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An Investigation of Us Foreign Policy Double Standards

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Master's Degree in Literature and Civilization**

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to:

Our beloved families, whose endless support and encouragement and unconditional love has made us ready to challenge. Your sacrifices, patience

and belief in us have been our greatest source of strength

To our friends, thank you for standing by us through every challenge, offering

comfort, motivation and moments of joy when we needed them.

A special dedication to our respected teachers, whose guidance and hard work

and passion for knowledge, they inspired us to strive for excellence. Your

mentorship has been invaluable.

and we are forever grateful for your dedication to our level development

With heartfelt gratitude, we present this work as a humble token of appreciation

for all what you have done

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Abstract

This study explores contradictions in U.S foreign policy that focuses on the gap between its declared commitment to democracy and human rights and their royal global actions. The main objective is to analyze how and why the U.S applies these values inconsistently, generally favoring strategic interests on ethical principles. Using a qualitative methodology, the study is based on historical analyzes and comparative case studies. It is based on both primary sources, such as disqualified government documents and statements of policies and secondary sources, including academic literature and human rights reports. Research addresses three -chave issues through a narrative approach: why the U.S treats human rights violations in allied states differently than on adversaries, which factors influence their decisions to intervene or abstain from intervention and how this inconsistency affects their global image and credibility. The results show that the US usually condemn abuse in rival countries such as China and Iran, keeping strong alliances with repressive regimes such as Saudi Arabia. The choice of intervening is more shaped by geopolitical and economic interests than by moral obligations. These double patterns weaken the legitimacy of US foreign policy, increase global skepticism and contribute to the empowerment of rival powers. The study concludes that US credibility is due to its selective application of democratic values, with long -reach consequences for global order and American leadership.

Key words: Democracy promotion, Double standards, Geopolitical strategy, Global credibility, Human Rights, International Relations, U.S. foreign policy.

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Introduction

1. Background of the Study

The United States has long positioned itself as a world leader dedicated to advancing the rule of law, democracy, and human rights. American foreign policy rhetoric has continuously emphasized these values as tenets for international engagement ever since the country became a superpower in the 20th century. A deeper look, however, shows a recurring discrepancy between these declared ideals and the actual choices made regarding policy. The United States has been accused of hypocrisy on multiple occasions throughout history for supporting authoritarian governments, ignoring violations of human rights committed by strategic allies, and launching military operations that were legitimated under the pretext of advancing democracy. The underlying reasons for U.S. foreign policy and the degree to which strategic interests take precedence over ethical considerations are seriously called into question by these contradictions.

In order to counter Soviet influence, the United States supported dictatorships in Latin America, Africa, and Asia during the Cold War era, prioritizing anti-communism over democratic consistency. This trend continued in the post-Cold War era, when the United States, especially in the Middle East, continued to strike a balance between its pragmatic alliances and ideological rhetoric. This dynamic was made more complex by the War on Terror, as counterterrorism collaboration frequently resulted in alliances with oppressive governments, despite the United States' outspoken denunciation of comparable abuses in adversaries such as China and Iran. America's capacity to project moral authority on the international scene has been made more difficult by these contradictions, which have not only drawn criticism from enemies but also damaged trust among allies.

These double standards have come under increased scrutiny in recent years due to the emergence of multipolarity and growing mistrust of U.S. leadership. In order to discredit Western criticism of their own human rights records, nations like China and Russia regularly draw attention to American hypocrisy in international fora. In the meantime, American foreign policy is increasingly seen by the public in areas impacted by American interventions, such as the Middle East and Latin America, as self-serving rather than moral. Credibility erosion has serious geopolitical repercussions, strengthening alternative forms of government and escalating anti-American sentiment. To evaluate these double standards' long-term effects on world stability and the future of American influence in international affairs, it is crucial to comprehend their historical foundations and current expressions.

The conflict between the United States' idealistic rhetoric and practical actions is emphasized in the literature currently available on the subject. According to John Mearsheimer's 2018 book *The Great Delusion*, America's quest for liberal hegemony frequently results in destabilizing interventions that conceal realist power politics behind moral pretexts. *Overthrow* (2006) by Stephen Kinzer offers a historical account of regime changes supported by the United States, showing how economic and strategic interests usually take precedence over democratic ideals. In the meantime, the U.S. foreign policy elite is criticized in Stephen Walt's 2018 book *The Hell of Good Intentions* for creating contradictions that undermine international confidence in American leadership. Together, these pieces highlight the recurrent theme of double standards and provide a basis for a more thorough examination of their causes and consequences in this study.

2. Statement of the Problem

The United States' foreign policy often demonstrates selective enforcement of democracy and human rights, aligning actions with strategic interests rather than consistent principles, despite its professed commitment to universal values. Accusations of hypocrisy have resulted from this contradiction, undermining America's moral authority and escalating anti-American sentiment across the globe. The destabilizing effects of selective interventions, which frequently leave power voids that rival countries take advantage of, make the issue even worse. This study aims to methodically examine these disparities in treatment, asking whether they are the result of inevitable geopolitical circumstances or a more profound mismatch between American rhetoric and policy goals.

3. Research Questions

The current study tends to answer the following three questions :

1. Why does the U.S. treat human rights violations differently in friendly countries compared to enemy countries ?
2. When does the U.S. choose to intervene in other countries and when does it stay out and what factors influence these decisions?
3. How do these double standards affect how other countries view the U.S. and its global influence?

4. Aim of the Study

Three main goals are the focus of this study: first, it examines case studies from the past and present in which American foreign policy has manifested blatant double standards, such as its divergent reactions to violations of human rights in allies and enemies. Second, it pinpoints

the fundamental causes of these discrepancies, be they ideological, economic, or strategic. Third, it evaluates the wider effects of these double standards, such as how they affect regional stability, U.S. credibility, and the emergence of rival superpowers. By doing this, the study aims to offer a thorough comprehension of how and why these inconsistencies continue to exist in US foreign policy.

5. Methodology

This study uses a qualitative research methodology that blends comparative case study techniques with historical analysis. Academic books, peer-reviewed articles, and policy reports are examples of secondary sources, whereas declassified government documents, official policy statements, and diplomatic records are examples of primary sources. To identify discrepancies, the study will contrast how the United States has responded to comparable geopolitical situations, such as its varying positions on Saudi Arabia's and Iran's human rights records. Additionally, to determine whether double standards are the result of ideological misalignment or structural imperatives, theoretical frameworks from liberalism and realism will be applied.

6. Significance of the Study

By critically analyzing the discrepancy between the declared principles and actual practices of U.S. foreign policy, this dissertation adds to the larger conversation on the subject. The study offers insights into how double standards erode American leadership in the world and contribute to geopolitical instability by methodically examining them. The results could help guide policy discussions about how the United States can uphold its credibility in a world that is becoming more multipolar by balancing its strategic interests with its declared values. Additionally, the

study lays the groundwork for further research on the long-term effects of inconsistent foreign policy conduct.

7. Research Structure

There are two major chapters in the dissertation. From its early isolationist beginnings to its current position as a global leader, the first chapter, Theoretical Foundations, Historical Evolution, and Motivations of U.S. Foreign Policy, charts the ideological and geopolitical evolution of American foreign policy. Particular examples of policy inconsistencies are examined in the second chapter, Double Standards in Action – Key Case Studies. These include U.S. relations with authoritarian regimes, targeted military interventions, and initiatives to promote democracy. The findings are summarized, their implications are discussed, and possible reforms to lessen the detrimental effects of double standards in U.S. foreign policy are suggested in the conclusion.

CHAPTER ONE

Theoretical Underpinnings, Historical Development, and American Motives International Relations

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Introduction

This chapter examines the philosophical roots, historical trajectory, and driving forces of U.S. foreign policy. It begins by analyzing America's foundational ideals—democracy promotion, human rights advocacy, national security, and economic prosperity—and their inherent tensions with realpolitik. Tracing the evolution from early isolationism (1776–1800) through territorial expansion (1800–1848) and into global interventionism (1920–1945), it contextualizes America's emergence as a superpower. The Cold War era (1945–1991) and post–Cold War phases, including the War on Terror (1991–present), reveal how strategic doctrines adapted to geopolitical shifts. Finally, it dissects the economic, geopolitical, and domestic motivations shaping policy decisions, offering a framework to understand America's complex role on the world stage.

1.1 Fundamental Principles

A set of fundamental principles has long served as the foundation for American foreign policy, defining its involvement in the world. These fundamental principles act as enduring moral and political compass points, guiding diplomatic goals and granting legitimacy to global endeavors. Two principles—the promotion of democratic governance and the universal defense of human rights—remain crucial, even though their actual application has changed in response to geopolitical changes. These guiding principles are examined in the overview that follows, along with their historical significance, current issues, and practical applications in a complex world.

1.1.1 Democracy: Promoting Democratic Governance

The United States contributed significantly to the "push for democratization" during the 1970s and 1980s (Huntington, 1991, p. 85). The United States' ability, willingness, and appeal as

a role model for other nations will determine how long it can continue to play this role (Nye, 2004). Prior to the middle of the 1970s, advancing democracy was not always a top priority in U.S. foreign policy. It may lose priority once more. One justification for backing anti-communist dictators may be eliminated with the end of the Cold War and the ideological conflict against the Soviet Union, but there may also be less justification for a sizable American presence in the Third World. The American aspiration to propagate democracy might or might not endure. In contrast, the American one is more limited (Gaddis, 2005). The budget and trade deficits place additional limitations on the US's capacity to affect events abroad. More importantly, America's ability to promote democracy is partially realized. With a few notable exceptions, practically every nation in Latin America, the Caribbean, Europe, and East Asia that was more susceptible to American influence has already opened up. The only significant nation where the United States can still have a significant impact in support of democratization is Mexico. The undemocratic countries of mainland Asia, the Middle East, and Africa are less exposed to American influence because democracy has a weaker hold there (Diamond, 2019).

The Persian Gulf region has been the only other significant Third World region where U.S. interests have remained of "vital significance," aside from Central America and the Caribbean (Bacevich, 2002, p. 73). In addition to undermining Saddam Hussein's authoritarian government in Iraq, the Gulf War and the subsequent deployment of 500,000 US troops in the area have reignited calls for democracy in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait (Brumberg, 2005).

1.1.2 Human Rights: Defending Fundamental Freedoms

Since they guarantee that each person is treated with respect and dignity, human rights are in fact essential to upholding just and equitable societies. Important standards for preserving

these ideals around the world are the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and later international accords such as the ICCPR.

Even though they are widely acknowledged, human rights still face many obstacles in the modern world. Government repression is a serious problem; reports of practices like censorship, arbitrary detentions, and suppressions of free expression are growing in many nations. People are still subjected to widespread discrimination on the basis of their race, gender, religion, and other identities, which frequently prevents them from having equal access to justice and opportunities (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 149).

Armed conflicts make these problems worse by fostering conditions in which state and non-state actors target civilians, forcibly relocate people, and commit other human rights abuses. Beyond this, corporate wrongdoing that threatens community livelihoods and violates many people's rights includes exploitation and environmental degradation (Ruggie, 2013, p. 105).

A diversified strategy is needed to address these issues. Human rights are protected by legal frameworks on a national and international level, although enforcement is still a major issue. When it comes to recording violations, spreading awareness, and promoting change, groups like Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International are essential. Furthermore, major advancements in holding violators accountable and bringing about policy reforms are frequently fueled by grassroots movements and public mobilization (Tarrow, 2011, p. 210).

In order to put pressure on offenders and promote adherence to international norms, multilateral accountability measures—such as targeted sanctions and UN resolutions—are also crucial. The long-term defense of human rights is further supported by funding education, increasing public awareness, and establishing avenues for communication and peacemaking. In

the end, upholding the rule of law and making sure that societies develop in a prosperous and equitable manner depend on promoting human rights. The need for vigilant protection and advancement of these fundamental freedoms grows with the level of global interconnectedness (Keck & Sikkink, 1998, p. 201).

1.1.3 National Security: Protecting American Interests

Walt examines post-Cold War American foreign policy, which he characterizes as a "catalog of missteps and misadventures." To help comprehend this dismal record, Walt compares the United States' position in the 1990s with its current position in the multipolar world, where China and Russia, along with other middle powers and non-state actors, pose a challenge to American global hegemony (Walt, 2018 ;p.12).

Walt (2018) contends that because the United States emerged as the world's leading military and economic force and became comparatively friendly with other superpowers, the 1990s represented a very advantageous strategic and economic moment for the country. This prospect is frightening due to the foreign policy of the Clinton, Bush, and Obama administrations; the United States is currently in a worse position than it was in almost every area of foreign policy. Much of the Middle East is in chaos, liberalism is dwindling both at home and abroad, and Russia and China have grown increasingly antagonistic and confrontational with the United States.

As a result, the world is extremely dangerous and complex today, and this is made worse by the fact that the US military is no longer unstoppable and is a "bankrupt military superpower." The ambitious definition of "liberal hegemony," which has been the foreign policy failure of the last three Trump presidents, is a failed American policy concept. It sought a more profound and

expansive liberal global order headed by a kind United States. However, it was founded on a faulty theory of international politics, which is why it failed (Mearsheimer, 2018).

Democratic peace theory, economic liberalism, and institutional liberalism—the theoretical underpinnings of liberal hegemony—are inherently defective. The United States has continued with this flawed policy despite its repeated failures, in part because it is a large state with immense power and a favorable geopolitical position, but also because of the "foreign policy community," which American political commentator Ben Rhodes has described as a "bloc" of those with a deep interest in international affairs (Layne, 2006, p.13). Among other issues, they tend to exaggerate the role of military force and ignore considerations of power asymmetry, which results in diplomatic constraints of "ultimatums" and "coercion." (Layne, 2006, p.13).

In addition to informal groups like think tanks, interest groups, lobby groups, the media, and academia, these organizations also include formal ones like the president and his administration and smaller agencies. Furthermore, with a strong and unanimity in favor of liberal hegemony, these groups function as a sort of community. An examination of three task forces from 2006, 2013, and 2016 demonstrates this active bias. This bias toward liberal hegemony is evident in documents pertaining to these teams, and despite its repeated failures, it has not been contested. By inflating the threat, exaggerating the benefits, and hiding the costs, the "elite bloc" has been able to advance this failed grand strategy, even though the general public favors a restrained foreign policy (Rhodes, 2018).

In this sense, liberal hegemony serves as a broad strategy that makes American leadership appear feasible and acceptable in addition to empowering the "bloc" and elevating its stature. However, if this is a failure, why hasn't the public made an effort to halt it and accomplish something better? The startling lack of responsibility for the "bloc" in foreign policy is one

explanation. Learning from past mistakes is nearly impossible when the "bloc" is shielded from its mistakes, when no one is held responsible for their mistakes, and when revisionists are treated as prophets without honor (Bacevich, 2020).

Essentially, the Trump campaign exacted revenge on this misguided grand strategy during his ascent to power. However, despite his advocacy, he has actually done the exact opposite, undermining rather than enhancing American hegemony. Trump is the most inept president in contemporary history, and his administration serves as a clear illustration of why American foreign policy has not changed. Trump has thus maintained liberal hegemony, as previous presidents have done, but with a slightly different moniker: "illiberal hegemony," which places a strong emphasis on the military while downplaying the institutional and democratic components of such a strategy (Drezner, 2019, p.105).

Therefore, until a new grand strategy is put into place, it is unlikely that the situation will get better. Walt suggests "offshore balancing" as a substitute grand strategy that tackles issues of power balance while accounting for the nationalism and sovereignty that have contributed to the global rise of anti-Americanism. Furthermore, this approach holds that only Europe, Northeast Asia, and the Persian Gulf are important outside of the Western Hemisphere, and that "maintaining the balance of power to ensure the rise of peripheral states should be the only American goal" (Walt, 2018).

1.1.4 Economic Prosperity: Ensuring Free Trade and Stability

Ensuring economic freedom in a free global market, which is defined by capital flows, open trade, and cross-border operations by enterprising multinational corporations, continues to be a top priority. Critics point to the "high costs of economic globalization." These costs include

inequality within and between countries, persistently high unemployment rates both domestically and internationally, and—above all—environmental exploitation and degradation and their effects on national economies, even though the majority of economists and others applaud this trend.

Critics also highlight the dangers of unchecked international financial fluctuations. They contend that the drawbacks of globalization greatly exceed its advantages, despite being a part of a global economic system that is influenced by external economic and technological forces. They argue that despite claims of universal prosperity, the global economy produces more losers than winners, and they point to global economic issues as proof of this imbalance. Some even predict economic wars on a local and international scale (Stiglitz, 2003).

Elites, economic classes, and individual states compete fiercely on the economic front. The "struggle for the global product" has the potential to spark regional blocs based on major economic powers, as noted by former German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt. However, the claim that the majority of the world's political, social, and economic issues are caused by globalization is frequently overstated or inaccurate. In actuality, technology and poorly thought out national policies are far more responsible for many, if not most, of the problems that are ascribed to globalization (Bhagwati, 2004, p.50).

According to recent studies, skepticism regarding free trade and international capital mobility is strengthened by false beliefs about the socioeconomic impacts of globalization. According to longitudinal survey data, including the Pew Research Center study from 1999, a sizable portion of the American electorate has negative opinions about global economic integration. In particular, 52% of respondents were worried about how it might affect environmental standards and domestic labor conditions. Recent scholarly analyses, however,

show a discrepancy between this all-encompassing view of globalization and its comparatively sparse actual manifestations (Gilpin 2001).

Three basic features of modern globalization can be seen from a structural standpoint. First, the majority of nations continue to maintain their fundamental economic independence, although its effects differ greatly amongst national economies. Secondly, it exhibits sectoral concentration, which means that its most significant impacts are limited to particular industries like communications, trade, and finance. Third, there is a clear geographic imbalance, with activity clearly concentrated in the three main global economic centers of gravity: East Asia, Western Europe, and North America (Held & McGrew, 2007).

It is necessary to distinguish between three levels of analysis in order to arrive at a scientific understanding of globalization: the direct effects of market integration, the structural changes that accompany these changes within economies, and external factors that are often confused with the effects of globalization itself (Ghemawat, 2007).

Historically, a significant three-dimensional shift occurred during the last ten years of the twentieth century. In terms of the economy, trade and financial interdependencies grew during this time. It was characterized technologically by the groundbreaking developments in communications and information. In terms of geopolitics, it required a major restructuring of global power structures and alliances. Deep theoretical questions about the nature of contemporary economic change and its analogy to significant historical economic shifts are raised by these interconnected transformations (Castells, 2010).

Three main schools of thought can be distinguished in the methodology of academic evaluations of globalization. The simplistic school tends to overestimate the overall impact of

globalization. On the other hand, the skeptic school downplays the importance of the current changes. However, the analytical school aims for a more nuanced and balanced approach to assessment (Hirst, Thompson, & Bromley, 2015).

In conclusion, this analysis reveals a number of important research priorities. Quantitative research that can precisely gauge the actual scope of globalization is desperately needed. Analyzing the root causes and outward signs of current economic change is equally crucial. Furthermore, understanding the intricate relationship between technological advancement and globalization requires the development of more accurate theoretical frameworks. In the end, using this methodical analytical approach creates new opportunities for a more precise comprehension of globalization within the proper historical and contextual context.

1.1.5 Tensions Between Moral Ideals and Realpolitik

In international relations, the perennial conflict between morality and realism poses a difficult problem that exposes underlying conflicts and real-world conundrums. States usually apply moral standards selectively because they put national interests ahead of moral considerations. State condemnations of human rights violations by enemies while ignoring similar violations by allies are examples of this inconsistency, which calls into question the sincerity of their stated ethical commitments and makes it more difficult to align foreign policy with moral imperatives (Dunne & Wheeler, 2004).

Moreover, there are substantial political limitations on international organizations created to preserve universal values. These organizations are frequently criticized for being places for strategic maneuvering, where strong states can block collective action on human rights by using tools like the UN Security Council veto to put their own or their allies' interests ahead of actual

accountability for violations. The legitimacy and efficacy of global frameworks are thus called into question when moral principles are applied inconsistently, as this damages confidence in international governance and breeds hypocritical views (Power, 2002).

Fostering a more equitable and stable international order still requires bridging this gap between principle and practice. Increasing accountability and transparency in international organizations, encouraging inclusive multilateral discourse, and bolstering civil society's ability to hold governments to their promises are some possible avenues. In the end, overcoming this conflict necessitates a sophisticated comprehension of state incentives and an unwavering dedication to upholding the integrity of international norms in the face of the unavoidable realities of world politics (Morgenthau, 1948).

1.2 Historical Development: Isolationism to Interventionism (1776-1945)

The United States' significant shift from a position of strategic disengagement to one of active international participation has its origins in the country's founding. The foundational era (1776–1800) created the institutional frameworks and intellectual frameworks that characterized America's early global perspective, including cautious interaction and selective neutrality. The fundamental framework for U.S. foreign policy was established by this paradoxical synthesis of idealism and pragmatism, which came to be known as the "American School" of strategic thinking. It also established the initial course for the subsequent 150-year shift toward interventionism.

1.2.1 Geopolitical Formation of Early American Foreign Policy (1776-1800)

The institutional and intellectual foundation of American foreign policy was laid during the founding era. Intellectually, this era established a concept of "cautious interaction" with the

international system, developed the theory of "selective neutrality" as an alternative to total isolationism, and solidified "American exceptionalism" (Elkins & McKittrick, 1995). In terms of structure, early diplomacy concentrated on establishing specialized diplomatic bodies, decision-making procedures, and legal frameworks to control international interactions and guarantee cogent policymaking. Operationally, the United States used sophisticated tactics such as "preventive containment" to counter new threats, "soft power" through trade, and "delicate balancing" diplomacy to preserve neutrality or alliances as needed. The United States, which was geographically shielded from European conflicts, made the most of its security space by concentrating on internal development and only sparingly intervening overseas (Tucker, 2014:p.12).

In addition to achieving "existential security," these initiatives developed a unique "international identity" apart from European colonial powers, showed flexibility in the face of a changing international order, and amassed a sizeable amount of political capital (Tucker, 2014). A foundational reference for centuries, this phase created a distinctive model—the "American School" of international relations—that combined political pragmatism, strategic flexibility, geopolitical realism, and philosophical vision.

1.2.2 Geopolitical Shift: From Neutrality to Territorial Expansion (1800-1848)

Defensive neutrality gave way to assertive expansionism in the first half of the 1800s. By doubling the country's territory through the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, foreign policy shifted from upholding integrity to gaining power. Despite being defensive in nature, the War of 1812 improved the military establishment, bolstered national identity, and showed strategic maturity through direct military conflict with colonial powers (Frederick, 1963).

By deftly balancing territorial ambition with regional isolation, the Monroe Doctrine (1823) established spheres of influence in the Western Hemisphere while avoiding involvement in European conflicts (Sexton, 2011). This expansionist trend was capped off by the Mexican-American War (1846–1848), which saw the annexation of large areas that cemented America's geopolitical presence while upholding the principle of non-interference in Europe (LaFeber, 1963). During this time, the country underwent a significant transformation from one that was securing its existence to one that was becoming a rising regional power, striking a balance between relative isolation and external expansion, and radically altering its strategic vision.

1.2.3 Strategic Shifts: From Isolationism to Global Leadership (1920-1945)

The Washington Naval Conference and other precautionary arms control agreements, as well as neutrality laws that enshrined non-involvement and balanced economic interests with isolationism, were hallmarks of the strategic retreat that occurred during the interwar years (1920–1939). Participation in World War II developed through several stages. By using the Lend-Lease policy to support Allies while retaining formal neutrality, the Indirect Support phase (1941–1942) preserved the European balance through logistical means (Kennedy, 1987).

The United States went from being a financier to the main military actor in Europe and the Pacific as a result of the Pearl Harbor attack, which led to Direct Engagement (1942–1945). America's concept of comprehensive global leadership was crystallized during the post-war period (1945 onward), which concentrated on institutionalizing a new world order, particularly through the United Nations (Gaddis, 1972). From strategic hesitancy to influencing the post-war order, this trajectory shows how the United States has gradually taken on more international responsibilities. The shift from regional power to a central international actor was made possible by this development, which exemplifies the fundamental aspect of American diplomacy:

strategic flexibility and adaptation to changes in the world while maintaining national interests (Dallek, 1995).

1.3 Cold War Era (1945-1991)

Ideological, political, and military tensions between the US and the USSR characterized the Cold War Era (1945–1991), which shaped world geopolitics for almost fifty years. A bipolar world order emerged during the first phase, Foundations of Confrontation (1945–1949), which saw the dissolution of the wartime alliance. Important occasions like the Marshall Plan (1948), the Berlin Blockade (1948–1949), and the Truman Doctrine (1947) cemented divisions and set the stage for decades of superpower competition.

1.3.1 Foundations of Confrontation (1945-1949)

Due to the failure of conference diplomacy (Yalta, Potsdam) and the crystallizing ideological conflict, the United States' approach to the Soviet Union underwent a dramatic change in the years following World War II. Three political pillars supported the U.S. response: the Truman Doctrine (1947) framed direct containment of communist expansion and preventive intervention. Western Europe was economically restored by the Marshall Plan (1948), which strengthened ties with the United States and resisted Soviet influence. NATO's founding in 1949 established a framework for collective defense, while the Berlin Airlift (1948–1949) showed military resolve (Gaddis, 2005). These steps marked a change from military alliances to complex strategic competition, uniting the Western bloc, creating the bipolar international system, and turning Europe into a battlefield in the Cold War.

1.3.2 Consolidation and Doctrine (1949-1960)

There were significant strategic changes during the first ten years of the Cold War. America's first long-term peacetime alliance, NATO, was established in 1949, breaking with the non-engagement tradition and serving as the formal restraint on Soviet expansion in Europe. European bipolarity was formally established in 1955 with the Soviet Union's creation of the Warsaw Pact. The U.S. nuclear monopoly was broken by the Soviet atomic test in 1949, which also sparked an arms race and compelled a drastic rethink of strategy.

In addition to establishing a precedent for collective action mandated by the United Nations, the Korean War (1950–1953) tested containment through limited war, showed a willingness to engage peripherally without escalating nuclear conflict, and accepted stalemate over the risks of total war. In terms of strategy, the United States relied more on technological superiority and adopted "massive retaliation" (1954), which resulted in the "mutual assured destruction" (MAD) paradox. This decade established nuclear weapons as the currency of power, turned containment into military implementation, and developed the long-lasting framework for handling superpower competition, which includes arms control, nuclear deterrence, alliance buffers, and proxy wars (Gaddis, 2005).

1.4 Post-Cold War and the War on Terror (1991-Present)

A new and turbulent era in U.S. foreign policy began with the fall of the Soviet Union, characterized first by uncontested dominance and then by a dramatic shift toward international counterterrorism. It looks at this post-Cold War trajectory (1991–present), examining the early years of American hegemony, which were marked by attempts to establish a unipolar global order, and the revolutionary effects of the September 11 attacks. This section examines how the ensuing War on Terror reshaped strategic priorities, used a wide range of military and non-

military instruments, and ultimately resulted in complicated regional instability, changes in global power dynamics, and important insights into the constraints and requirements of American power projection in the twenty-first century.

1.4.1 American Hegemony (1991-2001)

As the only superpower, the United States attempted to create a new global order after the fall of the Soviet Union. Important measures included extending NATO eastward, applying severe economic sanctions to Iraq, and using decisive military force in the Gulf War in 1991 (Ikenberry, 2002).

1.4.2 War on Terror and Its Aftermath (2001-2021)

A drastic change in policy was brought about by the September 11 attacks. Based on WMD claims, the United States militarily overthrew the Taliban government in Afghanistan, starting a protracted process of nation-building, and initiated Operation Iraqi Freedom (2003), which overthrew Saddam Hussein but also caused instability and insurgency. Severe sanctions, assistance for regional organizations, and clandestine operations were additional instruments. Significant issues during this time period included the inability to establish stable states, ineffective counterterrorism measures, intense international censure, and expensive human and material resources. On a regional level, it fueled the emergence of armed groups, ongoing instability, and the breakdown of Middle Eastern states. On a global scale, it accompanied a change in the balance of power, the waning influence of the United States, and the emergence of China as a peer rival. Important lessons were learned about the limitations of military force, the significance of cultural awareness, the need for realistic and balanced foreign policy strategies, and the difficulties of upholding fundamental interests in a shifting global order (Mearsheimer, 2019).

1.5 Reasons for Making Policy Decisions

Dynamic pressures and long-standing national interests interact in a complex way to influence U.S. foreign policy decisions. It looks at the fundamental reasons behind these decisions, going beyond the current situation to examine the following: pursuing economic gain, accomplishing strategic geopolitical goals, and navigating powerful domestic political forces. To understand the reasoning behind America's actions on the international scene, one must have a solid understanding of this complex calculus (Hook & Spanier, 2021).

1.5.1 Financial Concerns

Core economic goals have a big impact on U.S. foreign policy. Maintaining strategic priority continues to be securing access to essential resources, especially oil. The need to secure supplies and stabilize energy markets is the driving force behind Middle Eastern policies, such as the 2003 intervention in Iraq and the long-standing ties with Saudi Arabia. This reflects the "oil as a strategic weapon" theory that is essential to national security (Klare, 2008). At the same time, policy actively advances the interests of large American corporations overseas. This illustrates how economic and foreign policy objectives intersect by putting diplomatic pressure on trading partners like China to provide advantageous terms for multinational corporations like Apple and Boeing, especially with regard to market access, intellectual property rights, and competitive advantage (Gilpin, 2001).

1.5.2 Geopolitical Goals

One of the main geopolitical drivers is the strategic containment of perceived enemies. To combat Russian influence in Eastern Europe, the United States uses economic instruments like sanctions and military alliances like NATO (Mearsheimer, 2014). Similar to this, the "Indo-Pacific" strategy in Asia aims to counterbalance China's growing regional power by fortifying

ties with countries like Australia and Japan. It is equally important to maintain influence in key areas. Maintaining a military presence in the Persian Gulf, such as bases in Qatar and Bahrain, supports larger regional stability goals by protecting Israel and keeping an eye out for possible Iranian threats (Brzezinski, 1997).

1.5.3 Domestic Political Considerations

The formulation of foreign policy is significantly influenced by domestic actors. Effective lobbying organizations, like the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), use advocacy and campaign funding to influence lawmakers to support pro-Israel legislation. At the same time, President Eisenhower popularized the term "military-industrial complex," which links domestic economic interests to security policy and exerts pressure to maintain high defense budgets and procurement decisions (Mills, 1956,p.12). Additionally, presidential decisions are directly influenced by electoral dynamics and public opinion. High-profile initiatives, like the 2021 withdrawal from Afghanistan, are frequently carried out in part in response to domestic political pressures and changing public opinion (Gilpin, 2001).

Conclusion

After more than two centuries of change, U.S. foreign policy is now a dynamic fusion of long-held principles and practical demands. America's actions, from its isolationist beginnings to its current position of global hegemony, demonstrate enduring conflicts between the realities of power politics and ideals such as democracy and human rights. While post-9/11 interventions highlighted the limitations of military force, the Cold War cemented containment as doctrine. Strategic priorities are constantly recalculated by domestic pressures, security goals, and economic interests. This chapter demonstrates that policy is a contested equilibrium rather than a

monolith, wherein national interest, ideological conviction, and historical legacy come together to define America's engagement with a world that is constantly changing.

CHAPTER TWO

Chapter Two: U.S Double Standards in Action

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Introduction

This chapter explores the presence and consequences of double standards in U.S. foreign policy, particularly in its selective promotion of human rights and democracy. While the U.S. claims to uphold universal values, its actions often reflect strategic interests rather than consistent moral principles. By analyzing key case studies, this chapter uncovers the disconnect between rhetoric and reality. It also examines how the U.S. engages differently with allies and adversaries, revealing a pattern of favoritism that undermines credibility. The discussion includes the murder of Jamal Khashoggi and the varying levels of U.S. support for democratic uprisings. Additionally, it investigates how such double standards affect international institutions and U.S. relations with the Global South. Ultimately, the chapter sets the groundwork for understanding how these contradictions fuel global skepticism and empower rival powers. The aim is to critically assess the ethical and strategic costs of American foreign policy inconsistency.

2.1 Definition and Nature of Double Standards

2.1.1 Political–Theoretical Perspective

The failure to apply the same standards to comparable situations is blatant discrimination. The "unequal treatment of similar situations, based on self-interested considerations – not on reasonable legal or moral policies – applied to one set of countries" is the definition of double standards in international politics. For instance, politics becomes hypocritical when a major power condemns a particular type of behavior by a "rival" state but permits it in a "friendly" one. In both situations, the friendship status is quite comparable. Moral discourse loses credibility, as do organizations and laws that claim to uphold universally accepted principles (Duss, 2020,p,24).

2.1.2 Legal–Procedural Perspective

The legal and procedural perspective examines the "disparity of justice and non-equity among legal contradiction cases." In this context, "double standards" refers to the disregard for rational exceptions in order to irrationally achieve a particular desired outcome. In comparable circumstances, some states or international organizations are granted laws or principles, while others are not. There is further lack of justification for the existence of a fundamental order or the reasons why laws are questioned in this system of government when the same rule is applied consistently over time but produces different results. The "order of law," which is defined as nonpartisan governmental control, is lost by international actors who are subjected to such practices. They also surrender to an uncontested regime of negative law and grow increasingly distrustful of international authoritative institutions (Duss, 2020.p, 25).

2.2 Human Rights and Authoritarian Allies

Global relations are still shaped by the question of human rights, particularly when strong states condone or ignore the atrocities committed by their authoritarian allies. The United States charged China with "ongoing genocide and crimes against humanity" against the Uyghur Muslim minority in Xinjiang in its annual report (U.S. Department of State, 2021). Antony Blinken, the secretary of state, reiterated the Biden administration's position that human rights ought to be at the forefront of American foreign policy. Blinken criticized this as "lopsided" and demanded a more inclusive approach to human rights, in contrast to the previous administration, which placed a greater emphasis on religious freedom (Blinken, 2021). He emphasized transparency, a concept that stands in stark contrast to authoritarian regimes that hide abuses, while acknowledging America's own struggles with racism. The report also identified major violations

in conflict areas like Ethiopia and Yemen, as well as in countries like Russia, Uganda, Venezuela, and Belarus (Human Rights Watch, 2022).

2.2.1 China's Treatment of Uyghur Muslims

One of the most serious human rights issues of the twenty-first century is China's treatment of Uyghur Muslims. According to government and nongovernmental organization reports and independent investigations, the pervasive persecution in Xinjiang is considered a crime against humanity (Amnesty International, 2023). In order to eradicate religious and cultural identity, these abuses include widespread surveillance, mass arbitrary detention, and systematic torture. A global campaign calling for the closure of internment camps and the release of those who were wrongfully detained was sparked by Amnesty International's compilation of testimonies from more than 50 former detainees (Callamard, 2022).

Since 2017, hundreds of thousands of Uyghur men and women have been imprisoned in Xinjiang without formal charges or access to legal counsel, in an unprecedented wave of mass incarceration. Arrests were frequently made for innocuous actions like possessing religious objects or conversing with someone overseas. One report claims that after gathering their biometric information, "police swept into homes unannounced, detaining people without due legal process" and then moved them to camps (International Federation for Human Rights, 2023). Torture, including the use of the "tiger chair," a metal apparatus that immobilizes detainees in agonizing positions, was frequently a result of these detentions.

For Muslims in Xinjiang, religious persecution has been especially devastating. Chinese authorities frequently label basic Islamic practices as extremist, including prayer, traditional clothing, and Arabic greetings. Even uttering "As-salamu alaykum" has frequently resulted in

detention (Johnson, 2020). Qur'ans, prayer rugs, and other religious items were routinely seized, according to Amnesty International. According to former officials, state agents were directed to confiscate all religious items from homes and replace photographs of mosques with Chinese flags (Amnesty International, 2023).

Additionally, there has been a greater effort to stifle dissent and distort the facts. Foreign journalists, activists, and survivors have been silenced by the Chinese Communist Party's complete information blackout. Although the precise number of detainees is still unknown, satellite imagery shows that since 2017, the infrastructure for internment has grown rapidly (Chen, 2021). China has been urged by Amnesty International to end its targeted campaign against the Uyghur Muslim community, dismantle this system, and free all people who have been arbitrarily detained (Callamard, 2022).

2.2.2 Iran's Human Rights Abuses

Iran has a history of systematic human rights abuses, ranging from arbitrary detention to judicial abuse. The nation's courts frequently use coerced confessions gleaned through torture to prosecute people on the basis of nebulous charges (Amnesty International, 2023). Judgments are frequently rendered in closed trials with no public accountability, and legal representation is either nonexistent or severely restricted. These tactics allow the government to imprison protesters and dissidents while shielding offenders from prosecution (U.S. Department of State, 2021).

Detainees in Iranian prisons continue to endure severe conditions, including isolation, physical abuse, electric shocks, and starvation. These actions go unchallenged in the face of global scrutiny, and those involved have not faced any significant penalties (Human Rights

Watch, 2022). Amnesty International has condemned this climate of impunity, claiming that torture is a common form of control and punishment in Iran rather than an anomaly.

Under Iranian law, discrimination against women and girls is especially severe. A climate of gender-based oppression has been fostered by the implementation of the mandatory hijab, limitations on education and employment, and harsh penalties for dissent. Women who violate the dress code may face fines, jail time, or humiliating punishments such as washing corpses (Johnson, 2020). A larger effort to restrict and silence women in both public and private life is reflected in these state policies (Blinken, 2021).

Christians, Baha'is, Kurds, Arabs, and other ethnic and religious minorities are also routinely excluded. Many members of these groups experience surveillance or intimidation, and they are denied access to basic services like healthcare, work, and education (United Nations, 2021). Because state policies specifically target minority identities for repression, discrimination in Iran is not just social; it is deeply institutional.

The harsh circumstances faced by Afghan refugees in Iran are characterized by exclusion and discrimination. Despite the unrest in Afghanistan, they are frequently denied access to legal work, healthcare, and education, and many are under pressure to return (International Federation for Human Rights, 2023). Such treatment demonstrates the Iranian government's contempt for humanitarian principles and breaches its international legal obligations to protect refugees.

Iran continues to apply the death penalty at a startlingly high rate. Executions have increased recently, and non-violent crimes like drug trafficking are often punished with the death penalty (Amnesty International, 2023). Furthermore, political activists and opponents have been

put to death as a means of repression and terror. This policy reflects the government's use of death as a weapon against dissent and violates due process (Callamard, 2022).

Lastly, impunity is still a major problem in Iran. State actors rarely have their crimes looked into or prosecuted, particularly when they target protesters and dissidents. The way the regime handled the downing of the Ukrainian airliner in 2020 is a clear illustration of institutional cover-up and a refusal to take accountability (U.S. Department of State, 2021). Victims of state violence will not receive justice until the state is held responsible.

2.2.3 U.S Position from China's and Iran's Human Rights Violations

The United States has taken a firm and extremely critical stand against China's abuses of human rights, especially with regard to the persecution of Uyghur Muslims and other ethnic minorities in the Xinjiang area. First made by the Trump administration and then maintained by the Biden administration, the U.S. government formally declared in January 2021 that China's actions amounted to crimes against humanity and genocide (U.S. Department of State, 2021).

This signaled a dramatic increase in rhetoric and the implementation of useful policy changes. The Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act, which was passed in 2021, is one of them. It prohibits the importation of goods from Xinjiang unless importers can demonstrate that the goods were not made using forced labor. The United States has also placed specific sanctions on a number of Chinese officials and organizations that are thought to be engaged in the establishment and management of reeducation initiatives, surveillance systems, and internment camps.

The Global Magnitsky Act, which gives the United States the authority to impose sanctions on foreign government officials involved in grave violations of human rights, was used to carry

out these actions. In a number of speeches, Secretary of State Antony Blinken has condemned China's treatment of Uyghurs as "an attempt to erase their identity" and reaffirmed that the United States will continue to fight such abuses alongside like-minded allies. The United States has also spearheaded attempts to exert more diplomatic pressure on Beijing in multilateral fora like the G7 and the UN, although these initiatives are frequently thwarted by China's worldwide clout and other nations' economic interests (Blinken, 2021).

The United States has been equally outspoken about Iran's worsening human rights situation, especially with regard to the use of the death penalty, political repression, and the treatment of women and girls. American officials have repeatedly denounced Iran's use of unfair trials, arbitrary detention, and torture, especially against journalists, protesters, and political dissidents.

Following the death of Mahsa Amini in 2022, a young woman detained by Iran's morality police for allegedly breaking hijab regulations, the United States placed sanctions on the morality police and a number of Iranian security officials who were involved in the crackdown on demonstrations. U.S. officials responded by highlighting the significance of women's rights as a key element of human rights policy after this incident brought gender-based repression in Iran to the attention of the world (Amnesty International, 2023).

Iran's frequent application of the death penalty has drawn criticism from the United States, particularly for offenses that do not fit the international criteria for the death penalty, such as drug-related offenses or nonviolent political activism. Additionally, the U.S. Iran's persecution of Baha'is, Christians, Kurds, Sunnis, and other religious or ethnic minorities has led the State Department to designate it as a "Country of Particular Concern" under the International Religious Freedom Act. The United States continues to enforce a strict sanctions regime against Iranian

officials, organizations, and sectors that are thought to be involved in or permitting human rights violations in response to these violations. In addition to sanctions, U.S. officials frequently utilize global forums to highlight Iran's oppression and mobilize support for accountability initiatives. However, attempts to reach a multilateral agreement are frequently hampered by Iran's geopolitical position in the Middle East, especially for countries hoping to keep diplomatic ties open with Tehran (U.S. Department of State, 2023).

In both instances, the United States has positioned itself as a preeminent human rights advocate, responding to systemic violations in China and Iran through international diplomacy, legal channels, and public denunciation. However, detractors contend that the U.S. selectively applies pressure based on strategic interests, even though these actions demonstrate a strong rhetorical and policy commitment to human rights principles. The official U.S. stance, however, is still unwavering: crimes like those in Iran and Xinjiang are illegal under international law and require concerted international action to address.

2.2.4 The Murder of Jamal Khashoggi and its Repercussions on US-Saudi Relations

Smith American perceptions of the U.S.-Saudi relationship were altered by the heartbreaking murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi. According to polls, there is increasing concern about the U.S.-Saudi relationship, in part due to the kingdom's poor human rights record and its continued involvement in the catastrophic war in Yemen. However, U.S. officials realized that "this shift in public sentiment added further pressure" and that "the politicians are left with very little option but to pursue some sort of an escape from the disastrous war it had so blithely backed." (Pew Research Center, 2022).

President Biden promised to put human rights and democratic governance first when he declared he would "Recalibrate our relationship with Saudi Arabia" when he took office in January 2021. His administration did take some significant actions in that direction, including ending U.S. support for offensive operations in Yemen and declassifying an intelligence report that implicated Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman in Khashoggi's murder. However, the Biden Administration also faces the challenging task of striking a balance between global political realities and human rights concerns. In the fight against Iranian influence in the region as well as in the global energy markets, Saudi Arabia is a close ally of the United States. That was code for Riyadh being "moved but not entirely separated from" by the Biden administration (The White House, 2021).

A turning point in U.S. history was the Khashoggi affair. S. Saudi relations, but it's still unclear if this has actually marked a turning point. Although the incident strained bilateral relations, the strategic interests that long served as the alliance's foundation remain largely unaltered. Energy security, regional stability, and counterterrorism cooperation continue to be areas of shared interest for both nations. In summary, a concerning ambiguity in U.S.-Saudi relations was revealed by the murder of Jamal Khashoggi. Although it sparked increased criticism and calls for reform, the strategic reality that bound these two nations together in a long-term, mutually beneficial partnership makes this alliance, albeit in a more "troubled" form, one of the pillars of US foreign policy in the short to medium term (Council on Foreign Relations, 2023; Brookings Institution, 2022).

2.3 Democracy Promotion and Regime Change

2.3.1 Selective Support for Democratic Uprisings: Ukraine's Maidan Revolution (2014)

Widespread pro-European demonstrations in Kyiv were sparked by the Ukrainian government's sudden refusal to sign an Association Agreement with the European Union on November 21, 2013, which set off the Ukraine crisis. On February 22, 2014, President Yanukovich was overthrown as a result of the protests. Russian military forces moved into Crimea a few days later, sparking a contentious referendum in which the majority of voters chose to join Russia. A civil war broke out between Ukrainian forces and separatists in Donetsk and Luhansk after they declared their independence, sparking a larger conflict. A permanent solution was not reached in spite of efforts at peace through the 2014 and 2015 Minsk agreements. As Russia gathered troops at the Ukrainian border in 2021, tensions increased even more, leading to Russia's 2022 recognition of Donetsk and Luhansk and the ensuing Western sanctions (Amnesty International, n.d.). This case demonstrates how the United States selectively supports democratic movements, frequently acting more in accordance with strategic interests than with enduring democratic ideals.

2.3.2 The Iraq War and Democracy Promotion

The Bush administration, especially after 9/11, presented the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq as a reaction to Saddam Hussein's purported WMDs and terrorism-related ties. The narrative continued despite the lack of evidence of WMDs, motivated by worries about regional security and the spread of these weapons worldwide. Events like Israel's 1981 airstrike on the Tammuz reactor and a number of post-Gulf War sanctions and inspections under UN Resolution 687 had already brought attention to Iraq's nuclear aspirations on a global scale. These procedures signaled a change in global oversight procedures, moving toward no-fly zones and more invasive

inspections. This oversight became politicized over time and was used more as a means of projecting power than as a means of disarmament. The preemptive strike doctrine, which invoked Article 51 of the UN Charter in ways that many experts believed distorted international law, was a major part of the war's rationale. Under the pretense of advancing democracy, the war ultimately exposed the manipulation of moral and legal arguments to further geopolitical agendas (Pillar, 2006)

2.3.3 Intervention vs. Non-Intervention

2.3.3.1 Libyan Military Intervention

One of the most contentious instances of international military intervention occurred during the Libyan conflict. NATO began a full-scale campaign in March 2011 in response to UN Security Council Resolution 1973, which was initially intended to protect civilians but swiftly escalated toward regime change. Libya's military infrastructure deteriorated as a result of air and naval operations that started on March 19. Nearly 10,000 missions were completed by NATO forces, significantly destroying logistical targets. The intervention brought into question the "Responsibility to Protect" doctrine's application as well as the hazy distinction between national interests and humanitarian concerns. Critics contend that the operation concealed covert objectives, such as geopolitical supremacy and control over Libya's enormous oil reserves. Although the intervention was tactically successful in overthrowing Gaddafi, it was unable to bring about enduring peace, leaving Libya in a state of ongoing instability and proxy war (Lacher, 2020; Pack, 2019).

2.3.3.2 Assessing the Justification of Intervention: Interest or Protection?

There are various inconsistencies when evaluating Libya using the standards established by the Commission on International Intervention and Sovereignty. Despite being legally required by Resolution 1973, the intervention went beyond protecting civilians to include overthrowing the government. Even though there were egregious human rights violations, there was inconsistency in the responses to similar violations elsewhere. As demonstrated by France's quest for oil resources and influence in the Sahel, the goals of intervening powers seemed to combine economic and strategic interests with humanitarian justifications. In addition, the intervention used excessive force, circumvented peaceful alternatives, and damaged infrastructure unrelated to civilian safety. Notwithstanding its stated goals, the mission failed to bring about political stability and instead left Libya a divided and disputed battlefield (Lacher, 2020; Pack & Mezran, 2022).

2.3.3.3 The Goals of the US Invasion of Iraq in 2003

An example of how the United States used the war on terror as a pretext for more expansive geopolitical goals is the invasion of Iraq. In addition to overthrowing Saddam's government, the goals were to preserve regional dominance, secure control over oil reserves, and stop the emergence of competing powers. These goals were openly stated by the Bush Doctrine, which promoted American primacy and preemptive action. Massive devastation and fatalities resulted from the aftermath, and the promise of establishing democracy was not realized. The United States used the rhetoric of promoting democracy and national security to defend its actions, but these justifications frequently concealed imperialist intentions. In addition to destabilizing Iraq, the war caused significant harm to the local populace and reshaped the region to benefit American and allied interests (Hersh, 2004; Phillips, 2020).

2.3.4 The Declared and Unstated American Goals in the Afghanistan War

The United States used the need to hunt down terrorists, safeguard national security, and put quick preventative measures in place to defend its military intervention in Afghanistan following 9/11. But a closer look reveals hidden agendas. These included building long-term military installations, controlling energy routes in Central Asia, and destroying any regional alliances that might threaten American hegemony. Under the guise of counterterrorism, the war eventually revealed itself to be a neo-colonial endeavor. The campaign failed to bring about lasting peace or true reconstruction, and it caused enormous losses in terms of both money and lives. The declared ideals of freedom and democracy were frequently subordinated to larger hegemonic designs in Afghanistan, which turned into a site of geopolitical contestation and strategic experimentation (Edin & Kefalas, 2005).

2.3.5 Thoughts on the U.S. Promoting Democracy with Double Standards

The aforementioned case studies illustrate a recurrent trend in U.S. foreign policy: the selective application of democratic principles, which frequently corresponds more closely with national interests than with universal human rights. The United States' backing of the Maidan protests in Ukraine was presented as solidarity with democratic goals, but comparable popular movements in areas with little geostrategic significance have frequently been disregarded or minimized. High-level goals like counterterrorism and promoting democracy were used to justify interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan, but the underlying goals of regional hegemony, energy resource access, and rival power containment revealed a glaring discrepancy between rhetoric and reality. Concerns regarding the manipulation of international norms were raised when the Libyan intervention, which was disguised as humanitarian protection, similarly devolved into a regime-change operation with disastrous results. These discrepancies imply that the United

States uses democracy promotion as a tool that can be put on hold when it is not convenient and activated when it is in line with strategic objectives. Such inconsistencies make it more difficult for multilateral organizations to create moral guidelines for humanitarian intervention and damage the legitimacy of American support for democratic principles internationally (Paris, 2014; Chandler, 2017).

2.4 The Effects of Applying Different Criteria

2.4.1 The American War: A Conflict Between Colonial Interests and Pretexts

Afghanistan was turned into a battlefield to restore U.S. prestige and to establish a client regime. Following the September 11 attacks, the American agenda emerged along three main lines: legitimizing military interventions under the guise of the "War on Terror," expanding the military globally, and retaliating against the Taliban. Although the massive U.S. force deployment was presented as a counterterrorism operation, its true objectives were to subvert regional rivals like China and Russia and gain control over strategically important energy-rich areas. The true reasons for these interventions reveal a contemporary colonial endeavor that put American interests ahead of the rights and sovereignty of impacted communities (Cato Institute, n.d.).

2.4.2 Increasing Doubt Among Adversaries and Allies

Both allies and enemies have grown more skeptical of Washington as a result of its propensity to bend international norms to its will. The United States is frequently accused of enforcing standards that it does not adhere to. For instance, despite its claims of environmental leadership, it refuses to establish specific emissions targets and places the blame on less developed countries. Likewise, it maintains and upgrades the largest nuclear arsenal while

advocating for nuclear non-proliferation. This discrepancy has damaged public confidence at home. Its reputation as hypocritical is furthered by glaring instances such as its selective application of sanctions against Iran and its silence regarding the mass murders in Gaza. The United States' credibility on the international scene has been damaged by these contradictions (Chandler, 2017).

2.4.3 American Policy: An Unbalanced Approach

America's credibility has been severely damaged by the double standards principle. In the past, its influence increased when it behaved justly and decreased when it put power ahead of morals. The United States is currently dealing with a crisis of trust. It punishes others and backs authoritarian governments that further its own agenda. Its steadfast backing of Israeli policies in the face of war crimes accusations exposes a selective application of human rights norms. Chomsky asserts that the United States only offers advice to other countries when doing so serves its own interests. As a result, there has been a steady decline in American prestige, a rise in extremism, and the spread of hatred. This trend might consign American leadership to the past if left unchecked (Chomsky, 2003).

2.4.4 Extremist ideologies and anti-American sentiment are fueled by perceived hypocrisy

Deep resentment has been stoked by American hypocrisy, particularly in the Middle East. Extremism thrives because of the contradiction between its democratic rhetoric and backing for authoritarian governments. Its unwavering support for Israel while opposing adversaries' nuclear aspirations serves to further erode this disenchantment. Because of this, U.S. actions are seen as self-serving rather than morally righteous, which damages its credibility and fuels instability in

the region. This duality, according to Chomsky (2003), is essential to the region's continuous cycle of violence and the emergence of extremist ideologies.

2.4.5 Selective Interventions Cause Destabilization in Some Areas

Selective moral outrage is reflected in the unequal international response to conflicts such as the war between Russia and Ukraine. Many countries in the Global South are still hesitant to condemn Russian aggression, despite the West's own history of intervention. Many people see the conflict in Ukraine as another geopolitical power struggle that is similar to the actions taken by the United States in Libya and Iraq. The United States' involvement in the Saudi-led war in Yemen, where its arms and logistical support has directly contributed to a protracted humanitarian crisis, further solidifies this skepticism. The United States continues to support Palestine in spite of Israel's massive violations of international law. This contradiction has exacerbated views of Western hypocrisy and alienated a large portion of the world (Current Affairs, n.d.).

2.4.6 Emergence of Counterpowers: Strengthening of Adversary Countries Like Russia and China

One of the unintended consequences of U.S. double standards is the development of a stronger China-Russian alliance. Analysts such as Rozman (2014) contend that although it is frequently perceived as an unequal partnership, its foundations lie in shared identity politics and criticisms of Western liberalism. These non-Western powers can work together because of communism, centralized government, and cultural identity. Their unity provides a different model for countries unhappy with American hegemony and challenges the U.S.-led global order. The United States has unintentionally sped up the emergence of competing power blocs that are

able to challenge its position as the world's dominant nation by alienating allies and overextending its influence.

2.5 Reactions and Remarks

2.5.1 Foreign Criticism of the U.S. Regulations

The United Nations General Assembly has come under increasing fire for its alleged bias and inaction as global crises and economic sanctions worsen, especially with regard to the US' unilateral sanctions regime. Article 41 of the UN Charter, which states that sanctions must be approved by the Security Council, is interpreted as being violated by nations that are frequently the targets of such sanctions, such as Venezuela, Cuba, Russia, and Iran. As of September 2024, 97% of the more than 31,000 sanctions that have been put in place target just nine nations, according to the Venezuelan Anti-Blockade Observatory. Analysts contend that these actions have undermined the legitimacy of organizations such as the UN, World Bank, and IMF and have instead turned into instruments of political pressure (Santiago, 2024).

Critics also point out that U.S.-led sanctions frequently rest on nebulous justifications related to democracy and human rights, which are easily twisted for political purposes. Leaders from the Global South and ideological rivals, such as Argentina's President Javier Milei and Venezuela's Foreign Minister Yván Gil, denounced the U.S.'s control over international organizations during the 2024 UN General Assembly. Lula da Silva, the president of Brazil, reaffirmed calls for a more functional and representative Security Council, pointing out that the body's credibility on important issues like Gaza and Ukraine has been damaged by its paralysis and selective enforcement.

2.5.2 Domestic Discussions Regarding the Strategic and Ethical Costs of Double Standards

The ethical contradictions that define American foreign policy have drawn more and more criticism from within the country's own foreign policy discourse. There is a concerning double standard evident in the contradiction between defending Ukrainian sovereignty and condoning Israeli abuses in Palestine. Its human rights narrative is further complicated by the U.S.'s involvement in Yemen, where its military and logistical support has prolonged a devastating conflict. Even among its closest allies, Washington's moral authority has been undermined by these contradictions, leading to skepticism (Hepola, 2024).

This domestic discussion marks a shift in how the public and intellectual community approach foreign policy. Both citizens and analysts are starting to wonder if democratic and human rights ideals are actually respected or are only used when it suits them. The resulting decline in trust threatens to destabilize American influence and strategic alliances in addition to undermining the legitimacy of American global leadership.

2.5.3 Academic Conversations on Restructuring American Foreign Policy

Scholars are increasingly in agreement that significant reform of U.S. foreign policy is necessary to bring its actions into line with its professed democratic values. Scholars contend that reforms need to overcome political divisions, bureaucratic inertia, and ingrained strategic doctrines in addition to presidential intent. Effective reforms have been fueled by crises, coordinated executive-legislative action, and audacious strategic vision, as demonstrated by historical examples like Truman's Cold War containment policy, Nixon's Vietnamization, and the post-Cold War NATO expansion (Walt, 2018).

According to some analysts, Washington must take a more selective and principle-driven approach to international engagement because the days of unipolar U.S. dominance are over. This suggests a disciplined alignment of national interest with ethical commitments, not isolationism. Others draw attention to the growing discrepancy between American rhetoric and actual foreign policy, particularly in light of the failed nation-building initiatives in Afghanistan and Iraq. They ask whether the United States should maintain its liberal leadership or change its global stance in light of new geopolitical realities. They also call for a reevaluation of the country's overall role in a multipolar world, in addition to tactics and institutions.

2.6 Findings

There is a recurring pattern of double standards when examining U.S. foreign policy in relation to military intervention and democracy promotion. Case studies like Afghanistan, Libya, Iraq, and Ukraine show how the US selectively applies its democratic ideals, frequently in response to geopolitical, economic, or strategic interests. Similar aspirations in other regions, such as the Middle East, were met with silence or even suppression, especially when the regimes in question were aligned with U.S. interests. In contrast, pro-democracy movements in Ukraine received strong support. There may have been hidden agendas behind the official narratives when the interventions in Iraq and Libya, which were justified on the basis of humanitarian and democratic objectives, ultimately resulted in instability, regime collapse, and protracted civil unrest. America's reputation as a global champion of democratic principles has been seriously harmed by this contradiction.

Furthermore, these unfair practices have had far-reaching effects outside of the impacted nations. The United States has come under increasing fire both domestically and abroad for what is seen as its hypocrisy, which has led to a loss of trust among allies and a rise in opposition from

enemies. As evidenced by the global South's sluggish reactions to Western calls for unity on issues like Ukraine and the continued disregard for conflicts like those in Yemen or Palestine, the region has grown increasingly suspicious of the Western-led liberal order. In addition to undermining American moral authority, these contradictions have given adversaries like China and Russia the ability to contest American hegemony in international affairs. This has led to a wider reorganization of the balance of power in the world and a growing disconnection between U.S. foreign policy and its declared ideals.

Conclusion

This chapter's case studies showed that American foreign policy is frequently motivated more by self-interest than by a sincere commitment to democratic principles. The United States has undermined international trust and damaged its moral authority by selectively applying pressure and acting inconsistently in global crises. It has favored or disregarded authoritarian practices in some areas while advancing democracy in others, particularly when doing so served its strategic objectives. Both domestic academics and international actors have criticized these double standards, exposing a serious crisis of legitimacy. Rising anti-American sentiment, heightened regional instability, and the fortification of counter-hegemonic alliances are some of the consequences. Bridging the gap between ideals and action is crucial to the U.S.'s credibility in the face of a changing global order. Its leadership role runs the risk of further deteriorating in the absence of significant reform. Restoring international trust in the principles that the United States professes to defend requires addressing this hypocrisy.

Conclusion

Investigating the existence and effects of double standards in U.S. foreign policy, this dissertation examined how the nation struck a balance between its strategic interests and its declared commitment to democracy and human rights. The study investigated patterns of selective enforcement in various geopolitical contexts using a qualitative case study methodology and comparative analysis. The goal of the study was to determine why the US reacted differently to comparable violations, what factors led it to take action or keep quiet, and how these discrepancies affected how other countries saw US influence in the world. The study aimed to determine whether these contradictions were incidental or indicative of more fundamental structural requirements in U.S. policymaking, using examples from the past and present.

The results showed that the US continuously put economic interests and strategic alliances ahead of human rights concerns. Despite known abuses, nations like Saudi Arabia and Israel were given leniency, while enemies like China and Iran were denounced and sanctioned for comparable or less serious transgressions. Human rights enforcement was significantly shaped by the nature of bilateral relations, as evidenced by the frequent justification of this selective application under the pretext of national security or geopolitical stability.

According to the analysis, access to natural resources, strategic value, and larger hegemonic interests were the main motivators for interventions. Despite the absence of post-intervention planning, the advancement of democracy was invoked as a moral defense for regime change in situations such as Iraq and Libya. Crisis situations in less strategically important areas, however, were frequently disregarded. Even when there were serious violations of human rights,

the United States chose not to intervene in nations where its national interests were not in danger, which served to further solidify the notion that decisions about intervention were made more for the purpose of preserving global dominance than for moral reasons.

According to the evidence, American credibility on the international scene had considerably declined. While enemies took advantage of the inconsistencies to cast doubt on American legitimacy, allies grew increasingly reluctant to fully support American policies. Particularly in the Global South, U.S. actions were perceived as self-serving and imperialist, which fueled anti-American sentiment and strengthened alternative power centers like China and Russia. These views weakened America's moral authority in international fora and harmed its soft power.

Notwithstanding the thoroughness of the analysis, this study had some drawbacks. The examination of real-time decision-making processes in U.S. administrations was limited by access to certain classified documents. Furthermore, the study did not thoroughly examine the influence of civil society or multinational corporations on foreign policy, instead concentrating on actors at the state level. The examination of more recent events, like the United States' withdrawal from Afghanistan and the changing dynamics of the conflict in Ukraine, was also restricted by time constraints.

The study's conclusions suggest that future U.S. foreign policy should take a more open and consistent stance when it comes to upholding human rights. Restoring international credibility, fostering more stable alliances, and lowering global resentment would all be facilitated by bringing declared values into line with actual behavior. To learn more about how internal forces influence external actions, academics should look more closely at the relationship

between lobbying power, foreign policy, and domestic politics. Furthermore, a more thorough comparison of other superpowers might help determine whether the United States' double standards are an isolated instance or a reflection of a larger pattern in world politics.

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الملخص

هذا البحث يتقصّى وجوه التناقض في سياسة الدولة الأمريكية الخارجية، من حيث ما تعلنه من التزام بالديمقراطية وحقوق الإنسان، وما تبشره من أفعال ومواقف في ساحات العالم. وغاية الباحث من هذا العمل أن يستجلي كيف ولماذا تطبّق الولايات المتحدة هذه المبادئ على نحو متباين، إذ تغلب في أكثر الأحوال مصالحها الاستراتيجية على الاعتبارات الخلقية. وقد سلكت الدراسة في منهجها مسلك البحث الكيفي، معتمدةً على التحليل التاريخي، والمقارنة بين وقائع مختارة من الوقائع. واستمدّ الباحث مادته من مصادر أولية، كالمستندات الرسمية المنبوضة، وتصريحات الساسة، فضلاً عن المصادر الثانوية من كتب المحققين، وتقارير الهيئات الحقوقية. وتناول البحث ثلاثة مسائل ذات خطر، على نسق الحكاية المستقصية؛ أولها: ما وجه اختلاف معاملة الولايات المتحدة لانتهاكات حقوق الإنسان في الدول الحليفة عن مثيلتها في الدول الخصوم؟ وثانيها: ما العوامل التي تحملها على التدخل في بعض المواطن، والامتناع عنه في غيرها؟ وثالثها: كيف يؤثر هذا التباين في موقفها على صورتها وصدقيتها في العالمين؟ وقد دلّت نتائج البحث على أنّ الولايات المتحدة تدأب على إدانة المخالفات في بلدان خصومها كالصين وإيران، في حين تشدّ أواصرها وتحفظ حلفها مع أنظمة القاهرة للناس، كسلطنة نجد والحجاز (المملكة العربية السعودية). وأنّ أمر التدخل من عدمه إنما يُمليه عليها ما تقتضيه مصالحها من شواغل السياسة ومطالب الاقتصاد، لا ما تستوجبه المروءة والإنصاف. وممّا خلص إليه الباحث أن هذه الازدواجية في المواقف تقوّض شرعية السياسة الأمريكية في عيون العالم، وتزيد من ريبة الشعوب، وتمنح القوى المناوئة فسحةً للتمكين. وعليه، فإن صدقية الولايات المتحدة في ميزان الأمم مرتبهة بتطبيقها الانتقائي لقيم الديمقراطية، الأمر الذي يجرّ تبعات بعيدة المدى على نظام العالم وسلطانها فيه.

الكلمات المفتاحية: نشر الديمقراطية، ازدواجية المعايير، السياسة الجغرافية الاستراتيجية، السمعة

والصدق العالمية، حقوق الإنسان، العلاقات الدولية السياسة الخارجية للولايات المتحدة