

The Zionist Regime and the Challenges Facing the Liberal School in International Relations: Strategic Imperatives for the Islamic Republic of Iran

Seyed Mahdi Alizadeh Mousavi 

Assistant Professor, University of Religions and Denominations, Qom, Iran.
sma.moosavi@urd.ac.ir



Abstract

The conduct of the Zionist regime over the past two years—culminating in its attack on the Islamic Republic of Iran between June 12 and June 23, 2024—can be regarded as a major challenge to the liberal school of thought in the field of international relations. Despite the regime’s discursive self-presentation as committed to the principles of institutional liberalism, the available evidence and data clearly demonstrate that it not only lacks genuine adherence to the foundations of liberalism but, in practice, operates according to the logic of classical realism. On the other hand, the international institutions and organizations that emerged from the paradigm of institutional liberalism have not only failed to contain the crises precipitated by the Zionist regime’s actions but have, through their demonstrated ineffectiveness, actually reinforced an instrumentalist perception of these bodies. This view holds that such organizations ultimately serve the interests of the core powers—in Wallerstein’s terminology—and, in particular, those of the Zionist regime itself. This study, by focusing on the foundational principles of liberalism and realism in international relations and comparing them with the actual conduct of the Zionist regime over the past two years, concludes that liberalism in international relations has effectively lost its efficacy. In practice, the Zionist regime, the United States, and Western governments follow the logic of realism, while employing liberal discourse merely as a su Wallerstein perfunctory legitimizing tool and a means of deceiving Third World countries. Consequently, one can distinguish between two distinct types of policy pursued by major powers: a declared policy grounded in a liberal approach and an operational policy rooted in classical realism. In such circumstances, and in accordance with the principles and teachings of the Quran, the strategic posture of the Islamic Republic of Iran must be organized around the maximum strengthening of national power. The fundamental difference between the Western (and Zionist) realist conception of power and the concept

Cite this article: Alizadeh Mousavi, S.M. (2025). The Zionist Regime and the Challenges Facing the Liberal School in International Relations: Strategic Imperatives for the Islamic Republic of Iran. *Islamic Political Studies*, 7(2), pp. 247-269. <https://doi.org/10.22081/jips.2025.79155>

Received: 2025/03/05 ; **Received in revised form:** 2025/04/08 ; **Accepted:** 2025/05/11 ; **Published online:** 2025/07/10
Article type: Research Article **Publisher:** Islamic Sciences and Culture Academy

©2025/authors retain the copyright and full publishing rights



<http://jips.isca.ac.ir/>

of power in the worldview of the Islamic Republic lies in the following: in the Western approach, power is inherently aggressive and domineering, defined by the objective of domination and subjugation. In Islamic thought, by contrast, maximum power is sought exclusively for the purposes of defense and deterrence. Moreover, from an Islamic perspective, “others” are divided into two categories: opponents and enemies. Opponents are those who do not accept our doctrines and viewpoints yet conduct their interactions on the basis of peaceful coexistence. Far from having cause to fear the power of the Islamic Republic, such opponents should regard it as a source of their own security. Enemies, however, are those who seize every opportunity to inflict harm upon the Islamic community. The only effective means of preventing their aggression is to instill in them a profound dread of superior power.

Keywords

Realism, (institutional) liberalism, Zionist Regime, international relations, international institutions, deterrence.

weak accept what they have to accept” (Thucydides, 1999, p. 321). He believed that states are always seeking to increase their power and safeguard their national interests (ibid.), and since the international system lacks a supranational authority, states are compelled to adopt aggressive behavior toward one another. In such an anarchic environment, security can only be achieved through “power” (Waltz, 2022, p. 67). According to him, fear of others’ power is the primary cause of wars (Herz, 1950, p. 42). In his book *History of the Peloponnesian War*—considered the first written work in the field of international relations—Thucydides laid the intellectual foundations of the realist school and is therefore known as the “father of realism.” Thucydides (c. 460–400 BCE), the Greek historian, wrote after the Peloponnesian War between Athens and Sparta—which lasted more than 27 years—the following: “The strong do what they have the power to do and the weak accept what they have to accept” (Thucydides, 1999, p. 321). He maintained that states are perpetually driven to increase their power and protect their national interests (ibid.), and because the international system lacks any supranational authority, states are inevitably compelled to adopt aggressive postures toward one another. In such an anarchic environment, security can be attained only through “power” (Waltz, 2022, p. 67). In his view, fear of the power of others is the primary cause of wars (Herz, 1950, p. 157). In his *History of the Peloponnesian War*—widely regarded as the first written work in the field of international relations—Thucydides laid the intellectual foundations of the realist school and is therefore known as the “father of realism.” After him, this grim perspective on international relations not only endured but, in subsequent centuries, inspired many of the most influential thinkers in politics and international relations, and it continues to maintain its prominent position among the various schools of thought. Scholars such as Machiavelli (1469–1527), Hobbes (1588–1679), Morgenthau (1904–1980), and Waltz (1924–2013) each contributed to the further development of this theoretical tradition. Overall, it appears that although the realist school has experienced numerous ebbs and flows over the course of centuries and has been articulated by various scholars in forms such as “classical realism,” “structural realism,” “critical realism,” “neorealism,” and others, its core elements—namely the dominance of anarchy in the international arena, the centrality of power, the primacy of fear, and the pursuit of national interest—have been retained in all of its variants. Far from diminishing in relevance in the contemporary era, evidence that will be presented below suggests that the explanatory power of this paradigm has, if

anything, grown stronger (Bull, 2017, pp. 51–150).

In parallel with realism and its various branches, rival schools emerged grounded in the intellectual foundations of the Enlightenment, which regarded the realist outlook as bitter, pessimistic, and dismissive of the inherent goodness of human nature. Although these ideas lack the historical depth of realism, the dominance of the liberal and idealist paradigms in Western thought—paradigms that gained decisive ascendancy from the seventeenth century onward—enabled them to exert profound influence on the course of international relations. This influence was magnified by the fact that their intellectual wellsprings were major thinkers whose theoretical and discursive authority cast a long shadow over Western thought. Locke (1632–1704), Kant (1724–1804), Bentham (1748–1832), Mill (1806–1873), Wilson, Rawls, and others each played a significant role in shaping the liberal and idealist theoretical foundations of international relations. These efforts were undertaken in the hope that such theories could bring about lasting peace based on rationality and mutual respect among nations and states. The First World War (1914–1918) marked a turning point in the evolution of international relations theories. Due to its vast devastation and the immense human toll it exacted, the war was regarded as one of the greatest human tragedies of the early twentieth century. In contrast to Thucydides and his followers—who, in the aftermath of the Peloponnesian War, sought merely to explain the nature of the international arena and prescribe policies accordingly—liberal thinkers after the Great War actively searched for mechanisms capable of preventing the recurrence of such catastrophes on a global scale and of replacing anarchy and insecurity with lasting peace and security for all nations. It appeared that, having witnessed the deaths of millions and the bitter ruins of war, humanity had finally reached a stage where, drawing lessons from these harrowing experiences, it could chart a brighter future for itself. To achieve this goal, two parallel tracks were pursued simultaneously: on the theoretical front, an idealist, peace-oriented, and human-rights-centered literature was developed; on the institutional front, major international organizations were established, including the League of Nations (1919)—later transformed into the United Nations—the Permanent Court of International Justice, tribunals for war crimes, human rights organizations, economic, political, and cultural alliances, and similar entities.

Yet the Second World War (1939–1945) demonstrated that efforts to achieve global peace—whether through idealist and liberal theories on one hand or international institution-building on the other—had ultimately failed.

Explaining precisely why these initiatives could not prevent a cataclysmic war that claimed more than 50 million lives would require separate research; however, from the perspective of the present study, one of the most critical reasons was the major powers' own lack of genuine commitment to their proclaimed idealist and liberal principles. A telling example is the United States itself, which had originally proposed the League of Nations yet never joined it, because the U.S. Senate refused to ratify membership. Republicans argued that joining the League would infringe upon Congress's sovereign authority to declare war (Lodge, 1925, p. 123). What made the postwar environment particularly challenging was the fact that liberal and idealist theories had spent several centuries attempting to challenge realist schools and establish themselves as the dominant paradigm in international affairs—yet those efforts had now manifestly failed. Even if the founders of these doctrines had acted with benevolent intent, they had overlooked a fundamental truth: before promulgating any idealist framework, the expansionist and domineering impulses of the great powers must first be restrained. As will be shown below, in the absence of such restraint, ostensibly peace-oriented, human-rights-based, ethics-centered, and justice-seeking theories and institutions inevitably become mere instruments in the hands of the powerful for advancing their own interests. This danger was especially acute after the Second World War, when the two uncontested superpowers of the era—the Soviet Union and the United States—arrayed themselves against each other and launched the Cold War (1947–1991) with full intensity. Under these circumstances, the realist school—particularly in its classical variant—once again flared into prominence and reestablished itself as the prevailing paradigm among international relations theories. Hans Morgenthau and Kenneth Waltz emerged as the leading figures in the revival of realism, albeit in a somewhat moderated form. Morgenthau, through his famous six principles, effectively demonstrated that power remains the central variable in international relations and that anarchy continues to dominate the global arena. He argued that political ethics differ fundamentally from personal ethics and that human nature is essentially unchanged from what earlier realist thinkers had described.¹Of course, liberal perspectives continued to emerge and gain traction. For instance, the theory of complex interdependence, advanced by Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye, contended that the mutual dependence of states renders war economically and politically unprofitable for all

1. For further insight into Morgenthau's views, see: Morgenthau (1999); for Waltz, see: Waltz (2022).

parties involved.¹

3. The Zionist Regime and Its Declared Policy: Liberalism

Theodor Herzl (1860–1904)—the founder of the Zionist movement—stated years before the establishment of the artificial state of Israel: “Our aim is to create a modern and peace-loving country; a place where individual liberty, civil equality, and shared progress will be guaranteed. A Jewish state not against others, but alongside other nations” (Herzl, 1896, as cited in Block & Futterman, 2021, p. 75). The regime’s Declaration of Independence similarly proclaims: “The State of Israel... will be based on freedom, justice and peace as envisaged by the prophets of Israel.”² Furthermore, in 1949, in its official letter applying for United Nations membership, the Zionist regime declared: “Israel is committed to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, to international cooperation, and to respect for human rights. Our government will strive for world peace and security.”³ Ben-Gurion (1886–1973), the primary founder of the artificial state of Israel and its first prime minister, similarly stated at the Geneva Peace Conference: “Israel desires lasting peace in the Middle East and is prepared to cooperate with its neighbours within the framework of the United Nations Charter.”⁴ Moreover, in 1969, Israel wrote in an official letter to the United Nations concerning human rights: “We are committed to the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and have made them the foundation of our domestic and foreign policy.”⁵ Shimon Peres (1923–2016)—the eighth prime minister and ninth president of the Zionist regime—declared in his address to the United Nations General Assembly in 1987: “Israel, as a vibrant democracy, is committed to the values of freedom, equality, and international cooperation.”⁶ In the Oslo Accords (1993)—in which the Palestinians accepted even their most minimal rights, while the Zionist regime violated every provision of the agreement—the

1. For an introduction to Nye and Keohane’s views on “complex interdependence” and the role of institutions in international relations, see: Keohane & Nye (2021).

2. Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel, 14 May 1948, Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs Archive.

3. Application of Israel for admission to membership in the United Nations, UN Doc. A/818, 29 January 1949, United Nations Digital Library.

4. Geneva Peace Conference Archives, 1950, Israeli Delegation Records.

5. Letter from the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations, 4 November 1969, UN Doc. A/7790.

6. Address by Shimon Peres, Prime Minister of Israel, to the 42nd Session of the United Nations General Assembly, 21 October 1987, UN General Assembly Records.

Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs declared on the occasion of the signing: “The Oslo Agreement constitutes a step toward the realization of peace, regional cooperation, and mutual respect among nations.”¹ Such declarative policies have persisted into the present era, with Netanyahu himself echoing these slogans: “Israel is democratic and Israel will remain a liberal democracy.”² Apart from individual figures, all Israeli parties—ranging from the far right to centrists and secular groups—likewise chant slogans such as “democracy for all,” “legal equality,” and “regional cooperation” during their electoral campaigns in order to garner more votes.³

One point that must not be overlooked is the fact that Western countries and the United States have consistently portrayed Israel as a liberal nation supportive of liberal values. Barack Obama believed: “Israel is not only our ally, but an example of a liberal democracy in a tense region.”⁴ According to Joe Biden: “Israel will remain a liberal democracy.”⁵ Similarly, Emmanuel Macron stated: “France will continue to support Israel as a liberal democracy and a partner in global values.”⁶ Such rhetoric is also evident in the works of numerous liberal authors who have sought to portray Israel as a pioneering liberal state in a turbulent and reactionary region (Oren, 2002; Block, & Futterman, 2021). In light of the foregoing, it appears that, from the perspective of Western thinkers and policymakers, Israel is regarded as the embodiment and representative of Western liberalism in West Asia, and as a beacon of Western civilization in a volatile region. It would therefore be no exaggeration to assert that, in Western eyes, a direct war between Iran and the Zionist regime is viewed as a war between Western civilization and Islamic civilization, constituting a practical manifestation of Huntington’s “clash of civilizations” thesis.

4. The Zionist Regime and Its Operational Policy: Radical Realism

In recent decades, no proponent of the liberal school has mocked the teachings of liberalism itself as thoroughly as the Zionist regime has done, nor has any

1. Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs Press Release, 13 September 1993.

2. Netanyahu's Meeting with the German Chancellor, 2023:

<https://www.thecaireview.com/essays/is-israel-a-liberal-democracy>.

3. For an overview of the perspectives of Israeli political parties, see Aran, A. (2009). *Israel's foreign policy towards the PLO: The impact of globalization*. Sussex Academic Press.

4. White House Speech Archives, 2015.

5. <https://www.thecaireview.com/essays/is-israel-a-liberal-democracy>.

6. <https://www.vie-publique.fr/discours/emmanuel-macron-05062018-france-israel-situation-au-proche-orient>.

state so effectively revived the classical realism of Thucydides, Machiavelli, and Hobbes in practice. Despite its repeated claims of adherence to the rule of law, rationality, institutionalism, international cooperation, the diplomatic resolution of disputes, respect for human rights, and similar principles, the Zionist regime has in practice remained faithful to none of these foundations. The height of this disregard is clearly evident in the regime's conduct over the past two years. Western countries, led by the United States, through their comprehensive intellectual and material support, have effectively endorsed Israel's realist approaches, thereby revealing the decline and discredit of liberal values at the hands of their very proponents. In what follows, the conduct of the Zionist regime and its stark contradiction with the teachings of the liberal school in international relations will be examined:

A. International Laws and Institutions (Institutional Liberalism)

According to the liberal school, international law serves to foster stability and security among states and stands above national sovereignty (Gunder Frank, 1980, p. 89). What guarantees these laws and ensures their enforcement, however, is the existence of institutions with specialized functions. This strand of thought within liberalism is widely known as "institutional liberalism." Although international law has repeatedly been violated by great powers since the Second World War, and institutions have often proved unable to prevent such violations, Israel's conduct over nearly eight decades—and especially during the past two years—has demonstrated with particular starkness the ineffectiveness of international law and its associated institutions.

1) Violation of International Law and Human Rights: Above all, international legal norms have been violated by Israel to such an extent that even international organizations—despite their dependence on Israel's supporting countries—could not turn a blind eye to the profound human atrocities that contravene human rights and international legal standards. According to official reports from organizations such as Amnesty International (2023) and Human Rights Watch (2024), more than 50,000 Palestinians, including thousands of women and children, have been killed in Israeli attacks,¹ and this crime constitutes a flagrant violation of the right to life as enshrined in Article 3 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Even Amnesty International has characterized Israel's crimes in Palestine as "crime against humanity" and the "implementation of a system of apartheid" (2022),²

1. It should be noted that by August 2025, the number of Gaza martyrs exceeded 60,000.

2. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/02/israels-apartheid-against-palestinians-a-cruel-system-of-domination-and-a-crime-against-humanity>.

while the United Nations report for 2023 identified the illegal siege of Gaza as collective punishment in violation of Article 33 of the Geneva Conventions.¹ Human rights organizations have repeatedly accused Israel of destroying vital infrastructure in the State of Palestine, particularly in Gaza, and have emphasized its incompatibility with international law.² Apart from independent human rights organizations, United Nations-affiliated bodies—such as the UN Human Rights Council and the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs—have repeatedly drawn attention to issues including violations of human rights,³ the widespread killing of civilians in the occupied Palestinian territories,⁴ the siege of Gaza, and the ensuing humanitarian crisis.⁵ Even mainstream media outlets such as *The New York Times*⁶ and *The Guardian*,⁷ along with hundreds of others, have underscored the prevalence of extensive human rights abuses. However, in June and July 2025, after Israel failed to achieve its objectives despite the extensive and catastrophic killing of civilians, it resorted to the most devastating tool to bring the people of Gaza to their knees: the weaponization of famine and starvation. According to the Gaza Ministry of Health, from the start of the aid distribution mechanism on 27 May 2025 until late July, more than 1,083 Palestinians were martyred near aid distribution centers and food queues, while 7,275 others were wounded.⁸ The hunger crisis, exacerbated by Israel's closure of access routes, has plunged the region into a profound humanitarian disaster. As reported by the World Food Programme (WFP) in April and May 2025, approximately 93% of Gaza's population faced severe food insecurity, with 570,000 people on the brink of famine.⁹ Furthermore, according to the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) committee, 244,000 individuals are in the catastrophic phase (Phase 5), and 924,000 are in the emergency phase.¹⁰ UNICEF also reported that in 2025, 65% of children under five suffer from acute malnutrition, with only 10% having access to

1. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde15/5141/2023/en/>.

2. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/01/18/gaza-israeli-attacks-decimate-civilian-infrastructure>.

3. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/hrc/co-israel/index>.

4. <https://www.ochaopt.org/data/casualties>.

5. <https://www.unrwa.org/newsroom/official-statements/gaza-strip-humanitarian-crisis-deepens-israels-blockade-continues>.

6. <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/12/15/world/middleeast/israel-gaza-journalists-killed.htm>.

7. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2024/jan/10/israel-white-phosphorus-gaza-human-rights-watch>.

8. <https://www.afintl.com/202507241242>.

9. WFP Situation Report, May 2025.

10. IPC Analytical Update, May 2025.

even one meal per day.¹ The situation is so tragically dire that Michael Fakhri, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, warned in June 2024 that the conditions in Gaza are “unprecedented in modern human history” and a man-made famine.² The scale of the catastrophe was so immense that, in November 2024, the International Criminal Court (ICC) issued an arrest warrant against Israel's prime minister, deeming the deliberate use of starvation as a method of warfare to constitute a war crime.³

Another clear departure of the Zionist regime from liberal principles lies in its disregard for international law with respect to aggression against others. The Charter of the United Nations explicitly states: “All Members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state” (Article 2, paragraph 4).

The only exceptions to this principle are the inherent right of self-defense (Article 51) or explicit authorization from the Security Council. Israel's attack on Iran, however, possessed neither Security Council authorization nor can it be legitimately classified as self-defense. Article 51 stipulates: “Nothing in the present Charter shall impair the inherent right of individual or collective self-defense if an armed attack occurs against a Member of the United Nations, until the Security Council has taken measures necessary to maintain international peace and security.” In the Zionist regime's attack on Iran, neither was there an attack from Iran directed at Israel, nor did Israel possess authorization from the Security Council that could qualify it as legitimate defense or even preemptive defense. Notably, Iran—irrespective of the conflict—was engaged in negotiations with the United States, and Trump was sending positive signals regarding the course of those talks. On the other hand, Israel's attack on Iran also constituted a violation of the fundamental principles of international humanitarian law (IHL), as enshrined in the 1949 Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols. According to these treaties, any military operation must distinguish between military and civilian targets, be proportionate to the threat, and be conducted with due precaution to minimize possible harm. Yet Israel's strikes on Iran resulted in far greater loss of civilian lives—particularly among children and women—than military personnel, with approximately 700 non-combatants martyred in the assaults. Consequently, these attacks amount to war crimes under the Rome Statute of the International

1. UNICEF Gaza Brief, April 2025.

2. UN Human Rights Council, Statement by Michael Fakhri, June 2024.

3. ICC Arrest Warrant, November 2024.

Criminal Court as well. Israel is a party to numerous global conventions, including the Geneva Protocols and other humanitarian treaties, which explicitly prohibit attacks on civilian facilities, mass killings, the deprivation of civilians of water, electricity, and medicine, aggressive attacks on other states, the assassination of scientists, and similar acts. Nevertheless, Israel flagrantly violates all of these laws and protocols, and its record of treaty-breaking has become notorious worldwide. In the Zionist regime's aggression against Iran, several instances directly contravene international laws, conventions, safeguards, and agreements, including: the prohibition on the use of force (violation of Article 2(4) of the UN Charter), attacks on nuclear facilities under IAEA supervision, the assassination of scientists and military commanders outside active combat zones, assaults on residential areas and civilian infrastructure, and breaches of the Geneva Conventions and the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.¹ This is all the more striking given that Israel is a party to many of these conventions and international organizations.

2) Violation of Minority Rights and Systematic Discrimination: Another of liberalism's slogans is its emphasis on minority rights and the fight against systemic discrimination. According to this doctrine, all human beings are equal, and any discrimination—whether racial, religious, social, or political—is prohibited. Yet the reality is that perhaps no state has been as pioneering in the violation of minority rights and the practice of systemic discrimination as the Zionist regime. First, in the 2018 Basic Law: Israel as the Nation-State of the Jewish People, the Zionist regime explicitly reserves the right of national self-determination exclusively for Jews, thereby relegating the Palestinians—who are the indigenous inhabitants of the land—to second-class citizenship.² While Palestinians in the West Bank live under military rule, Jewish settlers enjoy full civil and political rights.³ More than 700,000 Jewish settlers living in 278 illegal settlements benefit from dedicated road networks, separate water systems, and special security arrangements, while Palestinians are entirely deprived of these privileges.⁴ The separation barrier has isolated the Gaza Strip from the rest of historic Palestine, turning it into the world's largest open-air

1. For further details, see Rashidi, N. (2025, July 13). Legal analysis of Israel's attack on Iran: Responses to several questions. <https://unstudied.ir/iauns-forum>.

2. Basic Law: Israel as the Nation-State of the Jewish People (2018)] (<https://main.knesset.gov.il/EN/activity/Documents/IsraelNationStateLaw.pdf>)

3. B'Tselem, *A Regime of Jewish Supremacy from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea: This Is Apartheid*, 2021. URL= https://www.btselem.org/publications/fulltext/202101_this_is_apartheid

4. OCHA, West Bank Access Restrictions (various reports).

prison; only basic food supplies are allowed in through the two crossings of Beit Hanoun (Erez) and Kerem Shalom.¹ Numerous other practices—suppression of freedom of expression, arbitrary detention of Palestinians, and dozens of similar measures—fall squarely under the headings of minority-rights violations and systemic discrimination. For this reason, Israel has repeatedly been accused of apartheid and racism in resolutions and reports issued by international and human-rights organizations.² A prominent example is United Nations General Assembly Resolution 3379 (1975), which determined that “Zionism is a form of racism and racial discrimination” (a resolution revoked in 1991). All of the above stand in flagrant violation of fundamental norms of international law, including the principle of equality (Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights), the right of peoples to self-determination (General Assembly Resolution 1514), and the prohibition of racial discrimination (1965 International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination).³

3) Inefficacy of International Institutions: In the liberal school of thought, international institutions serve as mediators among hostile states, establishing binding rules of conduct between governments and contributing to greater transparency and predictability in international relations (Abbott & Snidal, 1998, p. 32). Particular emphasis on international institutions emerged after the Second World War, when a large number of specialized agencies and organizations were created in the hope that they would promote peace, stability, and security worldwide. Among these, the most important global organization—the direct successor to the League of Nations—is the United Nations. As the overarching body within the international institutional architecture, the UN was expected to play a decisive role in resolving international disputes. Yet the very organization that was established after the Second World War to prevent another global conflagration has proven unable even to halt local and regional crises. In the Rwandan genocide (1994), close to one million people were slaughtered in just 100 days while the United Nations essentially remained a passive spectator. In the Srebrenica massacre

1. Boston Globe, “Life in Gaza steadily worsens” (22 Oct 2006).

2. B’Tselem (2021, 2022); *Human Rights Watch, A Threshold Crossed: Israeli Authorities and the Crimes of Apartheid and Persecution* (2021).

3. It should not be forgotten that this discriminatory outlook is not limited to the political positions of the regime’s leaders; it is also rooted in certain distorted religious texts such as the Talmud, in which non-Jews are at times regarded as slaves or even equated with animals. For further reading on the religious racism inherent in Zionist political theology, see Fadaei Mehrabani, *Political Theology in Judaism*.

(1995) and the wider Bosnian tragedy, tens of thousands of Bosniaks were subjected to ethnic cleansing, and the UN proved powerless to stop it (Rieff, 1995). Likewise, in the crises in Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Sudan, Libya, and elsewhere, millions of human beings have been killed, but the United Nations has done little beyond ceremonial presence and the issuance of resolutions that have had no practical effect whatsoever. However, what has made the situation far more deplorable in recent years is the plain reality that the United States and Israel no longer attach the slightest value to this global organization. In the Israeli-American attack on Iran, no Security Council resolution existed against Iran, and neither country even bothered to seek United Nations approval. By contrast, when the United States invaded Iraq, the then-Secretary-General Kofi Annan explicitly condemned the aggression and declared that the United States had violated the UN Charter.¹ Yet in the case of the Israeli-American attack on Iran, António Guterres refrained from any clear condemnation, limiting himself to the purely ceremonial gesture of “condemning all parties” and expressing concern about the deteriorating situation.

Global judicial institutions fare no better than the United Nations. The International Court of Justice (ICJ)—ostensibly the world’s most powerful legal body, whose rulings are in principle binding on all parties—in May 2024 issued an order, based on South Africa’s complaint against Israel for genocide, requiring Israel to immediately halt its military operations in Rafah, keep the Rafah crossing open to facilitate the delivery of food supplies, and permit UN fact-finding commissions to enter. The Zionist regime dismissed this ruling as a farce, challenged the court’s legitimacy by labeling it “antisemitic,” and proceeded to intensify its crimes. Similarly, when the International Criminal Court (ICC) issued arrest warrants in November 2024 for Benjamin Netanyahu and Yoav Gallant on charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity, the United States and Israel contested the court’s jurisdiction, and even many of the 124 member states did not take the matter seriously. Human-rights institutions find themselves in a similarly dismal position, effectively serving as tools in the hands of the powerful. For instance, the sweeping U.S. economic, pharmaceutical, and medical sanctions against Iran stand in direct violation of Article 26 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and fundamentally contradict the very foundations of human rights. Yet

1. ISNA (1392/2004). “Kofi Annan: The war against Iraq was illegal and contrary to the UN Charter.” 20 May 1392 [Persian calendar]. <https://www.isna.ir/news/8202-01199>

organizations such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International have never issued any binding or forceful statements on the matter. As noted earlier, despite Israel's extensive crimes against the Palestinian people and the adoption of more than twenty UN resolutions against Israel between 2010 and 2023, not a single one has ever been enforced. Moreover, in the assassinations of Iranian nuclear scientists—acts that constitute flagrant breaches of the customary international-law prohibition on assassination—no international institution conducted an official reaction or investigation. According to the report of Iran's Human Rights Headquarters, human-rights organizations have consistently refused to examine these cases, citing "lack of source transparency" (Koohkan, 2023, p. 35), while comparable incidents involving Western countries are pursued with the utmost rigor and urgency. On the other hand, whenever a country dares to act contrary to the policies of the United States and its Western allies, a Special Rapporteur on human rights is promptly appointed to monitor it. Yet no such rapporteur has ever been assigned to the United States, France, or even Saudi Arabia. Remarkably, the benchmark used by these bodies to assess human-rights compliance is invariably the liberal-Western standard, rendering these organizations and their rapporteurs little more than instruments for advancing Western objectives in countries that oppose the West.

4) International Institutions and Iran's Nuclear Energy: Amid all this, one of the most glaring examples of the puppet-like subservience and instrumentalization of international institutions is undoubtedly their stark double standards regarding the nuclear activities in Iran versus those of the Zionist regime. The irony of the situation is almost farcical: the very regime that postures as the champion of efforts to curb Iran's nuclear program is itself the most flagrant and persistent violator of international law. Israel possesses one of the world's largest nuclear arsenals and has never permitted the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to inspect its nuclear facilities, such as Dimona or the Soreq site. Moreover, it is not a signatory to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

For this reason, Avner Cohen describes Israel's nuclear capability as "the worst-kept secret" or a policy of nuclear opacity/ambiguity whose full dimensions remain deliberately obscure. Drawing on declassified documents and expert interviews, Cohen demonstrates that from the mid-1950s through the early twenty-first century, France and the United States covertly assisted Israel in acquiring military nuclear capability, with estimates today placing Israel's arsenal at approximately 400 nuclear warheads (Cohen,

2010).¹ Despite Israel having no logical right to inquire into or interfere with Iran's nuclear program, the Islamic Republic of Iran—according to international organizations—has fully cooperated with international institutions. The presence of inspectors at Iran's nuclear facilities and the installation of monitoring cameras provide compelling evidence for this claim. Moreover, on doctrinal grounds, the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic has explicitly declared the acquisition of nuclear weapons to be haram (religiously forbidden).²

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has repeatedly confirmed that there is no diversion of nuclear material in Iran's nuclear activities. From 2003 to 2015, more than fifteen IAEA reports—based on on-site inspections, installed surveillance cameras, and other verification measures—explicitly acknowledge that no such diversion has occurred in Iran's nuclear program.³ Of course, some reports have raised doubts about certain activities, but the IAEA itself has clarified that these do not indicate any Iranian intent to develop nuclear weapons.⁴ Nevertheless, Israel—which claims to uphold a liberal approach in the international arena and is itself the primary accused party—launched an attack on Iran under the pretext of Tehran's purported pursuit of atomic weapons. What is particularly noteworthy in this context is the stark reality that international institutions, born of liberal principles, not only failed to take any steps to prevent the Zionist regime's aggression against Iran but have even been accused—in the case of entities like the International Atomic Energy Agency—of providing Israel's intelligence services with sensitive information on Iran's nuclear program. The presence of Israeli spies embedded in IAEA inspection teams dispatched to Iran stands as a prime example of how these organizations have been instrumentalized by the great powers. In other words, far from averting the crisis, these bodies have actively helped to foment it. Of course, the Zionist regime's objectives in attacking Iran extended beyond merely its nuclear energy program; as John Mearsheimer has stated, Israel's primary aim was not simply the overthrow of the Iranian

1. For a detailed history of the Zionist regime's nuclear program, see Cohen, A. (2010). *The Worst-Kept Secret: Israel's Bargain with the Bomb*. Columbia University Press.

2. IRNA (2023). "Ayatollah Khamenei: Production, stockpiling, and use of nuclear weapons is haram." <https://irna.ir/news/81205454>.

3. For access to the IAEA reports, see IAEA and Iran: IAEA Board Reports (2003–2015), available at: <https://www.iaea.org/newscenter/focus/iran/iaea-and-iran-iaea-board-reports>.

4. For an example, see IAEA, Implementation of the NPT Safeguards Agreement and Relevant Provisions of Security Council Resolutions in the Islamic Republic of Iran (GOV/2011/65, November 8, 2011), available at: <https://www.iaea.org/sites/default/files/gov2011-65.pdf>.

government but the outright fragmentation and dismantling of Iran itself.¹

B. Violation of the Principle of Multilateralism and Peaceful Resolution of Disputes

Yet these principles, too, have been casually trampled by Israel. It would scarcely be an exaggeration to say that no state in the history of modern international relations has shown such systematic contempt for diplomatic methods and for United Nations resolutions—and those of other international bodies—as the Zionist regime. For example, in 2022 alone, the United Nations General Assembly adopted more resolutions critical of Israel (15) than of all other countries in the world combined (13), making Israel the undisputed record-holder.² Moreover, since 1948, Israel has been the subject of approximately 512 UN resolutions: roughly 225 from the Security Council (up to 2016), 183 from the General Assembly (up to 2023), and 104 from the Human Rights Council (2006–2023).³ These resolutions that have addressed, among other issues, allegations of genocide, war crimes, systematic human-rights violations, the right of return for Palestinian refugees, and the illegality of settlement construction. Israel has routinely left these resolutions unanswered and unimplemented. Remarkably, the United States has vetoed 49 binding Security Council resolutions against Israel since 1973—more than any other permanent member has wielded its veto power on any single issue.⁴ Even more strikingly, these vetoes account for approximately 30% of all Security Council vetoes in history.⁵

5. The Strategic Imperatives of the Islamic Republic of Iran in International Relations

In light of all that has been said, the liberal school—despite its insistent

1. Hemshahri Online (2025). "John Mearsheimer's Analysis: Israel's Dream of Fragmenting Iran." Available at: <https://newspaper.hamshahrionline.ir/id/258077>.

2. Hamshahri Newspaper (1401/2022). "Israel: Record-Holder of UN Resolutions in 2022." 15 Mehr 1401 [Persian calendar]. In that year, 15 resolutions were issued against Israel, while all other countries combined faced 13 (confirmed by UN Watch and reported in outlets such as The Times of Israel).

3. IRNA (1402/2023). "Over 500 UN Resolutions Against the Zionist Regime Since 1948." <https://www.irna.ir/news/85289779/>.

4. Jahan News (2024). "America Has Vetoed 49 UN Resolutions Against Israel." <https://www.jahannews.com/news/913386>.

5. ISNA (1402/2023). "How Many Times Has America Vetoed Resolutions Against the Zionist Regime?" <https://www.isna.ir/news/1402092014587>.

emphasis on humanitarian slogans—has manifestly failed to resolve international crises and conflicts. As critics of liberal theory have repeatedly pointed out, liberalism functions less as a genuine pathway toward eliminating or reducing international conflict and establishing justice than as a strategic instrument for penetration, the reinforcement of hegemony, and the continued exploitation of semi-peripheral and peripheral states. The fundamental question that arises is this: what is the duty of the Islamic Republic under such circumstances, and what foreign-policy course should it adopt? Trust in liberal ideas and their institutional manifestations, as has never succeeded in guaranteeing the security of the Islamic Republic of Iran; on the contrary, it has repeatedly been exploited by the great powers—as vividly illustrated by the experience of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). In other words, the optimistic view of an international order ostensibly built on liberal precepts has brought the Islamic Republic nothing but adverse consequences. A thorough re-examination and revision of Iran's international policies and approaches has therefore become imperative.

A. “Others” from the Perspective of Islam

The first step toward understanding the Islamic theory of international relations is to grasp the concept of “the Other.” A careful reading of the Quran reveals that humanity can be divided into two broad categories with respect to the Muslim community. The first group consists of those who oppose Muslim beliefs and teachings but do not resort to arms, wage war against Muslims, or conspire against them. Toward this group the Quran adopts a peaceful stance and commands the believers: “God does not forbid you from dealing kindly and justly with those who have not fought you because of your religion and have not expelled you from your homes. Indeed, God loves those who act justly” (al-Mumtaḥana 60:8). God even instructs His Prophet to honor covenants with polytheists who have remained faithful to their treaties and not to break faith with them (at-Tawba 9:4). Consequently, mere opposition must never be equated with enmity. The Quran prescribes that differences with such opponents be addressed through wisdom, goodly exhortation, and arguing in the fairest manner (an-Naḥl 16:125), and it specifically enjoins the most gracious form of disputation with the People of the Book (al-ʿAnkabūt 29:46). The second group comprises actual enemies, whom the Quran designates with the term *ʿaduww* (enemy) and characterizes by traits such as deceit, treachery, cunning, and hypocrisy. In the Quranic worldview, placing trust in such enemies is never permissible under any circumstances (al-Mumtaḥana 60:1). Even the illusion of security offered by them, or trusting them, leads only

to ruin (Hūd 11:113). The Quran strictly prohibits any form of political allegiance, emotional attachment, or friendship with them (al-Mumtaḥana 60:1). Dialogue that involves disclosing sensitive information to enemies is severely condemned, for they harbor hidden rancor and malice toward the believers (Āl ‘Imrān 3:118). They are neither faithful to divine covenants nor committed to human treaties (al-Anfāl 8:56). Beyond merely describing the characteristics of enemies, the Quran also prescribes concrete strategies for confronting them, including: maintaining unity and solidarity in the face of the enemy (Āl ‘Imrān 3:103), cultivating insight and precise enemy-recognition (an-Nisā’ 4:71), exercising foresight and God-consciousness (*taqwā*) when dealing with them (Āl ‘Imrān 3:120), rejecting compromise or appeasement of enemies (al-Qalam 68:8–9), placing ultimate trust in God and relying upon Him alone (Āl ‘Imrān 3:173), and numerous other measures.

B. Maximum Power

Given the extreme danger that the Quran attributes to the enemy, the very first directive it issues in confronting them is the mobilization of maximum power. It must not be forgotten, however, that attaining such maximum power requires relentless, sustained effort to acquire it. “Maximum power” does not mean merely employing everything currently at hand; it means exerting every possible effort to increase and strengthen that power. This is precisely the reality to which verse 60 of Sūrat al-Anfāl refers: “And prepare against them whatever you can of power (*quwwa*) and of warhorses ...” (8:60). Accordingly, Muslims are commanded to spare no effort in achieving full readiness against the enemy.

Expressions such as “severe against the disbelievers” (al-Fath 48:29), “be harsh toward them” (at-Tawba 9:73), and similar phrases all point to this same imperative. When news reached the Prophet that the Byzantine Empire—one of the two superpowers of the age—was preparing to attack the Muslim polity, he mobilized the full might of the community. He assembled an unprecedented army of more than 30,000 fighters for the Tabūk expedition and many Companions donated all their wealth to equip the Islamic forces (Tabarī, 1988, vol. 3, p. 100).

C. Deterrence Power

Whenever the concept of “maximum power” is raised, a familiar objection immediately surfaces: that such power is intended for aggression and domination over other peoples and territories. This objection is nothing more than a continuation of the old Orientalist trope—first articulated in the nineteenth century by William Muir—that “Islam is a religion of the

sword.”¹ The claim has been endlessly repeated by later Orientalists. The reality, however, is that power in Islam has an exclusively deterrent character. The very foundation of *da‘wa* (the invitation to Islam) rests upon the principle “There is no compulsion in religion” (al-Baqara 2:256). Moreover, the verses cited earlier concerning relations with non-hostile opponents clearly demonstrate that Islam never employs violence against those who merely disagree with it. The mobilization of power in the Islamic worldview serves only one purpose: to confront enemies and to deter them from attacking the Muslim community. This is why the central strategic objective of “maximum power” in Islam is deterrence, as stated explicitly in the latter part of the same verse: “Prepare against them whatever you can of [military] power and war-horses, awing thereby the enemy of Allah, and your enemy, and others besides them, whom you do not know, but Allah knows them. ...” (al-Anfāl 8:60). The verse makes it plain that the purpose of striving for maximum power is to instill fear in the hearts of God’s enemies, the Muslims’ enemies, and any potential adversaries of whose existence the Muslims may be unaware but whom God knows—so that this fear will dissuade them from taking hostile action against the Islamic polity. The Expedition of Tabūk provides the perfect historical illustration. When the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) learned that a formidable adversary—the Byzantine Empire—together with certain internal enemies, was preparing to strike at the heart of the Muslim community, he raised an army of such magnitude and readiness that it created overwhelming dread in the enemy’s ranks, ultimately compelling them to abandon their planned invasion without a battle being fought.

D. Power-Based Negotiations

Furthermore, the enhancement of hard power in no way negates the value of negotiation and dialogue. Rather, in a world characterized as described earlier, dialogue can only prove effective when the actor enters negotiations backed by robust power. Enemies, too, operate on this very principle when they engage in talks; Netanyahu himself has repeatedly invoked the notion of “peace through strength” or “negotiating from a position of strength.”² He even writes in his book: “The only way to achieve lasting peace is for enemies to know that you not only defend yourself, but can defeat them” (Netanyahu, 1993,

1. For Muir’s views, see Muir, W. (2021). *The Life of Mahomet: With Introductory Chapters on the Original Sources for the Biography of Mahomet, and on the Pre-Islamite History of Arabia*. Routledge.

2. See Netanyahu’s address to the U.S. Congress (March 3, 2015): <https://www.timesofisrael.com/full-text-netanyahu-speech-to-us-congress/> and https://www.gov.il/en/departments/news/spch_congress030315.

p. 344). Of course, there is a fundamental difference between the outlook of figures such as Netanyahu and Trump—who represent an extreme form of realism—and the Islamic perspective. In the worldview of the Zionist regime and the United States, power is regarded as an instrument of domination, colonization, and exploitation of others. By contrast, in Islamic thought—as explicitly stated in the verse just quoted—power possesses an exclusively deterrent character. Just as Islam does not recognize the legitimacy of offensive jihad (“primary jihad” aimed at conquest), the deployment of power for the purpose of subjugating or plundering others is likewise illegitimate. However, when the issue is one of defense, and power serves a preventive and deterrent function, its use is entirely legitimate and endorsed.

6. Conclusion

According to the findings of this study, the conduct of the Zionist regime over the past two years—particularly during regional conflicts and, most notably, in its attacks on the Gaza Strip and the Islamic Republic of Iran—is fundamentally incompatible with the principles and values of institutional liberalism, the theoretical framework that the regime and its Western backers routinely claim to uphold. Analysis of the available data reveals that the regime’s behavioral pattern, especially at the strategic level, aligns far more closely with the core tenets of classical realism: an overriding emphasis on power, the instrumental use of international institutions, and a blatant disregard for binding norms of international law. Furthermore, the findings of the study indicate that, despite the liberal school’s strong emphasis on the role of international institutions in crisis management and the establishment of lasting peace, these institutions and organizations have proven ineffective in containing the crises precipitated by the Zionist regime’s actions. In many instances, they have instead functioned as instruments of the great powers’ policy agendas. This systemic ineffectiveness has lent substantial credence to the realist contention that power logic continues to dominate the international system and that the capacities of multilateral institutions remain constrained. On this basis, three conclusions can be drawn: First, an anarchic structure continues to prevail in the international system. Second, the failure of the liberal school—despite its status as the dominant paradigm in contemporary international relations—to prevent, manage, or deal with crises has been conclusively demonstrated. Third, international institutions and organizations have assumed an essentially instrumental character, serving the interests of the major powers. In light of these characteristics and in accordance with the

political foundations of Islam—which rest upon the strengthening of power for the purpose of repelling the aggression of enemies—the maximization of power with the explicit aim of deterring adversaries must constitute the cornerstone of the Islamic Republic’s engagement in the international arena. Yet one crucial point must never be forgotten: according to the Quranic logic, “the Other” is divided into opponents and enemies. Maximum power poses no threat whatsoever to mere opponents; on the contrary, it builds security. It is only in the hearts of actual enemies that such power instills dread and terror.

References

The Holy Quran.

- Abbott, K. & Snidal, D. (1998). Why States Act through Formal International Organizations. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 42(1).
- Block, W. & Futterman, A. (2021). *The Classical Liberal Case for Israel*. Singapore: Springer.
- Bull, H. (2017). *The anarchical society: A study of order in world politics* (F. Soleimani Pourlak, Trans.). Mokhatab Publications. [In Persian]
- Cohen, A. (2010). *The Worst-Kept Secret: Israel's Bargain with the Bomb*. Columbia University Press.
- Gunder Frank, A. (1980). *Sociology of development and underdevelopment of sociology* (M. Sanajian, Trans.). Tehran: Sharif University of Technology Press. [In Persian]
- Herz, J. (1950). Idealist Internationalism and the Security Dilemma. *World Politics*, 2(2), pp. 157-180.
- Keohane, R. O., & Nye, J. S. (2021). *Power and interdependence* (4th ed.; V. Bozorgi, Trans.). Tehran: Qoqnoos Publishing. [In Persian]
- Koohkan, A. R. (2023). *Essays on Middle East politics (Collected articles)*. Tehran: Allameh Tabataba'i University Press. [In Persian]
- Lodge, H.C. (1925). *The Senate and the League of Nations*. New York: Scribner's.
- Morgenthau, H. J. (1999). *Politics among nations: The struggle for power and peace* (H. Moshirzadeh, Trans.). Tehran: Office of Political and International Studies. [In Persian]
- Muir, W. (2021). *The Life of Mahomet: With Introductory Chapters on the Original Sources for the Biography of Mahomet, and on the Pre-Islamite History of Arabia*. Routledge.
- Netanyahu, B. (1993). *A Place Among the Nations: Israel and the World*. Bantam Books.
- Oren, M. (2002). *Six Days of War*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Rief, D. (1995). *Slaughterhouse: Bosnia and the Failure of the West*. Simon & Schuster.
- Ṭabarī, M. (1988). *Tārīkh al-umam wa-l-mulūk* (Vol. 3; M. Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm, Ed.). Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risāla. [In Arabic]
- Thucydides. (1999). *History of the Peloponnesian War* (M. H. Lotfi, Trans.). Tehran: Kharazmi Publishing. [In Persian]
- Waltz, K. N. (2022). *Theory of international politics* (D. Yousefi & G. A. Chegnizadeh, Trans.). Tehran: Ministry of Foreign Affairs Publishing Administration. [In Persian]