

A Comparative Study of Unilateralism and Multilateralism in Trump Administration Period

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ABSTRACT

During Trump administration, the US government not only had withdrawn from a series of multilateral agreements and international organizations, but also threat allies to revise the agreement, while the international community stay committed to upholding multilateralism in kinds of ways. The two diplomatic behaviors are in sharp contrast. Firstly, this article analyzes the Trump administration's "withdrawal" diplomatic behavior through some cases and points out that its essence is unilateralism, which has many negative effects on the United States. Secondly, it briefly stated that the current consensus of the international community is still supporting multilateralism. China and some regional organizations always stay committed to upholding multilateralism. Finally, the comparison shows that under the current background of globalization and global issues, countries should actively advocate the concept of multilateralism and take practical actions to promote the development of multilateralism.

Keywords: *Unilateralism, Multilateralism, Trump administration, Globalization*

1. INTRODUCTION

During Trump's administration, the US had withdrawn from the "Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement"(TPP), the "United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization" (UNESCO), the "Iran Nuclear Agreement", and the "Paris Agreement". They also threatened to withdraw from the "North American Free Trade Agreement"(NAFTA)and the"US-Korea Free Trade Agreement".[1] These behaviors involve military security, economics and other fields, and its essence is unilateralism. Under this behavior, the United States ignored international fighting against COVID-19 pandemic cooperation, which led to the loss of control in the US. So it triggered an increase in the number of domestic unemployed, a greater trade deficit, and caused the international partners to alienate and distrust the United States.

On the contrary, multilateralism is the basic paradigm for maintaining international order after world war II, which the international community has been widely recognized and supported. For example, China put forward the concept of "community with a shared future for mankind" and actively participated in multilateral practice to discuss and solve global issues; in addition, regional organizations also continuously strengthen

cooperation and practice multilateralism by the ways of more frequent conversations.

In the existing studies, most of the studies analyze the impact and reasons of Trump's foreign policy, and there are few comparative studies between the unilateralism of Trump administration and the multilateralism of the international society. Therefore, this article starts with the two behaviors through the methods of analysis and comparative research, and conclude that under the current globalization and global issues, including economic recovery, climate change, and public health, countries should actively assume their due responsibilities and take concrete actions to support and safeguard multilateralism.

Now, humanity has experienced many crises that are rare in history. The global COVID-19 pandemic is still uncertain, as well as the global issue of climate. Making contrast and study about unilateralism and multilateralism can make countries realize the importance of multilateralism. Therefore, this research has its real meaning for now.

2. UNILATERALISM AND ITS MANIFESTATIONS IN THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION'S DIPLOMATIC AND MILITARY POLICIES

Unilateralism refers to a country with a relatively strong position in the international society that ignores the will of the majority of the people, violates the trend of the international society, disregards the interests of other countries, and even refuses to adopt a negotiation approach when they implement its foreign policy. The unilateralism behavior has always run through the foreign policy of the United States. During the Cold War, the Reagan administration refused to sign the "United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea" and announced that withdraw from UNESCO. After the end of the Cold War, especially during the George W. Bush administration, the United States successively withdrew from many agreements.[2] About the Obama administration, the United States began to correct unilateralism during the Bush era. Obama administration emphasize multilateral coordination and cooperation and signed the "Paris Agreement" to address global climate change and the "Iran Nuclear Agreement" to resolve the Iranian nuclear crisis. [3] But in the Trump administration, In order to maximize economic interests and political security, the United States has a more obvious tendency toward unilateralism than previous governments.

Economically, on January 23, 2017, Trump signed the first executive order on the day he took office to withdraw from the "Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement"(TPP). Trump pointed out that TPP destroyed the US industry, and that withdrawal from TPP is a "great thing" for American workers. Similarly, on June 1, 2018, Trump announced that the United States would withdraw from the "Paris Agreement", believing that the agreement will bring "harsh fiscal and economic burdens" to the United States and threaten the U.S. economy and employment.

Regarding political security, Since the Trump administration came to power, it has retired from many "groups" that are detrimental to Israel's interests. For instance, Trump believes that the "Iran Nuclear Agreement" neither restricts Iran from taking the path of nuclear armament, but also threatens the security of Israel, the United States' regional ally, and proposed to withdraw on May 8, 2018. In addition, the purpose of

withdrawing from organizations that are not conducive to Israel is to gain the support of American Jewish groups and pro-Israel groups.

Besides, U.S. unilateralism is also manifested in the use of its allies' military dependence to coerce their allies to re-sign agreements to obtain maximum economic benefits or reduce expenditure. For example, the United States re-signed the "Korea-US Trade Agreement" and the "North American Free Trade Area Agreement" to reverse the trade deficit. After the re-signing of the "Korea-U.S. agreement", American automobile and pharmaceutical companies will gain more share of the Korean market.[4] The United States also requires the EU to increase military expenditures, pay "protection fees", increase tariffs on steel and aluminum, and even impose punitive tariffs on German cars.

From the above, the United States' frequent withdrawal behavior not only because of its historical tradition but also means that to avoid assuming international responsibilities and obligations, that is, it ignores the feelings of other partners in the international community, does not abide by basic diplomatic norms, and is unwilling to provide international public goods. [5] By ordering and other tough methods to pursue the country's best interests, reduce expenditures and political security. Overall, this is a manifestation of narrow unilateral thinking.

3. THE NEGATIVE IMPACT OF UNILATERALISM IN THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION'S DIPLOMACY

One lesson from the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 is that no country can face global challenges alone. While the US not only ignores the global fight against the COVID-19 by cooperation but also politicizes the COVID-19 at home. Thus causing a domestic epidemic out of control. It gives a negative impact on employment and trade deficit.

In the early days of Trump administration, the unemployment rate in the United States was 4.7%. After the outbreak of the epidemic, the unemployment rate in the United States soared to 14.7% in April 2020, the highest unemployment rate in the United States in 80 years. Although the unemployment rate has fallen to 7.9% as of September, it is still much higher than the level when Trump took office.[6]

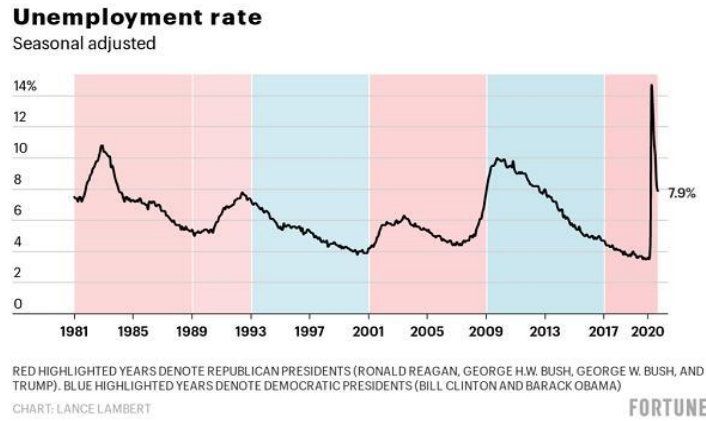


Figure 1 1981-2020 U.S. unemployment rate

In terms of trade, the United States had a trade deficit of \$42.9 billion when Trump took office. However, due to the COVID-19, the trade deficit continued to increase.

In August this year, the US trade deficit reached 67.2 billion US dollars, the highest level in 14 years.

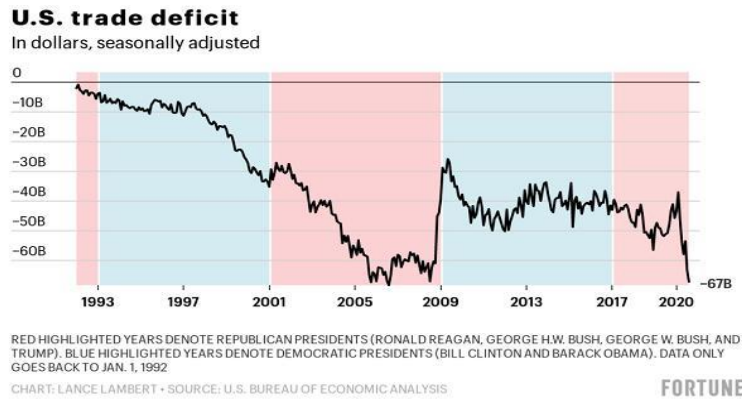


Figure 2 1981-2020 U.S. trade deficit

From an international perspective, the unilateralism of the US government has weakened the US itself. One is because unilateralism has greatly damaged the international reputation of the United States and weakened its soft power.[7] The second is because the United States' long-term unilateralism may make other countries more aware of the hegemony of the United States and thus alienate the relationship with the United States.

4. MULTILATERALISM AND ITS PRACTICE IN THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

The opposite of "unilateralism" is "multilateralism". "Multilateralism" is mainly through international organizations, multilateral agreements to coordinate the relationship between three or more countries, emphasizing that countries coordinate mutual benefits and cooperate to solve problems.[8] The definition of multilateralism means cooperation. Looking back at history, multilateralism was forged with the purpose of stopping war. It was born for peace. The multilateral mechanism of modern international relations is gradually formed after the two world wars. Since the founding of

the United Nations(UN) in 1945, multilateralism has developed rapidly, various international and regional international organizations or mechanisms have been established. Since the 1990s, driven by the trend of peaceful development in the post-Cold War period, multilateralism has been more broadly and effectively practiced. Multilateral consultation and cooperation have become the main channel for finding ways for global governance. And now multilateralism has been widely recognized and supported by the international community.

As a large developing country, China has always been firm and upholding multilateralism. During the 2017-2020 period, China has become more proactive in the multilateral agenda. The first one is to put forward the concept of a "community with a shared future for mankind", Under the guidance of this concept, China actively participates in multilateral activities and proposes to take up its due responsibilities. Second, China is actively cooperating and taking the initiative to discuss and resolve global issues. In the face of COVID-19, China has controlled COVID-19 in a short time and quickly resumed work and production. At the same time, it has provided more than 1.5 billion doses of vaccines to

more than 100 countries and international organizations around the world. In addition, China has also actively set an example in responding to global climate change. In 2020, China's carbon emission intensity has been reduced by 18.8% compared to 2015 and 48.4% lower than in 2005, exceeding the target of 40%-45% promised to the international community and has pledged to achieve a carbon peak by 2030 and 2060.[9] Third, China is also actively leading emerging multilateral organizations and mechanisms such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the "Belt and Road Initiative", and the China International Import Expo to improve the multilateral system.

In addition, the international community is also upholding multilateralism through consultation and managing common affairs through cooperation. On June 17, 2020, China and the African Union held a special summit of the COVID-19 fight. On the summit, China and Africa committed to fighting COVID-19 together. Similarly, between 2017 and 2020, China and the EU had more frequent conversations. In October 2018, at the 12th Asia-Europe Meeting with "Global Partners for Global Challenges", Leaders stressed the role of ASEM as the main platform for Europe and Asia to strengthen dialogue, foster cooperation including multilateralism and tackle global challenges together. In September 2020, China and the EU signed the "EU-China Landmark Geographical Indications Agreement", aiming at building a green and digital partnership. Recently, at the 8th Ministerial Conference of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, two countries signed the "China-Africa Cooperation Declaration on Climate Change" in order to address global climate issues.[10]

5. CONCLUSION

Trump administration withdraws from international organizations and agreements frequently which means the United States highlighted the unilateralism in its foreign policy, which has adversely affected the domestic fight against the epidemic and its international influence. However, Multilateralism is still a broad consensus of the international community. Countries and regional organizations are actively upholding multilateralism by strengthening cooperation. And the world is undergoing profound changes unseen in a century. Such as COVID-19, global climate and economic problems. Given the new opportunities and challenges we face, closer cooperation between counties is needed, more than ever. Therefore, multilateralism is still in line with the trend of the times and is closely related to the common interests of all countries in the world. The international community should resolutely safeguard the multilateral system with the United Nations at its core, unite and cooperate, and jointly respond to global challenges. This article still has shortcomings for lack of theoretical support and innovation.

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