

RESEARCH PROPOSAL

TITLE OF THESIS: RISING POLARIZATION IN THE UNITED STATES: IMPLICATIONS ON AMERICA'S ROLE IN UNITED NATIONS.



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Certificate of Approval

**AREA STUDY CENTER FOR AFRICA, NORTH, AND SOUTH AMERICA
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We have read the dissertation submitted by Ms. Alize Farooq Malik, under the title „Rising Polarization in the United States: Implications on America“s role in United Nations.“

It is up to the standard of acceptance by Quaid-i-Azam University to grant the degree of Master of philosophy in American Studies. This is a record of bonafide thesis work carried under the supervision of Assistant Professor Sadia Sulaiman of Area Study Center for Africa, North and South America, QAU, Islamabad.

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Dedication

To my mother, Tahira Rasheed Awan.

It will always be your bravery and your light that will guide me home.

I would not be half the person I am if I did not have you to look up to.

To all mothers, who spend their whole lives making a world for their child.

It's the most difficult job in the world.

This is for you.

Thankyou.

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the profound impact of rising polarization within the United States on its involvement in international organizations, with a particular focus on the United Nations. The study begins by acknowledging the historical significance of US engagement in international organizations for global stability and prosperity. However, it argues that the polarization within the US political system often overshadows its commitment to international organizations, hindering its ability to reach consensus on foreign policy matters. It further explores the relationship between domestic polarization and US engagement in the UN, highlighting how the nation's moral compass is influenced by its polarizing politics, which weakens its ability to effectively participate in UN decision-making and problem-solving measures. By examining the historical context of the bipolar world during the Cold War era, the thesis explores the transition to a unipolar world order and the increasing importance of multilateral institutions, such as the UN, in maintaining global stability. It identifies the significant role the US plays as a unipolar superpower within the UN, while also highlighting the challenges and resistance it faces in relinquishing autonomy to external institutions. The study also delves into the interplay between American politics, international organizations, and treaties, with a particular focus on the UN and its treaties. It highlights how partisan politics have influenced US decision-making within international organizations, resulting in disagreements and nullification of international efforts. The thesis further explores the detrimental effects of polarization on bipartisan consensus in international affairs, ultimately undermining the grand strategy of liberal institutionalism. Moreover, the thesis conducts a comparative analysis of the presidencies of Barack Obama and Donald Trump. It examines their differing approaches to international politics, their impacts on polarization within the United States, and the consequences for US engagement in international organizations, including the UN. The thesis underscores the significance of rising polarization within the United States and its far-reaching implications for the nation's involvement in international organizations, particularly the United Nations. By examining the historical context, exploring the role of partisan politics, and conducting a comparative analysis of presidential administrations, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of the complex relationship between domestic polarization and America's role in international organizations.

Introduction

History has shown us that United States involvement in international organizations is the key to international stability and prosperity. However the national politics within the United States tends to overshadow their involvement in international organizations. Its moral compass is directed by the polarizing politics within their state apparatus, which weakens its ability to come to a consensus on foreign policy matters. This effects US involvement in United Nations decision making and problem solving measures. Therefore it is not only sabotaging international decisions, but also derailing the grand strategy of Liberal institutionalism that has been on agenda ever since the end of Second World War.

The end of the World War II brought about two important shifts in the global political dynamics. There was a shift from multi-polarity to the new bipolar world which was torn between two overtly different political, cultural, economic ideologies. Polarity defines the way the global powers were distributed. This polarization of two super powers tore the world apart during the cold war¹, by creating military alliances and fighting proxy wars to contain one another. There are theorists who may argue otherwise, stating that bipolarity brought about a calculated balance in world politics². However, world order has been in a state of transition since its inception³, therefore this bipolarity eventually ended. As the Cold War came to an end with the ultimate collapse of the Soviet Union, the world order became unipolar, bringing as some would say „a semblance of stability“.

Secondly, the world began to move towards multilateral institutions in order to maintain a peaceful stability in world order⁴. The creation of the United Nations⁵ is the personification of the commitment the great powers had towards international peace and stability. Moreover, by the time the United States became a unipolar super

¹ The cold war officially began in March 1947 and lasted until December 1991

² Kenneth N. Waltz, "The Stability of a Bipolar World," *Daedalus* 93, no. 3 (1964): 881–909. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20026863>.

³ N. D. Palmer and H. C. Perkins, *International Affairs: International Relations. The World Community in Transition* (London: Stevens & Sons, 1954), 1270.

⁴ According to James Scott, A Professor of Political Science, Texas Christian University. Coauthor of *The Politics of United States Foreign Policy and Deciding to Intervene: The Reagan Doctrine and American Foreign Policy*

⁵ United Nations was created in October 1945 in San Francisco, USA.

power⁶ the world was at the peak of its multilateral involvement. This also meant that United States had a gigantic role to play with in the United Nations in order to maintain peace and stability across the globe.

It is a known fact that USA has been a champion of the multilateral world order and has been encouraging rules based institutionalism for decades, however it has always come off cautious when it comes to giving up their autonomy to an external institution and has made this resistance to the binding nature of international organizations a hallmark of their foreign policy. This can be attributed to the strict domestic policies and approvals of congress required to ensure participation in multilateral activities, the exceptional nature of US foreign policy is another deterrent in its involvement as well as the fact that the hegemonic design means that USA is independent, self-sufficient therefore it lacks incentive to join these institutions. An example of this is that USA has not ratified three extremely important international human rights treaties, on the rights of women, the rights of children and the rights of the disabled⁷. Despite the fact that USA has the strongest protections of these rights at home, due to the fact that USA does not need the protections that the UN Charter would provide if they had ratified these treaties. Besides this, any treaty related to human rights faces endless debate and mulling over in the senate.

Some consider international organizations extremely important to the upkeep of peace and security in the world. This was the reason the United Nations was conceived in 1945, in order to protect all human rights, provide humanitarian aid to war torn areas, promote sustainable development and in order to upholding international law⁸. United States was instrumental in the creation and maintenance of the United Nations; this was because President Roosevelt (1933-1945) rallied bipartisan support as well as public support in order to join UN. The two parties; Democrat and Republican both came onto one page in the creation of UN. Specifically, the Republican Party also known as the “grand old party” endorsed US

⁶ Marked by the fall of the berlin wall, free elections that ousted of communist regimes in Eastern Europe in 1989 to 1990

⁷ United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, "Training Guide: The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities" (New York and Geneva: United Nations, 2014).

⁸ Dimitris Bourantonis, The History and Politics of UN Security Council Reform, vol. 41 (Routledge, 2004).

participation in a post war international organization⁹. American politics had a huge role to play in the respective failure and success International Organizations, historically the League of Nations had failed due to lack of US involvement whereas the UN succeeded because US was a part of it. The Republicans and Democrats are two parties that have very different agendas and world views. The Democrats are often the liberals favoring international cooperation, preferring non-military instruments of power while republicans, the conservatives are skeptical of multilateral mechanisms.

The tug of war in American politics has time and again effected decisions made within international organizations and the treaties the United States choses to sign. President Bill Clinton (1993-2001) played a momentous role in shaping the Kyoto Protocol in 1997 in order to control greenhouse gas emissions by setting up a trading scheme modeled on market-based approaches so that pollutants that cause acid rain can be limited¹⁰. However, US were unable to ratify the treaty due to the Senate, which voted for the Byrd-Hegel Resolution¹¹ which restricts US from joining a climate arrangement that would create innovative commitments for them, so that US economy is not harmed. The American public is so politically polarized that almost everything becomes a political issue such as the US's refusal to sign the Kyoto protocol¹² therefore leading to a nullification of the efforts of other states as well. Polarization, a term often referred to the bimodal¹³ nature of politics, socialization, public opinions whereby, two concepts that are polar opposites of one another begin to move further apart. This reveals itself through a wider gap between the ideological viewpoints of the Republican and the Democrat party voters. Domestic politics in the United States has been driven by both public as well as political elites who have engulfed American democracy into partisan politics and populism which essentially divides the public into two sects, pitting them against one another. The same trend is

⁹ John Milton Cooper Jr., *Breaking the Heart of the World: Woodrow Wilson and the Fight for the League of Nations* (Cambridge University Press, 2001).

¹⁰ John Furlow and Mélody Braun, "Title of the Article," *Intereconomics* (2021), accessed June 9, 2022, <https://www.intereconomics.eu/>.

¹¹ Matthew J. Hoffmann, *Climate Governance at the Crossroads: Experimenting with a Global Response after Kyoto* (Oxford University Press, 2011).

¹² An international treaty based on the 1992 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change that commits state parties to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

¹³ Paul Heinbecker, "Multilateral Cooperation and Peace and Security," *International Journal* (2004): 783-800.

evident in international relations, demonstrated by congressional behavior and public opinion that democrats and republicans have been fractionated in international issues as well. This polarization is weakening the ability of the congress to come to an agreement on foreign policy issues or oversee the multilateral institutions that depend on United States. This polarization is derailing a bipartisan consensus on international affairs, therefore sabotaging the grand strategy of Liberal Institutionalism that has been in place since after World War II.

In the interconnected world of multilateral institutions, states bind themselves in hopes of finding stability and unity. America is the champion of multilateralism, as it has time and again proven, but it is most interested in institutionalism when it is placed in a position of power¹⁴. If US cannot exercise hegemony over the institutions it is a part of, it tends to resist membership. Whether we look at the disappointment that was the League of Nations or the International Criminal Court (ICC) or the nuclear test ban treaty, they all show the reluctance of United States to bind itself to the obligations of institutions¹⁵. Therefore, it is true that the strength of liberal international order is dependent on US engagement, thus making polarization an issue for America's international commitment.

The legacy left behind by the republican president Donald Trump (2017-2021) whose nationalist, partisan politics posed challenges to the international order while comparing it with the democratic Barrack Obama (2009-2017) who inherited the wars in Iraq, Afghanistan and the war on Terror, yet he was publically against the aggressive kind of nationalism, brought attention to climate change and played a crucial role in international politics. This comparative analysis will prove significant in order to recognize the role of US politics in international organizations, focusing on United Nations especially, the Security Council decisions that were affected by the polarizing effect of US domestic politics.

¹⁴ Dimitris Bourantonis, Kostas Ifantis, and Panayotis Tsakonas, *Multilateralism and Security Institutions in an Era of Globalisation* (New York: Routledge, 2008).

¹⁵ Dimitris Bourantonis, Kostas Ifantis, and Panayotis Tsakonas, *Multilateralism and Security Institutions in an Era of Globalisation* (New York: Routledge, 2008).

Statement of the Problem

Polarization has become a dominant phenomenon in contemporary American politics at home and abroad, and international institutions have not been immune from the rising levels of political polarization in United States. The level of US involvement depends heavily on members of congress where they are democrats and republicans and their voters, who also yield immense power in American democracy. This leads to a decline in US multilateral cooperation capacity¹⁶ and an increase in unilateralism in decision making, therefore it is difficult for United States to play a role in global problem solving measures. There is a sea of literature to be found on the subject matter of American role in multilateralism, the link between domestic politics and international affairs, the comparison of Donald trump(2017-2021) with Barrack Obama (2009-2017) and many other democratic leaders as well as other republicans, the polarizing effects of partisan politics and populism etc. After review of the literature, it is imminent to research this further especially in the wake of the changing post pandemic world where a surge of populist leadership and anti-globalization sentiment has led to strict closed border policies and restrictive travel bans. An understanding of where multilateral institutions stand, amidst the paradox of unilateralism, side by side with the solidarity of humanity amidst pandemic destruction¹⁷. Furthermore, the comparative analysis of Democratic leader President Barrack Obama and his counterpart and successor President Donald Trump with regards to their involvement in United Nations, especially Security Council problem solving and humanitarian interventions and aid will bring about a contextual analysis of the polarization discussion. When it comes to global climate change, a similar politically charged response came from United States; after signing the Paris Agreement under Obama administration in 2016, the US withdrew from it under Trump administration in 2020 and then rejoined when President Biden came into office in 2021. This hot and cold behavior of the United States is because of the change in government, therefore a change in public opinion as well. There is a need to explore this topic further to break down the decision making processes and how this unpredictable behavior of United States can be curbed.

¹⁶ Gordon M. Friedrichs, "Polarization and US Foreign Policy: Key Debates and New," *International Politics* (2022).

¹⁷ John Furlow and Mélody Braun, "America's Polarized Politics of Climate Change," *Intereconomics* 56, no. 6 (2021): 371-372, doi: 10.1007/s10272-021-1016-3.

Research Questions

1. Given the complexity of the international world order, what is the role of United States in maintaining peace and stability through United Nations?
2. Why has US politics fallen prey to Polarization?
3. How is polarization changing the scope of US involvement in United Nations?

Hypothesis

The hyperpolarized US politics has been eroding the sanctity and credibility of United Nations Security Council; it has caused mistrust for multilateralism and poses a challenge to American capacity to play its part in international affairs.

Literature Review

Literature on Polarization in United States

Scholars of American studies have researched polarization, its causes and consequences and effects of public policy on both national and international levels. Bill Bishop in his book „*The Big Sort: Why the Clustering of Like-Minded American is Tearing Us Apart*“ discusses how American society has clustered itself into homogenous communities, not by region or state but by communities. He states that people pick and choose the kind of media they consume, the locality they live in, the literature they read and even the universities they go to are based on ideological boundaries. The communities that is compatible to their lifestyles and preferences, therefore moving in specific clusters. Bishop explores where this phenomenon came from and how it influences America. During the Trump administration this clustering took on an overt political campaigning, making the idea accessible to each and every household in America. He writes, “As people seek out the social settings they prefer—as they choose the group that makes them feel the most comfortable—the nation grows more politically segregated—and the benefit that ought to come with having a variety of opinions is lost to the righteousness that is the special entitlement of homogeneous groups¹⁸”. In contemporary American politics, Trump has played a huge role in uncovering deep rooted polarization. One might be either a trump

¹⁸ Bill Bishop, *The Big Sort: Why the Clustering of Like-Minded Americans is Tearing Us Apart* (2008).

supporter or that means they are a certain kind of person. On the other hand, they may be a trump resister, which means you belong from a different social, cultural, religious stand point.

"The Great Alignment: Race, Party Transformation, and the Rise of Donald Trump" by Alan I. Abramowitz examines how racial polarization and identity politics have influenced the political landscape, particularly within the Republican Party, and how these factors intersected with Trump's campaign and his appeal to certain segments of the electorate. Abramowitz also discusses the broader implications of these developments for American democracy and the future of political parties. Overall, "The Great Alignment" provides a comprehensive analysis of the relationship between race, political parties, and the rise of Donald Trump. It combines historical analysis, quantitative data, and political science theories to shed light on the dynamics that shaped the 2016 election and its aftermath. Abramowitz argues that racial realignment, specifically the shifting racial attitudes and voting patterns within the two major political parties, played a significant role in the rise of Donald Trump. He delves into the historical context of racial politics in the United States, analyzing the impact of various factors such as immigration, civil rights, and demographic changes on party dynamics.

Another writer, Ezra Klein in his book *„Why We're Polarized“* aptly discusses the American polarization stemming from identity politics. Klein gives a persuasive analysis on the mixture of these partisan identities with racial, religious, geographic, ideological, and cultural identities. He states that these identities have become so strong that they are tearing at the bonds that hold the country together. “The American political system—which includes everyone from voters to journalists to the president—is full of rational actors making rational decisions given the incentives they face,” writes political analyst Ezra Klein. “We are a collection of functional parts whose efforts combine into a dysfunctional whole¹⁹.” That being said, Klein does not imagine a world where political polarization does not exist at all; he admits that some degree of polarization is needed if the parties are to offer competing and coherent platforms. However to live in a society that is so polarized, Klein has given a few suggestions that would safe guard the society from breaking down completely. The

¹⁹ Ezra Klein, *Why We're Polarized* (Simon and Schuster, 2020).

point is not exactly to free ourselves from polarization but to instead break free from patterns in which polarized electorate encourage politicians to campaign in polarized ways, therefore dividing the public even further.

Thomas Carothers, the senior vice president for studies at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace along with Andrew O'Donohue, a research assistant with focus on political polarization and challenges facing democratic governance wrote *Democracies Divided*. Discussing how polarization is shaking societies across the world, from new democracies to long-established ones. Why are political divisions intensifying globally, and what can policymakers learn from other countries' experiences?

Gordon M. Friedrichs and Jordan Tama's article *Polarization and US foreign policy* proved to be extremely useful in consolidating the key findings on the topic of polarization in context of American foreign policy. The author provides an overview of key debates and existing knowledge about important foreign policy questions, highlighting the importance of new findings from, and suggests avenues for further research on this increasingly important topic. After defining the term „Polarization“, the author sheds light on the different kind of polarization and then began to uncover how this topic

The research has made use of the open access united nations reports and press releases that have been published over the years, such as Political, Social Polarization Leading to Rise in Global Insecurity, uncovers the findings of the general secretary that Global insecurity will continue to rise as a result of political and social polarization. According to the report, political and social polarization built on economic disparities and populism, competition for natural resources and environmental degradation, fragmented non-State armed actors and the absence of political trouble-shooting that can help mitigate such issues. This absence is due to rampant populism in developed countries and divisions on foreign policy issues.

In another Journal Article published in 2007, *The Evolution of Republican and Democratic Positions on Cold War Military Spending: A Historical Puzzle*, the author Benjamin O. Fordham has explored the shifting preferences of the two parties in America with regards to military spending. After aptly observing that during the 1940s and 50s the Democrats such as Hubert Humphrey and Herbert Lehman were in

favor of military spending whereas Republicans such as Robert Taft were against it, in the 1960s this dynamic changed and switched vice-versa. Republicans became more inclined to military spending while democrats had a more opposition to it. The author deep dives into circumstances within the domestic and international environment that have led to such a change in party preferences. The author uses Carmines and Stimson's work on the evolution of partisan differences to reconstruct the historical process through which the two major parties changed their positions on military spending. The issue evolution begins with a shift in political leadership in parties, followed by changes in public perception of the two parties' positions and then by a shift in mass public alignments. Secondly, the shift against the United States in the late 1940s is considered the reason for the formation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) alliance in 1949 and the military buildup associated with NSC 68²⁰ and the Korean War. Democrats were more supportive of military spending during the Soviet gains of the early Cold War era; whereas Republicans were more supportive of it when the Soviets made gains during the 1970s. For an international condition to explain the party switch, it must have affected the two parties differently. Additionally, by studying the effect of military spending on multilateral institutions governing the international monetary system in hopes that military commitment would not only deter Soviet aggression but also reassure American allies internationally. Domestically however, it is found that, the benefits of military spending went increasingly to states in the South and the West at the expense of the Northeast therefore it grew republican support for it in the sixties. Additionally the US economy grew therefore increased military buildup would not cost as many taxes as it used to therefore it was another point that gained republican approval. Moreover, the author highlights the changing positions of the two parties on racial issues eventually changed the South from a region controlled almost exclusively by Democrats to one dominated by Republicans. The process took many years, and Republicans were not truly ascendant in the South until 1994 or even later. The southern congressional delegation has always been relatively conservative; its gradual shift from an exclusively Democratic to a largely Republican party affiliation increased the

²⁰ United States Objectives and Programs for National Security, better known as NSC 68, was a 66-page top secret National Security Council policy paper drafted by the Department of State and Department of Defense and presented to President Harry S. Truman on 7 April 1950.

ideological homogeneity of both parties. This is an important paper to go through as it explore the collapse of the Cold War consensus in USA, which is synonymous with the changing position of the Democratic Party after the late 1960s, was a defining moment in the history of American foreign relations. It is relevant to this day and has proven to be an important factor contributing to my knowledge on polarizing politics in the United States as there was never a moment when both parties had the same ideological guideline, despite the fact that they were ever changing.

The annual Review of Political Science published „*The Origins and Consequences of Affective Polarization in the United States*’ by a number of scholars from many prestigious colleges in USA. *Shanto Iyengar, Yphtach Lelkes, Matthew Levendusky, Neil Malhotra and Sean J. Westwood* have together written about the phenomenon of animosity between the parties known as *affective polarization*. They have successfully traced the origins of the polarization in united states to the power of partisanship as a social identity, and explain the factors that intensify partisan enmity. Furthermore they have explored the consequences of affective polarization, highlighting how partisan politics affect influences attitudes and behaviors well outside the political sphere. It is a thoroughly investigative study on the implications of polarizing politics and how it can be mitigated before it damages the fiber of society.

“*We Can’t Wait*”: *Barack Obama, Partisan Polarization and the Administrative Presidency*, published by *Kenneth S. Lowande and Sidney M. Milkis* is an indepth analysis of how President Barack embraced the role of a party leader amidst the partisan acrimony in congress. The unilateral technique Obama often used to ensure decision making and to uphold his campaign promises. This report has been extremely useful during my study on Obama’s leadership techniques as a Democrat as compared to Republican leaders. It also explored how important bipartisan coalition is a complex and rare phenomenon within American politics.

Obama, Trump, And Reflections On The Rhetoric Of Political Change written by *Denise M. Bostdorff* was published by *Michigan State University* in 2017. It explores the concept and importance of “Rhetoric” in US leadership pointing to Obama’s return of hope and change, “Change we can believe in,” and “Yes, we can”. The author offers some observations of their own on emotion and change, backlash and

victimhood, the magnification of heroic expectations, and social media and counterfactual advocacy, with attention paid to both Obama and his successor; Trump. The author is oftentimes taken by the works of Professor Stuckey and serves as a response to his learnings and teachings on “rhetoric valences”. It has been a remarkable commentary on the expectations and definitions of a leader and how an exaggerated picture of heroism is necessary during election campaigns in contemporary USA.

Trump is Simply the End Product by Céline-Agathe Caro is a refreshing study on the state of politics in United States. The author states that the Polarization of U.S. Politics Is the Culmination of Long-Term Trends, it is a protracted issue that was not exacerbated by President Donald Trump but has been trickling down for decades within the US political system. Whether it is across party lines or Gerrymandering within the party itself, there is no doubt that America has been divided since the 18th century. Moreover, the article addresses the role of media in polarizing the population further, campaign investors pushing their own agendas, the lack of ideological compromise and bipartisan collaboration in policy making and the distrust of the population with their representatives as factors that contribute to a much divided nation. The author reiterates that polarization within the lower middle classes on the left and the right of the political spectrum will always be one of the greatest challenges facing the political system in the U.S, infact all over the world. US could learn from Europe and its importance on established parties to taking seriously the concerns of all citizens in order to avoid strengthening populist and anti-establishment movements.

"Our Time Is Now: Power, Purpose, and the Fight for a Fair America" by Stacey Abrams, explores the issue of voter suppression in the United States and addresses the importance of fair elections and democratic participation. Abrams draws on her own experiences and the experiences of others to shed light on the various obstacles faced by marginalized communities in exercising their right to vote. She discusses topics such as gerrymandering, voter ID laws, and the systematic disenfranchisement of minority voters. "Our Time Is Now" also delves into the history of voter suppression in America, highlighting past struggles for voting rights and the ongoing challenges faced by underrepresented communities. Abrams argues for the need to fight against voter suppression and advocates for reforms to ensure fair and accessible elections.

Literature Review on International Organizations

The existing literature on International organizations, specifically in terms of the pursuit of multilateralism and humanitarianism includes the writings of Emmanuel Kant, John Locke, Robert Keohane, Woodrow Wilson, John Meyer and Brian Rowan etc. These writers come from the liberalist standpoint and have discussed and conceptualized multilateral institutions as well as humanitarianism through many different spheres.

Robert Keohane specifies some dimensions of multilateralism in his article *multilateralism and International order*²¹ by limiting multilateralism to treaties between states. Keohane realizes the interest in transnational economies and alliances, but has deliberately narrowed the scope to intergovernmental arrangements²². Especially arrangements that have been institutionalized to monitor and manage the set of rules governing state behavior. His focus on international institutions presumes that institutions are highly significant in contemporary world politics²³.

In the book titled *„Multilateralism and Security Institutions in an era of globalization“*²⁴, a team of contributors come together to conceptualize multilateralism in the context of United States. It focuses on the pressing security problems that are arising in the age of globalization and terrorism. The writers are able to cover multiple fields of multilateralism including institutionalism, transatlantic security communities, the United Nations Security Council and most interestingly, the humanitarian aspect of multilateral institutions²⁵.

A Journal Article entitled *„Joe Biden and a new era of multilateralism“* published by the German institute of global and area studies, written by *Hannes*

²¹ Amartya Sen, et al., "Multilateralism and the International Order," in *Peace and Democratic Society*, 1st ed., vol. 1 (Open Book Publishers, 2007), 109-122, accessed through JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt5vjstn.13>.

²² Amartya Sen, et al., "Multilateralism and the International Order," in *Peace and Democratic Society*, 1st ed., vol. 1 (Open Book Publishers, 2007), 109-122, accessed through JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt5vjstn.13>.

²³ Amartya Sen, et al., "Multilateralism and the International Order," in *Peace and Democratic Society*, 1st ed., vol. 1 (Open Book Publishers, 2007), 109-122, accessed through JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt5vjstn.13>.

²⁴ Dimitris Bourantonis, Kostas Ifantis, and Panayotis Tsakonas, *Multilateralism and Security Institutions in an Era of Globalisation* (New York: Routledge, 2008).

Greve, focus on the multilateral strategy of the current president²⁶. Joe Biden's strategy is with respect to Russia and China, especially the rise of China will determine the international world order which will in turn determine the West's multilateral agenda, whether it will be value based or all inclusive. His political program stands in stark contrast to Trump, by reentering the Paris Treaty, WHO and reengaging closely with Europe. Greve focuses on the two narratives on multilateralism; Reanimate and reinforce and secondly, Restructure. Greve states that Europe is tilting towards a reanimation strategy whereas US is more focused on Restructuring, as they did in June 2021 at the NATO Summit where heads agreed to update military alliance's strategic concept. His main concern in the article is the US-China competition. The authoritarian regime that is China is on its way to the super power status, which is creating major „tectonic shifts“ in geopolitics.

In *Paul Heinbecker's* journal article titled *Multilateral cooperation and peace and security*²⁷ sets forth a range of arguments discussing US hegemony, its imperialistic tendencies and whether or not America is an Empire. It aims to discuss the notion that whether USA is with the international community or against it. Heinbecker states that while living in this globalized, integrated, interdependent world, no one nation can afford to be isolated, not even United States. That being said, an integrated world does not mean that America is an Empire even though it has all the capabilities to be one. The decolonial period is a testament to the falling popularity of empires and states are not willing to forsake their sovereignty and as far as USA is concerned it was born anti-imperial but whether or not it has stayed anti-imperial is a question to be explored. The reality is, that America as well as Americans are not ready to taken upon the duties of an empire neither are the people interested in an Empire. The work of the likes of Woodrow Wilson and Roosevelt have done in the field of international institution building, treaty making and network-development has completely changed how the world views international relations. At the same time it is not powerful enough to dictate the course of world events, it may be too powerful to be coerced by anyone but it is not powerful enough to coerce

²⁶ Hannes Greve, "Joe Biden and a New Era of Multilateralism," German Institute of Global and Area Studies (GIGA), 2021.

²⁷ Paul Heinbecker, "Multilateral Cooperation and Peace and Security," *International Journal* (2004): 783-800.

everyone therefore a need to cooperation still exists and not just on America's terms²⁸. The writer also explores the possibility of being unilateralist without being a hegemon and how the United States completely set this aside post 9/11 when it went into such aggressive unilateralism that no amount of international treaties or institutionalism could replace America's own military might. And institutions such as NATO or the UNSC were only used to justify American actions and interventions in foreign lands. The proponents of such kind of unilateralism completely disregard the lessons learned in the world wars. The multilateralism that US does follow is handpicked from an array of options, evident from its reluctance towards the ICC, the Kyoto Protocol and the nuclear test-ban treaty are all evidence of US selective multilateralism.

Jean-Marc Thouvenin in the article titled "*Questioning the future of multilateralism*"²⁹ attempts to place multilateralism within international relations as a different approach to what other „isms“ suggest, this being an avenue of better global governance, an alternative to the lack of an international state system. The first use of the term multilateralism was in the context of an economic system that is open to international trade and integration³⁰, however it has since developed into the concept of international treaties and institutions. Thouvenin questions whether these multilateral treaties such as the United Nations charter, are under threat to their existence? Are they wishful thinking? Is the increase in nationalism jeopardizing international institutions?

In the article entitled *Trans-Regional Security Organizations and Statist Multilateralism in Eurasia*, *Nicole J. Jackson* takes multilateralism to Eurasia stating that there is a trans-regional security complex reaching from Russia to central Asia to China. The author pinpoints that the shared security norms have become state centered which would lead to them placing their national interest above collective gains. The paper outlines member states' key political values and shows how they 'framed' shared understandings about security. It then explains how security norms inform the institutional designs of the two main multilateral security organizations

²⁸International Journal, Autumn, 2004, Vol. 59, No. 4 (Autumn, 2004), pp. 783- 800

²⁹ Proceedings of the Annual Meeting (American Society of International Law), April 4-7, 2018, Vol. 112 (April 4-7, 2018), pp. 332-333

³⁰ Jean-Marc Thouvenin, "Questioning the Future of Multilateralism," American Society of International Law Proceedings of the Annual Meeting, 112 (2018): 332-333.

thereby directing the nature of cooperation, testing the argument in two key conflicts: in Kyrgyzstan and Afghanistan³¹.

The Journal article, *The Decline of America's Soft Power in the United Nations* by Monti Narayan Datta outlines the correlation of Anti-American sentiment with lowered softpower in the United Nations. In order to explore Anti-Americanism, the article dives into the voting trends in the United Nations General Assembly and international public opinion. Public Opinion turns into governmental policies and often times governments have used the anti-American sentiment to win elections and aid from other nations. The article however, fails to explore the reasons for declining soft power in United Nations, it only discusses that a decline has occurred and it leads to a decline in US influence. The article discusses how European nations have leveraged international backlash in order to keep United States in check, going as far as to say that there are two opinions in the world; the opinion of the US and the opinion of the rest of the world³².

Theoretical Framework

Theorization of any subject is a crucial step towards developing new research and identifying patterns in specific phenomenon, in order to create not only a predictability in one's research but streamline ones material as well. Theoretical perspectives guide research work towards the required direction in order to obtain scientific results and also focus on key questions, issues and methods of inquiry.

Several major theoretical approaches influence social science scholars across the world, especially in American studies. However it is optimum to consider and synthesize theory in specific place and time, rather than borrowing major theoretical approaches and attempting to make general statements about any phenomenon. Therefore, it is prime time to consider and recognize global trends that dictate social phenomenon.

³¹ Niccole J. Jackson, "Transregional Security Organisations and Statist Multilateralism in Eurasia," *Europe-Asia Studies*, 66, no. 1 (2014): 181-203.

³² Monti Narayan Datta, "International Studies Perspectives," *International Studies Perspectives* (August 2009): 265-284.

Therefore the study will make use of the “weighted balance theory”³³ which is an extension of Heider's “cognitive balance theory” in order to explain the phenomenon known as „Hyperpolarization“. The cognitive balance theory describes the cognitive consistency motive that shapes and affirms opinions, the urge to maintain one’s values and beliefs over time. The weighted balance theory aims to uncover the reason for political polarization, according to Schweighofer, people will try to create a balance of emotions by adapting their opinions to the people they like thus creating stronger more intense opinions, until more issues are viewed in the same way as their political allies. These intense opinions are often polarized in nature and create a division based on their conservative or liberal belief systems³⁴. Using the Weighted Balance theory³⁵, this study will delve deeper into the folds of political polarization, creating a link with contemporary political leaders from both the right-wing and the left-wing political factions in the United States. Furthermore, testing the implications of such hyperpolarization, on international institutions by using the example of the United Nations.

In order to understand contemporary International relations one must grasp the concepts of integration, globalization and interdependence. Due to the rise in communication and technological advancements, multilateralism is the need of the day; therefore the paper will also utilize the theory of liberal institutionalism to create a deeper understanding of Implications on United Nations.

Liberal institutionalism³⁶ or as some refer to it as rational functionalism originates from the philosophies of Immanuel Kant especially in his 1795 essay “Perpetual Peace” where he suggests that likeminded groupings can be formed that bind themselves to international institutions. Similar ideas were placed in the fourteen points given by Woodrow Wilson post world war I. This ideology came to light after the Second World War when institutions such as the United Nations (U.N.), the World Bank, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the General Agreement

³³ Simon Schweighofer, Frank Schweitzer, and David Garcia, "A Weighted Balance Model of Opinion Hyperpolarization," *Journal of Artificial Societies and Social Simulation* 23, no. 3 (2020): 5-10.

³⁴ Simon Schweighofer, Frank Schweitzer, and David Garcia, "A Weighted Balance Model of Opinion Hyperpolarization," *Journal of Artificial Societies and Social Simulation* 23, no. 3 (2020): 5-10.

³⁵ Simon Schweighofer, Frank Schweitzer, and David Garcia, "A Weighted Balance Model of Opinion Hyperpolarization," *Journal of Artificial Societies and Social Simulation* 23, no. 3 (2020): 5-10.

³⁶ Robert O. Keohane, "After Hegemony," in *After Hegemony* (Princeton University Press, 2005).

on Tariffs and Trade (GATT)³⁷ were created, which are the basis of the contemporary global order. International cooperation between states is a sustainable route towards a peace and de-escalation of conflicts. Liberal Institutionalism highlights the importance of these institutions in facilitating cooperation between states; therefore there is no need for a hegemon to stabilize the international system³⁸.

Significance of the Study

Political polarization is an important concept that requires research because society has become conspicuously more polarized in recent years. In the US, this demonstrates itself through a widening gap between the interpretations of conservative Republican and liberal Democratic voters. In Europe, there is a significant growth in disagreements over central issues such as immigration and European integration. Polarization was evident in the 2016 Brexit vote which divided the urban areas and the rural areas of Britain on European Union membership. In India, polarization has kept politics in turmoil especially since the BJP has been in power for two consecutive terms. Under Narendra Modi, the divide between secularists and Hindu nationalists forms the central axis of polarization in India³⁹. Poland is another example of polarizing democracy, rampant distrust of media outlets, exploitative and authoritarian government mechanism, political and social divide has been making democracy vulnerable. Under the guise of increasing political participation, Poland's Law and Justice Party has been the culprit of democratic backsliding by using legitimate and illegitimate maneuvering to undermine their

³⁷ Kyle Bagwell and Robert W. Staiger, "An Economic Theory of GATT," *American Economic Review* 89, no. 1 (1999): 215-248.

³⁸ Michael C. Webb and Stephen D. Krasner, "Hegemonic Stability Theory: An Empirical Assessment," *Review of International Studies* 15, no. 2 (1989): 183-198.

³⁹ Niranjana Sahoo, "Mounting Majoritarianism and Political Polarization in India," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, August 18, 2020, accessed July 9, 2023, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2020/08/18/mounting-majoritarianism-and-political-polarization-in-india-pub-82434>.

political opponents⁴⁰. Similar cases can be found in countries such as Hungary, Turkey, Brazil and United States⁴¹.

Therefore, it is of utmost significance to explore the effects of polarizing politics in the United States on a global scale. The study is significant in the light of the ongoing international crisis between Ukraine and Russia, which shows the importance of institutions. States are increasingly interested in multilateralism as a mechanism to ensure of security. However, the major players that control these institutions tend to act out of self-interest, rather than pursuing a collective goal. This study will analyze the circumstances of domestic politics in United States, in order to shed light on the pursuit of multilateral cooperation.

There is immense research that can be found on the topic of multilateralism within the context of American political environment, particularly when it comes to security and economic institutionalism. This study is significant because it focuses on the effects and defects of polarizing domestic politics on United Nations, which has been seldom explored, owing to its contemporary nature. The findings to this study will give a better understanding of how American domestic politics shapes not only multilateralism as a whole but also the extent of its global capability towards problem solving. The findings will be important to scholars of American studies, peace and conflict studies, international relations, human rights and international humanitarian law etc. Moreover it will benefit academics, policy makers, researchers, writers and students.

Research Methodology

The interpretation of data will be done by first collecting the empirical data through both Inductive and deductive techniques. By using the inductive method new knowledge can be gained and added to the existing body of knowledge. However, it is not completely inductive as the theories and information used from various studies,

⁴⁰ Anjali Nahata, "Polarization in Poland," published by Democratic Erosion, May 2019, accessed July 9, 2023, <https://www.democratic-erosion.com/2019/05/05/polarization-in-poland-by-anjali-nahata/>.

⁴¹ International Peace, October 1, 2019, accessed July 9, 2023, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2019/10/01/how-to-understand-global-spread-of-political-polarization-pub-79893>.

research reports, journal articles are to be added as well including qualitative and quantitative data.

This is an explanatory study as it explains the structure of multilateral institutions and the role they play in American politics well as an exploratory study because it explores how these institutions play a role in humanitarianism. In order for the research to be legitimate references will be taken from legitimate sources and cited throughout the research whereas a constructive validity will be reached through objective analysis of data, reliable use of sources and materials, using not only the method of congruence and process tracing but using triangulation to increase the validity of this research.

Source Material

The paper shall utilize primary sources in the form of interviews with experts in the field of international relations, particularly those dealing with domestic American politics, political polarization and experts of international relations. It will make use of open access documents found in the form of Agreements of United Nations, New articles, Statistical data and factual materials from authentic sources. Additionally it will use a plethora of secondary data techniques in the form of books, journal articles, news reports and research reports etc.

Chapter Summaries

The thesis will be divided into four chapters;

Chapter 1: History of US Engagement with UN during Cold War

A history of US Engagement with UN during Cold War: This chapter will look through the role of US as stabilizer of international system through UN.

Chapter 2: Changing Role of UN in Contemporary Era

This chapter will Debate and Discuss through various examples why the UN could not perform in post-Cold War Era especially as the number of conflicts increased massively in the world.

Chapter 3: Polarization of US Political System and Implications for US role in UN

This chapter dive into the complexities in US political system, where does this hyperpolarization come from? It will bring in various reasons why the domestic US politics is polarized through use of the process tracing technique. It will categorically narrate the Implications. This chapter will discuss US as Stabilizer in international politics. Its entry in WWI and WWII were meant to bring stability in the world. When USA retreated from League of Nations in post-WWI era, it resulted in WWII and failure of international system. Under bipolarity the engagement of both the superpowers in international system helped it sustained through the toughest phase"s especially nuclear proliferation and arms race. However, with the increasing polarization at home and decreasing role in international system by US, it resulted in more a uncertain and unpredictable world. The US lack of engagement in UN resulted in less stable world. The key reason for US lack of engagement in UN is increasing polarization at home.

Chapter 4: Comparative analysis of Obama vs. Trump presidencies

This chapter will explore the presidential terms of presidents Barack Obama (2009-2017) and Donald Trump (2017-2021) , in light of partisan politics and how it effects the overarching polarization within the United States and the International Environment as a whole.

CHAPTER 1: HISTORY OF US ENGAGEMENT WITH UN DURING COLD WAR

INTRODUCTION

The entangled fates of United States of America and the organization known as the United Nations began with the end of the Great War and a hope for a period of peace and prosperity. United States held a pivotal role in the creation of the organization therefore it held an important position amidst its ranks as the permanent member of the Security Council having unlimited veto power. This comes as no surprise that it also is the highest contributor of funds to the UN. Much of the approbation lands onto the tireless work of the American Association for the United Nations (AAUN) along with the work of Franklin D. Roosevelt (1933-45) who was the serving U.S President during the years of World War 2. He was able to lay the groundwork for a multilateral international organization that will ensure peace and stability in the world. Whether or not that goal has been achieved might be debatable but one thing is for sure, the Yalta conference of the Big three changed the dynamics of world politics and how we see them today.

All said and done, the organization was created as the geopolitical environment of the world took a turn, multi-polarity turned into bipolarity and instead of a peaceful world; it stood on the crossroads of the emerging cold war. It was during this period when the two global superpowers, USA and Russia began to use the Security Council as a pawn in the chess-game of dominance and influence. The two blocs created their own coalitions based on their favored ideologies, one propagating communism while the other disseminated capitalistic ideas. This power struggle led to war and destruction across the world and the veto-power members reckoned the Security Council useless and powerless in the face of such circumstances. Two different perspectives to peacekeeping emerged; one was the Universalist approach which by being Wilsonian⁴² by nature appealed to Roosevelt's liberalist origins. The other being the "Spheres of Influence" perspective which believed in respective orbits for

⁴² Wilson's most notable contribution to international relations was his advocacy for a new world order based on the principles of democracy, self-determination, and collective security. His vision, often referred to as "Wilsonianism," aimed to promote global peace and stability through diplomacy, international cooperation, and the establishment of international organizations.

both superpowers which was a perspective agreed upon by most republican politicians. One could rarely find one such as George Kennen⁴³ or Henry Wallace who would support the spheres of influence concept; most scholars were in favor of Universalist approach to peace. This was due to the fact that Universalism is deeply rooted into American politics; it has always been favored more than any other tradition.

Thus the United Nations was introduced; it appealed to most countries in the world and due to the influence practiced by global power contenders such as USA, USSR and China, its membership increased quickly. It was considered a ray of hope for the war trodden Europe as well as the rest of the world and in fact the formulae would have actually worked in an idealistic world. However, the world into which the UN was born was far from ideal and it soon became ridden with propaganda and a power tussle between the two emerging super powers during the cold war. Due to the ideological tussle between USA and the then USSR, UN was unable to keep the peace among member states despite the fact that the two powers did not engage in a face to face battle, they still funded proxy wars which were just as destructive for international peace. Whether it is the Spanish-american war, or the Hungarian conflict or even the Vietnam war, we see a lack of humanitarian action from the security council. However, one cannot imply that United Nations was completely inactive during the Cold War years, which were about 45 years in total, but the picking and choosing of conflicts plus the tug of war between the powerful contenders often times took attention away from issues that were extremely serious. In the post Cold-war era when the world assumed uni-polarity, the Security Council was often influenced by US political concerns and national interest. It became more apparent that US would choose which areas were of significance where one must intervene which in turn directed UN attention as well. These issues are talked about in greater depth in the following chapter.

History of United Nations

The United Nations Charter which was ratified by the US Senate on 28th July 1945 was a symbolic move in terms of US involvement in international organizations post

⁴³ George F. Kennan (1904-2005) was an American diplomat and historian who played a significant role in shaping U.S. foreign policy during the Cold War era. He is best known for his role in formulating the containment policy, which sought to prevent the spread of communism and Soviet influence.

world war II. The changed attitudes of the US population regarding international affairs meant that there was a future for increased multilateralism and a break from the isolationist policy within United States. Initially United States was disinterested in joining the war, and congress made this abundantly clear by passing a series of neutrality acts⁴⁴ that prevented US from being involved in international conflicts. In the 1940s, the policy seemed to have softened because US started sending aid to the allied forces, which were up against the axis powers (i.e; Germany, Italy and Japan). There was a preparation of war brewing on the backburner and Franklin D. Roosevelt (1933-1945) had been preparing the nation for the inevitable reality. However USA finally broke out of isolation when Japan attacked Pearl Harbor in 1941 that US formally entered World War II. Meetings with allied powers were a given as they were all fighting a common enemy and these meetings led to strategic alliances which defined the relationships in the post war world and went on to create a framework that would help alleviate the threat of war, in the form of an international organization known as the United Nations.

United States has always had a very close strategic partnership with the United Nations, which began at the very initial stages of its conception. The period during the Second World War and afterwards, the internal politics of United States was not as nearly as polarized as it is now. Instead the congress united in their effort to resolve two main issues facing the world after the war; the threat of another great war and the use of nuclear weapons. There was foreshadowing during the war time conferences that an international organization might be born. The Bretton-Wood conference⁴⁵ that decided the fate of international economy after the war, establishing rules and practices, as well as the World Bank and IMF. Similarly before this in the Tehran conference in 1943, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Winston Churchill and Joseph Stalin, met in Tehran in order to synchronize military strategy. The three leaders also discussed further international cooperation. This is where Roosevelt outlined his vision for United Nations to Stalin, in which the four biggest powers in the world (US, Britain, USSR and China) would be able to deal with a threat of war immediately. The

⁴⁴ Office of the Historian, Foreign Service Institute, United States Department of State, accessed December 25, 2022, history@state.gov.

⁴⁵ The conference brought together representatives from 44 countries to design a new international monetary system after World War II.

Moscow conference of foreign ministers set the groundwork for a general international organization which will promote international peace and security.

This work continued into 1945 when the end of the war was inevitable and a new world order would be born. The big three leaders met again in Eastern Europe at the Yalta Conference and discussed the post war predicament. There was hope that the US-Soviet cooperation would continue into the post war world which would be later shattered as the cold war began. The technical procedures of the United Nations were agreed upon at the Yalta conference in 1945, especially the voting powers of the permanent members (the veto power) were agreed upon by all the members and United Nations came into existence. In the same year the UN charter was completed when 50 member states met in San Francisco, United States. Thus, the United Nations was a brain child of the United States and the kind of influence US yielded within this organization speaks volumes to its role in global geopolitics. Since the democrats were moderately left of center and the republicans moderately right of center, United Nations was able to garner bipartisan support, whereas the isolationist republicans did not ratify when the concept of the League of Nations was put forward.

United Nations did not come into being through the negotiations happening abroad during these conferences. The domestic deliberations within the United States on the effects on international organization on national interest had a huge role to play in its formation. Roosevelt tried to gain bipartisan support for the United Nations within his congress, the Republicans endorsed it in 1943 and eventually it was endorsed by Democrats as well. Later on, in July 1945 it was approved by the senate with a vote of 89 to 2 and UN was born on October 24th 1945, when 29 nations ratified the Charter.

The Goal of United Nations

The creation of United Nations symbolized the hopes and dreams of a world that was desperate for peace and stability, seeking a reformed world order that was resting on the shoulders of the US-Soviet alliance. The unity required in the Security Council on matters concerning security became an issue in the bipolar world order that emerged in the period after the war, rendering many issues at a stalemate. The cold war carried with it challenges that crushed the hopes of a peaceful world and left the public that was rooting for an international organization unsatisfied. The issues that came about in the post-war world were strung with ideological differences between the great

powers and the only way United Nations could work was if they presented a united front. United Nations was not only Roosevelt's dream, but also the brain child of the American Association for the United Nations⁴⁶ (AAUN). It succeeded directly from the League of Nations association, gained traction during World War II when discussions of a new world order were all the rage and enthusiastically promoted the concept of an international organization that would end all wars. Even in the initial stages of the cold war during 1947 to 1952, the support for UN membership was 80 percent⁴⁷ because the AAUN had a national reach and it curbed much of the criticism that was thrown towards it during the Cold War period.

The major chunk of the criticism came as a result of the complexity of two similar yet completely different viewpoints that governed peace keeping after World War II. The Universalist perspective was one held by Roosevelt (1933-1945) where the national security is guaranteed by an international organization instead of the tedious task of creating alliances and ensuring balance of power. The approach was Wilsonian in nature, which comes as no surprise because Roosevelt was a Wilsonian⁴⁸ through and through. In fact he was a part of Wilson's cabinet in 1920s as a candidate for Vice president as well as a vehement advocate for the League of Nations. On the other hand, there were a few voices that believed in Spheres-of-Influence as a better way to achieve national security. The secretary of war; Henry L. Stimson believed that Russia's claim on influence in Eastern Europe was not entirely unreasonable compared to the US position in Latin America referring to these regions as "our respective orbits".

This perspective had little effect on Roosevelt (1933-1945) who had already decided to entrust the world to the big three⁴⁹, He reported to congress that his hope for Yalta was "to end the system of unilateral action, balances of power and spheres of influences which are destined to fail". He was backed by his secretary of state, Cordell Hull who was himself a Wilsonian fundamentalist, stating that there would be

⁴⁶ Robert D. Accinelli, "Pro UN Internationalist and Early Cold War," *Diplomatic History*, vol. 9, no. 4 (Fall 1985): 347-362.

⁴⁷ Robert D. Accinelli, "Pro UN Internationalist and Early Cold War," *Diplomatic History*, vol. 9, no. 4 (Fall 1985): 347-362.

⁴⁸ Woodrow Wilson, 28th president of the United States (1913-1921)

⁴⁹ The big three is the name given to Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin, however in this case it might also aptly be referred to as the Big Four as China was also named as an integral part of the United Nations conception.

no need to build alliances and create influence as the organization will ensure security and peace for all. There was rarely a spokesperson for any other ideology other than Universalism, the only one that spoke in favor of Balance of Power were of George Kennen who also believed that US must relinquish Eastern Europe to Russia and Henry A. Wallace whose speech in Madison Square Garden in 1946 which earned him a dismissal by the President Harry Truman (1945-1953). Since Universalism was rooted into the legal and moral tradition⁵⁰ of the US, the UN became a part of its foreign policy immediately after the war.

The United States influence on United Nations decisions

The discussion on the multilateral organization is important, because the United Nations formulae was plausible, even workable in an idealistic world, however it began to show glaring defects during the cold war. An institution that was created in order to build harmony by a cooperation of states that were able to come together and put an end to a great war, became a theater for propaganda and politics soon after the war ended. Whether this depravity took root from the ideological differences of two great powers in a bipolar world order or the ideological tussle that was rearing its ugly head within the congress; between the right and left wing politicians or whether the organization was inherently flawed due to the importance it placed on maintaining the status quo in the international world order. It was an undeniable defect that left the organization in a political limbo during the cold war period and unable to act when it was required to resulting in many failures and missteps. It is not to say that it was not successful in many other tasks that gave a platform for peace, human rights, development and the fall of colonialism. The main concern however was the avoidance of war and creation of sustainable peace through a collective security measure; the Security Council that was not allowed to breach sovereignty of any member state and encouraged the nations to peacefully settle their disputes⁵¹ while also authorizing the use of force⁵² if a state were to carry out an act of aggression or pose any challenge to peace. This paradox does not end here; the status quo within the Security Council did not allow any action to be taken unless all five permanent

⁵⁰ Arthur Schlesinger Jr., "Origins of the Cold War," *Foreign Affairs*, October 1967, 22-52.

⁵¹ UN Charter, art. 2.4 and art. 2.3.

⁵² UN Charter, art. 39.

members vote unanimously. That would've been a workable model had we lived in a utopia, however realistically and especially due to the disparity between the ideologies of the two great powers; the Security Council was often rendered useless.

This became most apparent when the two ideologies went head to head within the council trying to block each other's agendas during the cold war, thereby politicizing the very institution that aimed to obtain peace. Evidently, the institution fell prey to polarizing politics of a bipolar world during the cold war era. The Cold War was an antagonizing struggle between two ideologies set forth by the two great powers of US and USSR. Whether one takes the angle of the threat of Russian expansionism and the Communist Manifesto of 1848⁵³, or the angle of US abandonment of the wartime collaborations, emboldened by its nuclear capability, decided to abolish Russian influence from Eastern Europe. The standard argument is that the Cold war was absolutely inevitable under these circumstances. However one is forced to question the absolute necessity of the Cold War, especially considering the humanitarian risks it posed to the rest of the world. Humanitarian intervention was one of the very basic functions of the United Nations in order to avoid war; however at the same time it placed great importance on the national sovereignty of every country. This became a challenge during the cold war when the great powers used United Nations as their own personal propaganda churning machine. The argument that each country's economic and political system is good for humanity while the other country represents oppression and violations of human rights is an argument that was presented by both sides. Therefore either side can claim that they are planning a humanitarian intervention. What is humanitarian for one ideology is a violation for the other due to the rift between the two ideologies. The two powers did not fight directly, however they engaged in a series of proxy wars and built military alliances, such as the NATO and the Warsaw Pact. Cold, because it never translated into a full-fledged military confrontation but a war nonetheless because not only was there a nuclear arms race with some hot zones of war.

Even though, Isolationism was the embodiment of American foreign policy in the 1920s and 1930s, USA found itself enrolled in a multilateral organization and a part

⁵³ That stated that by creating one class will solve all the issue of a continuous class struggle and cycles of revolutions which never lead to true reform.

of an exclusive cold war with the soviet nations within a decade. This happened because the eventual involvement of U.S. in the first World War, left a major shift in the two major parties' posture toward foreign affairs. Before 1916 Democrats had generally opposed the dominating, interventionist role in world affairs. However, Woodrow Wilson was able to guide the party to steadily accepting a more vigorous role for the United States in international affairs, in which it acknowledged its economic and strategic well-being with that of other democracies and in which it would be more willing to use its strength in the pursuit of world peace.

Similarly, within the Republican Party a change was taking place with regards to its involvement in the Spanish-American War and procurement of the Philippines, along with the politicking of Roosevelt, Lodge, and other notable Republicans, changed the party's perception to approving a greater role for the United States in world affairs. However, in 1916 the Republicans rejected the prospect of nominating Roosevelt for the presidency because of the fact that in the debate over the Versailles treaty, the party branded itself as a champion of nationalism and isolationism rather than the idea of Wilsonian internationalism. Thus the Democratic administration of Franklin Roosevelt, being moderately left of center, did not challenge the Republican agreement. But as the 1930s advanced, Hitler became a greater threat to the allied powers and Japan's invasion of China, Roosevelt started influencing the country in the direction of an alliance with Great Britain, China, and the other nations standing against the Axis. As World War II began in 1939 and the fall of France in 1940, the debate regarding America's more prominent role in world affairs escalated, with the Democrats largely opting for interventionist policies and the Republicans reverting back to the trusted isolationist policies. However, in the spring of 1941, the Roosevelt administration went face-to-face with the supporters of isolationist policies in Congress and the Lend-Lease Act⁵⁴ was passed. Through this Act, the United States became a non-fighting supporter of Great Britain and the Soviet Union. However in December of the same year, with the attack on Pearl Harbor, the United States became a complete belligerent and eventually partisan opposition to interventionism ended.

⁵⁴ Passed on March 11, 1941, this act set up a system that would allow the United States to lend or lease war supplies to any nation deemed vital to the defense of the United States.

Roosevelt's policies were furthered by Harry Truman (1945-1953) who changed the foreign policy from one of withdrawal to full-fledged interactionism, his doctrine rose from the speech delivered by Harry Truman in 1947 at a joint session of congress that asked for military aid of \$400 million for Greece and Turkey. This would be known as the European Recovery Plan (ERP) or the Marshall plan, through which the economic structure of postwar Europe would be restored and developed in order to contain soviet influence. The congress overwhelmingly approved the plan, not only did it rebuild war-torn Europe but also provided new markets for American goods, created long-term trading partnerships and ensured stabile democratic governments in Europe. Congress approved the Marshall Plan which meant that this collaborative bipartisanship that emerged in the World War years would successfully carry into the postwar years aswell.

All the talk of containment and interactionism aside, the fact that USA did not come to the aid of the Hungarians in 1956 under the Eisenhower⁵⁵ administration is a conundrum. After all, USA had encouraged resistance against the Soviet Influence in Europe for long and it was an unspoken expectation that the west will intervene if an uprising against communism was to rise up. Especially given that Eisenhower (1953-1963) gave his Domino theory, which would have been applicable in Eastern Europe just as much as it was applicable in Vietnam. However, the Eisenhower administration, may have not expected a revolution on the other side of the iron curtain therefore USA would not have been ready to lose more American soldiers only three years after the Korean War where 40,000 soldiers died and 100,000 were wounded. Despite the fact that it was an expectation of the people of Hungary, that the USA will come to its aid if they revolt against a soviet regime. This leads one to question, whether USA was still considering the spheres of influence and balance of power theory even while promoting a collective security model. USA failed to act even though the Voice of America and Free Europe radio had encouraged a resistance with in Hungary⁵⁶, with insistent language, fueling the propaganda of anti-

⁵⁵ Eisenhower was whemently against the fortress theory of defense and stated that all nations stand together. He was also a believer of the Domino Effect theory.

⁵⁶ Thomas.J.Torda, The Hungarian Revolution and America's Failure to Actively Respond, The American Hungarian Federation, no. 1 (September 2006): 5-10.

communism, using phrases such as of rollback and liberation⁵⁷, creating an atmosphere that evidently called for a revolution. However when the time arrived the USA did not come to the aid of the Hungarians even when the Prime Minister Imre Nagy (1896-1958) called for aid on 1st November 1956, and then again called for aid from the western powers and united nations on 4th November 1956 in a more dramatic way announcing on national radio the dire situation his democracy was in. The cries were drowned out by media outlets that were more focused on the issues of the Suez Canal which was also happening at the same time. The calls upon the United Nations also came to no avail because when the Hungarian plight was put into the Security Council the authorization of use of force was vetoed by USSR. The Eisenhower government did provide medical and food supplies to Hungary, paying tribute to its freedom fighters and bravery of its people on the road to liberty. The Hungarians were hopeful that the West would play a bigger role in this revolt and were left sorely disappointed; this sent a feeling of abandonment in Eastern Europe.

However, USA did take action in another conflict brewing in the Indochina region that took the lives of thousands of US military soldiers, setting up the groundwork for polarization between the people and government, creating chaotic protests at home and abroad. The civil war in Vietnam was seen as an area of concern for US because of Eisenhower's 1954, Domino theory⁵⁸, which cautioned that if one Southeast Asian nation fell into communism then others were soon to follow. The North was controlled by the communist Ho Chi Minh the founder of the Viet Minh⁵⁹ party, while the South came under the power of Bao Dai according to the Geneva conference treaty in July of 1954. Reunification elections were to be held in 1956, but before this could become a reality the anti-communist politician Ngo Dinh Diem, emboldened by US support ousted president Bao and became president. Eisenhower not only pledged support of Diem but also provided training and equipment to the South Vietnamese people to combat the Northern influences. In 1956 when Diem refused to hold elections, Vietnam was infiltrated by the Communist Guerillas and led a series of

⁵⁷ Thomas.J.Torda, The Hungarian Revolution and America's Failure to Actively Respond, The American Hungarian Federation, no. 1 (September 2006): 1-5.

⁵⁸ Heiko Meiertöns, The Doctrines of US Security Policy: An Evaluation under International Law (2010), 100-171.

⁵⁹ Geoffrey C. Gunn, Rice Wars in Colonial Vietnam: The Great Famine and the Viet Minh Road to Power (Rowman & Littlefield, 2014).

insurgencies in the South, which led to the Second Indochina war. Despite the support of US, Diem proved unfavorable for the Southern Vietnamese population due to his lack of rural policy and land reforms that was important to the Southern Countryside. Eventually, in 1963, Diem was overthrown and assassinated by his own general with the backing of the Kennedy administration. Three weeks later, Kennedy himself was assassinated. For some reason, the Johnson administration in the US believed that a larger US presence in Vietnam was a plausible solution to the rising communist influence. By not only bombing the Laos border to disrupt supply-lines but also stationing two destroyers; the Maddox and the Turner, on the Gulf of Tonkin. These two destroyers were apparently attacked by Northern patrol boats on 4th August which led Johnson to take immediate defense action and asked the US congress to approve the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution. It passed in the Senate with only two opposing votes and unanimously in House of representatives. This resolution greatly escalated the Vietnam War and justified greater US presence in the conflict. The Tonkin resolution provided a legal basis for US involvement. However, the public opinion soon dissented from these government policies, as thousands of US troops began dying on the battlefield, even more became wounded and all of them developed mental health issues such as post-traumatic stress disorder, nightmares, anxiety and depression. People did not believe the proxy war they were fighting, with tax payers money on a foreign land, against an ideological enemy, was fruitful in any way. Lyndon B. Johnson (1963-1969) believed that there was no way out of this war but to increase military spending and escalating the conflict further. Despite the fact that Johnson, like Kennedy was a democratic leader and traditionally democrats tend to decrease military spending. The domestic politics in US were perplexing during the cold war; the roles seemed to have reversed in the congress and Kennedy faced extremely nerve wracking challenges where he closely avoided a nuclear war with USSR⁶⁰ while still fighting proxy in Vietnam and dealing with unrest and distrust of the public at home, ending with an assassination in 1963. The Johnson administration that came after followed in his footsteps and escalated Vietnam while also getting itself entangled in Latin American cruises and riots in the late 1960s, which is why they chose to stay away from another uprising brewing in Eastern Europe.

⁶⁰ During the Cuban Missile Crisis, 1962

When the Prague spring of 1968 began, the Czechoslovakians started showing trends of western influence and a softening of the Marxist-Leninist ideology⁶¹ within its policy structure, thus the Soviets became alert. Recalling the events in Hungary in 1956, they aimed to nip any revolutionary ideals in the bud. A similar domino theory⁶² was in play here, that if one nation falls into the capitalistic realm, then the rest of the eastern European states will follow. Therefore, the communist party in Moscow came to a decision that they must intercede and institute a pro-soviet government administration in Czechoslovakia. Internally, US were faced by many social and political upheavals. While NASA's Apollo 8 orbited the moon, the situation on Earth was extremely unsatisfactory. The assassinations of both the president John F. Kennedy and the activist Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. are symbolic of the violent and harsh nature of the situation in domestic US politics. The racial hatred was obvious even though the civil rights and voting rights had been passed into a law, the violence being shown in the Vietnam War, the easy access to firearms and lack of gun control, poverty ridden people turning into rebellious youth who lacked trust in the government. All this along with the ongoing war in Vietnam that was taking thousands of lives created a situation where Congress was wary of any more international entanglements. Getting involved with Czechoslovakia would mean opening up another frontier with the communists, moreover Czechoslovakia was impractical for national interest. There would have been nothing to gain in terms of national interest, whereas in Latin America during the uprising in Dominican Republic in 1965 and in the Middle East during the Arab-Israeli war of 1967, USA intervened.

The trends of USAs pick and choose method of foreign policy clearly affected the United Nations ability to maintain global peace. However US were not the only one, its allies voted in its favor and Soviet Union countered any move made by USA and its allies. This trend carried on even after the disintegration of the Soviet Union, when the world entered a new era of international order. The Unipolar world was another promise for peace and stability, however now more than ever USA exercised greater

⁶¹ "Soviet Invasion of Czechoslovakia, 1968," Office of the Historian, accessed January 4, 2023, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1961-1968/soviet-invasion-czechoslavkia>."

⁶² Given by Dwight Eisenhower during a news conference in 1954 when referring to communism in Indochina.

control of world politics, especially using the United Nations. A clearer example of USA domestic policy dictating international intervention is the case of Somalia and Rwanda studied side by side. In the Somalian crisis in 1992⁶³, USA led the UN humanitarian mission “Operation restore hope⁶⁴” to provide aid to the people of Somalia while also mediating the conflict through peacekeeping. The conflict escalated more than anticipated ending in a battle between a powerful war lord, General Farah Aideed and the US troops. Resulting in 18 US soldiers losing their lives and hundreds of civilian Somalis caught in the cross-fire. The images of an American soldier’s body that was dragged through the streets of Mogadishu on television turned American public opinion of this mission sour and resulting in Clinton pulling out his troops from the conflict in a matter of six-months. The lack of nation building left Somalia in a vacuum where terrorists organizations such as Al-Qaeda laying their foothold. After this failure, the congress was filled with arguments coming from the republican side that demanded a reassessment of America’s role in world affairs. Clinton became very cautious and focused his energies inwards on the domestic politics, whereas the international involvement especially UN peacekeeping missions were to be redesigned.

Thus a Presidential Decision Directive (known as the PDD-25) was developed⁶⁵ that outlined 16 important questions that policy makers must ask before getting involved in peacekeeping efforts. Some of the points to ponder were whether or not the area of intervention is significant enough for national interest, the possibility of American troops to enter into combat, and the creation of a clear exit strategy. However PDD-25’s restrictive methods were to end U.S. participation in humanitarian and peacekeeping operations which in turn made it very difficult for the United Nations Security Council to undertake such missions. This made it difficult for UNSC to send troops in Rwanda when genocide was taking place in 1994.

⁶³ Abdi Ismail Samatar, "Destruction of State and Society in Somalia: Beyond the Tribal Convention," *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 30, no. 4 (1992): 625-641.

⁶⁴ Valerie J. Lofland, "Somalia: US Intervention and Operation Restore Hope," *Case Studies in Policy-making and Implementation* 6 (2002).

⁶⁵ Developed by Richard Clarke of the National Security Council in order to put forward a rather restrictive mode of American intervention in international affairs. Clarke claimed that it would make peacemaking goals clearer and well defined.

It is apparent that USA chooses which areas are of interest and which area is low priority for them, thus deciding which areas are of a higher priority for the United Nations as well. The United Nations could not function independently from the five permanent members because not only is it heavily dependent on the funds generated from these states that run it, but also, when it comes to humanitarian intervention, it is dependent on countries to send enforcements to take part in UNSC activities. After the failure of Security Council members to enter into the “special agreements” as outlined by the Article 43 of the UN Charter, that entrusted command of member states’ military forces to the UN military Staff committee,⁶⁶ the other members states were unwilling to lend their troops as well, even though most peace keeping missions were on ad hoc basis and ended when the conflict ended. Another impediment was the selection of which humanitarian crises UN must intervene in. Since the UN slowly became extremely politicized due to the geopolitical rivalry and changing foreign policies of the permanent members thus the Security Council could not uphold its promise of peace. Therefore the United Nations could not evolve to become the collective security organization that it was intended to be. This is not to say that United states was to blame for the entirety of this issue as Soviet Union was playing exactly the same game with in the security council, moreover there were other states that let their foreign policies come in the way of collective security and peacekeeping of the United Nations, such as the India-Pakistan conflict or the Israel-Palestine conflict etc. But as the hegemon, there is a rather bigger influence that United States holds in the international political arena then the rest of the general assembly. The United States is predisposed to its internal political climate and inclined to follow congress policy making, more over the domestic policies that dictate foreign policy which in turn tends to dictate global trends by using the United Nations as a means to this end

Conclusion

Being the brainchild of President Wilson and Roosevelt, there is no question that United Nations works under the influence of US politics, this is not to say that the organization itself is biased, but the amount of power United States holds with in the

⁶⁶ Aiyaz Husain, "The United States and the Failure of UN Collective Security," *International Studies Quarterly* 51, no. 3 (July 2007): 581-599.

Security Council as its permanent member, it is inevitable. That being said, it does not mean other permanent members do not hold the same amount of power and responsibility within the United Nations. The capabilities of the UN rely heavily on the cooperation of its members, a collaborative peace process is necessary if the world is to reap the benefits of a United Nations Organization. Despite the assumption that the UN structure favors the Hegemon, it is a dynamic organization that is in the process of development and change. The UN was a different place during the Cold War whereas, it changed after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The response of other nations to this shift in global politics is one that guides UN trends. The debate between Universalism and Spheres of Influence ended because clearly there was one single winner of the cold war.

CHAPTER 2: CHANGING ROLE OF UN IN THE CONTEMPORARY ERA.

INTRODUCTION

The United Nations has been an ever changing institution, known for its shifting priorities and power players as well as inconsistencies in its agenda, the role of United Nations is not as it used to be. When UN came into existence, the world especially Europe was ravaged by conflicts and war, it was an expectation that UN would be able to bring about peaceful conflict resolution. However, the bipolar world order gave way to a cold war. It was later on an expectation that the post-cold war world would be easier to deal with and some semblance of peace will be achieved. However, the war on terror began soon after the disintegration of the Soviet Union and once again UN was unable to resolve conflicts that were arising between states and non-state actors. There were also other conflicts across the world that were not specifically related to the ongoing war on terror but arising from internal sociopolitical conflicts within states such as in Rwanda and Syria. However, it was observed that the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) could not take a proactive role when it came to conflict resolution in issues pertaining to USA, or any of the five permanent member states for that matter. This makes one question the legitimacy of UNSC conflict resolution and justice, specifically within the Security Council. Conflict resolution within the Security Council has proven to be a multi-faceted phenomenon, encompassing the authorization of sanctions, imposition of arms embargoes, establishment of peacekeeping missions, facilitation of negotiations, endorsement of diplomatic initiatives, promotion of justice and reconciliation, and engagement in conflict prevention efforts. By utilizing these various tools and approaches, the Security Council strives to promote peaceful resolutions, protect human lives, and maintain international peace and security. Power dynamics play a decisive role in the conflict resolution efforts of the United Nations Security Council. However, United States has seemed to hold the most amount of influence on decision making within the United Nations. The altering dynamics of United Nations within world affairs, especially the rising and falling of certain key players in the world, play a pivotal role in UN decision making and problem solving ability.

Changing Power Dynamics within United Nations

The United Nations came into existence with the intention of achieving liberal idealist goals; such as to evade destructive world wars, to preserve world peace and security and to become a platform for diplomatic relationships, to respect the autonomy of member states and give a voice to each nation in the General Assembly. These goals were to be achieved through a realist process due to the fact that the five permanent members of the Security Council collectively made up a great power chain of command that was impossible to bypass. The five veto power members agreed to maintain peace and security for the greater benefit of the world, but especially if that common good is accommodating to their national interest. The liberal and realist paradoxes in the United Nations are used and abused by the great powers to their advantage at multiple instances throughout history.

However, it was an assumption that this power politics within the organization would change in the era after the cold war as the geopolitical circumstances changed from a bipolar world order to uni-polarity. Therefore the world expected an era of peace and stability. However, the expansion of western influence within the organization played an adverse role which causes many to blame the United Nations for failing to uphold its promise of peace. Power dynamics within the United Nations can be influenced by various factors, including shifts in geopolitical alliances, changes in global economic and military power, and evolving priorities among member states. Therefore, the UN faced significant challenges in the post-Cold War era, which affected its ability to effectively perform its role in preserving global peace and security. The UN's budget and resources have been limited, and this might disturb its ability to carry out its obligation effectively. The organization was dependent on contributions from member states, and many of them were unwilling to provide adequate financial support. The United States being one of the leading sponsors of UN activities, it had a strong monopoly on UN decision making. Moreover, contrary to popular belief at the time, the end of the Cold War did not lead to an era of global cooperation, and political divisions continued to persist. The UN was often caught in the middle of these divisions, with member states pursuing their own national interests rather than working together to address global issues. This meant that The UN's decision-making process was often slow and inefficient, making it difficult to respond quickly to crises. This was exacerbated by the UN Security Council, where the veto power of the permanent members often prevented decisive action.

However, after a period of relative decline following the end of the Cold War, Russia has reemerged as a significant player on the global stage. Under President Vladimir Putin, Russia has sought to regain its influence and challenge Western dominance. Russia has used its veto power on numerous occasions, particularly in conflicts such as Syria and Ukraine. China's global influence and economic power has also grown significantly in the 21st century. This has translated into greater influence within the UNSC, as China has become more assertive in shaping global affairs. China has used its veto power to protect its interests and those of its allies, such as Russia and Iran. Even emerging powers such as India, Brazil, and South Africa have sought greater representation and a permanent seat on the UNSC. These countries, known as the G4, argue that the current composition of the UNSC does not reflect the geopolitical realities of the 21st century. However, progress on UNSC reform has been slow, and their aspirations for permanent membership have not been realized thus far. Moreover, the rise of non-state actors, such as ISIS, and regional conflicts in Syria and Yemen have tested the ability of the UNSC to respond effectively. Regional powers like Saudi Arabia and Iran have also sought to exert influence within the UNSC through their alliances and lobbying efforts.

In the 21st century, the role of the United Nations (UN) has undergone significant changes to address the evolving global challenges and realities. The UN, established in 1945, initially aimed to maintain global peace and security, promote human rights, and encourage cooperation among nations. While these objectives remain central to its mandate, the UN has adapted to new complexities and emerging issues in the contemporary world. One key change in the UN's role is its increased focus on sustainable development. The adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals⁶⁷ (SDGs) in 2015 demonstrated a shift towards a more comprehensive and holistic approach to development. The UN now actively engages in promoting economic growth, social inclusion, and environmental sustainability worldwide, recognizing the interconnectedness of these areas and their impact on global stability.

Another significant aspect of the UN's changing role is its response to humanitarian crises. The 21st century has witnessed a rise in complex emergencies, including

⁶⁷ Pradhan, Prajal, Luís Costa, Diego Rybski, Wolfgang Lucht, and Jürgen P. Kropp. "A systematic study of sustainable development goal (SDG) interactions." *Earth's Future* 5, no. 11 (2017): 1169-1179.

conflicts, natural disasters, and forced displacement. The UN has played a crucial role in coordinating humanitarian assistance, providing relief to affected populations, and advocating for the protection of vulnerable groups. Its peacekeeping operations have also adapted to address the changing nature of conflicts, encompassing efforts to prevent conflict, protect civilians, and facilitate peace building processes. Moreover, the UN has increasingly engaged with non-state actors, including civil society organizations, private sector entities, and academic institutions. Recognizing the importance of inclusive and multi-stakeholder approaches, the UN has sought to foster partnerships and collaboration to tackle global challenges. This shift acknowledges that addressing complex issues such as climate change, poverty, and inequality requires collective action and diverse perspectives. Additionally, the UN has made efforts to enhance its transparency, efficiency, and accountability. Reforms in its management structures, budgetary processes, and decision-making mechanisms aim to strengthen the organization's effectiveness and responsiveness to member states and the global community. However, the changing role of the UN in the 21st century also presents certain challenges. The organization faces increasing demands with limited resources, and its effectiveness can be hindered by political divisions among member states. Adapting to the rapidly evolving geopolitical landscape and ensuring the representation of emerging powers and regional dynamics also pose ongoing challenges for the UN.

Scope of Conflict Resolution with the Security Council

Conflict resolution plays a vital role within the framework of the United Nations Security Council. As an international organization responsible for the preservation of global peace and security, the Security Council has the authority to address and mitigate conflicts among nations. The scope of conflict resolution within the Security Council encompasses a range of activities and approaches aimed at peacefully resolving disputes, preventing the escalation of violence, and fostering long-term stability.

First and foremost, the Security Council has the authority to permit the use of sanctions and impose arms embargoes on parties involved in a conflict. Such as the sanctions that were imposed on North Korea due to its weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missile programs. These sanctions aim to halt North Korea's proliferation

activities and encourage denuclearization. Multiple resolutions have been passed by the Security Council since 2006, imposing increasingly stringent measures on North Korea. These measures are designed to exert diplomatic and economic pressure, encouraging parties to seek peaceful resolutions. The Security Council may also establish peacekeeping missions or impose peace agreements to help stabilize volatile situations and facilitate negotiations between conflicting parties.

Another significant aspect of conflict resolution within the Security Council involves mediation and diplomacy. The Council, through its member states or appointed envoys, can engage in direct negotiations, shuttle diplomacy, or track-two diplomacy to facilitate dialogue and reconciliation. This played a significant role in mediating the conflict between the Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots in Cyprus. The organization established the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus⁶⁸ (UNFICYP) in 1964, which has been involved in peacekeeping and mediation efforts on the island. Mediation efforts by the Security Council often include the deployment of special envoys or the establishment of ad-hoc committees to facilitate dialogue, build trust, and foster cooperative solutions.

Moreover, the Security Council can initiate or endorse diplomatic initiatives, such as peace conferences or international tribunals, to address root causes of conflicts, promote justice, and facilitate reconciliation processes. These initiatives aim to provide a platform for dialogue, reconciliation, and transitional justice mechanisms that can help heal wounds, address grievances, and promote lasting peace. Furthermore, the Security Council can play a crucial role in conflict prevention by closely monitoring potential conflicts and taking early preventive action. Through its regular assessments and analysis of global security issues, the Council can issue warnings, provide recommendations, and engage in preventive diplomacy to avert the outbreak or escalation of conflicts.

The UN institution works on a systematic hierarchy, at the highest level of authority is the UN General Assembly, which serves as the main deliberative body of the organization. Each member state, regardless of its size, has one vote in the General Assembly, and decisions on important issues, such as peace and security, require a

⁶⁸ Theodorides, John. "The United Nations Peace Keeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP)," *International & Comparative Law Quarterly* 31, no. 4 (1982): 765-783.

two-thirds majority. The Security Council is another critical component, one that truly depicts the UN hierarchy through its five permanent members that possess veto power as well as ten non-permanent members elected for two-year terms.

Below the Security Council, the UN Secretary-General plays a critical role in conflict resolution. The Secretary-General is the principal administrative officer of the UN and acts as a mediator, facilitator, and diplomat in international disputes. The Secretary-General often engages in shuttle diplomacy, conducting negotiations and diplomatic efforts to resolve conflicts peacefully.

In addition to these key structures, various subsidiary bodies, agencies, and specialized committees within the UN contribute to decision-making and conflict resolution processes. These include the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), the International Court of Justice (ICJ), and specialized agencies like the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Overall, the UN's hierarchy within decision making and conflict resolution provides a framework for member states to address global issues collectively and work towards peaceful solutions through diplomatic negotiations, mediation, and international cooperation.

However, The UN's authority is often limited by the reluctance of member states to accept its decisions. This was particularly evident in situations where the UN was called upon to enforce its resolutions, such as in the case of Iraq in the 1990s. The UN's peacekeeping missions in the post-Cold War era faced a number of challenges, including inadequate resources, unclear mandates, and hostile environments. These challenges led to a number of high-profile failures, such as the genocide in Rwanda in 1994 where the UN's failure to address the Genocide led to one of the worst humanitarian crises ever seen. Despite warnings of the impending violence and requests for UN intervention, the organization failed to act. The United States, which had previously been involved in peacekeeping efforts in Somalia, was reluctant to commit troops to Rwanda, and the UN did not have the resources or political will to act effectively. As a result, an estimated 800,000 Rwandans⁶⁹ were killed in just 100 days. The onus of this tragedy does not solely fall onto the UN but it was in fact, the

⁶⁹ Peter Uvin, "Reading the Rwandan genocide," *International Studies Review* 3, no. 3 (2001): 75-99.

veto power of the United States that led to the delay in UN intervention. The conflict sparked fierce internal debates within the US congress whether Rwanda was a civil war or genocide, the congress kept shying away from the term “genocide” because after the deaths of soldiers in Somalia, it could justify sending further troops into the African region, and therefore it was not onboard for a peacekeeping mission. Therefore UN was unable to perform its duties.

Unfortunately, Rwanda was not the only region where UN failed to uphold its charter. The lack of ability can be measured by the fact that the 2003 invasion of Iraq⁷⁰ by the United States, was carried out without UN authorization. The invasion was based on the premise that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction, but no such weapons were found. Many countries, including France, Germany, and Russia, were against the invasion and called for UN inspections to continue. However, the United States went ahead with the invasion anyway, leading to a prolonged conflict and a destabilization of the region. This dependency on the United States could not have been a positive thing for the world as US has been deeply polarized for generations and coming to a decision domestically is a feat in itself, let alone orchestrating international affairs.

The ongoing conflict in Syria is another example of the UN's limited ability to address conflicts when there's something at stake for the United States. Despite numerous efforts by the UN to broker a peace agreement, the conflict has continued for over a decade, due to the monetary and military support by the U.S and Russian governments to two separate conflicting parties in the Syrian conflict which clearly contradicted the mandate of the U.N Security Council and compromised the ceasefire agreement which resulted in the intensification of violent war in Syria during the period the peace deal was supposed to be in effect. This happened with no consequences for the United States nor any other super power. The involvement of superpowers has only fueled the conflict rather than helping the victims of this conflict, which leads one to believe that UN has come out as a pawn in the chess game played by hegemon rather than a power institution.

In addition to these specific conflicts, the UN has been criticized for its overall lack of effectiveness in addressing global issues, such as climate change and poverty. One

⁷⁰ Tuathail, Gearóid Ó. "“Just out looking for a fight”: American affect and the invasion of Iraq." *Antipode* 35, no. 5 (2003): 856-870.

might argue that the UN's structure, with its emphasis on consensus and the power of veto-wielding member states, hampers its ability to take decisive action.

Overall, while the UN has made imperative contributions to global peace and security, its ability to effectively address conflicts involving the United States has been limited. To overcome these challenges, it may be necessary to reform the UN's structure and increase its resources and political will. Some supporters of UN argue that despite these challenges, the UN has also had some successes in the post-Cold War era which must not be ignored. For example, the organization played a key role in ending apartheid in South Africa and in negotiating peace agreements in several regional conflicts. However, the overall picture is one of an organization struggling to adapt to the changing global landscape and facing significant obstacles in fulfilling its mandate. The United States has used the United Nations (UN) to further its own interests since the organization's inception in 1945. However, in the post-Cold War world, the United States became the world's sole superpower, and its actions at the UN became more pronounced.

During this time, the United States used the UN to legitimize its military interventions in various countries, including Iraq and Kosovo. The US also used its power and influence in the Security Council to push for resolutions that favored its interests and to prevent resolutions that could potentially threaten those interests. This led to growing resentment among other member states, who felt that the US was using the UN to advance its own agenda rather than working for the collective good. In addition, the US's increasing unilateralism and its tendency to bypass the UN altogether further eroded the organization's legitimacy and credibility. The US's actions, combined with other factors such as the UN's structural weaknesses and the difficulty of achieving consensus among its diverse membership, contributed to the organization's decline in the post-Cold War era.

However, it is important to note that the UN still plays a vital role in international affairs and has had many successes in promoting peace, human rights, and development around the world. While there are certainly challenges to the UN's effectiveness, it remains a crucial forum for global cooperation and diplomacy. Therefore one cannot write off the UN just yet, but must be aware of the discrepancies that have let down the world time and again.

Moreover, one cannot ignore how the polarizing domestic politics of the United States has had a significant impact on the decision-making of the United Nations in the post-Cold War era. The polarization of politics in the United States has made it difficult for the country to form a cohesive foreign policy, which has resulted in a lack of consistent leadership in the international community. As a result, the United States has been unable to exert the same level of influence on UN decision-making as it did during the Cold War⁷¹. The United States' decision to attack Iraq in 2003 is a prime example of such polarizing political decisions⁷². Despite opposition from several UN member states, the United States directed a coalition of countries to invade Iraq without a clear mandate from the United Nations Security Council. The invasion was highly controversial and has been criticized for its lack of legitimacy and the destabilizing effect it had on the region. The United States' decision to pull out from the Paris Agreement on climate change in 2017 is another event of domestic influence in international decision making. The Paris Agreement was a landmark agreement⁷³ negotiated under the auspices of the United Nations to address the threat of climate change. The United States' decision to withdraw from the agreement was highly controversial and was widely criticized by other UN member states. In 2017, the United States, under the administration of President Donald Trump, announced its intention to withdraw from the Paris Agreement. The decision to withdraw was largely driven by political factors and a divergence in opinions regarding climate change within the U.S. political landscape. The U.S. withdrawal from the Paris Agreement was met with widespread criticism from the international community and many domestic stakeholders, including environmental organizations, businesses, and state and local governments. These critics argued that the decision undermined global efforts to address climate change and weakened U.S. leadership on the issue. However, it's important to note that despite the federal government's decision to withdraw, many states, cities, and businesses in the United States have taken it upon themselves to continue supporting the goals of the Paris Agreement. These entities have pledged to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and pursue clean energy initiatives,

⁷¹ Thomas G. Weiss, "The United States and the United Nations: A Brief Introduction," in *The United States and the United Nations*, ed. by Lawrence S. Kaplan (New York: Council on Foreign Relations Press, 2001), 1-16

⁷² John G. Ruggie, "U.S. Foreign Policy After the Cold War," *Political Science Quarterly* 112, no. 4 (Winter 1997-1998): 553-570.

⁷³ U.S. Department of State, "United States Withdrawal from the Paris Agreement,"

irrespective of the federal government's stance. In 2021, under the administration of President Joe Biden, the United States rejoined the Paris Agreement, signaling a renewed commitment to international cooperation on climate change. The Biden administration has made addressing climate change a top priority and has set ambitious goals, including a target of net-zero emissions by 2050.

While the issue of climate change remains politically polarizing in the United States, there is a growing recognition of the need to take action and address the impacts of climate change. Public opinion has shifted, with a majority of Americans now expressing concern about climate change and supporting policies to mitigate its effects. The Paris Agreement continues to serve as an important framework for global climate action, despite the challenges posed by polarizing politics. In 2021, under the administration of President Joe Biden, the United States rejoined the Paris Agreement, signaling a renewed commitment to international cooperation on climate change. The Biden administration has made addressing climate change a top priority and has set ambitious goals, including a target of net-zero emissions by 2050. Polarized domestic politics in the United States have also affected UN decision-making on issues such as human rights and international development. The United States has been criticized for its inconsistent approach to human rights, with some UN member states accusing the country of double standards and hypocrisy. The United States has also been criticized for its approach to international development, with some UN member states accusing the country of using aid as a tool of foreign policy rather than as a means of promoting development.

Role of USA in UN decision making

The diplomatic engagement of the United States has had major influence on UN decision-making in the post-Cold War era. The U.S. has a robust diplomatic apparatus and maintains a vast network of embassies and diplomatic missions around the world. It actively engages in diplomatic efforts to mediate conflicts, broker peace agreements, and promote stability. The U.S. has been involved in numerous high-profile peace negotiations, such as the Camp David Accords between Israel and Egypt. During the uprising against the regime of Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi, the United States played a significant role in mobilizing international support for military intervention. In March 2011, a resolution was proposed at the UN Security

Council to establish a no-fly zone over Libya and authorize "all necessary measures" to protect civilians. The resolution was initially met with resistance from some Security Council members, including Russia and China, who had concerns about the potential for military escalation and infringement on Libya's sovereignty. The United States, along with its allies and partners, engaged in intensive diplomatic efforts to rally support for the resolution. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton personally lobbied foreign counterparts and delivered a forceful argument for international intervention. The United States utilized its diplomatic channels and influences to garner the necessary support within the Security Council.

Ultimately, on March 17, 2011, Resolution 1973 was approved with ten votes in favor and five abstentions, including from Russia and China. The resolution authorized military action to protect civilians in Libya and imposed a no-fly zone. Shortly after its passage, an alliance led by the United States and other NATO countries launched airstrikes and implemented the no-fly zone, ultimately leading to the downfall of Gaddafi's regime.

However, the lack of consistent leadership recently due to its entanglement in its own domestic issues has made it difficult for the USA to exert the same level of influence in the UNSC. This has created a more complex and difficult environment for international cooperation and decision-making. Such as the creation of ICC; US used its position of power to influence the UN's decision-making processes, and to promote its own interests in various UN initiatives. For example, the US played a strategic role in the creation of the International Criminal Court, but ultimately refused to join the court due to concerns about the court's potential to undermine US sovereignty⁷⁴

The US also played a leading role in several UN peacekeeping missions during the post-Cold War era, including in Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia, and Kosovo. However, the US often faced criticism for its unilateral actions in these missions, and for its use of force without explicit authorization from the UN Security Council⁷⁵. Overall, the post-Cold War era saw a shift in the UN's role from a primarily peacekeeping

⁷⁴ Timothy J. Biersteker, "The United States and the International Criminal Court," *International Journal* 57, no. 3 (2002): 389-407.

⁷⁵ Ramesh Thakur, *The United Nations, Peace and Security: From Collective Security to the Responsibility to Protect* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

organization to one that was increasingly involved in conflict prevention, mediation, and resolution⁷⁶. This shift was due in part to the changing nature of conflicts in the post-Cold War era, which were characterized by internal and intrastate conflicts rather than inter-state conflicts⁷⁷.

Conclusion

Thus we come to understand that generally liberal or idealist goals need to be streamlined through a realist process. By having checks and balances in place, a powerful chain of command set in place whose only goal is to spread peace and stability. The debate between liberalism and realism comes to a close on the point that both perspectives are part and parcel of one another. World affairs cannot be managed unless both perspectives are used to achieve ones goals.

However, the power dynamic of the cold war somewhat carried into the post-cold war era. This era was also symbolic for the war on terror that was started by the USA after the horrendous attack on the World Trade Center in 2001. This took the world into a much different direction than before and by stating that “you are either with us or with the terrorists” they had gained the support of the entire world.

United Nations on the other hand, plagued by financial issues, slow decision making capabilities, limited response to global conflicts and a hostile environment in which states were reluctant to accept and implement UN decisions. This was largely due to a lack of trust in United Nations as an institution. Moreover, the instances where the people relied on the UN to make good on their promises of peacekeeping, they failed. Whether, it is the example of, failure during the Rwandan Genocide in 1994 or turning a blind eye during the Invasion of Iraq in 2003, whether it was propaganda and misinformation during the Syrian conflict or the numerous other conflicts that have gone on for far too long such as Kashmir dispute or the Palestine issue.

Due to this, one might draw a conclusion, that the UN structure and its emphasis on consensus and the power of veto members is the reason UN is unable to come to conclusive and collective actions. Rather than being a powerful institution, UN acts as

⁷⁶ E. C. Luck, *The UN Security Council: From the Cold War to the 21st Century* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2012).

⁷⁷ M. W. Doyle and N. Sambanis, "International Peacebuilding: A Theoretical and Quantitative Analysis," *American Political Science Review* 94, no. 4 (2000): 779-801.

a pawn which brings down the trust that people have in it. It would do some good to restructure the UN while also increasing its resources and political will so that it might work independently for the betterment of society. That being said, there is no doubt that UN holds an important position in the world, by understanding that United States internal politics and its impact on UN decision making, one can make lasting change in the world. The internal political environment has been highly polarized in recent years; there is a need to explore the internal politics within the United States.

CHAPTER 3: POLARIZATION OF US POLITICAL SYSTEM AND ITS IMPACT ON UNITED NATIONS.

Introduction

The political system of the United States is based on a two party system, functioning within a framework of a constitutional federal republic, headed by a president. The root of the two-party system can be traced back to the early years of the United States. The Founding Fathers did not explicitly establish a two-party system, but the formation of political factions became evident during the presidency of George Washington. The Federalist Party, led by Alexander Hamilton, and the Democratic-Republican Party, led by Thomas Jefferson and James Madison, arose as the country's first major political parties. Over time, the Federalist Party disbanded, and the Democratic-Republican Party split into factions that eventually evolved into the modern Democratic Party (1828) and Republican Party (1854). These two parties have since dominated the political landscape, with other third parties having limited success in gaining significant representation at the national level. These parties emerged due to the ideological differences present within the U.S, which demanded representation within the government system. The Democratic Party generally leans towards progressive and liberal positions, advocating for social equality, government intervention in the economy, and a larger role for the federal government. The Republican Party, on the other hand, tends to be more conservative, emphasizing limited government, individual liberty, and free-market principles. Understanding these differences is of utmost importance when it comes to understanding the polarization of USA as a whole, whether it is the Federalist and Anti-Federalist papers, the Civil War (1861-1865), the use of mass media outlets along party preferences, the New Deal coalition under Roosevelt, the Civil Rights Movement or the Cold War. In fact it is important to explore this polarization until present day with the rise of populist leadership, the lengthening divide between the republicans and democrats. Whether it is the promotion of ideological conformity and the demonization of opposition that has eroded the trust of the public in their own institutions or whether through social media people have a heightened sense of social identity along with the rising number of racially and ethnically diverse voters that has contributed to the partisan divide. A divide that was only 10% in 1994 and has come up to 21% in 2017, to the point that 52% of Trump voters and 41% of Biden voters in

2021 supported the idea of dividing the United States into multiple countries based on party lines which is alarming. It would be wrong to states that these are entirely new concepts because partisan politics have been a part of US environment since the beginning and the world may be favoring Populist leaders today but USA has had populist leaders such as Andrew Jackson and Roosevelt throughout their history. Therefore it is absolutely necessary that one explores the extent of Ideological differences within the US political environment and understand the implications of this polarization on United Nations.

Emergence of Political Polarization in USA

The rise in political polarization⁷⁸ within American politics is not an unheard of concept, especially in this day and age. Many states have fallen prey to this propensity of polarization, giving birth to populist leaders that take center stage within their political structures. America had seen polarization to some degree since its earliest origin. The circumstances of political polarization in the United States can be traced back to the country's founding. The Federalist and Anti-Federalist debates of the late 18th century, for instance, were categorized by profound divisions over issues such as the role of government administration, the balance of power between the federal government and the states, and the protection of individual rights. These differences set the stage for a political system that was fundamentally divided along ideological positions. The Federalists were supporters of the Constitution and advocated for its ratification. They believed in a resilient central government with a broad scope of powers. The Federalists argued that a strong national government was indispensable to provide stability, protect individual liberties, and promote economic development. Prominent Federalists included Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Adams. They published a series of essays known as "The Federalist Papers" to endorse the ratification of the Constitution.

On the other hand, the Anti-Federalists opposed the Constitution and were skeptical of a strong central government. They were concerned that a authoritative federal

⁷⁸ Thomas Carothers, "The Long Path of Polarization in the United States," in *Democracies Divided: The Global Challenge of Political Polarization*, ed. Thomas Carothers and Andrew O'Donohue (Brookings Institution Press, 2019), 65–92, accessed June 25, 2023, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7864/j.ctvbd8j2p.6>.

government could infringe upon individual rights and bear a resemblance to a monarchy or aristocracy. The Anti-Federalists preferred a more decentralized system of government with power resting predominantly in the hands of the states. Prominent Anti-Federalists included Patrick Henry, Samuel Adams, and Thomas Jefferson. They argued against the Constitution and advocated for the inclusion of a Bill of Rights to guard individual liberties.

The deliberation between the Federalists and Anti-Federalists was intense and revolved around issues such as the scope of federal power, the balance between state and national authority, and the protection of individual rights. Ultimately, the Constitution was ratified in 1788, but the Anti-Federalists' apprehensions played a substantial role in the addition of the Bill of Rights, which secured individual liberties and satisfied some of their objections.

It is worth noting that after the ratification of the Constitution and the establishment of the federal government, the terms "Federalist" and "Anti-Federalist" were no longer used as formal political affiliations. Instead, they developed into the initial political parties of the United States, with the Federalists transforming into the Federalist Party and the Anti-Federalists becoming the Democratic-Republican Party.

During the 19th century, political polarization in the United States was often shaped by regional differences. The North and the South, for instance, had divergent economic, social, and cultural systems, which led to deep disagreements over concerns such as slavery, tariffs, and states' rights. These differences ultimately climaxed in the Civil War, which was one of the utmost polarizing and divisive events in American history.

During the Civil War in America, the nation became deeply polarized along numerous lines, chiefly driven by the issue of slavery and its expansion. The divide between the Northern states, which were mainly industrialized and urbanized, and the Southern states, which relied significantly on agriculture and slave labor, grew increasingly pronounced. The Northern states were generally in favor of abolition and the salvation of the Union, while the Southern states strongly defended their right to continue slavery and sought to protect their perceived economic and political interests.

The political landscape mirrored this polarization⁷⁹, with the formation of two distinctive factions: the Unionists in the North and the Confederates in the South. The stark contrast in ideologies led to intensified tensions, escalating into open hostility and eventually armed conflict. The election of Abraham Lincoln, who opposed the expansion of slavery, as President in 1860 further fueled the divide, prompting several Southern states to disaffiliate from the Union and form the Confederate States of America.

The polarization extended beyond political allegiances and into the cultural and social fabric of the nation. Deep-rooted regional dissimilarities, economic disparities, and differing attitudes towards race and labor further exacerbated the divisions. These ideological and social divisions were frequently passed down through generations, fostering an environment of deep-seated animosity and mistrust.

The Civil War witnessed families torn apart, with brothers fighting on opposite flanks and communities divided along geographical lines. The conflict not only pitted state against state but also created divisions within states and communities, where loyalties were tested and friendships strained. This polarization continued throughout the war and shaped the course of the conflict, ultimately leading to a protracted and devastating conflict that claimed hundreds of thousands of lives. In summary, the polarization during the Civil War in America was primarily driven by the opposing views on slavery and its expansion. The divide between the Northern and Southern states escalated into a full-blown armed conflict, resulting in a deeply divided nation where political, social, and cultural differences were amplified, leading to long-lasting consequences for the United States which are still evident today.

In the 20th century, political polarization in the United States was determined by a number of factors, including the escalation of mass media, the development of the federal government, and the progression of interest groups. The New Deal coalition of the 1930s and 1940s, perhaps, brought together a diverse assemblage of voters who were united by their support for government intervention in the economy and social welfare programs. This alliance helped to solidify the Democratic Party as the party of big government and social liberalism, while the Republican Party became allied with smaller government and conservative social values. The New Deal Coalition was a political

⁷⁹ Buehrig, Edward H. "The United States, the United Nations and Bi-Polar Politics." *International Organization* 4, no. 4 (1950): 573–84. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2703992>.

alliance formed during the 1930s in the United States in response to the Great Depression. It was led by President Franklin D. Roosevelt and brought together various groups, including urban workers, labor unions, African Americans, farmers, and intellectuals. The coalition's main objective was to implement Roosevelt's New Deal policies, which aimed to combat the economic crisis and provide relief, recovery, and reform.

The New Deal Coalition⁸⁰ had a profound impact on the political landscape of the time and set the stage for future political polarization. Firstly, the coalition fostered a sense of solidarity among diverse groups that had previously been divided along social, economic, and racial lines. It brought together urban and rural populations, labor unions, and minority communities, creating a broad-based alliance that worked towards common goals. The New Deal policies implemented by the coalition resulted in significant government intervention in the economy and the expansion of the federal government's role. This shift towards a more pro-active government led to several disagreements over the appropriate scope and limits of governmental power. These ideological divisions laid the groundwork for future political polarization, as conservative critics saw the New Deal as an overreach of government authority and a threat to individual liberties.

Furthermore, the New Deal Coalition's support for civil rights and economic reforms, such as the establishment of social security and labor protections, drew opposition from conservative Southern Democrats. This internal tension within the coalition further contributed to growing polarization. While the New Deal Coalition succeeded in alleviating the immediate effects of the Great Depression and reshaping the role of government, its long-term impact on polarization cannot be overlooked. The political divisions that emerged during this era laid the foundation for subsequent ideological battles and realignments in American politics, setting the stage for the polarization that continues to shape the nation's political landscape to this day.

⁸⁰ The New Deal Coalition was primarily associated with the Democratic Party and was instrumental in securing Roosevelt's electoral victories in the 1930s and 1940s. Its policies aimed to address the economic hardships of the Great Depression through government intervention, job creation, and social welfare programs. The coalition supported initiatives such as the establishment of the Social Security system, the Works Progress Administration (WPA), and the National Labor Relations Act (Wagner Act)

The 1960s and 1970s saw a fresh wave of political polarization⁸¹ in the United States, as the civil rights movement, the Vietnam War, and the counterculture movement brought abysmal dissections to the forefront of American politics. The Republican Party initiated an appeal to working-class whites who were disheartened by the Democratic Party's emphasis on civil rights and social justice, while the Democratic Party became more closely aligned with liberal elites and minority groups.

In recent years, political polarization in the United States has become more noticeable than ever before, with the two major parties becoming progressively more polarized along ideological and demographic lines⁸². According to a 2017 Pew Research Center survey, "Democrats and Republicans are more at odds along ideological lines and partisan antagonism is profounder and more widespread than at any point in the last two decades." This polarization has been driven by a number of elements, including rising income inequality, the growing influence of money in politics, and the increasing role of social media in shaping public opinion. The political system in the United States has been branded by unprecedented polarization in recent years. The polarization of the US political system is obvious in the increasing partisan divide between Democrats and Republicans, the rise of populism, and the widening ideological differences between the two major political parties.

Partisan Divide

Polarization in America begins with a polarizing political landscape and political elites creating favoritism for their respective ideological group that translates into the public as well. The partisan divide between Democrats and Republicans has been an essential feature of US politics for decades. However, the divide has become more evident in recent years, with each party becoming more ideologically distinctive from the other. In a study conducted by the Pew Research Center⁸³, the percentage of Democrats and Republicans holding extreme ideological views increased from 10% in 1994 to 21% in

⁸¹ Tom S. Clark, "Measuring Ideological Polarization on the United States Supreme Court," *Political Research Quarterly* 62, no. 1 (2009): 146-157, accessed June 25, 2023, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27759852>.

⁸² Posard, Marek N., William Marcellino, Todd C. Helmus, and Katie Feistel. "The United States in the 21st Century: A Polarized Democracy." In *A House Reunited: Prospects for Bipartisanship in a Divided Country*. RAND Corporation, 2023. Accessed June 25, 2023. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep47142.4>.

⁸³ Pew research center, December 17, 2019.

2017. This indicates that the two parties are moving further away from each other, with little room for compromise. One of the main reasons for the partisan divide is the changing demographics of the country⁸⁴. The United States is becoming more diverse, with ethnic and racial minorities making up a larger percentage of the population. This has led to the rise of identity politics, where individuals identify more strongly with their race, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation than with their political party. Identity politics has led to the formation of interest groups that advocate for specific policies that benefit their communities, leading to more polarization. Another factor contributing to the partisan divide is the media landscape. The media has become more polarized, with news outlets catering to specific political ideologies. This has led to the creation of echo chambers, where individuals are only exposed to information that confirms their preexisting beliefs. This reinforces partisan identities and makes it difficult to find common ground. Donald Trump's presidency was marked by a significant increase in partisan polarization. Trump had a unique style and approach to politics, often employing divisive rhetoric and engaging in confrontational tactics. His policies, communication style, and willingness to challenge established norms and institutions often intensified political divisions in the country. Trump's presidency witnessed heightened polarization and animosity between Republicans and Democrats, as well as within the Republican Party itself.

Populism

Populism has also contributed to the polarization of the US political system. Populism is a political ideology that emphasizes the interests and needs of ordinary people over those of the elites. In recent years, populism has gained traction in the United States, with the rise of politicians like Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders. Populism has contributed to polarization by creating a sense of “us versus them” mentality. Populist politicians often frame issues in terms of a struggle between the people and the elite. This creates a polarized environment where compromise and cooperation are seen as a betrayal of the people’s interests. Andrew Jackson, who served as the seventh president of the United States from 1829 to 1837, is often regarded as one of the early populist leaders. His administration was marked by efforts to empower the common man and challenge the political and economic elite. Similarly, Theodore Roosevelt (1901-1909) advocated for

⁸⁴ Kirkland, Justin H. “Ideological Heterogeneity and Legislative Polarization in the United States.” *Political Research Quarterly* 67, no. 3 (2014): 533–46. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24371890>.

progressive policies that aimed to address social and economic inequality and curb the power of large corporations. His focus on "trust-busting" and conservation initiatives resonated with the public, particularly the working class. Another factor contributing to the rise of populism is economic inequality. The United States has one of the highest percentages of income inequality amongst developed countries. Populist politicians often exploit this inequality to gain support by promising to fight for the interests of the working class.

Ideological Differences

The widening ideological differences between Democrats and Republicans have also contributed to the polarization of the US political system. In the past, the two parties had more in common ideologically, with both advocating for a mixed economy and a robust welfare state. However, in recent years, the Republican Party has become more conservative, advocating for smaller government, lower taxes, and deregulation, while the Democratic Party has become more progressive, advocating for larger government, higher taxes, and more regulations.

One reason for the ideological shift is the changing demographic makeup of the parties. The Republican Party has become whiter and more rural, while the Democratic Party has become more diverse. During the presidency of Barack Obama, who served from 2009 to 2017, the Democratic Party emphasized principles of inclusivity and diversity. Obama himself became the first person of African American descent to be elected president of United States, which was a significant milestone in American history. Under the Obama administration, efforts were made to promote diversity and equal representation in various aspects of society, including government, the judiciary, and the military. Obama appointed individuals from diverse backgrounds to key positions in his administration, aiming to ensure that different perspectives and experiences were represented in decision-making processes more urban. This has led to a divergence in the values and priorities of the two parties.

Another reason for the ideological shift is the influence of interest groups. Interest groups represent specific industries or communities and lobby for policies that benefit their constituents. The influence of interest groups has led to the adoption of more extreme positions by the two parties, making compromise more difficult.

Implications of Polarization

The polarization of the US political system has significant implications for democracy, governance, and policymaking. The implications of political polarization for American democracy are significant. Polarization can lead to gridlock and dysfunction in government, as politicians become more focused on partisan goals than on finding common ground and making compromises. It can also lead to a lack of trust and confidence in government, as citizens become disillusioned with the political process and feel that their voices are not being heard. Ultimately, political polarization can undermine the legitimacy of democratic institutions and threaten the stability of the American political system. Such as, the aftermath of the 2020 presidential election. The election between Donald Trump and Joe Biden was highly contentious, with both candidates and their supporters holding deeply divided views. Following the election, President Trump and some of his supporters claimed without evidence that the election was fraudulent and stolen from him. These claims were widely circulated on social media and amplified by certain media outlets. The polarization surrounding the election and the subsequent legal challenges further deepened the divide among Americans. As a result, a significant portion of the American population, particularly Trump supporters, expressed a diminished trust in the government and its institutions. They believed that the election was rigged, which undermined their faith in the electoral process and the democratic system as a whole.

The political system in the United States has been historically polarized, with deep divisions and disagreements between the two major parties. This polarization has been driven by a number of factors, including ideological differences, partisan competition, and demographic changes. While political polarization is not a new phenomenon in American politics, it has become increasingly pronounced in recent years, with significant implications for its role in international relations.

Implications for its role in United Nations.

While previously polarization was predominantly observed in issue-based terms, a new variety of division has emerged in the mass public in recent years: Average Americans increasingly dislike and distrust supporters of the other political party. Political polarization has become a defining feature of the United States in recent years, with deep

divisions between conservatives and liberals. This increasing polarization has implications not only domestically but also for the country's role in multinational institutions such as the United Nations (UN).

US political polarization directly affects the formulation and execution of foreign policy, consequently impacting its engagements within the United Nations. With differing ideological perspectives, conservatives and liberals often have contrasting priorities in international affairs. This divergence in foreign policy goals and strategies can hinder the ability of the US to present a united front in multilateral negotiations or decision-making processes within the UN. The lack of consensus within the US political landscape can weaken its diplomatic influence and hamper its ability to pursue shared objectives on the global stage.

Political polarization often leads to inconsistent policy positions, as different administrations and parties adopt conflicting stances on global issues. This inconsistency weakens the US's ability to project a united front within the UN and erodes its diplomatic credibility. International partners find it challenging to gauge the long-term commitment of the US to international agreements and initiatives, leading to diminished trust and cooperation.

The US's internal political battles often consume significant attention and resources, diverting focus away from international affairs. Contentious domestic issues and election cycles can overshadow diplomatic priorities, hindering the US's capacity to actively engage in the UN and fulfill its obligations as a member state. The US has traditionally wielded significant soft power, influencing global opinion through its democratic values, cultural exports, and economic clout. However, political polarization has tarnished the US's image on the international stage. Such as the case of the Iraq War in 2003. The United States, under President George W. Bush, led a coalition of countries to invade Iraq based on the assumption that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) and posed a danger to international security. The US government presented its case to the United Nations Security Council in an effort to gain support for military action. However, the UN Security Council was divided on the issue, with some member states expressing skepticism about the existence of WMDs and advocating for a peaceful resolution. The United States, along with the United Kingdom, pushed for a resolution that would authorize the use of force against Iraq if it did not comply with UN demands

for disarmament. However, several permanent members of the Security Council, including France, Russia, and China, expressed reservations and called for further diplomatic efforts and inspections. The division within the Security Council was largely influenced by partisan politics and differing national interests. The United States, under a Republican administration, believed that military action was necessary and argued that Iraq's possession of WMDs posed a direct threat to international security. On the other hand, countries such as France, Russia, and China, which had reservations about the invasion, had their own political and economic interests at stake. Some argued that the US push for military action was driven by geopolitical considerations rather than legitimate concerns about WMDs. Ultimately, the United States and its allies proceeded with the invasion of Iraq without obtaining a specific UN Security Council resolution authorizing the use of force. This decision created significant controversy and strained international relations, with some countries arguing that the invasion violated the principles of the UN Charter and undermined the credibility of the Security Council. The Iraq War serves as an example of how partisan politics, combined with differing national interests, can impact UN decisions in conflict areas. The divisions within the Security Council reflected the political dynamics and priorities of its member states, and the lack of consensus ultimately affected the UN's ability to take unified action.

The perception of a divided and inward-looking nation weakens its ability to effectively lead and shape global narratives within the UN. Other nations may be less inclined to follow US leadership or seek its mediation in international conflicts. One might look at global climate change for example, which is a very real, very dangerous phenomenon. US domestic politics have played a significant role in shaping UN climate policies, and the country's stance on climate change has had both positive and negative effects on global climate action.

In 2015, the United States, under the Obama administration, played a crucial role in negotiating the Paris Agreement; an international treaty aimed at fighting climate change. The agreement set the objective of limiting global warming to well below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. The active engagement of the US government in the negotiations and its commitment to climate action helped bring together nations from around the world to agree on a common framework. This demonstrated the positive influence of US domestic politics in shaping UN climate

policies. With its power as a global hegemon, USA has the power to encourage other nations to get on board and potentially make lasting change.

However, In 2017, the Trump administration declared its intention to withdraw the United States from the Paris Agreement⁸⁵. This decision sent shockwaves throughout the international community and raised concerns about the global effort to combat climate change. The withdrawal was based on the argument that the Paris agreement would impose unfair financial burdens on the US and would negatively impact domestic industries, particularly fossil fuel-related sectors. The US officially withdrew from the agreement on November 4, 2020. This move weakened the UN climate policies by reducing the financial and technological contributions that the US could have made to support global climate action.

While the federal government's stance on climate change has fluctuated, various US states, cities, businesses, and civil society organizations have taken significant steps to address climate change. Many states, such as California, have implemented ambitious climate policies, including carbon pricing, renewable energy standards, and emissions reduction targets. These subnational initiatives have helped maintain momentum on climate action within the US and have demonstrated the commitment of a significant portion of the country to combating climate change, despite the federal government's position. The involvement of subnational actors has also influenced UN climate policies by highlighting the importance of multi-level governance and encouraging collaboration among different stakeholders. With great power comes great responsibility, US played a pivotal role in negotiating the Paris Agreement but later withdrew from it under the Trump administration. However, subnational climate initiatives within the US have continued to contribute to global climate action and shape UN policies. The interplay between US domestic politics and UN climate policies is a complex dynamic that continues to evolve as political priorities and leadership change. The recent administration has reinstated the Paris Agreement which is undoubtedly a positive step, but who is to say and ensure that the next government does not change its plans for the Paris agreement. In such a situation, how can one reinstate its trust in the United States?

⁸⁵Zhang, Yong-Xiang, Qing-Chen Chao, Qiu-Hong Zheng, and Lei Huang. "The withdrawal of the US from the Paris Agreement and its impact on global climate change governance." *Advances in Climate Change Research* 8, no. 4 (2017): 213-219.

Addressing the Challenges:

This is only possible through bipartisan cooperation and fostering open dialogue, these things are crucial for mitigating political polarization. Leaders from both parties should prioritize national interests over partisan gains, engaging in constructive debates and seeking common ground on international issues. Stronger internal cohesion would enhance the US's ability to project a united front within the UN. Moreover by Demonstrating consistent and long-term commitment to international agreements and multilateralism USA can rebuild trust and restore its diplomatic standing. Staying true to commitments made by previous administrations, while providing clear communication on policy shifts, would bolster confidence in the US as a reliable partner within the UN. USA also needs to extend engagement beyond traditional political channels by involving civil society organizations, think tanks, and academia can help bridge political divides. These stakeholders can provide fresh perspectives, research, and policy recommendations, fostering a more informed and balanced approach to international affairs.

Conclusion:

Thus, it is to be understood that polarization is inevitable in a political system such as that of the United States, it has been a source of concern for political actors and visionaries alike when it comes to domestic policies. Moreover, US political polarization poses significant challenges for the country's role within the United Nations and its ability to effectively engage in diplomatic efforts. The inconsistent policy positions, domestic distractions, and erosion of soft power all undermine the US's diplomatic influence and hinder its ability to address global challenges. By prioritizing bipartisan cooperation, reaffirming long-term commitments, and engaging a broader range of voices, the US can work towards bridging its internal divisions and strengthen its diplomatic role within the United Nations. Only through concerted efforts to overcome polarization can the US effectively navigate diplomatic challenges and contribute to global problem-solving. However, one must not forget that Polarizing politics can stimulate increased political engagement and awareness, as people become more passionate and motivated to participate in the democratic process. This heightened engagement can lead to greater scrutiny of policies, increased voter turnout, and a more

active citizenry. Nevertheless, it can also lead to political gridlock, making it difficult for lawmakers to find common ground and pass effective legislation. This can hinder progress on important issues, both domestically and internationally, and impede the ability to address global challenges such as climate change or international conflicts. The United States is a global superpower, and its political decisions have a significant impact on the rest of the world. Where a polarized political landscape provides clarity on the differing ideologies, it can also result in inconsistent or unpredictable foreign policies, which contribute to global instability and uncertainty. International relations and cooperation may be affected if the U.S is unable to present a united front on important global issues, therefore it would benefit from a bipartisan unanimous stance on major world issues.

CHAPTER 4: COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF OBAMA VS. TRUMP PRESIDENCIES

Introduction

The political landscape of the United States has been marked by increasing polarization in recent years. However, how far does this polarization exist? Is there a tangible difference between Republicans and Democrats, between the presidents Barack Obama and Donald Trump? A comparative analysis of the presidencies of Barack Obama and Donald Trump provides insight into the ways in which these two leaders contributed to, and were shaped by, this polarized environment.

The rise of executive centered party-system⁸⁶, which is heavily dependent on presidential candidates and presidents to articulate party doctrines, raise resources for the election campaigns, campaign on behalf of their partisan colleagues and raise public support has led to growing polarization in American politics. Barack Obama, the 44th President of the United States, was in office from 2009 to 2017, while Donald Trump stayed in office from 2017 to 2021 after which he was impeached unanimously by the congress. The period between 2009 to 2021 saw enormous social and political change domestically as well as internationally, from the great recession of 2008 to the massive outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic in 2020, the rise of the black lives matter campaign and rampant police brutality against racial minorities, to the Arab spring, the ongoing afghan war, the war in Syria and much unrest in the middle east region. The years under these two presidencies put America center stage in global politics and determined the future of US influence in the world.

President Barrack Obama came into office with a message of hopefulness and transformation, and his administration was marked by a focus on issues such as healthcare reform, climate change, and income inequality⁸⁷. However, Obama faced substantial opposition from Republicans in Congress, who saw his policies as too liberal and too invasive into the private sector. This opposition was evident in the

⁸⁶ Kenneth S. Lowande and Sidney M. Milkis, "We Can't Wait": Barack Obama, Partisan Polarization and the Administrative Presidency, *The Forum* 2014, no. 12(1): 3-27, DOI 10.1515/for-2014-0022.

⁸⁷ "Barack Obama: Hope and Change." *History.com*. Accessed March 21, 2023. <https://www.history.com/topics/us-presidents/barack-obama>.

2010 midterm elections, in which Republicans gained control of the House of Representatives.⁸⁸ Despite this opposition, Obama was able to achieve some noteworthy legislative victories during his time in office. In 2010, he signed the Affordable Care Act into law, which expanded access to healthcare for millions of Americans.⁸⁹ He also signed the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act into legislation, which planned to avert another economic crisis similar to the one that happened in 2008.⁹⁰

Donald Trump, the 45th President of the United States, was in office from 2017 to 2021. Trump's presidency was marked by a emphasis on issues such as immigration, trade, and national security. Trump attracted a base of voters who felt unheeded by the political establishment and promised to "Make America Great Again."⁹¹ However, Trump's presidency was also marked by controversy and conflict. Trump faced significant opposition from Democrats in Congress, who saw his policies as divisive and harmful to American democracy. This opposition was evident in the 2018 midterm elections, in which Democrats gained control of the House of Representatives. Trump was also impeached twice by the House of Representatives, first in 2019 over his interactions with Ukraine, and then again in 2021 over his role in the January 6th insurrection at the Capitol. Despite this opposition, Trump was able to achieve some significant legislative victories during his time in office. In 2017, he signed the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act into law, which lowered the corporate tax rate and aimed to stimulate economic growth. He also signed the First Step Act into law, which aimed to reform the criminal justice system and reduce recidivism. Basically both the presidencies of Barack Obama and Donald Trump provide insight into the ways in which polarization has impacted American politics. While both leaders faced significant opposition from the opposing party, they were able to achieve some significant legislative victories during their time in office. However, the controversies and conflicts that marked their presidencies highlight the challenges of governing in a polarized environment.

⁸⁸ "2010 Midterm Elections: Republicans Take the House," History.com, accessed March 21, 2023, <https://www.history.com/topics/us-presidents/2010-midterm-elections>.

⁸⁹ "The Affordable Care Act: What You Need to Know," Healthline, accessed March 21, 2023, <https://www.healthline.com/health/affordable-care-act>.

⁹⁰ "Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act," Investopedia, accessed March 21, 2023, <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/d/dodd-frank-financial-regulatory-reform-bill.asp>.

⁹¹ "Donald Trump: Make America Great Again," History.com, accessed March 21, 2023.

Obama Presidency: Polarization under a Democratic Administration:

The presidency of Barack Obama marked a significant chapter in American history, as the nation elected its first African-American president. With his charismatic leadership and promises of hope and change, Obama inspired millions of Americans across the political spectrum. However, beneath the surface of optimism and progress, the Obama presidency was also marked by a deepening political polarization that intensified the ideological divide in the United States.

Barack Obama came into power as a symbolic leader, the kind of leader that would transcend the partisan divide that was so evident during the George W. Bush era⁹², and would unite both Republicans and Democrats under one umbrella. There had been a number of policy stalemates in Congress over the years. Often it was instigated due to the rise in political polarization; which led to the White House using its executive power in order to reach conclusive decisions. Ever since the end of 1980s, the administration has been agitated by conflicts along party lines, most notably during the progressive and the new deal eras. Most political scholars have reported political dissatisfactions and have emphasized the effects of polarization within Congress, therefore “modern” policymaking also has become more and more partisan. Presidents have begun to mobilize partisan opinion and use their administrative power for their party’s objectives. Obama came into office under these circumstances and it seemed that he would be yet another executive caught between this partisan crossfire; furthermore, political polarization had even divided the Congress.

When Barack Obama assumed office in 2009, he faced a deeply divided nation. The partisan divide had been growing for decades, fueled by cultural, economic, and social issues. The rise of the Tea Party movement⁹³, which emerged as a conservative

⁹² Kenneth S. Lowande and Sidney M. Milkis, "Barack Obama, Partisan Polarization and the Administrative Presidency," *The Forum* 12, no. 1 (2014): 3–27.

⁹³ The Tea Party movement was a conservative populist social and political movement that emerged in 2009 in the United States, generally opposing excessive taxation and government intervention in the private sector while supporting stronger immigration controls. In the wake of the financial crisis that swept the globe in 2008, populist sentiment was once more on the rise. The catalyst for what would become known as the Tea Party movement came on February 19, 2009, when Rick Santelli, a commentator on the business-news network CNBC, referenced the Boston Tea Party (1773) in his response to Pres. Barack Obama’s mortgage relief plan. This began a series of protests against taxation, protesters claimed that “Tea” was an acronym for “Taxed Enough Already.” (Britannica)

response to Obama's presidency, added fuel to the fire of polarization. The Tea Party's opposition to Obama's policies on healthcare, taxes, and government spending galvanized the Republican base and solidified the party's opposition to Democratic initiatives. The rise of the tea party movement gave fuel to rampant polarization amidst the population, especially due to its use of social media platforms such as twitter and Facebook. Polarization between the elite reflects in polarization between the populations, United States became increasingly divided during this time.

The Obama Administration eventually resorted to a unilateral form of decision making in order to deliver pending policy decisions. This was a refreshing change and garnered positive public opinion, making Obama turn out to be a man of his word as he delivered the promises he made in this campaigns. As it is difficult to get executive orders passed by a polarized congress and tough judiciary, Obama was often praised for his administrative politics.

Trump Presidency: Polarization under a Republican Administration:

The Trump presidency, which spanned from January 20, 2017, to January 20, 2021, was marked by intense polarization within American society. Donald Trump, a Republican, assumed office amidst a deeply divided nation, and his administration exacerbated the existing divisions, leading to heightened partisan polarization and a fractured political landscape.

The Trump presidency witnessed intense partisan gridlock, making it difficult to advance major policy initiatives. With a Republican-controlled Congress during the early years of his presidency, Trump faced challenges in passing legislation on key agenda items, such as healthcare and immigration reform. The inability to achieve significant policy victories reinforced the perception of a deeply divided government and contributed to increased polarization. It did not help that Trump himself was an incredibly polarizing figure and instead of maneuvering through the politics, he exacerbated it and used it to his own advantage. The use of inflammatory language and engaging personal attacks against his opponents deepened the „us vs them“ narrative that got him elected in the first place.

Moreover, He pursued policy positions that were often viewed as controversial and polarizing. For example, his immigration policies, such as the travel ban targeting

predominantly Muslim countries and his push for building a wall along the U.S.-Mexico border, generated significant debates and led to polarization between those who supported and opposed these measures. His direct communication with the public through twitter fueled aggressive debates, and divisions amongst the people. His term deepened the existing partisan divide in the country, with Republicans generally rallied behind Trump, supporting his policies and defending him against criticism, while Democrats largely opposed his agenda. This increased polarization between the two major political parties led to a breakdown of many international relations issues.

The administration mistrusted multilateral institutions like the United Nations and the European Union, and his emphasis on transactional diplomacy, strained relationships with traditional allies. Trump's „America First“ foreign policy approach, which prioritized American interests and advocated for renegotiating or withdrawing from international agreements, drew mixed reactions globally. While some countries appreciated the emphasis on sovereignty and self-interest, others expressed concern about the potential consequences for global stability and cooperation.

The Donald Trump administration vowed to address the unfair trade practices of China and therefore employed tariffs and trade restrictions, therefore pursuing an assertive stance towards Chinese businesses. This approach sparked tensions between the world's two largest economies and contributed to a trade war.

It's important to note that political polarization and its impact on international relations are complex phenomena influenced by numerous factors beyond any single presidency. While Trump's tenure exacerbated existing divisions and generated international controversies, the roots of political polarization and its effects predate his presidency and continue to be relevant in the post-Trump era.

Comparative Analysis: Polarization during Obama vs. Trump Presidencies:

Economic Policies and Impact

Obama:

During his presidency, Barack Obama implemented several economic policies aimed at addressing the challenges faced by the United States after the 2008 financial crisis. Some of the key economic policies pursued by the Obama administration included the

American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA⁹⁴), which aimed to incentivize businesses and aimed to upsurge economic growth and create jobs by increasing the amount of government spending. The ARRA allocated funds towards infrastructure projects, education, renewable energy, and tax relief for individuals and businesses.

The much renowned Affordable Care Act (ACA⁹⁵); also known as Obamacare, was another reform that benefitted the healthcare system by expanding access to healthcare, implementing insurance market reforms, and establishing health insurance exchanges. The ACA aimed to increase coverage, reduce healthcare costs, and improve the quality of care. Despite being at the forefront of endless debate and contention but it was a remarkable step for the health care and insurance sector. Whereas, the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act⁹⁶, sought to regulate the financial industry and address issues that contributed to the financial crisis. Establishing new regulations for banks, increased oversight of financial institutions, and created the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau. Obama also advocated for changes to the tax code, including raising taxes on high-income earners and implementing tax credits for low-income individuals and families. He aimed to reduce income inequality and generate revenue to fund social programs.

Overall, the Obama administration faced significant partisan divisions and ideological differences. The political climate during his presidency was characterized by intense polarization and gridlock, making it challenging to pass legislation and implement policies. The deep divisions between Democrats and Republicans often resulted in legislative battles, which hindered the implementation of Obama's policy agenda⁹⁷. Political polarization during the Obama era was influenced by ideological differences, policy disagreements, and the rise of grassroots movements such as the Tea Party⁹⁸.

⁹⁴ It was intended to stem the job losses associated with that recessionary period using a package of economic stimulus measures such as tax cuts, government spending, and targeted financial assistance. (Adam Hayes, Investopedia, 2023)

⁹⁵ McIntyre, A., and Z. Song. "The US Affordable Care Act: Reflections and Directions at the Close of a Decade." *PLoS Medicine* 16, no. 2 (2019): e1002752. Accessed June 25, 2023. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pmed.1002752>.

⁹⁶ United States. Congress. *Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act: Conference Report (to Accompany HR 4173)*. Vol. 111, no. 517. US Government Printing Office, 2010.

⁹⁷ Greenstein, Fred I. "Barack Obama: The Man and His Presidency at the Midterm." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 44, no. 1 (2011): 7–11. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40984474>.

⁹⁸ Jules Boykoff and Eulalie Laschever, "The Tea Party Movement, Framing, and the US Media," *Social Movement Studies* 10, no. 4 (2011): 341-366.

The contentious debates surrounding healthcare reform, immigration, gun control, and climate change further exacerbated the political polarization.

The challenges of political polarization made it difficult for the Obama administration to build bipartisan consensus and achieve widespread support for its policies. It led to increased gridlock in Congress and limited the scope of policy reforms. The divided political landscape also contributed to the rise of political populism and anti-establishment sentiment, which shaped subsequent elections and the overall political climate in the United States.

Trump

One of Trump's significant economic policy changes was the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act⁹⁹ passed in 2017, which was the largest tax overhaul since 1986. This legislation provided tax cuts to individuals and greatly reduced corporate tax rates for businesses in order to stimulate economic growth. This legislation was met with Supporters argued that it would encourage business investment and job creation, while critics expressed concerns about increasing income inequality and adding to the national debt. The Trump administration pursued deregulation in various sectors, aiming to reduce the regulatory burden on businesses. Advocates claimed that it would foster entrepreneurship and economic expansion, while critics argued that it might lead to environmental risks and compromise consumer protections. When it comes to trade policies, Trump adopted an "America First" approach to trade¹⁰⁰, which involved renegotiating existing trade agreements and imposing tariffs to protect domestic industries. Proponents believed it would protect American jobs and industries, while opponents warned of potential trade wars and negative impacts on global economic relations. It is widely believed that it instigated polarization in America. Supporters of the policy viewed it as a necessary step to protect American jobs, industries, and national security. However, critics argued that the policy was overly protectionist, isolationist, and nationalist, often creating tensions with other countries and straining international relationships.

⁹⁹ William G. Gale, Hilary Gelfond, Aaron Krupkin, Mark J. Mazur, and Eric J. Toder, "Effects of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act: A Preliminary Analysis," *National Tax Journal* 71, no. 4 (2019): 589-612.

¹⁰⁰ Paul K. Macdonald, "America first? Explaining continuity and change in Trump's foreign policy," *Political Science Quarterly* 133, no. 3 (2018): 401-434.

The "America First" policy¹⁰¹ exacerbated existing divisions in the country along political, ideological, and cultural lines. The rhetoric and actions associated with the policy often reinforced a sense of "us versus them" mentality, with some perceiving it as a rejection of global cooperation and multilateralism. This contributed to a deepening divide between those who supported the policy and those who opposed it. Moreover, the policy's emphasis on immigration and border control fueled passionate debates and heightened tensions on issues related to identity, race, and national identity. It further polarized the public discourse and amplified existing divisions in the country.

Overall Trump's economic policies received mixed reactions, with strong support from his base and skepticism from others. The divisive nature of these policies contributed to the existing political polarization, as supporters and opponents held contrasting views on their effectiveness and implications. The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act was criticized by some for potentially exacerbating income inequality. Critics argued that the benefits disproportionately favored the wealthy, widening the wealth gap. This issue further fueled political polarization, with differing opinions on the fairness and consequences of such policies. Trump's economic agenda resonated with some segments of the population, particularly those who felt left behind by globalization and economic changes. His policies were seen by supporters as addressing their concerns and prioritizing American interests. However, this appeal and the ensuing debates further deepened political divisions. Moreover, Trump's trade policies and renegotiation of agreements strained relationships with traditional allies and caused uncertainty in global markets. Disagreements over trade and economic policy added to the polarization, as people had contrasting opinions on the benefits and drawbacks of prioritizing domestic interests over international cooperation.

Foreign Policy and Diplomacy

During his presidency, Barack Obama faced numerous challenges in foreign policy and political polarization. The main point of contention was the Middle East, as

¹⁰¹ Paul K. Macdonald, "America first? Explaining continuity and change in Trump's foreign policy," *Political Science Quarterly* 133, no. 3 (2018): 401-434.

Obama inherited a complex and volatile situation in the Middle East, including the ongoing Iraq War, the Arab Spring uprisings, and the rise of ISIS. His administration faced difficulties in balancing intervention, stability, and the promotion of democratic values in the region. This along with the diplomatic approach towards Iran's nuclear program, led to a Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) in 2015¹⁰². Obama faced criticism on the deal due to lack of trust amidst factions on Iran's compliance. The JCPOA faced significant opposition within the United States, particularly from Republicans and some conservative groups. Critics argued that the deal did not go far enough in preventing Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons and that it provided economic benefits to Iran without sufficient concessions. This opposition contributed to increased polarization within the United States on issues related to foreign policy and Iran. While the deal was widely supported by European countries, Russia, and China, it faced opposition from some Middle Eastern countries, including Israel and Saudi Arabia. These countries expressed concerns about the deal's effectiveness in curbing Iran's nuclear ambitions and its potential to empower Iran regionally. The contrasting views on the JCPOA led to increased polarization and strained relationships between nations.

The Syrian Civil War also erupted during Obama's presidency, and his administration struggled to find a coherent policy response. The conflict's complexities, the rise of extremist groups, and the humanitarian crisis posed significant challenges for the U.S. government. The Syrian war became a topic of intense political debate within the United States. Different political factions had varying views on how to respond to the conflict, ranging from calls for military intervention to more cautious approaches. These differences in policy perspectives contributed to partisan divisions and polarization among the American public. Opponents of the administration argued that its perceived indecisiveness and lack of intervention in the early stages of the war allowed the conflict to escalate and led to negative consequences, such as the rise of extremist groups like ISIS¹⁰³. This criticism added fuel to the existing political polarization. The Syrian war created a massive refugee crisis as millions of Syrians

¹⁰² Mohamad Amine El Khalfi, "Agreement on the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) Between Iran and the United States," JPH 7, no. 2 (2020): 75-81 .

¹⁰³ ISIS, which stands for the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, was a militant extremist group that emerged in the early 2010s. It aimed to establish a self-proclaimed Islamic caliphate encompassing parts of Iraq, Syria, and other territories.

fled their homes seeking safety in neighboring countries and beyond. The issue of admitting Syrian refugees became a contentious topic, with some arguing for increased humanitarian efforts and others expressing concerns about national security. This debate fueled polarization and amplified discussions around immigration and national identity.

International alliances and divisions: The Syrian war also had implications for international relations, leading to divisions among various countries and alliances. Disagreements between the United States, Russia, and regional powers such as Iran and Saudi Arabia further exacerbated geopolitical tensions and created an environment of polarization at the global level.

Finally, The annexation of Crimea by Russia¹⁰⁴ in 2014 and the subsequent conflict in eastern Ukraine tested U.S.-Russia relations. Obama implemented economic sanctions against Russia but faced criticism for not taking more assertive measures.

Due to these key conflicts, Obama faced significant political polarization between Democrats and Republicans, leading to gridlock and difficulty passing legislation. This polarization hindered his ability to implement his policy agenda and led to deep divisions on issues such as healthcare, immigration, and climate change. The emergence of the Tea Party movement, a conservative grassroots movement, posed challenges to Obama's policies. Tea Party-aligned Republicans strongly opposed Obama's healthcare reform, fiscal policies, and perceived expansion of government power. Obama's election as the first African American president brought issues of race to the forefront. His presidency coincided with incidents such as the shooting of Trayvon Martin¹⁰⁵ and the protests in Ferguson, Missouri, which fueled racial divisions in the country. Overall, Obama's foreign policy challenges included navigating the complexities of the Middle East, addressing Iran's nuclear program, managing the Syrian conflict, and responding to the Russia-Ukraine crisis. In terms of political polarization, he faced deep divisions between Democrats and Republicans,

¹⁰⁴ The annexation of Crimea refers to the events that took place in 2014 when the Crimean Peninsula, which was previously part of Ukraine, was annexed by Russia. The annexation followed a period of political unrest and a change in government in Ukraine.

¹⁰⁵ The shooting of Trayvon Martin occurred on February 26, 2012, in Sanford, Florida, United States. Trayvon Martin was a 17-year-old African American who was killed by a suspicious neighbor and shot to death. Trayvon's death sparked national outrage and became a significant catalyst for the Black Lives Matter movement.

opposition from the Tea Party movement, and heightened racial tensions. These challenges shaped the political landscape during his presidency and influenced the outcomes of his policies.

Trump

Donald Trump's foreign policy and political polarization challenges were significant during his presidency; his foreign policy approach was centered on the "America First" doctrine, which prioritized American interests over global cooperation. Trump advocated for a more protectionist approach to trade, pursuing renegotiations of existing trade agreements such as NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement), which resulted in the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA). Additionally, his administration implemented tariffs on various goods, particularly targeting China, as part of an ongoing trade dispute. He aimed to renegotiate or withdraw from international agreements that he believed disadvantaged the United States, such as the Paris Agreement on climate change and the Iran nuclear deal. Not only this, Trump also pursued an aggressive trade policy, imposing tariffs on several countries, most notably China. These trade wars sparked tensions and led to retaliatory measures, escalating economic conflicts and raising concerns about the stability of global trade.

Trump's approach to diplomacy was often characterized by unpredictability and unconventional methods. He had a tumultuous relationship with traditional U.S. allies, criticizing NATO members for not meeting defense spending targets and questioning the value of long-standing alliances. Trump engaged in high-stakes diplomacy with North Korea's leader, Kim Jong-un, holding summits and attempting to negotiate denuclearization. While these efforts generated some diplomatic breakthroughs, the ultimate outcome remains uncertain, and tensions on the Korean Peninsula persist. Trump pursued significant changes in the Middle East, including recognizing Jerusalem as Israel's capital and relocating the U.S. embassy there. He also withdrew the United States from the Iran nuclear deal and implemented a maximum pressure campaign against Iran, which heightened regional tensions.

Overall, Trump's presidency exacerbated political polarization in the United States. His divisive rhetoric, controversial policies, and confrontational style deepened the divide between his supporters and opponents. The country became more politically

fragmented, and public discourse often became acrimonious, hindering the ability to find common ground on critical issues. Trump's policies on immigration, particularly his push for stricter border controls and his attempts to restrict travel from several predominantly Muslim countries, stirred significant debate and faced legal challenges. These measures contributed to the polarization on immigration issues. Trump's populist rhetoric resonated with a segment of the population that felt alienated by establishment politics. However, it also amplified social and cultural divisions, and his controversial statements on sensitive topics often fueled animosity and further polarization.

Social and Domestic Policies

Several policy debates during the Obama presidency further exacerbated political polarization. The Affordable Care Act¹⁰⁶, commonly known as Obama-care, was a central piece of legislation that sparked intense partisan battles. Republicans staunchly opposed the healthcare reform, viewing it as an overreach of government power and an infringement on personal freedoms. The debates surrounding the stimulus package, financial regulations, and immigration reform also highlighted the deep ideological divisions between Democrats and Republicans.

During the Trump era, the “Mexico-City” policy was revoked using a memorandum which meant that it would be prohibited to send funds to non-governmental organizations that provided family planning and abortion-related services in foreign nations. The policy has been a matter of debate and tussle between the Democrats and republicans ever since it was instated by President Ronald Reagan in 1984. President Clinton revoked the policy while George W. Bush reinstated it, all through presidential memoranda . However, Obama did not provoke debate regarding this policy and risk deflecting the public’s attention from much more pressing issues such as the economic and health care reforms he coveted. However Obama also made efforts to reach across party lines and seek bipartisan support for his initiatives. He held meetings with both Republican and Democratic members of Congress, seeking common ground and compromise on various issues. His administration worked

¹⁰⁶ A. McIntyre and Z. Song, "The US Affordable Care Act: Reflections and directions at the close of a decade," *PLoS medicine* 16, no. 2 (2019): e1002752, <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pmed.1002752>.

closely with congressional leaders to develop legislative strategies that maximized the chances of success. They focused on building coalitions and securing the necessary votes within Congress to pass key bills.

Trump's social and domestic policies centered on executive orders, this allowed him to bypass the legislative process and enact changes directly within his executive authority. For instance, he implemented immigration-related policies and initiated the process of withdrawing from international agreements like the Paris Agreement and the Trans-Pacific Partnership. Trump's administration pursued budgetary changes through the reconciliation process, which only required a simple majority in the Senate rather than the typical 60-vote threshold to overcome a filibuster. This allowed them to pass the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017 without any Democratic support. Trump's stance on social issues was conservative. He expressed opposition to abortion and appointed conservative judges to federal courts, including three justices to the Supreme Court. During the first two years of his presidency, Trump enjoyed Republican majorities in both the House of Representatives and the Senate. This unified Republican control facilitated the passage of key legislation aligned with Trump's priorities, such as the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017. Trump utilized public pressure and his platform as a means to shape public opinion and influence members of Congress. Through rallies, speeches, social media, and direct communication with his supporters, he sought to rally public support for his agenda and push lawmakers to align with his positions. Trump made efforts to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act (commonly known as Obama-care) during his presidency. However, his proposed healthcare reforms faced challenges in Trump pursued an agenda of deregulation, aiming to reduce government regulations on businesses and industries. His administration rolled back various environmental regulations and sought to streamline regulations across different sectors.

It is important to note that while Trump achieved some legislative successes, there were also instances where his proposals faced opposition or failed to advance due to partisan divisions or lack of support from members of his own party. The degree of polarization and partisanship during his presidency often complicated the process of passing major legislation.

Environmental Policies and Climate Change

Barrack Obama used the first two years of his administration to pursue progressive environmental and social policy, often times through unilateral decisions. Initially it was difficult to get his environmental legislative policies in the door at congress because the high employment rate and economic downfall in general had left little room to pursue issues such as carbon footprints, energy consumption and pollution. The congress staged many rampant debates during the early days of Obama's presidency.

Rather than jeopardizing valuable political capital by engaging in a legislative battle, the Obama administration pursued initiatives to address energy independence and climate change by creatively interpreting existing laws and utilizing administrative rule-making. Through the issuance of presidential memoranda, they initiated regulatory processes that led to the establishment of more ambitious corporate average fuel economy (CAFE) standards. These new standards surpassed the ones set by the bipartisan Energy Independence and Security Act (EISA) of 2007.

To facilitate this process, the Obama White House took a centralized approach, engaging in informal negotiations with relevant stakeholders. Memoranda were instrumental in advancing the administration's environmental agenda throughout Obama's tenure. A comparison between the first five years of the Obama and George W. Bush presidencies reveals a significant difference in their use of such directives. Bush issued 79 memos and 208 executive orders, while Obama issued 162 memos and 171 executive orders.

Bruce Oppenheimer, an expert on the subject, has observed that the Obama administration, faced with the challenges of negotiating a stimulus package upon assuming office, anticipating difficulty in passing healthcare legislation, and concerned about potential unified opposition from Republicans on domestic policy matters, made a strategic decision to bypass Congress. By doing so, they achieved substantial increases in CAFE standards that went beyond what existing legislation had provided for.

The Clean Power Plan was introduced in 2015 to reduce carbon dioxide emissions from existing power plants. It set emission reduction goals for each state and provided guidelines for states to develop their own plans to achieve those goals.

Paris Agreement: In 2016, the Obama administration played a crucial role in negotiating the Paris Agreement, a global climate agreement aimed at limiting global temperature rise to well below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. President Obama made climate change a top priority and played a crucial role in the negotiation and adoption of the Paris Agreement in 2015. Under his administration, the United States committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 26-28% below 2005 levels by 2025.

Trump

President Trump declared in June 2017 that the United States would be withdrawing from the Paris Agreement, raising concerns over its control on the American economy. His administration argued that the treaty placed a discriminating burden on the U.S. and undermined economic competitiveness. The agreement aims to combat climate change by limiting global warming to well below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. The withdrawal process was initiated in 2019, and the United States officially withdrew from the agreement on November 4, 2020.

Moreover, Trump emphasized energy production and sought to promote the expansion of fossil fuel industries. His administration took steps to encourage oil and gas drilling due to his close relationships with big corporations, including opening up more federal lands and waters for exploration and easing regulations related to extraction activities. Additionally, Trump signed executive orders to expedite the approval process for infrastructure projects, including oil and gas pipelines.

Trump issued an executive order in March 2017, directing the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to review and potentially rescind the Clean Power Plan. The plan, established under the Obama administration, aimed to reduce carbon dioxide emissions from power plants. In 2019, the Trump administration repealed the Clean Power Plan and replaced it with the Affordable Clean Energy (ACE) rule, which gave more authority to individual states in regulating emissions.

This back and forth of environmental treaties sparked global debate on the impact of not only US withdrawal from these treaties, but also the impact of intense polarization within the United States on world politics, global trends and climate change. Being the hegemon of power ever since the end of the cold war, US have impact in shaping worldwide coalitions and alliances. However the lack of consistency in US policy began a decline in its influence and soft power in multilateral deals, especially the ones orchestrated by the United Nations.

With the outbreak of a worldwide pandemic, COVID-19, the world went deeper into separation and isolationism, the strict regulation on vaccination, travel bans and immense losses in the business and social sector, not the mention the loss of thousands of lives of vulnerable people did not make things easier. The state of US polarization is such, that even the health and safety measures were politicized by the public. Throughout the pandemic, there were protests against lockdowns, mask mandates, and other public health measures. Some Trump supporters participated in these demonstrations, viewing them as a defense of individual liberties. These protests further intensified the political polarization surrounding COVID-19, as they were often portrayed as acts of resistance against government overreach by one side, and as dangerous and rec From the early stages of the pandemic, there were significant divisions in public opinion, political discourse, and policy approaches to combating the virus.

One key aspect of polarization was the differing attitudes towards the severity of the virus and the appropriate measures to control its spread. Most democrats and their voters believed that COVID-19 posed a significant threat to public health and advocated for strict measures such as widespread lockdowns, social distancing, and mask mandates. While Republicans downplayed the severity of the virus and instead emphasized the importance of reopening the economy and minimizing restrictions. Political polarization also played a significant role. The response to the pandemic became intertwined with partisan politics, with divisions often falling along party lines. This was evident in public messaging, policy decisions, and public health recommendations. The fact that American population could not be on the same page during such a devastating biological disaster speaks volumes to its intense political polarization.

Leadership and Communication Style

The leadership as well as communication styles of both the presidents differed in several ways. While Obama considered himself to be a writer turned president rather than a president who writes, while Trump's communication style was either highly emotional or highly abstract.

One of the defining characteristics of the Trump presidency was President Trump's unconventional communication style. His use of Twitter to bypass traditional media channels and directly connect with his supporters, while appealing to his base, also alienated many others. Trump's controversial statements, often laced with inflammatory language, ignited strong reactions from both his opponents and his supporters, widening the divide between them. This combative rhetoric further fueled polarization and made it difficult to find common ground on critical issues.

Public Perception and Approval Ratings

The media landscape during the Obama presidency played a crucial role in exacerbating polarization. Traditional media outlets, such as Fox News and MSNBC, became increasingly partisan, catering to their respective ideological audiences. This led to the rise of echo chambers, where individuals consumed news and information that reinforced their existing beliefs, further deepening the divide. The emergence of social media platforms amplified this effect, allowing individuals to curate their own news feeds and isolate themselves from opposing viewpoints.

Obama's presidential campaigns in 2008 and 2012 significantly capitalized on the emerging power of social media. His team leveraged platforms like Twitter and Facebook to engage directly with supporters, mobilize grassroots movements, and communicate his policy goals. This direct access to supporters allowed Obama to bypass traditional media gatekeepers and shape his message directly to his base, further strengthening his image. He appeared on late-night talk shows, participated in online interviews, and even utilized comedy shows like "The Daily Show" and "The Tonight Show" to reach different demographics. This not only humanized the president but also enabled him to expand his reach beyond traditional news channels and connect with audiences who may not typically engage in political discussions.

While Obama attempted to diversify his media interactions, he also engaged with partisan outlets that aligned with his political views. By doing so, he could rally his base, strengthen their support, and generate positive coverage within those media ecosystems. This approach, however, could contribute to polarization, as it reinforced existing partisan divisions and potentially limited exposure to alternative viewpoints. Regarding the effect on polarization, it is important to note that polarization is a complex and multifaceted issue influenced by numerous factors, including socio-political dynamics, economic disparities, and ideological divisions that predate Obama's presidency. While media strategies can shape public opinion, it is unlikely that Obama's media usage alone was the primary driver of polarization. Political polarization is a long-standing trend influenced by a combination of historical, cultural, and socio-economic factors, and it continues to evolve beyond any single individual or administration. However, in a gradual manner social media has stretched the divide between democrat leaders and republicans.

This intense polarization during the Trump presidency had profound implications for American democracy. It strained the democratic institutions and hindered effective governance. The erosion of trust in political institutions and the increasing disregard for factual information posed challenges to public discourse and rational decision-making. The deepening divide between Americans also made it harder to find common ground and achieve consensus on pressing issues, hindering progress on key policy challenges. However, Trump heavily relied on Twitter as his primary communication tool, directly reaching millions of followers. He used it to make policy announcements, share his views, criticize opponents, and engage with his supporters. By bypassing traditional media, Trump was able to control his messaging and amplify his preferred narratives.

Trump often held news conferences and granted interviews to both mainstream and conservative media outlets. He strategically chose outlets he believed would provide favorable coverage or amplify his messages. By building strong relationships with conservative media outlets, such as Fox News he was provided with a supportive platform, often presenting his viewpoints favorably or defending his actions. Trump leveraged these alliances to amplify his messages among his base, creating a parallel media ecosystem that reinforced his narratives. Trump frequently criticized mainstream media organizations, dismissing them as "fake news" and accusing them

of bias against him. By undermining the credibility of these outlets, he sought to discredit critical reporting and create skepticism among his supporters. This further polarized public opinion, as his base increasingly relied on alternative sources of information. Furthermore, Trump's campaign-style rallies garnered extensive media coverage. They provided him with a direct platform to communicate with his supporters, showcase his popularity, and reinforce his messaging. The coverage often focused on his provocative statements and enthusiastic crowds, contributing to the perception of a polarized political landscape.

The impact of these strategies on polarization is a complex issue. While Trump's use of media outlets energized his base and solidified support among his most ardent followers, it also contributed to deepening divisions within the American public. The constant attacks on mainstream media eroded public trust in traditional news sources, leading to increased polarization and the rise of alternative narratives. Trump's reliance on Twitter and conservative media outlets created echo chambers that reinforced pre-existing beliefs, making it harder for opposing viewpoints to find common ground.

Conclusion: Overall Comparison and Implications

The Obama presidency was a time of both hope and division in American politics. While President Obama sought to bridge the partisan divide and bring about change, the political landscape he inherited, coupled with policy debates, media polarization, racial and identity politics, and economic inequality, contributed to a deepening polarization that defined his time in office. The lessons learned from this period can serve as a reminder of the challenges and complexities of governing in a deeply divided nation, and the importance of finding common ground to address the nation's most pressing issues.

The Trump presidency witnessed a significant increase in polarization within American society. Factors such as Trump's communication style, the divisive stance on immigration, the media landscape, partisan gridlock, and social media echo chambers all contributed to the deepening divide. The implications of this polarization on American democracy remain significant, underscoring the need for constructive

dialogue, empathy, and a renewed commitment to finding common ground as the nation moves forward.

The presidencies of Barack Obama and Donald Trump were marked by a high level of polarization within American politics. Both administrations faced intense partisan divisions that shaped the political landscape of their times. While each president had their own unique approach to governance and policy, their presidencies deepened the divide between Democrats and Republicans, leading to increased polarization in the country.

During Obama's presidency, the nation was grappling with the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis. Obama, a Democrat, campaigned on a message of hope and unity, promising to bridge the partisan divide and bring about change. However, his presidency faced significant opposition from Republicans, particularly from conservative and Tea Party-aligned members of Congress. This opposition was evident in the contentious debates surrounding the passage of the Affordable Care Act (ACA¹⁰⁷), commonly known as Obamacare.

The ACA became a flashpoint for partisan conflict, with Republicans vehemently opposing the legislation and Democrats advocating for its implementation. The battle over healthcare reform highlighted the deep ideological divisions between the two parties. The polarization intensified as Republicans capitalized on popular discontent and gained control of the House of Representatives in the 2010 midterm elections. This shift in power further hindered Obama's ability to advance his legislative agenda and led to gridlock in Washington.

Moreover, social issues, such as same-sex marriage and gun control, also fueled the polarization during Obama's presidency. These topics generated heated debates and divided the nation along ideological lines. While Obama's support for same-sex marriage was seen as a progressive step by his supporters, it further alienated conservatives and contributed to the deepening divide between the two parties.

The polarization continued to escalate with the election of Donald Trump, a Republican, as the 45th President of the United States. Trump campaigned on a

¹⁰⁷ McIntyre, A., & Song, Z. (2019). The US Affordable Care Act: Reflections and directions at the close of a decade. *PLoS medicine*, 16(2), e1002752. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pmed.1002752>

platform of populism and promised to disrupt the status quo. His unorthodox style and provocative rhetoric appealed to a base of supporters who felt ignored by the political establishment. However, his presidency further polarized the nation as his policies and actions often stirred controversy and sparked intense partisan reactions.

Trump's immigration policies, including the implementation of a travel ban on citizens from several predominantly Muslim countries, became a focal point of contention. Supporters applauded these measures as essential for national security, while opponents argued they were discriminatory and infringed upon civil liberties. The Trump administration's approach to immigration exacerbated the polarization within the country, with passionate debates and legal battles unfolding throughout his presidency. Additionally, Trump's presidency was marked by a combative relationship with the media. He frequently attacked journalists and news organizations, labeling them as "fake news." This rhetoric undermined trust in the media and further deepened the partisan divide, as his supporters rallied behind his criticisms, while many others saw it as an assault on the free press.

The impeachment proceedings against President Trump also heightened the polarization. The House of Representatives controlled by Democrats, impeached Trump twice with accusations of abuse of power and obstruction of Congress. The Senate, controlled by Republicans, ultimately acquitted him on both occasions. The impeachment process further entrenched partisan divisions, with Democrats viewing Trump's actions as impeachable offenses and Republicans dismissing the charges as politically motivated.

The presidencies of Obama and Trump revealed the deep-rooted divisions within American society and politics. The polarization under their administrations was fueled by a range of factors, including policy differences, ideological clashes, and cultural and social issues. The inability to find common ground and the rise of partisan animosity hindered effective governance and contributed to the fractured state of American politics.

Moving forward, it will be crucial for future administrations to address this polarization and seek to bridge the deep divide. Fostering dialogue, finding areas of common interest, and promoting a more civil discourse are essential for healing the rifts and rebuilding a sense of unity. Only through concerted efforts to reduce

polarization can the country work towards effective governance and address the pressing challenges facing the nation.

Conclusion and Way Forward

The process of breaking down existing phenomenon to a science in order to obtain predictability is not a common concept in studies such as this, due to the fact that there are a plethora of contextual circumstances that may alter state behavior and overall discourse on the subject. However, it is possible to identify causal patterns in politics that can be broken down to a somewhat scientific relationship. Such is the case of the polarization of American politics which has affected United Nations protocols towards international relations. Since the topic of Hyper-Polarization has proven to be such a complex, non-exhaustive study, there are ample avenues of further research and traditions. The hegemonic design of the United States in the uni-polar world order puts immense responsibility on its government to curb foreign policy based on partisan complications and domestic instability. Otherwise, it might continue to erode a system that it has been established in the hopes of liberal institutionalism. It might also risk its own credibility as the spearhead of multilateralism and watchdog of global peace. This credibility is the influence United States holds over its counterparts in the global arena, due to which the world moves westwards. This polarization not only weakens International relations but also compromises the standards applied to elected representatives of a great nation. Despite the scandal and uproar of the Trump presidency which led to his eventual impeachment, there is tremendous support for Donald Trump amidst Republican voters, who still put a question mark on the credibility of media outlets and render investigative bodies as prejudiced and unfair. This study has established that polarization existed within US politics from the very beginning, however this level of polarization has never been seen before. Even during the Watergate years, the approval ratings of one President Nixon went down substantially, in Democrat as well as Republican Party lines. Neither condoned the Watergate scandal the way Trump has been given a clean chit by his supporters, despite being impeached twice by the House of Representatives. This speaks volumes to the kind of polarization between party lines that has occurred recently. The only way forward is to create a mechanism

that ensures bipartisan collaboration and rule of law. Whether, it is through open dialogue and communication or through campaign finance reforms. Limiting the influence of money in politics can help diminish the power of extreme partisan interest groups. Implementing stricter campaign finance regulations and promoting transparency in political donations could help reduce the polarization caused by excessive funding from special interest groups. Implementing bipartisan politics requires the commitment and cooperation of politicians from all parties. It also requires a shift in the political culture and a willingness to prioritize the interests of the nation over partisan advantage. While it may not be easy, the pursuit of bipartisan politics can lead to more effective governance and better outcomes for the American people. Therefore encouraging politicians to focus on specific issues rather than strictly adhering to party lines can foster bipartisan collaboration. By highlighting the importance of finding common ground and working together on issues that affect the nation, progress can be made beyond party affiliations.

Bipartisanship in the United States can also play an important role in strengthening the relationship with the United Nations and enhancing its effectiveness within the organization. It will ensure a more consistent and stable foreign policy, particularly in relation to the UN. When there is bipartisan support for the United States' engagement with the UN, it sends a clear message to the international community that the country is committed to multilateralism and cooperative diplomacy. It can expedite the implementation of international agreements negotiated within the UN framework. Treaties and agreements on issues like climate change, human rights, and arms control require domestic legislation to be fully effective. When there is bipartisan support, it becomes easier to pass necessary legislation and ensure compliance with international commitments. The achievement of bipartisanship on issues related to the UN can be and most probably will be challenging due to differing ideologies and priorities of Democrats and republicans. However, when bipartisan cooperation is achieved, as it has often done in the past it can significantly contribute to a more effective and impactful relationship between the United States and the United Nations.

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