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**U.S. FOREIGN POLICY
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HOW TO BALANCE VALUES AND INTERESTS?

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U.S. Foreign Policy and Human Rights:

How to Balance Values and Interests?

Dr. Joe Renouard

Can a nation pursue traditional, narrowly defined interests such as national security and economic growth while also working internationally to enhance democratic institutions, defend civil liberties, and raise living standards? In short, how can a nation balance values and interests? This is a central question for makers of American foreign policy whenever human rights violations are concerned.

While I cannot craft a definitive answer to what is essentially a subjective question, I hope to offer a few suggestions through a simple historical-theoretical framework. With so many unique humanitarian causes to consider, Washington policymakers cannot operate from a blueprint; rather, they must consider a wide array of factors, and they must acknowledge that international human rights concerns nearly always take a backseat to more traditional interests like security, trade, international order, strong bilateral relationships, and regional hegemony. Nevertheless, in many instances the United States may be in a position to use its power and influence to encourage abusive governments to implement reforms.

HUMAN RIGHTS IN A “REALIST” WORLD

We can begin by acknowledging that, historically speaking, very few governments have seen a place for “values” in foreign policy. In centuries past, diplomacy was carried out in pursuit of tribal, royal, imperial, or national interests with little or no regard for such concerns. But in the modern era, and certainly in the last fifty years, an alternative vision of international affairs has arisen which takes into account the well being of other states’ citizens. Consequently, a human rights regime has become well established in international law and in custom. Bilateral and multilateral human rights policies influence everything from humanitarian relief efforts to the dispensing of development aid. But even with these rules in place, powerful governments continue to reject outside interference in their internal affairs. Meanwhile, the United States prioritizes strategic and economic factors in its dealings with most states, especially larger, wealthier states like Saudi Arabia and China.

The classic realist/liberal (or realist/idealist) dichotomy may help shed some light on the issue.¹ Although this is an admittedly simplistic division, it does illuminate the policymaker’s dilemma. Realists follow in the tradition of Thucydides, Machiavelli, and Hobbes in taking a skeptical view of human nature.² They emphasize that flawed human beings are responsible for making policy, and they see

¹ The term “idealist” is often invoked as a pejorative to lampoon liberal, internationalist, or cosmopolitan ideas. (E.H. Carr famously called interwar liberal internationalists “utopians.” See Carr, *The Twenty Years’ Crisis: An Introduction to the Study of International Relations* (London: MacMillan, 1939).) Better, I think, to avoid the term because it implies impractical or impossible proposals, whereas “liberal” suggests more viable programs for alleviating poverty and reducing conflict.

² For the purposes of this essay, I am simplifying the descriptions of realism and liberalism, and I am omitting detailed discussion of other important theoretical frameworks: classical realism, neorealism, complex interdependence, neoliberalism, etc. Readers will get a better sense of the subject from the works of Hans J. Morgenthau, Reinhold Niebuhr, Kenneth N. Waltz, Stephen D. Krasner, Robert O. Keohane, Joseph S. Nye, and Stephen M. Walt, as well as lesser-known works, such as Colin Elman and Michael A. Jensen, eds., *Realism Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2014); Martin Griffiths,

rivalries and conflicts as central realities of interstate affairs. In an anarchic international system, states seek to increase their power and, in the case of Great Power rivalries, to decrease the power of rival states. In the eyes of “defensive” neo-realists, states follow defensive and moderate policies because they seek to maintain the existing balance of power against power-seeking states. But “offensive” neo-realists take the more pessimistic view that states seek hegemonic power, not a simple balance, especially as against regional rivals.³

The realist perspective has a powerful influence on human rights policymaking and the values/interests dynamic because it promotes a narrow definition of the national interest. Realism takes a top-down view of international affairs, prioritizing peace and stability in an anarchic world of competing states; thus the realist rejects human rights diplomacy in all but the most limited, private manner. Because the real goal of diplomacy is exercising power in the national interest, say realists, a compelling interest in other nations’ citizens can only be based on sentiment, emotion, and a vaguely defined humanism. Not only are such humanistic goals difficult to specify, they say, but these endeavors open a nation to an endless series of expensive, debilitating obligations that may, in the end, do little for human rights. Moreover, a government that meddles in another nation’s internal affairs will likely appear to be arrogant, while a sentimental consideration for foreign nationals may be interpreted as weakness.

A realist foreign policy does not simply mean aligning with autocrats because they maintain order and stability within their borders. It is more accurate to say that realism first seeks order and stability, and therefore does not oppose a stable, outwardly peaceful regime just because it happens to be autocratic. A realist is not above establishing ties with a dictator if such a relationship serves broader, long-term national interests. In the words of President Richard Nixon, “We deal with governments as

Realism, Idealism, and International Politics: A Reinterpretation (New York: Taylor and Francis, 1992); and Robert M.A. Crawford, *Idealism and Realism in International Relations: Beyond the Discipline* (New York: Routledge, 2000), Ch. 5.

³ See John J. Mearsheimer, “Structural Realism,” in Tim Dunne, Milja Kurki, and Steve Smith, eds., *International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 71-88.

they are, not as we would like them to be.”⁴ But a realist will also cut ties to a dictator whose grip on power is weak or whose policies are so unpopular as to foster destabilizing domestic unrest. As the international relations scholar Hans J. Morgenthau wrote more than fifty years ago, “Political realism does not require, nor does it condone, indifference to political ideals and moral principles, but it requires indeed a sharp distinction between the desirable and the possible—between what is desirable everywhere and at all times and what is possible under the concrete circumstances of time and place.”⁵ In other words, the realist school of thought is comfortable aiming at “the realization of the lesser evil rather than of the absolute good.”⁶

Most important to this perspective is the belief that there is a wide gap between the (perhaps admirable) goals of human rights diplomacy and the benefits to one’s own nation. What advantage will accrue to us, ask realists, if by speaking up for foreign nationals in a faraway country we imperil longstanding relationships with important partner states? What will we gain if we harm our economy by reducing trade in the name of human rights and in the process allow other nations’ businesses to supplant our own? Who wins if we sacrifice potential breakthroughs in security and regional stability in the name of an impossible-to-define “human” interest? Moreover, say realists, an outside power cannot change other cultures except perhaps through coercion or long-term occupation. When this is attempted, the law of unintended consequences is likely to prevail, e.g., the chaos that accompanied the U.S.-led invasion and occupation of Iraq. Such unintended consequences were a particular obsession of mid-century realists like Morgenthau, George F. Kennan, and Reinhold Niebuhr. “We

⁴ Nixon and Henry Kissinger uttered many variations on this theme. “The United States has a strong political interest in maintaining cooperation with our neighbors regardless of their domestic viewpoints,” said Nixon in 1971. “We hope that governments will evolve toward constitutional procedures. But . . . we deal with governments as they are. Our relations depend not on their internal structures or social systems, but on actions which affect us and the inter-American system.” Second Annual Report to the Congress on United States Foreign Policy, 25 February 1971, *Public Papers of the Presidents*, The American Presidency Project, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=3324>.

⁵ Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, 3rd Ed. (New York: Knopf, 1960), 7.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 4.

cannot conclude,” argued Morgenthau, “from the good intentions of a statesman that his foreign policies will be either morally praiseworthy or politically successful. . . . How often have statesmen been motivated by the desire to improve the world, and ended by making it worse? And how often have they sought one goal, and ended by achieving something they neither expected nor desired?”⁷

When faced with a formidable state, realism may take a few different forms. With respect to China, for example – a rising economic and military power with the world’s largest population – American realists tend to fall into two categories.⁸ The first prioritizes engagement, and thus greater interdependence, as a way to manage China’s rise and channel its power into directions that are in America’s interest: regional stability, free trade, beneficial manufacturing arrangements, open shipping lanes, domestic order, stable currencies, and peacefully arbitrated territorial disputes (especially in the South China Sea). These realists see no reason to threaten this delicate set of relationships – so very beneficial to hundreds of millions of people – over the plight of a relatively small group of Chinese activists, lawyers, and journalists.⁹

But other realists reject the “engagement and interdependence” model.¹⁰ They argue that Sino-American relations are already beyond the point of standard interstate rivalry, and that they may very well explode into open conflict. These observers emphasize China’s growing military power and its increasing assertiveness in international affairs. Seeing Sino-American relations as defined by rivalry,

⁷ Ibid., 6.

⁸ Tsuneo Watanabe addresses this dynamic in “U.S. Engagement Policy toward China: Realism, Liberalism, and Pragmatism,” The Tokyo Foundation, 31 January 2014, <http://www.tokyofoundation.org/en/articles/2014/us-engagement-policy-toward-china>.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ See, for example, Mearsheimer, “The Gathering Storm: China’s Challenge to U.S. Power in Asia,” *The Chinese Journal of International Politics* 3, No. 4 (Winter 2010): 381-396; and *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: WW Norton, 2014), Ch. 10.

they prefer using American power to check Chinese ambitions. Such actions could include everything from direct displays of American military might in the western Pacific region to assembling a stronger East Asian bloc of nations. It could entail forging bilateral and multilateral agreements that will marginalize China, or building coalitions against China in existing multilateral forums.¹¹

John J. Mearsheimer offers a stark summary of this perspective and the future of Sino-American relations: “The fact is that international politics is a nasty and dangerous business, and no amount of goodwill can ameliorate the intense security competition that sets in when an aspiring hegemon appears in Eurasia. That is the tragedy of great power politics.”¹² If this pessimistic view becomes more prevalent, realists may actually add human rights accusations to their kitbag in order to challenge Beijing. Seeing China’s human rights record as a point of vulnerability in world forums, realists may join activists in exploiting this record, much as the U.S. did with respect to the Soviet Union in the 1970s and 80s. However, this seems unlikely given China’s contemporary economic importance when compared with the relative economic weakness of the old Soviet Union.

THE LIBERAL PERSPECTIVE

Realism’s ideological foil is liberalism (and its close cousin, liberal internationalism). Liberals recognize the importance of power and the nature of rivalry, but they are more optimistic about states’ ability to transcend narrow national interests. They see international relationships as primarily cooperative and actual conflict as aberrant. By this perspective, governments have learned that cooperation in the

¹¹ The Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) may be one such agreement. See Min Ye, “China Liked TPP – Until U.S. Officials Opened Their Mouths,” *Foreign Policy*, 15 May 2015, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/05/15/china-liked-trans-pacific-partnership-until-u-s-officials-opened-their-mouths-trade-agreement-rhetoric-fail/>.

¹² Mearsheimer, “China’s Unpeaceful Rise,” *Current History* (April 2006), 162.

form of trade, international institutions, and international law is superior to conflict, and that international law can create conditions that are in the interest of virtually all states.¹³

With respect to human rights policymaking, this perspective prioritizes people, not states. Rather than emphasize national sovereignty as the central principle of international affairs, the most activist liberals envisage a world order in which the individual citizen is the basic building block. Thus they argue that governments cannot be allowed to use “national sovereignty” as a cover for abusing their citizens. Although few liberals completely reject the notion of the national interest, many give more weight to the “human interest.” Put another way, they believe that policymakers should not ignore the suffering of faraway people. The great Russian writer Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn crystallized this sentiment many years ago in his Nobel Prize acceptance speech: “There are no internal affairs left on our crowded earth. And mankind’s sole salvation lies in everyone making everything his business.”¹⁴

Another core liberal belief is that states can improve people’s lives through trade, international aid, multilateral lending, humanitarian agreements, and human rights diplomacy.¹⁵ The strongest proponents posit that states can, and should, intervene in other sovereign states to achieve broadly meliorative objectives, e.g. through humanitarian assistance, development aid, human rights policies, and even military invasion. Such interventions can be justified in traditional humanistic terms or in the name of newer principles, such as the “responsibility to protect” (R2P).

¹³ Key texts include Robert O. Keohane, *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984); and Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, “Interdependence in World Politics,” in George T. Crane and Abba Amawi, eds., *The Theoretical Evolution of International Political Economy: A Reader*, 2nd Ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 122-131.

¹⁴ “Solzhenitsyn – Nobel Lecture,” http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1970/solzhenitsyn-lecture.html.

¹⁵ “Neo-liberalism,” in particular, emphasizes institutions and their ability to influence states’ behavior.

This perspective also expresses Wilsonian optimism that an expanding set of enforceable international laws, standards, and conventions can encourage, or complement, rising domestic standards. In this sense, humanistic liberalism notes a long-term, positive trend in respect for human rights.¹⁶ In the United States and other Western nations, liberals emphasize that these are *traditional* values, not radical ones, and that humanitarianism is squarely within the pantheon of Western values. American liberals, in particular, combine adherence to the revolutionary traditions of the Enlightenment with a belief in using America's power to do good in the world. Owing to their nation's vast economic resources and diplomatic leverage, say these advocates, Americans may even be duty-bound to act in some cases.

Liberals look askance at realists' narrow definition of the national interest and argue, instead, for a much broader definition that takes into account not only the ultimate human effects of American actions and policies – CIA activities, extraordinary rendition, drone strikes, arms sales – but which also uses American influence to improve international human rights standards. At the very least, American economic and diplomatic power can be leveraged to encourage a government to free political prisoners, implement reforms, and lift repressive restrictions. In some cases, America has been influential in supporting a democratic transition, especially in nations that have experienced a temporary suspension of parliamentary government.¹⁷ Washington policymakers can also act in concert with other nations in multilateral forums to sanction the worst offenders and to encourage reforms among governments accused of milder offenses.

Although some liberals support all forms of engagement with oppressive regimes as a means of spurring more openness within those nations, others are wary of these contacts, arguing that they encourage turning a blind eye to human rights violations. Closer economic and financial ties may improve living standards in the target nation, but these ties will also invariably strengthen the hand of

¹⁶ Cf. Kirsten Sellars, *The Rise and Rise of Human Rights* (Phoenix Mill, UK: Sutton, 2002).

¹⁷ Such cases include the democratic transitions of The Philippines and Haiti (1986), South Korea (1987), Poland (1989), and, more recently, Myanmar.

those interests in American policymaking, making human rights a more distant concern. Post-1945 history is rife with examples, including America's trade and security relations with anticommunist, military governments in Latin America and its longstanding special relationship with the very illiberal, undemocratic Saudi Arabia.

Realists criticize these views as overly idealistic and even dangerously out of touch with the real world of hard power. They also criticize liberals for failing to give much guidance on when and where to apply such principles. It is one thing to desire a freer, more democratic world, they say, but it is another thing entirely to take up a global mission to spread liberty and democracy. Yet although the charge of naïveté may hold true for some, activists in government tend to have few illusions about the need to strike a balance between values and interests. President Jimmy Carter's critics called him idealistic, and worse, both during and after his presidency. But the preponderance of evidence now shows that he and his advisers were practical people who painstakingly weighed the pros and cons of each decision with respect to national and humanistic interests.¹⁸ Today's human rights bureaucrats are even more circumspect. As one State Department officer has argued, "Alas, even if the evidence suggests that there is much to gain from considering human rights more seriously as a security issue, the task of integrating human rights into the sausage-making of diplomacy is a challenge for policy makers trapped in a world defined by short-term interests and dominated by the often short-sighted domestic politics of security."¹⁹

¹⁸ Joe Renouard, *Human Rights in American Foreign Policy: From the 1960s to the Soviet Collapse* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), Ch. 3; "Review of Kristin L. Ahlberg, ed., *Foreign Relations of the United States, Vol. II, Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs, 1977*," *H-Diplo FRUS Reviews*, No. 24, 9 June 2014, <http://h-diplo.org/FRUS/PDF/FRUS24.pdf>.

¹⁹ Daniel R. Mahanty, "Realists, Too, Can Stand for Human Rights," *The National Interest*, 9 October 2013, <http://nationalinterest.org/commentary/realists-too-can-stand-human-rights-9208>. Mahanty goes on to argue that "human rights fit comfortably into a realist's world defined by interests and anarchy."

BEYOND IDEOLOGIES?

The realist/liberal dichotomy is hardly an iron law. Ideals and interests (or ideals and power) are not always in opposition. The fight against Nazi Germany and imperial Japan was not only a rebuke to power-enhancing states seeking to establish themselves as regional hegemony against the interests of the United States; it was also a fight against abusive, genocidal regimes. And as the realist Mearsheimer points out, more recently proposed humanitarian interventions in developing countries would have cost little and would not have jeopardized national security.²⁰ (Though of course they may have bogged down U.S. troops without an exit strategy, entailing a loss of both lives and national prestige – unpopular outcomes that would have hindered domestic social harmony.)

We have seen many other cases in which human rights interest has coalesced with other national interests. In such instances, hard-nosed realists have found themselves aligning with human rights activists. In the 1980s, for example, the United States, the United Kingdom, and their Western partners made Eastern European human rights an increasingly important part of their dealings with Moscow and other Warsaw Pact states. To many observers, individual rights in the region – basic civil liberties, freedom of emigration, representative government – were irrelevant in the context of managing relations between nuclear-armed rivals. And even if these liberties mattered to some citizens in the Soviet bloc, skeptics asked why they trumped the arguably more substantial problem of these nations' weak economies and their citizens' low living standards. But when it became clear that the sclerotic Eastern Bloc economies sought greater integration with the more dynamic economies of the West, these Western governments could make human rights progress an important part of their bilateral demands – that is, an important part of their realist approach to the East. During Ronald Reagan's second term, progress on human rights became an integral aspect of the burgeoning détente with the governments of the Soviet Union and Poland, with the result that conditions in both nations improved.²¹

²⁰ "E.H. Carr vs. Idealism: The Battle Rages On," *International Relations* 19, No. 2 (June 2005), 142.

²¹ Renouard, *Human Rights in American Foreign Policy*, Ch. 5.

Another example of the blurring of realist/liberal lines is in the area of democracy promotion. Since the 1980s, Democratic and Republican administrations alike have used a variety of grants, foundations, and innovative policies to enhance democratic procedures worldwide. They have done so for reasons that are both altruistic and strategic. First, there is the common assumption that liberal democracies make better partners and allies. Moreover, some argue, ties to oppressive governments have hurt America's reputation and have even spurred foreign policy setbacks, as when revolutionaries overthrew U.S.-backed regimes in Cuba (1959), Iran (1979), Nicaragua (1979), and Egypt (2011).²² "Democratic peace theory" further suggests that democracy promotion is a pacifying and stabilizing policy because democracies rarely fight one another. Critics, though, have argued that democracy promotion policies amount to undue interference in sovereign nations' internal affairs. Others see few positive outcomes given the funds that have been expended. And many realists and unilateralists reject the very notion that other nations' internal political structure even matters to the American national interest.

The War on Terror (now more accurately described as a perpetual war against radical Islamists) has necessitated something of a return to the pre-1991 emphasis on security over human rights. Simply put, the United States needs the assistance of some abusive Middle Eastern and African regimes in order to locate and destroy Islamist terrorist networks. This reality has prompted charges of American hypocrisy. Sudan in the Bush years was a stark example. Millions were displaced or killed as a result of the Sudanese government's and Janjaweed militias' war against non-Arab populations in the Darfur region of western Sudan. President Bush took up the cause early in his presidency. In 2002 he signed the Sudan Peace Act, which authorized aid to populations outside of government control, and two

²² Democracy advocates chastised the U.S. government for having supported the undemocratic Hosni Mubarak regime in Egypt for so long. Better, these advocates argued, to get ahead of the curve in promoting democratic reforms long before a client government loses legitimacy.

years later his administration openly condemned Sudan's leader, President Omar al-Bashir, and began to use the term "genocide" to describe the events in Darfur.²³

But Bush's overall regional goals led him to tone down his rhetoric. The Sudanese government was providing the CIA with valuable intelligence in the War on Terror, and Khartoum's security services were detaining Al Qaeda suspects for CIA interrogation, raiding suspected terrorists' homes, and expelling extremists. The State Department claimed that Khartoum's assistance did not change Washington's holistic approach to Darfur, human rights, and the peace process in Sudan, but others disagreed. In the words of a former NSC staffer, "We have not taken adequate measures given the enormity of the crimes [in Darfur] because we don't want to directly confront Sudan when it is cooperating on terrorism." The CIA also recruited Arabic-speaking Sudanese to provide intelligence on radical Islamist groups, which one CIA official rationalized as a counter-terrorist necessity: "There's not much that blonde-haired, blue-eyed case officers from the United States can do in the entire Middle East, and there's nothing they can do in Iraq. Sudanese can go places we don't go. They're Arabs. They can wander around." Meanwhile, the Sudanese government remained reluctant to alter their policies in Darfur.²⁴

It remains to be seen whether human rights concerns will appreciably alter the Obama administration's approach to the Syrian civil war. So far they have not, due in large measure to the geopolitical complexities of Syria's bloody war, as well as President Obama's surprisingly realistic approach to world affairs.²⁵ One glaring departure from Obama's otherwise cautious worldview was the 2011 Libya

²³ Thomas F. Farr and William L. Saunders, Jr., "The Bush Administration and America's International Religious Freedom Policy," *Harvard Journal of Law and Public Policy* 32, no. 3 (Summer 2009): 951.

²⁴ Ken Silverstein, "Official Pariah Sudan Valuable to America's War on Terrorism," *Los Angeles Times*, 29 April 2005; Ewan MacAskill, "U.S. Enlists Sudanese Spies in War on Terror," *The Guardian*, 11 June 2007.

²⁵ See Fred Kaplan, "The Realist: Barack Obama's A Cold Warrior Indeed," *Politico*, March/April 2014, <http://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2014/02/barack-obama-realist-foreign-policy-103861>; Stephen M. Walt, "Is Barack Obama More of a Realist Than I Am?," *Foreign Policy*, 19 August 2014," <http://foreignpolicy.com/2014/08/19/is->

intervention, an episode that now haunts his administration. That year, thousands of Libyans took to the streets to demonstrate against the regime of Muammar Gaddafi. When a violent civil struggle ensued, President Obama's advisers were divided on the subject of intervention. As Gaddafi's forces approached Benghazi, some outside observers speculated that these troops would slaughter thousands of civilians. Defense Secretary Robert Gates, Vice-President Joe Biden, and National Security Adviser Tom Donilon cautioned against direct involvement, fearing that the U.S. would be engaging in yet another civil war while its troops were still in Iraq and Afghanistan. But Obama was ultimately convinced by others in his administration (Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and NSC aide Samantha Power were particularly persuasive) and some European and Arab League leaders that the U.S. was in a position to prevent a bloodbath. In short, the administration would act in the name of R2P, the "responsibility to protect." The U.S. backed a Security Council resolution and joined Britain and France in bombing pro-Gaddafi forces. The original goal of saving civilians then morphed into a justification for regime change, and the administration backed a secret program to provide arms to rebel militias. Later that year, Gaddafi fell from power and was killed by rebels.²⁶

Although it is possible that the bombing forestalled Gaddafi's mass murder of civilians (we cannot know for sure), some challenged the legal basis for the dictator's ouster and the moral justification for the tons of bombs that helped bring it about.²⁷ Meanwhile, the ensuing chaos in Libya has turned an apparent victory for the Obama administration – and for the R2P philosophy of humanitarian intervention – into a disaster. As of this writing, multiple observers have branded Libya a "failed

[barack-obama-more-of-a-realist-than-i-am/](#); Edward Luce, "Barack Obama's Welcome Kissing Realism," *Financial Times*, 19 April 2015.

²⁶ I am relying here on Jo Becker and Scott Shane, "The Libya Gamble," *New York Times*, 28 February 2016; Sheryl Gay Stolberg, "Still Crusading, but Now on the Inside," *New York Times*, 29 March 2011; and Bob Dreyfuss, "Obama's Women Advisers Pushed War Against Libya," *The Nation*, 19 March 2011, <http://www.thenation.com/article/obamas-women-advisers-pushed-war-against-libya/>.

²⁷ For example, see Hugh Roberts, "Who Said Gaddafi Had to Go?" *London Review of Books* 33, No. 22, 17 November 2011, 8-18.

state.”²⁸ There is no central political authority; ISIS has established itself on the coast; and the violence has spurred thousands of Libyans to flee toward Europe. These long-term outcomes have fueled questions about the “bloodbath” justification and the wisdom of those who defended it. Time will tell if Libya’s predicament can be resolved, but surely when the next crisis arises American policymakers will consider very carefully the unforeseen consequences that invariably accompany even the most well-intentioned interventions.

Joe Renouard is the author of *Human Rights in American Foreign Policy: From the 1960s to the Soviet Collapse* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016).

²⁸ Richard Lardner, “U.S. Commander in Africa Says Libya is a Failed State,” *U.S. News and World Report*, 8 March 2016, <http://www.usnews.com/news/politics/articles/2016-03-08/us-commander-in-africa-says-libya-is-a-failed-state>.

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