

U.S. Human Rights Policy and Foreign Assistance: A Short History*

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Abstract

This article briefly outlines the history of United States human rights policy. United States human rights policy – the intersection of foreign policy, foreign aid and human rights —is the result of the complex interaction between the major actors in the foreign policy decision-making process. Using a chronological approach, this article will investigate the development and implementation of human rights legislation in foreign policy decision-making. Following the historic Congressional hearings, chaired by Representative Donald Fraser, on human rights conditions in 1973, the United States Congress wrote into law formal requirements for the restriction or denial of foreign aid to countries that consistently violated the human rights of their citizens. Since that time the Executive branch has sought to circumvent Congressional intent claiming the need for flexibility in order to protect U.S. national interest.

Keywords:

Human Rights; Military Aid; Economic Aid; American Foreign Policy; U.S. Presidents.

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INTRODUCTION

United States human rights policy – the intersection of foreign policy, foreign aid and human rights —is the result of the complex interplay between the major actors in the decision making process. The allocation of foreign aid is influenced by the evolving and often conflicting values and beliefs of policy makers, specifically the American President and Congress, but also the foreign policy bureaucracy and the American public. Foreign aid has become an indispensable tool of foreign policy. American policy makers have used foreign aid as an answer to the many foreign policy, security and humanitarian problems around the world. The United States has dispensed foreign aid in an attempt to counter communism, to economically and militarily support allies, to underwrite development, to safeguard U.S. strategic and economic interests, to foster democratic governments and to promote human rights. These diverse, often contradictory, intentions are written into foreign policy legislation.

Contemporary Congressional interest in human rights was activated by the civil rights movement in the 1960s, the backlash against the Vietnam War and a reaction to the Nixon Administration's unscrupulous foreign policy behavior. Congress and the American public believed that U.S. foreign policy should reflect the moral principles of the nation. Human rights became very popular on Capital Hill in the 1970s. There existed a coalition of those concerned with human rights, those that were looking for any reason to cut the foreign aid budget and foreign commitments, and those that simply wished to attack the Republican Party (Forsythe 1988). For liberals, human rights provided a moral and ethical component to U.S. foreign policy and a penance for Watergate, the Vietnam War, and CIA excesses. For conservatives, human rights were a useful tool for condemning the Soviet Union.

It was during this time that Congress took action to ensure that human rights were given priority in decision making of foreign policy issues. Congress wrote into law formal requirements for the restriction or denial of foreign aid to countries that consistently violate the human rights of their citizens. The most important of these acts are Sections 502B and Section 116 of the Foreign Assistance Act. The intention of the legislation was to distance the United States from the morally reprehensible behavior of foreign aid recipients. No longer would U.S. foreign aid

automatically be given to a country simply because it professed anti-communist or pro-American sentiments. Foreign aid would be directed to democratic regimes that respect human rights and fundamental freedoms.

I . U.S. HUMAN RIGHTS LEGISLATION

By joint action, Congress amended the 1974 Foreign Assistance Act to include Section 502B, also known as the Humphrey-Cranston Amendment, as a “Sense of Congress,” requesting that security assistance to governments which grossly violated human rights be restricted. In 1976, Congress deleted the “Sense of Congress” language from 502B and mandated that the President be legally obligated to deny or restrict aid to countries violating human rights, unless “extraordinary circumstances” existed which made it in the national interest to continue military aid. Section 502B was intended to prevent foreign governments from using U.S. military aid to violate the human rights of their citizens and to distance the United States from repressive regimes.

Section 502B of the Foreign Assistance Act reads:

except under extraordinary circumstances no security assistance may be provided to any country the government of which engages in a consistent pattern of gross violations of internationally recognized human rights, including torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, prolonged detention without charges, causing the disappearance of persons by the abduction and clandestine detention of those persons or other flagrant denials of the right to life, liberty, and the security of the person.

If security assistance was to be granted despite a country’s practice of gross violations, the President was required to submit to Congress a detailed explanation of the “extraordinary circumstances.” Yet, presidents have been able to get around Congressional directives due to several defects written into the legislation. The weakness in the legislation has allowed each American president to follow his political agenda with little or no concern for the human rights records of aid recipient countries.

The primary defect of Section 502B of the Foreign Assistance Act was

Congress' failure to define the meaning of "extraordinary circumstances." The ambiguity of the wording would open the door for executive abuse. The Lawyers Committee for Human Rights reports that the executive branch broadly interpreted extraordinary circumstances to basically mean any U.S. strategic or security interest (1989). This broad interpretation of extraordinary circumstances made no distinction between vital or minor national security interests. The result was that the president could provide foreign assistance to virtually any country due to some real or imagined national interest.

A second shortcoming of the legislation is the phrase, "to any government which." Terminating aid, under Section 502B, requires the establishment of a link between the government and human rights violations. If the civilian government is weak and without effective control over its military force, the civilian government is, therefore, not responsible for the human rights violations committed by the military forces and military assistance could be granted. El Salvador is a prime example of the danger of providing military aid to an ineffectual civilian government. The Reagan Administration supplied the Salvadoran military with billions of dollars worth of security assistance in its attempt to suppress a left-wing insurgency that threatened the brutal military-controlled dictatorship. The result was the deaths of over 80,000 Salvadorans.

The imprecise phrase "gross violations" of human rights also allowed the United States executive the opportunity to circumvent U.S. law. American Presidents, when they want to provide aid to governments that violate human rights, simply determine that the violations do not constitute gross violations. The legislation mandates that the violations must be significant in their impact without determining the level of significance. Arbitrary imprisonment is listed as a gross violation but detention without charges for weeks, months or even years are not considered gross because of the relatively brief period of confinement.

Another major limitation of the legislation is "consistent pattern." Presidents simply fail to find patterns or declare the patterns of human rights violations inconsistent, and, thereby, aid can be granted to abusing countries. For example, Carter found that in the case of Indonesia in 1979 there was not a consistent pattern of human rights violations because there was a plan to someday release the political prisoners. So, in spite of the fact that approximately 100,000 people were murdered and another

30,000 were still incarcerated, Indonesia was not denied U.S. security assistance.

A final flaw of the legislation is the concept of “security assistance” itself. Presidents who wish to circumvent Congressional resolve will reclassify what is or is not defense equipment. For instance, during the Reagan administration, helicopters equipped with machine guns were said to be postal delivery vehicles and electric batons were classified as cattle prods and, consequently, these items could be legally sent to the Contras even after Congress cut off all military aid to the Nicaraguan rebels.

In 1975, the Harkin Amendment (Section 116) was added to the Foreign Assistance Act. The Harkin Amendment prohibits economic assistance to any country that commits gross human rights violations unless it can be shown that the aid will directly benefit the poor and needy. Section 116 of the Foreign Assistance Act states:

No assistance may be provided under this part to the government of any country which engages in consistent pattern of gross violations of internationally recognized human rights, including torture or cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment, prolonged detention without charges, or other flagrant denial of the right to life, liberty, and the security of person, unless such assistance will directly benefit the needy people in such country.

Section 116 suffers from the same defects of language found in 502B of the Foreign Assistance Act. Regrettably, Section 116 encounters an additional ambiguity, that of the needy people clause. Critics refer to this as the needy-people loophole. The clause was included to pacify those in Congress who argued that there were more appropriate methods of promoting human rights than cutting off development aid to the poor. Advocates of foreign aid asked, “Why should the poor be twice penalized ...once by their government torturing and repressing them, and then by the U.S. by depriving them economic aid?” Nevertheless, it becomes a loophole because the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the bureaucracy charged with the arrangement and distribution of U.S. aid, depicts all projects to be funded in such a way as to appear to directly benefit the poor. Not only do very few projects fail to be funded, but most are not even scrutinized for their human rights impact. Thus, U.S. economic aid can be used to pro-

long the staying power of repressive regimes.

II . PRESIDENTIAL COMPLIANCE WITH U.S. HUMAN RIGHTS LEGISLATION

1. The Nixon (1968-1974) and Ford (1974-1976) Administrations

The Nixon and Ford administrations actively resisted attempts to link U.S. foreign assistance to human rights performance. Realpolitik and the Cold War dictated that human rights were secondary to U.S. national security interests. Based on practical politics and expediency, in addition to the realist sense of power politics, Secretary of State Henry Kissinger forged a foreign policy devoid of any moral or ideological component. Kissinger's confirmation hearings before the Senate, in 1973, demonstrate the Nixon administration's rejection of human rights objectives in U.S. foreign policy. Kissinger declared:

I believe it is dangerous for us to make the domestic policy of countries around the world a direct objective of American foreign policy... The protection of basic human rights is a very sensitive aspect of the domestic jurisdiction of ... governments (U.S. Subcommittee Hearings 1973:507). Since foreign aid was to be used primarily for geopolitical and strategic purposes the Nixon administration was willing to overlook a country's human rights record. Nixon's use of foreign aid was directly related to the need of furthering his military campaigns. Cohen blames the failure of human rights policy during the Nixon-Ford years on "Executive sabotage of human rights initiatives" (1979:225). The perspective that human rights were a domestic matter had several negative outcomes for human rights policy. The United States did not play an active role in the promotion of human rights. It failed to ratify the International Covenant on Political and Civil Rights, and its companion document, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Human rights officers were banished to an obscure office in the State Department and deprived of operating resources. In 1974, there was only one full-time human rights officer in the Executive branch. Moreover, the United States rarely condemned human rights violations, either publicly or privately. Human rights violators did not suffer a decrease in the amount of U.S. aid they received. In fact, a study by Stohl, Carleton and Johnson (1984) determined that during this collective administration there was an unfortunate direct relationship between human rights and foreign aid; more foreign

assistance went to recipients with higher levels of human rights abuses. Since the 1974 version of 502B was merely an advisory “sense of Congress,” the Nixon and Ford Administrations were able to legally ignore Congressional intent.

2. The Carter Administration (1976-1980)

The Carter administration pledged to administer a foreign policy based on moral considerations. Carter argued, in a speech before the United Nations, that the United States has not only a legal right but a responsibility to speak out against human rights violations. Carter vowed that foreign assistance was to be favorably linked to the human rights performance of the recipient country. Carter’s dedication to human rights was a result of a complex interaction between Carter’s religious beliefs, the Fraser’s Subcommittee hearings on human rights, lobbying efforts of NGOs, and the issue’s ability to achieve bi-partisan consensus:

“For liberals, the policy promised a crusade against right-wing dictators (especially the military governments of Latin America), and embodied an atonement for Vietnam. For conservatives, the policy offered a lever against communism and its abuses — also a way, in Odom’s words, ‘to really beat up morally on the Soviets’” (Drumbrell, 1997:17).

President Carter’s words of goodwill and a moral foreign aid policy proved difficult to implement. In response to the realities of international relations the Carter Administration’s position on human rights was erratic and inconsistent, loudly criticizing human rights abuses at certain times and with certain countries, and falling silent in the face of equally egregious abuses at different times involving different countries. In an attempt to renounce Nixon’s immoral support of repressive rightist regimes, particularly in Latin America, Carter’s human rights policy tended to focus on the abuses of Latin American tyrants and military governments to the virtual exclusion of leftist governments. Furthermore, when faced with a series of foreign policy failures, Carter quickly returned to Nixon’s foreign policy style of power politics and national security.

3. The Reagan Administrations (1981-1988)

The Reagan White House rhetoric emphasized the return of U.S. strength and prestige. International terrorism was declared the principal threat to human rights. Not surprisingly, the Reagan administration identified the Soviet Union as the source of international terrorism and, hence, as the provocateur of human rights abuse. Carleton and Stohl suggest that:

By identifying international terrorism as the most significant threat to human rights, and by further identifying the Soviet Union as the chief source of international terrorism, it was possible to bundle human rights, national security, and international terrorism into a single package that fit neatly (and subtly) into the broader United States fight against global communism (1985:208).

By dividing oppressive governments into authoritarian or totalitarian categories the Reagan Administration was able to overlook the outrages committed by friendly human rights violators. Reagan's Representative to the United Nations, Jeanne Kirpatrick proposed a dictatorship and double standards theory. This theory declares that not only are authoritarian regimes friendly to the United States, thereby furthering U.S. security interests, but also, as the Reagan administration claimed, they are less repressive and more receptive to democratic transformation and liberalization. Authoritarian, unpopular, repressive governments were in transition to democracy. Therefore, in a twisted of logic, the United States was actually supporting human rights by providing military and economic assistance to friendly, yet repressive, governments.

However, during the Reagan years, human rights actually became more and more institutionalized in U.S. foreign policy. The Congress was controlled by the Democrats, committed to human rights, or at least, committed to maintaining congressional initiatives constraining executive prerogatives in foreign policy. The 1980s were associated with a rise in pressure groups and nongovernmental organizations concerned with human rights. Moreover, the State Department and USAID bureaucracies became more professional, developing exacting procedures and meticulous routines in the collection and reporting on country specific human rights.

Additionally, during Reagan's second term, there was a change in White House personnel. The most significant factor in tempering human rights rancor was that "a number of ideologues left the Reagan team, to be

replaced by more pragmatic persons” (Forsythe 1995: 122). Notably, George Shultz replaced Alexander Haig as Secretary of State, Jeanne Kirkpatrick was replaced by Foreign Service officers, and Elliot Abrams was replaced by Richard Schifter. Furthermore, these advisers concluded that a strictly anti-communist policy was contrary to U.S. long-term economic and strategic interests.

4. The George Bush Sr. Administration (1989-1992)

George Bush Sr. was a pragmatist who served as director of the CIA, was ambassador to China, and served as the U.S. representative to the United Nations. Bush Sr.’s presidency coincided with an era of immense change in world politics with the demise of the Soviet Union and the passing of the Cold War. Bush Sr.’s foreign policy style was based on management and administration, that is, careful planning, avoiding new commitments, and personal diplomacy. Bush Sr.’s approach toward foreign policy has been described as painstakingly cautious, tempering optimism with prudence, pragmatic rather than ideological, and stressing state-to-state relations in pursuit of U.S. national interests, narrowly defined. This definition did not include the active promotion of human rights though.

The Bush Sr. administration’s human rights policy lay somewhere between those of its predecessors in both word and in deed. During the Bush Sr. years, human rights objectives were neither the “heart” of American foreign policy as it was for the Carter Administration, nor entirely downplayed and minimized as was said to be the case for the Reagan Administration. Bush Sr.’s human rights policy was much less moralistic, more pragmatic, yielding to realism and post-Cold War power politics. His foreign policy, in general, incorporated “moral impulses as long as they did not prove inconvenient to expedient concerns” (Forsythe, 1995:126).

The Gulf War offers an instructive example of Bush’s inclusion of human rights into foreign policy when it proves advantageous. Looking for a rationale for war, one acceptable to the American population, Bush, Sr. mixed economic matters with claims of the need to protect democracy and human rights. Polls indicated that the American population’s support for the war increased when the emphasis was mostly on human rights and the need to confront an international evil. Once the war ended though, Bush Sr. had to downplay issues of human rights and democracy since the

end of the war did not establish any respect for human rights and democracy in either Kuwait or Iraq.

The China case is indicative of Bush's human rights policy too. Following the June 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre, President Bush Sr. immediately ceased arms sales to China. At the same time, Bush opposed the Democrats' efforts to withdraw China's Most Favored Nation (MFN) trading status. Under the Democratic plan, to regain or retain MFN eligibility, China would have to take action to correct human rights abuses. Beijing would be required to release its political prisoners, lift the imposition of martial law, account for those missing or arrested at Tiananmen Square, and end the restrictions on the media. Bush twice vetoed legislation tying renewal of China's MFN status with the need to improve its human rights practices. Since the United States has important economic and geopolitical interests in China, human rights were subordinated to those "larger" concerns.

5. The Bill Clinton Administrations (1993-2000)

Campaigning for president in 1992, Bill Clinton reproached George Bush, Sr. for his indifference to democracy and human rights in foreign policy. In particular, Clinton criticized Bush for his policy of returning Haitians fleeing the repressive military regime following the 1991 coup d'état, which ousted democratically elected Jean-Bertrand Aristide. Clinton also criticized Bush for failing to take decisive action in Bosnia and for renewing China's most-favored-nation status. Clinton announced that "mine will be a foreign policy of engagement, one that strengthens democracy, promotes economic reform, opens markets and stands up to aggression and intolerance" (*The Guardian Feb 4, 1994*).

Yet, in the end, Clinton actually continued a number of George Bush Sr.'s policies. In 1993, Clinton resumed the Bush administration's policy of intercepting Haitian refugees in international waters and returning them to Haiti without a hearing for refugee asylum. In 1994, as a result of domestic outcry, the Haitian policy was amended to include asylum hearings while on board ship, still outside U.S. territorial waters, before forced repatriation.

In 1994, Clinton supported China's MFN trading status with no apparent concern for China's continuing human rights abuses. Clinton, like Bush before him, argued that the best way to promote human rights in China was to "engage" Beijing. That is, human rights can be encouraged

by bringing China into the family of rights-guaranteeing states through trade and diplomatic contact. This was an unsuccessful policy first pursued by Nixon 30 years earlier. Clinton's critics attribute this about face to the fact that, by conservative estimates, the U.S. would lose about 10-15 billion dollars if it withdrew China's MFN status (Dumbrell 1997). Shoring up United States economic interests by maintaining and expanding overseas markets trumped human rights concerns. It is, after all, using Clinton's catchphrase, "the economy, stupid."¹⁾

Neier, director of Human Rights Watch, charges the Clinton administration with enacting a new double standard. The Clinton administration willingly denounced human rights violations in "pariah states or the governments of countries that are not considered politically or economically important," but refused to condemn repressive governments deemed to be economically or strategically important for American interests (Neier 1996-97:96). A foreign policy that stressed trade expansion and the opening of foreign markets at the expense of human rights can be seen in the domain of the international sale and exportation of weapons. Although the Clinton administration professed that arms sales would be contingent upon the adherence to human rights standards, the U.S. share of world arms sales rose from 42 to 70 percent from 1990 to 1993. The purpose of foreign aid then is to subsidize domestic business, open foreign markets, and provide employment for domestic workers.

6. The George W. Bush Administration (2001-

George W. Bush was in office for less than a year before the tragic attacks of September 11. The events of 9/11 changed both the public's and Congress' attitude toward requiring human rights standards when supplying repressive governments with military aid. Since September 11, anti-terrorism has replaced anti-communism as the primary rationale for granting U.S. bilateral foreign aid. Gabelnick (2002) reports that George W. Bush has significantly increased U.S. military aid and contributes funding to an even greater number of states. Often, to provide aid to our "frontline" allies in the fight against terrorism, legislative mandates have

1) It has been widely argued that Clinton won the presidency as a result of his focus on the nation's economy. His slogan, "It's the economy, stupid" resonated with the American public who appeared to have little concern for foreign policy and diplomacy at the time. Still, foreign issues did surface that required a response by Clinton.

to be dismissed. For example, sanctions against both Pakistan and India—imposed because of their nuclear tests in 1998—were dropped immediately after September 11, and Pakistan has become a major recipient of United States military aid.

Pertaining to economic aid, the George W. Bush administration has declared that poverty is linked to violence, and he has pledged an increase in U.S. economic aid from its current 10 billion dollars to 15 billion by the year 2006 in what is dubbed the Millennium Challenge Account (Bush, March 2002). Moreover, a greater amount of the aid will be given in the form of outright grants rather than low interest loans, since many recipient governments have difficulty paying back the loans. In order to be eligible for the Millennium Challenge Account, developing countries would have to eradicate corruption and uphold human rights. Poverty and repression are often a cause of social instability and civil unrest, which in turn can produce flows of refugees and acts of terrorism. Critics believe the Bush Administration's concern for human rights and development is disingenuous and in fact a matter of political expediency. The Millennium Challenge Account was announced just days before the UN International Conference on Financing for Development summit in Monterrey, Mexico (2002).

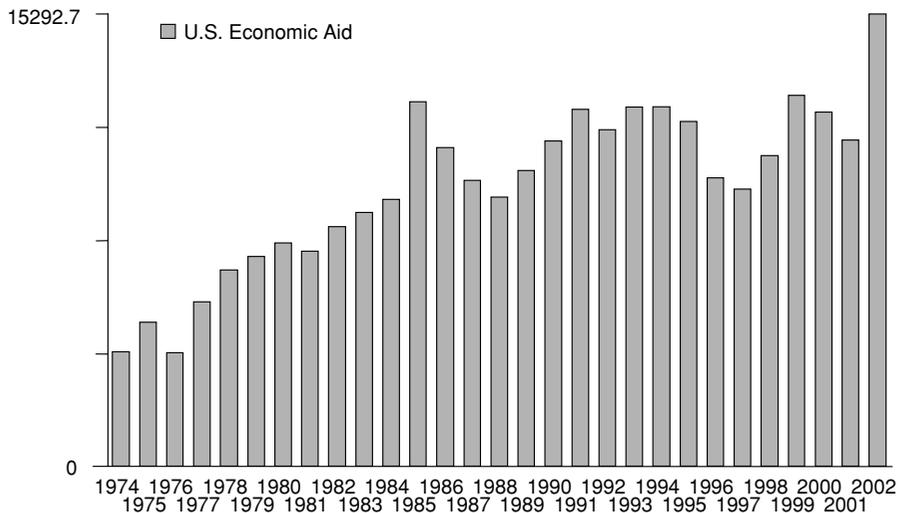
Bush's human rights rhetoric also linked economic and human development to defense and security issues. Bush's 2003 State of the Union proposed new funding, a total of \$15 billion over five years, to combat HIV/AIDS in Africa. This new program was dubbed the Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief. The President's supporters believe the administration realizes that poverty and inequality generate hostility and resentment towards the United States, and for that reason Washington must use foreign aid to secure U.S. national interests (Radelet 2003). Again, the timing of the Bush's revelation that human justice and welfare can be related to the United States' long-term security interests is revealing. The administration's recent attention on HIV/AIDS provided the "wow factor," a compelling proclamation for the State of the Union Address, critics claim Bush needed to offset continuing criticism of his Iraq policy.²⁾

2) The Administration's commitment to MCA has proven difficult to translate into a working policy. The program's country selection process and funding was not implemented until the end of 2003. The AIDS program has suffered from ideological clashes over the appropriate funding levels for abstinence programs and whether the program ought to even include issues of prostitution and gay sex. Both programs have lost much of their political popularity and are having a difficult time actually being funded at the proposed levels.

III. TRENDS IN FOREIGN AID

United States human rights policy is a combination of humanitarian and strategic concerns. During the Cold War, foreign aid was a tool used to contain the spread of communism and to keep the power of the Soviet Union in check. In the post-Cold War era, foreign assistance is viewed as an important instrument in preventing terrorist attacks. Foreign aid is an important mechanism to further U.S. national interests. By gaining allies, maintaining allies, and by building economically strong dependent states the United States can ensure its economic and strategic advantage. U.S. aid can contribute to global security by tackling threats to human security, such as human rights violations, disease, population growth, environmental degradation and the growing gap between rich and poor. Many believe that poverty and repression are often a cause of social instability and civil unrest, which in turn can produce flows of refugees and acts of terrorism, potentially making the U. S. less secure. Aid, USAID asserts, helps build a safer, more peaceful world. As graph 1 indicates, the American government has been extremely generous in its economic assistance over the years. Economic aid shows a gradual but fairly stable increase over the years to a high of over \$15 billion dollars in 2002.

Graph 1 Total Economic Aid by Year

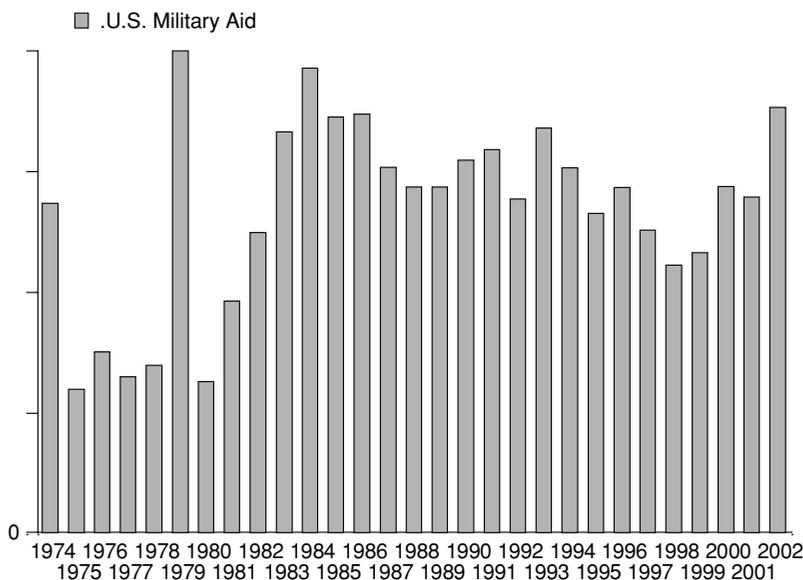


The constancy in economic aid can be attributed to Congressional indeci-

siveness, the public's unease of foreign aid giveaways, and the President's political agenda. Studies have shown that foreign aid appropriations have been incorporated into the continuing appropriation resolutions due to the public's displeasure with foreign aid and the inability of Congress to agree on the amount of appropriation and simply accepting to follow the executive's preferences. Therefore, bilateral aid allocations, without decisive intervention, are the outcome of executive proclivity, bureaucratic procedures and routines. This can be clearly seen in the graph on Economic Aid over the years. The amounts given do show a steady upward trend with a small peak in 1985. This peak in economic aid is explained by the extra aid that went to Reagan's priority region of Central America, specifically Honduras, El Salvador, Costa Rica and Guatemala, in his fight against communist insurgents.

Denials of economic aid, based on a country's human rights performance, are uncommon. By definition, USAID projects are essentially created to meet the basic human needs of the poor. Therefore, virtually all USAID loans and grants can be given without an assessment of the human rights conditions in the recipient state. Overall, economic aid to Third World and transition countries was given in larger amounts in an attempt to win allies, assist and stabilize friendly regimes, fight commu-

Graph 2 Total Military Aid by Yearx



nism, fulfill promises (the Camp David Accords awarding vast amounts of aid to Egypt and Israel, and secondarily, to benefit needy people.

The graph for Military Aid also indicates political rather than human rights preferences. Military aid declined with the close of the Vietnam War and continued to decline during the Carter Administration. With the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the Iran hostage situation, there was a substantial increase in military aid peaking in 1979. This pattern is followed by a subsequent increase during the Reagan years, followed by a slow gradual decline with the lessening of hostilities with the Soviet Union. United States military aid is then given mostly for geopolitical strategic purposes. U.S. bilateral aid is allocated in larger amounts according to military concerns, such as, the presence of military personnel, countries in conflict, and Egypt and Israel (as guaranteed by the Camp David Accords). In any case, human rights play little or no role in the allocation of security assistance. Section 502B of the Foreign Assistance Act has never been evoked as justification for reducing or restricting military aid to any country. It would be detrimental to U.S. strategic interests to characterize a friend and ally as a gross violator of internationally accepted human rights. As Graphs 1 and 2 indicate, every U.S. president, Republican or Democrat, has used foreign aid as a tool of strategic foreign policy.

On the face of the data, one would assume that the majority of U.S. foreign assistance is given for development assistance. But, this fact conceals the United States' reliance on Economic Support Funding (ESF). The United States' government has been able to counter domestic and international objections to its billion-dollar military assistance program by reducing military aid and increasing ESF funding. ESF funding, although officially listed as economic aid, is generally recognized as military assistance since it is used to financially support those countries considered to be politically and strategically important to United States' security interests.

The largest category of economic assistance is the Economic Support Fund (ESF). On average ESF loans account for more than half of all U.S. economic assistance. The Economic Support Funds (ESF) program is categorized as economic development assistance, not military aid, even though its primary purpose is to support U.S. political and security interests. The

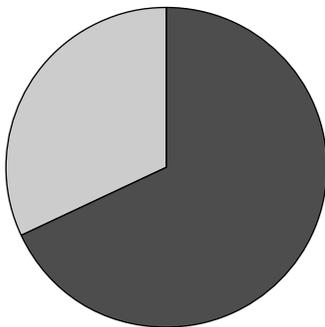
ESF program is financial assistance for budget support so that recipient countries could use their own resources to build up their defense infrastructures. ESF is aid given for diplomatic, security, or political purposes and includes the sale or grant of military arms and equipment. The Economic Support Funds program is intended to promote political stability in countries deemed important to United States economic, political or military interests. Its military component is evident by the fact that the State Department, not USAID, controls its allocation and disbursement.

Graph 3 shows the relationship between economic and security assistance provided by the United States. In this graph, ESF funding is included in economic aid as reported by the USAID. Whereas, Graph 4 indicates the real relationship between development aid and military aid. In Graph 4, ESF funding has been removed from economic assistance and added to USAID's statement of military assistance. Human rights scholars and NGOs have long argued that ESF funding ought to be moved from the economic to the military funding category in order to better evaluate and monitor foreign aid effects.³⁾ As Lancaster notes, "the bilateral aid pro-

Graph 3

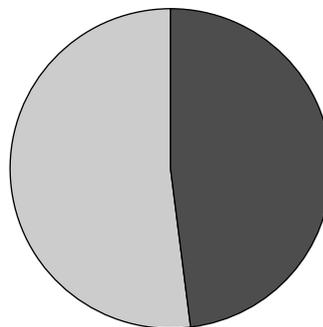
U.S. Bilateral Foreign Assistance

■ 68% U.S. Economic A
 □ 32% U.S. Military

**Graph 4**

U.S. Bilateral Foreign Assistance—with corrections for ESF

■ 48% Economic Aid - ESF
 □ 52% Military aid + ESF



3) A common understanding among the American public is that foreign aid is economic aid given to foreign recipients for development, humanitarian and welfare purposes. By calling ESF economic aid when it is actually used for military, strategic or geopolitical purposes, the American public's sympathies are being exploited. Polls indicate that, although the U.S. taxpayer is extremely generous during times of crises, such as earthquakes or famines, the average American disapproves of yearly disbursements of foreign aid.

gram intended primarily to support US security interests abroad was the ESF...The security rationale provided a general and often compelling justification for US foreign aid” (2000:18).

As graphs 3 and 4 indicate, the majority of U.S. bilateral aid is used for military purposes not humanitarian, development or human rights objectives. The traditional reporting of foreign aid indicates that economic aid accounts for 68% of all U.S. bilateral aid. However, once the appropriate corrections are made to the reporting scheme, as advocated by human rights NGOs, it is evident that military aid is the primary form of U.S. bilateral aid provided to Third World nations—52% of all aid is given for military purposes.

CONCLUSION

Foreign aid is used by the United States to maintain the geopolitical status quo. In effect, the United States has bought its hegemonic position. Unquestionably, foreign aid as a policy tool is designed to serve the United States’ own interests. Typically, the United States has used foreign aid to maintain friendly relations with foreign governments, to facilitate cooperation, and to build strong alliances. Foreign aid is used to win friends and to influence Third World nations. The aid given by the United States to Turkey, Israel and Egypt are notable examples. Of course, at times, there were other objectives for foreign aid, such as democracy or human rights goals, but less often than the United States government’s rhetoric would suggest.

Although foreign aid may have a humanitarian effect, the primary reason for its allocation is self-interest. Furthermore, the concept of self-interest may be interpreted, under certain circumstances, to include the welfare of others. Hook concludes that, “In some cases national interest may be limited to the Hobbesian minimum of simple survival in a hostile environment; in other cases it may encompass other values that incorporate issues of transnational welfare. The predisposition of states to seek either egoistic or altruistic objectives is thus highly variable (1995:13).

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