The Role of the United States in International Organizations since WWII

Paul Horness

Historically, the foreign policy of the United States (US) has oscillated between global interaction and isolationism. According to Klingberg (1983), the US, prior to WW II, had gone through cycles of introversion and extroversion with each phase lasting approximately 30 years. Since the end of World War II, however, the United States has been in a global leadership role. Since then, the US presidents have not backed away from the opportunity to highlight its responsibility in global affairs. From Harry Truman's statement, "[The United States should] take the lead in running the world in the way that the world ought to be run" to Barack Obama's statement "I am well aware of the expectations that accompany my presidency around the world. These expectations are … rooted in hope -- the hope that real change is possible, and the hope that America will be a leader in bringing about such change," all of the US presidents have echoed their intention to lead the world.

Kegley and Wittkopf (1987) argued there are four assumptions that have guided American presidents for US involvement in global affairs. The first assumption is that the US is the world leader. A position the US accepts. From this point, the remaining assumptions follow. The second assumption is that the US has global responsibilities and obligations. By becoming a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, clearly the US has global responsibilities and obligations. The third assumption is that the US stands for freedom. The US has a moral imperative to guard these ideals on the world stage. The fourth assumption is that world depends on the US in the name of goodness. The US must be ready and willing to act abroad for the good of the world. From the end of WWII, the US has been described as a global police officer.

Two principal ideas distributed through international organizations have reinforced the United States' self-conceived notion as the world police officer.

The first idea is that peace and security are organized through the United Nations and supported by the United States. The second idea is that economic prosperity is organized through multiple organizations, such as International Monetary Fund or World Trade Organization, which should reflect liberal economic ideals. This paper argues that the United States has effectively used international institutions to promote liberal principles across the world. The first part of the paper reviews the United Nations. The second part reviews the international organizations that the US has used to push liberal economic development. The final part discusses how the US uses hard power and soft power effectively in these organizations.

United Nations

The creation of the United Nations was to form an international organization that would end war, promote peace and justice, and advance better living for all mankind. Although one can debate the effectiveness of the United Nations, the charter of the United Nations sets forth an inspiring goal for all nations. The preamble states the following:

We the peoples of the United Nations determined

to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind, and

to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small, and

to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained, and

to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom,

And for these ends

to practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbours, and

to unite our strength to maintain international peace and security, and

to ensure, by the acceptance of principles and the institution of methods, that armed force shall not be used, save in the common interest, and

to employ international machinery for the promotion of the economic and social advancement of all peoples,

Have resolved to combine our efforts to accomplish these aims

Accordingly, our respective Governments, through representatives assembled in the city of San Francisco, who have exhibited their full powers found to be in good and due form, have agreed to the present Charter of the United Nations and do hereby establish an international organization to be known as the United Nations (1945).

By serving as an international forum, members can put forth problems to be discussed. The idea of collective security, where all participating states act to punish aggressors who violate international law, is good in principal; however, it is ineffective in reality. The organization of the United Nations Security Council, where permanent members are allowed to veto resolutions effectively, limits any form of collective security. This was particularly the case after WWII as the adversarial relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union (USSR) grew into the Cold War.

There are contending ideas as to why the US and the USSR got locked into the Cold War even though they were permanent members of the United Nations Security Council. One view argues that the Cold War is just an extension of great powers clashing over vital interests. As De Tocqueville (1969/1835) had predicted in his famous quote, "There are now two great nations in the world which, starting from different points, seem to be

advancing toward the same goal: the Russians and the Anglo-Americans…. Their point of departure is different and their paths diverse; nevertheless, each seems called by some secret desire of Providence one day to hold in its hands the destinies of half the world" (p.114). In this argument, the clash between the US and USSR is based on a mutual mistrust of each side seeking greater aggrandizement. Their wary perception of each other naturally leads to divergent global visions.

Another argument is that the Cold War was a continued extension of the US to discredit the USSR. Since the US intervened in the Bolshevik Revolution in 1918 and did not extend diplomatic recognition until 1933, the Cold War was an extension of two ideologies clashing (Jonsson, 1984).

A third argument for the Cold War is that the change from President Roosevelt to Truman altered American policies that were more hostile in expression and intention. Although there were differences among the Allies, the leaders of the Allies, Stalin, Churchill, and Roosevelt, had created an optimistic post-war plan in which spheres of influence could be maintained while not challenging vital national interests. The Tehran Conference followed by the Yalta Conference created an atmosphere optimism that the great powers could work in harmony. It was only after the death of Roosevelt and Truman's wariness of the Russians that the Cold War began (May, 1984).

A fourth argument made is that misperceptions were the biggest factor in the Cold War escalating. These misperceptions are the foundation of seeing your actions as virtuous and your adversary's actions as malice. Every action increases fear and distrust of another country while desensitizing your own actions. George Kennan (1976) noted how the US and the USSR often misread each other's intentions. For example, the Marshall Plan was interpreted by the USSR as pre-emptive move to limit their fruits of victory over Germany. The USSR's attempt to make a military base in Korea was evidence of world conquest to the Americans (pp. 683-684).

These arguments are important in understanding how the United Nations worked during its formative years. As mentioned previously, the Korean peninsula in June of 1950 was the United Nations first opportunity to address the independence of Korea with a peaceful solution. Instead, the initial

procedures continue to affect political affairs today. As the USSR had boycotted the Security Council in early 1950, the decision of the Security Council had a decidedly western orientation. The Security Council's resolution to assist South Korea against the northern invasion was short-lived. By August 1950, the USSR had become the president of the Security Council, through regular rotation. Although the Unified Command forces were under the United Nation's flag, they were mainly a composition of western forces with two-thirds of them being American (MacQueen, 1999). As China's Security Council's permanent seat was held by the Nationalist's in Taiwan, Mainland China had no interest in following the United Nations resolution. As the North Korean forces, supported by Chinese volunteers, gained ground in the south, the Security Council led by the USSR did nothing. The US response was to persuade the General Assembly to pass the "Uniting for Peace" resolution (377) that transferred security measures from the Security Council to the General Assembly when action by the Security Council lack unanimity, i.e., one of the members uses its veto power. The Korean War indicated the limitations of collective security as conceived in the original charter of the United Nations. The United States manipulated the system of the United Nations to favor its military and political objectives.

Although the Korean War highlighted the limitations of collective security, it did not prevent the United States from using the United Nations forces for political and military objectives. As the Suez Canal crisis in 1956 indicated, the US was not averse to dealing with the USSR when it favored their military and political objectives, even at the cost of allied national interests of Great Britain and France. The US worked in the background to help create the United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF), resolution 1001. Importantly, none of the UNEF soldiers were from the Security Council's permanent members so the force did not reflect the Cold War's adversarial relationship. This "neutral" force helped institute the United Nation's peacekeeping force (MacQueen, 1999). This was to become the United Nations model for the Cold War; it restrained and contained conflict in areas in which the US and USSR did not perceive core national interests at stake.

MacQueen (1999) also pointed out how the idea of collective security

transitioned into peacekeeping in the United Nations based on the Suez Canal Crisis, (see Table 1). He asserted that the crisis had clearly defined objectives in which the protagonists on both sides were willing to accept the United Nation's intervention. The area of the crisis, the boundary of the canal, was clear, which could effectively limit the scope of methods used. Additionally, all the participants were sovereign states that carried the usual obligations of such actors.

Table 1. Key Contrasts between Chapter VII Collective Security and Peacekeeping

	Collective Security	Peacekeeping
Trigger for Action	Identification of aggression	Identification of a crisis
Contributing forces	Chosen and led by permanent Security Council members	Middle and small powers
Basis of participation	Legal Obligations (Charter article 43)	Voluntary
Control	Security Council	Security Council and General assembly
Relationship with protagonists	Imposed	Consensual (Host consent)
Methods	Coercive military action	Interposition and observation
Objectives	Secure pre-determined outcome	Create conditions for political settlement

He pointed out, however, that the circumstances that made the peacekeeping forces successful in the Suez Canal were not the same conditions for future endeavors. Thus the effectiveness of the peacekeeping forces dwindled as the US and USSR used forces to suit their objectives. As one example, he used the 1958 crisis in Lebanon. Although the crisis was mainly derived from a domestic decision, i.e., President Camille Chamoun seeking to re-write the Lebanese constitution, the United Nations passed resolution 128 to monitor the Syrian border for illegal infiltration of arms or personnel. When the Iraq kingdom was overthrown, the United States provided military support to protect the integrity and independence of Lebanon. At that time, the US perceived Iraq and Syria as pro-USSR states. In the Lebanese situation, the area and objectives of the United Nations forces were susceptible to the superpower perceptions in the Cold War.

Bellamy and Williams (2004, 2010) argued that the result of the Cold War led to three characteristics of UN peacekeeping, the 'Holy Trinity' of consent, impartiality, and restricted force. These concepts are the traditional way of conceiving the peacekeeping forces. The concepts reflect a Westphalian logic that sovereign states should maintain internal integrity and political independence. Western states have been proponents of spreading liberal democracies as a way of maintaining peace and prosperity. With the end of the Cold War, further arguments have been proposed that aid should reinforce democratic ideals and market economics. It is the mantra that democratic countries do not attack each other because of shared values. The question becomes what is the role of United Nations peacekeeping forces after the Cold War. Or cynically, how can the US use the UN more effectivelly? International agencies, such as non-governmental organizations (NGOs) or non-profit organizations (NPOs) outside of the United Nations sphere highlighted the tension between the traditional peacekeeping concept and the post-Cold War peacekeeping concept. On the one hand, the peacekeepers should foster peace through the principles of non-interference and sovereignty. On the other hand, the peacekeepers should foster peace through the creation of liberal democracies. As some western leaders argued, the sovereign state has limitations. Tony Blair (1999) argued that state sovereignty should no longer be allowed to protect states that abuse the human rights of their citizens. Humanity has no borders. Newman, Paris and Richmond (2009) maintain that "Contemporary peacebuilding approaches reflect the idea that maintaining peace in post-conflict societies requires a multifaceted approach, with attention to a wide range of social, economic and institutional needs. They reflect a liberal project: not just managing instability between states but seeking to build peace within and between states on the basis of liberal democracy and market economics" (p. 7).

The United Nations' peacekeeping model reflects the progress of liberal institutions spreading the concept of liberalism globally, but still constrained by the traditional concept of state sovereignty. The United States has used the United Nations to promote its own agenda of liberalism that has led to a blurring distinction between enforcement and peacekeeping. In essence, it is

reinforcing the idea that sovereign states always reserve the right to make decisions based on their national interest.

International Organizations

Although Tocqueville's (1969/1835) prediction was based on natural resources and territorial size, he also included societal aspects that represented the dispute between the US and the USSR. He stated, "To attain their aims, the [America]relies on personal interest and gives free scope to the unguided strength and common sense of individuals. [Russia]in a sense concentrates the whole power of society in one man. One has freedom as the principal means of action; the other has servitude" (p 114). Behind all the arguments is a sense that the Cold War was about how society should be shaped. On the one hand, society should be run like the Soviet version deriving from Marxism where an authoritarian political regime imposes state planning, financial equality on mass citizenry, and limitations of individual freedom. On the other hand, society should be run with a political regime with limited powers permitting private ownership that accepts the tradeoff of economic inequality for individual liberty.

The end of WW II allowed the US an opportunity to shape global markets for several reasons. One reason was that the war had destroyed the industrial economies in most countries; and the USSR and China opted not to join a market-orientated economy. Another reason was that the US had approximately two-thirds of the world's gold, which allowed its financial philosophy to dictate terms in the creation of new international financial bodies. The Bretton Woods agreement created three pillars of support for the American view of the post-war financial development: The International Monetary Fund (IMF), the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (World Bank). These institutions are not neutral. As Barnett and Finnemore (2004) pointed out, international organizations promote a specific worldview. They develop into complex bureaucracies with special power, authority, and legitimacy to set agendas and influence developments in the international system. Most

international organizations were founded by Western liberal states and are designed to promote liberal values.

The financial institutions acted as regulators of US plans. The IMF focused on providing monetary stability where states could receive loans to pay off debts in a timely manner. The World Bank focused on providing investment for infrastructure so that economies could rebuild and grow. GATT provided a liberal trade orientation of reduced trade barriers and reduced trading preferences. The three pillars of the postwar economic system enabled stable exchange rates that would encourage foreign trade and elevate the dollar to the status of international currency.

There were several world events that allowed the US to manipulate these organizations favorably. The first event was that the institutions of the IMF and World Bank were woefully underfunded to help Europe recover. By early 1947, most of Europe had not recovered from pre-war economic levels (Spero, 1990). Great Britain's attempts to convert the pound into gold, as prescribed in the Bretton Woods agreement, were a failure. The IMF was not able to issue loans great enough for Great Britain to cover its debts. Great Britain suspended conversion immediately and did not allow convertibly of the pound again until 1958. The US initiated the Marshall Plan as a means to circumvent the Bretton Woods agreement by allowing reverse discrimination against the dollar (McKinlay & Little, 1986). The second challenge was the threat of communism from the USSR. For the US to manage the monetary system, it needed to run a payment deficit; US dollars had to flow outside the US to become the world's currency. The Marshall Plan, in addition to other aid programs, as well as military expenditures to NATO and the Korean War, allowed the US the opportunity to make the dollar the world's currency. By spending dollars outside the US, allies accepted security in exchange dollar liquidity (Spero, 1990).

The end of the Bretton Woods agreement was a US response to its overflow of dollars into the international monetary system. In 1960, foreign dollar holdings exceeded US gold reserves for the first time. Europe and Japan had recovered economically. By 1971, central banks from leading industrial countries were no longer able to control large currency flows that affected the

fixed exchange rate. President Nixon on August 15, 1971, announced the US would no longer convert dollars into gold. Although one might assume the dollar losing its role as the world's currency for this action, it did not. The main reason is that other countries, such as Japan and Germany, have been reluctant to give up control over their domestic economies by allowing the their currency to play a central international role (Spero, 1990).

GATT followed a similar pattern to that of the Bretton Woods agreement in that greater trading interdependence led to changes. It differed from the Bretton Woods agreement in that GATT did not start as an official organization, rather it was a consensus between trading partners that implemented free trade. Crucial to free trade was the principle of nondiscrimination which implied that "any advantage, favour, privilege or immunity granted by any contracting party to any product originating in or destined for any other country shall be accorded immediately and unconditionally to the like product originating in or destined for the territories of all other contracting parties" (GATT, 1994). Basically, tariffs among members of the treaty would be the same. It also established international commercial codes against dumping, subsidies, or quantitative restrictions such as quotas. By 1995, however, GATT transitioned itself into an official organization called the World Trade Organization.

All three organizations, IMF, World Bank, and WTO, have been heavily criticized over the years and modified their missions accordingly. The IMF changed from overseeing a system of fixed exchange rates to overseeing developing countries macroeconomics. It's main mantra of economic liberalization, however, did not change. The World Bank changed from reconstructing Europe to developing the countries from the post-colonial period. Many of its policies complemented that of the IMF, but the focus now is more on technocratic knowledge of good banking techniques. As GATT transitioned into the WTO, it expanded its mission from tarriff related agreements to services rendered and intellectual property agreements. These changes reflect the nature of expanding trade, especially in developed economies (Higgott, 2012).

America's Hard and Soft Power

As argued previously, the United States has used international organizations to spread the liberal philosophy thoughout the world. It has taken on the self-perceived notion of the world's police officer. The US enjoys two levels of policy-making. The first level is directly through the state appratus, which like all states do. The second level is through international organization such as the IMF and WTO. International organizations usually conduct the decision-making process through sovereign states. When states are considered equal and without any negating status applied to them, they should be able to decide national interests quite easily and clearly. The question becomes, why would powerful states join international organizations that negate their power by treating all states equal? Steinberg (2002) examined this very question. He concluded that "When GATT/WTO bargaining is law-based, states take procedural rules seriously, attempting to build a consensus that is Pareto-improving, yielding market-opening contracts that are roughly symmetrical. When GATT/WTO bargaining is power-based, states bring to bear instruments of power that are extrinsic to rules (instruments based primarily on market size), invisibly weighting the decision-making process and generating outcomes that are asymmetrical and may not be Pareto-improving" (341). He goes on to state that although the procedural rules are consensual, it is based on an invisible weighting system that favors the powerful states. In essence, the rules are rigged in favor of the United States and its liberal-orientated trading system.

Reinforcing the idea that the US uses its soft and hard power to influence the world market, Catley and Mosler (2007) argued that after establishing commodity markets, the US used the Cold War as a means of protecting those markets through trade. The US has vast amounts of resources, but as mentioned previously, the US needed to rebuild the world economy after WWII. Therefore, the US invested money abroad that created these resource commodity markets such as oil. The US expanded its foreign policy to ensure the availability of these resources and markets. In addition, the US has the top

two world's stock exchanges in market capitalization: New York Stock Exchange and NASDAQ (Kiersz, 2014). From the capital investment in the two leading exchanges, it is also argued that the US remains the primary location for technological innovation in the world economy. Combine the advanced markets with technological advances and the main source of hard power, the military, the US is the unquestioned world leader. The US spends more on its defense than any other nation. Over the last 30 years, its military expenditure is approximately 35-40% of the global total (Walker, 2014).

American soft power can be categorized in two ways: low and high culture. 'Low culture' is often characterized as fast food or Hollywood movies, and these types of culture are genrally not politically influential. 'High culture' on the other hand can be influential because it usually relates to education. Most of the world's top univesities are located in the US. Over half a million students came to study in the US in 2012, up form 100,000 in 2001. After graduating, many students go back to their home country with favorable views of the US (Ruiz, 2014). Although these students do not necessarily agree with US foreign policies, their experience in the US can expose them to viewpoints beyond local media. According the Pew Research Center (2014), America's image in the world is quite strong, especially among young people, as indicated in Figure 1. Over 60% of Africa, Europe, Asia, and Laten America have a positive image of the US. Only in the Middle East is the image of the

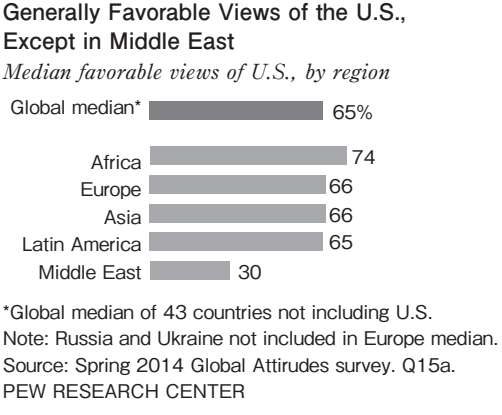

Figure 1. America's image in the world in 2014.

US under 60% and that image is ever-changing depending on the country, except Isreal. Over the last ten years, the image of the US in China has been improving, reaching 50% in 2014.

Interestingly, the views of American college graduates did not differ much from their European college counteparts when asked about foreign engagement. College graduates tended to favor international engagement over isolationism as compared to those that had not attended college. American graduates differed from their European counterparts when asked whether United Nations approval is necessary to use military force in international conflicts. The Americans were evenly divided (44%−45%) in seeking UN approval, whereas the European graduates overwhelming (20%−70%) thought UN approval was necessary prior to using military force Pew Research Center (2012).

America's use of soft and hard power indicates that national interests play a strategic role in setting foreign policy. Although the US favors a liberal philiosohical orientation, it will not be constained by it when claimed national interest is at stake. Politically, the US ssupports all types of regimes, even undemoctatic ones such as Saudi Arabi when it favors the US to do so. Economically, the government encourages US corporations to expand abroad; hence, the common phrase of "Washington Consensus" being mis-applied to mean US corporations dictating foreign policy to the government.

The United States has used two principal ideas to shape foreign affairs. The first idea is that peace and security are organized through the United Nations. The second idea is that liberal ideals organized through international organizations increase economic prosperity for the world. This paper argued that the United States has effectively used international institutions to promote liberal principles across the world even though at times the process it used were not liberal orientated. The US uses both hard and soft power to effectively run and manintain these organizations that benefit not only its national interest, but also the world's.

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