

**The Great Delusion: Liberal Dreams and International Realities by
John J. Mearsheimer**

Published by Yale University Press, September 25, 2018, pages 328,
ISBN: 978-0-300-23419-0 Hardcover

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“The people who have paid the greatest cost for Washington’s failed policies in the post-Cold period are foreigners who had the misfortune of living in countries that American policy makers targeted for regime change. Just look at the greater Middle East today, which the United States, pursuing liberal hegemony, has helped turn into a giant disaster zone” — *The Great Delusion*, page 233

The pioneer of offensive realism, Professor John Mearsheimer, argues that the post-Cold war approach of United States to international politics has been failed miserably. The proponent of structural realism in his new book contends about ‘great delusion’ that spreading of liberal values will generate peaceful world proved fateful. America in its holiday from realism engaged itself in unnecessary wars, killed millions of people in Middle Eastern conundrum, and militarized its own country. The seeds of such disastrous policy lie in liberal orientation of American foreign policy that anathematize kissing cousins—realism and nationalism. These two powerful isms, Mearsheimer believes, together will always trump liberalism in international politics (pp.3,229). While liberalism is productive arrangement for domestic order, however, it is poor force to confront international realities. This latest forceful book by offensive-realist, titles *The Great Delusion: Liberal Dreams and International Realities*, is a compelling case against liberal theories of international politics in general and liberal crusaders of Washington in particular.

The renowned author is skeptical about ambitious policy of liberal hegemony that United States has adopted since Cold-war ended three decades before. The said policy demands to turn as much states possible to democracy, building international institutions and promotion of free trade (p.1). For the success of such ambitious policy, United States considers its civilizational duty to intervene in 'evil states' for social engineering and regime change (p.2). Consequently, in its unipolar moment, Washington invaded several states to turn autocratic regimes into its own image. The rationale behind such approach was: That spreading of liberal democracies coupled with promotion of free trade and institutionalism will result in peaceful world. However, to offensive-realist Mearsheimer, this ostensible productive approach in theory proved counterproductive in three-decade of practice (p.153). The reason: liberalism undermines sovereignty and consequently those who pursue such policy become warlike (p.158).

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The long-awaited book has been written in usual Mearsheimer's style: Introducing concepts in a lucid manner first, followed by criticism. The first near-quarter of the book philosophically reasons about limitation of reason. The author believes that 'at its deepest level, politics is a conflict over first principles'—that what constitutes the good life? (pp. 16,39). This conflict is due to the fact that our critical faculties are inadequate to lead us to agreement over first principles. As a result, there would always be disagreement within and among social groups that sometimes lead them to duel on extensive level. Now if some people believe—though they do not acknowledge but this is the case with liberals—universal truth about first principles exist and they have found it only makes the situation worse (p.42).

The author throughout book introduces verities of liberalisms and deconstructs their prescriptive antidotes about faults of international politics. Particularly, he contests with central tenet of liberalism, democratic peace theory. There are certain cases, as author argues, when democratic states fought wars with each other's. And even if democracies do not fight with each other's, they are the sources armament and militarization of world. After Cold-war, United States initiated seven wars all against minor states, author further goes to say, because the superpower America is addicted to war (p.179). Moreover, it was America, the champion of democracy, who toppled four—Iran in 1953, Guatemala in 1954, Brazil in 1964, and Chile in 1973—democratically elected governments during Cold-war, when its interests demanded (p.202). In sum, liberalism is false hope nurture by American polity. Instead promoting peace, it causes endless troubles. Neither logically nor empirically, has it proved itself as a force of peace.

Author is hopeless in last pages of book about America abandoning policy of liberal hegemony. Selling realism in liberal market is daunting task. However, he maintains that situations might change for United States with continuing rising of China (pp. 233,234)

Undoubtedly, the book provide a keen analysis of American post-Cold war approach and possess shrewd criticism of liberal theories; but the book itself is not free from weaknesses. First, there is repetition of arguments and concepts. Second, much of criticism against liberal theories of peace are not new, rather, they are borrowed. The author does not offer much new in his critique against liberal tenets. Third, Mearsheimer considers liberalism as the main cause of failure behind American foreign policy after 1990's, however; such reductionist approach misses and neglects variety of other factors that contribute to failure of America's post-Cold war approach. He failed to analyses the politics of Middle East

that has contributed its own share to present quagmire. And finally, the critique missed the basic question to rise: Whether American policy makers are liberals at all or are they just failed realists in liberal cloaks?