**The Institutionalization of Presidents**

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The moments leading up to the dispatch of the atomic bomb would not only mark one of the most devastating political decisions of all time, but it would mold foreign policy for decades to come. The dropping of the bomb ended the war immediately, signaling US strength and seriousness to the rest of the world. The ability of the US to assert itself in the face of foreign pressures became engraved in Truman’s foreign policy. The Truman doctrine was originally coined when Truman decided that the US would defend and support free peoples everywhere who resisted repressive pressures. This started the foundational developments behind the political resistance to communism. Another important moment that would define the US approach to dealing with growing communist pressures was Kenneth’s Long Telegram. Kenneth proposed a policy of containment that would be threaded throughout foreign policy for decades to come. Truman’s doctrine and Kennth’s containment proposal lead to forced intervention in Vietnam, the formation of Détente, and finally the reinstatement of containment policy once again. Only during the Clinton administration do we see the slight separation from the doctrine that shaped the Cold War.

A defining moment in containing Soviet Russia began with the bay of pigs. The bay of pigs ended up being a complete embarrassment to the US and created more tension between the US and Cuba. Castro eventually sided with Soviet Russia and Russia took advantage of this by trying to place nuclear warheads in Cuba to offer a greater threat to America. This started the Cuban Missile Crisis, where JFK and Kirschov stood toe to toe with nuclear war in the balance. By the early 1960s JFK had already begun sending American troops into Vietnam to fight the spread of communism, a decision that would later be furthered by president Johnson. Johnson amplified the containment of Russian ideology through continuing the Vietnam war.

Johnson’s incessant commitment to fighting North Vietnam led to thousands of US casualties. The desire to prevent the contagious growth of communism clouded the vision of US government officials, leading us into a war that we didn’t understand. As approval ratings declined, America called for a new style of presidency. Nixon was voted into office based on his formation of détente. Détente symbolized the relaxed foreign policy that America would implement. The relaxed foreign policy towards Russia was reflected in the two Strategic Arms Limitation Treaties, allowing for limits on the number of nuclear missiles. After being so heavily involved in containing the disease filled ideology that was communism, America found itself in a new era of foreign policy where diplomacy would take the forefront in dealing with Russia. In warming relations with Russia, Nixon also began directing America’s attention towards China. Nixon saw China and the Asia Pacific region as an area that would be important in the future. This era came to an end with the Russian invasion of Afghanistan.

The expansionist policies set forth by Soviet Russia gave rise to Reagan and the reinvigorated battle against communist hostility. Reagan painted the soviets as the evil empire that would seek to take over the world, immediately reinstating the containment foreign policy model by developing the strategic defense initiative. Through funding anti-communist groups around the world, Reagan was able to bring Soviet Russia to its knees. This would mark the end of the cold war, establishing the US on the global stage as the hegemonic power. What is more, is the political opportunities that this would eventually allow for president Clinton. A defining feature of Clinton’s doctrine resides on the fact that he was molded in a political world leaning heavily to the right and that in order to survive, Clinton moved in the same direction. Clinton engaged in similar power expansion policies like former presidents, but in an economic way, through the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). He used NATO to expand liberal trade agendas around the world and NAFTA to enlarge trade in North America. Through global liberalization of trade, the Clinton administration was able to add to the global hegemonic power of the US.

It is clear from examining the molding of US policy throughout the Cold War that keeping or creating a global stage where the US is at the head and calling the shots, is an agenda that supersedes any other. Even though the Cold war has ended, this international political agenda remains. Current issues will once again put the maintenance of US hegemony in a precarious position. Among these issues is the rise of China. China is the first international actor since Russia to threat US hegemonic power. What is more, is that as China has become central to the debate, it has created a platform for the topics of trade and the environment to be dealt with as well.

**The Rise of China: Challenging Security, Trade, and the Environment**

The rise of China as a world power has become one of the most pressing issues to foreign policy officials today (Ikenberry, 2008). Since international relations has and will continue to be a subject centered around the balance of power among states, it makes sense that along with China’s vast increase in GDP and trade around the world, the balance of power has shifted accordingly. The acquired power that China is experiencing is creating potential problems for the US in the realm of security, international trade, and the environment

Security remains the number one goal on the international stage, and the US must deal with raised concerns surrounding security in the Asia Pacific region, as well as cybersecurity. In terms of regional security, China has showed expansionist tendencies while attempting to obtain islands in the Asia Pacific region. Not only does expansion beyond a state’s borders create red flags in the international scene, but this issue vicariously affects the US because of their allies in the region that feel threatened. Countries such as South Korea or Japan see China’s expansion as a direct threat to their national security, inflaming relations and creating the potential for war (CFR, 2016). It is in America’s best interest to keep tensions from escalating to the point where war becomes inevitable. Lastly, in the new technological age, cybersecurity is becoming a new issue in international relations as China has been blamed for the theft of intellectual property according to the US. Obtaining intellectual property that belongs to the US gives them an edge in their own endeavors on the international stage.

Part of the problem surrounding the breaching of cybersecurity surrounds international trade. If China acquires US international trade operations, they are able to shape their foreign policy in ways that prevents US interests in trade. Since the Clinton administration, trade has been imperative to US hegemonic power and the success of the US on the international stage (Fontaine & Kaplan, 2016). As China becomes an international power, they diminished the economic strength the US previously attained through international trade. Part of this process has occurred due to China taking away trade ties the US once had. China’s expansion in the Maritime region has threatened US trade routes in the area. Moreover, in a less literal manner, China has been able to outperform the US in trade through lowering pay and manipulating their currency. Corporations around the world ship their production to China because of the incredibly low wage labor. This increases the amount of exports for China, while at the same time hurting US export capabilities. These factors alone have a large impact on international trade.

Finally, the rise of China brought serious concerns surrounding energy and climate to foreign policy (CFR, 2016). As president Obama has made abundantly clear, energy and climate has become the defining global challenge of the 21st century. In light of this, the US has taken extensive measures to take action surrounding the environment. Obama developed a massive stimulus to aid the green enterprises developed to increase renewable resources. The Obama administration took even further steps by putting limits on carbon emissions, stopping the Keystone XL oil pipeline, and leading the Paris Agreements to commit hundreds of countries to reducing global carbon pollution. That being said, it may not be the first thing on China’s agenda seeing as their pollution and collective carbon production is almost unmatched. The US must delicately apply pressure to China so that they can take measures to protect the environment. Fortunately, in this area, the US and China have been able to find common ground.

Overall, the management of China will dictate the future stability of the global world. US and China relations will be a mixture of competition and cooperation. Obama has set the stage, allowing and welcoming China to the table of international powers. While China’s rise will create friction in several ways, it is up the US officials on how such friction is dealt with. Interdependence is key in todays globalized world, and the next president of the United States and their position on China, issues of trade and the environment will greatly effect US hegemony and global world order.

**Future Doctrines: Clinton, Sanders, and Trump**

In molding the doctrine of Hillary Clinton’s presidency, there are striking similarities to that of Obama. Among this doctrine is a heavy emphasis on diplomacy and creating better international ties. This is exemplified when examining China. Clinton would look to cultivate trust and attempt to cooperate with China, operating in the difficult space between an ally and a rival. Also important in this middle ground is Clinton’s belief that it is imperative for the US to maintain diplomatic strength with allies in the Asia pacific region. This approach takes a skilled, pragmatic diplomat in balancing the clashing powers in the region. Additionally, a critical point made by Hillary is that she would be interested in liberated navigation through the maritime commons. This is due to Clinton’s interest in expanding and continuing the liberalization of free trade. While Hillary has recently reigned in her support of the Trans Pacific Trade Partnership (TPP), she has previously voiced support for it, as well as other free trade agreements. Clinton sees trade liberalization as extremely beneficial to expanding US influence and power, however, she believes it must only be done when it produces jobs, raises wages and supports national security. Finally, Hillary has made her position clear on the environment. She wants to make the US the worlds clean energy superpower by installing half a billion solar panels in her first term and generating enough renewable energy to power every US home in 10 years. In addition, Clinton wants to use tax incentives to increase hydropower generation. All in all, Incremental change through developing diplomatic ties would be the cornerstone of the Hillary doctrine, building relations with countries around the world to secure US interests, expand free trade, and curb climate and energy crises.

Next, Bernie Sanders has voiced much less lenient measures when talking about how to deal with China. Where the two agree is on issues of China’s military build-up and the human’s rights violations and how the two want to improve environmental conditions in China (Baker, 2015). However, when it comes to US interests, Bernie is not so quick to increase ties in the Asia Pacific region. His reason for this lies heavily on the fact that Sanders is strongly against the TPP, and that China has failed to deal with their continued negative impact on the environment. Sanders has run an entire campaign for presidency on battling the one percent and making the world a more equal place, and since free trade has given immense power to big corporations and increasingly created vast disparities in wealth within the US, Bernie is much more hesitant to make agreements that continue this cycle. In addition to Bernie’s voiced concerns on expanding trade, he understands the severity global climate change, saying that it is the greatest global crisis facing America today. While Clinton had bold plans for environmental change, Sanders has already taken action with creating the End Polluter Welfare Act and co-signing the Low-Income Solar Act. The End Polluter act aimed to eliminate subsidies for coal, oil and natural gas, and the Solar act passed legislation to help low income families pay for and install solar power technology. Moreover, Sanders has taken almost every progressive measure to help the environment with banning hydraulic fracturing in Vermont, opposing offshore drilling and standing up to the Keystone XL pipeline. Sanders continues to stand by his principles when it comes to foreign policy which will surely shape his doctrine if elected president. While his hesitation around China and trade begins to look like a doctrine built on the foreign policy of isolationism, this can be explained by the populist campaign that Bernie has created (Fontaine & Kaplan, 2016). With those exploited by US markets and repressed by foreign intervention, the Sanders legacy will rest on pillars grounded in representing the marginalized, the forgotten and the broken within the US, even if that means giving up US hegemony.

Finally, the last candidate running for office is Donald Trump. Trump has claimed that Obama’s diplomatic navigation has allowed China to “rape” America financially through manipulating the value of the yuan. In response to China challenging US hegemony, Trump would impose tariffs on Chinese goods, lower income taxes on US corporations, and increase military presence in the Asia Pacific region (CFR, 2016). For Trump this would give the US a stronger bargaining position. In examining trade, Trump is in favor of free trade, however he believes that the current trade positions that the US has taken, like the TPP, are a disaster. The main concern for Trump, an area where he agrees with Sanders, is bringing jobs back to America. It is unclear what he would do differently with current free trade agreements, other than renegotiate them so that the US is benefitting the most. Lastly, Trump has voiced his disbelief in the crisis surrounding energy and climate. He does not see climate change as a pressing issue for the US, and believes that the monumental steps that Obama has taken to bring the environment to the forefront of the United States foreign policy has been a waste of money. Trump would take the exact opposite approach to Sanders when dealing with the environment by making cuts in the Environmental Protection Agency, signing off on the Keystone XL pipeline, and would increase hydraulic fracturing to make the US energy independent. This idea of independence is imperative to the development of the Trump doctrine. His doctrine will aim to bolster US hegemony through increasing military threats, and diminishing global interdependence involving the US. He will attempt to make the US independent through renegotiating free trade so that it is solely in the US bests interests and ignoring any environmental concerns if it means the US can get ahead.

In the end, it is evident that US hegemony remains a central theme in foreign policy even after the cold war. Every foreign policy issue facing the US today is framed in a question regarding the effects it will have on the US and its ability to lead the global order. As we enter a new era, a potential shift in global hegemony, the next president of the United States faces a tricky task in dealing with the rise of new foreign dilemmas. How the president deals with these predicaments could have a lasting effect on US foreign policy for decades to come. One important takeaway from the Cold War, is that certain defining moments in presidential career can have an impact on those that proceed them for decades to come. The way in which the next president deals with the rise of China may be one of those defining moments.

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