


Norm Internalization of Western Powers (United States, United Kingdom, and France) Regarding Respect for Human Rights in the International Community

Yekta. Behnam Roudsari¹, Afshin. Zargar^{2*}, Zeinab. Esmati³

¹ Department of Public International Law, Ka.C., Islamic Azad University, Karaj, Iran

² Department of International Relations, Ka.C., Islamic Azad University, Karaj, Iran

³ Law Department, Ka.C., Islamic Azad University, Karaj, Iran

* Corresponding author email address: a.zargar@kia.ac.ir

Received: 2023-08-25

Revised: 2023-10-13

Accepted: 2023-11-01

Published: 2023-12-28

The protection of humanity is considered one of the most important claims made by officials of Western powers within the international system. Over the past years, this issue has provided the grounds for unlawful interventions by the United States in various regions of the world. Nevertheless, a review of the United States' performance in the field of international human rights, along with the complicity of France and the United Kingdom, confirms the reality that these countries themselves are among the primary violators of human rights and lack the legitimacy to comment on such matters. Therefore, these states must be held accountable before global public opinion due to their dark records. The question then arises: how can these states be normatively compelled to respect human rights standards so that order and justice are properly established within the international community? In this study, by examining normative theory and employing the method of data collection, the approach was reached that by reducing the role of nation-states—particularly the sovereign aspect—strengthening the idea of the global community, reinforcing principles and values such as order and justice, and moderating power-seeking through international organizations, it is largely possible to persuade the governments of the United States, the United Kingdom, and France to adhere in practice to the standards of human rights.

Keywords: power, human rights, norm internalization, international order, international community.

How to cite this article:

Behnam Roudsari, Y., Zargar, A., & Esmati, Z. (2023). Norm Internalization of Western Powers (United States, United Kingdom, and France) Regarding Respect for Human Rights in the International Community. *Interdisciplinary Studies in Society, Law, and Politics*, 2(4), 101-110. <https://doi.org/10.61838/kman.isslp.2.4.12>

1. Introduction

Since the current era is marked by inequalities, injustices, human rights violations, and discrimination, human rights have come to be recognized as one of the most fundamental issues in the international community. Today, given the growing sense of justice among humanity, human rights have become a basic and strategic approach intertwined with

the political life of states. It is noteworthy that adherence to and observance of human rights require the correct behavior of states in the international community. Since power is an inseparable part of the foundation of states, the excessive pursuit of power by states has sometimes disrupted international order and security, leading to disorders within the international community. Therefore, in order for states such as the United States, the United Kingdom, and France to adhere to human



rights standards, their behavior must be normatively regulated so that respect for human rights can be expanded in the international community; otherwise, human rights violations will continue to be observed for many years to come.

2. Conceptual Framework

In international politics, the role of major powers in respecting and adhering to human rights is significant. Of course, the power of states cannot be entirely disregarded since power is a fundamental element in the formation of a country. However, if human rights standards conflict with their national interests, states sometimes disregard human rights. Since human rights, as natural rights, are rooted in the essence and conscience of humanity, the human rights regime today is of special importance due to its attention to freedom, individual security, and social justice. Given that major powers such as the United States, the United Kingdom, and France have been involved in human rights violations in other countries—as seen in Afghanistan, Palestine, Syria, and elsewhere—the international community needs methods to moderate their excessive pursuit of power and, based on international regulations, to normatively regulate these powers in the field of human rights. It is noteworthy that this study, with reference to international regulations and normative theory, addresses the manner in which major Western powers adhere to human rights.

3. International Monitoring and Implementation Measures Regarding Human Rights

After defining the fundamental and comprehensive concepts of human rights and codifying and adopting binding standards in the form of legal instruments, and committing states to their observance, "the second step is the adoption of measures and mechanisms and the establishment of institutions that pursue the implementation of these standards and oversee the conduct and actions of member states concerning their human rights obligations and possibly provide enforcement guarantees for them" (Mehrpour, 2009).

3.1. States' Commitment to Respect, Protect, and Fulfill

Human rights defenders play a vital role in democratic societies. In this regard, the participation of individuals,

states, groups, and institutions is essential to ensure the continued progress towards the realization of international human rights. Civil society assists states in guaranteeing full respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms, democracy, and the rule of law. Accordingly, human rights defenders perform an important and legitimate function in democratic societies (Zargar, 2019).

What becomes especially prominent is the role of states in this domain. In international law, it is fundamental that the state itself acts as a defender of human rights. Since the state originates from humanity, it must take effective steps toward the protection and promotion of human rights. Therefore, whenever the state's performance in this regard is weak, the international order also faces serious challenges. "In this context, states face threefold obligations that have been taken into consideration by all global and regional human rights instruments and institutions." The Human Rights Committee, which monitors states' performance, declared in its general comment on Article 6 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights that "states have an exceptional and special duty to prevent war, genocide, and other major violations that result in the loss of human life." The Committee further stated that "states must not only refrain from engaging in criminal conduct against human life but must also exercise vigilance concerning their security forces and prevent their arbitrary actions." One of the mechanisms in this regard is the possibility of states filing complaints against each other, in addition to individuals filing complaints against states, regarding allegations of human rights violations. The extent to which states are willing to file complaints against each other regarding human rights violations appears to suggest that if states are prepared, the realization of a universal monitoring system by states themselves, based on their accepted human rights commitments, is not out of reach (Rahpeik, 2009).

3.2. Establishment of Specialized Committees

Another important mechanism defined in international instruments is the "establishment of specialized monitoring committees." This approach, which took shape in 1966, has provided a suitable framework to compel states to fulfill their obligations. The most significant human rights monitoring bodies utilizing this

method are: a) the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, established by the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1966); b) the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, established by the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1979); and c) the Committee on the Rights of the Child, established by the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) (Raisi Kia & Derakhshandeh, 2014).

Of course, the primary purpose of establishing monitoring institutions is to persuade states to provide the international community with a transparent account of their actions regarding the protection and observance of human rights. Achieving this goal still requires extensive efforts. In this regard, the efforts of the United Nations General Assembly should not be overlooked. One of its functions is to organize studies and research on human rights and to draft recommendations to facilitate the realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms without discrimination. This executive authority undertakes a wide range of mechanisms for the protection of human rights (Omorzakov, 2023).

3.3. *Formation of Groups of Rapporteurs*

"These groups, which are directly associated with the performance of states, are among the monitoring mechanisms overseeing human rights and their implementation by states. These groups investigate instances of violations and submit their reports to the Human Rights Council and the United Nations General Assembly, and their reports are published" (Lequesne, 2022).

The rapporteurs of the Human Rights Council, whose primary task is fact-finding regarding state actions concerning the observance of human rights, are among these groups. They evaluate complaints from individuals claiming to be victims of human rights violations and submit their reports to the relevant body. The publication of these reports internationally gradually affects the global reputation of states that have violated human rights, leading to changes in their status. Therefore, the impact of these reports on altering the international standing of major powers cannot be overlooked.

3.4. *Alignment of Political Systems with Human Rights Standards*

"The neoconservative school emerged in opposition to the legacy of the Enlightenment and modernity, and against rationalism and the idea of human freedom and autonomy. Conservatives deny modernity's fundamental claim regarding human freedom and consciousness, viewing humans as beings bound by tradition and history" (Dehghanzadeh, 2021).

"The core of this thinking is the belief in human inequality and the idea that a minority should undertake the guidance of society." On the other hand, new actors on the international stage argue that democracies must be able to suppress their enemies with full authority, even through the use of force. Thus, the use of force to create and expand democracy is not only permissible but necessary. However, human rights advocates believe that human rights constitute the foundation of humanity and that the principles of human rights are essential for advancing human life's goals. Since human rights are universal and global, no state should disregard them. Human rights principles and standards are dynamic; therefore, the greater the alignment between countries' political systems and human rights standards—and the more their laws and regulations reflect human rights principles—the more we will witness enhanced international order on the one hand, and the regulation of major powers on the other.

4. *The Status of Human Rights in U.S. Foreign Policy*

Woodrow Wilson's 1919 speech, in which he declared, "We stand for setting men free, and we shall not restrict our aims to the borders of America," indicated that "America envisions a global and interventionist mission for itself." The orientation of U.S. foreign policy evokes a kind of fusion of strategic interests with the cultural values of human rights and democracy, as America views itself as a country with a unique civilization or as the beacon of liberty and the stronghold of democracy. After World War II, during the Truman era—particularly coinciding with the formation of the theoretical foundations and executive policies of the Cold War—there is considerable evidence of the role of liberalist themes in U.S. foreign behavior, including offering military advice and equipment to freedom-seeking countries. Eisenhower sought to link America's human

rights behavior with its anti-communist policy, in contrast to Truman. During the Cold War, the shift from a Cold War-centered strategy toward a new world order enabled Bush to speak of the "wind of freedom and democracy" blowing across the world. He stated that wherever members of the international system violate principles, regulations, and procedures, the United States reserves the right to use force if necessary, because the U.S. is the only country with both the responsibility and the capacity to do so. During Clinton's time, the mission of the new Secretary of State was to achieve a distinguished diplomacy aimed at promoting peace, expanding the rule of law, and confronting human rights violations internationally. Ultimately, during the critical moment of the U.S. attack on Afghanistan, the issue of human rights and its linkage with U.S. foreign policy became much more complex, because in the post-Cold War era—with no rival like the Soviet Union—the fight against terrorism and the emphasis on a global order became central to strengthening America's position and influence worldwide, particularly in the Middle East (Mohammadi, 2006).

In line with this, an examination of America's historical periods reveals the significant integration of human rights perspectives into U.S. foreign policy. "In other words, the demise of the threat of communism's expansion moved the U.S. into a new phase of policymaking focused on human rights issues, and the events of September 11 gave this trend new visibility. At that time, the U.S. emphasized several human rights components in its foreign policy:

- a) Defining human rights as a pillar of the U.S. national security strategy, emphasizing liberty and the development of democratic institutions as key topics in bilateral relations, fostering cooperation among all democracies, and applying pressure on states that deny human rights to pursue a better future;
- b) Viewing human rights on a global scale as a national security issue, based on the premise that human rights—representing the spirit of liberal democracy—prevent the emergence of terrorist threats and weapons of mass destruction, typically originating in non-democratic and authoritarian Middle Eastern regimes;
- c) Utilizing human rights as a pretext for humanitarian interventions within the framework of national interests" (Raisi Kia & Derakhshandeh, 2014).

It should be noted that, in this context, "in the Middle East, to pursue its objectives and to achieve exclusive dominance in the region, America attempted to weaken independent regional powers while also trying to create a new security system and promote a new model for the region, with several functions in mind:

- a) Providing the necessary security for U.S. interests;
- b) Ensuring Israel faces no regional threats and is recognized as a democratic model state;
- c) Strengthening the military capacities of regional allies in a manner that human rights concerns would not obstruct U.S. aid to them;
- d) Intensifying conflicts in the region to prevent the emergence of an Islamic human rights model;
- e) Establishing extensive, deep, and comprehensive military, security, economic, and political ties with Gulf Arab countries to influence their internal political directions along Western lines" (Mehrpour, 2009).

Given U.S. human rights policies, "the United States consistently employs various tools to advance its human rights objectives. American diplomatic tools make governments accountable for their international human rights obligations and standards, contribute to improving the rule of law, promote state accountability, foster a culture of law and punishment, and assist in strengthening institutional capacities such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Human Rights Council, while cooperating in human rights activities with key allies such as the European Union and regional organizations" (Zargar, 2019).

5. U.S. Civil Policies Violating Human Rights

"According to the report of the China Society for Human Rights Studies, the United States seeks to transform countries in the Middle East and establish dependent regimes to serve its global hegemony. Efforts to forcibly change political systems in Iraq, Syria, Libya, and many other places not only disrupted political order but also destroyed social and national cohesion in these countries. The acts of overthrowing governments through force, interfering in the internal affairs of other countries, and forcibly exporting so-called democracy not only violate fundamental norms of international law such as the prohibition on the use of force but also constitute serious violations of the right of people in the affected countries to determine their own paths of

development, as well as their fundamental human rights" (Faraji, 2021).

"The oldest contradiction regarding U.S. support for human rights in the Middle East is its financial and military support, use of vetoes, and disregard for Israeli crimes against Palestinians over decades of occupation. Human Rights Watch, citing public statements by Israeli leaders and official policies, argues that Israel has demonstrated its intent to maintain domination by Israeli Jews over Palestinians in Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza, alongside systematic oppression and inhumane acts." The statement notes: "When these three elements occur together, it constitutes the crime of apartheid. Concerning allegations of persecution, reference is made to severe abuses in the occupied territories, including land confiscations, systematic denial of building permits, home demolitions, and broad, decades-long restrictions on freedom of movement and basic human rights".

"The Biden administration had declared that human rights would be central to its foreign policy, but these statements have largely been rhetorical, serving as rallying cries to unite Western countries against Russian aggression in Ukraine. However, when it comes to Palestinian rights and those defending them, the United States seems committed to silence".

Interestingly, "many American scholars and politicians advocate maintaining U.S. military dominance in the Middle East, viewing human rights as a tool for U.S. military domination in the region. They argue that if China or Russia were to replace the U.S., authoritarian injustices would proliferate. A recent report from the Quincy Institute argues that the United States should condition engagement with its security partners on addressing human rights concerns" (Hua, 2022).

It is worth noting that one of the significant issues visible within the United States is the problem of gun violence, which, unfortunately, is exacerbated by U.S. laws. Gun violence violates human rights enshrined in customary international law and treaties to which the U.S. is a party. These rights include the right to life, personal security, health, education, freedom of peaceful assembly, freedom of expression and opinion, freedom from mistreatment, and freedom from gender and racial discrimination (Fellmeth, 2019).

Therefore, a country that struggles to ensure the security of its own people, prioritizes financial gains from arms

sales over the safety of its citizens, and neglects its people's rights cannot be expected to adhere to human rights principles and standards at the international level.

6. The United Kingdom and Human Rights Violations

Since the mid-twentieth century, human rights have played a central role in the discourse of international relations. Over the past two decades, human rights have gained a more prominent place in both national constitutional law and the international sphere. The United Kingdom was one of the last common law countries and one of the last in Europe to incorporate human rights into its domestic legal system. At the start of the third millennium, human rights became a pivotal part of the legal system, rapidly transforming the United Kingdom.

The British Parliament, after many years of complicated and seemingly ineffective discussions, eventually enacted human rights legislation on October 2, 2000. Nevertheless, British authorities, despite the implementation of this act, have undermined human rights, the rule of law, judicial independence, freedom of expression, and lawful protests in the name of "national security" and "counterterrorism".

The weakening of human rights in the United Kingdom under the guise of anti-terrorism measures is not a new phenomenon. Necessary legislation in Britain has been a major concern for decades. Since the early 1970s, when British authorities began implementing emergency measures during the Northern Ireland conflict, human rights have been sacrificed in the name of security. Among the abuses associated with emergency measures are torture or other ill-treatment and unfair trials.

There is serious concern regarding the grave disregard for human rights in British legal and political measures following the September 11 attacks. British authorities have enacted a series of new laws, even though the United Kingdom already had some of the strictest counterterrorism laws in Europe. These laws include broad measures that undermine anti-human rights protections and have led to serious human rights abuses. Among these measures are the detention without charge or trial of individuals labeled as "suspected international terrorists," with such labeling often based on classified information withheld from the individuals and their legal representatives.

Furthermore, British authorities have attempted to circumvent the prohibition of torture or other ill-treatment. Humanitarian laws during the war against Iraq and during the occupation of Iraq have also been violated by British forces. Unfortunately, the UK government continues to weaken fundamental human rights, the rule of law, and judicial independence, and passes legislation contrary to basic human rights.

Human Rights Watch, in a report dated January 24, 2008, declared: "The British government's plan to detain terrorist suspects for up to six weeks without trial violates the fundamental right to liberty and alienates British Muslims." This proposal was presented to Parliament as a new anti-terrorism measure. Measures taken by British authorities to combat terrorism have led to blatant violations of human rights and heightened concerns about the impact of these measures on Muslims, migrants, and other minority communities.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Council of Europe's Commissioner for Human Rights, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Torture, the United Nations Committee Against Torture, the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, and the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture are among those who have expressed serious concern over the statistics regarding human rights violations by the United Kingdom.

A notable point in the United Kingdom's history is that although the country seeks to fulfill human rights commitments and adhere to related standards, it simultaneously supports dictatorial and authoritarian regimes that violate human rights. This clear contradiction in practice has tarnished the country's image.

Thus, in the UK's foreign policy, we observe the emerging intersection between traditional methods and ideas of British foreign policymaking—such as material interests, reasons of state, and moral dualities—which challenge established hierarchies in this regard (Grealy, 2023).

6.1. *The War on Terror or the Violation of Human Rights*

Since September 11, 2001, and the declaration of the "war on terror," British authorities have enacted a series of new laws and launched a sustained assault on human rights, judicial independence, and the rule of law. These laws were passed even though the United Kingdom

already had some of the strictest anti-terrorism laws in Europe. After September 11, three new laws were enacted, each including extensive measures that violated human rights, leading to serious breaches.

Following the London bombings on July 7, 2005, further dangerous and reckless measures were designed. These measures also conflicted with the United Kingdom's obligations under both international and domestic human rights law and resulted in major human rights violations.

Anti-terrorism measures and policies led to laws and practices that suppressed dissent and opposition, allowing state agents to commit human rights abuses such as extrajudicial killings, torture, arbitrary detention, and unfair trials. These anti-human rights actions were repeatedly carried out without any involvement from Muslims or other minority groups.

Thousands of Muslims in the UK have been stopped on the streets, interrogated, subjected to body searches, detained, and questioned under anti-terrorism laws.

Many foreign nationals residing in the UK, identified by British authorities as security risks, have been kept under harsh surveillance for years based on secret information that was withheld from them, preventing them from challenging the government's actions.

When members of the House of Lords ruled these detentions unlawful due to their discriminatory and unjustified nature, the government pursued new ways to restrict these individuals' liberties: first by imposing so-called "control orders," hastily introduced as enacted laws, and then by detaining the majority of them under immigration powers that suspended deportations on national security grounds.

None of these individuals have been found guilty in any legal court in Britain of any crime related to terrorism.

In fact, before trials even commenced, British authorities admitted there was insufficient evidence to support criminal charges against the individuals under surveillance.

Nevertheless, British authorities continued to assert that these individuals posed a "threat to national security."

The British government's contemptuous attitude toward human rights during the war on terror was also evident in other areas.

Government officials made efforts to circumvent the absolute prohibition of torture or other ill-treatment.

7. France and the Decline in Human Rights

France pursues a foreign policy driven by global interests. The 1789 Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen was once an aspiration for French diplomacy; however, France's foreign policy sometimes exhibits dimensions that contradict democracy. Thus, France's policy reflects two extremes: support for democracy in some cases, and the strong prioritization of national interests in others (Lequesne, 2022).

"According to social analysts and experts, the crisis and protests in France were by no means unexpected events; rather, they were rooted in the nature of the liberal system, democracy, and the actions of the French government in perpetuating racial and religious discrimination, neglecting the rights of various social groups, exacerbating class divisions, and economic and social problems entrenched in the country's history. Analysts attribute these widespread protests to the existing discrimination and injustices in French and European societies.

While France has previously witnessed syndicalist protests and symbolic human rights movements, the recent widespread unrest—which lasted for several weeks and engulfed many cities—was fundamentally a reaction against the discriminatory practices of politicians who, for decades, claimed to uphold equality and human rights.

Neglect of the social situation of low-income citizens, costly foreign policies without significant achievements, and the violation of minority religious rights have accumulated public dissatisfaction over the past three decades, particularly after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

During the 1960s and 1970s, the external pressure from communism motivated support for lower-income groups; however, with the fading of communist threats, countries like France reduced their social support policies.

Liberal critics argue that the French government's economic policies, based on the principles of the welfare state, lack efficiency in the context of globalization. High taxation rates necessary for funding social protections are among the factors causing economic stagnation and the spread of unemployment.

Another factor identified by experts and some French officials is the ongoing identity crisis within France. The

recent riots are viewed as evidence of the failure of the French government's immigration and integration policies."

From the perspective of many analysts, "the French regime's hostility toward Islam is a major factor in recent events. In recent years, attacks by extremist groups on France's ethnic minorities have increased, largely due to the tolerance and negligence of French authorities toward hostility against Islam and foreign migrants.

Analyzing the roots of this policy, one must note that one of the main foundations of the French secular system (*laïcité*) is the separation of religion from government, seen as necessary for the realization of social rights, civil society, democracy, and welfare.

Thus, following the French Revolution, secularization of civil society occurred, assigning material values and social standing to the public sphere while relegating religious values to private, individual domains, thereby facilitating capitalist colonialist ambitions and preventing the rise of political and social religious forces. On this basis, prohibitions on the hijab, opposition to any form of religious activity (even secular religious activity), religious and racial discrimination, humiliating behavior, multiple restrictions, and deprivations against Muslims in France are justified.

French leaders understood well that Islamic principles inherently possess political and social identity, unlike the distorted forms of Christianity and Judaism, from which such identity could be separated.

Fear of the spread of Islamic ideology has compelled proponents of the fragile ideology of liberal democracy to expose their dictatorial nature—despite their proclamations of freedom and human rights—and to use all available means to suppress the emerging and powerful Islamic ideology and its symbols" (Mohammadi, 2006).

8. Normative Theory

At first glance, the distinction between the moral and political concepts of human rights, which constitutes a large part of academic writings, is evident within the normative system. The moral view regards human rights as universal rights, essentially prescribing correct and incorrect human behavior. Therefore, the complementary standard feature of these rights relates to a set of rights belonging to every individual solely by virtue of their status as a human being (Kay).

In contrast, the political understanding recognizes a moral view of human rights that is pre-political, meaning that the moral view depends only on assumptions about the nature of humanity, while the political view derives solely from the statements and actions of political actors (Kay).

In this regard, normative theory in international relations generally addresses the moral dimensions of international relations. "The recognition of normative theory as a distinct field within international relations is a relatively recent phenomenon. It should be noted, however, that normative studies have a long history. The dominance of positivist empiricism in modern knowledge was one of the reasons for the gradual marginalization of normative-ethical studies in political science. In normative theory, the theorist and researcher deal with 'oughts,' precisely in contrast to the positivists' emphasis on studying and describing 'what is.' Normative theory mainly discusses ethical-normative subjects such as international justice, the rejection of war, violence and discrimination, and the necessity of observing human rights extensively and universally. Thus, normative theory deals with values and value priorities. Positivists insist that true propositions must concern material or directly sensory experiences. If so, normative theory has a profound problem since its components refer to non-material or non-sensory subjects. This emphasis on empiricism and the study of 'what is' was contrary to the rise of normative and ethical perspectives. Two important fields of normative theory application are justice and freedom, especially justice, which has become a major global issue" (Zargar, 2007). The emergence of the concept of justice in international relations was influenced by John Rawls' ideas on justice. His definition of a just society is as follows: "1) Each individual must have an equal right to the most extensive liberties compatible with similar liberties for others. 2) Economic and social inequalities are justifiable only if they benefit the least advantaged members of society." "The numerous new conflicts and disputes on the international stage have increased the importance of moral and normative principles in this field" (Zargar, 2007).

Thus, normative and ethical principles can be prescribed in the following international relations areas:

a) War and violence, such as terrorism and the effort for a peaceful world: Today, the world emphasizes

establishing and maintaining global peace more than ever, including moral principles prohibiting the use of weapons of mass destruction.

b) Reducing and eliminating global inequalities: Emphasis is placed on eliminating inequalities among individuals, classes, nations, and especially between the global North and South.

c) Global human rights: Observance of human rights globally without preconditions is emphasized by the international community. In the past, ideological bloc divisions and narrow-minded interpretations of sovereignty posed serious barriers to global human rights efforts, but today, globalization, the erosion of physical borders, and precise monitoring tools through communication and information systems have put the pursuit of global human rights firmly on the agenda (Zargar, 2007).

Thomas Aquinas articulated three necessary conditions for a just war: "legitimate authority (to declare war), just cause, and right intention." The just war theory became systematic in the late sixteenth century through the intellectual efforts of Christian scholars like Vitoria and Suarez. According to them, war is not merely an incident but a real solution to disputes between states, justified if it meets four conditions:

a) Official declaration by a competent government.

b) Just cause motivated by justice, proportional to the destruction caused by war.

c) Necessity, meaning no other means to achieve justice exist.

d) Right conduct in war to ensure a return to order and peace.

Until this period, just war theory was entirely within religious teachings but gradually assumed legal form through efforts by legal scholars. Hugo Grotius, with his legal perspective, considered a war just and lawful if it was in response to injustice. Natural law was the benchmark for identifying injustice, meaning when fundamental rights such as equality, independence, mutual respect, and international trade were harmed, retaliation and resorting to war became legitimate.

Gradually, just war theory entered international law discussions, mainly within the concept of self-defense. Nevertheless, the ethical aspect of just war has always outweighed the legal aspect. Despite different interpretations and perspectives on just war, several conditions have achieved relative consensus: just cause,

just intentions, competent authority, proportionality, military action as a last resort, fair peace, respect for civilian rights, a reasonable chance of success, and positive outcomes outweighing the harms.

Without a doubt, just war theory is a prime example of normative theory's application in international relations (Zargar, 2007).

Steve Smith writes: "In recent years, as governments have decided to justify and organize their policies and actions based on moral standards, normative questions and issues have increasingly taken on a political dimension. This shift has led to greater attention to normative theory and dissatisfaction with theories that (arrogantly) claim to be non-normative and realistic."

Clear examples of a normative turn include humanitarian intervention and Britain's efforts to design a foreign policy based on ethics.

"In recent years, due to the evolving and new nature of global security threats and military confrontations, reactions have also changed. To overcome traditional barriers such as sovereignty and self-determination, new concepts and standards have been developed and used to help address global issues, mainly carrying normative and moral weight. Concepts like humanitarian intervention, preventive war, liberation war, and just war to guarantee human rights have all attracted attention in addressing national and global security dilemmas. Consequently, the foreign policies of major powers, especially the United States, have taken on strong moral and ethical dimensions, meaning normative theory can greatly aid in understanding these policies" (Zargar, 2007).

Today, the European Union (EU) presents itself as a "normative power." The success of the European integration project has led to the EU's emergence as a distinct power in international relations, separate from other major powers.

Normative power differs from military and civilian power. The EU's actions in light of its normative power are significant and distinct from those of the United States and China.

Thus, the EU has built an image linking its actions with normative power, emphasizing multilateralism and the promotion of international law. The EU increasingly centers its foreign relations around its norms and focuses on shaping ordinary concepts on the international stage (Gulde, 2011).

9. Conclusion

Since human rights represent one of humanity's most basic needs, developments in the international system have transformed human rights from a mere idea in the public consciousness into a fundamental and strategic approach tied to the political life of nations.

The survival and observance of human rights depend on the proper actions and behavior of states within the international community. Major powers like the United States, the United Kingdom, and France have played roles in violating human rights in other countries, examples of which are seen in Yemen, Palestine, Syria, and Afghanistan.

Furthermore, actions such as the sale of arms to Saudi Arabia by France and the United States, leading to the killing of Yemeni civilians; repeated conflicts in Syria and baseless U.S. interventions; incitement of European countries to destabilize Syrian territory; and the gross human rights violations by the Israeli regime, heavily supported by the United States, all reveal the weakness and inefficiency of international organizations, particularly the United Nations.

Thus, until state power is restrained and there is a transformation in the concept of security and power within the international community—which normative theory can help achieve by providing a proper framework and recommendations—major powers will continue to evade human rights obligations.

Reducing the role of nation-states, especially their sovereign dimension, strengthening the idea of a global community, and promoting principles such as order and justice, alongside moderating power through international organizations, can greatly facilitate this goal.

The EU, presenting itself as a normative power, has emphasized its distinctiveness from other powers through norms based on multilateralism and international law promotion, illustrating the important and prominent role of normative theory in international relations and foreign policy.

In other words, to moderate the excessive power-seeking behaviors of major powers, normative frameworks must be applied so that states like the United States, the United Kingdom, and France can be persuaded to adhere to human rights standards.

Authors' Contributions

Authors contributed equally to this article.

Declaration

In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

Transparency Statement

Data are available for research purposes upon reasonable request to the corresponding author.

Acknowledgments

We would like to express our gratitude to all individuals helped us to do the project.

Declaration of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

Funding

According to the authors, this article has no financial support.

Ethical Considerations

In this research, ethical standards including obtaining informed consent, ensuring privacy and confidentiality were observed.

References

- Dehghanzadeh, M. h. (2021). A Comparative Study of Human Rights Monitoring and Enforcement Mechanisms in Iran and the United States of America. *Quarterly Journal of Political Sociology*, 4(1).
- Faraji, M. R. (2021). Emerging Powers and Hegemonic Order. *Strategic Quarterly*, 24(2), 197.
- Fellmeth, A. (2019). *US compliance with International human rights law obligations*.
- Greal, D. (2023). Human Rights and British Foreign Policy : case studies in middle power diplomacy. *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 4(36), 467-473. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09557571.2023.2228077>
- Gulde, J. (2011). *The EU anormative power on human rights*.
- Hua, X. (2022). *US commits serious crimes of violating Human rights in the Middle East and Beyond*. <https://global.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202208/09/WS62f2124aa310fd2b29e71356.htm>
- Kay, R. Normative systems and human rights. *Emory law Journal*, 7(71).
- Lequesne, C. (2022). *Support for Democracy and human rights in France*.
- Mehrpour, H. (2009). International mechanisms and their level of deterrence in human rights violations. *International Quarterly of Foreign Relations*, 4(1), 10-19.
- Mohammadi, A. R. (2006). France and Human Rights Violation. *Shamim Yas Magazine, Hozeh Information Database*(36), 4.
- Omorzakov, R. (2023). *The role of executive power in ensuring human rights*.
- Rahpeik, S. (2009). Serious violations of Human Rights in Gaza 2008-2009 under International Humanitarian law. *16*(2), 115-127.
- Raisi Kia, L., & Derakhshandeh, M. (2014). The role and position of human rights as soft power in America's Middle East policy. *International Relations Studies Quarterly*, 32(8), 226-227.
- Zargar, A. (2007). The normative theory of international relations in the contemporary world. *Foreign Policy Quarterly*, 21(3), 611-612.
- Zargar, A. (2019). Human rights in US Foreign policy. *International Journal of Political Science*, 4(19), 53-66.