

VISUALIZE THIS

by Monroe Newman

Professor Emeritus of Economics, Pennsylvania State University

Visualize yourself as an American who opposed the 2003 invasion of Iraq. You didn't trust your President who baselessly linked Saddam Hussein to al-Qaida. You didn't trust your Vice President who reportedly thought 10,000 troops would be sufficient for the job. You didn't trust the National Security Adviser (now Secretary of State) who foresaw an Iraqi-supplied mushroom cloud over America. You didn't trust a Secretary of State who paraded error before the United Nations. You didn't trust a Secretary of Defense who dismissed his military chief for making an accurate prediction of force needs.

Four years later, after tens of thousands of deaths and injuries, you were right. It's true, you hadn't anticipated that Turkey could thwart part of the original invasion plan and suffer no consequences. (What does that say about it being penalized for less major present and future transgressions?) It's true, you hadn't anticipated the virulence of the civil war that erupted or the prompt meddling and mischief and worse of state and non-state entities. (So often, "blowback" -- the unwanted and unanticipated follow-on to acts -- surprises those who are supposed to know.)

You were right to be in opposition. But what now? Stay the course? Do you persist in order to "honor the sacrifice" of those killed and injured implementing a failed policy by killing and injuring more? Of course not. Do you remain in the middle of a civil war, hoping that eventually people will come to their senses? After all (as is apparently true) there are rights and wrongs on all sides and does your presence aid or impede the arrival of good sense? Do you have a responsibility to stay to try to undo some of the damage done? Or does staying only add to the damage and delay its undoing? Do you stay but in a less prominent role, aiding the creation of a civil society and being available if gross mayhem erupts? Is such a role even possible? Do you leave and does

that "embolden" your "enemies?" Would they be less likely to attack us at home and abroad if we stay? Would their recruitment efforts have more persuasive examples if we stay or if we go?

How would staying or going affect our severely damaged standing in the world community? Some would like it, some wouldn't. Which peoples are in which group and how significant are they?

Which choice best redeems and reiterates your country's lofty principles.

Visualize yourself as an American. Which would you choose?