


Aidization of Weapon, Weaponization of Aid: The US-Israel Interventionist Aid in Israeli-Palestinian War

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ABSTRACT

The contemporary dynamic of Aid relations has developed beyond the discussion of development and humanitarian motives, as the emerging Interventionist Aid Phase has captured aid as the center of International Relations development. This research aims to integrate the Interventionist Aid Model analysis within the US-Israel Aid relation, particularly in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian War. The research focuses on the dynamic between these two as donor and recipient and how they influence the war. The result shows that the US-Israeli aid relationship is indeed an interventionist aid. However, this research concluded that the US-Israel aid relation was the dawn of the Interventionist Aid Phase instead of the Russo-Ukrainian war. This paper found the development of 'anarchical' aid within the US-Israel aid relation. This paper also found that the type of aid in the US-Israel relationship is one of the donor-recipient partnerships and a type of aidization of Weapons International Aid Public Policy. This research uses a qualitative-descriptive research type with a literature review method. The analysis was conducted using the three dimensions of the Interventionist Aid Model: the political, conceptual, and historical dimensions.

Keywords: Aidization, interventionist aid, Israeli-Palestinian war, US-Israel.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Contemporary war might have largely differed from past world wars(s) in terms of ways and battle technicalities, but one thing remains the same: the desire to win the war no matter what it takes. Thus, new means of warfare strategy emerged, and Pellicciari (2022) identified using aid as one of the emerging war tools and strategies. As for how aid found a place in the warfare and battle strategy realm, it needs to be understood that the study of International Relations (IR) has several notions as key identification of aid. Malacalza (2019) identified aid in IR into three identifications:

1. Aid as a foreign policy tool,
2. Aid as a separate means from politics that has its altruistic principles and morality,
3. Aid as an outcome of multiple constituents' interactions.

Under this identification, it is feasible for aid to be a tool of war, as aid is very much a political matter, and in Clausewitzian logic, war has always been described as the ultimate continuation of politics (Dimitriu, 2020). Nevertheless, this is an entirely different case with humanitarian relief aid that focuses on the victims of war; rather, these aids are elements that would be part of war's reinforcements like weaponries. The existing research on aid's involvement in war often focused more on the role of aid organizations and aid's effectiveness in solving humanitarian crises or post-conflict development (Girod, 2012; Narang, 2015; Polman, 2010).

Furthermore, the existing research on US-Israeli aid has long been focused on two paradigms, which are (1) the US-Israel aid relations as a form of the US's geopolitical interest in the Middle East or (2) pro-Israeli constituents in the US domestic politics that always pushed for such aid schemes (Wang,



2021). This means the US-Israel aid relation has always been centralized on the US itself as the donor and less on the overall dynamic of both, especially concerning the endless Israeli-Palestinian war (Ali, 2018; Ali *et al.*, 2016; Gilboa, 2023; Khan, 2015; Qaddoura *et al.*, 2019; Wang, 2021; Yahaya, 2020). This research also differs from Findley (2018) research on the probability of aid to cause war, as it would focus on the direct use of aid in war. Aid as a foreign policy tool might already be a long-discussed notion, but the research on aid as a direct war tool has yet to be explored. Thus, Pellicciari (2022) concluded that the aid regime entered a new ‘Interventionist Aid’ phase when the Russo-Ukrainian war began in 2022. However, this article would argue that the act of ‘Interventionist Aid’ itself has been done much sooner, especially in a contemporary decades-long war like Israel-Palestine. This article found varying similarities between the utilization of aid regimes in the Russo-Ukrainian war and the Israel-Palestinian war. This is particularly on the role of Western countries, or the United States (US) especially, as the main donor and its relationship dynamic with the recipient of each war, Ukraine and Israel. Thus, whereas Pellicciari (2023) Interventionist Aid model’s research is focused on the Russo-Ukrainian war, this article would implement a similar framework to seek the novelty, peculiarities, and dynamics of aid utilization in the Israeli-Palestinian war with a specific focus on the US aid toward Israel in times of war. This article found that the Interventionist Aid model has fundamental differences with the more mainstream Foreign Aid model, such as differences in the Donor-Recipient relations dynamic, which could be uniquely identified in the study case. This research is divided into a few main analytical sections:

1. Laying the ground framework of the shift from ‘Foreign Aid’ to ‘International Aid Public Policy,’ which gives more leverage to understand the Interventionist Aid Model,
2. Breaking down the three dimensions of the Interventionist Aid Model,
3. Analyzing the US’s aid to Israel in war times data through the three main dimensions,
4. Concluding the dynamics of the Israeli-Palestinian War in shaping the Interventionist Aid phase and re-affirming the increasing utilization of aid as a warfare and battle strategy.

2. THEORY

Pellicciari (2022), in ‘*Re-framing Foreign Aid History and Politics*,’ began by proposing the reconceptualization of ‘Foreign Aid’ to be ‘International Aid Public Policy’ (IAPP). Pellicciari aimed to reconstruct the definition of state-funded aid using a realist-based approach so that the focus would be directed to the dynamic of power politics. Pellicciari asserted three distinctive elements of IAPP, which are:

1. For donor and recipient at an equal level of analysis,
2. To give priority to the donor’s and recipient’s political motive(s), putting the declared need of the recipient in the second place,
3. Considering any type of transaction on favorable terms between states, regardless of the object and the form of transaction.

Simply put, Pellicciari emphasized that aid, first and foremost, is a *political move* and has a central influence on the current dynamics of international relations. Pellicciari believes that to understand aid’s influence on the international structure, the primary factor that needs to be understood is the historical relations among actors rather than the action of aid itself. Following this paradigm shift, this research will use the term ‘International Aid Public Policy’ (IAAP) instead of ‘Foreign Aid’. Pellicciari (2022) explains the components of IAPP: Aid, international, public, and policy, with definitions mapped in Table I.

For Pellicciari (2022), aid was reconceptualized to the scope, which included any two parties’ transactions carried out on ‘favorable terms’ no matter the aid’s object. Pellicciari has a few arguments to justify this conceptualization shift. The first is that aid should be used as a lens to understand a state’s foreign policy, specifically the type of relation between donors and recipients, instead of just

TABLE I: DEFINITION OF THE COMPONENTS OF IAPP

Component	Definition
Aid	Any kind of transaction between a donor and a recipient
International	Donor and recipient belong to two different countries
Public	Financed through a public budget (related to central or local government)
Policy	Continuous set of actions planned on mid-to long-term objectives

Note: Adapted from Pellicciari (2022).

TABLE II: THREE DIMENSIONS OF THE INTERVENTIONIST AID MODEL

Dimension	Characteristics
Political	Interventionist aid <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Success-oriented aid • Donor-recipient partnership • Recipient-driven aid
Conceptual	Realist approach reinforced/three IAPP spin-offs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weaponization of aid • Aidization of weapons (and sanctions) • Aid as a component of an anarchical war
Historical	The new Interventionist Aid phase

Note: Adapted from Pellicciari (2023).

determining whether aid must be sent to a specific recipient. Second, donors and recipients should be put on an equal level of analysis instead of only focusing on what kinds of assistance are given to the recipients. Lastly, the historical variables of aid phases and evolution will be included much more in the analysis. Pellicciari (2023) then proposed a new Interventionist Aid model based on the definition of IAPP and research on aid given in the Russo-Ukrainian War. In contrast, the model results from peculiarities that emerged in the aid regime of the Russo-Ukrainian war. *Interventionist Aid* is defined as wide-ranging inter-state deals that are given to take an active part in the crisis to condition its course and outcome and define primarily political objectives.

Pellicciari (2023) then presented the Interventionist Aid model, emphasizing it as a revolution of aid composed of three dimensions, which are Political, conceptual, and historical (see Table II):

1. The *political dimension* deals with presenting Interventionist Aid as a form of political interest, whether the related aid has the characteristics of Interventionist aid, assessing the development of the relationship between donor recipients, and classifying aid based on the relationship between the donors and recipients. This dimension would be used to mainly analyze the donor-recipient dynamics between the US and Israel in the Israeli-Palestinian war.
2. The *conceptual dimension* is a re-operationalization of aid, using the realist approach to analyze the influence of aid interventions in war, to analyze the donor's motivation in giving aid in accordance with its political motive, and to discuss the *aidization of weapon-weaponization of aid* paradigm as part of aid's growing role in the war. This dimension is used to analyze the study case with a realist approach to analyze the aid's position within the Israeli-Palestinian war.
3. The *historical dimension* explains the evolution of aid. Pellicciari (2023) identified a few phases of aid that eventually led to the new Interventionist Aid phase as the emerging phase in the status quo. This dimension determines when the US's aid to Israel entered the new Interventionist Aid phase.

3. METHOD

This qualitative-descriptive research uses literature review methods. Qualitative-descriptive research is used to understand and explore the phenomenon, whereas the researcher interprets the meaning of the data gathered and provides descriptions of experiences and perceptions regarding a certain phenomenon and case (Creswell, 2017; Doyle et al., 2020). The literature review method uses existing research, writings, and other relevant publications to assess the research scope in order to seek the aim of the study, which is used to justify the research question and problem (Synder, 2019). This research type and methods are used to understand the role of aid in the Israeli-Palestinian war from the US (as the donor) to Israel (as the recipient) from the perspective of the Interventionist Aid model by reviewing existing literature and research to achieve the intended result of how Interventionist Aid develops between the US-Israel in Israeli-Palestinian war.

4. DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

4.1. The US-Israel Aid Relations

The US and Israel have been known as one of the tightest alliances that has lasted ever since Israel's independence in 1948. Sharp (2022) explains that Israel is the 'largest cumulative recipient' of the US's IAAP since World War II, with involved principles and goals such as the US's support for Israel's security, the shared goal in the Middle East, historical ties from Israel's creation, and the US's primary bilateral recipient-partner. Most of the US's bilateral aid is a form of military assistance. This priority in military assistance has been proven by the third signing of their Military Aid 10-year Memorandum of

TABLE III: TOTAL OF THE US FOREIGN ASSISTANCE TO ISRAEL IN 1946–2021 (IN MILLION USD)

Fiscal year	Military	Economic	Missile defense	Total
1946–2019	101,206.200	34,336.000	6,911.409	142,453.609
2020	3,300.000	–	500.000	3,800.000
2021	3,300.000	–	500.000	3,800.000
Total	107,806.200	34,336.000	7,911.409	150,053.609

Note: Source: Sharp (2022).

Understanding (MoU). The US would grant \$33 billion in foreign military financing and \$5 billion in missile defense for 2019–2028 (Sharp, 2022). This is not yet including the Biden Administration’s appeal for an additional \$3.3 billion for foreign military financing and \$500 million for missile defense aid in 2022, and another (would-be) \$14.5 billion aid package passed by the US’s House of Representatives in response of recent October 7 Israeli-Palestinian war, although it was rejected in the Senate (Falk, 2023; Sharp, 2022). Up to 2021, the US’s IAPP has accumulated to \$150,053.609 million, with aid distribution in military, economic, and missile defense sectors (see Table III).

The US has also been consistent in the amount of aid budget given toward Israel, amounting to \$3 billion on average since the 1980s. The US also consistently focused on the Conflict, Peace, and Security sector, including military and defense aid (see Fig. 1). This trend of the US focusing on military and defense sectors has been consistent throughout the years. With 2022 the Conflict, Peace, and Security budget alone reaching \$3.3 billion, even though the total amount of aid given in 2022 was \$3.308 billion (see Fig. 2). More than 90% of the aid went to the Conflict, Peace, and Security sector.

Ali et al. (2016) called Israel ‘the special case’ of the US’s IAPP (Foreign Aid) policy, which is not far from the truth. Scholars have explained various reasons for this predicament. Past research on the US-Israel Aid relations has focused on two paradigms; the influence paradigm, which focuses on the role of pro-Israel groups within the US’s domestic politics, and the self-interest paradigm, which focuses on the US’s geopolitical interest in the Middle East (Wang, 2021). These two paradigms dominate the discussion due to the focus on the US as the donor and the implication that aid is a foreign policy tool. These two paradigms explain the aid relation of the US-Israel, particularly the self-interest paradigm that dominates most of the US’s aid discussions and research. Israel and US do share similar geopolitical and geostrategic interests in the Middle East, particularly after Israel’s victory in the 1967 Arab-Israeli war that elevated Israel’s power in the region, Israel as the US’s sure gateway to influence the power politics on the field, various commentaries of how ‘unique’ and ‘special’ throughout the history, the US’s oil interest in Middle East, as well as the existence of shared values of democracy and

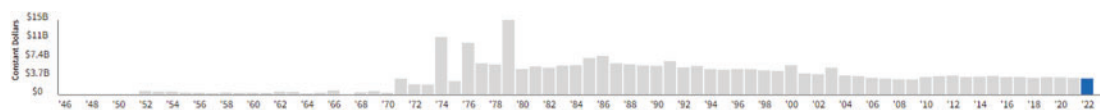


Fig. 1. Trend of the US aid budget toward Israel in 1946–2022.



Fig. 2. Trend of aid sector in the US aid for Israel in 2022 (Source: US Foreign Assistance, n.d.).

Judeo-Christian values that kept pro-Israel interest groups within the US's domestic politics sphere (Ali, 2018; Ali *et al.*, 2016; Gilboa, 2023; Khan, 2015). However, more importantly, the US-Israel aid relation was built on the existence of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, as their relationship has grown due to the US being the first state to acknowledge Israel as a sovereign state in 1948. It is important to note that the the US-Israel aid relation cannot be separated from the dynamic of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that become the root of the US focusing on massive military and defense aid.

In the case of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict(s) and war(s), the US's degree of involvement depended on the leading administration at the time. For instance, Obama asserted that America would not 'turn their back on Palestinian's legitimate right for a state' and 'asked' Benjamin Netanyahu to stop the expansion of Israeli settlements in Gaza and the West Bank (Khan, 2015). One of Obama's campaigns was also to conduct a peace settlement between Israel and Palestine. Obama conducted meetings and appointed the US as the peace mediator. However, unfortunately, it failed due to Benjamin Netanyahu and his far-right, ultranationalist administrations that did not budge on their stance to hold the occupied territories (Terry, 2017). What Obama did was similar to the US's 1991 attempt to mediate Israel and the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), which resulted in the creation of the Oslo Accords. However, it was also shortly-lived (Erdoğan & Habash, 2020).

On the other hand, the Trump administration showed blatant support toward Netanyahu's regime through bold moves such as recognizing Jerusalem as Israel's new capital city, moving the US embassy to Jerusalem, cutting the US's funding for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) for Palestine, and creating a 'Peace Strategy' that favored Netanyahu's demand (Erdoğan & Habash, 2020; Yahaya, 2020). In the recent Biden administration, Biden's responses are mostly highlighted in his response toward the 7 October-kickstarted Israeli-Palestinian war. President Biden chose to support Israel's military campaign with the justification that it is within Israel's right of self-defense to combat Hamas, and the failed-to-pass \$14 billion aid package that showed America's consistent massive support toward Israel (Falk, 2023; Gambino, 2023). At the time of this research's writing (December of 2023), the Biden administration reportedly has been accelerating weapons transfer to Israel, the US has vetoed several Israeli-Palestinian Gaza humanitarian ceasefire resolutions on October 18 and December 8, and all the US's support has contributed to a disproportionate war where around 18,000 Palestinians killed in the war (Guyer, 2023; Nichols, 2023; UN News, 2023).

Thus, two things remain unchanged throughout history: the US's use of veto power on United Nations (UN) resolutions on any Israeli-Palestinian conflict to give Israel diplomatic protection and the constant large amount of aid, especially in the security and defense sector. Therefore, it can be inquired that:

1. The US has, and will always be at the beck-and-call for Israel's protection,
2. The US is consistent in treating Israel as its 'special recipient' for aid,
3. The US has an extensive role as Israel's supporter of the Israeli-Palestinian war, with the majority of aid being in the form of military and missile defense aid.

This is where the hypothesis of Interventionist Aid originated. In contrast, the US's aid has always been and keeps on playing a central role in influencing the dynamic of the Israeli-Palestinian war.

4.2. *The Interventionist Aid Model Analysis*

In 'Interventionist Aid and The War in Ukraine,' Pellicciari (2023) begins with identifying peculiarities within the huyeRusso-Ukrainian war that are connected with the role of aid, such as the speed and efficacy of aid delivery, treating Ukraine as a recipient-partner or a recipient treated as an equal political partner, the use of the weapon as primary aid, and western donors' primary role in navigating the war. All these shared similarities with what has escalated between the US-Israel throughout the Israeli-Palestinian war. Therefore, this research deemed that a similar analysis framework, which is the Interventionist Aid model, can be implemented to break the dynamic of the US-Israel aid related to the Israeli-Palestinian war, thus justifying the paper's argumentation on the US-Israel as the dawn of Interventionist Aid model as opposed to the Russo-Ukrainian war as the one triggered the new phase. In order to arrive at that conclusion, this section focuses on analyzing the US-Israel Aid in the Israeli-Palestinian war through the three dimensions of the Interventionist Aid model.

4.2.1. *Political Dimension*

Pellicciari (2023) emphasized that the Interventionist Aid model has reinforced the intersectionality between IAPP and a state's foreign policy interest. Thus began the turning point toward the Interventionist Aid phase, marked by donors' attention to achieve the expected result of IAPP given to the recipient for war. Pellicciari called this attention 'Success-Oriented Aid,' which in this context is the push to give aid that will elevate the probability of winning a war. The reason why war needed to be won is that it directly correlated with the fulfillment of the donor's political interest. For the US,

Israel must win, or at least Israel must be the side that overwhelms the other in order to maintain its geopolitical interest in the Middle East. This support can be traced back to Israel's victory in the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, whereas [Baroud \(2020\)](#) stated that American military aid and armament contributed to the victory. The newest one, as stated in the previous section, is the attempt at a \$14 billion aid package and several vetoes that may result in a truce/halt of the Israeli-Palestinian war to make sure that Israel may express their 'right of self-defense.' This paper argues that those acts are within the definition realm of aid in the IAPP, as they were carried out within favorable terms, and they can be considered as a political transaction, as under IAPP, the form of the object in the transaction does not matter. Thus, the consequence of success-oriented aid is some emerging dynamic between donors and recipients. Pellicciari categorized it into two kinds of aid: Donor-Recipient Partnership and Recipient-Driven aid.

The orientation of the aid's success led the state donors to treat their recipient more as an equal transaction partner rather than a simple receiver, where [Pellicciari \(2023\)](#) called them 'Recipient-Partner.' [Pellicciari \(2023\)](#) argued that Interventionist Aid has pushed for the increase of state donors' ownership sense for their IAPP, and the recipient-partner gains a stronger sense of political control and authority. The main difference between Donor-Recipient Partnership and Recipient-Driven aid is the donor-recipient dynamic. In contrast, in the Donor-Recipient Partnership, both are transitioning as more of an equally active transaction partner, while the Recipient-Driven aid scheme centered on the active role of the recipient as opposed to the more common Donor-Driven aid where every conduct is sourced from the donor. In the case of the US-Israel, this paper argues they can be classified as a Donor-Recipient Partnership. As stated before, the US has repeatedly stated that they have a 'special and unique relation' with Israel, and this is also not only in general but also in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian war. [Khan \(2015\)](#) explained that the US had sent various weaponry as war aid that were not even given to the US's NATO allies. However, the most obvious movement of the US that gave the impression that the US-Israel is a Donor-Recipient Partnership relation is the endless utilization of the US's veto power for Israel's protection. Whether Israel could give massive feedback to America or not, diplomatic protection is beyond a regular alliance. In contrast, using veto power on other states' behalf signifies that relationship's significance ([Usher, 2011](#)). This also follows this research's argument that any political transaction carried out under favorable terms between donors and recipients can be considered a form of IAPP within the Interventionist Aid model. In other words, the US has always regarded Israel as its most important ally. Thus, the political dynamic in the donor-recipient of the US-Israel can be seen as an equal transactional aid partner.

4.2.2. Conceptual Dimension

This dimension discusses two things: *the Weaponization of Aid vs. Aidization of Weapons* paradigms and the realist-conceptualization of aid as a Key Component of War. Simply put, the weaponization of aid is the use of aid for war purposes. A donor state usually does this, as it controls its aid toward a certain country or other actors to suit its military objectives. [Pellicciari \(2023\)](#) shows Russia's strategy in the Russo-Ukrainian war as an example, as Russia abandons its 'dual diplomacy plus aid' foreign policy strategy to win the war. Opposed to this, Aidization of Weapons, in simple terms, is the prioritization of weapons and other military supplies as aid. This means the IAPP scheme of a donor state is focused on giving weapons to their recipient. Pellicciari identified this as the strategy of bilateral donors of the West in the Russo-Ukrainian war, and this paper argues this is the case for the US-Israel. There are characterizations of Aidization of Weapon: 1) Donors presented military aid as the core IAPP; 2) Donors declared that military aid is justified under the notion of the right to self-defense; 3) The centrality of military aid which support realist's assumption that anything can be a form of aid; 4) the extension of Aidization to another strategy, such as the use of sanction and political transaction. All four of these are the exact characterizations of the US-Israel aid relationship. In 20, the US and Israel agreed to forgo the Economic aid for Israel but instead highly increased the Foreign Military Financing (FMF) for Israel. This was done for a few reasons: Israel has become a high-income country, and America wants 'extra care' of Israel's defense and security to be improved. [Zimmermann \(2017\)](#) argues that the US has focused on restructuring military aid for the Israeli-Palestinian war, which also includes top and the most advanced military technology.

The second discussion is on the concept of aid as a Key of War. [Pellicciari \(2023\)](#) argued that aid has become more 'anarchical,' as in the classification of Weaponization of Aid and Aidization of Weapon has been done openly, not within any particular system and limitation because the aid regime has never set a rule for war-specific aid, thus becoming an 'anarchical' aid. It lacks a regulatory principle, as reflected in the Aidization of Weapon paradigm adopted by the US-Israel for years. Their military and defense aid were always exclusively bilateral, skipping any process related to the multilateral element of the international aid regime. Their concept of aid is 'anarchical,' as in they control however they want, and mostly tailored according to the height of war(s) and battle(s) happening in Israeli-occupied

lands. Pellicciari argued that the Russo-Ukrainian war ended the ‘non-military aid wars era.’ However, this research argues that the dawn of ‘anarchical aid’ is not in the Russo-Ukrainian era. Instead, in the beginning, it was an exclusive bilateral aid relation that grew along with the emergence of other types of IAPP.

4.2.3. Historical Dimension

This dimension discusses the growth and the evolution of IAPP’s significance in IR phenomena, especially war. Pellicciari (2022, 2023) divided it into a few phases: Phase of Reconstruction Aid, Phase of Development Aid, Phase of Transition Aid, (the brief) Phase of Pandemic Aid, and Phase of Interventionist Aid. Reconstruction Aid was the post-war phase marked by the birth of the Marshall Plan; Development aid was the steady phase concentrated on developing nations’ development policies; Transition Aid was the post-cold War phase, marked by the transition of the world from bipolar-world and post-soviet times, emerging different types of aid and showed emerging-donor states; Pandemic Aid was the brief phase of pandemic covid whereas aid was concentrated to health aid, most notably Vaccine Diplomacy, to adapt with the global need; and Interventionist Aid emphasized the centrality of IAPP in war as the driver of IR, characterized by the aid that has specific elements; adaptable, non-determined form, no regulated system, and framework, and focuses on its effectivity to accommodate a war until victory is achieved.

Reflecting on the timeline of the US-Israeli war-focused aid can be traced back even since the 1967 war, and it continues throughout the years as violent conflict(s) and battle(s) commerce throughout the years as we see major conflicts like Intifada I & II, the 7 October-induced war, and other smaller in scale conflicts. Nonetheless, if the historical dimension of Interventionist aid is taken in the context of the US-Israel aid relations, it began decades ago instead of developed recently.

5. CONCLUSION

The Donor-Recipient Partnership and Aidization of Weapon are the defining phrases of the US-Israel aid relations, especially within the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It is clear within the three-dimensional analysis that the US-Israel aid is a type of Interventionist Aid driven by the intention to win wars in order to maintain their political interests. Thus, it can be concluded that the dawn of the Interventionist Aid phase began with the US-Israel aid relation, although it was growing along with the emergence of other IAPP types. This research has clear limitations on perspectives on what can be counted, defined as aid, and the data gathered from Israel’s side. Future research can focus on this to develop a more comprehensive discussion on the US-Israel Interventionist Aid dynamic in the Israeli-Palestinian war context.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that they do not have any conflict of interest.

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