

Part - II

Section - A

Q. No. 2. Answer:

The description of the United States President as the most powerful elected executive in the world yet constitutionally constrained captures a central paradox of the American political system. The office combines immense formal authority, global influence, and symbolic leadership with a dense web of constitutional checks, institutional rivalries, and political norms designed deliberately to prevent the concentration of power.

understanding this duality requires examining both the sources of presidential power and the mechanisms that limit it within the constitutional framework.

The power of U.S. president flows first from the constitution itself. Article II vests "the executive power" in a single individual, making the presidency a unitary executive unlike parliamentary systems where authority is fragmented. As head of state, head of government, and commander in chief of the armed forces, the president exercises authority that in many countries is divided among multiple offices. The president directs foreign

policy, negotiates treaties, appoints senior officials, commands the world's most powerful military, and oversees a vast federal bureaucracy. In practical terms, this concentration of authority allows the president to act swiftly in crises, project power internationally, and shape national priorities through agenda setting, executive orders, and public leadership. This power is further magnified by the United States' position as a global superpower. Decisions taken by the U.S. president on trade, war, climate, or sanctions have worldwide repercussions.

Presidential control over nuclear

weapons, intelligence agencies, and diplomatic recognition underscores the extraordinary reach of the office. For example, presidential decisions to deploy troops without formal declarations of war, as seen in Korea, Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan, illustrate how executive authority has expanded in Korea, Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan, illustrate how executive authority has expanded in practice, particularly in matters of national security. Modern media, the "bully pulpit," and direct communication with the public also enhance presidential influence by allowing the president to shape

narratives and mobilize political support.

Yet this vast power is intentionally constrained by the constitutional architecture designed by the Founding Fathers, who deeply feared tyranny. The U.S. Constitution establishes a system of separation of powers and checks and balances to ensure that no branch, including the executive, dominates the state. Congress holds the power of legislation, taxation, and budgetary control, which limits the president's ability to govern unilaterally. Even the President's veto power can be overridden by a two thirds majority in both houses,

reflecting legislative supremacy in lawmaking. The Senate's role in confirming appointments and ratifying treaties further restricts presidential discretion, ensuring that key decisions require institutional consent.

Judicial constraints are equally significant. The Supreme Court and lower federal courts possess the power of judicial review, enabling them to invalidate executive actions that violate the Constitution. Landmark cases such as *United States v. Nixon*, which compelled President Nixon to surrender the Watergate tapes, demonstrate that the President is not above the law. Courts have repeatedly

limited executive authority in areas such as detention, surveillance, immigration, and emergency powers, reinforcing constitutional boundaries. The possibility of judicial scrutiny acts as a continuous restraint on presidential overreach.

Political accountability mechanisms further limit presidential power. The President is subject to regular elections, impeachment, and public scrutiny. Impeachment by the House of Representatives and trial in the Senate, although political in nature, serve as a constitutional safeguard against abuse of power. The impeachment proceedings against President Andrew

Johnson, Bill Clinton, and Donald Trump underscore that even the most powerful executive can be formally challenged for misconduct. Moreover, federalism constrains presidential authority by reserving substantial powers for states, particularly in areas such as law enforcement, elections, and public administration.

In practice, the effectiveness of these constraints depends not only on constitutional text but also on political norms, party dynamics, and institutional behavior. Periods of unified government, where the president's party controls Congress, often reduce legislative

oversight and expand executive influence. Conversely, divided government strengthens checks and balances by forcing negotiation and compromise. The growth of executive orders and emergency powers in recent decades reflects both the complexity of modern governance and congressional reluctance to legislate decisively, resulting in a gradual expansion of presidential power within constitutional limits.

Critically, while the U.S. president is constrained relative to absolute executives, these constraints have not always prevented the accumulation of power. Scholars have noted

the rise of the "imperial presidency," particularly during war time and national emergencies, when fear and urgency weaken institutional order retains self correcting mechanisms. Courts, Congress, the media, and civil society continue to challenge executive excesses, preserving democratic accountability. In conclusion, the U.S. president is rightly described as the most powerful elected executive in the world due to the concentration of executive authority, global reach, and institutional capacity of the office. However, this power is neither absolute nor unchecked. Constitutional limits, separation of powers, judicial

review, federalism, and political accountability collectively constraint presidential authority. The enduring strength of the American system lies not in denying power to the executive, but in embedding that power within a constitutional framework that seeks to balance effective governance with the prevention of tyranny.
