POLITICAL REALISM

AND AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY

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SYNOPSIS

America's war in Afghanistan and on Iraq classified as part of the war on terror have come in the aftermath of the atrocities of September 11, 2001 when America was attacked by Islamist terrorists. America's response to these attacks, especially the war on Iraq, has been criticized heavily throughout the world. The U.S. has been criticized on the basis of morality, in terms of increasing the danger of further attacks on American soil and by its lack of understanding of the Islamic world. Criticism of U.S. foreign policy will continue long into the future, especially if the U.S. maintains its status as the only superpower in the world, which is unlikely in the long term, however we need to understand why America is criticized.

The purpose of this thesis is to better understand American foreign policy and why the U.S. embarks on the policies that it does. This understanding will come by way of analysing America's stance towards both Afghanistan and Iraq in the last quarter of a century to see how it has changed in correlation with American needs at the time. Since the events of 9/11 America has become more aggressive in its foreign policy stance toward both Afghanistan and Iraq. It has ousted both the Taliban and the Saddam Hussein regime, with the help of allies, from these respective nations. This thesis will argue that this is natural given the tenets of political realism. Political realism is a theory based upon self-interest, power and opportunity. America's policy towards Afghanistan and Iraq will be intimately tied with these notions, as these notions have been called upon throughout history. The thesis should be viewed as a microcosm of the realities of international relations. The essay will discuss different aspects of International Relations political theory and draw the conclusion that

political realism provides the more relevant and stronger theories. I use the word theories because there exists differing approaches within the nexus of realism, although core assumptions are maintained. The thesis will explore America's role in Afghanistan and Iraq in the 1980s as well as in its post 9/11 context. Placed in its proper context American foreign policy should be seen as something that is natural, rather than something unique to America.

The methodology of this thesis is positivist in its scope, which is both relevant and preferable. As international relations are the result of a 'real world mentality' a political 'real' framework will be administered here. The author of this thesis sees little relevance in approaching the subject of IR with an idealist framework when the subject is dealing with 'real world' human contingencies. This author believes that theories are most relevant when they can be applied to the 'real' world.

CHAPTER 1: POLITICAL REALISM AS THEORY

REALISM

The core tenets of realism are: 1) realists share a pessimistic view of human nature; 2) realists believe that humans and thus states seek security and survival in a conflictual world; 3) that human progress is limited due to the confines of human nature. These basic assumptions reflect the realist discourse, both past and present (Jackson & Sorensen 1999:68). Political realism seeks to understand both human and political relations within the confines of the possible (Jackson & Sorensen 1999: 69). To understand realism is to understand the notion of power politics as a feature of human civilization (Smith et al (eds) 1996: 47). Classical realists such as Morgenthau viewed realism in sin, a product of the human condition. The power seeking nature of states Morgenthau believes derives from the imperfection of humanity (Brown 1997: 32). Moreover, Morgenthau views international relations as *states* pursuing their own *interests* in terms of *power* (Morgenthau 1948:33). And it is in this mode that realism accounts for both historical and contemporary political events.

Realism developed into a scientific approach with positivist overtones; it dealt with human nature as *it is* rather than how it *ought* to be. Realist theorists believed the subject of International Relations had to lose its normative character (Hollis & Smith 1990:23). However, many believed that the positivist nature of the subject also manifested itself in the foreign policies of the most powerful of superpowers, including the United States. The belief was the characteristic features of power

politics among states being 'the primacy of foreign policy, the central role of war and the essentially political and amoral character of international relations' (Light & Groom 1985: 14). With this as an underlying belief of realists, American diplomacy throughout the Cold War period and especially in the period after World War 11 was couched in realist language.

Morgenthau's scientific approach in his classic *Politics Among Nations* promoted this methodology whereby it stipulated there are underlying forces determining international relations. Some critics argue that Morgenthau's scientific approach was historically specific to the U.S.A. There was the emergence of America as a dominant power in the world whereby American politicians were seeking academic justification for the policy of confronting Soviet power. Secondly, there was a general respect for science in the U.S.A at this time (Hollis & Smith 1990:24). This cumulative effect brought about Robert Rothstein declaring that realism was popular amongst American politicians 'because it encapsulated what they took for granted especially after the failures of the 1930s and during the height of the cold war' (Hollis & Smith 1990:27). Furthermore, realism became associated with a rationalization and justification of Cold War politics (Hollis & Smith 1990:28).

This account of realism as being reflective of a socio-historical milieu underestimates the significance of realism being reflective of human and sovereign state nature as opposed to the afore mentioned socio- historical environment. There was a need especially during the cold war in the name of power politics to create a balance of power not in the guise of a socio-historical significance, however in the

name of a conceptualisation of human nature and the lessons learned through history. If American foreign policy had not built up its defence and nuclear capabilities in this period, then surely we would be living in a different world today.

MORGENTHAU'S SIX PRINCIPLES OF REALISM

Morgenthau's six principles of realism offer a guide to how political realism has been conceptualised through history, given the works of Hobbes, Machiavelli and Thucydides. Morgenthau, writing after the Second World War, believed that objective laws that have their roots in human nature governed society, a nature that has not changed since classical times (Morgenthau 1948:4). For Morgenthau, realism consists of ascertaining facts through experience, 'hence novelty is not necessarily a virtue in political theory (Morgenthau 1948: 4). Secondly, according to Morgenthau we can trace the steps a statesman has taken or will take on the political scene, as their actions through history suggest that statesmen act 'in terms of *interest* defined as *power*' (Morgenthau 1948:5). This second point relates to America's war in Afghanistan and Iraq, whereby it has acted in an interest - whether it is an economic, security or geo-strategic interest - that is defined through power, an assumption that the evidence of history has borne out. Therefore America's role in Afghanistan and Iraq can be seen as natural and many even suggest justified, as we will see later, especially in a post Sep 11 context. The greatest power in the world was attacked on Sep 11, 2001 by al-Qaeda operatives, the response being to quell that threat to the national interest, no matter how long or difficult that task may be, this is the reaction of a responsible state. These actions are repetitive through history: 'Man responds to social situations with repetitive patterns. The same

situation, recognized in its identity with previous situations, evokes the same response' (Morgenthau 1948: 8). Thirdly, Morgenthau evokes the words of Thucydides 'identity of interests is the surest of bonds whether between states or individuals' (Morgenthau 1948:10). Morgenthau also relies upon Lord Salisbury in the nineteenth century who wrote: 'the only bond of union that endures among nations is the absence of all clashing interests' (Morgenthau 1948:11). That is to say a state's interest is the one constant in international relations, although the exercise of power is not fixed and can vary with each environment (Hollis & Smith 1990:26). The fourth point that Morgenthau discusses is the separateness of politics and morality. That is individual morality should be separated from the public sphere of politics. 'Realism maintains that universal moral principles cannot be applied to the actions of states in their abstract universal formation' (Morgenthau 1948:12). America's decision to go to war on Iraq in the face of a seemingly worldwide moral condemnation is an example of what Morgenthau stated. Although this collective individual morality has stifled America's position in regards to its war on Iraq, as it continues to struggle against insurgents and the handover of sovereignty to Iraq.

The fifth of Morgenthau's six principles has a Machiavellian tone. It suggests that each state is an entity in itself that does not share a single morality; yet formulate their policies under the cloak of a moral language when it best serves their interests (Hollis & Smith 1990:26). One can argue that America's war on terror can be bracketed in these terms. The final point that Morgenthau states is a conflictual one with more contemporary theories of international relations especially since the end of the cold war. It states that political realism needs to be treated separately from other subjects such as economics, law and religion. Politics need not be subordinate

to other theories, yet must maintain its independence in structuring theories on politics. A political realist should not allow the ' legalistic-moralistic approach' to international relations to shape their thinking rather they must subordinate other opinions (Morgenthau 1948:14). That is to say when one is faced with a political situation a state must not let the 'legality' or 'morality' of that situation determine their actions. A state must act in a politically responsible manner – that is in the best interests of that particular sovereign state, relative to the power of other nations.

As previously stated, America's war on Iraq initially ignored the majority of the international community when it decided to attack that nation and dispose of Saddam Hussein's regime, yet has become protracted thereafter due to not only the resistance to the occupation however also because of an international morality that has pervaded the discourse on the war on Iraq. Although the social nexus of Iraq is deeply complex with its many factions, America or any other great power should never compromise the swiftness of their attack in the face of international condemnation. These six principles of Morgenthau's clarify a political realist position regarding international relations. Morgenthau believes these principles are not reflective of a time and place, as has been muted; rather they are the timeless, unchanging realities of both the human and political world. As a political realist Morgenthau cannot claim to be the first to record basic realist principles, as political realism is a theory based on the tenets of human nature, which Morgenthau believes is everlasting. Morgenthau derived his principles from classical realists such as Thucydides, Machivelli and Hobbes thus we will now explore the works of these political realists.

THUCYDIDES AND THE BALANCE OF POWER

Thucydides account of the Peloponnesian War and especially the battle for the island

of Melos illuminates the seemingly unchanging nature of power politics. Thucydides

Melian dialogue whereby he details the Athenian expedition against the Melians

describes the political power of Athens in its diplomacy and absorption of Melos. The

Melians, a colony of Sparta, had refused to join the Athenian empire like the other

islanders (Thucydides 1954:400), which, in essence, meant that they were there for

the taking. In Thucydides account of the war the Melians believed that the Spartans

would protect them, which is reflective of a balance of power. This theory stipulates

that as nations compete for power there is bound to be conflict, ' each trying either to

maintain or overthrow the status quo, leads of necessity to a configuration that is

called the balance of power' (Morgenthau 1948:187). Therefore in the case of the

Melians they as a weak colony of Sparta believed that Sparta would protect them

against the more powerful Athenians. This alliance the Melians thought would

counteract the power of Athens, thus producing a balance of power.

Morgenthau believes France and its allies opposing Russia in 1812, Japan

opposing China between 1931 to 1941, the Allies vs. the Axis in the Second World

War, correspond to the pattern of a particular nation pursuing an imperialistic policy

in regard to another nation which in turn is countered by that nation with an

imperialistic policy of its own or a restoring of the status quo (Morgenthau 1948:

192). The Cold War battle between America and the Soviet Union for control of

Afghanistan is intimately tied with this essay, also the ideological competition

between the United States and China for Southeast Asian nations and correspondingly

the Soviet Union and China's increased antagonism towards each other for control of the same region (Morgenthau 1948:123).

To continue, the Athenians greater power and greater knowledge of the Spartans accompanied by the Spartans reluctance to get involved in the battle because of their own security and self interest is reflective of political realism. Without the protection of the Spartans the Melians' delusional hopes of security succumbed in the face of a sustained attack by the Athenians whereby the Melians 'surrendered unconditionally to the Athenians, who put to death all the men of military age whom they took, and sold the women and children as slaves' (Thucydides 1954:400). This account of Thucydides exposes the power politics between the ancient Greek city-states and consequently the nature and reality of unequal power in international relations. Thucydides is emphasizing core realist assumptions in the conduct of foreign policy that of caution and prudence 'in a world of great inequality, of restricted foreign policy choices, and of ever present danger as well as opportunity' (Jackson & Sorensen 1999: 71). Thucydides' work placed its significance on 'human actors as the conscious initiators of events rather than events being dictated to by the structure of states within the international sphere' (George 1994: 193). If a nation and its government want to survive according to Thucydides they must pay attention to the fundamental political maxims of international relations, they being: foresight; prudence; caution and judgement (Jackson & Sorensen 1999: 71). If only the Melians understood this point, they would have been spared being annexed by the Athenians. The balance of power was not enough for the Melians to counter Athenian power. Sparta viewed the situation through their own self-interest, thus leaving the Melians to be conquered by the Athenians. If the Spartans saw the circumstances from the

Melians perspective, many of their people would surely have lost their lives. As a set of particular circumstances emerges, especially as such that a distribution of power has changed that might affect a nation's capacity for self- preservation, then to act in such a way that a balance of power emerges is an understandably rational act (Waltz 1979:ch 3). Unfortunately for the Melians, they miscalculated. The balance of power is a necessary adjunct to any kind of international order, to the extent that states only have any real freedom in the world when a balance of power emerges (Bull 1995:100). Put in these terms, the Melians would have the freedom to act only if their power, either by itself or collectively, could be balanced against the Athenians. This power the Melians perceived to be balanced thus they had the freedom to attack Athens yet paid the price as has been earlier stated.

However, to pick up on Hedley Bull's point on the freedom to act, the only superpower in the world at present the United States has the freedom to act as it pleases as no other individual nation has the capacity to quell its political agenda, although collectively nations can stifle its political ambitions, as has been witnessed at the WTO. The United States is not a member of the International Criminal Court, ignored the United Nations in its war on Iraq and has the capacity to impose economic embargoes on other nations. We can deduce from this that Hedley Bull is referring to weaker nations balancing power in order to act in freedom. As seemingly America is not confined by this notion.

MACHIAVELLI

Following in the political realist agenda from Thucydides was Niccolo Machiavelli who in Renaissance Italy described the political situation in terms of power, cunning and deception. For Machiavelli a ruler of a state is primarily there to protect the interests of that particular state. This can be achieved through a state's strength and independence (Jackson & Sorensen 1999: 72). If the state were weak it will be deemed as an invitation for other states to attack (Jackson & Sorensen 1999:72). 'A Prince ought to have no other aim or thought nor select anything else for his study, then war and its rules and discipline (Machiavelli 1984:21). Although relative to its time, Machiavelli's statement still resonates in the present. The statement relates to a preparedness to be ready in case of war, or suffer the consequences. This is a politically responsible attitude. For instance if U.S. President George W. Bush was not prepared in his pursuit of terrorism and weapons of mass destruction or biological or chemical weapons were placed in the hands of a terrorist group such as Al Qaeda, then American lives would be in grave danger. Therefore America must build up its arms and quell any potential threat.

For Machiavelli and classical realists alike the world is a dangerous place whereby one must calculate your own power and interest relative to the power and interest of your rivals and competitors (Jackson & Sorensen 1999:73). The implication is clear: If a ruler or state does not pay attention to the tenets of power politics his or her tenure will fail along with the security of the state's citizens (Jackson & Sorensen 1999:73). Classical realist theory is a theory of survival (Wight 1966:Ch 3) In this context a prudent leader should not act in accordance with Christian values as this is the height of political irresponsibility, on the contrary a leader should be aware of what is happening and be prepared to anticipate the motives of others. A prudent

leader should act before their rivals as to ward off any potential threat. Responsible leaders need act in a way that quells any threat and be prepared to engage in a pre-emptive war, relative to your power (Jackson & Sorensen 1999: 73).

Machiavelli believes that a conquered state that has been accustomed to their own laws can be held by the conqueror in three ways. 'The first is to ruin them; the second, for the conqueror to go and reside there in person; and the third is to allow them to continue to live under their own laws, subject to a regular tribute, and to create in them a government of a few, who will keep the country friendly to the conqueror' (Machiavelli in Vasquez 1996:15). This looks decidedly like America's invasion and occupation of both Iraq and Afghanistan. At first they conquered, then they placed a government that many deem a 'puppet government' that fosters American political interests.

This from an American perspective is sound logical and calculated politics, responsible politics. Many would cry foul over America's war on Afghanistan and Iraq and suggest that it is an amoral and politically base war. They would argue the poor innocent civilians of Afghanistan and Iraq are not responsible for the wrongs committed to America on Sep 11, 2001. However this is an idealistic response as America is only reflective of the tenets of human nature and the timeless core values of realism, as we have seen. America had to ignore any moral consideration or face the possibility of being attacked once again in regards to Al Qaeda and could not take chances with Saddam Hussein given his history.

These elements underpin Machiavelli's three essential tenets that form the foundation stones of political realism. They being: that history is a sequence of cause and effect, which can be understood by the intellect rather than by the

imagination. Secondly, theory is a result of practise not the other way round. Thirdly, politics is not a product of ethics, however ethics of politics, and morality a product of power (Carr 1939: 63). This is not to suggest that classical political realists such as Machiavelli disregard morality in politics, on the contrary, political realists however believe a sharp distinction need be drawn between the desirable and the possible. 'Political realism does not require, nor does it condone indifference to political ideals and moral principles' (Morgenthau 1948:7). Moreover, 'realism is a theory that consists in ascertaining facts and giving them meaning through reason' (Morgenthau 1948: 4). This reason is theorized through experience, to dismiss such a theory because it reflects on events centuries past 'is not a rational argument but a modernistic prejudice that takes for granted the superiority of the present over the past' (Morgenthau 1948: 4).

HOBBES

Thomas Hobbes believed that man was in a constant state of war with each other a condition he described as natural, a pre-civil condition described as the 'state of nature' (Jackson & Sorensen 1999:74). Hobbes believed that man; woman and children can paradoxically get along with each other if a joint collaboration was considered and a security pact formed (Jackson & Sorensen 1999:74). They can cooperate politically for fear of being hurt by their neighbours: they are 'civilized by fear of death (Oakeshott 1975:36). Hobbes believed that this fear and mistrust brought about the development of the sovereign state with its ambition of peace and order firmly in hand (Jackson & Sorensen 1999: 74). However the creation of a sovereign state which somewhat guarantees an individual's security leads to the

creation of more sovereign states which creates a situation of states being in conflict with other states rather than citizens being in conflict with each other within an individual state, this has been referred to as 'the security dilemma (Jackson & Sorensen 1999: 75). States are best in this position as they have the collective will of the people behind them; they can mobilize people into an armed force and most importantly, states never sleep. Individuals sleep thus are at risk of being attacked by other individuals. Therefore states are the guarantor of a citizen's safety, whereby the citizen looks to the state for protection against political rivals; an individual's safety is intertwined with the policies of the state (Jackson & Sorensen 1999:75).

We can deduce from this that Hobbes realism is one of security, the building up of military power and mistrust (Jackson & Sorensen 1999:75). Hobbes also believes that history and prudence, classical realist terms, are important in international affairs (Oakeshott 1975:21). 'History is the ordered register of past experiences' (Oakeshott 1975:21). Whereas prudence is the capacity to anticipate future events from a conception of the past. 'Of our conception of the past, we make a future' (Oakeshott 1975:21). Given Hobbes observations on man, 'the nature of man we find three principle causes of quarrel: first, competition; secondly, diffidence; thirdly, glory'. (Hobbes 1946: ch. 13). Moreover 'men invade for gain, the second for safety, and the third for reputation (Hobbes 1946: ch 13). The history of mankind to Hobbes is one of conflict embraced in the language of power. Which underscores the classical realist philosophy of a state's interest being defined through the notion of power, and also of course a common theme in the writings of Thucydides, Machiavelli and Morgenthau. Hobbes' insistence in the importance of

building up a nation's military power indicates the significance of war in Hobbes theory of international politics, which causes problems from a moralistic point of view. However this moralistic and political confusion fails to understand ' the involvement of all mankind in the sinful realities of history' (Niebuhr 1940: 35-37). Moreover, this type of moral confusion suggests that any kind of peace is better than war. ' This always means in the end that tyranny is preferred to war' (Niebuhr 1940: 35-47).

CRITIQUE OF REALISM

As we have seen during the 1940s and 1950s International Relations political theory was defined in more or less realist terms. This conceptualisation of international relations spawned a substantial literature that criticizes the one-dimensional nature of realism and many of its core assumptions and arguments (Jackson & Sorensen 1999:96). Critics of realism suggest that realism is too narrowly defined, i.e. in terms of power, and fail to recognize that international relations is a dialogue of different spheres of thought and perspectives such as: the international society, liberal and international political economy critiques (Jackson & Sorensen 1999:96). Critics believe that political realists overlook the cooperative strain in human nature, which in turn relates also to states. Realists, critics stipulate, forsake this element of human nature to promote their own theory. Critics suggest that political realists ignore non-state actors such as human beings and NGOs (Jackson & Sorensen 1999: 99). Moreover, states are not only in conflict with each other however share common interests and observe common rules that promote friendship rather than antagonism (Jackson & Sorensen 1999:97).

 Critics of realism also suggest that realism plays down the significance of the role of international law. Which sees states being governed by the codes of international law (Jackson & Sorensen 1999:97). This view of an international law governing states within the international system is synonymous with the view that there can be 'no peace without law' with the added conception that peace cannot be established by a continued arms race, but by national disarmament ' together with the establishment of institutions corresponding in the world field to those which maintain law and order within local communities and nations' (Clark & Sohn 1966:25).

This view along with other theories such as a world government to control individual nations is ultimately inadequate as the arms race has continued to spiral as more nations acquire either/or nuclear, biological and chemical weapons. Furthermore the creation of international law has mainly been developed by the greatest powers in order to perpetuate their reign as the pre-eminent nations of the world. America has ultimately rejected international law – in its initial attack on Iraq, ignoring UN resolutions: its abuse of prisoners, which does not comply with Geneva conventions – which suggests that in the realities of war whereby a dominant power fears for its security, freedom and future international law is not much of a deterrent.

Moreover, a realist response to criticism is that realism still offers the best alternative in times of crisis such as war as a realist can better clarify a nation defining situation as they can make the hard decisions (Jackson & Sorensen 1999: 98). Although some would argue that the current Bush administration's 'war on terror' has neither been realistic in the short, medium nor long term.

END OF COLD WAR / NATION STATE

Many critics of realism believe that realism's insistence of viewing international relations through the prism of a nation state is no longer relevant as since the break-up of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War the realist game of power politics is no longer applicable to international defence and national security (Jackson & Sorensen 1999: 99). America has been likened to Great Britain in the nineteenth century, as it is the paramount power of the world. Britain in that time refrained from wars of aggression in Europe rather they were content in employing their political skill in manoeuvring their military assets to maintain the balance of power (Jackson & Sorensen 1999: 102). Many theorists believe in the aftermath of the Cold War, the United States as the only superpower of the world need only to concern itself with the protection of global peace and security and coming to grips with so called 'rogue states' such as Iraq and 'failed states' such as Afghanistan who sit on the periphery of the state system (Jackson & Sorensen 1999:103). Many theorists believe that the major writings on International Relations theory coincided or mutually developed with the Cold War, therefore the ending of the Cold War is significant from a theoretical perspective (Brown 1997: 205).

In 1992 Francis Fukuyama in his *The End of History and the Last Man* believed that liberal democracies had removed its last major competitor, which is not to say that there will be no wars or conflicts. However, what is meant by Fukuyama's claim is these events will no longer be charged with a deep significance; conflicts will no longer be based upon ideology, however conflicts over interests will

continue (Brown 1997: 223). This has clearly proven to be wrong as much of the war on terror is based on ideological differences and is deeply significant much more significant than the Cold War as the Cold War ideology was only temporal whereas the ideological struggle between Islamic terrorists and the west has been apparent since the time of the crusades. Moreover the insistence of post Cold War theorists that the emergence of other issues that go beyond the nexus of inter-state power politics such as ecology, migration and communications is a further indication of the eroding of so called 'old' theories that promote the state as a vehicle or instrument defined through self interest and power (Smith et al 1996: 320).

This undercutting of the state belies the fact that the number of member states of the United Nations has increased almost four –fold since its inception in 1945 from a tally of 51 to 191 in 2002(www.un.org). Furthermore, what is commonly referred to as utopianism, realists thought it to be a naïve belief that international law would provide peace in the world.

The implied suggestion that new theories become more relevant or that they were superior theories is delusional. These 'new theories' only reflect what Machiavelli stated earlier that theory is a result of practice, thus the critics of realism are bound in contradictions.

This also underlines debates about methodology- they are reactive to international events rather than proactive. The idealist-liberalism of the 1920s, to the Behavioural school theories of the 1950s and 1960s to the more contemporary post cold war theories are more representative and empiricist rather than a full proof scientific study. The methodological issues post cold war is characterized by the debate of

positivist and post- positivist theories (Jackson & Sorensen 1999: 219). This is reflective of the international political milieu more than anything.

However two other aspects of Wilsonian thought have relevance in the present- the building of institutions of global governance, and the relation to democracy to peace (Smith et al 1996:321) This can be deemed as also being reflective of the situation in Iraq. The United States has gone into Iraq after the atrocities of Sept 11, although without a connection to that event, with the good intention of freeing the Iraqi people from the despotic hands of Saddam Hussein's regime in the hope to bring democracy and peace to the nation, this program for peace has been implemented with the help of many allied nations including Britain, Australia and Poland. Which expresses a more idealistic approach to Iraq that is both dangerous and untenable as implementing a program of democracy and peace to Iraq is a convoluted process.

To continue, this essay will overview two examples of political realism from an American perspective that have shaped contemporary world politics, the example of both Afghanistan and Iraq from the 1980s to the present. These two nations have been chosen not only because they represent contemporary political events, however also because they highlight the vicissitudes of international relations. America has changed its policy towards both Afghanistan and Iraq; this next phase of the essay will seek to answer why American policy has changed in these regions. These policy changes can be related back to political realism and seen as they are rather than by imposing a certain morality to the issue. First of all we will deal with American foreign policy in Afghanistan within the last 25 years.

CHAPTER 2: THE CHANGING NATURE OF AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY TOWARD AFGHANISTAN 1979-PRESENT

AFGHANISTAN

American foreign policy towards Afghanistan has been based around core political realist maxims – strategy, self-interest and political power. When the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan on 25 December 1979, the belief amongst U.S. foreign policy makers of the time was that the Soviet Union was embarking on its long held ambition of advancing upon the oil of the Persian Gulf (Hartman 2002:467). In a Cold War context this posed a threat to America, whether it be perceived or not. U.S. foreign policy is a policy driven by the pursuit of capital; thus communism was a threat to the needs of American capitalist society. 'Soviet Union support of socialism in national liberation movements of Third World countries was a grave issue for U.S. policy makers' (Hartman 2002: 467). Thus any intervention from America either physically or covertly would be to quell Soviet influence, rather than to fight Afghanistan per se. For America, Soviet intervention in the turmoil of Afghan politics was seen as a dangerous extension of Russian military power (Howard 1980:461). After the bloody communist *coup* in Afghanistan on 27 April 1978, the Soviets policy was to maintain the communists in power, hence their intervention on 25 December 1979, in the face of dissent from the Afghan people (Misra 2004:25). Prior to the communist *coup* or Saur revolution (as the *coup* came to be known) there was a growth of Islamic militancy, which created a fear in Moscow that it might both underpin their policies in Afghanistan and create instability in Soviet Central Asia and

spread on its eastern flanks (Misra 2004:25). Therefore we can see that the Soviet

Union promoted the Communist cause in Afghanistan, which had the double effect of

trying to quell Islamic movements within the region. In a Cold War context American

policy was to limit Soviet influence within the region thus promote and help any

forces that could achieve these aims whether it be Islamic militants or traditional

forces. President Carter stated " the Afghan struggle was an 'Islamic' struggle and

U.S. assistance should not disturb that impression."(Ray & Schapp (eds) 2003:110).

On the contrary, America covertly supplied aid to Islamic insurgents in July 1979,

even before any Soviet intervention. President Carter's National Security Advisor

Zbigniew Brzezinski who believed that the aid to Afghan insurgents would induce a

Soviet military intervention cunningly planned this. He later told a journalist that 'the

secret operation…. Had the effect of drawing the Russians into the Afghan trap'

(Hartman 2002:470). U.S. foreign policy makers wanted to 'grow the war' and create

for the Soviet Union 'their Vietnam' (Hartman 2002:468). Moreover President Carter

opined ' the implication of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan could pose the most

serious threat to world peace since the Second World War' (Brown, S 1994:383). This

claim was proven incorrect, however at the time obviously seen as a most serious

issue.

 This attitude reflects the power struggle of the Cold War between America and the

Soviet Union. The Soviet occupation in Afghanistan became a proxy war between the

two superpowers. The overall strategic U.S. policy was to provide funding and

training as well as directing and propagandising a proxy war (Ray & Schapp (eds)

2003: 102). The U.S. did not want to negotiate with the Soviets until they had been

sufficiently 'bled' (Ray & Schapp (eds) 2003: 102). To this end the Americans

continued their support for the Afghan mujahideen- the Muslim guerrillas opposing

Soviet occupation, the United States also called upon Arab and Islamic states to support their own anti-Soviet proxies (Byman & Khalilzad 2000:16). ' The implications for a post-Soviet Afghanistan were not considered. After all, our enemy's enemy is our friend' (Byman & Khalilzad 2000:16). Many in the USA credit the eventual fall of the Soviet Union, as being one of the many reasons, to America's role in Afghanistan. The chief architect of that war, Zbigniew Brzezinski, put it succinctly that Moscow's Afghan adventure 'brought about the demoralization and finally the break up of the Soviet Empire' (Misra 2004:26).

Brzezinski's conscience was clear about the role he played in the Afghan war as he later reflected in 1998 'what was more important in the worldview of history? A few stirred up Muslims or the liberation of Central Europe and the end of the Cold War?'(Hartman 2002: 482). Moreover one senior state official stated in an interview 'the question here was whether it was morally acceptable that, in order to keep the Soviets off balance, which was the reason for the operation, it was permissible to use other lives for our geopolitical interests' (Hartman 2002: 483). President Jimmy Carter's CIA director, Stansfield Turner in response to this suggestion stated 'I decided I could live with that' (Hartman 2002:483). This underpins Morgenthau's belief that morality need be separated from politics.

So much was US involvement in Afghanistan that the State Department has said that a total of about $3 billion was provided by the US to the Afghan mujahideen by way of military assistance from 1980 until the withdrawal of the Soviet Occupation in 1989(Buyers (ed) 2003: 197). The Afghan war became one of the last brutal episodes of the Cold War which was a 'manifestation of the two superpowers attempts to gain

control of a region of very high geostrategic significance (Ahmed 2002:21). With each superpower boycotting each other's Olympic games in 1980 and 1984 with détente a thing of the past, the Reagan administration ended any attempts to conceal the knowledge that the weapons were heading for Afghanistan and the mujahideen (Hartman 2002:476). The mujahideen were provided with US made stinger missiles- the most effective in the world- with the backing of the legislative branch of Congress in 1985(Hartman 2002:476).

The US were helped in their ambitions in Afghanistan by Saudi Arabia and notably Pakistan who wanted to sure up their own security namely the long fearing Pashtun-driven Afghan nationalism, Pakistan wanted the social order in Afghanistan to be Islamic, which explains Pakistani recognition of the Taliban (Hartman 2002:478). Therefore we can see that other nations other than America were playing the political realist game.

With Afghanistan in turmoil the UN's position at the outset was ambivalent (Saikal & Maley 1991: 93). Thus in the main the solution to the Afghanistan problem was left to those most heavily involved. Given that the Soviet Union was being dragged deeper and deeper into the 'Afghan trap' reformist leader Mikhail Gorbachev agreed to a UN brokered accord (the Geneva Accords) requiring it to withdraw, which it did on February 15, 1989 (Buyers (ed) 2003:197). Moreover the United States pressed the Soviets into mutually cutting off their military aid programs, which a weakened Moscow agreed to on September 13, 1991 (Buyers (ed) 2003:197).

With the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, America's attitude toward Afghanistan changed. With the Soviets gone the United States saw little reason to focus on the poor and distant land that was Afghanistan (Byman & Khalilzad 2000:17). The United States believed that any future conflict in Afghanistan would be confined to the mountains and valleys of that region (Byman & Khalilzad 2000:17). Furthermore the United States came to regard Afghanistan as a liability. Washington was largely disinterested in the turmoil that engulfed Afghanistan after the withdrawal of the Soviet Union 'having expediently used their Pakistani allies and the mujahideen to serve their ends, they simply turned their backs on the country' (Misra 2004:29). Moreover the Soviet withdrawal elicited for America the 'restoration of the strategic balance of the region' (Hartman 2002: 483). Afghanistan was only important when it was seen as a base for communist expansion (Hartman 2002: 483). To the minds of those who mattered Afghanistan went from being one of Washington's top foreign policy concerns to one of almost irrelevance (Misra 2004:29).

Many would see this as a cynical, calculated and cold position that was held by the American government in respect to initially attempting to help the Afghan people in their war against the Soviet Union to then almost totally disregarding the Afghan struggle once the Soviet Union had withdrawn. However this should be viewed as responsible political acumen as the Afghan war was efficacious for the American people- namely it helped destroy the Soviet Union, this was the objective, as we have seen of the American government- both Democrats and Republicans. . The Afghan War should be viewed in its proper Cold War context rather than from the position of the present. Although the cause and effect of America's policy was to create terrorists groups such as al Qaeda, however one must remember that the Soviets were

the unwanted force in Afghanistan not American, thus any antagonism of the present towards America should also be directed, even more so, at the Soviet Union.

After the United States and the Soviet Union departed the nation, Afghanistan spiralled into a civil war that eventually led to the Taliban assuming power. The United States response was one of hopeful expectation as one senior official surmised 'the good part of what has happened is that one of the factions at last seems capable of developing a new government in Afghanistan' (Hartman 2002: 484). It was believed that the new regime could resemble Saudi Arabia, which would be propped up, by American aid and influence whereby American corporates could access the oil rich Central Asian Caspian Sea region (Hartman 2002:484). From this it can be argued that America played a pivotal role in the Taliban gaining power in Afghanistan.

However does this mean that the American government in some ironic way is responsible for the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on America? Given that many of the terrorists were trained in the mountains and valleys of Afghanistan which American officials so callously disregarded only a decade earlier. Would the consequences of America not supplying the mujahideen with covert aid been greater than the atrocities of September 11, 2001 and would the terrorists attacks of S11 happened regardless of America's policy towards Afghanistan, as there had been terrorist acts committed against American interests throughout the world in the decade leading up to the S11 terrorist attacks. Such as the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center in 1993, as well as terrorist attacks on American embassies in Nairobi, Kenya and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania in 1998 which were linked to al-Qaeda (Hayden et al (eds) 2003:13).

The suggestion here is that Islamist groups who represent Islamic society are more responsible for terrorist attacks than the American government whereby American foreign policy should not be made a scapegoat for the problems of Islamic states. It's worth remembering that the main groups who opposed the communist government in Afghanistan were Islamic and prior to the Soviet invasion and American aid there were already at least six Islamic insurgency groups attempting to overthrow the Taraki regime (Hayden et al (eds) 2003:7). Although speculative, terrorist attacks on American interests were likely to have taken place regardless of its external policies. America's role in Afghanistan should be seen as a state weighing up the pros and cons of its policies at that particular time, which is reminiscent of Machiavellian thought - exploit opportunities when they have been provided.

THE TALIBAN

The Taliban assumed control of Afghanistan on September 27, 1996 after a factional struggle in the previous four years (Buyers (ed) 2003:198). Many of the Taliban came from the disillusioned mujahideen (Buyers (ed) 2003:198). The Taliban are an ultra-conservative Islamic political party that have four main elements to their policy: a ban on the employment of women; a halt in the education of females; the imposition of strict dress codes for both men and women and also the strict monitoring of women once they leave the family home (Marsden 1998:88). Many in the West criticize the policies as being morally redundant, on the other hand the Taliban feel aggrieved that the West does not recognise their achievement in bringing peace, law and order to Afghanistan relative to the

tumultuous Civil War that preceded the Taliban assuming power (Marsden 1998:

117). Many believe that it was in that vain that the Taliban came to rule in

Afghanistan, that it was finally bringing peace and order to the nation after years of

turmoil and civil war, the population was eager for peace at almost any cost

(Maley(ed) 2001:43).

The Taliban portrayed Afghanistan under their rule as an archetypal and self-

conscious community based on Qur'anic principles (Misra 2004:70). However

Misra (2004:70) believed that the Taliban did not possess any intellectual curiosity

whereby there remained plenty of ambiguity in their interpretation of Islam.

Moreover Misra believes the Taliban's appeals to Islam were more in line with

Pashtun tribal behavioural patterns, values and norms that were pre-Islamic rather

than principles based upon the Qur'an and the Hadith. 'The Taliban represented

nobody but themselves and recognised no Islam except their own' (Rashid

2000:87).

America's attitude towards the Taliban was rumoured to be sympathetic which was

fuelled by a statement made by American oil company UNOCAL that it stipulated

the Taliban's accent to power as a 'positive development'. The argument made by

UNOCAL was that a single stable government in Afghanistan would allow it to

build oil and gas pipelines through Afghanistan and Central Asia (Marsden

1998:129). The US government was also reported as saying they could see nothing

objectionable with the Taliban which was contrary to statements made from

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the leader of Iran 'In the neighbourhood of Iran,

something is taking place in the name of Islam and a group whose knowledge of

Islam is unknown has embarked on actions having nothing to do with Islam'

(Marsden 1998:130). It was further stipulated by Khamanei that the Taliban had received support from the USA 'not only has Washington not condemned it. On the contrary it has been supporting the Taliban in its suppression of its rivals' (Marsden 1998:130). Thus we can see America's initial attitude to the Taliban was one that was developed from their economic self-interest, which is of course reflective of political realism.

However in the international sphere America could not be seen as being as so supportive of the Taliban, in November 1997 US secretary of state Madeline Albright that they were opposed to the Taliban 'because of their approach to human rights, their despicable treatment of women and children and their general lack of respect for human dignity (Maley (ed) 2001:90). Albright's personal compassion was recognised and perhaps signalled a change in policy from the US towards the Taliban however America's policy toward Afghanistan was still in the main characterized by America's belief that the Taliban would clean up the drug problem; serve as a bulwark against Russian and Iranian interests in the region; restore order in the whole nation; put an end to terrorists training camps as well as paving the way for their former King Zahir Khan to return and notably to provide US ally Pakistan a geographical link to trade with the new Central Asian republics. The Taliban at the time also promised to open up the area for the construction of huge gas and oil pipelines running from Central Asia through Afghanistan and into Pakistan (Maley (ed) 2001: 96). America's role in the region cannot solely be defined through economic interests as US support of the Saudi Arabian, Pakistani and United Arab Emirates backed Taliban at the time was also defined through its strategic geopolitical planning. American support of a strong client state in the region would strengthen its influence in the region as a stronger Afghanistan would promote a

stronger relationship with Pakistan which has given America a sense of equilibrium in the region given its traditional hostility with Iran (Ahmed 2002: 47). American policy towards Afghanistan was also characterized by its duality- that is on the one hand it sought to promote its economic interests and strategic security interests by being welcoming initially of the Taliban. On the other hand America even before the Sep 11 terrorist attacks sought to capture Osama Bin Laden and destroy radical Islamic groups which the Taliban was protecting, this had become the most underlying bilateral issue of American foreign policy towards Afghanistan (Buyers (ed) 2003:214).

SEPTEMBER 11 ATTACKS

On September 11, 2001 two' planes one followed by the other flew into the World Trade Center- a symbol of global capitalism, which is not to suggest that Osama Bin Laden is anti-capitalist – in New York City, during the same hour a third plane hit the Pentagon- the behemoth of American military might. A fourth plane went down reportedly destined for the White House (Kellner 2003:1). As it had been known to US officials that the Taliban were providing a base for al-Qaeda as well as providing both overt and covert aid to other terrorist organizations (Hayden et al (eds) 2003:12). The Taliban were now enemy No.1, there was intense debate in the weeks after the Sep 11 attacks as to what the response would be from America. On October 7, 2001 President George W. Bush announced the start of a military campaign in Afghanistan to destroy both the Taliban and the al Qaeda network that it had been harbouring (Kellner 2003: 2). It has even been suggested that the Bush administration had been planning a war in Afghanistan even before the Sep 11 terrorist attacks as America

became increasingly frustrated with the Tahban. It became evident to the U.S. government between 1999 and 2001 that the Taliban would not provide the stability that it needed, in order to exploit Central Asian economic possibilities (Ahmed 2002:55) This was to be a venture conducted with the help of Russia, India, Pakistan and Iran (Ahmed 2002: 56). America also imposed Iraq-like embargoes – which reflects the power of the nation state, contrary to the opinion of some who believe the nation state to be redundant- on the nation prior to the Sept 11 terrorist attacks in an attempt to oust the Taliban, however it only made the poor Afghan people suffer more hardship (Ahmed 2002: 56).

The events of 9/11 exposed America's vulnerability to attack and highlighted America's need to oust the Taliban and al Qaeda operatives. These terrorists 'are trying to rally the Muslim world to jihad against the planets only superpower and the principle and most visible obstacle to their ambitions' writes Frum and Perle (2003:9). America's position from pro- Taliban to anti- Taliban are commensurate with both their economic and security ambitions, whereby it has become a struggle for power between terrorists, those who harbour terrorists and the American government. The American government should not hesitate to act unilaterally to destroy these terrorists' cells, as this is the message of political realism and of Machiavelli.

In the short term the war on terror has produced significant victories for the Bush administration. The Taliban has been routed in Afghanistan. Moreover al Qaeda has been dispersed and is no longer using Afghanistan as a base for their terrorist's exploits. Furthermore the President sent Special Forces to the Philippines, Yemen and Georgia, in an attempt to defeat al Qaeda forces in these countries (Hayden et al (eds) 2003: 60).

The Bush administration had stepped onto the front foot whereas previous American

governments had lacked the resolve to be forceful on terrorism. U.S. vice –President Dick Cheney recalled the repeated terrorist attacks on American citizens during the 1980s and 1990s. These attacks included the bombing of the U.S. embassy in Beirut in 1983 killing sixty-three Americans. Six months later in the same city a truck bombing killed 241 American marines. Cheney also mentions the 1986 bombing of a West Berlin discotheque that killed two American servicemen, the 1988 Pan Am Flight 103 bombing over Lockerbie, Scotland and finally the bombing of U.S. military barracks at Khobar Towers in Saudi Arabia in 1996(Daalder & Lindsay 2003:83). Added to this list is the other bombings that we have mentioned previously. Therefore we can see that drastic action needed to be taken against terrorist operatives. This is both logical and natural, could we expect the greatest superpower in the world to continue to be the target of terrorists without responding?

President Bush was adamant in his pursuit of al Qaeda and other terrorists whether it is a multinational approach or whether the pursuit of terrorism is unilateral. For President Bush terrorism presented no room for neutrality 'we will pursue nations that provide aid or safe haven to terrorism. Every nation, in every region, now has a decision to make. Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists' (Daalder & Lindsay 2003:86). President Bush also stipulated that 'this is the time for self-defence' (Woodward 2002:31). The President also stated that 'we have to see this as an opportunity (Woodward 2002: 32). This situation refers to America's relationship with Russia and China.

President Bush is implying that global terrorism can galvanize the international community against terrorism. President Bush's reference to self-defence and opportunity highlight political realism core tenets, which has been manifest in

America's foreign policy stance towards Afghanistan. Critics of America's war on terror believe America's war on terror to be amoral and a war based on America achieving perceived objectives. They say that America's war on terror is a war on America's enemies conducted to secure strategic and economic interests with a racist and xenophobic attitude towards the Afghan people (Ahmed 2002: 255). America in line with the tenets of political realism has separated politics from morality, in order to achieve objectives; this is sensible, responsible politics.

Critics of American foreign policy toward Afghanistan is based upon an imposition of a morality to politics, however these critics fail to mention that America is the biggest provider of humanitarian aid to Afghanistan since the 9/11 attacks. In the American financial year of 2002 American humanitarian aid totalled U.S.$ 620 million, this aid was to go to the Afghan people rather than be directed to the ousting of the Taliban (Buyers(ed) 2003:219). This policy of America's highlights its duality whereby it can achieve political aims through one policy and maintain its unsurpassed record of being a great provider of humanitarian aid through another policy.

However since 9/11 American foreign policy has been characterized by its security proclamations. President Bush stated 'we now recognise, that oceans no longer protect us that we're vulnerable to attack. And the worst form of attack could come from somebody acquiring weapons of mass destruction and using them on the American people' (Daalder & Lindsay2003: 86).

Many other nations supported America's right for self-defence given that it was attacked. America's war on terror in Afghanistan was seen to be legitimate and was

supported by nearly twenty countries as no nation could defend the Taliban and al Qaeda after the atrocities of 9/11(Daalder & Lindsay 2003:116). In this heightened environment America emphasised its desire to rid the world of terrorism. President Bush stated ' our war on terror begins with al Qaeda, but it does not end there. It will not end until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped and defeated' (Daalder & Lindsay 2003:112). Moreover Bush stated 'I will not yield; I will not rest; I will not relent in waging this struggle for freedom and security for the American people (Woodward 2002: 108). The notion of ideology, security, self-interest and power all highlight the major political realist maxims. President Bush stated 'America has, and intends to keep military strengths beyond challenge' (Daalder & Lindsay 2003:90). This military strength of America's needs to be maintained as it increasingly faces challenges of a global nature, such as terrorism. America's military capacity is currently being tested in Iraq which like Afghanistan is a nation that America has changed policy over in the last quarter of a century, and especially since the tragic events of 9/11.

CHAPTER 3: AMERICA AND SADDAM HUSSEIN'S IRAQ

IRAQ

A year after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, Saddam Hussein's Iraq launched a pre- emptive attack on Iran to seize its oil fields (Clarke 2004:39). America's response at first was neutral as Washington was not on good terms with Iraq as they had developed close ties with the Soviet Union. However America's relation with Iran was going from bad to worse which were initiated by the 1979 Islamic revolution in Iran and culminated in the new Iranian government seizing U.S. embassy staff and holding them for over a year (Clarke 2004:39). Iran also contributed to the chaos that had erupted in Lebanon which the United States had always seen as a stable and friendly pro Western bulwark in the Eastern end of the Mediterranean (Clarke 2004:39). This had the cumulative effect of America wishing to see the demise of Iran. This was to be achieved by way of supporting the Saddam Hussein regime.

The United States provided direct economic aid to Iraq and indirect military aid as well as the transportation of technologies with military applications. Moreover Washington rejected calls for sanctions to be placed on Iraq after Iraq had used chemical weapons against Iranian soldiers and Kurdish civilians during the conflict (Zunes 2001:16). The U.S. Navy intervened in the conflict in 1987 further bolstering the Iraqi war effort (Zunes 2001:16). From an American perspective an Iranian victory in the war against Iraq laid bare the possibility that the Iranian theocracy lead by their leader Ayatollah Khomeini would give rise to a Shiite state

in Iraq based upon the model of Iran (web.pdx.edu). This of course, in the eyes of American foreign policy makers, could not happen given the attitude that Iran had shown America since the Islamic revolution of 1979. So much so that America sent a special presidential envoy to Iraq in 1983, one Donald H. Rumsfeld whom of course is now defence secretary for the current Bush administration.

The irony of Donald Rumsfeld shaking hands with Saddam Hussein in 1983 to now being Secretary of Defence who played a pivotal role in toppling Saddam Hussein's regime is not lost on some, however should not be viewed in the context of fostering and giving legitimacy to the dictator and be thought of as a form of blowback. On the contrary America's policy toward Iraq needs to be seen as a policy that satisfied its position and the varying circumstances at that particular time. America, obeying political realist maxims weighed up the pros and cons of the situation and chose a policy that they believed would be beneficial to them. All nations go through a similar process. It's easy in hindsight to suggest that American policy in Iraq has been flawed. However to predict the future events in the Middle East is nigh on impossible.

To continue America's involvement in Iraq based on the principle of self – interest continued to support Saddam Hussein in the year before 1990, which included ' large scale intelligence sharing, supply of cluster bombs through a Chilean front company, and facilitating Iraq's acquisition of chemical and biological precursors' (web.pdx.edu). In February 1982 the U.S. state department removed Iraq from the list of states supporting international terrorism (www.gwu.edu). Iran accused Iraq of using chemical weapons and appealed to the international community for help. America confirmed the almost 'daily use' of chemical weapons yet Iran as a

diplomatically isolated nation received only a muted response to it's grievances (www.gwu.edu). From an American perspective the selling of arms to Iraq was not about ensuring profits from the arms trade ' but the much more significant aim of controlling to the greatest extent possible the region's oil resources' (Shalom 1990). A victor in the Iran- Iraq war would likely emerge as the dominant power in the region, which would in turn threaten the weaker nations in the region and ultimately the economic interests of the Western nations who were reliant on the Gulf oil. Therefore America was keen to see a protracted, inconclusive war that left the protagonists worse off than when they started (www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org). This is a reflection of Henry Kissinger's 'plague on both houses' policy according to which both Iran and Iraq would be so economically and militarily drained from the war that both nations would lack the capacity to cause mischief elsewhere (Bassiouni, 2003). One State Department official stated in 1983: 'we don't give a damn as long as the Iran- Iraq carnage does not effect our allies in the region or alter the balance of power' (Shalom 1990).

Iraq found itself to be in the enviable position of being courted by both America and the Soviet Union, a situation whereby it was viewed that an Iranian victory would neither be desired by 'East or West' (Tripp 2000:240). The Soviet position being of a similar nature to that of America's and other Western nations including France and Britain after 1982 whereby it was thought that an Iranian victory would destabilize the whole Middle East region and damage vital economic interests (Tripp 2000:240).

This situation highlights two great rivals – America and the Soviet Union at the height of their conflict being able to work together through their own self- interest to achieve an objective that suited them both. If it so happened that either of the superpowers supported Iran, a situation would likely of arisen that both superpowers would ultimately have been drawn further into the conflict at a greater cost to their nations as well as, as was the conventional wisdom of the time, bringing a new order to the Middle East region that would have been internecine to both superpowers. Thus the self-interest of both superpowers on this particular occasion was beneficial to both America and the Soviet Union.

America's continued support of Iraq in the war was not concurrent with its official policy which still barred the export of U.S. military equipment to Iraq, however it was evident that some was provided on a ' don't ask- don't tell' basis (www.gwu.edu). This despite Donald Rumsfeld who returned to Baghdad in 1984 and publicly condemned Iraq's chemical weapons use, stating ' the United States has concluded that the available evidence substantiates Iran's claims that Iraq used chemical weapons' (www.gwu.edu). This could possibly explain why Rumsfeld was keen to attack Iraq in 2003, however more of that later.

Washington's response to Iraqi chemical use in the 1980's was one of public condemnation however prepared to give the Iraqi government enough latitude to forestall an Iranian victory. A Washington spokesperson stated 'we are adamantly opposed to Iraq's attempts to acquire the raw material, equipment, or expertise to manufacture chemical weapons from the United States. When we become aware of attempts to do so, we will act to prevent their export to Iraq' (www.gwu.edu). However the American government believed this to be the lesser of two evils as it

was stated ' while condemning Iraq's chemical weapons use…The United States find the present Iranian regime's intransigent refusal to deviate from its avowal objective of eliminating the legitimate government of neighbouring Iraq inconsistent with the norms of behaviour among nations and the moral and religious basis which it claims' (www.gwu.edu). These two statements are an indication of America's declared self- interest in it's involvement in the Iran- Iraq war implying that it would act on Iraq's use of chemical weapons only when it had stopped benefiting their interests.

A self- interest that is more manifest when you consider that America for a period supported both Iran and Iraq when the Reagan administration agreed to secretly sell weapons to Iran in exchange for the release of American hostages who were being held hostage by terrorists in Lebanon. Part of the proceeds of these sales was going to finance the rebel Contras in Nicaragua in an attempt to overthrow the Sandinista government (www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org). This became known as the Iran- Contra scandal and became a political sore on the Reagan administration.

The under sided nature of America's foreign policy is condemned on moral grounds, however the reality of a politically cruel world and the vicissitudes of circumstances means America's foreign policy must continually adapt in order to quell any threat and be ready to take advantage of political circumstances in order to safeguard the citizens of America.

However, to continue, America's support for Iran was only temporary as it continued to support Iraq as well as encouraging Arab Gulf States to give financial support to the Iraqi cause, this being done in the face of continued use of chemical weapons such as the internationally prohibited weaponising of mustard gas, Saria and VX

poisonous agents (bassiouni 2003). With Iraq benefiting from the help of both superpowers and increasingly turning the tide of the war towards victory, Iranian leader Ayatollah Khomeini decided to end the fighting and accepted UN Resolution 598 which stipulated that both sides withdraw from the conflict and declared a ceasefire (Shalom 1990). America's position regarding the war was characterized by its strategic machinations and its ambition to maintain the status quo in a region of great strategic value to Washington (Shalom 1990).

GULF WAR 1990

Only two years after the end of the Iran – Iraq war the Gulf region was plunged into another war of global significance, the Gulf War of 1990-1991. Following a dispute with the Kuwaiti government regarding debt repayment and oil policy, Saddam Hussein's Iraq invaded the Sheikdom, which it soon annexed. The UN Security Council condemned the attack and demanded the immediate withdrawal of Iraqi forces. Failure to comply with these demands led to economic sanctions as well as military intervention from the United States (Zunes 2001:17). The U.S. in conjunction with over twenty other UN member states liberated Kuwait from Iraqi control in six weeks, which was backed by the U.S. congress and the UN Security Council (Zunes 2001:17). President George Bush Snr orchestrated America's attack on Iraqi forces in Kuwait that saw over 200, 000 troops stationed in Saudi Arabia at the request of the Saudi royal family, a position that has been considered a long held desire of the U.S. government to have a base in the Persian Gulf (Ray & Schapp 2003:220). However America's military aggression in the region did not precipitate a fall in the Saddam Hussein regime and failed yet provoked a Kurdish uprising to

topple the Saddam Hussein regime that was spectacular in it's failure (Ray &

Schapp 2003:207). However America controlled Iraq in the next decade by

imposing sanctions on the regime (Ray & Schapp 2003:207).

The reasons for America's intervention in the Persian Gulf War of 1991 was to

maintain its position in the region and to bring stability to the region that was home

to precious oil fields. If Iraq had seized Kuwait with minimal American response,

Saddam Hussein would have been more emboldened to explore other aggressive

adventures. Saddam, in America's eyes, would then have control of a large portion

of the world's oil fields. He then would be able to dictate to America (Clarke

2004:57). This was something anathema to America, thus the fear of the unknown

guided America in it's decision to defend Kuwait and the Saudi oil fields.

America's position in the Gulf War, guided somewhat by other Arab nations

especially Saudi Arabia, remembering that Saudi Arabia gave permission to the U.S.

to station forces on Saudi Arabian soil as they felt the impending threat of Iraq.

Although once the six week offensive was over, America had no plans of marching

in on Baghdad, it was the wish of the Arab nations (Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Syria) who

had had a large contingent in the Gulf War did not want America to occupy an Arab

state and more importantly they did not want a Shi'a Muslim majority to take over

Iraq and set up a pro-Iranian regime. Thus the Saudis and Egyptians backed UN

Security Council resolution authorizing only the liberation of Kuwait (Clarke

2004:65). This reflects the political realist game also being played by Saudi Arabia

and other Arab nations.

The temerity of Saudi Arabia to forbid the stationing of American troops in the

name of Islam, and then allow them to do so once they feared the threat of Saddam

Hussein reflects their own political realist agenda, their security fears and the

naturalness of international politics.

America under the name of the UN Security Council placed unprecedented

infringements on Iraq's sovereignty in particular the building up of a nuclear

weapons program that would threaten the region's stability, as well as placing upon

the nation economic sanctions that resulted in the humanitarian catastrophe of

hundreds of thousands of Iraqi children dying of malnutrition and related diseases

(Zunes 2001:17).

America's sanctioning policy on Iraq with the help of Britain has come under

criticism as it had failed to remove Saddam Hussein from power and was affecting

only ordinary Iraqi people. The country's social and industrial infrastructure were

continuing to decay and the chance of reconstruction in the future to be more

expensive (Simons 2002:67). The sanctions continued to reap havoc on the people

of Iraq and was not likely to change as the UN sanctions committee was dominated

by the U.S. and Britain which were dismissive of requests to lift the sanctions

(Simons 2002:76). Critics also suggest that sanctions prey on the weaker members

of a society – the poor, sick, elderly and newborn young. They see it as a violent,

insidious form of warfare (Arnove (ed) 2003:86). This may be true or not, however

in the particular case of Iraq it's worth remembering that Saddam Hussein rejected

UN resolutions designed to ease the hardship on the Iraqi people. UN Resolution

661 contained humanitarian provisions for the sale of food and medicine supplies to

Iraq from the beginning. Yet with the realization that the embargo was resulting in

suffering on the community prompted the United Nations to propose a program

whereby Iraq could sell it's oil with the resulting proceeds contributing to the purchase of food and medicine. This was to be conducted under the supervision of the UN. Saddam rejected this policy, as he believed it impeded on Iraqi sovereignty (O'Sullivan 2003:109). This clearly highlights the tyrannical nature of Saddam's regime and the wanton callousness of the man. Saddam perceived that the deteriorating humanitarian situation could be used as a tool in the propaganda battle, which would lead to the lifting of the sanctions (O'Sullivan 2003: 115). Critics of sanctioning Iraq must realise that the humanitarian catastrophe in Iraq cannot entirely be attributed to the embargoes placed on the nation.

As we have seen the policies of Saddam Hussein have contributed to the humanitarian situation as well as the destruction caused by two devastating wars (O'Sullivan 2003:106). Contrary to criticism of sanctions, they deserve great credit for the relative amount of containment they have placed on Saddam Hussein's regime and compared favourably with many of the options available to policy makers of the time (O'Sullivan 2003:108). America's position from giving tacit support to the Iraqi regime during the Iran-Iraq war to then becoming the chief initiator of military action against the regime after it's invasion of Kuwait as well as imposing sanctions on the nation for over a decade highlights the vicissitudes of international politics.. The lack of loyalty that nations exhibit to each other is also manifest and mirrors the fear and cunningness of politics. America's position towards Iraq continued to respond to its economic and security needs, which became more aggressive in a post 9/11 world.

IRAQ POST 9/11

America's invasion of Iraq in 2003 under the pretext of the war on terror was

justified at the beginning of the operation to be in response to Saddam Hussein's

regime and al Qaeda connection (www.pdx.edu). These allegations look flimsy at

best as Hussein's power is based upon a secular nationalism whereas al Qaeda is a

terrorist organization built on religious fanaticism (www.pdx.edu). However it had

been reported that Saddam Hussein knew that an atrocity was planned. Two weeks

before the Sep 11 attacks it was reported that Saddam Hussein put his military on

high alert. This clearly is an indication of Saddam having a prior knowledge of a

planned attack on a massive scale (Simons 2002:35). Whether this is true or not,

American officials can only act on the intelligence they receive. However it was

certain that Saddam Hussein was joyful after hearing of the atrocities of 9/11, which

is no justification or does not prove legitimate the war on Iraq (Bassiouni 2003).

America's justification for the war on Iraq increasingly became linked with Saddam

Hussein's neglect of former UN resolutions and his atrocious humanitarian record.

The U.S. wanted to avoid Saddam's stalling tactics and UN Security Council

protocol in an effort to remove Saddam from power. The U.S. argued that Iraq was

already in breach of several UN Security Council resolutions which did not need

any more breaches to justify going to war (Bassiouni 2003). As the likelihood of

war drew closer the Security Council agreed to Resolution 1441 in November 2002,

which required Iraq to prove that they did not possess any weapons of mass

destruction by way of UN inspections (Soros 2004:56). 'Saddam failed to provide

an accounting of the destruction of the material that he was known to have

possessed' (Soros 2004:56). However in the main Saddam cooperated with UN

inspectors. Chief UN inspector Hans Blix ruled that certain missiles exceeded the

legal limit imposed on their range, which was enough for the American government

to conclude that an invasion of Iraq was inevitable. Secretary of State Colin Powell accused Iraq of violating UN Resolution 1441, France then actively lobbied against a new resolution which America ignored, meaning America defied the UN Security Council in its war on Iraq (Soros 2004:57). A defiance that has been echoed by Saddam Hussein in his flagrant disregard for the UN since 1990 when Resolution 678 was passed which believed Iraq was a threat to global peace and security (Shawcross 2004: 217). ' In March 2003 of the Fifteen members no one doubted that Iraq was still in breach of all the relevant, binding Council resolutions since 678 (Shawcross 2004:218).

President Bush stated ' twelve years after Saddam Hussein agreed to disarm, and ninety days after the Security Council passed Resolution 1441 by a unanimous vote, Saddam Hussein was required to make a full declaration of his weapons program. He has not done so (Bush 2003:224). Furthermore 'Saddam Hussein was required to fully cooperate in the disarmament of his regime; he has not done so (Bush 2003:224). This breaching of U.S. resolutions by Saddam Hussein for more than a decade, mocks the whole purpose of the United Nations (Shawcross 2004:218). Not only that but it brings to question whether the UN Security Council is relative anymore. President of the UN Kofi Annan stated that the UN had ' come to a fork in the road' (Shawcross 2004:219). And concedes that the UN has failed to placate the fears of some states who feel vulnerable to new threats that drive them to take military action (Shawcross 2004:219).

Saddam Hussein has ultimately been responsible for the death of hundreds of thousands of his own people. Over 100,000 people have estimated to be killed by

the reign of terror of Baath Party officials. Economic sanctions imposed on the regime have resulted in the deaths of an estimated 500,000 people. Two wars of aggression carried out by Saddam Hussein against Iran and Kuwait resulted in a cumulative total of over 200,000 casualties. In addition to this an estimated 100,000 Kurds have been killed along with an estimated 20,000- 60,000 Shi'a Muslims who resided in Southern Iraq. Over 200,000 Iraqi's have also been displaced from the border with Iran (Bassiouni 2003). Thus we can see the inflictions and casualties of Saddam Hussein total in the millions.

These also constitute 'crimes against humanity' and 'war crimes' as well as constituting human rights violations, regrettably the UN has not undertaken as it should have the task of establishing, publishing and disseminating these crimes (Bassiouni 2003). This is a further indication of the inadequacy of the UN. Going through the process of the UN was justifiable as America attempted to garner a multilateral force in its war on Iraq. It was only when the credible threat of force was issued on Saddam Hussein's regime that some form of compliance was offered from the tyrannical regime. Compliance came from the threat of force (Trimble 2003:11). The paradox of the UN wanting peace in the world is better achieved through the threat of force, which is something the UN must back up (Trimble 2003:11).

America's use of force was legally justified as Saddam Hussein continued to defy UN resolutions for more than a decade. It was believed that the cumulative effect of not adhering to Resolutions 678, 687 and 1441 of which 'all of these resolutions were adapted under chapter VI1 of the UN Charter, which allows the use of force

for the express purpose of restoring international peace and security' (McGoldrick 2004:54). The Security Council continued to condemn Iraq for its violations yet it was manifest that they could not impose enough pressure on Iraq for them to comply. Thus America's decision go to war, is an indication of that particular nations power over a global organization such as the UN, emphasising the power of the nation state.

Many criticize America's war on Iraq and label it as a pre-emptive war guided by the notion of self-defence. However 'legal theory articulated by the Australian, Spanish, U.K. and U.S. governments was not predicated on self defence, but on SC resolutions' (McGoldrick 2004:53). Although Iraq contained no weapons of mass destruction, which was the preamble to go to war, the defiance that Saddam exhibited towards UN resolutions is a firm basis for going to war.

Weapons inspector David Kay concluded that there was no weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, yet reported there was plenty of disturbing evidence suggesting that a clandestine network within the Iraq Intelligence Service ' had equipment suitable for research in the production of chemical and biological weapons, as well as evidence that the renovation of a nuclear program was in its early stages' (Bresler 2004:13). Furthermore Kay testified to American Congress that Iraq by maintaining WMD programs and activities was in clear violation of UN Resolution 1441 and that he clearly had an ambition to resume these activities (Bresler 2004:13). In addition Kay also testified that Iraq was a place where terrorists were passing by unimpeded, couple this with the loose control that existed over Iraq's WMD programs, Kay concluded that ' Iraq was a dangerous place…. even more dangerous than we thought' (Bresler 2004:13).

America's war on Iraq has come under severe criticism for the supposedly shallow reasons for its invasion. However in a post 9/11 world America could not take the risk of further relying on the unsatisfactory United Nations, it acted in the interests of the American people, the securing of Iraqi oil, the securing of the American people from any potential threat that might emanate from Iraq and the displacing of an evil despot highlight the cumulative effect of procuring for America what it set out to achieve. The war on Iraq also highlights America's willingness to go to war and impose themselves in the theatre of international relations. These aspects mirror political realism's core assumptions of self-interest and power.

The danger of America's policy in Iraq is the war has become an idealistic pursuit of democracy within the Middle East region; which given the different factions and difficulty in achieving that in Iraq is a dangerous policy. If the Shi'a majority in Iraq eventually rise up and assume power than Iraq would be on closer ties and would become an Iran like state, which America would not wish to see happen. Moreover America's decision to pre-empt the war on Iraq could yet haunt America as it tries to 'reign in' other rogue states such as North Korea as not only is it morally isolating for America to do so, a country such as China which has failed to get involved in the process in North Korea could ultimately sit back and take advantage of America's militarily and economically expensive crusades. However given the evidence that we have seen America had to get rid of Saddam Hussein.

CONCLUSION

As we have seen the existence of a foreign policy is a result of the human condition. The humanness of politics is always at hand. American policy toward both

Afghanistan and Iraq should be seen as a natural response to a given situation.

Under the terms of political realism America acted in a purely self interested and

natural manner in order to perpetuate the power that it exhibits in the region and

indeed the world. The power of the nation state is clearly still relevant as it exercises

more power than global organizations such as the United Nations. The nation state

as has been highlighted in the thesis can impose embargoes, declare war and ignore

the conventions of multilateral organizations. Thus arguments that the nation state is

in decline and lack relevance in the theatre of international politics become

redundant and misguided. Yes, international terrorism lingers between nation states,

however ultimately an individual nation should be held responsible for any terrorist

cells that fester in their countries. For those who criticize U.S. foreign policy, need

only to look at the tenets of political realism to better understand their misguided

idealism. The psychological effect of 9/11 on the American political conscience was

both immediate and profound. Before the atrocities of 9/11, America both to

themselves and indeed to the rest of the world seemed not only impregnable but also

invincible, 9/11 changed this perception. As the greatest power in the world

America needed to reassert itself and lessen the relative vulnerability that 9/11

caused. It is moving in the right direction in achieving this outcome by ousting the

Taliban, al Qaeda operatives and the Saddam Hussein regime. The increased hatred

of these policies are mainly deriving from militants anyway whom both are vying

for control and power of the region and had a pre-existing hatred for American

policy in the region as it stifled their sinister ambitions. America will continue to

fight against political Islam whom attempts to undermine American dominance in

the world to satisfy their ambitions for power. China's growing confidence will also

be closely monitored as will India's who could become an important bulwark for

America in its struggle against militant Islam. Finally, this thesis has been written to highlight the changing nature of political circumstances that require new and different approaches to political situations, this should not be seen as political hypocrisy. It is natural, human and politically savvy in a politically conflictual world.

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