

The United States: A Superpower Collaborating with the World to Fight Human Trafficking

Caroline Harlow

College of Alameda

The United States is a constitution-based federal republic (“Government and Society”, n.d.). Being a republic means that the people hold the power, and elected government leaders represent their citizens. The United States is made up of fifty states and the District of Columbia. The Constitution creates a federal system of government where the national government holds certain powers, and the states hold others. There are ongoing debates about how much control the federal government can have over citizens of the country. Some examples of this are from the Constitution’s provisions. There are disagreements about what “the right to keep and bear arms” is and how “cruel and unusual punishments” should be defined. Another vague wording is the ability to create laws of “which shall be necessary and proper” (“Government and Society”, n.d.). This creates a sometimes difficult but also sometimes useful tension between national and state interests.

At the federal level, the U.S. Constitution creates three branches of the federal government to make sure that no single group or individual has all the power. This system attempts to ensure that the citizens of the United States always have a say and a voice in their government. The three branches of government are: legislative, executive, and judicial. The legislative branch makes laws, the executive branch carries out and enforces the laws, and the judicial branch evaluates the laws (“U.S. Federal Government”, 2015). Having the three branches work together while being separate entities makes sure that the government “acts in the best interests of its citizens through a system of checks and balances” (“U.S. Federal Government”, 2015). In other words, the three branches of government check each other’s decisions in order to keep the laws in line with the U.S. Constitution and the wishes of U.S. citizens.

The United States is said to be a capitalist country, but it is really a “mixed economy”. According to Adam Smith, “private property rights, freedom of choice and competition are necessary and fundamental elements of pure capitalism”. The U.S. does have individual freedom and private ownership, but a large portion of the economy is made up of Federal government spending (“Mixed Economy”, n.d.). In terms of gross domestic produce (GDP), the U.S. is the world’s greatest economic power; they produce about one-fifth of the world’s economic output with only 5 percent of the world’s population (“Government and Society”, n.d.). The GDP composition is 1.6% agriculture, 20.7% industry, and 77.7% services. Because the United States is a market-oriented economy, individuals and business firms make the economic decisions, while both the federal and state governments buy from the individuals and business firms (“The World Factbook”, n.d.). Businesses can hire and fire employees, and open or close their operations. The government does regulate certain parts of all U.S. industries such as worker safety, work conditions, air and water pollution, food safety, prescription drug safety, transportation safety, and automotive fuel economy, and others (“Government and Society”, n.d.).

The U.S. economy is known to be resilient, flexible, and innovative. It has been able to withstand many costly setbacks such as, the stock market crash, corporate scandals, September 2001 attacks, wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and a big hurricane in Louisiana (“Government and Society”, n.d.). Because of the huge size of the U.S. economy, it is the single most important part of global trade. The exports of the United States make up more than 10 percent of the world total (“Government and Society”, n.d.). They export agricultural produce, industrial supplies, capital goods, and consumer goods. Their main export partners are Canada, Mexico, China and Japan. They make more than one and a half trillion dollars a year on exporting goods. They also spend

around two trillion dollars on importing goods a year, mostly from China, Canada, Mexico, Japan and Germany (“The World Factbook”, n.d.). Even though the United States is spending more than they are making on imports and exports, they are contributing to the world economy by giving money to other countries and producing valuable products.

The branches of the United States military are the U.S. Army, U.S. Navy, U.S. Air Force, and the U.S. Coast Guard (“The World Factbook”, n.d.).

Technically no national language, but English has been made the official language in 31 states, and Hawaiian is the official language of Hawaii (“The World Factbook”, n.d.). This stems from the fact that “the United States is a nation of immigrants” (“The United States”, n.d.). Because the U.S. is made up of people from many different countries that speak different languages there is no national language. Also because it is a “nation of immigrants”, there are multiple religions represented. Just under 80% of U.S. citizens are some form of Christian, including Protestant, Roman Catholic, Mormon, and other Christian religions. Smaller percentages of the population are Jewish, Buddhist, Muslim, other unspecified religions, as well as stating they are undecided or don't have a religion (“The World Factbook”, n.d.).

The United States, being 3,794,083 square miles big, is the largest country in the world. The country is bordered by Pacific Ocean on the West and bordered by the Atlantic Ocean on the east. Canada is along the northern border, and Mexico is along the southern border. The country is divided into six regions: New England; the mid-Atlantic; the South; the Midwest; the Southwest; and the West. There are many different types of land, including prairies, deserts, plains, beaches, mountain ranges, and industrial areas. This creates a wide range of types for the Americans to live, as well as types of land for plants and other resources to grow. The different types of land create a lot of natural resources; these include coal, copper, lead, molybdenum,

phosphates, rare earth elements, uranium, bauxite, gold, iron, mercury, nickel, potash, silver, tungsten, zinc, petroleum, natural gas, and arable land. Plus, they have the largest coal reserve in the world (“The World Factbook”, n.d.). This helps the United States because they are able to have many resources without importing them, and they are able to make a profit from exporting the extra.

UNITED NATIONS POLICY.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child was adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on November 20, 1989 and ratified by 159 countries. The United States, along with Somalia, are not a party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, even though they brought seven articles to the negotiations on the Rights of the Child, which was more than any other country did. The Convention of the Rights of the Child defined the child as “a person who had the right to care, but also as a rights holder, one who is entitled to resources from the state, protection from the power of the state, and a reciprocal relationship with others that advances the person’s well-being” (“The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child as policy and strategy for social work action in child welfare in the United States”). Some of the rights agreed to at the Convention are: “the inherent right to life; the right to a name at birth; the right to express his or her opinion freely, and have that opinion taken into account in any matter affecting the child; the right to meet with others and to join or form associations; the right to the highest standard of health and medical care attainable” and more. The governments that participated in the Convention also agreed to provide parents with what is necessary to raising their child; protect children from being mistreated by parents or guardians; and have an alternate institution for children with a parent or guardian (“The Rights of the Children”). They did not ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child because the U.S. Constitution protects the rights of

individual states, and therefore is reluctant to agree to any formal treaties that could take away individual states' ability to govern their citizens. Also, citizens of the U.S. were able to distort the Constitution and claim that the CRC was taking away the rights of individual states and therefore was "an assault on United States culture by the United Nations by contending that it advocated loss of parental control over their children, abortion, homosexual behavior, Satanism, gang involvement, and control of U.S. families being placed in the hands of small and sometimes hostile countries". Currently, a movement is going through the House of Representatives to stop the United States' ratification of the CRC by passing the "Parental Rights Amendment" to the Constitution. Those supporting this movement claim that ratifying the CRC would "prevent parents from exercising their authority and control over their children" ("The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child as policy and strategy for social work action in child welfare in the United States").

Human trafficking is defined as, "the act of compelling or coercing a person's labor, services, or commercial sex acts. The coercion can be subtle or overt, physical or psychological, but it must be used to coerce a victim into labor, services, or commercial sex acts" ("Civil Rights Division Human Trafficking Prosecution Unit"). Or, "an umbrella term used to describe the activities involved when someone obtains or hold a person in compelled service" ("Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons"). The United States is mainly a transit and destination country for human trafficking, meaning that victims are either sent through the U.S. to other countries, or are kept in the United States ("United States of America"). The U.S. State Department has estimated that there are over 100,000 human trafficking victims in the United States ("A law with bite: new approach is tougher on human trafficking and more supportive of victims"). Although, the recorded number of trafficking victims is most likely much lower than

the actual number of humans trafficked into the U.S. because many victims do not report their victimization. A few reasons that this happens could be, “social services providers will not take their claims seriously, that the police will charge them for some offense, or that the authorities are unable to protect them from traffickers’ reprisals” (“Sexual trafficking in the United States: a domestic problem with transnational dimensions”).

Human trafficking and forced labor affects the United States because, “the economies of the United States and many other nations are tainted by the widespread use of child labor and forced labor of adults” (“Work toward progress: new ABA principles provide starting point for businesses to eliminate forced and child labor in their production, supply chains”). In other words, these countries may not support human trafficking, but if forced labor did not occur than those jobs would have to be filled with other people, and they do not realize how much of a difference that would make in the nation. As the support for companies to stop using forced labor increases, the risk that those companies will face both civil and criminal penalties grows (“Word toward progress: new ABA principles provide starting point for businesses to eliminate forced and child labor in their production, supply chains”). This shows that the citizens of the United States make an impact on their country, because as they fight forced labor and express their opinions about it, the companies using the workers are more likely to be punished. Human trafficking also has a strong negative affect on nations, “trafficking in persons can impede efforts to improve health, increasing economic growth, achieve gender equality and women’s empowerment and can pose a threat to lifetime prospects for youth” (“Countering Trafficking in Persons”). Because human trafficking has these negative affects, the U.S. is committed to stopping the problem.

The U.S. Government has made many attempts to stop human trafficking. In the year 2013, there were 9,460 prosecutions, 5,776 convictions, 44,758 victims identified, and 58 new or amended legislations, which are significantly larger numbers than in previous years (“Department of State, United States of America, Trafficking in Persons Report”).