Generic Affirmative: “Losing U.S. Hegemony” - Responses

By “Coach Vance” Trefethen

**Resolved: The United States Federal Government should considerably reduce its military commitments**

Negatives will have a generic “HEGEMONY” brief against any case reducing US military commitments. "Hegemony" (he-GEM-oh-nee) is leadership, or direction, where other nations do things our way because we have the most influence and power in the world. NEGs will argue that reducing US military commitments means reducing US leadership in the world. If that happens, bad guys (like Russia and China) will gain influence and the world will be much worse off.  
When NEGs run this argument (probably because they have no on-case responses to your actual plan), you need to have this generic Affirmative brief ready, regardless of what AFF case you are running. It can defeat the Hegemony arguments and allow you to bring the debate back to what you really wanted to talk about: your case!  
  
Obviously some of the arguments below may run in tension or even contradiction to each other. Pick a story and stick with it, and simply choose which path you want to take, and don’t read the other evidence in the brief that doesn’t support it.

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Generic Affirmative: Losing US Hegemony – Responses

NON-UNIQUE – US hegemony declines anyway due to other factors, so it’s not a voting issue against AFF Plan

US decline is inevitable: China is advancing ahead of us. We should simply embrace it like Britain did after World War 2

Adrian Monck 2018. (head of communications at the World Economic Forum) 28 Aug 2018 “The Choice Facing a Declining United States” THE ATLANTIC <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2018/08/americas-global-influence-is-declining/568708/>

In Africa, the evidence is everywhere. China will put nearly $90 billion into the continent this year, the United States nothing close. China is betting big on economic partnerships and dependencies along its new Silk Road, christened “One Belt, One Road.” The U.S., meanwhile, spends many of its dollars on expensive wars, to the detriment of soft-power projects like USAID, or domestic welfare programs like Medicaid. America’s global influence is certain to decline relatively in the years ahead; it is the inevitable consequence of the return of the Middle Kingdom. As that happens, the U.S. should be more deliberate about the policy choices it makes. It’s a lesson I’ve seen my own country—which was once an empire, too—learn the hard way. On the way down from global hegemony, Britain came around too slowly to investing in domestic welfare. The U.S. should apply those lessons sooner.

US military will face inevitable federal budget cuts forced by consequences of Covid 19

Ashley J. Tellis 2020 (Counselor, The National Bureau of Asian Research; Senior Fellow, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace) 4 May 2020 “Covid-19 Knocks on American Hegemony” <https://www.nbr.org/publication/covid-19-knocks-on-american-hegemony/>

Even if the more optimistic analysis from J.P. Morgan, for example, comes to pass—that the United States could begin to bounce back from the pandemic in the second half of the year—the cumulative economic losses that the country suffers would total roughly $11 trillion over a decade. More pessimistic assessments offered under some scenarios by McKinsey, in contrast, suggest that such losses would reach almost $19 trillion over the same time period. Under such conditions, it is unlikely that U.S. defense expenditures at the 2019 level of $676 billion could be sustained over the next decade.

US hegemony can’t be sustained due to long-term negative economic effects of Covid 19

Ashley J. Tellis 2020 (Counselor, The National Bureau of Asian Research; Senior Fellow, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace) 4 May 2020 “Covid-19 Knocks on American Hegemony” <https://www.nbr.org/publication/covid-19-knocks-on-american-hegemony/>

As scholars of international competition have long understood, successful hegemonies arise—and can be successfully maintained—only by states that dominate the cycles of innovation to create new leading sectors in the economy. These transformations produce supernormal returns, which are then utilized for satisfying internal needs and expanding external influence. By the best accounts, the United States has exemplified this pattern since around 1945. But if the country is in fact now trapped in a period of low productivity growth and persistent weaknesses in aggregate demand—each for different reasons—the net result may be a diminished capacity to sustain both the increasing domestic obligations and its extant international interests simultaneously. Or, in other words, the task of preserving U.S. primacy over the next few decades will prove to be harder than before. This constraint will only be amplified if the disconcerting findings of a working paper from the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco prove to be true of the Covid-19 pandemic: that the deleterious macroeconomic consequences of pandemics appear to persist for around 40 years.

US ability to lead is declining because of our bad reputation for botching the response to Covid 19

Ashley J. Tellis 2020 (Counselor, The National Bureau of Asian Research; Senior Fellow, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace) 4 May 2020 “Covid-19 Knocks on American Hegemony” <https://www.nbr.org/publication/covid-19-knocks-on-american-hegemony/>

While the damage caused to the U.S. economy and the human losses will make the task of preserving U.S. hegemony after the pandemic harder—at a time when most assessments suggest that countries like China are likely to recover faster than the United States—the reputational damage to Washington is just as serious. Although variables like competency are hard to quantify, they are vital in international politics because they induce awe in others and make cooperation, if not compliance, easier. After all, the generation of hegemonic power is owed not merely to the strength of a nation’s material base but even more fundamentally to the effectiveness of its state authority, which directs the transformation of latent resources into realized capabilities. Thomas Hobbes underlined this insight powerfully in the *Leviathan* when he declared, “Reputation of power, is Power.” China has lost no time in claiming that its authoritarian model of politics is far more effective in dealing with upheavals than its democratic rivals. While this argument is unlikely to have many takers in democratic countries, the fact remains nonetheless that the United States, with its dismal performance in managing the pandemic, has lost its sheen as a proficient power.

BRINK RESPONSES – Removing just 1 US military commitment will not bring the apocalypse

U.S. hegemony not on the brink of passing – it’s firmer than ever and will remain so for a long time

Salvatore Babones 2015 (adjunct scholar at the Centre for Independent Studies in Sydney, Australia, and an associate professor at the University of Sydney) 11 June 2015 “American Hegemony Is Here to Stay” <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/american-hegemony-here-stay-13089>

In fact, reports of the passing of U.S. hegemony are greatly exaggerated. America’s costly wars in Iraq and Afghanistan were relatively minor affairs considered in long-term perspective. The strategic challenge posed by China has also been exaggerated. Together with its inner circle of unshakable English-speaking allies, the United States possesses near-total control of the world’s seas, skies, airwaves and cyberspace, while American universities, think tanks and journals dominate the world of ideas. Put aside all the alarmist punditry. American hegemony is now as firm as or firmer than it has ever been, and will remain so for a long time to come.

Brink Turn: Saying we’re on the brink of “something bad” every time the US steps back on anything creates the very problem it’s trying to avoid. NEG should stop saying it if they really believe it’s a problem

Doug Bandow 2020 (J.D. from Stanford Univ.; Senior Fellow at the Cato Institute; former Special Assistant to President Ronald Reagan) The U.S. Should Not Lead the World 23 July 2020 <https://www.cato.org/publications/commentary/us-should-not-lead-world?queryID=af31074dc65e4c368cd4d36a59759e4a>

Yet even the slightest suggestion that the U.S. step back anywhere generates horrified, frenetic opposition. The president’s proposals to withdraw troops from countries as disparate as Afghanistan, Germany, Iraq, South Korea, and Syria triggered sustained bouts of wailing and gnashing of teeth in Washington and overseas. Not only must America lead, it must always lead, and once having led anywhere, it must forever lead everywhere. No retreats, substitutions, or transformations are allowed. This fixation on U.S. leadership amounts to a self‐​fulfilling prophecy. If nothing can be accomplished without America, then other nations will act as if nothing can be accomplished without America. Which means they will not act. And nothing will be accomplished without Washington.

SPECIFIC EXAMPLE RESPONSES - Examples cited by NEG can be defeated

1. China

US decline relative to China is inevitable. Turn: Refusing to accept it (NEG’s position) provokes instability

Minghao Zhao 2019 (Senior Fellow at the Institute of International Studies, Fudan University) 26 Aug 2019 “Is a New Cold War Inevitable? Chinese Perspectives on US–China Strategic Competition” CHINESE JOURNAL OF INTERNATIONAL POLITICS <https://academic.oup.com/cjip/article/12/3/371/5544745>

For instance, Tsinghua University Professor Yan Xuetong points out that US–China strategic competition is inevitable due to the structural contradictions between the hegemon and the rising power. That China has been narrowing the gap between its comprehensive national strength and that of the United States might be the root cause of the growing competition between the two nations. He ascribes the instability of China–US relations to the two powers’ policy of ‘pretending to be friends’.Wang Jisi also mentions ‘structural contradictions’, but his elaboration features nuanced differences. He argues that although a large number of Chinese analysts believe that American power has declined, the Americans themselves cannot accept such a view. Therefore, as the United States is unwilling to acknowledge its weakness vis-à-vis China, a kind of strategic competition between the two sides is inevitable.

US/China rivalry isn’t a zero-sum game: China can gain influence without the U.S. being harmed

Minghao Zhao 2019 (Senior Fellow at the Institute of International Studies, Fudan University) 26 Aug 2019 “Is a New Cold War Inevitable? Chinese Perspectives on US–China Strategic Competition” CHINESE JOURNAL OF INTERNATIONAL POLITICS <https://academic.oup.com/cjip/article/12/3/371/5544745>

The United States cannot contain China in the region; nor can China exclude the United States from the Asia-Pacific. China needs to respect US interests and traditional influence in the Asia-Pacific and carefully manage the security implications of its expanding economic footprints. In the meantime, there is no need for the United States to see China’s rising influence in the region through a Cold-War lens and deem it a zero-sum game.

China isn’t interested in replacing US hegemony

World Economic Forum 2019 (international organization for public-private cooperation; non-profit foundation headquartered in Switzerland) Is a U.S. – China power transition inevitable? 15 Jan 2019 <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2019/01/is-a-us-china-power-transition-inevitable/>

Perhaps most critically, though, China has evinced little desire to replace the United States in its present capacity. While increasingly global in scope, Beijing's foreign policy remains parochial in objectives, aimed more at sustaining its growth and cementing its centrality within the Asia-Pacific than at furnishing global public goods. The economist Charles Kindleberger [observed (TXT)](http://bev.berkeley.edu/fp/readings/WorldinDepression.txt) in 1973 that the Great Depression persisted “because the international economic system was rendered unstable by British inability and United States unwillingness to assume responsibility for stabilizing it.” We may witness a variant of this dynamic nine decades on, with neither the lone superpower nor its putative replacement able or willing to invest in the current order's modernization. Should that dynamic indeed prevail, China might continue to chip away at America's margin of pre-eminence without actually ascending to the commanding heights of geopolitics.

2. Russia

US massively spends more on military than Russia, and Russia can’t establish much power abroad

Vijay Prashad 2018 (Indian historian, editor and journalist. He is a writing fellow and chief correspondent at [Globetrotter](https://independentmediainstitute.org/globetrotter/), a project of the Independent Media Institute) A paranoid America is greatly exaggerating Russian power 22 Feb 2018 <https://www.salon.com/2018/02/22/a-paranoid-america-is-greatly-exaggerating-russian-power_partner/>

One of the central features of Putin’s reforms was to strengthen the military, whose capacity had declined in the post-Soviet era. This included Russia’s weapons production, which withered for lack of investment. Putin put in resources towards both the arms industry and the military — although the numbers here are minuscule compared to those in the United States. It is important to point out that the increase of the US military budget insisted upon by Donald Trump is greater than the total Russian military budget. The new US budget will spend $105 billion more on the military than it did last year, taking US military spending to $716 billion; Russia’s total military spending is $69 billion. Even Russia’s interventions — in Ukraine and in Syria — are less acts of belligerence than acts of defense. The two warm-water ports that Russia is able to access for its navy are in Sevastopol (Ukraine) and Tartus (Syria). If the West had been able to draw Ukraine and Syria away from mild Russian influence, Russia would have lost its navy. The United States, meanwhile, has 40 warm-water bases on its own territory and an additional 31 naval bases across the world (from Peru to Japan, from Spain to Diego Garcia). Russia’s attempt to create the Collective Security Treaty Organization, a rival to NATO, has not gained traction. Eastern Ukraine remains in distress, while Syria is still in the midst of a terrible war. Russia has prevented American hegemony in these zones, but it has not been able to establish its own power here either.

Neither China nor Russia are a threat to the US, just moving the world back into healthy balance of power

Vijay Prashad 2018 (Indian historian, editor and journalist. He is a writing fellow and chief correspondent at [Globetrotter](https://independentmediainstitute.org/globetrotter/), a project of the Independent Media Institute) A paranoid America is greatly exaggerating Russian power 22 Feb 2018 <https://www.salon.com/2018/02/22/a-paranoid-america-is-greatly-exaggerating-russian-power_partner/>

But it remains a defensive statement. Neither China nor Russia is making a push to become the global powerhouse. They are merely seeking to rebalance a world order that has — since the end of the Cold War — tilted unhealthily towards the United States. So is Russia a threat? Is China a threat? The question really is, to whom? They are threats to any assertion of US dominance over the planet. But they are no threat to the United States as such. They are committed to a multi-polar planet: a sensible solution in our very unstable and dangerous times.

3. Middle East

US “leadership” in the Middle East has been a disaster

Doug Bandow 2020 (J.D. from Stanford Univ.; Senior Fellow at the Cato Institute; former Special Assistant to President Ronald Reagan) The U.S. Should Not Lead the World 23 July 2020 <https://www.cato.org/publications/commentary/us-should-not-lead-world?queryID=af31074dc65e4c368cd4d36a59759e4a>

After two decades of U.S. “leadership” in the Middle East, what is the result? A series of nations wrecked. New terrorist organizations created. Even more new enemies made. Thousands of Americans killed. Tens of thousands of U.S. personnel wounded. Hundreds of thousands of foreign civilians killed. Even more wounded. Millions of people displaced. Trillions of dollars squandered.

Don’t need US hegemony in the Middle East because there’s no significant threat coming from there

Prof. Sean Yom 2020 (Associate Professor of Political Science at Temple University and Senior Fellow at the Foreign Policy Research Institute in Philadelphia) 28 Feb 2020 “US Foreign Policy in the Middle East: The Logic of Hegemonic Retreat” <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/1758-5899.12777>

Second, whereas the spread of communism and disruptions to Arabian oil production constituted foremost threats to US interests in the past, today there are no equivalent perils that can justify maintaining America's vast regional infrastructure of militarism. Over the past decade, the two most frequently cited threats from the MENA against the US have been radical Islamist terrorism (such as from the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, or ISIS) and a nuclear‐armed Iran. While scholars can debate whether these post‐Cold War actors have meaningful offensive capabilities or else are merely constructs of Western fear, the reality is that these are regional perils rather than international ones. They will not traverse the Atlantic Ocean and wreck the prosperity and security of the American homeland.

No threats from the Middle East require US intervention

Prof. Sean Yom 2020 (Associate Professor of Political Science at Temple University and Senior Fellow at the Foreign Policy Research Institute in Philadelphia) 28 Feb 2020 “US Foreign Policy in the Middle East: The Logic of Hegemonic Retreat” <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/1758-5899.12777>

Because radical Islamism and Iran represent peripheral rather than core dangers, it remains difficult for the US to turn its traditional hegemony back into interventionism. The Bush presidency could claim Al‐Qaeda as a global menace after the 9/11 attacks struck the American homeland; the Trump administration cannot construct any Middle East threat as the equivalent because that homeland has become increasingly isolated from regional externalities. The only variable that could reverse this would be a sudden terrorist strike in the US that would put policy makers on wartime footing once again. However, given the dismantling of ISIS, and Iran's tendency to goad but not openly attack US forces, it is difficult to imagine who could author such a new danger. It will not be a state actor given the MENA's current instability. The traditional Arab regional powers – Egypt, Syria, or Iraq – have faded in importance given their internal instability or conflicts. Violence in Libya and Yemen has likewise fractured those states. Outside of Iran, the most coherent and secure states in the Middle East remain staunch American allies, namely Morocco, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia.

Not on the Brink: Reduction in hegemony doesn’t mean abandonment, and other nations will pick up the slack

Prof. Sean Yom 2020 (Associate Professor of Political Science at Temple University and Senior Fellow at the Foreign Policy Research Institute in Philadelphia) 28 Feb 2020 “US Foreign Policy in the Middle East: The Logic of Hegemonic Retreat” <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/1758-5899.12777>

Third, hegemonic drawdown does not mean evacuation. The US will maintain its coercive infrastructure, from its drone and surveillance bases to dense naval and air fleets in the Gulf, since it suffers no immediate resource shortage that requires military contraction. However, in line with extant patterns, it will engage in ‘offshore balancing’ to redistribute the costs of maintaining regional order. This represents a new term for an old concept – relying upon local proxies to maintain the regional balance of security, and launching interventions only when absolutely necessary to prevent a major collapse or reconjugation of regional order (Mearsheimer and Walt, [**2016**](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/1758-5899.12777#gpol12777-bib-0024)). US policy initiatives since the Obama administration classify as textbook offshore balancing, such as allowing Russia and Iran to take the lead in squashing the Islamic State in Syria, providing massive arms transfers to Saudi Arabia and the UAE, and restraining its own Gulf‐based military forces from attacking Tehran despite extraordinary provocations.

IMPACT RESPONSES – Even if US hegemony is reduced, it’s not a problem

No reason to celebrate US hegemony: No one anointed us to rule the world. People should solve their own problems

Doug Bandow 2020 (J.D. from Stanford Univ.; Senior Fellow at the Cato Institute; former Special Assistant to President Ronald Reagan) The U.S. Should Not Lead the World 23 July 2020 <https://www.cato.org/publications/commentary/us-should-not-lead-world?queryID=af31074dc65e4c368cd4d36a59759e4a>

Nevertheless, many of the complaints about inadequate U.S. leadership really are about something else. They reflect frustration that the U.S. will no longer automatically take care of other nations’ problems. Indeed, complaints about inadequate American leadership reflect a pervasive problem predating Trump’s election. Even the most prosperous and populous nations prefer to send crises to Washington for solution by the global hegemon. And American policymakers, overflowing with hubris and sanctimony, are only too happy to oblige.   
**[END QUOTE. HE GOES ON TO CONCLUDE LATER IN THE SAME CONTEXT QUOTE:]**  
Despite the tsunami of criticism, Donald Trump and his administration have good reason to be skeptical of the ubiquitous call for American leadership. Indeed, the extraordinary and ostentatious failures of the Trump administration when it has attempted to “lead” demonstrates why there should be much greater skepticism of global demands for greater U.S. leadership. The world needs better leadership. From all countries and peoples. It is not Washington’s duty to run the world. Other nations must pick up after themselves, pay their bills, fulfill their responsibilities, and shape their futures. American leadership is no substitute for better leadership by all.

Don’t need US hegemony for world peace / stability. They can, and should, find it on their own just fine without us

Doug Bandow 2020 (J.D. from Stanford Univ.; Senior Fellow at the Cato Institute; former Special Assistant to President Ronald Reagan) The U.S. Should Not Lead the World 23 July 2020 <https://www.cato.org/publications/commentary/us-should-not-lead-world?queryID=af31074dc65e4c368cd4d36a59759e4a>

Countries facing serious common threats should put aside their differences, rather than wait, hoping their mutual protector, almost always Washington, will take their side and pressure the other government. Such public officials should put national necessity before political advantage when facing an international moment of truth. America has no obligation to play nursemaid and beg them to make the right decision. Governments and peoples at war have good reason to make peace without relying on other nations, especially the U.S., to pressure and/​or bribe one or both sides. The overwhelming beneficiaries of peace are the parties themselves. Demanding payment to end combat suggests an attempt to profit from tragedy. Good societies should aid the recovery of those in need, not pay others to do what is right and in their interest.

No apocalyptic consequences without US leadership

Doug Bandow 2020 (J.D. from Stanford Univ.; Senior Fellow at the Cato Institute; former Special Assistant to President Ronald Reagan) The U.S. Should Not Lead the World 23 July 2020 <https://www.cato.org/publications/commentary/us-should-not-lead-world?queryID=af31074dc65e4c368cd4d36a59759e4a>

However, the claim that American leadership is necessary does not reflect the long arc of human history. Even before the U.S. existed, “stuff” happened in the world. Even before Washington was able to take a leading role in international affairs, decisions were made. Even before America chose to exercise its power, events occurred and problems were solved around the world. So there is good reason to be skeptical of the apocalyptic prophesies of doom from the supposed lack of U.S. leadership.

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