#### Ethical policymaking requires calculation of consequences

Gvosdev, St. Antony’s College Rhodes Scholar PhD, 2005

(Nikolas, “The Value(s) of Realism”, SAIS Review of International Affairs, 25.1, project muse)

As the name implies, realists focus on promoting policies that are achievable and sustainable. In turn, the morality of a foreign policy action is judged by its results, not by the intentions of its framers. A foreign policymaker must weigh the consequences of any course of action and assess the resources at hand to carry out the proposed task. As Lippmann warned, Without the controlling principle that the nation must maintain its objectives and its power in equilibrium, its purposes within its means and its means equal to its purposes, its commitments related to its resources and its resources adequate to its commitments, it is impossible to think at all about foreign affairs.8 Commenting on this maxim, Owen Harries, founding editor of The National Interest, noted, "This is a truth of which Americans—more apt to focus on ends rather than means when it comes to dealing with the rest of the world—need always to be reminded."9 In fact, Morgenthau noted that "there can be no political morality without prudence."10 This virtue of prudence—which Morgenthau identified as the cornerstone of realism—should not be confused with expediency. Rather, it takes as its starting point that it is more moral to fulfill one's commitments than to make "empty" promises, and to seek solutions that minimize harm and produce sustainable results. Morgenthau concluded: [End Page 18] 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.11 This is why, prior to the outbreak of fighting in the former Yugoslavia, U.S. and European realists urged that Bosnia be decentralized and partitioned into ethnically based cantons as a way to head off a destructive civil war. Realists felt this would be the best course of action, especially after the country's first free and fair elections had brought nationalist candidates to power at the expense of those calling for inter-ethnic cooperation. They had concluded—correctly, as it turned out—that the United States and Western Europe would be unwilling to invest the blood and treasure that would be required to craft a unitary Bosnian state and give it the wherewithal to function. Indeed, at a diplomatic conference in Lisbon in March 1992, the various factions in Bosnia had, reluctantly, endorsed the broad outlines of such a settlement. For the purveyors of moralpolitik, this was unacceptable. After all, for this plan to work, populations on the "wrong side" of the line would have to be transferred and resettled. Such a plan struck directly at the heart of the concept of multi-ethnicity—that different ethnic and religious groups could find a common political identity and work in common institutions. When the United States signaled it would not accept such a settlement, the fragile consensus collapsed. The United States, of course, cannot be held responsible for the war; this lies squarely on the shoulders of Bosnia's political leaders. Yet Washington fell victim to what Jonathan Clarke called "faux Wilsonianism," the belief that "high-flown words matter more than rational calculation" in formulating effective policy, which led U.S. policymakers to dispense with the equation of "balancing commitments and resources."12 Indeed, as he notes, the Clinton administration had criticized peace plans calling for decentralized partition in Bosnia "with lofty rhetoric without proposing a practical alternative." The subsequent war led to the deaths of tens of thousands and left more than a million people homeless. After three years of war, the Dayton Accords—hailed as a triumph of American diplomacy—created a complicated arrangement by which the federal union of two ethnic units, the Muslim-Croat Federation, was itself federated to a Bosnian Serb republic. Today, Bosnia requires thousands of foreign troops to patrol its internal borders and billions of dollars in foreign aid to keep its government and economy functioning. Was the aim of U.S. policymakers, academics and journalists—creating a multi-ethnic democracy in Bosnia—not worth pursuing? No, not at all, and this is not what the argument suggests. But aspirations were not matched with capabilities. As a result of holding out for the "most moral" outcome and encouraging the Muslim-led government in Sarajevo to pursue maximalist aims rather than finding a workable compromise that could have avoided bloodshed and produced more stable conditions, the peoples of Bosnia suffered greatly. In the end, the final settlement was very close [End Page 19] to the one that realists had initially proposed—and the one that had also been roundly condemned on moral grounds.

#### Utilitarianism is the only ethical way to evaluate action because it is indifferent to temporal distance.

Davidson 15 (Marc D. Davidson, researcher and lecturer, University of Amsterdam environmental ethics and economics “Climate change and the ethics of discounting” WIREs Clim Change 2015, 6:401–412. doi: 10.1002/wcc.347 *.nt)*

Welfarist Consequentialism Utilitarianism The most common approach to discounting in the climate debate is (classical) utilitarianism. According to utilitarianism, the right act is the one that maximizes utility (or happiness, well-being, or some other comparable measure) for all concerned. The utilitarian approach has two consequences for discounting. The first of these is that time as such is irrelevant. Sidgwick,61 one of the founding fathers of utilitarianism, already observed that ‘the interests of posterity must concern a Utilitarian as much as those of his [their] contemporaries.’ In other words: changes in future utility count as much as changes in present utility.c The second consequence is that, given the diminishing marginal utility of consumption, discounting is indeed required if future generations are expected to be wealthier than we are today.d According to Marshall,64 ‘a pound’s worth of satisfaction to an ordinary poor man is a much greater thing than a pound’s worth of satisfaction to an ordinary rich man.’ According to utilitarianism, we should therefore discount future climate damage at a rate equal to the expected growth rate of consumption times the absolute value of the elasticity of marginal utility: the Ramsey formula with the pure rate of time preference set to zero. This is the approach followed by e.g., Ramsey,20 Pigou,56, and Harrod65 in the general discounting debate and by e.g., Cline,32 Schelling,53 Azar & Sterner,66 Broome,67,68, and Stern6 in the climate debate.