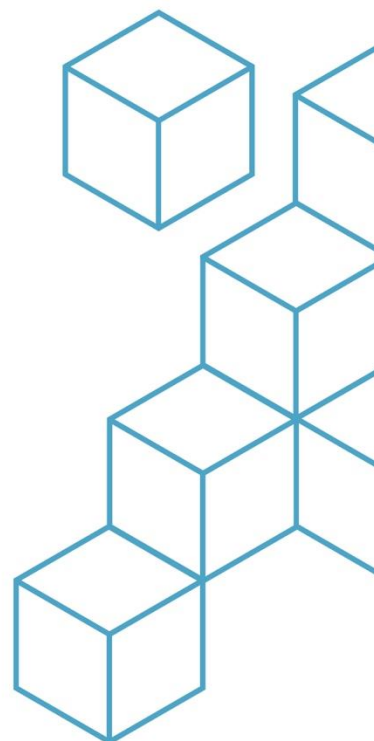


## ANALYSES

# Navigating Crisis: Why the US Is Fuelling Global Violence

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By prioritising force as its primary ingredient, the US has, in many ways, drifted from the ideal balance of values that once defined its approach to global leadership. [Reuters]

The Middle East had entered a relatively peaceful phase after the Arab Spring with the Eastern Mediterranean mediation [\(1\)](#) among Türkiye, Egypt, Israel and improved Saudi-Iranian normalisation facilitated by Chinese diplomacy, and Abraham Accords, [\(2\)](#) identified as Arab-Israel normalisation, strategically located at the IMEC (India Middle East Corridor) in global trade route, and at the expense of the Palestinian cause. This fragile stability was shattered on 7 October 2023, with a resurgence of violence at unprecedented levels. When the world turned its eyes to the United States, the power capable of preventing this escalation, the "world's hegemon power" responded to the crisis dismally, in a way that eradicated all values and principles of humanity.

Historically an ideological power, the US has actively positioned herself to represent the liberal values and ideology in world politics, striving to advance human rights and democracy through global interventions. This was conceptualised as the "end of history" [\(3\)](#), promoting the American Dream globally after the dissolution of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. However, it has become apparent that this is not the case. Today, US foreign policy demonstrates that might makes right, revealing nothing more than a ruthless power struggle and using force in the international arena driven by the US. The only ideological stance of the US being addressed today, especially in relation to Christian Zionism, is Evangelical influence, and capitalist economic and defence industry interest groups.

In contrast, the first insight from political philosophers Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri in their pivotal work on hegemonic power, *Empire*, is that "Empire is formed not on the basis of force itself but on the capacity to present force as being in the service of right and peace." Therefore, "Empire is formed and its intervention becomes juridically legitimate only when it is already inserted into the chain of international consensus aimed at resolving existing conflicts". [\(4\)](#) This suggests that when an empire applies force, it must do so in response to a crisis legitimised by universal values. However, in the context of the Israel-Palestine conflict, such legitimacy is not only absent, but the actions taken often exacerbate the conflict and undermine these universal values.

Contemporary developments in US domestic politics further complicate this picture. Even during the election process, presidential election candidates Kamala Harris and Donald Trump appear to compete over how far they can militarise support for Israel, effectively side-lining human rights and liberal discourse in global politics, which raises questions about the future of the world order.

## US hegemony in crisis: The total shift to military dominance

While the US remains a key architect of the world order, it increasingly views global developments through a military lens. American grand strategy, viewed through the old-school lens of Prussian military theorist Carl von Clausewitz, (5) is rooted in state capacity and war-driven objectives. Facing economic competition from China, the US has doubled down on military power to protect the dollar's role as the global reserve currency, (6) making coercion a central element of its foreign policy.

In a restructured perspective to grand strategy, American historian Williamson Murray et al. liken it to a French peasant soup—a blend of ingredients added over time, with no set recipe to follow. (7) This analogy can also be extended to Noah's pudding (known in Türkiye as aşure), a multicultural dish shared by Christians, Jews and Muslims, which incorporates an eclectic mix of nuts, salt, spices and sugar. Despite its diverse ingredients, aşure's dominant flavour is sweet. This analogy reflects the essential need for hegemonic powers to balance multicultural and multi-ethnic and religious diverse societies, aiming to cultivate universal values within the global system.

In contrast, American grand strategy, which has long placed an overwhelming emphasis on military might, no longer carries that inclusiveness and sweetness. Instead, it now leaves a bitter taste in the global landscape. By prioritising force as its primary ingredient, the US has, in many ways, drifted from the ideal balance of values that once defined its approach to global leadership.

Former Clinton administration official Joseph Nye's emphasis on soft power (8) and late American diplomat and academic Charles Hill's insights on history and diplomacy (9) no longer play a role in US foreign policy, which now focuses on aggressive measures to maintain hegemony against non-Western powers and dictate the policies of American allies particularly European powers. American grand strategy has shifted from building a global order to merely confronting adversaries. US military spending, already the world's highest, rose from \$633 billion in 2015 to \$876 billion in 2021, (10) highlighting the increasing emphasis on military dominance.

The US has been a significant international donor, with military representing the significant portion of it. (11) US foreign military aid has been mostly over \$10 billion. The US has provided approximately \$3.3 billion of aid to Israel every year since the 1980s, (12) focused mostly on military aid. After 7 October, this trend of military assistance escalated despite the international outcry opposing the genocide. Earlier this year, the US allocated an extra \$20 billion military deal to Israel, (13) ignoring international opposition and more importantly, the International Court of Justice's opinion (14) and the statement of the International Criminal Court's prosecutor, Karim Khan. (15)

The US now disregards the very rules of the system it helped create, particularly in international law. This shift was highlighted by academics, experts and lawyers at a recent conference titled, "Rethinking International Law after Gaza", (16) held at Boğaziçi University in Istanbul. Consequently, international law and multilateral organisations play little role in balancing the ruthless actions of the US and its ally, Israel, in the face of such human tragedy and crimes against humanity, especially given the asymmetric power dynamics on the ground.

## Discontent with American hegemony

The US's aggressive policies have intensified global criticism, fuelling discontent and the rise of challengers to its hegemony. This backlash is worsened by Israel's brutal actions in the Middle East, the genocide of Palestinians in Gaza and Washington's unwavering support.

Palestine is one of the key issues for the Islamic world, central to the creation of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in 1969, following Israeli attacks on Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem. While the OIC or the Islamic countries have yet to deliver a unified or expected type of state-level response, public opposition to US dominance is growing and becoming deeper due to its role in the Israel-Palestine conflict and its broader actions in the Muslim world.

Beyond the criticism from the Muslim public, the most significant challengers to US global hegemony are Russia and China, both contesting control over energy resources and supply chains individually. As permanent members of the UN Security Council, both nations wield considerable influence, yet they often find themselves in a power struggle rather than advocating for new values or an alternative global system that includes voices of non-security council members. This rivalry complicates existing problems and distracts from the urgent need for a cohesive, values-based international order capable of addressing pressing global issues such as climate change, inequality and humanitarian crises. The absence of collaborative frameworks prevents efforts to forge meaningful solutions, leaving the world increasingly fragmented and vulnerable to conflict.

In an effort to counter these rivals, the US and its allies introduced an alternative to China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) at the G20 summit in New Delhi in September 2023. This project, known as the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC), [\(17\)](#) aims to connect India to the Gulf and Europe, providing an alternative supply route to China's BRI and energy sources outside of Russia. IMEC's core ambition is to shift reliance away from China for supply chains and from Russia for energy, reinforcing the US's position and securing Europe's alignment with the West.

When IMEC was announced, Arab-Israeli normalisation had already progressed, raising expectations for concrete steps regarding railway financing, such as the Tracks for Regional Peace initiative of 2017, which aimed to link Israel, Jordan and Saudi Arabia via the ports of Haifa and Ashdod to Saudi ports. [\(18\)](#) However, these hopes were dashed after 7 October.

Türkiye is playing a pivotal role in proposing an alternative route from the Gulf through Iraq to Türkiye and onward to Europe. Türkiye and Iraq have initiated high-level diplomatic meetings and announced projects related to the IMEC. [\(19\)](#) Historically, this route was crucial for the British Empire during the Ottoman era, facilitating access to its Indian colony. It is important to emphasise that Türkiye has the most secure and well-developed infrastructure in the region, serving as a gateway to Europe through railways, roads and ports. However, the security situation in Iraq remains a significant concern for this initiative. Thus, the main question is centred around ensuring Iraqi security and rebuilding the country to support this project, which could be more feasible compared to the high costs and political burdens associated with Gulf ports to Israel, traversing challenging desert routes.

Additionally, it is important to interpret that, to safeguard the IMEC project, the US is backing Israel's escalating military activities in the region, leveraging force and fear to protect its strategic interests and assert dominance. While speaking to Israeli President Isaac Herzog in 2022, US President Joe Biden said, "if there were not an Israel, we'd have to invent one." He had made the same statement back in 1986 to approve a \$3 billion investment to Israel which he identified as "invent[ing] an Israel to protect US interests in the region". [\(20\)](#) A stronger US military presence is expected, particularly as both presidential candidates have pledged unconditional support for Israel.

## The necessity of a new world order

While the International Court of Justice has repeatedly ruled that Israel's occupation of Palestinian territories violates international law, [\(21\)](#) Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu continues to receive standing ovation from US lawmakers despite war crimes in Gaza. [\(22\)](#) In another escalation, Israel directly attacked sovereign territory, assassinating Ismail Haniyeh, Chairman of Hamas's Political Bureau.

Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan condemned the assassination, stating that "Israel killed prospects of peace by killing Haniyeh." [\(23\)](#) These blatant violations of international law, and the US's steadfast support of Israel despite clear ICJ opposition, reveal a disturbing reality: national interests and power politics have overtaken any respect for international norms and law.

Instead of asking why the US hasn't pursued peaceful policies, the real question is: why is it fuelling violence in the Middle East? The answer lies in America's grand strategy, which increasingly prioritises coercion over diplomacy.

The US seems focused on maintaining its hegemony through force, violence and fear, aiming to prevent any challenges to its dominance. This approach has historical precedents and current potential challenges in the region, including regional leadership contests like Egypt under Nasser, King Saud's oil embargo, diplomatic efforts such as the OIC, Iran's influence and proxies, and the potential for Arab and Muslim unity against American hegemony and Israel as a regional ally. While, in contrast to historical challenges, today, there may not be significant state or multilateral reactions against the US, we are witnessing a rising public outcry against these unjust policies. This sentiment is expressed not only by Muslim communities but also by individuals and people around the globe, with demonstrations and protests highlighting a call for a peace and universal values to protect Palestinians.

The world urgently needs a new grand strategy, particularly as multilateral institutions hold greater potential to provide effective frameworks for conflict resolution in an anarchic global system. While the US has maintained dominance without significant competition in the Western Hemisphere, as noted by American international relations theorist John Mearsheimer, (24) it seeks to prevent any regional powers from emerging in Europe, East Asia, the Middle East and Africa to sustain its global hegemony. This approach reveals significant challenges, including political imbalances, security threats and economic and humanitarian crises in all regions. Emerging powers challenge American hegemony not through collaboration or initiating a paradigmatic shift, but through power struggles. Rather than promoting shared values, these nations highlight the complications that arise when the US resorts to increasing force, further complicating the landscape for the global community.

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