

# United States Domestic Politics and Foreign Policy Agenda: Examining the United States Position on the Palestinian Statehood

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**Abstract:** *The United States has always clearly made its position known in respect of its foreign policies to sovereign states in the world including Palestine. So, Palestine featured prominently in US domestic politics as well as its foreign policy agenda. This is more particularly salient in view of the US key interest in the state of Israel and the entire Middle East. This study seeks to examine the objective view of United States' people represented in the Congress, key political actors as well as the foreign policy approach of the United States in bringing to an end the intractable Israel-Palestine conflict. A closer look at the age long conflict showed how public opinion in the streets of the United States has to a larger extent contributed to moderate the United States President's and the State Department's pronouncements and policy changes on the Palestine statehood. Although the United States has always demonstrated its firm support for the state of Israel since 1947, it has not completely trivialized and under – estimated the right of the Palestinians. The work is predominantly a literature – based study, chronicling the events and policy designs of different United States administrations as well as the internal political dynamics in the United States with respect to the impending Palestinian statehood. Again, the study suggests that the United States is not opposed to modern Palestine State aspiration, but always and certainly prefers a Palestinian State in Middle East that will not undermine its interest in the Middle East or threaten the survival of Israel as a sovereign entity.*

**Keywords:** Sovereignty, Foreign Policy, Statehood, Diplomacy, Peace Accord.

## INTRODUCTION

Every country has a clearly spelt out foreign policy goals it wants to pursue and attain. This to a larger extent determines how it will relate with other countries within the international system. The foreign policy designs are driven by a country's national interest. Again, domestic and environmental factors contribute in shaping a nation's foreign policy. So, it is only natural that the United States must design and define how it will relate with other countries of the world including countries that are at the verge of acquiring full sovereign statehood like Palestine.

Palestine is one of the territories contending for statehood for a very long time. Others include Taiwan and Western Sahara. Palestine is particularly very important to Washington in view of the volatile and unstable political state of the Middle East.

The United States has always made its position known in matters concerning the Palestine agitation for sovereign status, and Israel as a country that share boundaries with Palestine. The United States and its presidents are not opposed to the two-state negotiation over the years. They are, however, careful in matters dealing with how settlements and location of both Israel and Palestine will be done. They strongly support that Palestine should take charge of Eastern Jerusalem, and this means the resettlement or relocation of Israel elements in that axis. But Palestine always and consistently lays claim over Jerusalem, and vehemently opposed the location of US Embassies in Jerusalem instead of Telaviv. The issue of the true owners of the West Bank , Gaza, Jerusalem and others had been at the core of the un-ending and intractable Israel- Palestinian debacle over the years (Gorden, 2021.p14).

It is worthy to note that nations do not pursue foreign policy in isolation. There are so many considerations and events that may determine any foreign policy goal. They include, the national interest, the opinion of the citizens, the internal political dynamics and the like. In the case of the Palestinian issue, we would be examining how all these have defined the United States position in debates dealing with the statehood and sovereignty of Palestine. We intend to take an objective look at the United States position on the unending Israel- Palestinian conflict. Also, the positions of different administrations and presidents with respect to Palestinian aspirations to statehood will be examined (Rabe, 1995.p89).

The paper is divided as follows; the first part will deal with the introduction and conceptual clarifications. Key concepts that will offer direction and focus to this study will be explained. This will be followed by the statement of the problem. The second part will dwell on the US position on Palestinian statehood, the US position on Jerusalem statehood, the US position on Jerusalem and the Israel settlement. The third part will examine the prospect for peace and resolution of conflict. They will be followed by the conclusive statement.

## **PROBLEM STATEMENT**

It is no longer news that the Israel- Palestinians conflict had become the most discussed and intractable in the history of conflict in the world. Palestine, an aspiring sovereign state had consistently laid claim to Jerusalem as their traditional homeland, and are uncomfortable with any political arrangements that will transfer the ownership of the territory to Israel. Again, they have consistently demanded to be given a sovereign states within the United Nations/

Although it is their right to agitate and make a genuine demand for a sovereign state within the UN framework, it is particularly difficult to attain, when the issue of location, territorial ownership and boundary problem have not been addressed. The United States is not opposed to the two-state arrangement, but it preferred any brokered peace to deal with the age long settlement issue. That is the crux the matter.

Sadly, the many peace accords, several party talks, bilateral and multilateral dialogues had not addressed the lingering issue of territorial ownership and boundary demarcation. The two sides to the conflict are unyielding and this had always worsened and aggravated the conflict. A critical look at the whole issue reveals two major problems, the agitation for a sovereign status by Palestine in the absence of a final resolution of the settlement and boundary issue, and the escalation of crisis in the territory leading to colossal loss of lives and property due to the increasing tension and hostilities in the region.

## **STUDY METHODOLOGY**

The research is predominantly a literature- based study. This means that efforts was channeled at the reviewing existing literature on Palestine, statehood agitation and the United States role in terms of its domestic and foreign policy position towards Palestine. In furtherance of the application of the secondary data, monographs, documents, foreign policy dialogues, textbook, contemporary documents on Israel and Palestine will be used. The array of existing literature and data would be subjected to a through and objective analysis.

## **CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION**

This study had elected to define and explain some concepts, which will be helpful. The concepts include among others; foreign policy, states, sovereignty.

## **FOREIGN POLICY**

Foreign policy is a concept that has attracted many definitions, interpretations and attention in International Relations. But, there has never been a strong controversy as to the meaning of the concept among scholars. According to Joseph Frankel, foreign policy consists of decisions and actions, which involve to some extent relation between one state and the other (Frankel, 1970). Other scholars are of the view that foreign policy of a state would generally refer to the principles by which a state governs in relations to external environment (Lerche & Abdul, 1963). Also, Legg and Morrison defined foreign policy as a “set of explicit objective with regards to the world beyond the borders of a given social unit, and a set of strategies and tactics designed to achieve these objectives (Ekemam, 2015.p167).

Usually, states design and adjust their actions in such a way that it can minimize adverse, unfavorable condition and maximize the full benefit. At the heart of a country’s foreign policy posture is the tendency to achieve its overall national interest. It carefully designs policy options and strategies that will ensure maximum benefits. It is, therefore, on the basis of this, that countries spend fortunes in getting their foreign policy goals achieved. In the words of Usman, foreign policy is the pursuit of clearly articulated national or domestic interest and realities of state abroad. At the heart of such broad national interest that states pursue outside of its immediate environment, is the promotion of well-being and safety of its citizen (Usman, 2018).

## **SOVEREIGNTY:**

The concept of sovereignty has been developed since the days of Aristotle who contends that the senate of the Athenian State is sovereign, and that its laws should be the final. However, in the sixteenth century, the French political philosopher Jean Bodin gave it a new meaning. In his book titled; “Six Books of a Commonwealth”, Bodin argued that sovereignty refers to the source of the States’ authority regardless of its forms of government. Sovereignty may be vested in a King or in some elite group or even in corporate citizenry of the society over time. By way of definition, Jean Bodin defined sovereignty as the “absolute, perpetual, indivisible, complete, unlimited and supreme power over citizen of a state (Bodin, 1955). According to Bodin, the sovereign gives order to all but receive order from none.

Other scholars like Professor Raphael, has questioned the concept of sovereignty entirely in terms of the possession of supreme coercive power by the state. He reasons that the possession of supreme power is neither a necessary nor sufficient condition for a substantive claim to supreme authority.

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According to Raphael (1990,p 158).

Although it makes sense to speak of authority without power, political authority which ceases to be effective tends to lapse after a time even as authority since the prime purpose of political authority is to maintain order and security in matters of potential conflict, there seems no point in ascribing a right to a state to issue orders unless they have a fair chance of attaining their purpose. If a system of state law is to be valid, it must in general be effective ..... and since one cannot expect unanimous acknowledgment of legal authority or universal obedience in consequence of such acknowledgment, the authority of the law has to be joined with coercive power.

What this implies is that sovereignty should be conceived in terms of the ultimate authority in a nation state over and above which there is no authority. Sovereignty in the hallmark of the nation state.

John Locke and Jean Jacque Rousseau redefined sovereignty in terms of people rather than one single ruler. They contended that the ultimate power in any state rested with the people. John Locke in his work "Essays on civil government" wrote that the supreme power in the state lay with the people. According to him "the power of the state is limited, not absolute because it derives power from the people, and because it holds power in trust for the people. Jean Jacques Rousseau went further, and insisted that whenever the ruler violated or betrayed the trust of the people, the people had the right not to obey the sovereign, and to even overthrow his government (Baker, 1962,'p18).

Some of the modern views on sovereignty distinguishes between legal and political sovereignty. According to Professor A. V Dicey, the legal sovereignty is that person or body of persons having the power to make laws. The political sovereign on the other hand is that body of persons in the state whose will ultimately prevails and legal sovereignty in the making of law is bound to act according to their will (Nnah, 2002). Others like Jeremy Bentham, thinks of sovereignty in terms of the unlimited power of the legislature, and argued that this power is only morally limited by the possibility of justifiable resistance to its authority by individuals or groups.

#### **STATE:**

There is no single definition of the state. However, some radical writers like Karl Marx, Frederick Engels argued that the state is "essentially an expression of class relationship generated by a particular mode of production, and involved in the class struggle on the side of the dominant economic class. Marx and Engels whole that in a capitalist society, the executives of the modern state is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the bourgeoisie (Poggi, 1978).

Some regard the state as one organization that transcends class, and stands for the whole community. Other definitions have emphasized the political authority, the monopoly of force through government and political allegiance of citizens to the state. Some have regarded the state as the moral and good society where justice and the promotion of the general welfare of the people are established. Broadly speaking, the state is the political form of society. It is a community of men organized for preserving and creating order and general wellbeing of its members (Nnah, 2002'p35).

A later version of the conflict theory defines the state more than anything else, in terms of the possession of the monopoly of the use of force. Norman Barry has however, stated that such theories by seeing the state solely in terms of voluntary coercion, thereby including two possibilities:

- i. That the state may not simply act coercively in terms of maintaining law and order, but also act on non-coercive manner such as the delivery of welfare services.
- ii. That other institutions in society may equally act coercively towards individuals. Theorists have, however, taken care of such criticism by stating that the state is the organization that possesses the monopoly for the legal use of force (Barry, 1979)

#### **BACKGROUND STATEMENT**

The middle East has long been of central importance to the United States as successive administrations pursued a broad set of inter-related goals including securing vital energy resources, staving off soviet and Iranian influence, ensuring the survival and security of Israel and its Arab allies, countering terrorism, promoting democracy and reducing refuge flows ( Gorden, 2021).

Correspondingly, the United State has sought to resolve the Israel- Palestinian conflict, which has been a major driver of regional dynamics, with an eye toward obtaining these strategic objectives while balancing its support for Israel and pushing for broader regional stability. At the same time, the dispute has been a core concern of the American Jewish community and Christian evangelicals both strong supporters of Israel.

However, some experts say the US interest in resolving the conflict has waned in recent years. After the start of the Arab Spring in 2011, other regional conflict such as wars in Syria Yemen, Iran push for dominance in the region and terrorist group such as Al Qaeda, and the self-proclaimed Islamic state posed more immediate threat to the US interest. Additionally, the US relation with Iran and the Arab Gulf states no longer seem to hinge on Israel-Palestine issue, making the conflict even less of a priority [Gorden, 2021]. Phillip Gorden worked on Middle East peace negotiation at the white house during the Obama administration. In January 2021, Gorden was appointed deputy National security adviser to the vice President Kamala Harris. The US interest in the greater middle east faded as other region gained priority, as highlighted by the Obama administrations pivot to Asia”.

The Trump administration reignited controversy over the disputed region by siding with Israel on various matters, breaking with decades of US policy aimed at serving as a neutral broker in negotiations. The Joe Biden administration has so far signaled that it will promote equal right for Israel and Palestine rather than focus on resolving the over- arching disputes.

## **THE UNITED STATES AND ISRAELI\_ - PALESTINE CONFLICT**

The United State has been a central player for more than half a century. It became involved shortly after the World war II, joining the United Kingdom in a 1946 inquiry that recommended one hundred thousand holocaust survivors relocate to Palestine, which would be neither a Jewish nor an Arab State. The United States then became the first country to recognize Israel as Sovereign nation in 1948 (Ojo, 2014).

After the 1967 six days war, the United State attempted to mediate the broader Arab-Israel conflict along with Britain, France, Russia and the United Nations. However, it was the 1973 war in which Israel struggled early on to defend itself against invading Egyptian and Syrian forces, that compelled the United States to take the lead in future diplomacy. Although Israel won the conflict militarily, the Arab powers delivered a major psychological blow.

The war was also a major turning point for the US foreign policy, in that it prompted Arab oil producer to impose a harmful oil embargo on the United State, and it brought the United State and USSR which armed Egypt and Syria close to a nuclear confrontation after a period of détente. The war also proved a boon for the Palestine cause, with the Arab League recognizing Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestine people in 1974 (Ross, 2004).

In the months after the fighting, the United State Secretary of States, Henry Kissinger served as the principal intermediary between the Arab States and Israel. His shuttle diplomacy among Middle East capitals in 1974 and 1975 helped to de-escalate the war and disentangle the combatants.

In 1978, the US president Jimmy Carter hosted the Camp David Peace talk between Israel and Egypt, which produced two framework that would lay a foundation for future Middle East diplomacy. The first called for talks involving Egypt, Israel, Jordan and the Palestine about Palestine self-rule in Gaza and West Bank. The second called for a peace treaty between Egypt and Israel, which the two government signed in 1979 at the White House. Though Jordan was also a party in the 1973 war, it did not join the talks, fearing condemnation from other nations. A separate Israel-Jordan peace treaty was signed in 1974 (Gorden, 2021).

Although the United States was left out of negotiating the 1993 Oslo peace Accord, under which Palestine leaders recognized Palestinian autonomy in Gaza and West Bank, the disputing parties signed the final agreement at the white House. The US and the Clinton administration played a larger role in 1998, when it sponsored negotiation between Israel and the Palestine liberation Organization that led to the “Clinton Parameters” for the establishment of a two state solution. Since then, successive organizations have proposed their own plan for a two-state solution: George Bush Road map to peace, Secretary of State John Kerry’s Six principles, and Donald Trump’s peace to prosperity (Blackwell, 2021).

While trying to broker a deal between the parties, the United States has shielded Israel from International criticism, which some say has hindered diplomacy to resolve the conflict. Since 1970, the United States has used its veto power as a permanent member of the UN Security Council to block resolutions censuring Israel dozens of time because it sees the United Nation as a forum that is biased against Israel. Since 1980, the United States has only once allowed the Security Council to condemn Israel for its settlement constructions in late 2016, when the outgoing Obama administration abstained from a vote on the matter (Spillus, 2011).

Many analysts say Trump abandoned the role of honest broker between Israel and Palestine, and adopted a firmly pro-Israel stance. In August 2020, the Trump administration mediated on agreements between Israel and UAE, known as the “Abraham Accord”, in which the two countries pledged to begin normalizing ties. Bahrain, Sudan, Morocco later announced similar US brokered deals. Opponents of the normalization say these moves betray the Palestinian cause, as the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative stipulates that Arab League members will establish relation with Israel only after the creation of a Palestinian state , among other conditions. The Joe Biden administration welcomed the accord, and said it will encourage other nations to seek normalization with Israel, but noted such agreements are not a substitute for Israel- Palestinian Peace (Blinken, 2021).

In 2021, after days of renewed violence in which Israel air strike destroyed targets in Gaza and Hamas and other Palestinian militant groups fired rockets at Israel, the Joe Biden administration reportedly worked behind the scene to help establish a cease fire between Israel and Hamas. Biden reiterated US support for Israel's right to defend itself while vowing humanitarian assistance for Palestine in Gaza.

### **THE UNITED STATES POSITION ON PALESTINIAN STATEHOOD**

President Joe has admitted that he will continue the nearly two-decade of the US support for a two-state solution, which calls for separate Israel-Palestinian states, with borders resembling those that existed before the 1967 war. This territory include the Gaza strip, the West Bank and part of Eastern Jerusalem. The "Clinton Parameters" provided the outlines for the establishment of a Palestinian state and the resolution of the other final status issues. George W. Bush became the first US president to publicly endorse a Palestinian state which was represented in the "2003 road map for peace" plan put forward by Russia and the UN. The Obama administration also tried to advance a two-state solution, but talks collapsed in 2014 over disagreement on settlements, the release of Palestinian prisoners and other issues. In 2016, secretary of State John Kerry outlined "principles" for a two state solution based on those final status talk (Ojo, 2014).

Donald Trump's plan dubbed "Peace to prosperity" would have established a Palestinian state but given Israel sovereignty over an essentially undivided Jerusalem, including the old city and the holy sites, relegating the Palestinian capital to a sliver of East Jerusalem. The plan did not grant Palestinian refugees the right to return to their former lands, but promised some \$50b worth of investments in a developing Palestinian state. The conceptual map provided in Trump's plan suggested that the Palestinian territory in the West Bank would shrink to 70% as Israel annexed the Jordan valley and all its settlement there. Critics called the plan, which was created without consulting Palestinian leaders, a win for Israel on all major final status issue, and the Palestinian authority rejected it.

Despite the long standing support for two state solution, the United States has traditionally not supported Palestinian bid for statehood at the United Nations, saying this matter should only be decided through negotiations with Israel. The Palestinian authorities has yet to gain enough support for the bid, but in 2017, one hundred and thirty eight ( 138) countries at the UN General Assembly voted to recognize Palestine as a non-member observer state.

### **THE UNITED STATES POSITION ON JERUSALEM**

When the UN General Assembly voted to divide British controlled Palestine into separate Arab and Jewish states in 1947, it set aside the city of Jerusalem as a "Corpus separatum" or separate body, recognizing its shared religious significance for Christian- Jews and Muslims. However, newly independent Israel established its seat of Government in the Western half of the city, and later captured East Jerusalem from Jordan in 1967. Israel then expanded the municipal borders of Jerusalem to incorporate neighbouring Palestinian town effectively annexed it ( Ojo, 2014).

As part of the 1993 Oslo Accord, the last significant agreement in the dispute Israel and Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) affirmed the claims to Jerusalem would only be decided in a final status negotiation. Today, Israel views all the Jerusalem as it's capital, while the Palestinian authorities claims East Jerusalem as the seat of a future Palestinian state, viewing Israel's hold on the land as an occupation ( Ross, 2004).

For decades, the United States and most others that have relation with Israel kept their embassies in Telaviv, so as not to pre-empt a future peace deal. Although, a 1995 US Law required the relocation of the US embassy to Jerusalem, successive presidents waived the requirements to protect the national security interest of the United States (Blinken, 2021).

However, Donald Trump's declined to do so in 2017, instead moving the embassy to Jerusalem, and recognizing the city as Israel's capital. Supporters of the relocation argued that there was no national security imperative prohibiting the move, and that the United States diplomatic representation to Israel ought to be based at the country's seat of Government. The announcement prompted Palestine officials to break off relation with the Trump administration. Although Joe Biden has re-established these ties, he has said the US embassy will remain in Jerusalem. Biden also announced his intention to re-open the Palestinian mission in Washington, and the US consulate in East Jerusalem, both of which Donald Trump's closed. However, doing so will be difficult. A 1987 law circumvented by Trump's predecessors bans the Palestinian from having a mission in the United States, and the Trump administration passed a legislation to block future leaders from waiving the restrictions.

### **THE UNITED STATES POSITION ON ISRAEL SETTLEMENTS**

Shortly after the 1967 war, Israel began building settlements in some of the territories it had acquired. Settlement construction began under Labour party government seeking to strengthen defense in part of the West Bank that had seen heavy fighting during the Arab-



Israel's wars, but it increased rapidly as some settlers viewed the land as their religious and historical right and others found economic incentives to live there. By 2019, some 600,000 Israel's were living in settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

For years, the United States officially condemned these settlements, branding them as obstacles to peace, but avoided out rightly calling them illegal to avoid the possibility that Israel would face international sanctions. A 1978 State Department's legal opinion stated that Jewish settlements in occupied territory are not admissible under International Law, yet President Reagan stated in 1981 interview that the settlements were ill-advised but not illegal. George H.W Bush was the first President to link the amount of aid that Israel would receive to its settlement building, deducting the cost of settlement construction from US war guarantees. However, Bill Clinton allowed exemptions for settlement construction in East Jerusalem and the natural growth.

In 2004, George W. Bush wrote a letter to Israel prime minister Ariel Sharon recognizing that the new realities or settlements would make it impossible for Israel to revert to pre 1967 borders in any peace agreement. Most administrations came to believe that Israel would keep its three largest settlements blocks in exchange for ceding other land to the Palestinians in any peace deal, thinking it unrealistic that Israel could force so many of its citizen to leave the settlements. While the Obama administration took actions to shield Israel from political movement that sought to penalize Israel's businesses operating in the West Bank, it also delivered a rebuke of Israel's settlements by abstaining from a United Nations security council vote declare the settlement illegal (Aumann, 1988).

As it did with other components of the Israel-Palestine conflict, the Trump administration pivoted to a view of Jewish settlement that was markedly pro-Israel. In November, 2019, the United States Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo voiced disagreement with the 1978 State Departments opinion, saying civilian settlements in the West Bank are not inconsistent with international law, and not an obstacle to the peace process. The announcement prompted more than 100 members of the congress to sign a letter of disapproval. Then CFR Fellow Gorden, wrote that "If there was already a yellow light from the United States for settlement expansion", the Trump administration just turned it green (Cohen, 2013, Michael, 2018).

Under Trump's Peace Plan, Israel would have absorbed 30% of the West Bank by extending sovereignty to all Jewish settlements there, and to the Jordan valley. Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was expected to move forward with annexation in July 2020, a proposal condemned by the United States lawmakers from major parties, human rights experts, and leaders worldwide. However, as part of the "Abraham Accord" with the United Arab Emirate, Israel agreed to halt annexation temporarily.

### **PROSPECT FOR A RESOLUTION OF THE CONFLICT**

The outlook for Israel-Palestinian negotiation is bleak. It is highly unlikely that the Palestinian will receive a package of concession from Israel that is more favourable than those that the Palestinian have rejected in the Past. Some experts have suggested that the prospect for a two-state solution will continue to fade, especially if the Israel's government annexes settlements in the West Bank and Jordan valley, action it agreed to suspend as part of the "Abraham Accord" with the United Arab Emirate. Again, many analyst say that the recent Arab-Israel's normalization deal, as well as the 2021 Israel-Hamas conflict, have reduced the likelihood of new talks between Israel and the Palestinian authority. Meanwhile, political divisions between Hamas and Palestinian authority remain a challenge to any future negotiated settlement.

Experts say these dynamics have raised the prospect of a one-state outcome, which many view as perilous given the possibility that with Arabs forming at least half of the population, Israel would no longer be a Jewish State. And if Israel were to deny Palestinian equal rights in order to remain a Jewish state, that would undermine its future as a democracy. Despite these concerns, there is the growing interest in the notion of a one state solution. It has become more popular among Israel, and a 2021 poll of the Palestinians showed that just over 1/3<sup>rd</sup> would support it.

### **OVERVIEW OF THE UNITED STATES' ADMINISTRATIONS FOREIGN POLICIES TOWARDS PALESTINE**

It is important at this point to take a critical look at the Foreign policy positions, responses of different United States administration towards the Palestine question and its statehood. First, we begin with the Ronald Reagan's administration. During his administration, it is on note that Reagan issued a presidential waiver to the anti-terrorism act to allow contact with the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO). This is because the Palestinian Liberation Organization accepted the United Nations Security Council's Resolution 242 and 338, and recognized Israel's right to exist. They also renounced terrorism, a condition for open dialogue between the United States and Palestine (Ehrenfeld, 2016).

Under the George H.W. Bush administration, dialogue between the United States and Palestinian Liberation Organization continued. But it was suspended in June 1990 following Palestine Liberation Organization's refusal to condemn an attack on Israel's coastline by PLO front. Again, relations between the United States and Palestine strained when the PLO leader Yasser Arafat supported Saddam Hussein invasion of Kuwait in the 1990 (Yousef, 2020).

The Bill Clintons administration altered the United States official position towards Palestinian Liberation Organisations. Clinton supported the goal of a Palestinian state, but refrained from expressing this in public until the closing months of his administration. To Clinton's credit, the suspended peace talk between the United States and Palestine was resumed. There was also the signing of the Sept 13, 1993 Oslo Accord (Ojo, 2014, Ross, 2010). After the Oslo Accord signing, Yasser Arafat, the PLO leader, became a regular visitor to the White House in Washington D.C. Also Bill Clinton brokered the Israel-Palestinian cease fire agreement in October 1996 and October 1998 (Ojo, 2014). Again, the Palestinian Liberation office was upgraded and renamed the PLO Mission to the United States (Federal Register, 1994).

During the George W. Bush (JR) administration, the United State's attitude to Palestine changed. George Bush refrained from meeting Yasser Arafat. Following Arafat's death in 2004, president Mahmood Abbas, the new Palestine leader began to visit the White house. Bush referred to Abbas as the "Chairman". George Bush viewed that any final states agreement , that is , a two-state solution must be agreed by both Israel and Palestine (Ojo, 2014).

Relation between Palestine and the United States improved under Barack Obama administration. Obama pledged support for the establishment of Palestinian state. This encouraged the regular visit of Mahmood Abbas to the Whitehouse between 2009 and 2014. In 2010, the Palestinian Liberation Organization was upgraded and renamed the PLO General Delegation to the United States. In 2011, the United States gave the Palestinian Authority \$200m budget support (news conference, 2011).

In the late 2011, relation between the US and Palestine worsened when Palestine sought UN membership for a Palestinian state. Israel and the United States regarded that as a unilateral act. Barrack Obama told Mahmood Abbas that the United States will veto United Nations Security council move to recognize Palestine Statehood (Spillus, 2011). Palestine later applied to the United nations General Assembly, which in 2012 November, voted to admit Palestine as an observer state. The United States voted against this (State Departments, Report).

Donald Trump's administration totally supported Israel's position on the settlement issues and Palestinian Statehood. It is on record that Mahmood Abbas visited Trump in May 2017, but his offence of ordering the killing of children infuriated Trump and he closed the PLO's office in Washington. He thereafter recognized Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. Mahmood Abbas condemned Trump's action (Haaretz, 2020).

The Joe Biden's administration announced on January 20, 2021 that it would restore relationship with Palestine, and provide aid to Palestine. On May, 25 2021, the United States secretary of state Anthony Blinken announced that the United States would reopen its Palestinian consulate in Jerusalem, but no specific date was given (Blinken, 2021). In June 2022, the Palestinian Affairs Unit (PAU) was renamed the United States office on Palestinian Affairs. This office will report directly to Washington on substantive matters (The Guardian, June, 2022).

## **CONCLUSION**

It is an established fact that the Middle East has been central to the United States as successive administration consistently pursued a broad set of goals including achieving a foreign policy that advanced and promoted the US hegemonic position in the region. The United States had maintained a strong position when it comes to Israel's-Palestinian relationship especially in respect of the settlement issues and Palestinian aspiration for statehood. Again, the Israel-Palestinian dispute over the contested territories has been a core concern of American Jews and Christian Evangelicals.

Having said this, it is clear, therefore that the political relation between Palestinians and the United States has been complex since 1960. While the United States does not recognize the state of Palestine, it recognized the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) as the legitimate representation entity for the Palestinian people following the 1993 Oslo accord. Again, it recognized the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) as the legitimate Palestinian government. A closer look at the different United States administration's foreign policy posture to Palestine reveals that the United States had strongly maintained their opposition to Palestinian State achieved without mutual acceptance of such by both Israel and Palestine. So, a two-state solution can only be possible if there is a consummation of the States agreement, and acceptance by Israel

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