods and arms. Again in WW II USA not directly participated and gained profits by selling goods, arms, military aides, etc to the countries which were suffering from severe crises. US also gave loans to these countries at high interests rates and made these countries dependent on the USA for financial help and these wars played a major role in surpassing the European dominance from the world and for the establishment of US hegemony.

4. Economy:

During the time of 1800s, the USA built a massive industrialized and manufacturing base in its country. When the world was busy fighting WWI, WWII USA sold, and due to these wars USA exported manufactured goods to European and other countries of the world and established its economy as an export-based economy which give the US Economy a boom. The USA is also called Permanent War Economy means that US's economy is growing because of the sale of its arms and ammunition and due to this USA always tries to create a conflict between the countries which ultimately benefits America. The USA is the largest exporter in the world and the world's largest economy, it has free trade agreements (FTA) with more than 20 countries and US Dollar(\$) can be called as world's currency (unofficially). As a frontrunner in globalized liberal trade, it also maintains its goods position in World Trade Organisation (WTO), IMF, and World Bank.

5. Research and Innovations:

The USA spent a tremendous amount of money on its Research and Innovations in the 19th and 20th centuries and emerged as a frontrunner in this field whether it is in the field of Nuclear Research, Space explorations, Healthcare, Technology, Communications, etc. The USA tried to prove that no one can do it better than its country. When other countries were fighting for their survival and independence USA was doing research and this provide an advantage of 50 years ahead of other countries. It provides an ecosystem and resources for research and is promoted by the government themselves which ultimately led to this advancement in this sector also.

The leadership played a crucial role in implementing the countries and foreign as well as domestic policies which somewhere worked very well in the USA, and visionary leaders like George Washington, George Bush, Woodrow Wilson, and Franklin D. Roosevelt are the leading presidents of the USA.

So from the above factors we can see that it was not only a single factor that helped the USA to become a Hegemon but it was a result of multiple factors which jointly led the USA to reach that point where hardly anyone can challenge it. The Manifest Destiny which is a phrase coined in 1845 said that the USA is destined by god to expand its dominion and spread democracy and capitalism around the continent.

End of US Hegemony in Latin America:

The USA in recent years somewhere neglected the attention to Latin America and on the other hand, china's growing level of economic and political influence in Latin America is very detrimental to the US in strategic terms. This scenario may lead to the decline of US hegemony in the western

hemisphere which is not a good thing for the US's security concerns. Also, the influence of China is not limited to only military and security cooperation but also investing heavily in the region and shifting the economic influence into the hands of the latter.

After the collapse of the soviet union in 1991 the US created a cooperative atmosphere and its policies like the Washington Consensus also promoted free trade from the US in this region. However, in recent times this status quo is changing and China's increasing dominance in the Latin market and promoting growth in many Latin American countries, especially in the southern cone is shifting their dependence from the USA to China. Meanwhile, the distraction from the Iraq war also led the USA to not pay enough attention to the western hemisphere, and USA's ties with this region were mainly limited to drug trafficking, illegal migrants, etc which also make China penetrate this region (boulder, Colorado 2021)

Under free trade agreements, every country is gaining economic growth because without trade barriers each state specialized in the goods that it produces best and trades with other countries for the product which make its population satisfied. China has become the largest exporter of manufacturers to Latin America due to its cheap labor in textiles, toys, and clothing. China has become the top trading partner with many Latin American countries like Brazil, Peru, Chile, and Uruguay Also china has free trade agreements with countries like Chile, Costa Rica, and Peru (crsreports.congress.gov 2022)

If we look at the figures for the trade between China and Latin America between the period of 2000 to 2009 it records an increment of 1200% from 10 billion dollars to 130 billion dollars (Koleski K. 2011) China has become the second largest trade partner of Latin America after USA and still growing its trade and cooperation in pace. China is investing in infrastructure plans also like in power plants in Brazil and in repairing a railway in Argentina (The Economist 2018)

Approximately 90% of the Latin American countries in China till 2008 are in the countries of Brazil (41%), Peru (9.3%), Chile (23.1%), and Argentina (15.9%). (14) The FDI in the Latin American countries from China has increased by 1500% from 21.86 million dollars in 2003 to 349.55 million dollars in 2009 which makes China the third largest FDI provider in this region (Chinese statistical bulletin,2009). The visit of Chinese officials to this region is also increasing day by day. However, China's economic ties with these countries made countries like Mexico and Guatemala antagonistic to the Chinese market because they are facing a tuff competition from Chinese products. Also, some countries in the Western hemisphere recognized Taiwan as an Independent country, so to get their support China has to invest more in these countries to maintain its "One China Policy". It is also true that trade of china in this continent is limited to only a few richer countries and the Chinese use this continent as a consumer market and benefit by exporting their manufactured and finished products and by importing the raw materials at cheap rates like Soyabean, Copper, Iron ore, etc(Koleski 2011)

However, from the above observation, we can conclude that the influence of China in this region is increasing drastically and which is a serious matter of concern for the USA not only in strategic terms but also in political and economic terms. The trade preference of this continent is shifting towards China and US hegemony in this region is declining. In the recent examples, we can see how Venezuela is supporting the Russian invasion of Ukraine and rejecting the so-called ideology of the US. So somewhere there is a lack of a positive image of the USA that lies in this continent which is not a good sign for the US. The USA should maintain friendly relations with these countries and should promote trade and investment in this region so that the influence of the USA in Latin America would not get replaced by China.

Downfall of USA Hegemony in Africa:

Africa from the inception of industrialization became a continent full of resources that can make any continent powerful if properly utilized. Almost every European country housed colonies in Africa during the 19th and 20th centuries. The resources of Africa have attracted both friends and invaders. Arab traders made links with Africa much before European penetration. The Chinese also claimed their relationship with Africa from the Han Dynasty (206BC to 220AD) (Yuan Wu,2007). At the end of the 19th century, Bismarck said “He who Controls Africa will control Europe”. Britain and France fought major wars to control the gold, copper, coca, and rubber of Africa Also they established Apartheid to ensure the profitability of the European sector (Anderson,1996).

However, after the cold war, the rivalries between the European power for imperialism led to the dominance of the USA in Africa. The USA also get positive support from the Afro-Americans to promote the imperial interest of the United States. The famous USA Commerce Secretary Ron Brown also stated that “The US would no longer concede the African market to former colonial powers”(US State Dept.1993-2001). But the emergence of China in Africa Complicated the tussle between the European Union and the USA that “Who Controls Africa”. The end of Apartheid after the cold war and the defeat of Mobutu Sese Seko led to the transformation of the African Union (AU). China started to come close to AU and tried to establish a new area of cooperation and ties with the AU by rebuilding the infrastructure of war-torn countries like DRC and Angola. It was also not a coincidence that Angola was the major oil exporting country. China showed its presence and tried to give a message to African countries that there are also other alternatives present in the world.

Certain factors helped the Chinese to make their influence on Africa and these are the same factors that differentiate the Chinese from the USA.

- Chinese has no tradition of Colonialism, genocide, and occupation in Africa.
- China never engaged in the slave trade which was an inglorious practice done by the USA and European countries.
- China embraced the African liberation process and supported it through the process of Diplomatic, Political, material, and military support.
- Both China and AU are parts of the South-South Blocs of WTO and oppose the patenting of life forms which is the plan of the USA.
- China has also not been involved in structural adjustment policies that impoverished Africa over the past 30 years (Campbell,2008).

So these points should also be kept in mind when we are assuming how Africa will decide their future partner. Angela Merkel (Chancellor of Germany) said “We Europeans should not leave the continent of Africa to the PRC we must take a stand in Africa”(Asia Times,2006).

There is also some Empirical Observation that reflects how China is spreading its legs in Africa; for instance, In Sept 2007, the government of China advanced a loan of 5 billion dollars to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) to modernize their infrastructure (Business Day,19Sept 2007).

Since 2003, the FDI from China in Africa has risen significantly from \$74.8mn in 2003 to 5.4 billion dollars which makes China the Fourth largest Investor ahead of the USA since 2014. Loans from China to Africa were estimated at around \$153 billion between 2000-2019 (Chinese Statistical Bulletin 2020).

The construction sector like the SEZ operated by the Chinese is the largest channel for Chinese FDI accounting for 35%, China's FDI in mining in Africa is 21% from an estimate the Chinese FDI could reach 90 billion dollars by 2035 (Yik Fu 2021). However, India is also maintaining its relation with

Africa like recently India has pledged to more than 1 billion dollars for implementing Solar Project in Africa. However, the kind of Investment China is booming in Africa is much higher than in India.

Almost every country in Africa today bears the example of China's Emerging Presence, from farms in the south to the oil fields in the East and mines in the center of the continent. Chinese-run farms also supply vegetables at street markets and also launching a Nigerian satellite, China also established a monopoly in the construction business in Botswana (Mark Pambazuka)

So the History of Apartheid, Imperialism, and colonialists is the main factor that disengages the USA from the African countries and declines its hegemony in these Regions. However, the long-term implications of the Chinese investment in Africa are a precursor to declining European and USA Hegemony in this region. So the USA has to carefully track the progress and development of China in this continent which is full of abundance of Natural Resources.

Downfall of US hegemony in Asia:

A group of countries in Asia was transformed into a modern capitalist country by the modernization project introduced by the USA after World War II because the USA feared the rising dominance of communist ideology in this region (burger 2004). The USA also helped Japan in the reconstruction of its economy and tries to replace China with Japan So that Japan can become the economic hub of East Asia; other countries like South Korea and Taiwan benefited from the aid of the USA.

Apart from the economic tangle meant the security relationship between the Asia and USA is also very close however the Seattle Southeast Asia treaty organization(SEATO) which is made like NATO could not even solve their regional conflict but the USA has a military security network so basically we understand the relation between the East Asia and USA in a way that this East Asian countries exports their goods to America in exchange America sells their military protection to these countries the exported goods make Asian countries a surplus trade with USA and this surplus is used to finance the American deficit(Cummings 1984).

If you look at the figure the USA's goods and services trade with Asian countries can be estimated at \$362.2 billion in 2020, export from Asian countries was \$11.9 billion whereas imports were \$250 billion So the US trade deficit for Asian countries was \$138.4 billion in 2020 also US's FDI in Asian continent was \$328.5 billion in 2020(Ustr.gov.in report 2020).

As a result of a trade agreement between the USA and China in 1979, the US removed some of the commercial barriers which makes China smoother entry to trade with Asian countries. The USA also restored the most favored nation to China from 1980 to 1999(Pregelij 2001). Since 2002 China surpassed Japan and became the largest exporter in the Asian continent. Since 2005 China was the main exporter to the USA (Morrison 2005) USA's goods and services trade with China totaled an estimated \$615 billion in 2020 with which export from the USA was \$164 billion whereas the imports were \$ 4 billion, the USA has a great trade deficit of \$285 billion in 2020 with China which is a serious concern for USA. China is the largest goods supplier of the USA in 2020(ustr.gov report 2020).

China Belt and Road initiative also referred to as the "silk route "is one of the most ambitious projects for China which stretches from East Asia to Europe and it significantly expands China's economy and political influence in the European continent also. China is the largest investor in Sri Lanka also, where it invested nearly \$15 million. China has also spurred the FDI in Sri Lanka of \$14 billion the official development assistant (ODA) worth of \$12 billion in sectors like energy, infrastructure, and services. The flagship project like the Hambantota Port development and the Colombo project which is a

significant strategic point on the sea route is also loaned by China. There are also different investments in the energy sector for instance \$1.3 billion Norochcholai coal plant (gateway house). As a result of the private investment of China in Sri Lanka Chinese companies gained a dominant position in the Sri Lankan market for instance the telecom company “Huawei” constitutes a 25% share of the total Smartphone market in Sri Lanka (Bhatia, Kulkarni, Lee 2020).

The trade between China and Sri Lanka is also a matter of concern in which the Chinese market gained a positive trade benefit. In November 2021 China exported goods worth \$507 million whereas imported items and goods of only \$66.2 million from Sri Lanka resulting in a positive trade balance of \$440 million for China, between November 2020 and November 2021 Chinese export increased by 39% 144 million dollars (Oec.world,2021). As compared to USA trade with Sri Lanka, in the year 2021, the US export to Srilanka was \$391, million whereas the imports were \$2.8 billion which makes Sri Lanka a trade deficit country for the USA of \$2.4 billion and Srilanka get trade benefits from USA(US census foreign trade data 2021). Some political thinkers also believe that Sri Lanka will fall into a debt trap of China and as a result, the Chinese influence in Sri Lanka will increase in the future in private as well as in government institutions which is a serious concern for the country like the USA. India is the neighbor of Sri Lanka; a country in the Indian Ocean is a crucial strategic location for the sea trade routes and plays a vital role for both US and India, however China's investment in large infrastructure projects in Pakistan like Gwadar port which also works as a strategic point in Arabian Sea, Pakistan is also moving away from the USA due to the ignoring tendency of USA So Pakistan has only one option left to boost their trade with China however EU, Japan, USA are the three top investors in Southeast Asia and the fact that should also not to be ignored that China consistently increasing its investment in this region(Shaw, 2021).

Dilemma of European Union:

European Union or Western countries always try to dominate their ideology of capitalism, liberalism, and democracy around the world and in this process, they criticize the countries which doesn't follow these principles. China is also one of the countries which neglected the Western ideology however China adopted liberalism according to its interest & convenience and participated in the global market with its norms. European Union consists of 27 members and is one of the largest trade partners of the China Union. Historically the USA has long been the European Union's largest trade partner however that trend came to an end in 2020 with an increase of \$26.7 billion in Chinese imports and a \$5.3 billion increase in European Union export in China making China officially the largest trade partner of the European Union. China which is the Manufacturing Titan of the world's exports worth \$463 billion in 2020 has increased by 35% in the last decade. Whereas the export valued at just \$245 billion makes up just half(52%)of what it imports and European Union has a ballooning trade deficit with China(Ali,2021).

So we can observe that European Union despite having a huge trading partner with China also somewhere tries to criticize China and tries to depict that it is China that is dependent on the EU however at the same time it is the EU which get benefitted from the cheap Chinese products. European countries somewhere also acknowledged that China is one of the largest manufacturers in the world and its export is also beneficial for European Union markets because of its cheap products and large category of items which can also become the alternative USA's costlier products. If you see the trade between the European Union and the USA then we can observe that it is less vis-a-vis to china for example in 2020

European Union exported goods worth \$491 billion whereas imports from the USA were \$271 billion which made the USA a trade deficit with European Union of \$220 billion ([ustr.gov.in/census](http://ustr.gov/in/census) 2020).

But on the other hand, European Union also tries to compete with the global gateway which is on the same line as China's Belt and Road initiative BRI. European Union wants China also not to expand its program of loans and debt trap policies in the Europe continent which China did in Asian countries like Sri Lanka, and Pakistan. The Montenegro approach to the EU for help to pay a nearly \$1 billion loan to China Exim bank alarms bell to European Union.

The strong economic ties of the European Union with China are also a concern for the USA. In 2019 when Italy became the first country to join the China BRI initiative put USA and Europe outlined a new strategic approach to Beijing which make an economic competitor as well as a systematic rival promoting an alternative model of growth in the European Union (Cfr.org 2020)

The relationship between the EU and China started in the 1990s and lasted for a decade and this period is called the "Honeymoon Period" (Li, 2016). The relationship between China and the EU reached a high point in 2003 when the two sides signed a comprehensive strategic partnership in the mid-tension of the Iraq war and it was also expected that the EU and China would move even closer (Shambaugh,2004). However, this positive trend was not continued for a long time due to conflict aroused between the EU and China due to the event such as China's Anti Succession law, the EU's refusal to abandon the arms embargo, and controversies surrounding the 2008 Beijing Olympics (Gill & Murphy,2008). Also, Europe was more concerned about the increasing trade deficit, currency manipulation, intellectual property, market access, and the growing competition of China in the market (Garlick,2013). The image of China in Europe gets worse in 2009-20014(Reiley, 2017). However, China's BRI initiatives initially got support from most of the European countries when the Chinese narratives of BRI were explained by the

European media however took 4 years to come up with their narratives about the BRI intention in Europe which drastically changed people's attitude towards China (Turcsanyi &Kachilikova,2020).

China is perceived internationally with its soft power. Soft Power is a term which is introduced by Nye. It means achieving results with the attraction of the competitor rather than coercion which is hard power. Soft Power called as hard power is present in China's strategic policy for thousands of years from the period of Sun Zi who preferred Soft power for victories without fighting.

Comparison between USA and China in economic and military terms:

USA and China are the two largest economies of the world where USA is in the top position in nominal terms whereas China is in the first position in terms of PPP (purchasing power parity) As of 2021 USA and China together share 41.89% and 34.75% of the entire world's GDP in nominal as well as in PPP terms respectively as per the IMF in 2021 USA is leading China from China by 6,033 billion dollars or 1.36 times on the exchange rate basis however the Chinese economy is also 1.18 times of USA's economy in terms of PPP with 3,982 billion dollars although according to World Bank China GDP in 1960 was 11% of the US GDP but in 2019 it is 67% of the US GDP. The USA is the world's largest trading partner with \$5.6 trillion in 2019 and the second largest exporter with \$1.6 trillion and trades with more than 200 countries (Ustr.gov.in 2021).

It is the population that increased China's PPP as China is four times of US population but if you compare the per capita income of the USA then it is around 5.8 times higher than that of China in

nominal terms similarly the US is the 5th richest country in the world whereas China ranked is 63rd (World Bank 2022).

Let’s compare USA and China in terms of military power and capability according to the ultimate military index 2022:

Field	Countries	Rank	Score
Military Machine	China	1 st	82
	USA	2 nd	74
Defence Budget	USA	1 st (\$732bn)	10
	China	2 nd (\$261bn)	9
Airpower	USA	1 st (14141)	-
	Russia	2 nd (4682)	-
Land Power	Russia	1 st (54,866)	-
	USA	2 nd (54,326)	-
	China	3 rd (41,641)	-
Naval Power	China	1 st (406)	-
	Russia	2 nd (207)	-
	USA	3 rd (207)	-
Nuclear Arms	Russia	1 st (6375)	-
	USA	2 nd (5800)	-
	China	3 rd (320)	-

(Ultimate Military Index 2022, by Military Direct)

So these data show that the USA will win the war by Air, China will win by Sea and Russia will win through Land.

China's challenge to USA's military capabilities is impressive in such a short period and it can also possible that it will surpass the USA in military power in future.

Conclusion:

The USA never explicitly acknowledged that it was a hegemon or a superpower of the world but if you analyze we will find that the USA always tries to maintain its supreme Position in the International arena. The USA also gets some benefit from the historical factors as I have discussed earlier and USA’s motivation to attain supremacy through its leadership and its foreign policy played a vital role in establishing US hegemony. The USA also checks the power of other emerging nations which may be in future can challenge the hegemony of the USA like China as we have seen in this article that’s how China is expanding its power in every sphere and every region of the world and tries to provide an alternative to the countries which was previously dependent on the USA.

Although China is the largest manufacturer in the world, the quality of the products of China is not at par with USA products and it is also to be acknowledged the fact that the USA maintains its supremacy not by its military capability or ideological expansion but by also maintaining its quality of products, services, and security to the world. For instance, we can see how Chinese War craft and drones are proved to be a failure in Pakistan (ANI, Sept 2021). Also, we have seen that China is not happy with the status quo at the international level and you tried to influence the structure in which China will emerge as the leader in world organizations, international trade, regional disputes, etc. Some Scholars also argue

that however China is growing very rapidly but it take a very long time to reach the level where the USA is present today. China is grabbing the opportunity where it can substitute the USA due to its history like in Africa and Latin American countries. At the same time, the USA should recheck its foreign policy where it lacks behind China. However, it is difficult to assume that China will replace the USA in 10 or 50 years but we can predict from the previous observations that China is not much behind the USA.

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