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The Influence of The United Nations in Decision-Making Regarding The Israel-Palestine Conflict: A Literature Study

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the influence of the United States on United Nations decision-making processes regarding the Israel–Palestine conflict through a literature review approach. As a permanent member of the UN Security Council, the United States holds veto power that grants structural authority to block resolutions even when supported by the majority of member states. This research identifies three main dimensions of such influence: (1) the consistent use of veto power to obstruct resolutions unfavorable to Israel, including vetoing three ceasefire resolutions in the first six months of the Gaza war after October 2023; (2) the impact of pro-Israel lobbying on U.S. domestic politics, particularly through organizations such as AIPAC, which systematically shapes American foreign policy in multilateral forums; and (3) informal mechanisms including diplomacy and political pressure on other member states. The consequences of this veto pattern are significant: UN resolutions frequently fail to pass despite majority support, international sanction mechanisms cannot function optimally, and the credibility of the UN as a global peacekeeping institution is further eroded. These findings indicate that UN decision-making is not neutral, but is shaped by an unequal distribution of power within the international system, consistent with the realist perspective in international relations.

Keywords: Veto Power, UN Security Council, Israel–Palestine Conflict, Foreign Policy, Political Lobbying, Literature Review

INTRODUCTION

The dynamics of contemporary international relations demonstrate that international organizations such as the United Nations (UN) play a strategic role in maintaining global stability and peace. In the context of protracted conflicts such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the UN is expected to be a neutral actor facilitating conflict resolution through various institutional mechanisms, particularly the Security Council. However, global political realities demonstrate that the UN's decision-making process is not entirely free from the influence of major powers. The United States, as a permanent member of the Security Council, holds veto power, granting it significant power in determining policy direction and the resulting resolutions. The use of this veto power is often associated with the United States' strategic interest in supporting Israel, leading to criticism of the UN's objectivity and credibility in addressing the conflict. This situation demonstrates the tension between the principles of multilateralism and the realities of power politics in the international system. Therefore, it is important to examine in more depth how United States influence is formed and operates within the UN decision-making process. This research then focuses on analyzing United States influence in UN decision-making regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, using a literature study approach as the primary locus and focus of the study.

Previous research has extensively discussed the involvement of major powers in the UN decision-making process. Khafis et al. (2024) found that the United States consistently uses its veto power in the Security Council to block resolutions deemed detrimental to Israel's interests, thus influencing the direction of international policy. Research on US national interests through veto policy Fadhilah (2025) revealed that US political dominance is not only evident in the use of the veto, but also in the diplomatic lobbying process and the formation of preferences of other member states. Pebrianto et al. (2021) emphasized that the UN's

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institutional structure inherently gives advantages to permanent member states, thus creating an imbalance of power in the decision-making process. Furthermore, research by Sari et al. (2025) shows that US influence is also reflected in the framing of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in international forums, which impacts the legitimacy of the resulting resolutions. These findings demonstrate that US influence is multidimensional, encompassing structural, political, and diplomatic aspects within the UN system.

In general, these studies share similarities with this one, namely, they both examine the role of the United States in influencing UN policy and its relationship to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. The main focus of the discussion includes the use of veto power, political dominance, and the imbalance of power structures within international organizations. Therefore, this research falls within the same framework, namely the study of international relations, which highlights the interaction between great powers and global institutions. This similarity demonstrates that the issue of United States influence within the UN is a relevant and growing topic in academic literature. Furthermore, the approach used in previous research provides an important conceptual foundation for this research. Therefore, this research is inseparable from the contributions of previously developed thought.

However, there are fundamental differences between previous research and this one. Previous research tends to use an empirical approach, focusing on the analysis of specific cases or specific time periods in UN decision-making. Meanwhile, this study uses a literature review approach that aims to integrate various academic findings systematically and comprehensively. Furthermore, this study not only highlights the forms of United States influence but also seeks to identify general patterns and trends emerging from various literature sources. Another difference lies in this study's attempt to construct a more structured theoretical synthesis of the relationship between great power and the institutional mechanisms of the UN. Thus, this study offers a broader perspective than previous research, which tends to be partial. This makes this research have a different analytical approach while complementing the shortcomings in previous studies.

These differences indicate a research gap that has not been thoroughly explored in the existing literature. Therefore, this study presents originality by combining various academic perspectives to produce a more comprehensive understanding of the United States' influence on UN decision-making. The literature review approach employed allows the researcher to identify common patterns not always apparent in single-case studies. Furthermore, this study contributes to enriching theoretical studies on the relationship between power and institutions in the international system. Thus, this study not only replicates previous findings but also offers a new synthesis with added academic value. This originality is expected to significantly contribute to the development of international relations studies, particularly in the study of international organizations. Furthermore, this study can serve as a reference for future research that wishes to examine similar issues with a different approach.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach with a literature review method. This qualitative approach was chosen to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of United States influence in United Nations (UN) decision-making regarding the Israel–Palestine conflict through analysis of various scientific sources.

According to Creswell (2014), "qualitative research is an approach to exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem." This approach allows researchers to examine the dynamics of power and interests in international relations more comprehensively.

The literature review method was conducted by collecting and analyzing various sources, such as books, scientific journals, and relevant official documents. Zed (2008) states that "literature study is an activity related to collecting library data, reading, recording, and processing research materials."

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The data analysis technique used was content analysis. Krippendorff (2018) explains that "content analysis is a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts to the contexts of their use."

Through this approach, the research is expected to be able to provide a systematic and comprehensive picture of the influence of the United States in UN decision-making regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict based on a synthesis of various relevant literature.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Influence of the United States in the Decision-Making Process of the United Nations Regarding the Israel–Palestine Conflict

Within the structure of the United Nations, the United States occupies a highly strategic position as a permanent member of the Security Council. This position grants a special privilege in the form of veto power, which constitutes one of the strongest instruments of influence within the global decision-making system. Conceptually, the veto power enables a single state to block a resolution even when it is supported by the majority of member states. From the outset, this illustrates that the distribution of power within the United Nations is not entirely egalitarian, but rather hierarchical, in which major powers such as the United States possess structural advantages over other countries.

The influence of the United States is not limited solely to the formal instrument of veto power, but also encompasses its political, economic, and military strength as a hegemonic state. In international relations literature, this form of influence is often categorized as *structural power*, referring to a state's ability to shape rules and policy directions within the international system. Furthermore, the close strategic relationship between the United States and Israel further reinforces this influence, particularly in the context of the Israel–Palestine conflict. This relationship positions the United States not merely as a participatory actor, but as a dominant actor in shaping policy dynamics within the United Nations (Khafis et al., 2024).

From a procedural perspective, U.S. influence is clearly evident in the decision-making process of the Security Council, particularly through the use of veto power. In practice, every resolution must undergo a voting process; however, the final outcome remains highly dependent on the approval of the five permanent members. In the context of the Israel–Palestine conflict, the United States has frequently used its veto to block resolutions aimed at halting violence or exerting pressure on Israel (Saputra & Yuniarti, n.d.). This mechanism demonstrates that although democratic procedures exist in the form of voting, the final outcome can ultimately be controlled by a single veto-wielding state.

Beyond formal mechanisms, U.S. influence is also exercised through informal channels such as diplomacy, political lobbying, and pressure on other member states. In many cases, decision-making outcomes are shaped not only during the voting stage but also through negotiations that occur prior to the formal submission of resolutions. In issues such as Palestine's efforts to obtain full membership status in the United Nations, the United States has demonstrated its opposition from the outset, thereby influencing the direction of discussions and reducing the likelihood of the resolution's adoption (Khafis et al., 2024). This underscores that influence operates not only openly, but also through subtle and strategic political processes.

Analytically, the combination of these forms and mechanisms of influence illustrates that the role of the United States within the United Nations reflects power domination in the international system. Veto power and structural influence enable the United States to steer global policy in line with its national interests, particularly in safeguarding its alliance with Israel. This phenomenon aligns with realist perspectives, which emphasize that major powers utilize international institutions to maintain and expand their influence.

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Consequently, the decision-making process within the United Nations cannot be understood as fully neutral, but rather as a political arena shaped by an unequal global distribution of power.

The Influence of U.S. Foreign Policy Interests on the United Nations

The most direct and measurable mechanism of U.S. influence within the United Nations is the use of veto power in the Security Council. In accordance with Article 27(3) of the UN Charter, every substantive resolution of the Security Council requires the unanimous consent of the five permanent members (the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Russia, and China). A single veto is sufficient to defeat a resolution, even if the remaining fourteen members vote in favor.

Research by Mukhlas (2024) in the Global International Journal confirms that in the first six months of the Gaza war after October 7, 2023, the US vetoed three ceasefire resolutions, an action that effectively blocked a multilateral response to a humanitarian crisis that many international legal experts have classified as an emergency situation.

The veto of Palestine's application for full UN membership in April 2024 provides a particularly illustrative case. As documented in an official UN report (UN Press Release SC/15670, 2024), although twelve members of the Security Council supported the resolution and only one—the United States—opposed it, the resolution failed. China described the day as a "sad day," as the U.S. veto obstructed Palestine's aspirations to become a full member of the United Nations.

One factor that distinguishes U.S. behavior on the Israel–Palestine issue from its stance on other international matters is the role of pro-Israel lobbying within domestic U.S. politics. Rahmad (2020) documents how AIPAC, with its extensive member network, large campaign budget, and lobbying power in Congress, shapes US foreign policy towards the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, which is ultimately reflected in US positions at the United Nations.

Data from *The Guardian*, cited in the same study, show that U.S. members of Congress who supported Israel at the outset of the 2023 war received an average of more than USD 100,000 in donations from pro-Israel groups. This creates systematic incentives for legislators to endorse pro-Israel policies, which in turn constrains the executive branch's ability to adopt a more balanced stance in multilateral forums such as the United Nations.

Research from the University of Oregon (cited in ScholarsBank UO) also documents how AIPAC spent up to USD 40 million on advertising campaigns opposing the 2015 Iran nuclear deal—illustrating the lobby's capacity to influence not only policies directly related to Israel, but also broader Middle Eastern policies that intersect with Israeli interests.

The Impact of U.S. Veto Power on the Effectiveness of the United Nations in Addressing the Israel–Palestine Conflict

The use of veto power by the United States within the United Nations, particularly in the Security Council, has long been a focal point in international relations studies due to its impact on the organization's effectiveness. Directly, the veto allows the United States to block resolutions that have already received broad support from other member states. Historical data indicate that the United States is among the countries that most frequently employ veto power in relation to the Israel–Palestine issue, particularly to obstruct resolutions perceived as detrimental to Israel (Bosco, 2009). This confirms that the effectiveness of decision-making within the United Nations is not solely determined by majority mechanisms, but is heavily influenced by the interests of major powers.

One of the primary reasons the United States exercises its veto is to shield Israel from intervention by the Security Council. In addition, political and economic interests rooted in the cooperative relationship between the United States and Israel further motivate the protection of U.S. national interests in political-

economic terms (Octaviasari & Moh.saleh, 2025). In this sense, veto power is not exercised on the basis of justice or collective international interests, but rather on considerations of strategic alliances and geopolitics. The consistent use of veto power reflects national political interests and strategic alliances, demonstrating how political polarization and global geopolitical dynamics can hinder the United Nations' collective response in maintaining international peace and security.

Repeated use of veto power by the United States has produced layered effects on the UN's capacity to manage the Israel–Palestine conflict. First, in terms of resolution mechanisms, veto usage nullifies the voices of other states supporting Palestine, thereby obstructing diplomatic processes and the pursuit of a fair conflict resolution. Second, in terms of enforcement of international sanctions, the Security Council is unable to implement either military or non-military sanctions as stipulated in Articles 41 and 42 of the UN Charter if a permanent member rejects the decision through veto power.

The use of the United States' veto power within the United Nations, particularly in the Security Council, has long been a focus of international relations studies due to its impact on the organization's effectiveness. Directly, the veto allows the United States to block resolutions that would otherwise have received widespread support from other member states. Historical data shows that the United States is one of the countries that most frequently uses its veto power on the Israel-Palestine issue, particularly to block resolutions deemed detrimental to Israel (Bosco, 2009). This confirms that the effectiveness of decision-making in the United Nations is not entirely determined by majority mechanisms, but is heavily influenced by the interests of major powers.

Moreover, the political impact of veto use is also reflected in increasing polarization among United Nations member states. Divergent interests between major powers and developing countries often generate tension within international forums, particularly when critical decisions fail due to vetoes. Studies indicate that such conditions can hinder the achievement of global consensus and reinforce fragmentation in international governance structures (Binder & Heupel, 2015). In the long term, this situation has the potential to weaken the role of the United Nations as an inclusive forum for international cooperation.

CONCLUSION

Based on the literature review, this study concludes that the United States wields significant and multidimensional influence in the United Nations decision-making process regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This influence stems not only from its formal power, in the form of veto power, as a permanent member of the Security Council, but also from its structural, diplomatic, and political power as a hegemonic power in the international system.

First, the forms and mechanisms of US influence within the UN are manifested through two main channels: formal and informal mechanisms. Formally, the veto power is the most powerful instrument, enabling the United States to thwart resolutions inconsistent with the interests of its strategic alliance with Israel. Historical records show that of the dozens of draft resolutions related to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the majority failed to pass due to US vetoes. Informally, this influence is exerted through diplomatic lobbying, behind-the-scenes negotiations, and political pressure on other member states, thus shaping the direction of UN policy even before the voting process takes place.

Second, US foreign policy interests have been shown to directly influence the outcomes of UN decisions and resolutions. The United States' strategic relationship with Israel, strengthened by the influence of the pro-Israel lobby in domestic politics—particularly through organizations like AIPAC—creates systematic pressure that pushes the United States government to consistently protect Israel in

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multilateral forums. This is reflected in the United States' rejection of various ceasefire resolutions, including three vetoes in the first six months of the Gaza conflict after October 2023, as well as its rejection of Palestine's full membership in the UN in April 2024.

Third, the impact of the United States' repeated use of its veto power has far-reaching implications for the UN's effectiveness. International sanctions mechanisms cannot function optimally due to the structural barriers created by the veto, while even agreed-upon resolutions often fail to be implemented on the ground. In the long term, this pattern has the potential to erode the UN's credibility as an independent and impartial global peacekeeping institution, while widening the gap between the aspirations of the majority of the international community and the policy realities produced by the Security Council.

Overall, the findings of this study align with the realist perspective on international relations, which asserts that international institutions do not operate neutrally but rather reflect the distribution of power within the international system. The United States exploits the UN's institutional structure to defend its national interests and strategic alliances, resulting in decision-making processes that do not fully represent the collective interests of the international community. Therefore, structural reforms within the UN system—particularly regarding the veto mechanism—are needed to enable the organization to carry out its mandate more fairly, effectively, and representatively in addressing global conflicts, including the decades-long Israeli–Palestinian conflict.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Author 1: Conceptualization, Methodology, Formal Analysis, Writing – Original Draft.
Author 2: Data Collection, Investigation, Writing – Review and Editing.
Author 3: Validation, Writing – Review and Editing.
Author 4: Data Collection, Investigation
Author 5: Data Collection, Investigation
Author 6: Data Collection, Investigation
Author 7: Supervision

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The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest related to the research, authorship, and publication of this article.

DATA AVAILABILITY

The data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

AI USE DECLARATION

The authors declare that no generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools were used in the preparation, analysis, or writing of this manuscript.

ETHICAL CLEARANCE

Ethical clearance was not required for this study because the research did not involve human participants, identifiable personal data, or procedures requiring formal ethical approval.
If an interview is used but the institution says it is not necessary:

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