Invasion Of Iraq: Neo-Realism As A Strong Concept In Theory Of International Relations

The invasion of Iraq in 2003, to this day continues to be a combative issue in the world of global politics. Whilst there are many perspectives of the war from different theorists the most Important viewpoint is that of Neorealists. Whilst the neorealist view and methods can be seen as combative and unnecessary. In the world of international relations whilst it is not favourable war is sometimes a necessary means (Mearsheimer, J 2003). The realist perspective believes states only seek power to increase security. The past evidence of justifications for the invasion by and American leadership are false due to the war not being in the national interest and based on misinformation by both governments. The neorealist perspective confirms that due to the lack of global governance in the international realm, the United States acted in their own interest to remove Saddam Hussein from power. Due to this wrongful invasion the region of Iraq is still volatile which clearly resembles the belief that this unjustness was not in any states best interest.

Neorealism can be traced back to Kenneth Waltz's theory of International relations. Unlike other realist thinkers at the time Waltz argued that the grapple for power in international relations caused a system which was anarchic due to human nature. (Baylis, J, Smith, S, Owens, P, 2016). Neo realists that were led by Waltz's newly emerged theory of International relations believed that conflict and the lack of cooperation between state powers were due to there being no overarching governing system that sat above the sovereign. Neo-realists believed that with a central authority states would be held accountable for their actions removing the concern for future conflicts between states. The three points that Waltz uses to explain the faults and explicit ideals of neo-realism as a theory are the structure of the international system, distribution of power and capabilities and the differentiation of units. (Baylis, J, Smith, S, Owens, P, 2016). Whilst critics may assume that neo-realists are only interested in 'the maximization of power' (Maravankin, 2016) is inaccurate as neo-realist believe that states are 'Security Maximiser' (Baylis, J, Smith, S, Owens, P, 2016). This imprecise allegation can also be refuted by Waltz himself who concluded that 'the ultimate concern of states is not for power but for security' (Waltz 1989, p. 40). A system that incorporates Waltz's beliefs of states seeking security and the implementation of a central authority above sovereign states would create less conflict, due to the need for security states would not seek warfare because of the consequences that could be handed down by a higher authority.

A Secondary element that is used to describe neo-realism is the distribution of power and capabilities. As mentioned above the distribution of power and capabilities is a key point in the development of neo-realism. neo-realists believe that state structures should be 'defined by its distribution of capabilities'. (Maravankin, 2016). This relates to the overall idea of a lack of higher authority because states seek to increase their power against other states to improve their security. Consequently, the balance of power changes as each state changes their distribution of capabilities. This Anarchy that has created the neo-realist perspective is clear in modern sovereign states that have caused a loop effect that will see states continuously increase power and security over each other. This anarchic state that the international system is in can only clearly be resolved through the implementation of the belief outlined in Kenneth

Waltz's Theory of International relations. A clear example of this is if one of the hegemonic powers seeks conflict there is little to nothing other state or sovereign powers can do to stop this. The only resolution to this dispute can be a higher authority that can inflict consequences onto states where necessary and decrease the need for excessive state power capabilities. However, to ensure the security of an international realm conflict may be a necessity, this fact is even demonstrated by Waltz when quoted 'power is a means to an end, that end is security'(Baylis, J, Smith, S, Owens, P, 2016). This shows that whilst conflict is not sought after by neo-realists it may be required to create a secure system.

In certain cases, war is a necessity and whilst it is not a favourable option there are occasions where it is justified. However, in the case of the 2003 invasion of Iraq by the coalition forces it was not necessary or justified. There are many reasons to why this war should not have happened, for this essay however them main two will be discussed. The first reason why the Iraq war was unjustified was the war was not in the national interest of the United States. The Bush and Blair administrations attempted to explain the decision to go to war by arguing that Saddam Hussein was an irrational actor who possesses weapons of mass destruction and wishes to blackmail the international community with them (Mearsheimer, J 2003). If this was a true depiction of the events it would have definitely been in the national interest for both countries to go to war against Iraq because the states wished to protect their security. However, the basis of the Bush/Blair administrations reasoning is false. Whilst Saddam Hussein was not a great man he did act however rationally. Whilst his actions and ideas were cruel and callous this did not affect the United States or the United Kingdom. It can also be shown that the build-up of WMD's that Both Coalition governments kept mentioning did not actually exist. In 2002 Bush said that Hussein had a 'massive stockpile' of weapons of mass destruction. However, in 2004 CIA Director George Tenet affirmed that there wasn't any 'information about the types or quantities of weapons.' (Mathhews 2016). To gain public support Bush stated that 'we do not know whether or not [Iraq] has nuclear weapons. Tenet refuted this statement by explaining to policy makers that the CIA explicitly said Hussein has no nuclear weapons (Mathhews 2016). This was a further lie by Bush to get the country to believe in an unnecessary war against Iraq. This proves that the reason the Bush/Blair administrations gave for the invasion of Iraq was false

The second reason that to show that the war was unnecessary was the sanctions and threat of military force was enough to contain Saddam Hussein. This was a proven reason to not go to war because sanctions and the threat of military action had worked before. In relation to the Iraq invasion Mearsheimer says that 'logic and historical evidence suggest a policy of vigilant containment would work' (Mearsheimer, J 2003), showing that war was not necessary to contain Iraq threats. This is obvious to be a better course of action than war because the United States and its allies had a larger military force than Iraq. There is no reason why the United States did not put these options in to force because they had already been tried and tested. Even if Iraq had gone nuclear the US and UK forces could have contained Iraq as it did the Soviet Union during the cold war. (Mearsheimer, J 2003). Another example of this is clear during the gulf war where Hussein used missiles against other countries, but did not use chemical or biological weapons because when facing the United States they would retaliate with WMD's. During the Iraq War at least 250,000 people (Mathhews 2016) died including 5,000 United states soldiers and 179 troops. This war was not in either countries best interest and killed many service men and women who did not need to be there, not to mention the many Iraqi citizens that died. Saddam Hussein was not an irrational actor and did not have a 'stockpile' of weapons like the US government said he had. The containment and sanction on

Iraq would be enough deter any threats from Saddam Hussein or Iraq from arising.

One of the key opposing views to the Neo-realist take on the Iraq war is that of Marxism. ‘Marxism states that everyone is in conflict with eachother’ (The Curious Classroom, 2013). Karl Marx the invented Marxism as a way of creating a more balanced society between social, political and economic classes. Marxists are one of the biggest critics of the Iraq war, questioning the motives of invasion and the effects on Iraqi citizens. Unlike neo-realist who believe the war was to remove Saddam Hussein from power, Marxists believe the main driver for the war was to gain control of the oil sources. This is evident due to certain economic gains the United States would receive from joining the war. This was clear where after the war Haliburton was allowed into Iraq to occupy and privatise certain oil reserves (Muttitt, G, p.327 2018) . At the time of the war there was influential members within the government that had ties to certain businesses within the oil sector that would seek to benefit from invading Iraq, such as Vice President Dick Cheney who before his time in office was the CEO and Chairman of Haliburton.

Marxists also argue that the Iraq war was used to recruit American citizens for the military. This is based on the fact that the government targeted citizens from lower economic classes to join the military such as the Appalachia region. The Appalachia has less opportunities for work, higher rates of poverty and lower incomes compared to other places across the United States (Scanlan S, 2014). By joining the army at allows the people from the Appalachia region to find job opportunities where there used to be limited work. (Scanlan S, 2014) . Marxists believe this is a clear example of mining the poor for the America’s economic gain. The two marxist perspectives above raise good reasons as to why the United States went to war with Iraq, However the marxist example of going to war for the economic gain of a country ignores the idea of national interest and security that neo-realism conveys. The marxist perspective also does not cover the belief that the war was not necessary because even a nuclear Iraq could be contained by The United States and their allies like they did with the Soviet Union during the Cold war.

In Conclusion neo-realism is a strong concept developed from Kenneth Waltz’s theory of International Relations. Neo-realism believes strongly in security of states and will seek security at any means necessary. Neo-realism also features the strong belief that there should be an overarching authority to stabilise the anarchic international system. The 2003 invasion of Iraq by the coalition forces was clearly not int the United States best interest and the military onslaught that occurred only led to a greater unstable state that does not benefit the Iraqi people. As proven throughout this essay the Iraq war was completely unjustified due to the false information spread by leaders such as President Bush and Prime Minister Blair. The war was also avoidable due to the United State military power being greater than Iraq’s which would allow the coalition forces to contain Suddam Hussein. Whilst there are some theories that at times depict a strong case of alternate reasons for the Iraq war, it is neo-realism that precisely depicts the unjust and unnecessary actions led to by the coalition forces.