

TO LEAD OR NOT TO LEAD – REVERTING PRESIDENT TRUMP’S RETREAT FROM THE UNITED STATES’ TRADITIONAL LEADING ROLE IN PROMOTING HUMAN RIGHTS THROUGH TRADE

*Chang-fa Lo**

ABSTRACT

Traditionally, the United States has long been the promoter of human rights (especially labor rights) protection through trade measures and agreements. But the “America first” policy adopted by the Trump Administration has created negative impressions of the United States being hostile toward existing Free Trade Agreements (hereinafter “FTAs”) and being unenthusiastic about promoting labor rights or human rights protection through FTAs. The paper argues that the “America first” policy and the human rights promotion can co-exist. If the United States can make it clear that its position of promoting human rights and labor rights protection through its FTAs and its Generalized System of Preferences (hereinafter “GSP”) has not been changed under the “America first” policy, it could enhance the justification of its position in renegotiating agreements with its trading partners. On the other hand, if the impression that the United States is giving up its leadership in promoting human rights and labor rights protection through trade measures and agreements is continued, the justification of its policy in renegotiating the trade agreements would be weakened. Hence it should be important for the United States to remove such negative impression of retreating from its

* Constitutional Court Justice, Republic of China; Professor, National Taiwan University College of Law. The author can be reached at: lohuang@ntu.edu.tw.

traditional leading role.

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