

# The Virtues of Political Realism

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## **Abstract**

Despite the simplicity of its objectives, Realism has proved difficult to apply, all the more so once the military option is undertaken. The chief advantage of Realism is its confrontation of the facts, especially the costs of war. It seems therefore that, for all its acceptance of the harsh realities of the world of Nation-States, Realism is not only a more successful way to account for the behavior of Nation-States; it may be a preferable way to formulate policy. Not only does it focus on achievable goals, by focusing on the facts and appreciating the limited ability of dealing with them, it weighs the costs of desirable outcomes. This may not be a very thrilling way to deal with the problems of the world. But it does promise to be far less destructive than its more radical, read "Idealistic" alternatives.

*Key Words: Realism, Idealism, Cold War, Neo-conservative Idealism, Gulf War, Vietnam War*

## **The Repugnance of Realism**

When I discuss the Realistic Approach to International Politics, I can feel the resistance of my students, many of whom shrink in their seats in an effort to distance themselves from their monster instructor. They tend to be more repelled by Realism's decisional process and its justification than by its horrific effects of death and destruction of millions, most of whom are innocent victims.<sup>1</sup> Of course there are some students who are relieved to find that not all their professors are tender-minded idealists, who present utopian visions as if only monsters like me prevent their actualization. In brief, most human beings are simply repelled by an explicitly Machiavellian, power-political approach to international relations. Why can't human beings order their affairs and resolve their conflicts reasonably? Why can't they see the folly of war? What good did it do the world to kill one hundred million

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<sup>1</sup>John Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: Norton, 2001). See also Robert Jervis, "Neorealism, Neoliberalism and Cooperation: Understanding the Debate", *International Security* (Vol.24 No.1, 1999).

people in the wars of the twentieth century?<sup>2</sup> Posed this way Realism is as awful as it seems and, worse, a self-defeating approach to international politics. Moreover, not only brutal, Realism denies the cooperative basis of human society. What human group could survive if all of its members were engaged in a war of all against all? But, Realists argue, this way of posing the question is wrong. The advocates of political Realism deny that they favor violence over cooperation.<sup>3</sup> Cooperation and soft power in general is almost always less expensive than military action and therefore preferable. When cooperation is mutually beneficial, then it is clearly superior on realistic grounds than violence. It must be understood that cooperation is not pursued by Realism on moral grounds or even to achieve political parity. It means that violence is not the necessarily preferred approach to reach political objectives. It must also be understood that Realists believe that without credible military capability, the incentives for cooperation would be greatly lessened.<sup>4</sup>

For example, in an arms race it would always be better, that is, more cost effective, to achieve security at the lowest level of expenditure. If security can be maintained at x number of weapons, then it is foolish to push the level of weapons higher, if an adversary can likewise respond. The only catch is trust. Each side must be confident that it can verify its adversary's force capabilities. If one side tries to achieve a greater degree of security by procuring an advantage, then the arms race will resume at great cost to both sides without any improvement in security.

International politics is made up of Nation-State actors and only the few rich and powerful among them. The question should be, "what good the wars did for this Nation-State or that one, not the world as a whole or sub-nation-state groups?" Nation-States must treat each other as rivals and potential enemies. Interests may overlap, but they can never be identical or permanent. Even the closest allies cannot be conceived as friends, in the sense of a willing subordination or suspension of self-interest in another's behalf. In a hostile world—and the world must be assumed hostile, if only due to conflicting interests—the prime directive is survival. If survival implies the destruction or impoverishment of untold millions, so be it. If the costs of Realism have been all-too-obvious and all-too-common, its advantages have been all-too-often ignored.

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<sup>2</sup>Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin* (New York: Basic Books, 2010). See also Nicholson Baker, *Human Smoke* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2008) ;Chris Bellamy, *Absolute War* (New York: Knopf, 2007).

<sup>3</sup> Mearsheimer, op.cit. in note 1, pp.1-28.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. pp. 1-28.

## The Virtues of Cost-Effective Violence

The chief advantage of Realism is its confrontation of the facts, especially the costs of war. It does not try to contextualize the material costs in lives and treasure by placing them in an ideological black hole.<sup>5</sup> Propositions like, "we have no choice" or that "we simply must take action no matter what" or "we must act because it is the right thing to do" have no place in Realistic analysis. No matter how desirable an objective may be, to secure Realism's approval it has to be achievable at reasonable cost or be abandoned. Realism tends to result in limited, cost-effective wars, not ideological violent binges. In other words, when violent means serve realistic goals, a natural economy is at play, what Machiavelli called the economy of violence. Violence is a tool, not an end in itself. Used properly it works as a scalpel not an axe in the hands of a murderer. "Properly," of course, means that violence is used in the pursuit of realizable material objectives at an acceptable cost. Cold-blooded efficiency results in less destruction than hot-blooded idealism or even the cool-blooded reach for non-material values. Survival of the State is the prime objective. This has meant in the Twentieth Century that every man, woman and child of the enemy can be killed without compunction in the pursuit of this objective.<sup>6</sup> Hence Hiroshima, Dresden and countless other indiscriminate assaults on the enemy. For the State, even its own citizens are expendable, that is, they are treated as assets, as instruments of the State. The most drastic recent case was the willingness of North Vietnam to sacrifice millions of its people to eject Americans from their land.

Despite the simplicity of its objectives, Realism has proved difficult to apply, all the more so once the military option is undertaken. It is easier to use violence for realistic ends than to curtail violence if the ends prove more difficult or costly to achieve than originally postulated. Unless the decision to suspend operations is made with the same cold blooded analysis as the decision to fight, the consequences are almost always disastrous. Allow some examples, among the many which could be cited. (1) It was clear from the beginning of the American Civil War that for the South to achieve independence, it would have to win a decisive victory. By imposing unacceptable costs on the Union, the chances for a negotiated settlement allowing for Secession would be enhanced. An independent Confederate States of America would then exist. There is little question that a separate Southern Nation existed, based on a plantation slave economy and a very

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<sup>5</sup> Mearsheimer, op. cit. in note 3, pp. 1-28. See also Jervis, op.cit. in note 1. For a good analysis of the "idealist" position, see Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (MA: Addison-Wesley, 1976).

<sup>6</sup> Baker, op.cit. in note2. See also Bellamy, op.cit. in note 2 and Snyder, op.cit. in note 2.

different culture from the North which was rapidly becoming an industrial economy. When Robert E. Lee, the Southern commander, was offered the command of the Union Army, he declined, saying famously that he could not fight against his country, Virginia! Virtually all southern graduates of West Point joined in the movement for Secession. And ordinary southern soldiers, the vast majority having nothing to do with slavery, supported the Southern cause to the bitter end. Lee knew a long war would spell defeat. Therefore, he took the risk of Gettysburg, hoping a victory at Gettysburg would bring Lincoln to the peace table. The South lost the battle and with it all chances for independence, but the war went on for two more bloody and futile years without a realistic basis. There were no serious efforts to negotiate. (2) The trench system on the Western Front was completed by November 1914, three months after the World War One started. Strategically, the war in Western Europe was over. Peace negotiations should have commenced. None was contemplated. The reason given was that both sides had sacrificed too much to end the war honorably. One hundred thousand had died on each side. So more than six million French and German soldiers later, to say nothing of millions of other combatants, the Versailles Treaty was signed in 1919, the Treaty that formed the basis of Hitler's appeal. The West won an ideological victory for which it and the Germans would pay dearly within a generation. (3) When the Russians defeated the Germans at Stalingrad in the Winter of 1942-3 and with America now in the War, it was clear to the German General Staff that they could not win the War. Negotiations were in order. Of course Hitler would not hear of it and neither would the Allies. Another ideological victory was necessary and eventually one by spring 1945. Tens of millions of people were killed and millions more wounded and otherwise harmed in these two years, all of which were gratuitous on realistic grounds. (4) The American defeat in Viet Nam is perhaps the classic case of remaining in a war for no reason whatsoever. When its foolish premise was exposed by a CIA/Pentagon report in 1966-7, the war continued as if the North Vietnamese were really under the direction of Beijing and Moscow, as if the war was not an anti-colonial independence movement against the Americans and their Vietnamese collaborators. The war continued for eight more years to save America's face. "Great powers cannot be defeated by fourth rate powers like North Vietnam." "American withdrawal will enable the Communists to take over all of South East Asia, Malaya, Indonesia, the Philippines and who knows what else," intoned the advocates of the Domino Theory. Without doubt some fools believed this nonsense but the Realists in the Defense and State Department and the CIA knew it was all nonsense. And they have been proved right. Because they were ignored, thousands of Americans were killed or wounded, the American economy damaged, the society split into antagonistic groups, to say nothing of millions of Vietnamese casualties.

## **A Realistic Understanding of the U.S. Role in World War II**

Reinforcing the normal rhetoric for American participation in wars was the revelation of the mass murder of Jews and other enemies of the Nazi regime. Surely the Nazis were evil and had to be defeated if civilization were to survive. There seemed no clearer case of good versus evil than America's efforts to defeat Nazi Germany. Although there were many in the American government who believed this at the time, it is certainly true that the eradication of evil was not why the Roosevelt administration went to war against Hitler.<sup>7</sup>

Both the European and Asian theaters of World War II are better explained by Realism. Of course Roosevelt's desire for war was couched in idealistic terms, even before irrefutable evidence of the death camps became available. These were: defeating aggression; safeguarding the weak, nations or people; promoting democracy; defending human rights; saving civilization and so on. All these factors taken together left the vast majority of Americans cold. It took Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor to change America's mind and even then most Americans believed Japan was the more important enemy. Nevertheless, as had been planned since the war began two years earlier, the U.S. would defeat "Germany first." When Germany declared war on the U.S. in the days after Pearl Harbor, Hitler gave Roosevelt a much needed excuse to declare war on Germany. Hitler's reasons were many and beyond the scope of this paper. What needs to be noted is that the U.S. had been engaged in an undeclared war in the Atlantic in an effort to protect American ships that were providing war materials to Britain.

There have been many justifications, including racial ones, for American bias in favor of Britain.<sup>8</sup> These like the others already cited are essentially ideological. Their effects are tangential to the real objectives of American foreign policy. Effective propaganda can improve morale of soldiers and civilians, increasing their willingness to undergo the hardships of war, for example. In Europe, however, America went to war for the same reason Britain went to war and despite Hitler's desire not to have "Anglo-Saxon" enemies: to prevent any European nation from controlling Europe from the Urals to the Atlantic and from Scandinavia to the Iberian Peninsula and the Mediterranean rim. The direct threat of a German invasion of Britain was illusory; on the U.S., it was patently absurd. When Britain proved unable to conduct a Balance of Power policy, America had to fill the breach, as the Roosevelt administration realized. America's war on Nazi Germany was not a defensive war; it was a preemptive war fought for realistic objectives. If

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<sup>7</sup> Herbert Feis, *Churchill, Roosevelt, and Stalin* (Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 1957). See also Michael J. Smith, *Realist Thought from Weber to Kissinger* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1986).

<sup>8</sup> Feis, op.cit. in note 7.

Germany dominated Europe, it could be a hostile and effective rival to the U.S. it was in America's interest do defeat this rival. It should be noted that taking over Britain's policy for Europe did not preclude American antagonism to the British Empire. Also argued on idealistic terms, e.g. ending colonial oppression etc., American objectives were much more cold blooded. Absent the British, French, and Dutch empires, America would be the undisputed hegemon in the Pacific.<sup>9</sup>

Of course Japan had to be dealt with. Japan's reasons for war were obvious and necessitous. As an island nation-state bereft of resources, Japan had to secure the energy, metals, rubber, food and a multitude of other natural resources, if she were to become a truly sovereign industrial power able to defend itself. The effectiveness of the American embargo, especially of oil, proved this truth beyond doubt. Without its ability to provide for its own political and military independence, Japan would be what it has become since World War II, a dependent on the U.S. Japan had to dominate the Pacific if it were to be a modern industrial sovereign power. This was Japan's only realistic course. America, by contrast, was not so strictured. It was America's choice to dominate the Pacific, not a matter of national survival. America's preemptive war in the Pacific was a realistic effort to defeat a would-be rival. Pearl Harbor was Japan's response to America's strangle-hold on her economy and military. The Pacific war started when the U.S. denied Japan the resources it needed to survive, because it disapproved of Japan's foreign policy.

### **The Cold War and Vietnam**

If America's participation in World War II is best explained by Political Realism, what about its role in the Cold War? In Europe between 1945 and the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the situation could not be more plain: to prevent the Soviet Union from dominating Western Europe, for the same reasons that Nazi Germany had to be defeated. Moreover, Soviet control would extend far beyond Hitler's dreams, as it would extend from the Atlantic to the Pacific, that is, effective control of the bulk of the Euro/Asian land mass, a prospect seemingly more ominous with the Communist victory in China.

In Asia the circumstances were less clear, for Communist China was no threat to the U.S. or Japan, although China's acquisition of nuclear

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<sup>9</sup> Hans Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations* (New York: Knopf, 1965). See also Franz Schurmann, *The Logic of World Power* (New York: Pantheon, 1974).

weapons was a real cause for concern.<sup>10</sup> In any event, China threat to its Asian neighbors was not comparable to the Soviet Union's threat to Western Europe, although this was greatly exaggerated in the nuclear stalemate, especially given the fact of America's willingness to use these weapons on civilian populations concentrated in cities. Indeed it was the absence of a credible military threat and therefore of realistic political and military *defensive* objectives that drove American policy makers to manufacture a functional equivalent. Hence the Domino Theory, *Communist* China, with or without the connivance of the Soviet Union, was on its way to San Francisco via Southeast Asia, Japan, Malaya and Indonesia, the Philippines, and Hawaii. When Realists pointed out the military absurdity of the Theory, its advocates relied on the doctrine of the spread of World Communism, as if it were an ineradicable virus. For all its palpable absurdity, the proponents of the Domino Theory included Presidents Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson and Nixon. To the degree that policy makers believed in the Domino Theory, they departed from objective analysis. To the degree that they proffered the Theory as a propaganda tool, they were nurturing an ideological war against Communism.

Ideological wars are in the nature of international politics, especially when the lure of Third World resources are at play. When ideology justifies hot war, it is an entirely different matter and must be held to the standards of Political Realism and objective analysis. The cardinal case of failure to do this and the consequences of such failure is the Vietnam War. This is not to say that the U.S. had no rational objectives in Indo China. Arguably it was realistic to support the French efforts to regain control of this resource rich region. Despite its desires to end European imperialism, the Eisenhower administration allowed itself to be convinced by the French that without Indo China it could not fulfill its commitments to NATO. Reluctantly and secretly, the U.S. underwrote the Indo Chinese war. When France was defeated this realistic argument dissolved and with it any realistically based American involvement in Indo China.

And yet, under the bogy of worldwide criminal Communist conspiracy, spearheaded by Ho Chi Min, America fitfully began a twenty year military invasion of Vietnam. Although billed as an attempt to defeat Communist expansion, by the mid-1960's, as American involvement was becoming

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<sup>10</sup> Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: a History* (New York, Viking, 1983). See also John Prados, *Vietnam* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 2009). For Korea, see Peter Lowe, *The Origins of the Korean War* (London: Longmans, 1997) and James Cotton and Ian Neary, *The Korean War in History* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1989).

massive, the Pentagon Papers, a CIA/Defense Department study demonstrated that Ho Chi Min was not an agent of China or the Soviet Union and was in fact a nationalist who wished to reunite Vietnam, a patriot who happened to be a Communist. It further argued that there was little justification for the U.S. attempting to support an illegitimate successor to French collaborationist governments in the South. Not only was the Domino Theory fallacious, the war in Vietnam was only incidentally part of the Cold War. The Soviets and the Chinese would supply arms to Ho Chi Min, but only insofar as it supported their interests, not Vietnam or Worldwide Communism. Ho Chi Min wished to unify Vietnam by driving invaders out of his country. China and the Soviet Union, having no such objective, wished only to have the U.S. squander its resources in a futile war.

After years of failure the Realist's central question was allowed to be asked in the Nixon White House, to wit, what do we win, if we win? The answer confirmed the analysis of the Pentagon Papers: an unstable and divided Vietnam, the value of which was dubious. It was not worth the cost as of 1965/6 and it was not worth the cost of all the additional expenditures until the war ended in 1975. The difficulty of ending the war after Nixon and Kissinger decision that it was folly further confirms another Realistic truth: it is far easier to get into war than get out and the more murky and unrealistic the reasons for war, the more difficult it is to deny the validity of these reasons and leave.<sup>11</sup> Added to this is the factor that wars tend to take on their own logic, which often defeats the asking, much less the honest answering, of realistic questions.<sup>12</sup> The disastrous effects of U.S. policy in Vietnam were entirely due to the inability to apply Realism to the issue.

### **Realism Vindicated: the First Gulf War**

If it were true that the nature of nation-states is essentially irrational, then Political Realism would be as utopian as Idealism. But it is not true, as my analysis of America's roles in World War II demonstrate. Whatever else he was Roosevelt was as Machiavellian and as ruthless as Hitler, Stalin and Churchill. In other words he acted in accordance of his understanding of America's national interest. If it were true that once the shooting starts, it is impossible to use realistic criteria as the American Civil War and World War I seem to suggest, then Political Realism is equally utopian. But it is not true. Let me use the Two Gulf Wars as my diametrically opposed examples. It is difficult to conceive of two more different military invasions taking place on the same territory with the same adversaries within a few years of each other.

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<sup>11</sup> Karnow, op.cit. in note 10.

<sup>12</sup> Mearsheimer, op.cit.in note 1.

## **The Realistic Objective: Oil**

The most profound reason for reversing Saddam's invasion of Kuwait was not stated by the Bush Administration: to prevent Saddam from becoming the regional hegemon by virtue of his control of Kuwaiti oil and by his danger to the other small oil producing regimes in the Gulf. Saddam's realistic goal was premised on the direct linkage of oil, wealth and military power. Other reasons for opposing Saddam were of course supplied, the most important of which was the defense of international borders in the region. "Stable borders" is but another way of saying stable oil supplies. Stable borders imply that ambitious leaders will not be allowed to add to their oil reserves at the expense of their less powerful neighbors. Stable borders is another way of certifying the current dispensation of oil reserves in the Middle East, a dispensation which has provided an energy hungry world with oil at price controlled by economic, not political, factors. The 1973 oil embargo has been the only exception.

## **The Realistic (and Restrained) How**

The first approach of the Bush administration was diplomatic. There were several Security Council resolutions which encouraged and then demanded that Saddam withdraw from Kuwait. These culminated in an authorization of force resolution backed by a remarkable consensus, which included the Soviet Union and avoided a Chinese veto. It was also clear that an overwhelming majority of the General Assembly supported the effort to force Saddam to withdraw. Only in the face of Iraqi intransigence was military coercion applied.<sup>13</sup>

A thirty day air war commenced: its aim was to destroy telecommunications and command and control functions of Iraqi forces. Now blinded, Saddam was again asked to relent. Upon his refusal, a ground war started early in the New Year. Contrary to virtually all expectations, and due to a marvelously conceived and coordinated assault, the war was over in 100 hours with about 1100 allied casualties. There was no pursuit of the remnants of the Iraqi army to Baghdad. The Bush administration read the UN Resolutions very narrowly in order to hold together the anti-Saddam alliance.

None of this is to suggest that the war was painless. More than 100,000 Iraqis were killed, many more wounded and millions displaced. In

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<sup>13</sup> Steve Yetiv, *Explaining Foreign Policy: US Decision –Making and the Persian Gulf War* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 2004). See also Robert Jervis, "Theories of War in an Era of Leading-Power Peace", *American Political Science Review* (Vol. 96, No.1, 2002).

addition, the subsequent partition and embargo on Iraq entailed the suffering of millions of Iraqi citizens. There was more collateral damage, especially to Iraq's trading partners in the region, principally Turkey. All considered, however, as military interventions go, the First Gulf War was a remarkable success in its own terms and given subsequent developments, an incredible achievement. All of the objectives of the UN resolutions were met. Aggression was reversed. Borders were reestablished. Oil prices retreated to decades low figures.

Moreover, there was a host of unanticipated benefits from this successful operation. Not only was the Cold War over, within two years the Soviet Union collapsed, at least partly due to the realization that it could no longer compete with the West militarily, because it could not generate the wealth necessary for technological improvements. More generally, the world, including Communist regimes, began to reform its economies more and more according to free market criteria and responding to the lure of Western technology. The global prestige of the US rose to post World War II highs due not only to its military prowess but to its willingness to secure UN cooperation and to operate under international restraint. This development was particularly notable and significant in the Arab Middle East, which had grown skeptical of America's ability to deal rationally in the region, if that meant restraining Israel.

### **Realism Trashed: Neo-Conservative Idealism and the Second Gulf War**

It is difficult to conceive of the bloody-minded Neo-Cons who dominated the second President Bush's administration as idealists. Of course, the designation does not suggest humanitarian values. It means only that the Neo-Cons were motivated by non-materialist values. They had an anti-Muslim and anti-Arab ideology, largely based on the "Clash of Civilizations" thesis of Samuel Huntington and Bernard Lewis, among others. The clear implication was that decisions to invade the Middle East would be based on their conceptions of right and wrong, not realistic policy assessments.<sup>14</sup>

Accordingly, to expect the same conditions to apply in the second Bush White House as the first was unrealistic. What were considered necessary conditions to justify American military intervention for the father were not necessary for the son? Let me list a few of the absent conditions: (1) Iraqi did not commit aggression against its neighbors; (2) More generally, the militarily devastated Iraq was not a threat to any of its neighbors; (3) its

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<sup>14</sup> Jeffrey Record, "The Use and Abuse of History: Munich, Vietnam and Iraq" *Survival* (Vol. 49, No.1, 2007).

economy had been severely injured by Western sanctions; (4) it was effectively partitioned by no-fly zones and a de facto Kurdish state; (5) Iraq was more divided than ever into Sunni and Shiite zones; (6) there was no threat to the flow of oil; (7) not surprisingly, there was no international consensus for invasion.

As a result, it was difficult to lay out a Realistic policy for a second invasion. An idealistic approach was therefore mandatory. The Neo-Cons, however, began their rationale realistically; it had two parts. The first was to rid Iraq of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD), a realistic goal, except for one thing: there were no WMD. This realization, contrary to most Neo-Cons is not a matter of hind-sight. I knew they did not exist, despite having no intelligence, because Canada did not support US military operations. For me this was conclusive, for had any evidence existed, the US would have informed Canada and gained its support. The second rationale was to rid Iraq of Al Qaeda, another realistic objective, save for one fact: Al Qaeda was not in Iraq, as anyone who knew about the relations of the highly secular Saddam and the Fundamentalist Osama Bin Laden would have known. As these rationales dissolved, an idealistic justification emerged: the US would create a democratic Iraq in the wake of deposing Saddam. This rationale is particularly interesting, apart from its futility, for the Neo-Cons did not want a democratic Iraq any more than they want a democratic Egypt or Palestine. Democratic Arabs are much more hostile to the US and Israel than military dictators. The Neo-Cons purveyed the quest for democracy, alias nation-building, as a last effort to secure the American public's diminishing support for this dubious invasion.

Since there was no basis for a realistic justification of military intervention, it cannot surprise that there was no Realistic How for getting anything done. If one does not have a clear set of objectives, it is impossible to have a clear method for achieving anything. Of course one advantage of this ambiguity is that victory can be declared at any time, as Bush did with his famous "Mission Accomplished" speech. Reality, however, has a tendency to bite. Instead of acquiescing to an Iraqi puppet government, various factions and tribes began an insurgency, which lasted more than eight years after the mission was accomplished. Few observers believe that Iraq is better off now than it was under Saddam. Few observers believe the US has benefited from the Second Gulf War.

What then was the basis for this massive miscalculation? What did the Neo-Cons really expect to achieve with the subjugation of Iraq? It seems clear that Iraq, totally defenseless and dependent upon the US, was to be a stepping stone to Iran, the real enemy of the US and Israel, according to the Neocons. Far from nation-building in Iraq, far from producing a democratic Nation-State, the goal was to retribalize and partition Iraq so that it would be

a willing launching pad for an attack on Iran. Far from stabilizing the Middle East in the form of Nation-States who were responsive to the needs of their people, the goal was to weaken the "enemies" of Israel. There can be little doubt that such a policy is in Israel's interests in the short run. Equally, there is little doubt that a destabilized Middle East counters the American interest in a politically stable oil rich region. The devastating effects of problematic supplies at ever increasing energy prices works against the Western economies' recovery, to say nothing of driving the poorer nations into deeper poverty.

American support of Israeli interests to the detriment of its own, to say nothing of the global economy, is the essence of an unrealistic foreign policy. It makes sentiment for the horrible experience of European Jews the principal factor in American policy. It allows the influence of the Israel lobby to direct US policy. It allows a strategically insignificant Nation-State to veto effectively any effort of the US government to achieve rational goals in this immensely important region. Furthermore, outcomes which intensify the absurdity of America's policies, is that anti-American regimes like Iran have become stronger, largely as a result of windfall energy profits. The positive unintended consequences of the First Gulf War have been mirrored by the negative consequences of the Second Gulf War. The expenditure of over a trillion dollars, to say nothing of lives, Iraqi and American, and the untold hardship of millions of Iraqis due the devastation of their country has produced a long list of policy failures: (1) the strengthening of Iran; (2) the destabilization of the region; (3) global economic hardships due to rising energy costs; (4) huge American debt and deficits; (6) polarization of the American electorate; (7) intensification of anti-American feeling the Arab and Muslim world; and (8) a growing sense in the world that the US was a rogue state, driven by an ideologically inspired program not so much of changing the world in its own image, but of refashioning it as a series of puppet states.

It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the Realism of the First Gulf War not only achieved its objectives but spawned healthy children. The Idealism of the Second Gulf War produced monsters that only Israelis and their Neo-Con surrogates could love. It seems therefore that, for all its acceptance of the harsh realities of the world of Nation-States, Realism is not only a more successful way to account for the behavior of Nation-States; it may be a preferable way to formulate policy. Not only does it focus on achievable goals, by focusing on the facts and appreciating the limited ability of dealing with them, it weighs the costs of desirable outcomes. This may not be a very thrilling way to deal with the problems of the world. But it

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