

Double Standards in Human Rights Interpretation (Comparison of American and Asian Practices)

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Abstract

This paper explores the phenomenon of double standards in the interpretation and application of human rights principles, with a comparative analysis between American and Asian practices. Through an examination of key case studies and legal frameworks, it delves into the disparities and inconsistencies that arise in the treatment of human rights issues across these regions. The study elucidates how cultural, political, and historical factors shape differing perspectives on human rights, leading to divergent approaches in addressing violations and advocating for protections. Drawing upon empirical evidence and scholarly discourse, the paper highlights instances where double standards manifest in human rights discourse, such as the selective condemnation of human rights abuses based on geopolitical interests or cultural biases. It examines how interpretations of rights, such as freedom of expression and assembly, vary between the American and Asian contexts, often resulting in contrasting legal norms and enforcement mechanisms. Furthermore, the paper analyzes the impact of these double standards on marginalized



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communities and the effectiveness of international human rights mechanisms in promoting accountability and justice. In conclusion, the paper underscores the importance of recognizing and addressing double standards in human rights interpretation to ensure equitable treatment and protection for all individuals regardless of nationality or cultural background. It calls for greater transparency, consistency, and collaboration in upholding universal human rights standards, thereby fostering a more just and inclusive global society.

KEYWORDS *Human Rights Standard, Human Rights Interpretation, Particularistic, Universalism*

Introduction

Human rights, the cornerstone of a just and equitable society, are meant to be universal, transcending geographical boundaries and cultural differences.¹ Yet, in practice, interpretations of these fundamental rights often vary significantly, exposing the existence of double standards that challenge the very essence of their universality.² This paper delves into the complex realm of human rights interpretation, focusing on the striking disparities between American and Asian practices.

In the global discourse on human rights, the United States has often positioned itself as a champion of freedom and democracy. With its Constitution serving as a beacon of liberty, the nation has historically been at the forefront of advocating for individual rights and liberties.³ However,

¹ Mutua, Makau. *Human rights: A political and cultural critique*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002; Mutua, Makau Wa. "The ideology of human rights." *International Law of Human Rights*. Routledge, 2017. 103-172.

² Otto, Dianne. "Rethinking universals: opening transformative possibilities in international human rights law." *The Australian Year Book of International Law Online* 18.1 (1998): 1-36; Ackerly, Brooke A. *Universal human rights in a world of difference*. Cambridge University Press, 2008.

³ Guilhot, Nicolas. *The democracy makers: Human rights and the politics of global order*. Columbia University Press, 2005; Sikkink, Kathryn. "The power of principled ideas: Human rights policies in the United States and Western Europe." *Ideas and foreign policy: Beliefs, institutions, and political change* 139 (1993): 144.

beneath this facade of advocacy lies a web of contradictions and double standards that undermine the credibility of its human rights stance.⁴

Conversely, in many Asian countries, human rights are often viewed through a different lens, shaped by unique historical, cultural, and socio-political contexts.⁵ While some Asian nations have made significant strides in recognizing and protecting human rights, others grapple with authoritarian regimes and systemic oppression, where the concept of human rights is often overshadowed by concerns of stability and economic development.⁶

Furthermore, this discourse delves into an exploration of the politics of double standards as exemplified by the United States, particularly concerning the preservation of human values and rights amidst the backdrop of democratization, notably during the tumultuous events of the Arab Spring. A critical analysis is conducted to discern the implications of such double standards, particularly in relation to the political conflict that ensued. Notably, the discussion centers on the nuanced response of the United States to the military coup in Egypt, highlighting the inconsistencies in its approach to upholding human rights principles.⁷

The United States' response to the military coup in Egypt presents a compelling case study, highlighting the intricate balance between

⁴ Moravcsik, Andrew. "The paradox of US human rights policy." *American exceptionalism and human rights* 147 (2005): 149-50; Turner, Scott. "The dilemma of double standards in US human rights policy." *Peace & Change* 28.4 (2003): 524-554; Harfeld, Amy C. "Oh Righteous Delinquent One: The United States' International Human Rights Double Standard-Explanation, Example, and Avenues for Change." *City University of New York Law Review* 4.1 (2001): 59.

⁵ Grewal, Kiran Kaur. *The socio-political practice of human rights: Between the universal and the particular*. Routledge, 2016; Topidi, Kyriaki, ed. *Normative pluralism and human rights: Social normativities in conflict*. Routledge, 2018.

⁶ Donnelly, Jack, and Daniel J. Whelan. *International human rights*. Routledge, 2020; Lauren, Paul Gordon. *The evolution of international human rights: Visions seen*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011.

⁷ Grote, Rainer, and Tilmann J. Röder. *Constitutionalism, human rights, and Islam after the Arab spring*. Oxford University Press, 2016; Harrelson-Stephens, Julie, and Rhonda L. Callaway. "You say you want a revolution: The Arab Spring, norm diffusion, and the human rights regime." *Human Rights Review* 15 (2014): 413-431.

geopolitical interests and democratic principles.⁸ This example underscores the challenges of maintaining consistency between rhetoric and action, revealing how strategic considerations frequently overshadow commitments to human rights and democratic governance. By delving into the aftermath of the Arab Spring, particularly the contrasting approaches to political upheavals across the region, this analysis unveils the far-reaching implications of double standards in global diplomacy and human rights advocacy.

Led by General Abdul Fatah Al-Sisi, who concurrently held the position of Minister of Defense and occupied a prominent role within the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF), the military coup in Egypt resulted in the removal of Mohammed Morsi, the nation's inaugural democratically-elected president. This event transpired against the backdrop of the broader political turbulence known as the "*Arab Spring*" or "*Jasmine Revolution*," which unfolded throughout the Middle East from late 2010 to 2011.⁹

The Arab Spring, characterized by its aim to dismantle authoritarian regimes and institute democratic governance, is deeply intertwined with Egypt's modern political landscape. Notably, the country played a pivotal role in this regional upheaval. Spearheaded by the Muslim Brotherhood, one of the most significant transnational Islamic political organizations, the revolution succeeded in ousting Hosni Mubarak, who had maintained an autocratic grip on power for three decades. Following Mubarak's removal in 2011, Egypt transitioned to a democratic system, marked by the election of Mohammed Morsi as the legitimate and

⁸ Brownlee, Jason. *Democracy prevention: The politics of the US-Egyptian alliance*. Cambridge University Press, 2012; Atlas, Pierre M. "US foreign policy and the Arab Spring: Balancing values and interests." *Digest of Middle East Studies* 21.2 (2012): 353-385.

⁹ El-Khawas, Mohamed A. "Tunisia's jasmine revolution: causes and impact." *Mediterranean Quarterly* 23.4 (2012): 1-23; Saidin, Mohd Irwan Syazli. "Rethinking the 'Arab Spring': The Root Causes of the Tunisian Jasmine Revolution and Egyptian January 25 Revolution." *International Journal of Islamic Thought* 13 (2018): 69-79. See also Kuznetsov, Vasily. "The Jasmine Revolution in Tunisia and the birth of the Arab Spring uprisings." *Handbook of revolutions in the 21st century: The new waves of revolutions, and the causes and effects of disruptive political change*. Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2022. 625-649.

democratically chosen president, thus signaling a significant milestone in the nation's political evolution.¹⁰

During the initial phase of Morsi's presidency, Egypt grappled with persistent political instability, characterized by frequent demonstrations, clashes between government supporters and detractors, as well as protests against presidential decrees and the conduct of referendums. A notable event occurred on November 22, 2012, when Morsi issued a decree granting himself expanded powers. However, amidst widespread outcry and denunciation, he revoked the decree on December 8. Subsequently, despite opposition claims of electoral irregularities, approximately 64% of voters across two rounds of balloting endorsed the new constitution in a referendum.¹¹

The swift termination of Egypt's brief experiment with democracy, followed by the imposition of military rule, constitutes a grave affront to democratic principles from multiple perspectives. Moreover, the repercussions of the military coup were compounded by the tragic loss of lives, as Egyptian military forces engaged in lethal actions against demonstrators supportive of Morsi.¹²

Furthermore, the United States, a key player in global affairs, maintains a vested interest in the Middle East region across economic, political, and military domains. This interest stems from the strategic significance of the region within the broader landscape of international politics.¹³

The strategic importance of the Middle East renders it a battleground for global superpowers, notably the United States, vying for influence and safeguarding their interests in the region. Consequently, policymakers within the US establishment have harbored apprehensions regarding the transformative potential of revolutions across the Middle

¹⁰ Bellin, Eva. "Lessons from the jasmine and Nile revolutions: possibilities of political transformation in the Middle East." *Middle East Brief* 50 (2011): 1-7.

¹¹ Baizhi, Liao. "The Reasons and the Impacts of the Egypt Revolution." *Institute of West Asian and African Studies* 21.2 (2011): 119-127.

¹² Brown, Nathan J. "Egypt's Failed Transition." *Journal of Democracy* 24.4 (2013).

¹³ Hahn, Peter L. *Crisis and crossfire: the United States and the Middle East since 1945*. Potomac Books, Inc., 2005; Watkins, Eric. "The unfolding US policy in the Middle East." *International Affairs* 73.1 (1997): 1-14.

East, including the Arab Spring. These concerns stem from a desire to preserve adherence to constitutional, liberal, and capitalist norms, which align with American values and interests. Central to American foreign policy objectives is the pursuit of stability, often construed as a prerequisite for ensuring an orderly and predictable process of change.¹⁴

On the contrary, legalism-moralism, often rooted in ideological foundations, tends to reflect a profound cultural ethos and its associated values. These values are entrenched in the fundamental notion of national greatness, alongside the promotion of individual freedom and democratic capitalism both domestically and internationally.¹⁵ Many Americans perceive themselves as morally and politically superior, akin to a beacon of light atop a hill, embracing a universal mission propelled by a sense of exceptionalism. However, dissenting voices argue that an assertive foreign policy geared toward national greatness could potentially jeopardize the freedoms cherished by Americans, as espoused by Republican principles.

This paper seeks to unpack the nuances of human rights interpretation in both American and Asian contexts, shedding light on the discrepancies that exist and exploring the underlying factors driving these disparities. By examining key case studies, legislative frameworks, and societal attitudes, we aim to elucidate the prevalence of double standards and their implications for global human rights discourse.

Furthermore, this comparative analysis serves as a call to action, urging stakeholders to critically examine their own practices and biases in interpreting human rights. Only through a collective commitment to upholding the principles of universality, equality, and justice can we hope to bridge the gap between rhetoric and reality in the realm of human rights.

¹⁴ Trubowitz, Peter. *Defining the national interest: conflict and change in American foreign policy*. University of Chicago Press, 1998; Levy, Jack S. "Learning and foreign policy: Sweeping a conceptual minefield." *International organization* 48.2 (1994): 279-312.

¹⁵ Boyle, Francis Anthony. *Foundations of world order: the legalist approach to international relations (1898-1922)*. Duke University Press, 1999; Schmidt, Brian C. "The American national interest great debate." *International Relations and the First Great Debate*. Routledge, 2013. 94-117.

In the following sections, we will delve deeper into the historical background, legal frameworks, and contemporary practices shaping human rights interpretation in both American and Asian contexts, illuminating the complex interplay of factors that perpetuate double standards and offering insights into potential pathways for progress and reconciliation.

Human Rights Protection: Diverse Responses and Interpretations

The protection of human rights stands as a fundamental pillar of modern society, embodying the principles of dignity, equality, and justice for all individuals.¹⁶ However, despite the universality of these rights, their interpretation and the responses to violations often vary significantly across different contexts and regions.¹⁷ This paper delves into the complexities surrounding human rights protection, shedding light on the diverse responses and interpretations observed across the globe.

In the pursuit of safeguarding human rights, nations adopt various approaches, shaped by historical, cultural, and political factors. These approaches manifest in differing legal frameworks, enforcement mechanisms, and societal attitudes towards human rights violations. Moreover, the responses to such violations range from diplomatic interventions and legal recourse to grassroots activism and international pressure.

This paper seeks to explore the myriad ways in which human rights protection is perceived and enacted across different regions, with a focus on the underlying factors driving these variations.¹⁸ By examining case studies, analyzing legal frameworks, and evaluating societal attitudes, we aim to elucidate the complexities inherent in addressing human rights violations and the implications for global human rights discourse.

¹⁶ Carozza, Paolo G. "Human dignity and judicial interpretation of human rights: a reply." *European Journal of International Law* 19.5 (2008): 931-944.

¹⁷ Steiner, Henry J., Philip Alston, and Ryan Goodman. *International human rights in context: law, politics, morals: text and materials*. Oxford University Press, USA, 2008.

¹⁸ Nowak, Manfred. *Introduction to the international human rights regime*. Vol. 14. Brill, 2021.

Furthermore, this exploration serves as a call to action, urging stakeholders to critically examine their own responses and interpretations of human rights, with the ultimate goal of fostering a more cohesive and effective approach to human rights protection worldwide. In the following sections, we will delve deeper into the divergent responses and interpretations of human rights protection, highlighting the challenges and opportunities for advancing a more unified and comprehensive framework for safeguarding the rights and dignity of all individuals.

This research underscores that a nation's response to international affairs is often multifaceted, influenced not solely by its own motives for conflict. The intricate interplay of political, security, and economic dynamics within the Middle East significantly shapes the United States' response, given its historical involvement in the region's affairs¹⁹. Presently, the United States grapples with a diplomatic conundrum, confronted by the actions of key allies who not only endorse but also provide moral and material support for the military coup and the establishment of a new Egyptian military government. This contravenes both constitutional principles and international democratic norms, necessitating a proactive response from the international community.

However, the response from the United States to recent events in Egypt stands in stark contrast to its previous reactions to acts of violence and severe human rights violations in other Middle Eastern countries, such as Libya, Syria, and others facing similar challenges. Despite claims to uphold democratic values, Egyptian civilians have peacefully protested against the erosion of democracy and human rights by the Egyptian military.²⁰ Tragically, these demonstrations have been met with brutal repression, with thousands of Egyptian civilians falling victim to military attacks, marking one of the most egregious human rights violations since the Libyan crisis.

¹⁹ Migdal, Joel S. *Shifting Sands: The United States in the Middle East*. Columbia University Press, 2014.

²⁰ Elgindy, Khaled. "Egypt's Troubled Transition: Elections without Democracy." *The Washington Quarterly* 35.2 (2012): 89-104; Krieg, Andreas. "Egyptian Civil-Military Relations and Egypt's Potential Transition to Democracy." *Publications in Contemporary Affairs (PiCA)* (2011).

Beyond the fundamental right to life, Egypt has also witnessed severe violations of political rights under the rule of its democratically elected president, Mohamed Morsi. Despite the United States' previous assertive stance in addressing crimes against humanity during the Arab Spring, its response to the Egyptian situation now appears muted. President Obama has explicitly stated that the United States cannot dictate Egypt's future and has suggested that the events in Egypt do not constitute a coup, signaling a departure from previous positions.

The United States has asserted that the military's ousting of a democratically elected president for political reasons does not qualify as a coup and does not amount to a hindrance to democracy. This position represents yet another instance of the United States engaging in double standard politics concerning gross human rights violations in Egypt.

Despite the evident human rights abuses, including the unjust detainment of tens of thousands of Egyptian civilians, the United States persists in extending support to the new Egyptian government led by General Abdel Fattah al-Sisi. Moreover, while displaying a lack of decisive action in addressing the situation in Egypt, the United States remains highly engaged in advocating for the prevention and resolution of severe human rights violations in other nations, such as Syria. This stark contrast underscores the inconsistency in the United States' approach to addressing authoritarianism and human rights abuses on the global stage.

United States Diplomatic Dilemma on Egyptian Civil-Military Conflict

The United States finds itself embroiled in dilemmatic considerations stemming from several key factors. Firstly, the escalating conflict in Egypt has resulted in a substantial death toll, surpassing one thousand victims, which categorizes it as a high-level conflict with significant implications for human rights. Historically, the United States has positioned itself as a champion of democracy and human rights, often intervening in global affairs to uphold these values.

However, this stance is complicated by the responses of the United States' closest allies, notably Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, who have openly supported the military coup in Egypt and the subsequent

violent crackdown on civilians by the government forces. This presents a challenge to the United States' commitment to promoting democracy and human rights while maintaining diplomatic relationships with key allies in the region.

Further considerations regarding the United States' stance on the situation in Egypt encompass the evolution of diplomatic relations between the United States and the Egyptian government, both preceding and during President Morsi's tenure. These relations were marked by ideological disparities and differences in foreign policy direction. Additionally, there are indications suggesting that the military coup against Morsi was not solely driven by popular discontent but may have been orchestrated by opposition factions in collaboration with external actors.

Diplomatic dilemmas are compounded by the involvement of the United States' closest allies, who possess vested political interests in the Egyptian case.²¹ The attitudes and responses of these allies towards Egypt hold significant sway over the United States' own stance and actions. The establishment of diplomatic ties and alliances between the United States and various Middle Eastern nations occupies a prominent position within the United States' foreign policy agenda in the region. This agenda extends beyond mere diplomacy, encompassing broader objectives such as promoting democratization, stabilizing security, and enhancing American influence in the Middle East.

On one hand, the United States espouses a commitment to promoting democracy throughout the Middle East, viewing it as a cornerstone of regional stability and progress. However, on the other hand, the United States also seeks to exert influence over political dynamics in the region, often leveraging its alliances and partnerships to advance its strategic interests.

Aligned with Albertine Mindeop's assertions in "*Pragmatism, Life Attitudes, and Foreign Policy Principles of the United States*," the United States' engagement in the Middle East's political landscape post-World

²¹ Resnick, Evan N. "Strange bedfellows: US bargaining behavior with allies of convenience." *International Security* 35.3 (2010): 144-184; Snyder, Glenn H. "The security dilemma in alliance politics." *World Politics* 36.4 (1984): 461-495.

War II is palpable.²² This involvement became conspicuous during the turmoil in Iran, characterized by the contentious rivalry between Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi and the Iranian nationalist coalition. The latter aimed to curb foreign influence over their natural resources and governmental institutions, advocating for the nationalization of assets owned by the British-owned Anglo Iranian Company.

Amidst its objectives of democratization, the United States also sought to uphold its influence in the Middle East to counterbalance the encroaching Soviet Union, later Russia, which endeavored to establish its presence in the region. Throughout the Reagan era, the United States cultivated robust relations with countries such as Egypt, Israel, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia, strategically advancing its agenda.²³ The methods employed by the United States varied, encompassing a spectrum from providing economic and military assistance to establishing diplomatic alliances.

Allied Support: Strengthening Influence and Strategic Objectives

The United States' response to the military coup led by al-Sisi is heavily influenced by the stance of its allies, underscoring the significance of diplomatic relations in shaping U.S. foreign policy. The support received from these allies carries considerable weight, potentially impacting the trajectory of U.S. relations with these nations. Consequently, the United States' own response to the coup plays a pivotal role in either strengthening or straining its alliances in the region.

Historically, allies of the United States, including Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Israel, and Egypt itself, have offered significant economic and political benefits to the United States. This includes access

²² Franke, Ulrich, and Gunther Hellmann. "American pragmatism in foreign policy analysis." *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics*. 2017; Murray, Donette, David Brown, and Martin A. Smith. *George W. Bush's foreign policies: Principles and pragmatism*. Routledge, 2017.

²³ Kaye, Dalia Dassa, et al. *Reimagining US strategy in the Middle East: Sustainable partnerships, strategic investments*. Rand Corporation, 2021; Quandt, William B. "America and the Middle East: a fifty-year overview." *Diplomacy in the Middle East-the international relations of regional and outside powers* (2001): 59-73.

to oil resources, trade opportunities, and military cooperation, including permits to establish U.S. military bases at strategic locations within these countries.

From this phenomenon, several potential outcomes arise if the United States diverges from the wishes of its allies who support the coup in Egypt:

1. Deterioration of Relations: Non-alignment with the stance of allied countries backing the coup may lead to strained relations between the United States and its Middle Eastern allies. This lack of alignment could be interpreted as a failure to understand the gravity of the coup issue in Egypt.
2. Reduction in Facilities: There is a possibility that allied countries may reduce the facilities they provide to the United States for carrying out its democratization agenda in the Middle East. This reduction could occur if the United States is perceived as not fully supporting the attitudes of its allies regarding the coup.
3. Threat to Economic Interests: Failure to heed the stance of allied countries supporting the coup poses a threat to the political and economic interests of the United States in the Middle East, particularly in the realm of oil extraction. This threat arises from the potential for retaliatory measures or diminished cooperation from these allies.²⁴

These dilemmas underscore the complex dynamics driving the United States' double-standard approach to the military coup in Egypt.

Furthermore, the United States must also consider the significant number of casualties resulting from the events in Egypt, which underscores the urgency for a robust international response and humanitarian intervention. The World Conflict and Human Rights Map 2001/2002 by PIOOM categorizes the intensity of conflict in correlation with the legitimacy and effectiveness of international responses, thereby emphasizing the critical need for decisive action in addressing the humanitarian crisis unfolding in Egypt.²⁵

²⁴ See Holmes, Amy Austin. *Coups and revolutions: Mass mobilization, the Egyptian military, and the United States from Mubarak to Sisi*. Oxford University Press, 2019.

²⁵ Scherrer, Christian P. *Ethnicity, nationalism and violence: Conflict management, human rights, and multilateral regimes*. Routledge, 2017.

The United States finds itself in a delicate position regarding the events in Egypt, particularly due to the stance of its closest ally, which acknowledged and supported Morsi's ousting at a time when the United States refrained from recognizing it as a coup. Consequently, the United States must grapple with the determination of whether the events in Egypt constitute a coup or not, a decision that is heavily influenced by the attitudes of its allies.

If the United States deems the situation a coup, it would be obligated to cease all financial and logistical assistance, resulting in the loss of its monetary influence in Egypt. Conversely, if the United States refrains from classifying the events as a coup, it would absolve itself of any liability for human rights violations in Egypt. This complex dilemma underscores the intricate interplay between geopolitical considerations, international alliances, and human rights considerations in the United States' response to the Egyptian case.

Furthermore, the international community's response to the Egyptian military coup spans a spectrum from support to rejection, urging the United States to take action. The dilemma facing America lies in whether to prioritize its national interests or heed the international call for intervention due to the escalating casualties. Recent developments in Egypt's civil-military conflict have resulted in a significant loss of life, with casualties surpassing 3,000 by January 31, 2014, and exceeding 49,000 by October 2014.

Historically, the United States has considered high casualty figures as a compelling factor for intervention. The case of Libya serves as a pertinent example, where a death toll exceeding 40,000 prompted the enactment of the UN Security Council R2P Resolution, authorizing NATO intervention. In light of these considerations, the United States faces two policy options: proposing intervention to address the escalating humanitarian crisis or refraining from action.

The United States' close ties with Egypt's military both before and after Morsi's presidency posed a significant dilemma for the nation. It had to weigh whether to continue supporting its longstanding ally within the military establishment or to back Egypt's first democratically elected government under Morsi's leadership.

The Politics of Double Standards of the United States towards the Egyptian Civil-Military Conflict

The civilian casualties resulting from the Arab Spring uprising numbered in the thousands, yet the international community, particularly the Arab League, merely issued condemnations of the gross human rights violations observed. This high death toll has been deemed an unfortunate price to pay for ushering in reforms and democratization across the Middle East, a sentiment echoed in the case of Egypt.

However, the United States' response to conflicts in countries like Libya and Syria has been characterized by clear objectives: upholding democracy, enforcing human rights, and dismantling dictatorial regimes in the Middle East. In the case of Egypt, these goals have been complicated by the United States' diplomatic ties with other key Middle Eastern actors, including Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Israel, who are deeply involved in the conflict.

The onset of the Arab Spring in Egypt witnessed a fluctuating stance from the Obama administration, initially offering full support to the Mubarak regime, followed by backing for the demonstrators seeking Mubarak's ousting. However, in 2013, following Morsi's overthrow by elements associated with Mubarak's regime, alongside demonstrations and a military coup, the United States, led by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, even asserted that Egypt was in a state of stability.

Obama even explicitly advocated for swift reform and transition in Egypt. However, the United States appeared to overlook the implications of a military coup, even refraining from officially recognizing it. Through the lens of the theoretical framework presented, it becomes evident that the United States did not earnestly propose the internationalization of the serious human rights violations occurring in Egypt, nor did it intervene either militarily or non-militarily.

The considerable influence exerted by Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Israel in the Egyptian case presented a complex diplomatic dilemma for the United States. Ultimately, this confluence of factors led to a situation where double standards became the prevailing policy for the United States in addressing the conflict in Egypt.

The United States adopts a strategic approach in its political discourse concerning Egypt, refraining from explicitly labeling the events as a "*coup*."²⁶ This deliberate choice allows the United States to neither endorse nor reject the coup, thereby avoiding taking a definitive stance on the matter. Consequently, the United States does not feel compelled to express condemnation towards Egypt for the significant casualties resulting from the conflict.

This differing attitude towards Egypt, compared to other cases within the Arab Spring, where similar criteria of conflict between the government (represented by the military) and civilians are observed, suggests the application of double standard politics by the United States. In this instance, the United States' stance is heavily influenced by diplomatic dilemmas it faces. White House Secretary Jay Carney's statement underscores this cautious approach, emphasizing the importance of an inclusive political process for resolving the crisis in Egypt. This cautious optimism reflects the United States' attempt to navigate the complex diplomatic landscape while maintaining a semblance of support for democratic principles.

This raises the question of how a provisional government formed in the aftermath of a military coup, which typically tends towards authoritarianism, can be deemed democratic and entrusted with fostering an inclusive political process. In a statement dated August 14, 2013, John Kerry expressed the United States' strong condemnation of the violence unfolding in Egypt. He urged the Egyptian government to uphold the rights of free assembly and free expression, while also proposing constructive steps such as amending the constitution and conducting

²⁶ Alaghbary, Gibreel Sadeq. "Ideological positioning in conflict: The United States and Egypt's domestic political trajectory." *The Routledge Handbook of Language in Conflict*. Routledge, 2019. 83-102; Yegin, Mehmet. "Turkey's reaction to the coup in Egypt in comparison with the US and Israel." *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies* 18.4 (2016): 407-421; Collins, Victoria E., and Dawn L. Rothe. "United States support for global social justice? Foreign intervention and realpolitik in Egypt's Arab Spring." *Social Justice* (2012): 1-30.

parliamentary and presidential elections as means to foster an inclusive and peaceful political process.²⁷

The United States advocates for immediate elections and urges the Egyptian government to uphold the principles of free assembly and freedom of expression. This stance implies indirect support for the military coup that ousted President Morsi. However, there are inconsistencies in the actions of the United States, as noted by the GCRP on August 15, 2013. While US Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel stated that the US would maintain military ties with Egypt, he also highlighted the risk posed to longstanding defense cooperation due to violence and inadequate reconciliation efforts.

Contrary to this, Obama's statement following a discussion with the US National Security Team on the same day indicated a different direction for US foreign policy towards the Egyptian crisis. Obama called on all parties to address the legitimate grievances of the Egyptian people through the democratic process. He urged the Egyptian military to swiftly and responsibly return authority to a democratically elected civilian government through an inclusive and transparent process. Obama acknowledged that the previous government had not been inclusive and did not respect the views of all Egyptians. He emphasized that the future of Egypt should be determined by the Egyptian people themselves, without interference from the United States. Furthermore, he underscored the importance of protecting the rights of all Egyptian citizens, including the right to peaceful assembly, due process, and fair trials in civilian courts.

From these statements, the authors deduce several key points. Firstly, it's evident that the United States maintains a stance of neutrality, refraining from siding with any specific party or individual in Egypt. Instead, it expects all actions to adhere to the established political process.

Regarding the excerpts from Obama's statements, they can be interpreted in two ways. Firstly, there's an implication that the ousting of President Morsi was not classified as a coup. Secondly, there's no explicit

²⁷ Sherry, Michael. "Dead or alive: American vengeance goes global." *Review of International Studies* 31.S1 (2005): 245-263; Ishay, Micheline R. *The Levant express: The Arab uprisings, human rights, and the future of the Middle East*. Yale University Press, 2019.

denial of the Egyptian military's role in President Morsi's removal. President Obama's second statement suggests that the actions of the Egyptian military are perceived as part of the country's internal decision-making process.

The contrast between the United States' approach to the situation in Egypt and its response to government violence against civilians in Libya and Syria is stark. While the third statement reflects the United States' expressed concern for Egyptian civilians and its support for a democratic government-building process following President Morsi's ousting, the ongoing violence in Egypt suggests that this concern has not translated into concrete action. This stance stands in sharp contrast to that of other countries, such as Turkey, Malaysia, Qatar, and Tunisia, which have condemned the violence in Egypt and continue to support President Morsi.

Moreover, international organizations in Malaysia, Southeast Asia, issued the "KUALA LUMPUR DECLARATION ON THE EGYPT COUP" on August 30, 2013, rejecting the characterization of anti-military government protesters as terrorists and strongly condemning the coup carried out by the Egyptian military. The declaration also expressed disappointment and anger toward the United States for its perceived silence on the matter, linking this silence to the United States' relationship with Israel under the 1978 Camp David Agreement. This agreement, which prioritizes the safety and security of Israel, aligns with Israel's support for the coup in Egypt.²⁸

On the other hand, Saudi Arabia, Israel, and the United Arab Emirates—considered "*close allies*" of the United States—have vocally and materially supported the military coup in Egypt. The UAE, for instance, provided \$3 billion in aid to Egypt's interim government, underscoring the depth of their support.

²⁸ Cook, Steven A. *The struggle for Egypt: from Nasser to Tahrir square*. Oxford University Press, 2011; Sulaiman, Nidzam, and K. A. T. Khalid. "Will There Be Malaysia Spring? A Comparative Assessment on Social Movements." *Malaysian Journal of Communication* 33.1 (2017): 43-58; Karuppannan, Ilango, and Shakila Yacob. "Malaysia-Indonesia Konfrontasi: The Struggle for Influence in the Middle East." *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 93.1 (2020): 67-89.

Saudi Arabia's significant support for Egypt's military government, including \$5 billion in material aid and the issuance of a fatwa labeling protesters as terrorists, underscores the depth of its involvement in Egypt's internal affairs. Moreover, reports suggesting the presence of Israeli-made "*dum-dum bullets*" in the victims of shelling further indicate external interference in Egypt's crisis.²⁹ In contrast to its actions in Libya and Syria, where it has consistently urged an end to violence and even threatened military intervention, the United States' response to the situation in Egypt appears tepid. By refraining from classifying the Egyptian military's actions as a coup, the United States avoids tarnishing the image of democracy and sidesteps the need for intervention. However, its limited response, characterized by mere condemnation of violence against protesters, does little to uphold human values in Egypt post-coup.

The Double Standard of Human Rights: Diverging Definitions and Interpretations

The case under review scrutinizes the double standard attitude of the United States towards the 2013 coup in Egypt, within the broader context of US foreign policy, particularly focusing on its engagements in the Middle East region. This analysis draws upon various scholarly works, with the primary reference being a paper authored by Ataöv titled "*Double Standard in Recent American Foreign Policy*." This paper, published in *The Turkish Yearbook* Vol. XXI during the period of 1982-1991, delves into the historical trajectory of US foreign policy, highlighting instances of double standards from the Cold War era up to contemporary events.³⁰

Ataöv's exposition begins by elucidating the foundational principles of US foreign policy, rooted in the concept of "*political realism*." This theoretical framework, stemming from the Hobbesian school of thought,

²⁹ Wagner, Kim A. "Savage warfare: Violence and the rule of colonial difference in early British counterinsurgency." *History Workshop Journal*. Vol. 85. Oxford University Press, 2018.

³⁰ Ataöv, Türkkaya. "Double Standards in Recent American Foreign Policy." *The Turkish Yearbook of International Relations* 21 (1982): 133-152; Umar, Süha. "The Rise and Fall of Turkish Foreign Policy." *Horizons: Journal of International Relations and Sustainable Development* 20 (2022): 208-219.

perceives international relations as a realm marked by perpetual competition and disorder. Within this paradigm, Atouf explicates the notion of "*War of all against all*," emphasizing the centrality of interests and power dynamics in shaping US foreign policy decisions.

Moreover, Atouf contends that democracy, as propagated by the United States, is construed as a pragmatic necessity rather than an ideological imperative. This pragmatic approach underscores the realpolitik orientation of US foreign policy, wherein the promotion of democratic values is often subordinated to strategic interests and geopolitical considerations.³¹

Within the framework of its foreign policy, the United States has consistently pursued dominance across international spheres. The presence of double standards within US foreign policy is intricately shaped by a myriad of factors, ranging from theoretical underpinnings of international relations to the pursuit of national interests. The legacy of the Cold War has also left a significant imprint on the evolution of double standards evident in contemporary US foreign policy. Notably, the Middle East and Africa have served as regions where such implications of double standards are prominently manifested.

In his discourse, Atouf delineates several instances of double standards perpetuated by the United States in its foreign policy endeavors spanning from the Cold War era to the post-Cold War landscape. One notable illustration of this phenomenon lies in the US intervention in Afghanistan during the late 1990s, wherein the motive initially stemmed from security concerns amidst Soviet domination. However, domestic pressures led to an expansion of US involvement, transitioning into a lucrative military-industrial complex driven by economic interests.

Another manifestation of double standards is evidenced in the US response to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. While the United States condemned Iraq's actions, it abstained from direct intervention due to considerations regarding regional alliances and geopolitical ramifications. It's crucial to note that the US had previously supported Iraq in its conflict with Iran during the First Gulf War, underscoring the complex and often

³¹ See also Mozaffari, Mehdi. "Neorealism and Structural Changes in the Gulf." *Asian Development and Public Policy*. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 1994. 214-234.

contradictory nature of US foreign policy in the region. Similarly, the US exhibited non-interventionist tendencies during Israel's incursion into Lebanon in 1982, further accentuating the selective application of principles and interests in the region.³²

Moreover, the US approach towards the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) underscores another facet of double standards, wherein compromise efforts were pursued inconsistently, contingent upon strategic objectives and alliances. These instances elucidate the nuanced dynamics of US foreign policy in the Middle East, characterized by a mosaic of strategic calculations, geopolitical considerations, and ideological imperatives, often resulting in the selective application of principles and the perpetuation of double standards.³³

The United States' double standards extend to its stance on the development of nuclear weapons as a military capability. Atouf highlights this phenomenon by illustrating how the US vehemently opposes nuclear proliferation efforts by certain countries, such as Iraq, Iran, and North Korea, viewing them as threats to global security. However, a stark contrast emerges in the US response when it comes to Israel's pursuit of nuclear capabilities. Despite Israel's nuclear ambitions, the United States adopts a notably different attitude, displaying a degree of leniency or reluctance to impose similar constraints or sanctions. This discrepancy underscores the selective application of nuclear non-proliferation principles by the United States, reflecting strategic considerations and geopolitical alliances that influence its foreign policy approach.

The United States has consistently utilized the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to investigate and impose sanctions on nations seeking nuclear weapons capabilities. However, Israel stands as an

³² Warbrick, Colin. "The Invasion of Kuwait by Iraq: Part II." *The International and Comparative Law Quarterly* 40.4 (1991): 965-976; Snell-Mendoza, Morice. "In Defence of oil: Britain's response to the Iraqi threat towards Kuwait, 1961." *Contemporary British History* 10.3 (1996): 39-62.

³³ Chamberlin, Paul Thomas. *The Global Offensive: The United States, the Palestine Liberation Organization, and the Making of the Post-Cold War Order*. Oxford University Press (UK), 2012; Khalil, Osamah F. "The Radical Crescent: The United States, the Palestine Liberation Organisation, and the Lebanese Civil War, 1973–1978." *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 27.3 (2016): 496-522.

exception, refusing IAEA inspections and granting the United States exclusive rights to conduct inspections within its borders. This exemption underscores a clear double standard in the US approach to nuclear proliferation.

Furthermore, the manifestation of double standards is evident in the US foreign policy towards Muslim-majority nations such as Bosnia, Somalia, and Palestine. Despite facing egregious crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing, these nations received minimal impactful response from the United States. Atouf's analysis, though dated, serves as a pertinent reminder to researchers that indications of double standards have persisted in US foreign policy both pre and post-Cold War, highlighting the role of continuity and change within this domain.

In addition to Atouf's work, the book "*Unilateralism and U.S. Foreign Policy in International Perspectives*" by David Malone and Yuen Foong Khong delves into the concept of unilateralism in US foreign policy, leveraging pre-existing hegemony. The authors elucidate the repercussions and dynamics inherent in this unilateralist approach, contextualizing it within the post-Cold War era. Their exploration begins with a comparative analysis of unilateralism and multilateralism, framing these concepts within the evolving landscape of international relations following the Cold War.³⁴

The book anticipates a shift towards multilateralism in future US foreign policy, emphasizing its alignment with key global issues such as the rule of law, peace and security, economic development, and regional policies. This perspective posits that leveraging multilateral frameworks would be advantageous, particularly considering the significant influence of the United States within institutions like the United Nations and the World Trade Organization (WTO).

However, while the book offers valuable insights, it falls short in providing a comprehensive analysis of certain aspects, notably the role of the United States in promoting peace and security as well as shaping regional policies. These omissions detract from a thorough understanding

³⁴ Malone, David, and Yuen Foong Khong, eds. *Unilateralism and US foreign policy: International perspectives*. Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2003.

of how multilateralism could address these critical areas of international relations.

In their analysis, the authors primarily focus on the United States' role in peacekeeping, human rights, and combating transnational crime in the context of peace and security, without delving into the broader challenges faced by US foreign policy in these areas. Similarly, their examination of regional policy only touches upon the United States' involvement in NATO and the Asia-Pacific, overlooking other significant regional dynamics. While the paper provides valuable insights into the evolution of US foreign policy, a more nuanced understanding of security and regional issues in the Middle East necessitates additional reading references.

To address this gap, the researcher also consults Jeremy M. Sharp's work, a specialist in Middle East policy at the Congressional Research Service. Sharp's article, "*Egypt: Background and U.S. Relations*," offers a comprehensive exploration of the historical relationship between Egypt and the United States, shedding light on the complexities and dynamics between the two nations. Notably, Sharp examines Egypt's role in facilitating efforts to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, providing insights into how this aligns with US interests.³⁵

Moreover, Sharp delves into the internal dynamics of Egypt, particularly during the era of President Mubarak and the rise of the *Ikhwanul Muslimin* (Moslem Brotherhood, MB). He discusses how the MB's ascension to power could potentially disrupt the stability of US interests in Egypt, especially if they were to control the parliament. Additionally, Sharp touches upon the debates within the US Congress regarding foreign aid to Egypt, highlighting increases in military and economic assistance.³⁶

By incorporating Sharp's analysis, researchers gain a deeper understanding of the complexities surrounding Egypt's relationship with the United States leading up to 2013. While Sharp's focus is primarily on developments until 2010, his insights provide valuable context for

³⁵ Sharp, Jeremy M. *Egypt: background and US relations*. DIANE Publishing, 2011.

³⁶ See also Sharp, Jeremy M. "Egypt: Background and United States Relations." *Current Politics and Economics of Africa* 4.4 (2011): 519.

comprehending the broader geopolitical landscape in the Middle East and its implications for US foreign policy.

Conclusion

In contrast to situations involving Palestine, Sudan, and Bosnia, the manifestation of double standards in US policy towards Egypt cannot be solely attributed to pragmatic considerations. Instead, there exists a degree of "*confusion*" within the United States itself, stemming from challenges in formulating appropriate policies amidst international pressure and domestic circumstances. This confusion is theoretically conceptualized as a "*Diplomatic Dilemma*."

This study concludes that the Diplomatic Dilemma faced by the United States has contributed to the adoption of double standards in the case of Egypt. This dilemma arises not only from external pressures but also from internal factors such as economic challenges, debt burdens, and budget constraints, which necessitate cuts to foreign aid to the Egyptian government. Despite these aid reductions, the label of double standards persists, as the United States refuses to acknowledge the Egyptian situation as a coup and continues to recognize Abdel Fattah el-Sisi as the democratically elected president.

By elucidating the conceptualization of national security theory through the lens of rationalism in constructing diplomatic dilemmas and double-standard politics as interrelated concepts, this research demonstrates the correlation between the United States' attitudes and actions in addressing civil-military dynamics in post-Morsi Egypt. Diplomatic dilemmas have compelled the United States to resort to double standards as a rational policy choice, deemed necessary for advancing its security interests and stability objectives in the Middle East, particularly through its relationship with Egypt.

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