The Impact Of Donald Trump's Presidency On The US Hegemony

Introduction

The United States' role within the world post-World War II has been one comprised of global leadership, promotion of civil liberties, and the prevention of radical organizations. The United States' role can be examined by measuring the overall success of past policies and responses to specific international conflicts. Observers claim the Trump administration is responsible for significant change to the United States' role and reputation on a global scale. This change of roles may result in catastrophic effects to the United States relations with European nations, the economy, trade agreements, United States security, and foreign aid.

The objective of this paper is twofold:

(i) to share how the relations between the United States and European nations have changed since the beginning of President Trump's term,

(ii) to describe how President Donald Trump's actions, ideas, vocabulary, and legislation have contributed to the United States hegemonic stability standpoint.

Hegemonic Stability Theory

The United States relations over the past four years with European nations has seen an increase in tensions. Due to President Trump being such a polarizing leader, the United States has made global economic and political decisions which have angered and worsened its relationships with European countries. In international relations, the Hegemonic stability theory indicates that the international system will remain more stable with one nation serving as a dominant global power. Over the last four years, the Trump administration has enacted numerous policies that have tarnished the reputation of the United States affecting its role as the sole hegemonic state.

The theory of hegemonic stability argues that the existence of a single global power facilitates the responsibility and solution to problems of free riding and collective action. In international relations, free riding is considered to occur when a country wants others to pay for a majority of the public goods when paying as little as possible to use the goods for themselves. In economics, this conflict results in the failure to produce and export goods within the free international market. This occurs quite often in the international market because the free rider has little to no incentive to contribute when they can benefit without their contribution.

Collective action problems arise when there are obstacles to cooperation where actors have an incentive to cooperate however, each actor makes decisions with the expectation that other nations will pay for the costs of such cooperation. Collective action conflicts can also arise in situations where all actors are better off cooperating, yet fail to because of conflicting interests between individuals which discourage a collaborative effort.

This theory argues that if the hegemonic power can facilitate the solution to the problems of free riding and collective action, the power is large enough to solve the problems for the world entirely. In order for a nation to reach the level of global hegemon they must have a powerful military, political strength, and be a superior nation capable of enforcing international laws. In the past two centuries, there have been two hegemonic powers; Great Britain post 1860 and the United States' post World War II. After the end of World War II, the United States began its ascend to reign as the global hegemon. The creation of nuclear weapons has assisted nations such as the United States' maintaining their hegemonic stability in the modern era. When exercising their leadership, hegemons typically do so through persuasion, coercion, and diplomacy. Additionally, the Hegemonic Stability Theory assists political scientists to analyze a nations rise to becoming a global leader. Through this theory, it's easier to discover when a nation is suitable enough on its own to take responsibility for making decisions on a global scale.

Analysis

Since the beginning of President Trump's campaign for the 2016 presidential election, he rallied around the acronym "Make America Great Again," or "MAGA." Prior to the election, the American people were able to observe glimpses of Donald Trumps policies and ideas to strengthen the United States' role as a global hegemon. This election may have been the most controversial election in United States' history as it divided many Americans who held different beliefs as to how effective Donald Trump could lead the most influential nation in the world. His lack of political experience combined with his grotesque sense of vocabulary led many Americans to develop a severe sense of animosity towards his leadership. The American people raised concerns that the newly elected President Trump would affect the United States relations and reputation through his actions and legislation developed under his administration.

One of President Trump's most controversial claims throughout his presidential campaign and presidency was that climate change is a hoax. Prior to Trump's inauguration, President Barack Obama committed the United States' to the Paris Agreement promising to pay $3 billion to strengthen the global efforts to tackle the threat. Within the United States, this standpoint of the Trump administration angered many environmentalists resulting in hundreds of climate strikes over the last four years across the entire country. However, on a global scale President Trump's actions have resulted in detrimental consequences to the United States' relations with European nations. In June of 2017, President Trump decided to announce the United States' would cease all participation in the Paris Agreement and enter negotiations to re-enter on terms which are fair to the United States' and its citizens. The decision to withdraw from the agreement had sparked immense conflict and resulted in distrust from European nations. Additionally, this decision further establishes a poor precedent for climate cooperation of behalf of the United States as the United States' had previously failed to sign the Kyoto Protocol under the Clinton administration. This decision to leave the Paris agreement angered many European leaders including French President Emmanuel Macron, who claimed that this was a mistake by the Trump Administration which threatens the safety and security of our future Earth. While giving a speech in English, which is a rare occurrence, the French President even made a mockery of his slogan "Make America Great Again" by stating "Make our planet great again." President Macron also teamed up with Italy and Germany to put out a joint statement claiming that the United States leaving is detrimental to the potential success of the Paris Agreement.[Ward] It was not until just recently that the United States had officially left the Paris

Agreement as the United States hadn't filed its intent to withdraw until November 4, 2019. After the one-year timeframe required to withdraw, the United States' officially withdrew on November 4, 2020 [Hersher]. In efforts attempting to save the taxpayers money and avoiding the free riders within the Paris Agreement, President Trump has managed to anger European leaders, hurt the American economy, and further establish America's reputation as unprofessional when it comes to tackling climate concerns.

Since the United States' assumed its role as global hegemon after World War II, one of the key factors which helped prevent the spread of communism into Europe was the North Atlantic Treaty Organization(NATO). NATO is defined as an intergovernmental military alliance between North American and European countries. During Trumps presidency he repeatedly claimed that the United States' provides too much money for NATO in comparison to its European counterparts. President Trump even went as far to directly point out the free riders as he accused Germany of not providing its fair share to help NATO. In July of 2020, President Trump decided it was time to pull 12,000 troops out of Germany to hold them accountable for their lack of contribution to NATO. In doing so he showed them that they won't have access to such valuable resources if they don't contribute to the greater good. Throughout his presidency, Donald Trump has talked several times about a potential exit from NATO entirely. The potential withdrawal of the United States' from NATO could essentially result in a collapse of the organization as a whole. Additionally, NATO serves as a first line of defense to the United States during a time of war thus, an exit from President Trump could endanger the lives of millions of American citizens. However, President Trump has successfully maintained the United States hegemonic status by holding nations such as Germany accountable for free riding. In doing so, President Trump was able to negotiate with NATO members into paying $130 billion dollars more to help ease the burden the United States was bearing [Gould].

Conclusion

Since the end of the second World War, the United States' role in the world has been one comprised of global leadership, protection of freedoms, and the surveillance of other nations. Through doing this, the United States' has solidified itself in the modern era as the global hegemon in charge of facilitating solutions to problems of free riding and collective action within various intergovernmental organizations. However, since the Trump Administration has taken over in 2016, the hegemonic status which the United States' had possessed for such a long time has been in question.

The Trump Administration has been viewed as responsible for the change in the United States hegemonic standpoint due to his various actions and decisions which have angered European nations. The Hegemonic Theory has allowed political scientists to evaluate how much the Trump Administration has affected the hegemonic status of the United States. Since the inauguration of President Trump, he has angered European leaders such as Emmanuel Macron by pulling the United States out of the Paris Agreement. This decision to withdraw from the Paris Agreement was Donald Trumps attempt to hold the free riders of the agreement accountable however, he handled it improperly only worsening relations with European nations. Donald Trump also decided to hold free riders accountable into NATO where he called out specific countries such as Germany for not paying their dues. Through this action, President Trump actually showed the European nations that the United States is capable of maintaining its role as hegemon by creating solutions to free riding problems.

Although President Trump may have declared the United States' as hegemon and promised its continuity through his "Make America Great Again" acronym, his lack of filter and poor decisions ultimately are responsible for complicated relations with European nations recently. The Hegemonic Stability Theory however argues that as long as the United States' are capable of solving solutions to problems of collective action and free riding then it can maintain its hegemonic status. In the near future, the world will truly discover the standpoint of the United States' hegemonic status through how it handles more complicated situations in the world.