**Foreign Policy Goals**

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At a time when an estimated 3,897 people–including children–have been killed in 117 mass shootings in just three months in 2023 and another 5,280 people have died by suicide in the same period, the US State Department released its “2022 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices,” touting itself as the saviour of human rights while slandering and smearing countries it deems as rivals or unfriendly. The Biden administration, according to the report, has placed human rights “at the centre” of both domestic and foreign policy. Covering hundreds of pages on how other governments have “jailed, tortured, or even killed” political opponents, human rights defenders, and journalists, the report kept silent on the thousands of Americans who have lost their lives due to mass shootings, police brutality, and racism discrimination.

The preamble of the report, which was issued on March 20, states:

“For nearly five decades, the United States has issued the Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, which attempt to present a factual and impartial record on the situation of human rights around the world. The reader quickly learns that approximately 198 countries and regions were considered. The US was one of them, right? Obviously, not. Why? Because it aspires to serve as the world’s “human rights judge.”

While keeping an eye on everyone else, the US may have lost focus on its own domestic human rights situation. In its annual country reports on human rights practices, the US always points the finger at other countries with an arrogant attitude while ignoring the numerous systematic human rights violations occurring right here at home, including violence, crime, racism, unemployment, homelessness, and the human rights issues of immigrants.

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Shouting slogans of rights and freedom, Washington declares itself a champion of democracy, affirms its adherence to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), and pledges to do everything in its power to make the world safer, democracy stronger, and human rights more protected. Nonetheless, despite widespread protests against George Floyd’s murder, it appears that little has been done by the US to denounce the grave violations of human rights that were deliberately left out of the State Department’s annual report.

Domestically, the US police, despite having much more advanced technology and better training facilities than their developing counterparts, have been killing more than a thousand people each year without due process of law. In 2022 alone, the self-proclaimed democratic country saw a record high of 647 mass shootings that have left 44,329 people dead, according to the Gun Violence Archive. Statistics from the non-profit research group Mapping Police Violence show that law enforcement in the US killed 1,239 people in 2022, an average of three deaths per day. These serious human rights issues perhaps explain why the US chose not to evaluate itself.

“Country Reports on Human Rights Practices” has been a tradition for almost 50 years. It is interesting to note that the countries the US considers to be its strategic adversaries are always those who are accused of repression, coercion, arbitrary detention, and inhumane treatment. Any state that refuses to submit to Washington’s dictates is ruled by an authoritarian regime that mistreats its people and endangers democracy, thus covering its violation of those nations’ sovereignty with a moral veil. But, despite widespread domestic demonstrations, Washington’s allies have always been portrayed as being committed to upholding human rights.

America’s historical trajectory shows that it has always viewed human rights as a tool for hegemony and uses it selectively as an excuse to label countries as “human rights violators. Under the pretext of defending human rights, the US invaded Iraq, Syria, Libya, and Afghanistan, but all of these war-torn countries suffered the murder of innocent civilians and catastrophic infrastructure destruction. We must not overlook the fact that the Watson Institute of International and Public Affairs at Brown University concluded that the American-led invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan may have resulted in up to 250,000 civilian deaths. It is important to keep in mind how the US has “respected” other countries’ human rights.

“The UNHRC’s Resolution 47/9 emphasizes that “human rights dialogue should be constructive and based on the principles of universality, indivisibility, objectivity, non-selectivity, non-politicization, mutual respect, and equal treatment.”

Sadly, the US does not uphold the common international standards or guarantee human rights from a fair and impartial standpoint when promoting human rights diplomacy and managing human rights matters. It always exercises double or even multiple standards.

The US exaggerates the human rights situations in developing nations and other “unfriendly” countries in its annual country reports while underplaying or omitting similar problems in its allies. The question is raised as to why the US has always acted as a silent bystander about the human rights violations in Israel and Egypt, where the military dictator Abdel Fattah el-Sisi toppled the democratically elected government and seized power. From 2008 to 2018, the United States provided 60 per cent of Saudi Arabia’s total weaponry acquisitions. Since then, similar weapons have been used in the invasion of Yemen, killing around 2.5 million people, including roughly 10,000 children. Does this not support the violation of human rights?

Critics argue that the annual report has nothing to do with human rights but is a tool to malign rivals and coerce other countries. In the case of Bangladesh, the fact that the report is the product of current regional and international politics will come as no surprise to anyone aware of the rapid changes underway in the Indo-Pacific region. Bangladesh is becoming an increasingly important player in Asian geopolitics, especially when it comes to the competition between China and the US. Bangladesh is consequently dealing with terrible human rights politics.

However, it doesn’t necessarily suggest that Bangladesh does not have any cases of human rights violations. Human rights challenges are faced just like those in any other country in the world. The point here is to understand how the US blatantly exercised double standards by exaggerating the global human rights realities to advance its global strategy. The “human rights issue” can be used to criticize, threaten, or sanction a country if it adopts a policy that goes against the interests of the US government at a certain point. It reveals that the strategic politics of the United States have a greater weight than actual human rights indicators in the process of preparing this country report.

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