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A Look Into America's Foreign Policy: Everything Everywhere All At Once

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Abstract

The United States of America is, and has been, a global superpower for decades. A major influence in global geopolitics, the country is looked at as being a force to be reckoned with in every socio-political issue, portraying the picture of it standing for justice and making the right choices. But if one does look deeper than the image the country displays of itself on the world stage, certain cracks and crevices start to appear. Time and time again a shadow has been cast on how the US positions its domestic and foreign policy and for good reason. This paper seeks to study the American foreign policy, the important aspects related to it, the problems and ambiguities at hand and its possible reformation.

1.0 Post 9/11

On September 11, 2001, in an apparently well-financed/coordinated attack, hijackers rammed jetliners into each of the New York World Trade Center's Towers and ultimately collapsed them. A third hijacked airliner plowed into the Pentagon and a fourth hijacked airliner crashed near Pittsburgh, raising speculation that a related mission – aimed at the Capitol – had failed.

The protective actions taken over 20 years have produced important gains in security at home—but these gains came with major human, financial, and strategic opportunity costs. The United States led international coalitions into three major wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, and against the Islamic State group in Syria and Iraq; it also conducted military and intelligence operations in dozens of other countries. Admittedly, tallying gains against costs yields inconclusive results. What emerges clearly, however, is the consistency with which some of the biggest challenges emanate from unforced U.S. policy errors and unpredictable consequences of well-intended

actions. Today, the United States is more secure on the home front from foreign terrorist attacks yet faces increased domestic terrorist threats. America's efforts to promote freedom and democratic governance in the world faltered. Freedom globally has stagnated and deteriorated since 2005, and the significant stresses on America's own democratic system have risen dramatically in recent years.¹

A few years into the initial policy response to the 9/11 attacks, the United States started to recognize the limits of a military-centric approach, with many political leaders, policymakers, and analysts calling for prioritizing diplomacy, economic tools, and political and ideological engagement. This growing recognition led to modest reforms, but the main structures and resources dedicated to so-called "hard" security remained front and centre. Efforts to integrate "smart power" as a central concept in U.S. national security failed to achieve the promised and desired results. Too often, the United States repeated past patterns of behaviour in not using foreign assistance and other related tools effectively to achieve U.S. policy objectives.

In the wake of the 9/11 attacks, many voices across America's political and ideological spectrum backed a call to support freedom and democracy to counter the extremist ideas that fuel terrorist networks. The Bush administration initially framed its "Global War on Terror"² in terms of a "Freedom Agenda"³ and it justified some of its moves, including the 2003 Iraq War, within that framework. Yet missteps and unforced errors undermined America's efforts to provide itself as an example of moral leadership in the world. This included high profile abuses, including the torture of detainees at prisons in war zones and around the world; controversial drone strikes; and broad intelligence collection programs that used new technologies to collect information in ways that raised questions about the checks and balances of America's democratic political system.

During the past five years inside of the United States, more internal challenges to the country's democratic system emerged, with growing concerns about the stability and legitimacy of the

¹ Hananel Director, S. et al. (2022) ,The lessons learned for U.S. National Security Policy in the 20 years since 9/11, Center for American Progress, <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/lessons-learned-u-s-national-security-policy-20-years-since-911/>

² The Global War on Terrorism: The First 100 Days, U.S. Department of State, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/s/ct/rls/wh/6947.htm>

³ *Freedom Agenda*, National Archives and Records Administration, <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/infocus/freedomagenda/>

election system and the broader system of government.

2.0 U.S Arms Trade and the Economics of it all

There are two major ways foreign governments purchase arms from U.S. companies: direct commercial sales negotiated between a government and a company, and foreign military sales in which a foreign government typically contacts a Defence Department official at the U.S. embassy in its capital. Both require U.S. government approval.

Sales of U.S. military equipment to foreign governments rose 49% to \$205.6 billion in the latest fiscal year. Sales approved in the year included \$13.9 billion worth of F-15ID fighter jets to Indonesia, \$6.9 billion worth of Multi-Mission Surface Combatant ships to Greece, and \$6 billion worth of M1A2 Abrams tanks to Poland. The direct military sales by U.S. companies rose 48.6% to \$153.7 billion in fiscal 2022 from \$103 billion in fiscal 2021, while sales arranged through the U.S. government rose 49.1% to \$51.9 billion in 2022 from \$34.8 billion the prior year.⁴

2.1 Private and Public Corporations

Global sales of arms and military services by the 100 largest defense contractors increased in 2010 to \$411.1 billion, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute⁵. The increase reflects a decade-long trend of growing military spending. Since 2002, total arms sales among the 100 largest arms manufacturers have increased 60 percent. The institute recently published its annual report on the leading arms producing companies in the world -- SIPRI Top 100. The report identifies the largest companies in the sector and provides each company's arms sales as a percentage of its total sales. The composition of the 10 largest manufacturers reflects the state of modern warfare. More and more, battles are fought remotely through air surveillance and strikes rather than on-the-ground combat. As a consequence, seven of the 10 largest companies are among the leading aerospace companies. Surveillance and battlefield communications also are increasingly important in modern warfare. All of the companies in the top 10 have significant

⁴ 10 companies profiting most from war, NBCUniversal News Group, <https://www.nbcnews.com/businessmain/10-companies-profiting-most-war-330249>

⁵ Global Arms Industry: Sales by the top 25 companies up 8.5 per cent; big players active in Global South (2020) SIPRI, <https://www.sipri.org/media/press-release/2020/global-arms-industry-sales-top-25-companies-85-cent-big-players-active-global-south>

electronics divisions.

Of the 100 companies on the list, 44 are based in the U.S., including Boeing, Northrop Grumman and Lockheed Martin. The American companies account for more than 60 percent of arms sales revenue of the 100 manufacturers. Seven of SIPRI's top 10 are American, one is British, one is Italian and one is a multinational EU conglomerate. The U.S. federal government has contract deals with all seven American companies. These seven are among the top 10 U.S. federal contractors by amount procured, according to the government's Federal Procurement Data System. Analysis of the SIPRI 100 includes revenue for arms sales for 2007, 2009 and 2010, as well as percentage of company revenue from arms sales, employees, industry and applicable military division.⁶

Given below are some major players in the arms and defence sector-

(i) Lockheed Martin: The largest arms-producing and military services company in the world, with nearly \$3 billion more in arms sales than second place BAE Systems. Although military sales make up the majority of its revenue, it is significantly less than many other major arms-producers, including BAE's 95 percent share. In addition to being the world's largest arms-seller, Lockheed is also the largest federal contractor in the U.S. by a large margin. In 2010, the company's government contracts totalled nearly \$36 billion. Lockheed produces a number of major products, including the Trident missile and the F-16 and F-22 fighter jets. Despite being the largest military service company on this list, Lockheed is only the fourth-largest company by overall sales among the companies featured on this list. In 2007, the Lockheed was the third-largest arms producer.

(ii) BAE Systems: An aerospace and defence contractor based in the UK. The company has a major U.S. subsidiary, BAE Systems, Inc., which by itself would be the seventh-largest weapons manufacturer in the world. In 2010, 95 percent of its revenue came from arms sales, \$32.88 billion in all.

(iii) Boeing: The second-largest aircraft producer in the world by deliveries, behind only Airbus. It is also the second-largest U.S. government contractor, procuring just under \$19.5 billion in

⁶ Arms Sales of SIPRI Top 100 Arms Companies Grow Despite Supply Chain Challenges
<https://sipri.org/media/press-release/2022/arms-sales-sipri-top-100-arms-companies-grow-despite-supply-chain-challenges>

contracts in 2010. Major products produced by the company include the KC-767, an aerial refuelling tanker, and the F-15 fighter jet. Boeing made less in arms sales in 2010 than it did in 2009, although arms sales made up a larger amount of total sales -- two percentage points, to be exact -- in 2010 compared to 2009. Even in 2010, however, only 49 percent of revenue came from arms sales, which is among the lowest rates among companies on this list.

(iv) General Dynamics: An American defence company that deals in aerospace, combat systems, information systems and technology, and marine systems. Although the company has been around since 1952, it has enjoyed a resurgence beginning in the 1990s, thanks largely to a number of mergers. Since 1997 General Dynamics says it has acquired more than 50 companies. Over this same period, its revenue increased from \$4 billion to more than \$32 billion. It also added more than 60,000 employees to its workforce. Currently, 74 percent of the company's sales are arms sales. General Dynamics owns Electric Boat and Bath Iron Works, two of the largest naval vessel builders in the world. General Dynamics is notable for its Ohio-class ballistic missile submarine, the Seawolf-class submarine, the M1 Abrams tank and the Arleigh-Burke-class destroyer.⁷

2.2 Supplying to Areas of Conflict

"If we don't sell it to 'em, they'll say 'well, thank you very much, we'll buy it from Russia' or 'thank you very much, we'll buy it from China.'" - Donald J. Trump

This quote from the ex-president of the United States has never rung more true and essentially sums up the policy behind USA selling arms to foreign countries. The business of war is something the government has understood and adapted to very well making hundreds of millions from it, either by supplying munition to governments under attack or separatist groups/ non-state actors in rebellion against their government.

The United States selects its clients based on well-established partnerships, as well as for strategic reasons related to the leverage it could gain during conflicts. Of the 25 countries buying the most weapons from the U.S., 10 are either NATO member nations or part of other alliances formed with the United States since the Cold War. To identify the countries buying the most weapons

⁷ Statista Research Department and 5, J. (2023), Leading weapon and military technology providers 2021, Statista, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/267160/sales-of-the-worlds-largest-arms-producing-and-military-services-companies/>

from the U.S. government, 24/7 Wall St. reviewed the total value of arms exports from the United States over the decade 2008 to 2018 delivered to the 183 countries. The arms data cover actual deliveries of major conventional weapons. The Middle East was the fastest growing market for arms, importing 25% more in 2016-20 compared to the previous five year period. The biggest increases came from Saudi Arabia (61%), Egypt (136%) and Qatar (361%). Asia and Oceania was the largest importing region for major arms, receiving 42% of global arms transfers. India, Australia, China, South Korea and Pakistan were the biggest importers in the region.⁸

For example-

(i)Egypt:

- Arms imports from US, 2008-2018: **\$2.84 billion, 27.9 percent of arms imports**
- Arms imports from US, 2018: **\$197 million, 13.3 percent of arms imports**
- 1st, 2nd, and 3rd largest suppliers (2014-2018): **France, Russia, USA**

(ii)Israel:

- Arms imports from US, 2008-2018: **\$2.91 billion, 69.6 percent of arms imports**
- Arms imports from US, 2018: **\$480 million, 96.4 percent of arms imports**
- 1st, 2nd, and 3rd largest suppliers (2014-2018): **USA, Germany, Italy**

(iii)India:

- Arms imports from US, 2008-2018: **\$3.10 billion, 9.1 percent of arms imports**
- Arms imports from US, 2018: **\$25 million, 1.6 percent of arms imports**
- 1st, 2nd, and 3rd largest suppliers (2014-2018): **Russia, Israel, USA**

(iv)Taiwan:

- Arms imports from US, 2008-2018: **\$3.58 billion, 95.1 percent of arms imports**
- Arms imports from US, 2018: **\$129 million, 100 percent of arms imports**

⁸US Supply of Arms <https://www.usatoday.com/story/money/2019/03/26/us-arms-sales-these-countries-buy-most-weapons-government/39208809/>

- 1st, 2nd, and 3rd largest suppliers (2014-2018): **USA, Germany, Italy**

(v)Turkey:

- Arms imports from US, 2008-2018: **\$3.82 billion, 45.8 percent of arms imports**
- Arms imports from US, 2018: **\$293 million, 42.8 percent of arms imports**
- 1st, 2nd, and 3rd largest suppliers (2014-2018): **USA, Spain, Italy**

(vi)Iraq:

- Arms imports from US, 2008-2018: **\$4.45 billion, 55.8 percent of arms imports**
- Arms imports from US, 2018: **\$40 million, 6.7 percent of arms imports**
- 1st, 2nd, and 3rd largest suppliers (2014-2018): **USA, Russia, South Korea**

(vii)South

Korea:

- Arms imports from US, 2008-2018: **\$7.40 billion, 66.7 percent of arms imports**
- Arms imports from US, 2018: **\$612 million, 46.5 percent of arms imports**
- 1st, 2nd, and 3rd largest suppliers (2014-2018): **USA, Germany, UK**

(viii)Saudi

Arabia:

- Arms imports from US, 2008-2018: **\$13.72 billion, 59.6 percent of arms imports**
- Arms imports from US, 2018: **\$3.35 billion, 88.0 percent of arms imports**
- 1st, 2nd, and 3rd largest suppliers (2014-2018): **USA, UK, France**

3.0 Flouting International Law and Treaties

3.1 RBIO

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken and other members of the Biden Cabinet are fond of proclaiming the “rules-based international order” (RBIO) or “rules-based order” every chance they get: in press conferences, on interviews, in articles, at international fora, for breakfast, lunch, dinner, and cocktails. Along with the terms “human rights” and “democracy,” the RBIO is

routinely used to claim a moral high ground against countries that they accuse of not following this RBIO, and wield it as a cudgel to attack, criticize, accuse, and delegitimize countries in their crosshairs as rogue outliers to an international order.

This cudgel is now used most commonly against China and Russia. Oddly enough, whenever the United States asserts this “rules-based order” that China (and other “revisionist powers”/enemy states) are violating, the United States never seems to clarify which “rules” are being violated, but simply releases a miasma of generic accusation, leaving the stench of racism and xenophobia to do the rest. This is because there is a fundamental contradiction at the heart of the RBIO. The RBIO isn’t “rules-based,” t “international,” and neither does it confound any sense of “order,” let alone justice. It is, at bottom, the naked exercise of U.S. imperial power and supremacy, dressed up in the invisible finery of an embroidered fiction. The RBIO is a fraudulent impersonation of international law and justice. First, the RBIO is not “international” in any sense of the word.

There actually is a consensual rules-based international order, a compendium of agreed-upon rules and treaties that the international community has negotiated, agreed to, and signed up for. It’s called simply “international law.” This refers to the body of decisions, precedents, agreements, and multilateral treaties held together under the umbrella of the Charter of the United Nations and the multiple institutions, policies, and protocols attached to it. Although imperfect, incomplete, evolving, it still constitutes the legal foundation of the body of international order and the orderly laws that underpin it: this is what constitutes international law. The basic foundation of the UN Charter is national sovereignty—that states have a right to exist, and are equal in relations. This is not what the United States is referring to.

When the United States uses the term RBIO, rather than the existing term “international law,” it does so because it wants to impersonate international law while diverting to a unilateral, invented, fictitious order that it alone creates and decides—often with the complicity of other imperial, Western, and transatlantic states. It also does this because, quite simply, the United States does not want to be constrained by international law and actually is an international scofflaw in many cases.

3.2 Hypocrisies

The United States refuses to sign or to ratify foundational international laws and treaties that the vast majority of countries in the world have signed, such as the Rome Statute of the ICC⁹, CEDAW¹⁰, ICESCR¹¹, CRC¹², ICRMW¹³, UNCLOS¹⁴, PAROS¹⁵, the Ottawa Treaty¹⁶, and the majority of labour conventions of the ILO¹⁷. In fact, the United States harbours sweatshops, legalizes child labour (for example, in migrant farm labour), and engages in slave labour (in prisons and immigration detention centres). Even the U.S. State Department's own 2021 Trafficking in Persons Report¹⁸ acknowledges severe problems in the U.S. of trafficking and forced labour in agriculture, food service, manufacture, domestic service, sex work, and hospitality, with U.S. government officials and military involved in the trafficking of persons domestically and abroad. Ironically, the United States tries to hold other countries accountable to laws that it itself refuses to ratify. For example, the United States tries to assert UNCLOS in the South China Sea while refusing—for decades—to ratify it and ignoring its rules, precedents, and conclusions in its own territorial waters.

There are also a slew of international treaties the United States has signed, but simply violates anyway: examples include the Chemical Weapons Convention¹⁹, the Biological Weapons Convention²⁰, UN treaties prohibiting torture, rendition, and kidnapping, and of course, war of

⁹ International Criminal Court <https://www.icc-cpi.int/>

¹⁰ The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/>

¹¹ International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-economic-social-and-cultural-rights>

¹² Convention on the Rights of Child <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-child>

¹³ The International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-convention-protection-rights-all-migrant-workers>

¹⁴ United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea https://www.un.org/depts/los/convention_agreements/texts/unclos/unclos_e.pdf

¹⁵ Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space <https://unidir.org/sites/default/files/publication/pdfs/prevention-of-an-arms-race-in-outer-space-a-guide-to-the-discussions-in-the-cd-en-451.pdf>

¹⁶ Convention On The Prohibition Of The Use, Stockpiling, Production And Transfer Of Anti-Personnel Mines And On Their Destruction <https://geneva-s3.unoda.org/static-unoda-site/pages/templates/anti-personnel-landmines-convention/APLC%2BEnglish.pdf>

¹⁷ International Labour Organisation <https://www.ilo.org/global/lang--en/index.htm>

¹⁸ Trafficking in Persons Report 2021 <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/TIPR-GPA-upload-07222021.pdf>

¹⁹ Chemical Weapons Convention <https://www.opcw.org/chemical-weapons-convention>

²⁰ Biological Weapons Convention <https://www.un.org/disarmament/biological-weapons/>

aggression, considered “the supreme international crime”—a crime that the United States engages in routinely at least once a decade, not to mention routine drone attacks, which are in violation of international law. Most recently, the AUKUS agreement²¹ signed between the United States and Australia violates the NPT²² by exploiting a blind spot of the IAEA²³. There are also a multitude of treaties that the United States has signed but then arbitrarily withdrawn from anyway. These include the JCPOA²⁴ with Iran, the Agreed Framework and the Six-Party Talks²⁵ with North Korea, the Geneva Conventions, the INF Treaty²⁶, and many others.

There are also unilateral fictions that the United States has created, such as FONOPs²⁷, which is gunboat diplomacy, a military show of force, masquerading as an easement claim. FONOPs are a concept with no basis in international law—“innocent passage” is the accepted law under UNCLOS—and it is the United States and its allies who are violating international laws when they exercise these FONOPs. Air Defence Identification Zones (ADIZs) are likewise notions that have no recognition in international law—the accepted concept is “sovereign airspace”—but the United States routinely claims that China is violating Taiwan’s ADIZ or airspace—which covers three provinces of mainland China. These are some examples of the absurd fictions that the United States invents to assert that enemy states like China are violating the RBIO. This is weaponized fiction. The United States also takes great pains to undermine international structures and institutions; for example, not liking the decisions of the World Trade Organization (WTO), it has disabled the WTO’s Investor-State Dispute Settlement mechanism; it has undermined—and threatened—the ICC (by passing the ASPA²⁸, also known as the Hague Invasion Act), and more recently, sanctioned the ICC prosecutor and her family members; it thumbs its nose at the ICJ²⁹ and its decisions, and generally is opposed to any international institution that restricts its unbridled, unilateral exercise of power.

²¹ The Australia-United Kingdom- United States Partnership Agreement <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/04/05/fact-sheet-implementation-of-the-australia-united-kingdom-united-states-partnership-aukus/>

²² Treaty on Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons <https://www.un.org/disarmament/wmd/nuclear/npt/text>

²³ International Atomic Energy Agency <https://www.iaea.org/>

²⁴ Joint Cooperative Plan of Action <https://2009-2017.state.gov/documents/organization/245317.pdf>

²⁵ Agreed Framework and the Six-Party Talks <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/six-party-talks-north-koreas-nuclear-program>

²⁶ Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty <https://2009-2017.state.gov/t/avc/trty/102360.htm>

²⁷ Freedom of Navigation Operations <https://www.state.gov/freedom-of-navigation-report-annual-release/>

²⁸ American Service Members Protection Act <https://2001-2009.state.gov/t/pm/rls/othr/misc/23425.htm>

²⁹ International Court of Justice [https://www.icj-cij.org/court#:~:text=The%20International%20Court%20of%20Justice,in%20The%20Hague%20\(Netherlands\).](https://www.icj-cij.org/court#:~:text=The%20International%20Court%20of%20Justice,in%20The%20Hague%20(Netherlands).)

Former U.S. Ambassador to the UN John Bolton, in blunt candour, asserted that there is “no such thing as the United Nations,” but this unhinged ideology is quietly manifested in the day-to-day *actions* of the United States throughout successive U.S. administrations.

4.0 Proxy Wars

Proxy wars are conflicts in which a third party intervenes indirectly in a pre-existing war in order to influence the strategic outcome in favour of its preferred faction. Proxy wars are the product of a relationship between a benefactor who is a state or non-state actor external to the dynamic of the existing conflict (for example, a civil war) and the chosen proxies who are the conduit for the benefactor’s weapons, training, and funding. In short, proxy wars are the replacement for states and non-state actors seeking to further their own strategic goals yet at the same time avoid engaging in direct, costly, and bloody warfare. The United States has arguably become the torch-bearer of being involved in or starting proxy wars between two hostile nations in a tense geopolitical situation for vested interests or national security reasons. A few notable conflicts have been studied below.

4.1 Iran

The heightened tension between Iran and United States has been started since both countries severed their diplomatic relations back in 1979, and the bilateral affairs of both countries are being conducted unofficially between protectorates. Back in 2013, during Iranian President Rouhani's visit to the US, he had a 15-minutes call with President Obama during the momentum of UN General Assembly 2013. This short bilateral call may seem to be a simple diplomatic courtesy, but meant a lot between US-Iran tensions wherein the two countries were seeing positive prospects in Iran's nuclear agenda. Both countries, in general, have always been the centre of attention in the Middle East regional security discourses owing to their self-interest and power balancing contestations. In a more neoliberalist view, both countries are also the centre of attention when it comes to multilateral dialogue in non-proliferation agenda, where US diplomatic representatives repeatedly blame Iran. The UN-led sanctions, plutonium scrutiny, and Iran’s deviation from the agreed security norms are also the main institutional agenda that is utilized by the US to counter Iran. The US presence in Iran and the Middle East architecture as a whole seems to be struggling on their quest to balance power and counterweigh Iran, considering the rising conservatism after

the secular Shah Pahlevi was thrown out of power. The Khomeini dynasty claimed power against the western powers to reverse its implications within the Iranian society. The United States are indeed partaking in the power competition and geopolitical contest against Iran and its allies, while also at the same time being participated by many US' allies. The US indeed has been receiving great threats from Iran's nuclear ambition and its revolutionary leadership which labelled the US as the "great satan."

Forty years after the 1979 Iranian Revolution, relations between the United States and Iran are as tense as they have ever been. As Iran advances its nuclear program and trains proxy forces throughout the Middle East, the potential for conflict continues to increase. Iran has also continued to develop ballistic missiles, which, according to the United States, violates UN resolution 2231. In response, the United States continues to impose sanctions on Iran's ballistic missile program and the IRGC through the Countering Iran's Destabilizing Activities Act of 2017 and the Countering America's Adversaries through Sanctions Act. A worsening conflict with Iran would have significant economic, political, and security implications for the United States. Should the United States and Iran engage in military conflict, Iran could attempt to block the Strait of Hormuz, through which 30 percent of the world's oil flows, which would raise oil prices globally. Moreover, the United States risks isolating itself from already beleaguered allies: in June 2019, NATO refused to commit to working with the United States to secure freedom of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz. A U.S.-Iran confrontation could trigger an escalation of proxy warfare in countries like Syria and Yemen, or an increase in Iranian missile strikes targeting the seventy thousand U.S. troops in the Middle East.³⁰

4.2 Cuba

The origins of the Cuban Missile Crisis lie in the failed Bay of Pigs invasion, during which US-supported Cuban exiles hoping to foment an uprising against Castro were overpowered by the Cuban armed forces. After the invasion, Castro turned to the Soviets for protection against future US aggression. The Soviets provided Cuba with nuclear weapons on the condition that the deal would remain secret until the missiles were fully operational. Khrushchev claimed that his

³⁰ Council on Foreign Relations: Confrontation with Iran <https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/confrontation-between-united-states-and-iran>

motivation for providing Cuba with nuclear weaponry was to safeguard the Cuban Revolution against US aggression and to alter the global balance of power in favor of the Soviet Union. In October 1962, US U-2 spy plane flights over Cuban territory revealed the missile installation sites. This discovery inaugurated what became known as the Cuban Missile Crisis. The strategic implications of these weapons were enormous: the missiles could easily reach targets in the United States, including New York City and Washington, D.C.

The Kennedy administration established a naval blockade to prevent any more missiles from reaching Cuba, and in no uncertain terms demanded the immediate removal of the missiles that had already been delivered. The danger of this approach was that if the Soviets refused to remove the missiles, the United States would be forced to escalate the crisis by authorizing air strikes over Cuba to bomb the missile sites. Contingency plans were drawn up for a full-scale invasion of Cuba and a nuclear attack on the Soviet Union, in the event that the Soviets responded militarily to Kennedy's demands. The Cuban Missile Crisis also convinced Kennedy of the dangers of nuclear brinkmanship. He and Khrushchev had peered into the abyss of nuclear destruction but had managed to pull back from it. In order to prevent future crises, a Moscow-Washington hotline was set up in the White House to facilitate direct communication between the leaders of the Soviet Union and the United States.

In August 1963, the United States, the Soviet Union, and Great Britain signed a treaty banning atmospheric and underwater nuclear testing. Nevertheless, the test-ban treaty failed to halt the arms race, as Kennedy simultaneously authorized a massive arms buildup that vastly expanded the US nuclear arsenal and amplified US strategic superiority in the Cold War.³¹

4.3 Afghanistan

The United States' decision to withdraw troops from Afghanistan closes a 20-year chapter between the two countries. But US intervention in Afghanistan far predates the 21st century, stretching back decades. In the 1980s and early 1990s, Afghanistan was a proxy battleground for the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union. One could argue that America was the winner in that battle (the Soviet Union and Afghanistan certainly weren't), except that US

³¹ The Cuban Missile Crisis <https://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/2002/fall/cuban-missiles.html>

actions then created the threat from the Taliban today. There were no winners. America and the Soviet Union brought two other neighbours into that Cold War fight: Pakistan and India. India stood by the Soviet Union as it quietly did in many other areas. Pakistan and its intelligence service became the middleman between the United States and the mujahedeen (later to form the Taliban).³²

There is a relationship here in which the US, through funnelling money to ISI, Pakistan's intelligence services, either inadvertently or intentionally ends up funding a group of foreign fighters who ally with the more organized elements of the mujahedeen. The consequence of that will be that once the US and the Soviet Union withdraw their influence, Afghanistan falls into a civil war.

The unintended consequence of that meddling is chaos, and that chaos will give us al-Qaeda and the Taliban, both of whom have American training manuals, American funds, and American guns, all funnelled through Pakistan's ISI. When Soviet forces pulled out in 1989, Pakistan continued to support the rebels; India supported the forces that years later became the North Alliance. The United States tied Afghanistan and Pakistan together through the creation of Reconstruction Opportunity Zones along their mutual border which would get American tax exemptions. Afghanistan also is the 1 inch pin of the trade routes and energy pipelines to Central Asia. So, if the United States is going to reverse this sad decline in Afghanistan, it will need the support of both India and Pakistan.

4.4 Reformation

One can hope that the US government sees its repeating pattern and realises nothing good can come from foreign intervention without reasonable cause and not disguise their intentions by the twisting of international law and articles from the UN Charter. The withdrawal of US forces from Afghanistan, the peaceful negotiations at the end of the Cuban Missile Crisis, and the will of the Biden administration to lessen the strain on the Middle East and seek compromise with countries like Saudi Arabia and Iran does give hope and denote an eventual light at the end of the tunnel,

³² Analysing the Proxy War: America's Perspective in Afghanistan https://www.ia-forum.org/Content/ViewInternal_Document.cfm?contenttype_id=5&ContentID=9499

however their quest for power and domination shall continue which points to uncertainties in the future.

5.0 Conclusion

All said and done, the United States of America will continue to be a superpower and efforts for asking for full transparency and accountability could be declined simply due to the stronghold the US has over the global community. Their veto will continue to influence major world decisions and skew the odds in their advantage. One shouldn't forget that America's first priority will and always be, America.

