International politics

VOCABULARY PRACTICE
UPPER-INTERMEDIATE | B2

Name: _____ Date: _____

1 Match each precise term with its definition.

1 geopolitics ____	**a** the study of how geography influences politics and power relations between states
2 soft power ____	**b** influence gained through cultural appeal, diplomacy and persuasion rather than coercion
3 hard power ____	**c** influence exercised through military or economic coercion
4 sphere of influence ____	**d** a region where one power exerts significant political or economic control
5 non-proliferation ____	**e** efforts to prevent the spread of weapons, especially nuclear weapons
6 proxy conflict ____	**f** a conflict in which powers support opposing sides rather than fighting each other directly
7 balance of power ____	**g** a distribution of power among states intended to prevent any single state from dominating
8 unilateral action ____	**h** action taken by one country alone, without the cooperation or consent of others
9 realpolitik ____	**i** a pragmatic approach to politics based on practical power considerations rather than ideals
10 international norms ____	**j** widely accepted, though not always legally binding, standards of state behaviour

2 Choose the word with the most suitable connotation.

1 For influence through cultural appeal: soft power / military coercion.

2 For influence through military or economic coercion: hard power / gentle persuasion.

3 For a region under one power's control: sphere of influence / a neutral zone.

4 For efforts to prevent weapons spreading: non-proliferation / active arms sales.

5 For a conflict fought through allied sides: proxy conflict / direct war.

6 For preventing any one state from dominating: balance of power / total dominance.

7 For action taken without others' consent: unilateral action / coordinated agreement.

8 For a pragmatic, power-focused approach to politics: realpolitik / pure idealism.

3 Complete the geopolitics collocations with one word.

1 exercise _____ power (= influence through appeal)

2 a _____ conflict (= fought through allied sides)

3 a _____ of influence (= a region under one power's control)

4 _____ action (= taken without others' cooperation)

5 nuclear _____ (= preventing weapon spread)

6 the _____ of power (= distribution preventing dominance)

7 violate international _____ (= break accepted standards of behaviour)

8 pursue _____ (= pragmatic, power-focused politics)

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4 Complete the case notes with words and phrases from the box.

balance of power | geopolitics | hard power | international norms | non-proliferation | proxy conflict | realpolitik | soft power | sphere of influence | unilateral action

Case A: Analysts studying regional 1 _____ noted the country's growing 2 _____ over neighbouring states.
Case B: The government relied heavily on 3 _____, projecting influence through cultural diplomacy rather than military threat.
Case C: Critics accused the larger power of exercising 4 _____ to pressure smaller neighbours economically.
Case D: The conflict was widely understood as a 5 _____, with rival powers backing opposing sides without direct confrontation.
Case E: Diplomats emphasised the importance of maintaining a regional 6 _____, wary of any single state becoming dominant.
Case F: The country's decision to act without consulting allies was criticised as 7 _____.
Case G: Officials cited 8 _____ commitments in defending the 9 _____ treaty limiting weapons development.
Case H: Critics accused the government of practising 10 _____, prioritising pragmatic advantage over stated principles.

5 Read the text and answer the questions briefly.

Soft power in a multipolar world

Scholars of international relations increasingly examine how soft power, the ability to shape outcomes through attraction and persuasion rather than coercion, operates alongside more traditional forms of hard power in a world with multiple competing centres of influence. A country with limited military capacity can nonetheless project significant influence through cultural exports, educational exchange and diplomatic engagement, complicating simple assessments of national power based purely on military or economic metrics. Critics of soft power theory caution that its effects are notoriously difficult to measure precisely, and that genuine crises still tend to be resolved through hard power considerations, suggesting soft power functions best as a complement to, rather than a substitute for, traditional strategic capability.

1 What do scholars of international relations increasingly examine? _____

2 What is soft power? _____

3 What can a country with limited military capacity nonetheless do? _____

4 What does this complicate? _____

5 What do critics of soft power theory caution? _____

6 How does soft power function best, according to the text? _____

6 Rewrite each sentence using the word in capitals. Do not change the meaning.

1 The country influenced others through culture and diplomacy. SOFT POWER _____

2 The larger power exerted economic and military pressure. HARD POWER _____

3 The war was fought through rival allies rather than directly. PROXY CONFLICT _____

4 The country acted alone without consulting its allies. UNILATERAL ACTION _____

OVER TO YOU

Write a 120-150 word account analysing how a country uses soft or hard power to achieve its foreign policy goals, distinguishing observation from interpretation.

[ ] Use at least twelve target expressions. [ ] Control connotation carefully. [ ] Avoid unsupported assumptions.

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ANSWER KEY

1 Precise terms

1 a 2 b 3 c 4 d 5 e 6 f 7 g 8 h 9 i 10 j

2 Connotation

1 soft power 2 hard power 3 sphere of influence 4 non-proliferation 5 proxy conflict 6 balance of power 7 unilateral action 8 realpolitik

3 Collocations

1 soft 2 proxy 3 sphere 4 unilateral 5 non-proliferation 6 balance 7 norms 8 realpolitik

4 Case notes

1 geopolitics 2 sphere of influence 3 soft power 4 hard power 5 proxy conflict
6 balance of power 7 unilateral action 8 international norms 9 non-proliferation 10 realpolitik

5 Reading - suggested answers

1 How soft power operates alongside hard power in a multipolar world.
2 The ability to shape outcomes through attraction and persuasion rather than coercion.
3 Project significant influence through cultural exports, educational exchange and diplomatic engagement.
4 Simple assessments of national power based purely on military or economic metrics.
5 That its effects are notoriously difficult to measure precisely, and crises still tend to be resolved through hard power.
6 As a complement to, rather than a substitute for, traditional strategic capability.

6 Rewriting - possible answers

1 The country used soft power. 2 The larger power used hard power.
3 It was a proxy conflict. 4 The country took unilateral action.

Over to you

Answers will vary. Check lexical precision, appropriate connotation and separation of fact from inference.