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## **American Diplomacy towards the Arab-Israeli Conflict in the Twenty-First Century**

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### **Abstract**

The purpose of this paper is to establish a standard based on U.S. motives, policy analyses, policy advice, and the political phenomenon called political feasibility for future evaluations of U.S. Arab-Israeli policymaking. This represents a changed focus for our analysis of U.S. involvement; from providing advice that could enable all parties to the conflict to successfully address the underlying issues on their own through the peace process to putting the spotlight on the absence of political will that could enable each party to choose and subsequently exit from negotiations with relevant promises. Through American diplomacy, we find that there has been a kind of improvement in Arab-Israeli relations, especially with the oil states in the Gulf, which has reduced this concern. But the previously strong domestic cultural and political pillars are now under pressure. Following the sharp decline in sympathy for Israel within the Democratic Party, bipartisan support for Israel is now in doubt. The new Israeli government can stop and reverse this decline. But in the absence of progress towards a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the challenge will remain.

**Key Words:** American diplomacy, Arab-Israeli conflict, Eisenhower Doctrine, Middle East, Policy Analyses.

### **Introduction**

For over seventy years, the United States has remained fully engaged with the Arab-Israeli question, from its first tentative entry into the Middle East in the era of the Eisenhower Doctrine to the diplomatic blitz by George Bush and his Secretary of State in the last year of the President's final term. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the stakes in the Arab-Israeli conflict could not be higher. It has

become a lightning rod for criticism not merely of American power but also of the values that its leaders have done so much to encourage abroad. The United States is held to be intimately involved in events in a part of the world whose people, governments, and Arab Palestinians attribute their plight in large measure to American hegemony.

As the twenty-first century unfolds, U.S. Diplomacy formulation comes at a historical crossroads in responding to the Arab-Israeli conflict. During the past forty-seven years, said policy has more or less developed along the same consistency of choice. Washington consistently provided military and economic aid to ensure Israel's secure existence and has consistently pursued American interests in the region through the belief that stability could only come from the maintenance of pro-Western, authoritarian regimes. These largely had been monarchies in the Gulf States and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, and the more secular dictate in the Republic of Egypt. Since the Abraham Accords among Israel, the United Arab Emirates, and the Kingdom of Bahrain were signed on 15 September 2020, and the Israeli normalization agreement focused on economic and technological cooperation and normalization of diplomatic ties with the Kingdom of Morocco on 11 December 2020, bolstered by Arab states, especially those of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and the Republic of Sudan, many world leaders believe that the 'battle phase' of the Arab-Israeli or Arab-Israeli-Palestinian conflict is over. Only the U.S. Democratic Party is lagging in shaping its policy.

A mature American response to the Arab-Israeli conflict should not only take into consideration Israeli and Arab security concerns. It should also recognize the national rights and needs of both sides. A sound policy would, therefore, support Israel's right to exist in peace and security and the Palestinian people's right to determine their own political future, just as it would demonstrate respect for the needs and fears of both societies. The United States made substantial strides in the years following the October War to shape and pursue a course in keeping with these fundamental principles. But the Arab-Israeli conflict is a snake pit, and every effort to escape has seen the hunter captured by the hunted. Given recent developments, it is incumbent upon us now to decide upon the appropriate role we should play in the continuing conflict and how we might best guide the parties involved toward peace.

The primary purpose of American diplomacy toward the Arab-Israeli conflict must, for now, be to maintain the momentum gained with the negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians at Oslo and, in turn, between Israel and Jordan. Toward this end, the United States should encourage, by persuasion rather than coercion, the parties involved to respect agreements and consider timely action to resolve disputes arising from the accords through negotiation and compromise. By its moral commitment to the legitimate untainted rights and security concerns of the parties, the United States can exercise a unique influence upon the course of Arab-Israeli relations. This, in turn, can help to shape a situation in the area that eventually allays regional and global strategic risks.

### **Background of the Arab-Israeli Conflict**

The Arab-Israeli conflict is, in reality, several interconnected and overlapping conflicts that are part of a dispute between the Arab states and the Palestinian Arabs on one side, and the Jewish state of Israel on the other. The origins of the dispute go

back to the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries with the rise of Jewish nationalism, known as Zionism, which sought to create a Jewish state in the ancient land of Israel, then part of the Turkish Ottoman Empire. Palestine, a term that had traditionally encompassed a region on the eastern Mediterranean coast from Gaza in the south to Mount Hermon in the north, and between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River, was viewed as the ancestral and spiritual home of the Jewish people.

The Jews, who had lived in Palestine at various times over the centuries, viewed their return to Zion – as they called Palestine – as a homecoming to the land of their forefathers, deeply rooted in their religion and culture. To facilitate the colonization of the land, the first Zionist Congress declared in 1897 that Zionism aimed to establish for the Jewish people a publicly secured homeland in Palestine. Subsequently, tens of thousands of Jews began to immigrate to Palestine, purchasing land from rich absentee Arab landlords living in the towns while renting from the poor peasants living on it. The immigration inflamed the hatred of the indigenous Arabs – Muslims, Christians, and Jews – towards their new neighbors.

The Arab-Israeli conflict is one of the basic unsolved issues in modern world diplomacy. For more than fifty years, it has been the cause of bloody wars in this sensitive and strategic region that was and still is a meeting point of two basic old civilizations, the Western and Eastern. The wars in the Middle East create problems even in countries that are at the other end of the Mediterranean Sea. The U.S. has reason to stop these tears. The U.S. has actively participated in past conflicts, while in the last hundred years, it has been helping financially one of the parties involved, the Jewish settlers. Nowadays, there are more than 4 million Jews in the occupied territories given to Israel by the Great Powers. This paper is an attempt to reveal to what extent U.S. policy has proved to be successful, having as a basis the premises of the main American thinkers.

The Arab-Israeli conflict started during the 19th century under the influence of important events: the Western Industrial Revolution, which led to a rapid strengthening of the West and, at the same time, to its anatomization; the collapse of the Ottoman Empire after 400 years of domination; the national political ideas with their appeals to the fight against every sort of oppression—racial, religious, and national; the demographic factors; the exploitation of the Zionist ideal and the settlement of new refugees in the Orient; the desire of powerful Christian Europe to encourage any idea, any secret fight against the basic principles of Islam; and the promising Russian Pan-Slavic policy over the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire. The Arab-Israeli conflict is not only a modern refugee problem but also a class conflict between poor peasants and workers on one side and Jewish workers and peasants as agents of Western monopoly capitalism.

The Palestinian refugee problem resulted from the failure of the great powers who imposed Israel on Palestine and planned to increase Arab immigration into the country. They started to exert their influence on all neighboring and other Arab states to allow Arabs to leave or even to actively expel them. Israel itself tried to force Arabs to emigrate by massacres and terror. From these historically known actions, instruments and exponents of United States foreign policy have maintained a conspiracy of silence. The immediate objective is to secure peace to the detriment of justice, which is imposed on reason and conscience as the only way of attaining

peace. Peace settlements based on force fundamentally misunderstand the nature of the Arab-Israeli issue, which is a just and legitimate struggle for national liberation. Peace should only be a means of achieving justice for all. Only peace based on fundamental justice can ensure the security of all parties in the long term. With justice, no enemy; without justice, no peace.

### **Research Objectives and Methodology**

The purpose of this study is to examine the development of U.S. diplomacy towards the Arab-Israeli conflict in the twenty-first century. A core assumption of the research upon which this dissertation is founded is that the end of the Cold War, and with it the collapse of the Soviet Union, would offer the U.S. the opportunity to forge a more neutral and less intrusive role in Arab-Israeli diplomacy. This research argues that the end of the superpower rivalry presented the U.S. with new freedom to act and to facilitate a settlement based not on values or ideology, but rather on a strategic calculation that, in turn, would meet the interests and stakes of both the Arab and Israeli sides. This new opportunity offered the U.S. both the ability and the political will to transform itself and its regional policy, away from the containment doctrines of the Cold War and towards limited benign engagement consistent with its regional interests which, in the process, would strengthen and enhance its international status.

Given the parameters of this research study, focusing exclusively on the American role in the Arab-Israeli conflict north of the Sinai, how does one go about measuring U.S. diplomacy? Examples of diplomacy that could potentially influence the Israeli-Palestinian and Israeli-Syrian peace processes abound; from the rude and unorthodox methods of the Clinton administration that sought to pursue peace initiatives with Syria in the absence of formal recognition or negotiations between the parties, to failures to take action to save Jews from the Holocaust; from the consideration that “Arab unpopularity can impose stress upon the Western position in key Muslim countries with grave consequence to NATO and with even more direct and general effects upon the world economy,” to considerations and rejections of suggestions that the United States should take steps to halt the Zionist program and relocate Jews in the United States; from the original U.S. pledge that the U.S. would “as opportunity offers, use its friendly offices to guide to a successful issue the negotiations that are pending between the governments of the Sublime Porte and those of some of the Christian powers,” to the contemporary Middle East diplomatic roadmap. The list of U.S. policy considerations, decisions, and diplomatic behavior and initiatives on the Arab-Israeli disputes is long and full of contrasts and contradictions.

### **US Involvement in the Arab-Israeli Conflict: 20th Century**

Over the last 70 years, US-Israeli relations have been enhanced to encompass almost every facet of international relations. There is no other country with which Israel shares such a close relationship as that with the United States. This unique relationship dates from the late 1960s, largely as a result of the overall alignment in the foreign policy goals of the two nations. It is in the decades preceding this, the crucial 1940s and 1950s, that we can observe the origin of the pro-Israel stance.

During the pre-September 11th world, Israel was America's familiar Middle Eastern associate. There was no other country in the region that came from a similar ideological foundation, and it is a commonly supported assumption that it was America's promotion of these democratic shared values, two sets of very basic principles, that resulted in this mutual partnership. In recent years, however, much of the horror and fear surrounding the events of September 11th have shifted focus away from other equally dangerous conflicts that had previously been raging – the Arab-Israeli conflict. Nonetheless, it is apparent that in the post-September 11th era, the world has embarked on a new epoch that could surpass the era of ideological wars. During these times of emerging new security threats, while re-establishing what the line is, the Atlantic Alliance is drawing closer to cooperating more closely through a plethora of security measures. It is now more than a necessity that we examine our various policies and alliances to maximize the full benefits. No regional policy is more fundamental to the maximization of these benefits than that between the United States and Israel in the Middle East.

We will focus on a subject that has occupied the attention of many American administrations over the years: the efforts to settle the conflict between the Arabs and the Israelis. The pursuit of peace between the Arab states and Israel has preoccupied the American government since 1944. It is a highly unusual subject of American foreign policy. It is unusual because its birth was to a large extent domestic and it has been nurtured by domestic considerations to an unusual degree. It involves the United States to a great extent in the internal affairs of the parties and depends upon the United States for the financial well-being of one of the parties. Of course, the traditional approach of American policy was that the parties to the conflict would first make peace and then United States aid could be used to promote regional development.

The background to the negotiations between Egypt and Israel, which culminated in the spectacular visit of President Anwar Sadat to Jerusalem in November 1977 and the subsequent agreements, was discussed in some detail in an analysis of the period 1969-77. These had shown a greater willingness on the part of the international community to consider a possible resolution for the conflict. The negotiations that led to the subsequent peace treaty between Egypt and Israel also pointed to the importance of other actors, who could serve as intermediaries and provide the necessary guarantees to each of the parties. Preliminary to these sustained diplomatic initiatives, the Palestinian Liberation Organization had used arms to try to force a resolution of the conflict. The organization's failure to either eliminate Israel or to gain recognition for its demand for a separate Palestine based on a secular democratic state had led it to decide in the late 1960s to recognize Israel.

### **US Diplomatic Initiatives and Key Events and Initiatives.**

The research paper is provided as a synopsis of significant US diplomatic initiatives and key events involving the United States and relations with all countries, international organizations, and within the UN system in the 21st century. The report consists of five parts. Part One contains a brief introduction and background context, which examines the involvement of the US in world affairs with attention to the rights and responsibilities of the US government in terms of international law or governing international relations and the impact of these policies on maintaining world order. Part Two is a country list of diplomatic initiatives and key events,

including treaties, strategies, military and humanitarian interventions, and executive action. Parts Three, Four, and Five cover diplomatic initiatives and key events as they pertain to the United Nations, international organizations, and preeminent global challenges accordingly.

The twenty-first century has presented the U.S. government and its coalition partners with enormous global challenges, opportunities, and challenges unforeseen in the Cold War era. The September 11, 2001, terrorist attack on the U.S. homeland and the resulting events have significantly tested U.S. foreign policy doctrine. The emergence of new global actors and the reemergence of assertive, rising powers like China and India have challenged the post-World War II international order. National "soft power" tools, both separately and collectively, have been stretched and have become prime policy priorities for the United States government. No longer are government instruments like development, traditional diplomacy, military assistance and training, security cooperation, democracy and governance, public diplomacy, and other policy areas used primarily to support defense and security objectives; they have prominent roles in achieving national diplomatic and development objectives.

Accordingly, U.S. ambassadors and chiefs of mission are more frequently responsible for advancing entire government strategic goals to stabilize and reconstruct post-conflict countries, forge diplomatic relations to resolve issues of mutual interest or prevent crises from occurring. Such efforts, however, underline a serious misalignment of U.S. government program objectives with domestically oriented agency missions, resources, and personnel skills centrally stationed to engage them. The twenty-first century has been markedly different from the preceding century. U.S. foreign policy priorities have shifted from the tactical and overwhelming state-centric security priorities of the Cold War to human-centric initiatives directed at promoting and preserving democratic successes, mediating cultural disputes, relieving humanitarian crises, counterinsurgency, counter corruption, antiterrorism, and preventing the spread of weapons of mass destruction. Accurately, the U.S. ambassador, as the president's personal representative, has been entrusted with the responsibility to resolve increasingly complex, intergovernmental, ethnic, military, and societal challenges of global dimensions.

### **US diplomacy towards the Middle East Roadmap for Peace and Oslo Accords and Annapolis Conference**

The topic of diplomacy in the Arab-Israeli conflict is not new. There is a rich tradition within political science, international relations, and international law that studies both the broader phenomenon of Arab-Israeli diplomacy and the work of the United States. Following the decision by the Bush administration to "relinquish the role of peace processor to others," however, there is widespread recognition both inside the Middle East and internationally of the potential growing importance of the United States in positively shaping the discourse, trends, and outcomes within the Arab-Israeli conflict. The speech by President expressing support for the "establishment of a democratic Palestinian state living side by side in peace and security with the state of Israel," however, is seen as a critical strategic initiative by the United States that could have a very positive and lasting impact within the Arab-Israeli conflict.

This essay analyzes the potential challenges and opportunities for the American strategic initiative to promote the establishment of a new Palestinian state and "the transformation of the entire region by addressing the roots of terrorism" in the Middle East. Drawing on both Israeli and Palestinian perspectives and experiences, it argues that the capacity to achieve the strategic goal of ending suicide bombers and violence, allowing Israel to live securely side by side with a democratic Palestine, and promoting a lasting resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict depends on the extent to which the United States is able to formulate a balanced strategy. The text locates contemporary American diplomacy within the broader context of recent American, Israeli, and Palestinian diplomacy towards the generation of a new Palestinian state living side by side in peace and security with the existing state of Israel. The text concludes with observations on the strategic challenges and opportunities for American diplomacy in a reengagement with the Arab-Israeli conflict at this period of time.

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the key determinants of conflict settlement, using the negotiations that were entered into as points of departure. In particular, we analyze the peace process that resulted in the Israeli-Palestinian Declaration of Principles on September 13, 1993, and the November 2007 summit meeting and negotiations to initially create a Palestinian state. In addition, we posit that conditions in the Middle East have not only limited the feasibility of reaching a comprehensive peace and establishing durable peace but have partially shaped the nature of the agreements themselves. In identifying these endogenous factors, we also endeavor to contribute to the general study of interactions during negotiations between adversaries.

The principal research questions that guide this paper are as follows: 1. What factors have made it possible for parties in conflict to set aside their differences and enter into negotiations about the future of the disputed regions if all parties were initially unwilling to accept 'peaceful divorce'? In answering this question, we specify what the necessary conditions are that can facilitate the willingness to commence and sustain negotiations. In particular, we focus on the relationship between bargaining and exclusion costs on the aggregate objectives of warring parties.

It is well-recognized that the Israel-Palestine conflict represents one of the most intense and protracted disputes the world has seen. In particular, Jerusalem is the main focus of the Arab-Israeli conflict and is at the heart of the problem. The long and difficult peace process has played a positive role in helping both Israeli and Palestinian people of every walk of life to gain their national status.

The meeting of Yitzhak Rabin, chairperson of the Palestine Liberation Organization, and President Arafat in Oslo in August 1993 signaled a breakthrough in Israeli and Arab peace settlement. The PLO accepted the resolution from the United Nations Security Council and recognized the existence of the state of Israel; the Israeli government recognized the PLO as the representative of the Palestinian population. The Declaration of Principles recognized that it is necessary to establish in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip a system of self-governing Palestinian authority that will have legal jurisdiction and operate in the fields of education and culture, health, social welfare, taxation, and tourism. The PLO and Palestinian Authority recognized the existence of the state of Israel and renounced violence and terrorism.

## **Key Players and Stakeholders**

The Arab-Israeli conflict is one of the more central issues in the history of American foreign policy. As a religious, ethnic, and territorial struggle between Zionist Jews and Palestinian Arabs, complicated by the hostility and military intervention of nearly all surrounding Arab states, the conflict is multi-faceted with ramifications extending beyond the physical region. Yet even as developments have called into question the traditional beliefs of American diplomats regarding the conflict and America's proper role in its resolution, there has been no comprehensive overview made of American diplomacy towards the Arab-Israeli conflict either in the twentieth or the twenty-first centuries.

Given such an omission, it is perhaps best to begin by setting the broader historical context. The present conflict has roots deep in history, though the actual crises can be traced to the emergence of nineteenth-century nationalist movements, such as romantic nationalism among the Greeks, as these interests developed at the expense of the multi-ethnic Habsburg and Ottoman Empires. These national movements were given further impetus by the nineteenth-century European publics' optimistic expectations during the various revolts against Ottoman power. The negative setbacks experienced by various peoples at the end of what would become the 'Eastern Question' were taken to be clear indicators that the political status of these downtrodden nationalities was not in line with their instinctual or, more importantly, religious needs.

The key players in American foreign policy making towards the Arab-Israeli conflict are well described in a controversial context. Their approach can be criticized for relying too much on the role of the pro-Israel lobby and not accounting for the American way of conducting foreign policy in the Arab world. Nevertheless, to put the issue in a broad theoretical perspective, it is important to list what is called the "Israel Lobby," or those lobbyists whose duty is to exert substantial influence over American policy in the Middle East, and who might have pernicious effects on U.S. foreign policy and national security. First and foremost, staunch supporters of the Israel lobby congress to support aid to Israel at levels not given to any other state; contribute significant amounts to both Republican and Democratic parties and presidential candidates.

Furthermore, both the Christian right and Evangelical Christians and the American Jewish organizations have considerable mass support and are sophisticated political actors with long-standing ties to Congress and the executive branch. Various organizations are widely known. However, other groups also represent a considerable electorate contingent, thus linking foreign policy concerns with a domestic political base. The Jewish lobby is extremely influential among Democrats, especially in presidential campaigns and several key Senate races. The Christian right supports unabashedly pro-Israel candidates. Finally, arms industry units in many American states have very close ties and often donate political contributions to people who have to solve Israeli and Palestinian problems.

How have American presidents and secretaries of state approached peacemaking in the Arab-Israeli conflict since the end of the Cold War in 1991? Specifically, in the twenty years since the Madrid peace process, how has the United States sought to restore peace in the Middle East? These two questions are the focus of this paper,

which presents a bibliography on American diplomacy and peacemaking in the Arab-Israeli conflict. Using the phrase "Arab-Israeli conflict," the bibliography does not focus only on "the Israeli-Palestinian conflict," but also considers the moves of United States presidents and secretaries of state to bring peace to Israel and the surrounding states: Egypt, Syria, and Lebanon. War and peace in the Middle East may result from many causes, of course, not just from the Arab-Israeli conflict, yet this difficult, bloody, and unresolved conflict is surely a key source of regional instability.

So far, the official role of the United States in the Arab-Israeli peace process emphasizes the need for "direct negotiations" and the principle of "no imposed or premature solutions." The beliefs of presidents and secretaries in the American role, however, are reflected in their decisions to become involved and in their perceptions of when and where civilians should intervene in the peace process. Do the peacemaking decisions of presidents and secretaries follow the beliefs and values of the diplomatic role outlined above? To what extent do they adjust that role in various conflicts, particularly in the Arab-Israeli conflict? And how have these ideas and actions shaped the course of the Arab-Israeli conflict in the past twenty years?

### **Strategic Interests in the Region**

American involvement in the Arab-Israeli conflict began with a humanitarian initiative to prevent a war between newly formed Israel and its Arab neighbors several months after Israel's Declaration of Independence. In the last 75 years, the conflict has encompassed three motion pictures and numerous diplomatic efforts and has significantly affected U.S. presidential administrations. To cut to the chase on the significance of the current study, Israeli-Palestinian peace could not only provide peace dividends to the Arab-Israeli front but could also enhance regional security and significantly reduce U.S. strategic interests and involvement in the broader Middle East. Due to these potential peace dividends, the United States has been involved in Arab-Israeli peace processes and has attempted to facilitate acquiring a final Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement.

The United States is the only superpower to emerge from the Cold War and to assume almost sole responsibility for maintaining and nurturing the new international system. Its global leadership is multifaceted and deals with a broad spectrum of global issues. The twenty-first century presents great opportunities and challenges in terms of international relations and diplomacy. While many have pointed out differences between the international political outlooks of the Clinton and the two Bush presidencies, a hidden thread runs through the Clinton and Bush administrations—the overarching strategic goals laid out in various strategies, as well as by the strategy for the Middle East. These are the protection of critical energy supplies, the forging of the global political economy through which the United States leads and benefits, the containing and defusing of the technological spearhead of the new global economy, and the America-brokered bargain between Israel and the Arab states that underwrites these strategic goals.

This research paper examines American diplomacy toward the Arab-Israeli conflict in the twenty-first century and how it is linked to strategic interests in the region. The approach of the George W. Bush administration toward Palestinian-Israeli peacemaking reflects a profound appreciation for the inherent restrictions that

necessarily apply to American influence on Arab-Israeli peacemaking. Such understanding reflects not only a contrast to the approach of the previous administration but a level of wisdom that squares with the historical record. Successive American governments have sought to mitigate, even reverse, these natural equities. In doing so, they have fought against the political traditions of the Arab world, the nature of the Arab-Israeli conflict, the geostrategic weight of the Arab countries within whose ranks are the principal potential adversaries of the United States, the geographical dimensions of the conflict, and the nature of the United States itself. These U.S. actions have hobbled the United States in the region at the expense of addressing Arab-Israeli issues in consonance with broader American interests and power. In so doing, the great bazaar closed off vital diplomatic and strategic paths.

### **Mediation and Conflict Resolution Efforts**

The U.S. has played a prominent role in the Israeli-Arab and later Israeli-Palestinian peace diplomacy in the past and continues to do so, molding the strategies of the negotiating parties. This paper identifies various American diplomatic strategies and their relevance in the 21st century towards the Israeli-Arab and Israeli-Palestinian negotiations. Can these strategies succeed in achieving peace in the region, and can the U.S. be an even-handed mediator, given its repeatedly pro-Israeli policies? Quite a few peace proposals and neutrality principles have been recommended to the U.S. and other mediating parties by peace researchers and conflict resolution experts. A bird's-eye view of this peace diplomacy has been presented. Also, American and other pre-negotiation, negotiation, and post-negotiation activities and commitments that the parties should observe for the peace plans to succeed have been suggested.

As a result of the conflict, the holdings of the Arab-Israeli conflict and dealing with the problems thereof became increasingly threatening at the end of the second millennium. Before reflecting on the capital aspects of the Arab-Israeli conflict and the international mediation and conflict resolution efforts exerted over the Arab-Israeli conflict, a bird's-eye view of the conflict is presented. Then U.S. diplomacy and its relevance towards the Arab-Israeli conflict are discussed. Additionally, American and other pre-negotiation, negotiation, and post-negotiation activities and commitments that the parties to the negotiations should observe for the peace plans to succeed have been suggested.

The Arab-Israeli conflict is one of the most enduring international conflicts whose resolution has been the goal of numerous American presidents in the past half-century. It is a conflict that enjoys a great deal of international attention and has a dominant presence on the agenda of major world powers. Therefore, nearly every American administration has worked in various forums and bilateral and multilateral negotiations to resolve the conflict. Former presidents made it their policy to make significant strides toward ending the conflict. However, they achieved varying degrees of success. In general, the Arab-Israeli issue has provided American diplomacy with an opportunity to illustrate its role as a mediator par excellence in a high-profile, high-stakes peace process. The United States continues to believe that a two-state solution, where democratic Israel and a contiguous Palestinian state live side by side in peace and security, is vital to the protection of Israel's long-term

security, its Jewish and democratic identity, and the well-being of the Palestinian people.

Since the establishment of the UN in 1945, the Palestine problem, which created the Arab-Israeli conflict, has been on the world agenda for generations. However, the problems of this region affect only a small number of member countries and regions. The Arab-Israeli conflict that began with the creation of the Israeli state in 1948 has spread over fifty years and has joined the Mediterranean with the Indian Ocean. It has also had an impact on not only regional countries but also the superpowers. Although there have been events like wars and the establishment of peace between the two sides in the Arab-Israeli conflict during this period, the conflict – instead of being resolved completely – has continued. In fact, it has developed and spread. Today, new problems have appeared in the form of terrorist organization operations, regional countries becoming dependent on other regional countries, the possibility of turning the conflict into a global conflict, and concerns that it could cause a Cold War. The central question is: Why does the great power approach the Arab-Israeli conflict in a stable way? The Arab-Israeli conflict is no longer a regional problem but a global burden with global consequences that have brought risks. The global nature of conflicts is usually considered to have been triggered by the interconnected economic development of international systems and political evolution. Thus, the rapid developments in the world system – shared in collective securitization projects – prevent local, regional, and problem countries from threatening the business of the big powers. It has been seen that the region persists in conflict with itself in these crises in most.

### **US Diplomacy in the Middle East during the War on Gaza and Lebanon**

The complexities of geopolitical dynamics in the Middle East have often necessitated a multifaceted approach to international relations, particularly evident during periods of heightened conflict. The ongoing unrest in Gaza and Lebanon serves as a critical backdrop for understanding U.S. diplomatic strategies in the region. This essay aims to explore the intricacies of American diplomacy amid the latest escalations, highlighting both the motivations and implications of U.S. actions. By examining the historical context of U.S. involvement, the fluctuating alliances, and the humanitarian considerations that underlie these diplomatic endeavors, a clearer picture emerges of the United States' role as both a mediator and participant in regional conflicts. Ultimately, the analysis will shed light on the significant consequences of these diplomatic efforts, not only for the immediate parties involved but also for broader U.S. interests and global perceptions of American foreign policy in the Middle East.

Over several decades, the United States has been deeply intertwined with the complexities of Middle Eastern geopolitics, navigating the delicate balance between its support for Israel and its relationships with Arab states. The Gaza and Lebanon conflicts, in particular, demonstrate the challenges inherent in US policy, revealing the tensions between American strategic interests and the realities of regional politics. As articulated in recent analyses, the Middle East has been one of the most unstable and unsafe regions in the world for decades, highlighting the persistent volatility that underpins US engagement.

Furthermore, the historical context reveals that American involvement has often been driven by ideological commitments to Israel and pragmatic concerns for regional stability, leading to a cycle of diplomatic initiatives that frequently falter. In this light, understanding the significance of the Gaza and Lebanon conflicts is crucial, as they not only exemplify the broader Arab-Israeli tensions but also reshape the landscape of US diplomatic efforts in a region marked by divergent national aspirations and alliances.

The evolution of U.S. diplomacy in the Middle East has been deeply influenced by the region's complex political landscape, particularly concerning the Arab-Israeli conflict. Since World War II, American policy has oscillated between staunch support for Israel and the necessity to engage Arab states, driven by vital interests in oil resources and geopolitical stability. This intricate balancing act has continued through pivotal conflicts, with U.S. involvement often acting as a catalyst for negotiations. For instance, the historical tensions underlying U.S. diplomacy emerge from a growing recognition of Palestinian national aspirations, which, while acknowledged, often took a backseat to broader strategic interests.

Furthermore, the portrayal of the Arab-Israeli conflict in educational materials has evolved, reflecting shifting narratives in U.S. society and politics, suggesting that the historical context of U.S. engagement is as much about domestic perceptions as it is about international. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for analyzing contemporary U.S. actions in the ongoing conflicts in Gaza and Lebanon.

### **Key events leading to the escalation of tensions in Gaza and Lebanon**

The complex landscape of Gaza and Lebanon has been shaped significantly by a series of critical events that escalated tensions in the region. The capture of Israeli soldiers by Hamas and Hezbollah in mid-2006 marked a pivotal turning point, triggering intense military responses from Israel characterized by extensive operations in both Gaza and Lebanon. This armed escalation was not merely a product of localized conflict, but part of a broader geopolitical struggle that brought into question the efficacy of US diplomacy in the region. As the US administration attempted to impose its vision of stability through military action, it inadvertently created conditions that made peaceful resolutions increasingly elusive. The resultant humanitarian crisis in Gaza and Lebanon further complicated negotiations, illuminating the urgent need for a multifaceted political solution that addresses the nuanced grievances of all stakeholders involved. Thus, these events underscore the critical importance of proactive diplomacy rather than reactive military strategies in achieving long-term peace.

The shifting landscape of Middle Eastern conflicts has substantially influenced U.S. diplomatic strategies, especially during the War on Gaza and Lebanon. Initially, American diplomacy sought to stabilize the region through power politics; however, this approach failed to account for the complex realities on the ground, as noted by the lack of credibility of the Bush administration among regional players. With a transition toward diplomatic engagement, the U.S. attempted to mediate peace while grappling with diminished influence. This inability to forge effective partnerships has led regional actors, such as Saudi Arabia and Turkey, to take the lead in conflict resolution efforts, focusing on negotiation processes tailored to specific interests instead of imposing pre-constructed solutions. Consequently, U.S. involvement

risks becoming increasingly irrelevant, compelling the European Union and other international stakeholders to rethink their roles and strategies amid escalating tensions.

Analysis of diplomatic Initiatives and negotiations undertaken by the US government. The credibility of U.S. diplomatic initiatives in the Middle East has faced persistent challenges, particularly during the recent conflicts in Gaza and Lebanon. Efforts under the Bush administration, which oscillated between power politics and diplomatic outreach, ultimately faltered due to a lack of regional acceptance and effective solutions, as highlighted in the analysis that the administration's weakened credibility precluded it from being viewed as a serious negotiating partner. Despite good intentions, U.S.-mediated initiatives tended to overlook the complex political realities and stakeholders involved, leading to a diplomatic vacuum that regional actors have increasingly filled. Conversely, the European Union has stepped up its role, particularly through initiatives like the EU3's negotiations with Iran and its leadership in reinforcing UN peacekeeping efforts in Lebanon. These actions raise critical questions about the future efficacy and relevance of U.S. diplomacy in a region where local contexts and interests increasingly dictate the negotiation landscape.

The credibility of US diplomatic initiatives in the Middle East has faced ongoing challenges, particularly during the recent conflicts in Gaza and Lebanon. The Biden administration's efforts, which have oscillated between power politics and diplomatic outreach, ultimately foundered on a lack of regional buy-in and effective solutions, and analysis has highlighted that the administration's weakened credibility has prevented it from being seen as a serious negotiating partner. Despite their intentions, US-brokered initiatives have tended to ignore complex political realities and stakeholders, creating a diplomatic vacuum that has increasingly been filled by regional actors. By contrast, the EU has strengthened its role, notably through initiatives such as the three-nation negotiations with Iran and its leadership in bolstering UN peacekeeping efforts in Lebanon. These actions raise important questions about the future effectiveness of US diplomacy and its relevance in a region where local contexts and interests increasingly dictate the negotiating landscape. The current conflict between Lebanon and Gaza with Israel is likely to expand. However, what many do not disagree on is that Iran did not suffice with the narrative of "strategic silence" this time, but rather carried out its threat to respond and that the response was complex geographically, as some of its details were shared by parties other than Iran, and militarily in terms of the weapons used, and that it was the first time that Tehran had officially and publicly targeted the depth of "Israeli" territory, and not through parties or arms affiliated with it and that the response was specific and limited in light of the latter's efforts not to cause a major escalation, or the outbreak of a large-scale war that might put it in confrontation with the United States of America, and not just the occupying state.

US administration overlooked the underlying political realities often weakening its credibility among regional players, rendering its diplomatic initiatives ineffective. As the diplomatic vacuum grew, regional powers such as Saudi Arabia and Turkey began to assert themselves, emphasizing a more nuanced negotiation process that considered local dynamics without imposing pre-defined solutions. This signifies a pivotal shift in diplomatic engagement, suggesting that the US's previous approach

may have become obsolete in the face of evolving regional politics. Ultimately, the implications for future US engagement in the Middle East call for a reevaluation of strategies to incorporate a more flexible and context-sensitive framework that resonates with the realities on the ground.

### **Main Obstacles to Peace and Conflict Resolution and American Diplomacy**

The problem of peacemaking and conflict resolution is considered one of the most important but difficult tasks in international relations. It is important because of the benefits that countries may have if they live in peace. Peace brings opportunities for improving the living conditions of people and nations, and it allows for more effective working of international mechanisms of cooperation, leading to a more stable world order as well. But by the same token, successful peacemaking represents the most challenging process in international negotiations. Obstacles to peacemaking between conflicting parties are numerous and difficult to overcome. They may be internal or external, real or perceived, and they may also be psychological or political, or result from the complexity and long duration of conflicts.

The problem of obstacles to peace and conflict resolution is of great interest if we are considering the Arab-Israeli conflict. For the last fifty years, many efforts have been made to settle the conflict, and little has been achieved. There have been many plans and peace initiatives; each has been repeatedly rejected or appeared to be fruitless. This high level of difficulty may explain why so many works are dedicated to analyzing the peace process and the obstacles to it. So why efforts to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict continuously are hindered? What are the main internal or external, real or perceived obstacles that make it so difficult to achieve lasting peace?

### **Strategic Hedging in US-Iranian Diplomacy in the Middle East**

Relations between the United States and Iran since the Iranian Revolution of 1978-79 have been primarily adversarial, essentially characterized by an almost total lack of government-level diplomatic communication for the two decades from April 7, 1980. Since the late 1990s, these relations began to be characterized by some cautious external diplomatic communication at various times, but they essentially continued to be largely adversarial. In turn, this state of affairs has created an acute need to identify the mutual willingness to communicate more openly, to understand the aspirations of one another, and to take at least symbolic steps to move their relationship in a different direction. This need is made more pressing as Iran possesses substantial bottled-up potential, especially at times when Persian Gulf Muslim Arab populations and governments are particularly attuned to Pan-Islamic, rather than Pan-Arab, orientations, and have shown an increasing tendency to unite in protest against military conflicts and the excessive suffering of the Palestinians.

Iran thus sees itself as a significant international power, with a rich pre-Islamic heritage, a rich Islamic heritage, substantial contributions to Persian ate, Cold War, and United Nations diplomacy, the increasing human, technological, and financial resources of a rapidly developing society, possession of some abundant nonrenewable resources, and inheritance in a significantly strategic location bridging the Islamic and Arab worlds. Given the complexity raised by Iran's combination of

nonrenewable resources, hereditary ruler ship, rapid modernization, regional leadership, and international quests, the basic question raised is one of identifying ways for adversaries to construct peaceful and constructive parameters of interaction. To address this constituted question in this particular realm, that of non-military engagements, a strategy is proposed in the context of US-Iranian diplomacy that emulates the concept of strategic hedging. Specifically, systematic strategic hedging modifies the equilibrium of a strategic situation to prevent things from going definitively and severely wrong and to drive forces of mutual competition into constructive directions.

### **Definition and Concept of Strategic Hedging**

Recently, countries have begun to resort to the hedging strategy in their international relations to achieve their national interests, implement their goals and foreign policy, and maintain their sovereignty and national security by following several methods such as alliance with major countries, soft or hard balance, cooperation, conflict, or neutrality.

Looking at the theory of strategic hedging in-depth, we see that despite its modernity in the international arena, hedging as a behavior can be compared to the policy of appeasement followed by Britain and France in confronting Germany before World War II. The policy of appeasement aims to calm down when there is no alternative or other option and to make political and material concessions to avoid conflict and prevent wars, which leads to weakening the power of countries in exchange for the increasing power of the country being appeased. The most famous theorists of the theory of strategic hedging are (Ivan S. Medeiros) (Vojtek M. Wolf) (Mohammed Salman) (and Brock Tasman).

Theorists have described the hedging theory as a combination of cooperation and conflict. The hedging state may cooperate with the state that poses a threat to its national security, to avoid getting involved in conflicts of unequal power (soft balance), but at the same time, it works to confront the threatening states through alliances with regional and international parties and with powers competing with the threatening states. At the same time, the hedging states seek to employ their capabilities in economic, social, and political cooperation with the threatening states.

Some thinkers believe that the hedging strategy is a mediator between balance and neutrality. Neutrality obliges states not to interfere in any conflict, and to adhere to a single position towards the parties to the conflict in general. In the case of hedging, states may work to cooperate with allies against the threatening states. An example of this is what Asian states are doing towards both the United States and China, and the policy followed by the United States in its dealings with China.

The Gulf States have adopted a policy of strategic hedging in their relationship with Iran, and at the same time they do not stop their continuous attempts to develop their strength, which reduces the possibility of a conflict or direct confrontation with it for some time, and the matter is not without establishing alliances and cooperative relations with the American side.

To interpret the behavior of states in general as hedging, some conditions and criteria must be met, the most important of which is the development of states' military

capabilities seriously for fear of the outbreak of an armed conflict with the threatened states, or relying on their capabilities and trying to limit the assistance provided by the threatening state to them, in addition to forming regional and international alliances and avoiding falling into direct clashes with the threatening state, which is called the external balance of power, in addition to supporting defense industries and military spending within sound and organized planning, otherwise it will negatively affect the states and create adverse results.

For example, opinions differ on how the United States should deal with China. Some believe that the best way is to adopt a hedging policy towards China by continuously engaging it in trade relations and finding common interests between them, while others believe that China still has a long way to go before it becomes a country that poses such a troubling threat.

The relationship between China and the United States is characterized by continuous competition, as both use a hedging policy in their relationship with each other in anticipation of a confrontation that they can do without due to any potential impact on their economic benefits. Since the rise of China and the United States, they have been trying to integrate it into free trade and manufacturing avoid direct clashes with it, and resort to direct understandings in addition to clashes, fearing a threat to the United States' global position. The matter is not without American attempts to use a policy of gradual slowdown and obstruction of China's economic rise by increasing customs tariffs on Chinese imports and the sanctions it imposes on the technology sector and igniting the spark of a trade war from time to time.

China hedges by increasing countries' economic dependence on it and strengthening the modern technology sector, especially the semiconductor and artificial intelligence industries. China always threatens the United States and others by establishing alliances with Asia-Pacific countries in response to any threat to their security in the Taiwan Strait. Small countries' adoption of a strategic hedging strategy mitigates the threats affecting their national security, independence, and sovereignty, and allows them to enhance their capabilities at the economic level through various cooperative relations. As for major countries, the hedging policy avoids wars, clashes, and confrontations for a long period, which contributes to reaching a state of stability, but it is relative and depends on the extent of the possibility of enhancing their military capabilities, which takes us back to the arms race before the two world wars, and igniting the spark of wars again.

The meaning of hedging qualities in international relations and security studies is clear if we understand the above description of hedging. If people (countries) take part in a contest with the hope of winning easily, with the expectation that the prize would be collaboration at no cost, how could anyone take seriously their pledges of not bringing their negative foreign policy tools to intoxicate the harmony, peace, and good feeling? The way people show their commitment to their words is by capitalizing on the peace dividends associated with their ostensible commitments to refrain from causing harm. They demonstrate their readiness to bear the associated costs and act in a way that alters the strategic interaction. In this sense, repaying trust and caring for the well-being of others overall become far less interesting than the returns from bringing the negative foreign policy tools into play. To justify the added costs of writing trust and caring for others into their interests, people would therefore

take seriously only people's actions of hedging against the risk of political instability and physically and financially bearing the burdens of peace enforcement.

Many studies of US-Iranian relations center on one or more of the negative aspects of a relationship that is in serious trouble and has been heading for trouble for much of the Islamic Republic's life. Indeed, the fact that the United States has two such dissimilar adversaries in Iran and Iraq, and the 10-year Iraq-Iran war probably made it possible for many Americans to ignore that fact. There are also many reasons that observers, especially American observers, would focus on the negative aspects of the relationship.

First, the severing of diplomatic relations, 444 days of hostage-taking, numerous mutual denunciations and tension, a bloody and destructive war in which obstructionist members of the administrations talked openly about the desirability of a long war, destruction of the US embassy in Beirut, armed clashes at sea in the Arabian Gulf can hardly be taken to indicate a healthy relationship.

Second, it is customary and conventional to focus on conflict, especially in political science, which has largely ceded economics to economists, and in policy discussions, where diagnosing difficulties aids in deciding how to respond to them. Optimism about economic and social relationships can translate into support for economic and social policies conducive to trade, investment, exchanges, and understanding. In international relations, it is associated with defense contracts.

Third, it is a significant conflict. Americans are only dimly aware of the Iran-Iraq war and the tank war that raged. The capacity and willingness of each to cause trouble outweighs those of other adversaries, such as Israel or Iran's neighbors to the northwest, the Americans whom Iranians refer to darkly are perceived by Iran's political elite as close, dangerous trouble. And Americans reciprocate.

US relations with Iran have often been dominated by perceptions of threats and actions that reflect these concerns. Iran sees the United States as an enemy that has often used its dominant military and political position in the Middle East region to try to dominate Iran in a bid to exploit Iran's oil and maintain corrupt, pro-American regimes. US policymakers have often viewed Iran as aggressive and expansionist and used this perception to justify alliances with non-democratic, corrupt regimes that are dominated by a single family at the expense of long-term reform of the institutions that could legitimize their power. Since the revolution that overthrew the Shah in 1979, the US government has struggled to determine which policy of engagement or ostracism will be most effective in achieving Iranian compliance with US and international policy in the Middle East. In the last two, US diplomacy attempted to build Iranian power as a regional hedge against the rising power in the Middle East. These efforts were rebuffed by Iran as ineffective and not serious. The Shah, however, was willing to put bridges and roads into Iraq in an attempt to integrate regional states into the Iranian orbit as well as the other states in the region as well. US relations with Iraq also played a part in America's attempts to determine the limits of Iranian expansionism. Post-Shah efforts to restrain Iran have varied from in-flight refueling during an arms sales embargo to threats to use force against Iran to stop it from interfering in the internal conflicts of other regional states. Detente, rising tensions, and the security benefits of regional cooperation with Iran are key parts of US policies toward the Islamic Republic. American policy on Iran

also contains a contradiction in the role it hopes Iran will play in the Middle East. On the one hand, Iran is approached as the most influential and potentially stabilizing regional power, the best hope for long-term understanding and equilibrium in a region with a high degree of power diffusion. On the other hand, Iran is viewed with suspicion as a hegemonic power that poses a threat to itself and its neighbors; as a dangerous adversary that supports causes that run counter to US national security interests.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The United States of America has had an important role in influencing the Arab-Israeli conflict for the past fifty years. Armed with its superior military forces, the U.S. intervened in the region as a peace facilitator after the cessation of military hostilities by the Damascus declaration. When no violence erupts in the region, there will be conversations between the involved parties. Compared to the era of Presidents Dwight Eisenhower and Gerald Ford, the role of the United States was not distinct from the period Eisenhower formulated the Eisenhower Doctrine on war-torn Syria and Lebanon. Diplomacy was seen as a messy, unpleasant tool of the weak. The realm of U.S.-Arab diplomacy toward the Arab-Israeli conflict was reserved mainly for the superpowers who convened two conferences at the end of the 1948 hostilities, and thereafter, spent most of their effort supplying the local arms industry with the means for fighting and concluding the conflicts.

The motives behind the United States interventions in the Arab-Israeli disputes should be understood in broader terms than solely the nature of the Arab-Israeli dispute and the physical interests that might be ascribed to the antagonists. The diplomatic techniques regarding the specific objectives of the U.S. presidents involved in the resolution efforts were a response to expectations, ambitions, and needs beyond the domestic intent. Domestic and international pressures were considered by decision-makers to be more potent than useful during the crisis. Afterward, the United States' reputation would suffer a diplomatic failure if progress was not attempted. Besides the United States security stake in the region, the roles of this country stemmed from other significant national concerns; paradoxically, the interest of the actors in finding a solution to the problems was overshadowed by the needs of the United States. This paper has examined the United States' role in the Arab-Israeli conflict and revisited the question of motive, scope, and techniques of the mediation. The intention is to illuminate the degree of attachment between the mediations of influence and the real stakes at play, as well as to spotlight the pitfalls of this procedural doctrine. Hence, this piece will have to straddle the minefields of historical documentation and public choice.

Palestine and Israel, or historically, Palestine and the Arab states and Israel, have been in dispute for a hundred years. The American connection goes back to the early part of the twentieth century and the Christian Zionist settlers, who began to move into the region as Jewish settlements. The League of Nations Mandate, granted to the United Kingdom, required the mandatory power to encourage "close settlement by Jews," a provision incorporated in the British Mandates for Palestine. The British government sought to implement the mandate against the wishes of the indigenous Arab population, who fought against the Zionist settlements from 1920, thus placing the implementation of the Mandate into a political minefield.

U.S. Secretary of State George C. Marshall was to complain that the United States had been in near-continuous trouble over the Middle East since the end of the First World War due to the British government's Zionist commitments, giving rise to the largely increased friction between Arabs and Jews living in the area. Britain was subject to repeated outbreaks of fighting, all of which had implications for the wider region and British attempts to establish peace and development, a constant drain on British resources that ultimately undermined the British Empire itself. Nor was overt warfare the only issue. It was the Sykes-Picot Agreement, secretly carved up behind the backs of their Arab allies that first introduced the Western domination of the Middle East to the Arab world. In this view, the arbitrary division of the region into states cobbled together from ill-matched ethnic communities exacerbated their differences through a mission civilisatrice, determined to ensure that its oil revenue continued to flow to Britain and France while fending off further challenges in the region.

In this paper, we tried our best to examine the prospects for the U.S. role in national conflict resolution in the Middle East, particularly the Arab-Israeli conflict. The analyses which had been discussed earlier also compare and contrast the roles of U.S. diplomacy intermediation experiences in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process with its mediatory efforts in the wider Middle East high-stakes conflict. The term conflict resolution is a simple concept, with complex, difficult, and varied real-world political applications. Conflict resolution procedures generally look beyond simple curtailment of violent responses to pursuing constructive, mutually acceptable, long-term accommodations that significantly alter the political and social structure of a given conflict. The idea of conflict growth containment and reduction is considered a major contributor to social change. Societal reform, therefore, falls within the larger rubric of successful conflict resolution institutions.

The term itself has long been employed by the U.S. government to denote the broad range of activities necessary to restore peaceful coexistence to a troubled area. Conflict resolution efforts focus on the search. Conflict resolution is often based on three somewhat overlapping premises: international and intra-state conflict problems cannot be solved by military means alone, but demand skilled political, diplomatic, and humanitarian interventions; third-party negotiation is beneficial, and at times, indispensable in coercing the parties to a conflict to establish dialogue, and at times, enforce through power, limited agreements; and conflict resolution goals are usually implemented piecemeal, through complex packages that are premised by aggressors and victims alike. The broader goal of combining regressive, human interest, and development perspectives into large-scale political-social action is often congruent with many of the social and economic dimensions of national conflict growth containment and reduction.

For the U.S., peace in the Middle East is a long-existing objective that must not be further neglected. The U.S. has a crucial role in preventing war and in deepening mutual understanding. It is time now for the U.S. to act in defense of its interests in the preservation of peace by bringing about a settlement that offers opportunities for cooperation. The U.S. must lessen its dependence on arms sales and assume its rightful role as a peacemaker in that difficult part of the world. U.S. diplomacy can break the political deadlock, which in turn encourages compromise on the substantive issues of the dispute. The U.S. can more actively engage the parties for

their visions of regional security, thus providing a unifying framework for peace. The U.S. needs to show that it is prepared to serve that role and to give momentum to this concept. Preoccupation with the military aspects of the conflict unduly limits the flexibility in American diplomacy necessary to contain flare-ups in the area and to influence the conflict towards progress.

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