



Human Rights and Geopolitical Narratives: The U.S. Discourse on the Israel-Palestine Conflict

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Abstract

This study examines the role of the United States in the Palestine-Israel conflict, evaluating whether its foreign policy aligns with its professed commitment to human rights. Through an analysis of U.S. policies, diplomatic decisions, and military aid to Israel, the paper explores how American actions have influenced the dynamics of the conflict, impacting regional stability and Palestinian governance. Despite its global advocacy for human rights, the U.S. has consistently used its veto power in the United Nations, provided extensive military assistance to Israel, and influenced international accountability measures. This study assesses the implications of these policies, including their effects on human rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and perceptions of U.S. leadership in global affairs. The research calls for a critical reassessment of American foreign policy to ensure alignment with international human rights principles and diplomatic commitments.



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1. Introduction

The concept of the “shining city on a hill” has long been a defining metaphor in American political discourse, representing the U.S. as a moral exemplar in global affairs. Originating from John Winthrop’s 1630 sermon, this vision has been invoked by numerous American leaders—John F. Kennedy, Ronald Reagan, and Barack Obama—which positions U.S. as a nation uniquely destined to lead the world through ethical example (Mead, 2005). In the backdrop of this self-propagated discourse, this paper critically studies U.S. actions in the context of Israel-Palestine conflict to draw a parallel or contrast between what U.S. says and what it does. It seeks to prove the hypothesis that U.S. has successfully acted as a global leader in international peace and human rights in the wake of Israel-Palestine conflict.

International Relations (IR) theories, which provide explanatory models for state behaviour in global politics, will be used to discuss U.S. actions. Political realism posits that states act primarily in pursuit of power and national interest rather than moral principles. Rooted in the writings of Thucydides, Niccolò Machiavelli, and Hans Morgenthau, realism argues that state actions are governed by anarchy, where states must prioritize their survival and security over abstract ethical considerations. Realism further explains why human rights considerations, while frequently invoked in political rhetoric, often take a backseat to pragmatic geopolitical calculations. Thus, from a realist standpoint, U.S. actions in the Israel-Palestine conflict would be about preserving power dynamics that favour its own global dominance.

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Liberalism, in contrast to realism, emphasizes the role of international institutions, democratic values, and economic interdependence in shaping state actions. Thinkers like Immanuel Kant, John Locke, and Woodrow Wilson have advocated for a world order where cooperation and collective security, rather than power politics, dictate state behaviour. The U.S. often portrays itself as a liberal hegemon, committed to promoting democracy, human rights, and international law. According to Liberalism, U.S. should encourage a diplomatic solution that upholds rights, supports a two-state solution, and promotes an equitable resolution to the conflict. Nonetheless, the concept of hegemonic liberalism posits that liberal ideals are advanced only when they align with strategic interests. This concept will strengthen a critical analysis to dig beneath the surface of the prevalent discourse.

This study is a qualitative exploratory endeavor that has builds a theoretical framework of how U.S. has self-propagated discourse of being a global leader. This discourse is followed with the situation prevalent in Palestinian OPT, what international community thinks about it and what human rights aspirations the oppressed masses harbour. The analysis then juxtaposes U.S. actions it has taken in reality. Discussion section draws parallel/contrast between U.S. self-propagated discourse, human rights aspirations of the concerned people and U.S. actions as one of the most powerful and impactful leaders in the world. The paper concludes with an attempt to find answers why the hypothesis has been proved/disproved.

2. Theoretical Framework

Research suggests that human rights considerations play a variable but significant role in shaping US foreign policy, particularly in multilateral development banks and international diplomacy (Braaten, 2014). U.S. played a key role in drafting and adoption of Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) (United Nations, 1948). It outlines fundamental human rights that include self-determination (Article 1), protection from discrimination (Article 7), and the prohibition of arbitrary detention (Articles 9-11). U.S. has historically championed these principles.

The US foreign policy often aligns with the ‘democratic peace theory’, which suggests that democracies do not engage in war against each other. This policy underpins US efforts to promote democracy as a path to global peace (Forythe, 2017). Barack Obama’s diplomacy focused on the principle, ‘America leads best when it leads by example’. Antony Blinken, Secretary of State in the Biden administration, consistently highlighted ‘values-based foreign policy’, reinforcing US.’ role as a protector of international norms. U.S. has even developed institutions that extensively publish how U.S. is acting as the global leader by promoting international peace and human rights. Some of them are Brookings Institution, Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) and Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

Indeed U.S. has set an example by intervening in humanitarian crises in the Balkans, advocating for democracy in Eastern Europe, and supporting civil society organizations worldwide through instruments like the National Endowment for Democracy (Carothers, 1999). U.S. has made a mark for itself by working for international criminal justice. Its critical role in the establishment of UN War Crimes Commission, tribunals in Nuremberg and Tokyo during WWII and modern ad hoc tribunals for humanitarian crises in Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Cambodia, Yugoslavia and Lebanon are shining examples of the same. U.S. has played a key role in the establishment of the Rome Statute that in turn created the International Criminal Court (ICC). An example of the collaboration between the two is U.S. actively supporting ICC arrest warrants against Joseph Kony and other Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) leaders indicted for war crimes and crimes against humanity in Uganda. The U.S. provided intelligence, logistics, and training to African Union troops hunting Kony. In 2013, the U.S. offered a \$5 million reward for information leading to the arrest of Kony and others wanted by the ICC. (Rewards for Justice)

Justifying its self-promoted discourse of being a global leader, U.S. has imposed sanctions on Saudi Arabia for human rights violations, despite maintaining security ties. It has sanctioned Russia for its invasion of Ukraine. In the Israel-Palestine conflict also U.S. has taken praiseworthy initiatives aimed at resolving the conflict (Pressman, 2020). U.S. has officially endorsed a two-state solution, advocating for a negotiated settlement that allows for both an Israeli and Palestinian state (Walt, 2018). Despite challenges, successive U.S. administrations have pressured Israel on settlement expansion, urged Palestinian leadership to renounce violence, and provided humanitarian aid to the Palestinian Authority.

The United States has historically positioned itself as a global defender of democracy and human rights. Institutions like Freedom House and the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) have received U.S. funding to promote human rights worldwide (Ignatieff, 2011).

However, Forsythe (Forythe, 2017) also argues that U.S. human rights advocacy is often selectively enforced, prioritizing national interests over universal principles. This contradiction is evident in U.S. criticisms of authoritarian regimes while simultaneously supporting Israeli policies that infringe on Palestinian rights. Walt in his book, *The hell of good intentions: America's foreign policy elite and the decline of U.S.*, highlights the same fact that U.S. human rights enforcement is often inconsistent, being used as a tool of diplomacy rather than a universal principle.

From a realist perspective, the U.S.-Israel alliance is primarily driven by geopolitical interests rather than ethical considerations (Walt, 2006). This perspective argues that U.S. foreign policy prioritizes military alliances over human rights concerns. The U.S. military presence in the Middle East, coupled with Israel's strategic position, makes Israel a valuable partner in countering threats from Iran, Syria, and Hezbollah (Layne, 2007). Liberal theorists argue that shared democratic values between the U.S. and Israel strengthen their relationship (Jr., 2020).

3. Human Rights Situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT)

OPT comprises the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip. Israel has been occupying it since 1967, in violation of international law, which prohibits the acquisition of territory by force. Prolonged Israeli occupation has resulted in systematic violations of the rights of the Palestinian people, including right to self-determination, right to life, right to freedom of movement, right to health, right to education, and right to an adequate standard of living. The occupation has also entailed illegal annexation of East Jerusalem, construction and expansion of settlements, confiscation of land and natural resources, demolition of homes and property, imposition of a blockade on Gaza, and use of excessive and indiscriminate force against civilians.

The human rights situation in the OPT is also affected by the internal Palestinian political division and lack of democratic governance. The long-overdue legislative and presidential elections that were scheduled for May and July 2021 were indefinitely postponed by President Mahmoud Abbas, citing Israel's refusal to allow voting in East Jerusalem. The decision sparked protests and criticism from various Palestinian factions and civil society groups, who denounced it as a violation of their right to political participation and representation. The Palestinian Authority (PA) security forces responded by cracking down on dissenting voices, arresting and intimidating activists, journalists, and human rights defenders. The PA also faces allegations of corruption, nepotism, and lack of accountability and transparency.

3.1. Violations committed in OPT

3.1.1. Illegal settlements

Fourth Geneva Convention specifically addresses the issue of occupation and prohibits the transfer of an occupying power's civilian population into the territory it occupies.

"Individual or mass forcible transfers, as well as deportations of protected persons from occupied territory to the territory of the Occupying Power or to that of any other country, occupied or not, are prohibited, regardless of their motive."

(Article 49 - Deportations, transfers, evacuations, 1949)

In West Bank and East Jerusalem, more than 700,000 Israeli settlers live in violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention and several UN resolutions (The Question of a Palestine, 2023). Furthermore, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) issued an advisory opinion in 2004 concerning the construction of a wall in OPT. (Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, 2004) It concluded that construction of the wall, along with measures taken previously, severely impeded the exercise by the Palestinian people of their right to self-determination and was thus, a breach of Israel's obligation to respect that right. Additionally, multiple United Nations Security Council resolutions also have reaffirmed the illegality of Israeli settlements in Palestinian territories.

3.1.2. Home demolitions

Israel has demolished thousands of Palestinian homes and structures in the OPT, especially in Area C of the West Bank and East Jerusalem, where it exercises full control. The demolitions are often carried out without due process or adequate compensation. According to the reports of Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions (ICAHD), more than 131,000 Palestinian structures have been demolished in Israel and the OPT since 1947, (Demolition Report, 2023) including homes, schools, mosques, wells, and agricultural facilities. It was also noted by ICAHD,

notably in East Jerusalem, Israeli authorities condition Palestinians to either demolish their properties themselves or have the authorities do so. In an attempt to avoid having to pay high fee of the Israeli authorities' demolition operation and additional high fines, many Palestinians are forced to self-demolish (Demolition Report, 2023). Housing is recognized as a basic human right by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 25), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (Article 11), and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (Article 5). Home demolitions are also a war crime and a crime against humanity under international law.

3.1.3. Excessive use of force

Israel has used excessive and disproportionate force against Palestinians in the OPT. The use of live ammunition, rubber-coated metal bullets, tear gas, stun grenades, skunk water, and other weapons has caused hundreds of deaths and injuries among Palestinians, including children, women, journalists, medics, and human rights defenders. Many of these cases amount to extrajudicial killings or serious violations of the right to life and physical integrity. In one year, i.e., from October 2023 to October 2024, it has been estimated that, Israel had dropped 6000 bombs on Gaza in six days, which nearly matches US total in Afghanistan in one year, (Anand, 2023) and also exceeding the amount of explosives used in World War II. (Anand, 2023) Israel has also used white phosphorous bombs on Palestinians.

3.1.4. Arbitrary arrests

Israel has arrested and detained Palestinians in the OPT, often without charge or trial, under its administrative detention policy. The detainees are held in Israeli prisons or detention centres inside Israel, in contravention of international law that prohibits the transfer of protected persons outside the occupied territory. The detainees are subjected to ill-treatment, torture, solitary confinement, denial of family visits and legal counsel, and unfair trials before military courts.

According to Palestinians Prisoner Club, as of November 2021, there were 4,650 Palestinian prisoners in Israeli Jails, including 200 children, and 540 administrative detainees (Israel and Palestine: Events of 2021, 2022). According to the UN report, since the occupation of the East Jerusalem, Gaza strip, and the West Bank by Israel in 1967, it has captured and imprisoned around one million Palestinians, including tens of thousands of children.

3.1.5. Restrictions on movement and access to basic services:

Israel has imposed a complex system of checkpoints, roadblocks, walls, fences, gates, permits, and closures that restrict movement of Palestinians within and between the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) and Gaza Strip. According to the Human Rights Watch, Israeli authorities, as of June 2020, maintained nearly 600 checkpoints and other permanent obstacles within the West Bank, in addition to nearly 1,500 ad-hoc "flying" checkpoints erected between April 2019 and March 2020, according to OCHA (Anand, 2023))

Since 2006, Israel has imposed a suffocating and illegal siege and naval blockade of Gaza, amounting to collective punishment of the entire population of 1.8 million people, which is a war crime (Anand, 2023). and the violation of international law. Israel's policy was summed up by Dov Weisglass, an adviser to Ehud Olmert, the Israeli Prime Minister, 'The idea is to put the Palestinians on a diet, but not to make them die of hunger.' (Anand, 2023). Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant, announced "I have ordered a complete siege on the Gaza Strip. There will be no electricity, no food, no fuel, everything is closed... We are fighting human animals and we are acting accordingly." (Fabian, 2023).

4. Palestinian Aspirations

The most urgent and fundamental human rights aspirations of Palestinians and other Arab states is to end the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territory and other Arab lands, such as the Syrian Golan Heights and the Lebanese Shebaa Farms. The occupation, which has lasted for more than half a century, is considered a violation of international law and a major source of human rights abuse. It deprives Palestinians of their right to self-determination, which is recognized as a core human right by various international instruments, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 1), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Article 1), and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (Article 5).

Another key human rights aspiration is to achieve statehood for Palestine, based on the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. This aspiration is based on the principle of the two-state solution, which

envisages the establishment of an independent and sovereign Palestinian state alongside Israel, living in peace and security. The two-state solution has been endorsed by numerous UN resolutions, such as Resolution 242 (1967), Resolution 338 (1973), Resolution 1397 (2002), Resolution 1515 (2003), Resolution 1850 (2008), and Resolution 2334 (2016). It has also been supported by various regional and international initiatives, such as the Arab Peace Initiative (2002), the Quartet Roadmap (2003), and the French Initiative (2016).

A related human rights aspiration of Palestinians is to secure justice and reparations for the violations of international law and humanitarian law committed by Israel in the OPT. This aspiration entails holding Israel accountable for its actions and ensuring that it complies with its obligations under international law. It also entails providing effective remedies and redress for the victims of violations, such as compensation, restitution, rehabilitation, and guarantees of non-repetition to ensure dignity of the oppressed mass.

Democracy and human dignity should be promoted within the Palestinian society. This aspiration reflects the desire to have a greater say in internal political affairs, to enjoy their civil and political rights, to participate in free and fair elections, to have an independent judiciary and media, to combat corruption and nepotism, to respect diversity and pluralism, to protect minorities and vulnerable groups, to empower women and youth, to foster social justice and economic development, and to uphold human dignity and human rights for all.

5. Analysis:

The international community along with international bodies like UN, ICC, UNSC have documented and accepted that Israel's occupation and use of excessive force has led to severe humanitarian crises in Palestine. In this section, we analyse how U.S. actions have stood by its discourse of being the global leader in promoting international peace and human rights.

1. The UNSC has passed numerous resolutions condemning Israeli settlements, human rights violations, and military actions. Resolution 242 (1967) called for Israel's withdrawal from occupied territories, while Resolution 2334 (2016) reaffirmed that Israeli settlements are illegal under international law. However, as Pressman (Pressman, 2020) notes, and Al Jazeera documents, the US has vetoed at least 53 UN Security Council resolutions critical of Israel since 1972 (Newton, 2019). This repeated use of vetoes has weakened the legitimacy of international law and contributed to Palestinian disenfranchisement. (Falk, 2014) In 2019, the US vetoed a resolution that expressed support for the two-state solution and criticized Israel's annexation plans. Moreover, in the most shocking attack on Gaza till date that started in October, 2023, U.S. vetoed the UNSC Resolution which called for "humanitarian pauses" to deliver lifesaving aid to millions in Gaza (Israel-Gaza crisis: US vetoes Security Council resolution, 2023).
2. Israel is the largest cumulative recipient of U.S. foreign assistance since World War II. A report of Business Insider has cited the report of Congressional Research Service which explicitly mentions an aid of \$158 billion (not adjusted for inflation) since 1948 (Relman, 2023). In 2016, ten years MoU was signed between the then US President Barack Obama and the President of Israel which covers, FY2019-FY2028, \$38 billion (\$3.8 billion per year) (Horton, 2021). MoU includes \$33 billion in Foreign Military Financing (FMF) funds and an unprecedented \$5 billion commitment in missile defense assistance. The U.S. has also given Israel access to advanced weapons systems, such as F-35 fighter jets, Apache helicopters, Patriot missiles, and Iron Dome batteries (U.S. Foreign Aid to Israel, 2023). These weapons have been used by Israel to attack Palestinian civilians and infrastructure in Gaza and the West Bank.

The Iron Dome munitions U.S. provides to Israel was above what Israel has ordered and will be part of ongoing military assistance packages. Those packages also include small diameter bombs and JDAM kits — that turns a "dumb" bomb into a "smart" bomb (U.S. Foreign Aid to Israel, 2023). Following the attack of Hamas in October 2023, Israel conducted its largest military operation since 1948. Nearly 48,360 Palestinians have been killed including a substantial number of women and children, and approximately 111,800 individuals have been injured (Asmar, 2025). The humanitarian impact has been severe, with over 1.9 million Palestinians—about 90% of Gaza's population—displaced due to ongoing military operations. (The Israel-Hamas war's devastating toll, by the numbers, 2025) Scholars like Chomsky (Chomsky, 2015) and Bennis (Bennis, 2015) 1949 argue that this aid enables excessive force in Gaza and supports illegal settlements that violate the Fourth Geneva Convention.

3. The ICC is an independent and permanent court that investigates and prosecutes the most serious crimes of international concern. The ICC operates on the principle of complementarity, which means that it only intervenes when national authorities are unable or unwilling to prosecute such crimes. The ICC also relies on the cooperation of states to carry out its mandate, as it does not have its own police force or enforcement mechanism.

The ICC has been examining Palestinian situation since 2015, following a referral by the Palestinian Authority. The ICC's preliminary examination focused on alleged crimes committed by both Israelis and Palestinians in the OPT since June 13, 2014. In December 2019, the ICC Prosecutor announced that she had concluded there was a reasonable basis to believe that war crimes had been committed in the OPT and that she was ready to open a formal investigation, subject to a confirmation by the ICC judges on the scope of the court's territorial jurisdiction. However, U.S. strongly opposed the ICC's involvement in Palestine and took measures to prevent or deter such an investigation, such as:

- U.S. has repeatedly declared that it does not recognize ICC's jurisdiction over Israel or Palestine, as neither of them are parties to the Rome Statute, the treaty that established the ICC.
 - U.S. has imposed sanctions and visa restrictions on ICC officials and personnel involved in any investigation or prosecution of U.S. or allied personnel, including Israelis. The U.S. has also threatened to impose further sanctions on any individual or entity that assist or support ICC in such cases.
 - U.S. has used its veto power at the UNSC to block any resolution that would refer the situation in Palestine to ICC or call for accountability for violations in the OPT.
 - U.S. has exerted diplomatic pressure on other states to dissuade them from cooperating with or supporting ICC in relation to Palestine. U.S. has also lobbied for bilateral agreements with other states that would prevent them from surrendering U.S. or allied nationals to ICC.
4. U.S. recognized Jerusalem as Israel's capital and moved its embassy there in May, 2018. This decision ran counter to longstanding international consensus that the status of Jerusalem should be determined through negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians as part of final status talks. By taking this unilateral action, U.S. was perceived as prejudicing the outcome of such negotiations and undermining the prospects for a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.
 5. The annexation of East Jerusalem in Palestine and Golan Heights, captured from Syria, by Israel following the six-day war in 1967 was not recognized by the international community. In March 2019, former U.S. President Donald Trump signed a proclamation officially recognizing Israel's sovereignty over the Golan Heights, which after capturing in 1967, it annexed in 1981. The proclamation marked the first instance of any country recognizing Israeli sovereignty over Golan Heights which is recognised as occupied territory under International Law (Blinken stops short of endorsing Trump recognition of Golan Heights as Israel, 2021). The Biden administration has also upheld Trump's recognition.
 6. U.S. has imposed sanctions on several Arab states and entities that have challenged Israel's occupation and policies, such as Iran, Syria, Lebanon, and Hamas. These sanctions have targeted their political, military, and economic sectors, as well as their leaders and supporters. U.S. argues that these sanctions are necessary to counter threats posed by these actors to Israel's security and regional stability.

In stark opposition to Palestinian aspirations, U.S. has supported authoritarian regimes in the Arab world that have maintained friendly relations with Israel and suppressed popular movements for democracy and human rights. These include Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Bahrain, and the United Arab Emirates. U.S. has provided these regimes with billions of dollars in military and economic aid, as well as diplomatic and political backing. U.S. claims that these regimes are key allies and partners in the Middle East, who share its interests in combating terrorism, promoting peace, and containing Iran. However, these regimes have committed serious human rights violations against their own people, such as torture, arbitrary detention, enforced disappearance, extrajudicial killing, censorship, and repression.

6. Discussion

1. The Being one of the founders of UNHR, U.S.' veto of resolutions for uplifting Palestinian situation, even when such resolutions enjoy widespread international support, speaks of one-sided support U.S. lends to Israel. This has shielded Israel from potential international sanctions or consequences for its actions, hindering the enforcement of international law.

2. The U.S. argues that its aid for Israel is essential for its security and stability in a volatile region, where it faces threats from Iran, Hezbollah, Hamas, and other groups. However, Israel has been incessantly using this military assistance on innocent Palestinians. In the latest attack that started in October 2023, as a response to Hamas' attack, the incessant and uncontrolled usage of ammunitions against civilians, blocking of humanitarian aid, considering Palestinians to be animals, destroying all media and medical facilities specifically remain unjustified.
3. By blocking investigations and accountability mechanisms for violations in the OPT, U.S. is undermining its own credibility and commitment to international law and human rights. The U.S. is also contributing to a culture of impunity and injustice that fuels further violence and suffering for both Israelis and Palestinians. In its pursuit of saving Israel, it has even put sanctions to an organisation as remarkable and revered as the ICC.
4. U.S. has pursued unilateral or biased solutions that favour Israel's interests and demands by recognizing Jerusalem as Israel's capital, moving its embassy there, recognizing Israel's sovereignty over Golan Heights, proposing a peace plan that grants Israel most of its territorial claims and denies Palestinians their basic rights. These solutions have violated international law and consensus, undermining the two-state solution, pre-empting final status negotiations, and alienating Palestinian people and leadership.
5. Despite U.S. claims of being the global harbinger of peace and human rights, it has severely failed to deliver the same in the Israel-Palestine conflict. Critics argue that U.S. stance has been inconsistent, with diplomatic rhetoric often failing to translate into policy action. Within the Arab world, U.S. aid is received only by states that are in favor of Israel and those in favor of Palestine face sanctions. Thus, its actions prove loud and clear that U.S. is not only directly aiding Israel's attack on Palestine but also creating whole environment for the same.
6. U.S. has positioned itself as a key diplomatic player in the Israel-Palestine conflict, yet its role as a mediator has been widely contested. Critics argue that U.S. mediation favours Israeli interests, undermining its credibility in global diplomacy. According to Dr. Gordon, "The failure of U.S.-led peace initiatives stems from an unwillingness to apply equal pressure on Israel and Palestine, undermining the credibility of its mediation efforts." (Gordon, 2008).

Despite U.S.' interventions, empirical data suggests that U.S. mediation has not led to sustainable peace. Since the Oslo Accords, Israeli settlements in the West Bank increased by over 131%, violating international agreements (Oslo: Before and After: The Status of Human Rights in the Occupied Territories, 1999). These empirical data points confirm that U.S. mediation has failed to ensure compliance, further weakening its credibility as a neutral negotiator.

7. U.S. disregard for the human rights aspirations of Palestinians has undermined their sovereignty and legitimacy as people and nations. U.S. has denied or ignored the right of Palestinians to self-determination and statehood, which is enshrined in various international instruments and resolutions. These actions have violated the territorial integrity and national identity of Palestinians and have threatened their historical, cultural, and religious heritage. (Third Committee Spotlights Human Rights Abuses in Conflicts, Stressing Need to End Terrorist Attacks, Genocide, Illegal Hostage-Taking, Enforced Displacement, 2023).

6.1. U.S. losing its image as the global leader

U.S has maintained a strong discourse of promoting international peace and human rights. However, its severe lack of action coupled with biased actions have critically weakened its position of being the shining city on a hill. A 2022 Pew Research Center survey found that only 39% of respondents across 16 countries trusted the U.S. to handle international affairs fairly, compared to 63% in 2009 (Global Views of U.S. Foreign Policy, 2022). Between 2014 and 2022, over 80% of UN member states voted in favour of Palestinian rights resolutions, while the U.S. was one of the few nations consistently opposing such measures (Lederer, 2024). A Brookings Institution survey (2021) found that over 70% of respondents in Arab countries viewed U.S. policy as biased in favour of Israel (Telhami, 2002). The ongoing conflict and inhuman treatment of Gazans at the hands of Israel with U.S. still supplying military aid to the latter has further added to the prevalent view of discrepancy between what U.S. says and what it does. One wonders if this conflict, which has been ongoing for more than seven decades, continue this long with U.S.' direct support to Israel and the attempt to shield it from international scorn.

Lack of substantial activity in favour of establishing human rights has alienated its allies and partners in the region and beyond who have different views and interests on the conflict, such as the EU, the UN, the Arab League, and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. U.S. has isolated itself from the international consensus on

the Israel-Palestine conflict, which is based on international law and UN resolutions. U.S. has also clashed with its European allies over its recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital, its withdrawal from the Iran Nuclear deal, its sanctions of ICC officials, and its normalization agreements with some Arab states without addressing the Palestinian issue. U.S. has failed to live up to its own values and principles of democracy, human rights, and the rule of law, and has damaged its reputation and image as a global leader and a champion of human rights. These findings demonstrate that U.S. credibility as a leader in global diplomacy is not only questioned by Middle Eastern nations but also by Western allies and international institutions.

6.2. U.S. according to International Relations Theories

The As Mearsheimer and Walt (2006) put it: 'Allies are not chosen based on moral perfection, but on their ability to advance strategic goals.' This suggests that U.S. policy is not necessarily hypocritical, rather it is reflective of the difficult choices inherent in global politics. The region is home to over 50% of the world's proven oil reserves and remains a critical energy supplier for global markets (Layne, *The Peace of Illusions: American Grand Strategy from 1940 to the Present*, 2007). Ensuring the security of key allies, including Israel and Arab Gulf states, is central for U.S. to maintain regional stability and preventing disruptions in global oil flows. U.S. policymakers view Israel as a strategic partner capable of counterbalancing threats from Iran, Syria, and non-state actors like Hezbollah and Hamas.

Israel possesses one of the most advanced military forces in the world, and its technological and intelligence are highly valuable to U.S. national security (Jr., 2020). In multiple instances, Israel has assisted U.S. in regional intelligence operations, including monitoring Iran's nuclear program, countering ISIS, and preventing terror attacks. (Pressman, 2020) Scholars like Goldberg (2021) argue that this intelligence cooperation strengthens U.S. national security and justifies continued U.S. military assistance to Israel. From a realist point of view, U.S.' actions are justified because it has prioritized its own security, diplomatic advantage and global dominance by controlling the oil reserves. This suggests that U.S. foreign policy is shaped by a mixture of strategic interests, security concerns, and diplomatic calculations, rather than a simple pro-Israel bias.

However, U.S. has proved its discourse by taking firmer actions in countries like Russia, Iran, and North Korea for human rights violations. These countries are also nuclear-powered and powerful. Therefore, the realist consideration of security does not hold here. These are authoritarian regimes that U.S. has pointed to for human rights violations, it has consistently shielded Israel from similar scrutiny despite documented human rights abuses in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (*A Threshold Crossed: Israeli Authorities and the Crimes of Apartheid and Persecution*, 2021). Therefore, in any case, proclamation of being a human rights defender, global leader and connoisseur of peace remains immoral and misleading.

From a liberalist point of view, U.S. has failed to uphold democratic values since Palestine is also a democracy. U.S. has not taken any step to resolve the democratic aspirations of Palestinians within their country. Liberalist point of view would discard U.S.' action as selfish, biased and promoting regional and global divide. This disparity raises fundamental questions about whether U.S. human rights advocacy is a universal principle or a selectively applied diplomatic tool.

7. Conclusion

The The U.S. has positioned itself as the "Shining City on a Hill", a moral leader that promotes democracy and justice worldwide. However, its policies in the Israel-Palestine conflict reveal a clear double standard. In the context of Israel-Palestine conflict, U.S. has neither acted as a realist state nor as a liberalist state. It has prioritized security but has also pointed to other powerful states like Russia and North Korea putting its security at stake. It has protected and favored Israel because it is a democracy. But it has failed to hold democratic rights of Palestinians. Therefore, it is hard to place U.S. within realist or liberalist paradigms. It can, nonetheless, be called a liberal hegemon since it tries to promote liberal ideals rhetorically but follows them in practice only for the state that also fulfills its realistic aims. This unique and intriguing behavior may be governed by some uncovered constructivist motivations. This area opens door for further detailed study that may prove impactful in the longer run. It is, nonetheless, stark clear that U.S. has failed to apply human rights norms consistently which has, in turn, weakened its influence and created a credibility gap. Thus, the U.S. does not consistently uphold its self-proclaimed status as a human rights champion in the context of the Israel-Palestine conflict. Instead, its actions demonstrate a pattern of strategic selectivity, where geopolitical interests take precedence over universal human rights enforcement. If U.S. wishes to reclaim its position as a legitimate global advocate for human rights, it must

demonstrate consistency, enforce accountability, and commit to diplomacy that prioritizes justice over political alliances.

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The authors declare no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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