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SEARCHING FOR THE JUSTIFICATION OF AMERICAN HAWKS' POLICY

Hawks: prominent American Neoconservatives following hard-line and uncompromising attitude in foreign policy. This term is often used to define the beneficiaries of the *status quo*, people holding the power who practice politics based on US preventive military interventionism. 11th September 2001 gave the American hawks the first opportunity ever to take over full control over short-term tenets of American federal policy. This was the first step in the fulfillment of their broader plan concerning foreign policy and proving the dominant position of America in contemporary geopolitical system.

The roots of current views of the neoconservatives who hold posts in the administration of the 43rd president of the United States, George W. Bush, should be sought for at the threshold of the 1990s. The end of the Cold War was the moment that forced neoconservatives to change their concept of the foreign policy, as for over four decades it had been based on fighting communism. The question emerged: what objective to designate; what should the United States aim at as an actor on the international scene. The main debate focused around the question whether America should continue Wilson's policy whose objective was to spread democracy in the world, or should it rather return to its former isolationism, so similar to the traditional Conservatives, and seek foundation in own, narrowly perceived interest.

The result of the debate was primarily a split within the Republican Party. On the one hand, there were further advocates of the "enlightened nationalism" supporting foreign policy based on non-intervention, which they believed to result from

the history of America, its tradition, and the wisdom of the Founding Fathers. They opposed any crusades for spreading democracy. Turning the back on the rotten Old World was one of the myths on which America was built. The United States – the land of the free, the land of plenty, and the land of moral self-improvement – was to develop independently of Europe, never becoming entangled into the debasing conflicts of states of the eastern hemisphere¹ that were devoid of any scruples. On the other hand, there were primarily those neoconservatives who did not want returning to the past. They desired a broad scale campaign to support spreading democracy all over the world, with the hoped result of such activity being the broadening of the land of liberty.²

Irving Kristol, the godfather of neoconservatism, supporting the basing of the foreign policy on solely American interests. This, however, followed a broader line of thought that whatever America does for itself, it does also for others. Kristol believed that the interest of the United States goes far beyond the ordinary reason of State. Following this train of thought further, neoconservatives were persistently in favor of the United States' audacity and readiness to defend its interest, even when its allies do not want or cannot support them. They became the champions of unilateral actions on the international scene: of such actions that will be deemed necessary from the point of view of the American *raison d'être*.³

Neoconservatives considered that the foreign policy in the post-Cold War period was to a great extent based on similar, if not the same, arguments that Ronald Reagan used to crack down on the Soviet Union. Reagan, as we know, unconditionally believed that the United States is the chosen nation, whose obligation is to defend democracy both on the inside and abroad. The objective here was to be the universalization of the liberal democracy. After the fall of the Berlin Wall, neoconservatives followed a similar assumption, preaching that the diminishing safety of the United States diminishes parallel to the shrinking of the area of democracy, and the democracy and individual liberty are universal, and supporting them in the world is justified. For decades, the United States were treated by the democratic world as the guarantor of both political and economic liberty. In the new international reality neoconservatives wanted America to make use of its advantage to enforce the international standards of conduct. At the threshold of the 1990s they believed that safety of the world depends on the readiness of the United States to assume the role of the leader.

After the initial period dominated by the eagerness to be strongly present and involved on the international scene, neoconservatives assumed a more neutral attitude and selected a certain 'middle of the road' course that was to avoid crusades in the name of democracy. It might seem that they denounced interventionism as a tool for conducting foreign policy, and acknowledged that the United States no

¹ E. Todd, *Schylek imperium. Rozważania o rozkładzie systemu amerykańskiego*, Warszawa 2003, p. 20.

² P. J. Buchanan, *Prawica na manowcach*, Wrocław 2005, pp. 20–21.

³ J. Ehrman, *Neokonserwatyzm*, Warszawa 2000, pp. 194–195.

longer has to shoulder the responsibility for maintaining peace in Europe or chairing NATO. Nevertheless, the developments in the world proved that neoconservatives could not explicitly identify the interests of their country and decide when America should become involved and use its power. Situations would crop up when some neoconservatives supported the government's interventions in international conflicts, while others were their stalwart opponents.

It goes without saying that after Ronald Reagan successive cabinets governing the United States used the agenda of the convictions that originated in the neoconservative thought despite the fact that both Bush and Clinton represented the passive attitude that assumed cooperation with other powers, and allowed use of force only in exceptional cases. The system of multi-polar international order established in the first half of the 1990s was still based on the dominance of America – the only superpower – that cooperated with a group of several states with decidedly lesser potentials.

The first acid test for the new order in international relations was Iraq's invasion on Kuwait in October 1990. George Bush, the 41st president of the United States, wrote that he was ready – should there be such need – to counteract the Iraqi–Kuwaiti crisis on his own. He wanted, however, the United Nations to participate in the first reaction to the aggression and severely condemned the Iraqi attack against a UN member, as it would be of momentous significance. Despite the optimistic bias, he did not really know what to expect from the United Nations. He realized that this was to be the first test of the operation of the United Nations Security Council in a crisis situation in the post-Cold War era.⁴ From this point of view, of great significance was the joint Soviet–American declaration that condemned the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait of 3 August 1990. It meant that the previous main supporter of Iraq did not support the aggression. It was a proof that for the first time since the beginning of the Cold War two superpowers were on the same side of a major international crisis.⁵ President Bush performed a master feat of diplomacy and gathered a whole alliance of Arab States and NATO countries, composed of nearly 30 states. The United States needed the support of Arab countries for all their activity in and around Persian Gulf, so as not to jeopardize the further development of good Arab–American relations or undermine the trust for America in the region. With the backing of Germany and Japan, support of the UN Security Council, and approval of the Congress, Bush ordered the commencement of the Desert Storm operation. After five weeks of air raids, the American ground forces needed no more than just 100 hours to drive the Iraqi army from Kuwait, and march towards Baghdad.⁶

The war in the Persian Gulf was a certain bridge between the Cold War era and the new international order. A joint position of both superpowers was of historic significance and symbolic of the changing Soviet–American relations. The coopera-

⁴ G. Bush, B. Scowcroft, *Świat przekształcony*, Warszawa 2000, p. 312.

⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 335.

⁶ P. Buchanan, *op. cit.*, pp. 21–22.

tion between the two countries allowed belief that the world would be built where the United Nations will be capable of working on the international scene and oppose aggressions in the manner envisaged by the authors of the Charter of the United Nations.⁷

This war provided arguments both for American multilateralists and unilateralists. The multilateralists emphasized that the unanimity of the Permanent Representatives of the UN Security Council allowed the successful use of political and military instruments contained in the Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations that referred to the lawful employment of force in case of any threat to the peace, breach of the peace, or act of aggression. Unilateralists, on the other hand, emphasized that the entire operation would have been impossible without the political determination, and military and economic potential of America.⁸

Neoconservatives were inclined to agree with the claim put forth by Charles Krauthammer that the United States is the only state with military, diplomatic, political, and economic assets that allow assumption of the role of the decisive player by the US in any conflict wherever in the world it should occur.⁹ According to the neoconservatives, but also to the broad masses of the American society, the War in the Gulf was a proof that the United States is responsible in a special manner for leadership in solving international crisis situations. The fact of acquiring broad global support for the leading role of America in the world was highly significant. The political credibility and influences of the United States raised to a level that they had never reached before.¹⁰

Once the war was over, the support for the President in the American Society verged on 90%. The conflict in the Persian Gulf, contributed to the change in international reality and gave the United States the sense of fulfilling a mission, which US needed so very much. A proof of embracing the unipolar concept by Bush's cabinet was the President's address to the United Nations in October 1991, when he stated that he would not withdraw American army from the occupied areas and that he was beginning a crusade for the construction of the New World Order. The United States was to lead the United Nations in the supervision of the world, punishing the aggressors, and maintenance of peace. The mission of America was presented to the world, and Bush was ready to embark on his Wilsonic crusade.¹¹

Believe that – using the experience of the previous term, and drawing from the neoconservative thought – George Bush led the United States on to a new path that was to help maintain American dominance on the international scene. The 41st President left a most clear heritage, whose continuators were and are successive US Presidents.

⁷ G. Bush, B. Scowcroft, *op. cit.*, p. 505.

⁸ W. Szyborski, *Doktryna Busha*, Bydgoszcz 2004, p. 32.

⁹ Ch. Krauthammer, *The Unipolar Moment*, "Foreign Affairs. America and the World" 1990/1991.

¹⁰ G. Bush, B. Scowcroft, *op. cit.*, p. 505.

¹¹ P. Buchanan, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

Although it seems otherwise, in its foreign policy, Clinton's Democratic cabinet never abandoned the postulates of its predecessor and was highly active on the international scene. The Democratic administration of the White House believed the establishment of the new world order and American-style refurbishment of the international environment both right and necessary.

Besides the war in the Gulf, from the assumption of the presidential chair by George Bush to the presidency of his son, the United States became involved in Panama (1989: intervention that resulted in the removal of the authoritarian ruler, Manuel Noriega), intervened in Somalia, occupied Haiti, bombed Serbia, captured Kosovo, introduced soldiers into the territory of Saudi Arabia,¹² began war on global terrorism (Afghanistan), and was again involved in Iraq.

It is to be emphasized that neoconservatives perceive a powerful correlation between democracy and peace. The unquestioned expression of this view is the claim that operation for the benefit of democracy should pose an integral part of United States foreign policy. Even if there should be no correlation, on ideological ground America should still incline towards Wilson's foreign policy. And indeed, Reagan's, Bush's, and Clinton's administration made use of Wilson's rhetoric and set Wilsonic goals before the United States. The differences between the successive governments concerned not the question whether to act for the benefit of democracy, but the manner of such action. Republicans were slightly more hardliner in assessing where and under what conditions democracy may really come to exist.¹³

It is not difficult to assert that both the foreign policy of the United States and the manner it has been practiced over the last few decades carry strong brunt of neoimperialism. American commentators claim openly that the imperial wars, as the one in Yugoslavia or the one in Afghanistan, must be accompanied by new conquests, and that the chaos pervading the world is too dangerous to be treated lightly. The imperial logic seems to be incontrovertible. In his publications, Robert Kaplan, one of the leading of the American Empire, convinces that American leaders are capable of ensuring successful development in parts of the world lying far away from the United States should they remain under its graceful imperial sway.

It does seem that imperialistically tinted contemporary policy is an indispensable consequence of embracing neoconservative beliefs in the field of foreign policy. The power of the empire provided the grounds for the idea of security of the United States. In the consolidated and enlightened leadership of America, the neoconservatives see a solution that may help to eliminate the sense of terror and contribute to the increased level of safety and security in the world and the development of better conditions for the expansion of the freedom zone and democracy.

The neoconservative view on the questions concerning foreign policy may – according to Kristol – be recapitulated in a number of claims:

¹² *Ibidem*, pp. 22–23.

¹³ F. Fukuyama, *Ostatni człowiek z folki – po namyśle*, after: www.tezeusz.pl/cms/tz/index.php?id=1250 (December 2006).

- patriotism: according to neoconservatives, it is a natural and healthy movement and it is the task of both the government and the private sector to stimulate and reinforce patriotism. This results from the assumption that Americans as an immigrant society need the sense of belonging.¹⁴ It is to be borne in mind that in the case of neoconservatives, one may speak not only about a powerful patriotism, but even about nationalism. This is followed by the belief in the superiority of American democratic values. To quote Irving Kristol, “patriotism flows from the love for the national past/history; nationalism is born from the hope for magnificent future”.¹⁵

- global government: the notion of such a government is considered abhorrent and leading to tyranny. Neoconservatives treat international institutions with high level of suspicion.¹⁶

- politicians/men of state: they must primarily be capable of distinguishing friends from enemies. Kristol emphasizes that it is not as easy as it would seem, quoting the experience of the Cold War and the fact that a large share of intelligent people could not treat the Soviet Union as an enemy.¹⁷

- National interest: neoconservatives exert pressure not to treat this term in its geographical sense. They believe that a large state, to the like of the United States, has a far broader or more distributed interests. Such a state inevitably has ideological interests, for which material premises are just an addition. Hence the conviction that United States are obliged to defend – if possible – the democratic nations in the strife against non-democratic powers, be they internal or external.¹⁸

- Military power: the overwhelming military power of the United States towards all the other states is, in the opinion of neoconservatives, incontrovertible. The supremacy was not planned, and there are many Americans who do not believe it even today. It goes without saying, however, that during the five decades that have passed since the second world war, while Europeans maintained peaceful relations with the Soviet Union, the United States became involved in a long succession of wars: Korea, Vietnam, later the Persian Gulf conflict, Kosovo, and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Such actions resulted in the increased arms expenditure, more or less proportional to the economic growth, while Europe continued to limit its arms expenditure, promoting social programs. This contributed to today’s *status quo*, where in more than a decade from the downfall of the Iron Curtain, America is wielding a unique military power.

Kristol emphasizes that this power is followed by responsibility, be it accepted or not. Moreover, he claims that if one has a power like the contemporary United States, either the United States will find its opportunity to use it or the world

¹⁴ I. Kristol, *The Neoconservative persuasion: What it was, and what it is*, “The Weekly Standard” 2003, August 25, Vol. 8, Issue 47.

¹⁵ Idem, *Reflections of a neoconservative*, New York 1983, p. xiii.

¹⁶ Idem, *The Neoconservative persuasion...*

¹⁷ *Ibidem*.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*.

will find it in their stead.¹⁹ It is not difficult to see that a new Conservatism, today is the prevalent doctrine in American political scene and it seems necessary to emphasize that it has undergone a major evolution from the moment it was born as a worldview of Cold War liberals desiring powerful resistance against the Communist bloc to the time when it is a doctrine that bears traits of imperialism.

The most distinguishing feature of neoconservatism in the last decades was the uncompromising position in the ideological controversy with the Communist bloc, which has recently lost its significance. Yet also at present, the neoconservative vision of American foreign policy continues to follow the hard line, with its characteristic features including uncompromisingness and portrayal of the world in the categories of friends and foes. Neoconservatives expertly use the moral and ideological justifications for current activities undertaken on the international scene. Besides this, they should be credited with a continuous and unflinching sense of Messianism and belief in the legal validity of policy aimed at the universalization of liberal democracy in the world. Neoconservatives tried to combine Wilson's idealism in the promotion of American exemplars of democracy with a fascination in Rooseveltian concept of interventionism in foreign policy, which in our day bestows them with a markedly militaristic image.²⁰

Today, such an attitude raises vast controversies. Proliferation of democracy with the use of force and coercion does not bring the expected results everywhere and immediately. Can liberty and democracy be imposed by power?

The presidency of Ronald Reagan came in a very special period. He was a politician determined to put an end to the "empire of evil". His actions were directed against the main and greatest – if at that time, not the only – enemy. War in the name of democracy and liberty was enthusiastically embraced both by the West and the societies of eastern Europe who longed for liberation. War against Communism was universal in its character, and wherever it was fought it meant struggle for the freedom of societies and freedom of individuals.

I believe that the contemporary situation is decidedly different, and that running his crusade in the name of liberty and operating in distinctly different geopolitical, cultural, and primarily mental and historical conditions, Bush Junior will hardly achieve victory or fail. The nations and societies whose political culture has never been a participative one, which for many years have been dominated by the culture of dependence, if not parochialism, are hard to be activated, encouraged, and convinced to the "western model" of the state and its organization. The national character, and the political culture related to it are hard to change, and the manner that the United States is trying to effect that change seems particularly ineffective. The democratic crusade wherever possible, and negotiations where there is no other way out²¹ – this may be a short characteristic of the doctrine currently binding

¹⁹ *Ibidem*.

²⁰ W. Szyborski, *op. cit.*, p. 75.

²¹ M. Fita-Czuchnowska, *Jastrzębie demokracji*, "Wprost" 2005, July 3.

in American foreign policy. The terrorist attacks of 11th September 2001 were followed by a radical change in the American strategy of security: that was the end of the transitory period between the Cold War strategy of containing Communism and Bush Doctrine. The initial period of his presidency, which lacked a global vision and had Bush clinging to a realistic point of view, with the maintenance of stability being most crucial and ambitions to change the world invisible, was followed by the era whose unchallenged priority was the guarantee of national safety and security, restoration of the superpower reputation, and the United States' due place in the international system.²²

Dominant today, neoconservatism is a peculiar form of reborn Reaganism: a dynamic *mélange* of authority and principles; combination of the American capacity to overthrow regimes with the evangelical belief that democracy is the only proper system; characterized by the faith in the unquestioned power of America.²³ Worth answering is the question whether considering contemporary neoconservatism that has dominated American policy a conservative trend is indeed justified. The actions undertaken by neoconservative decision makers, at least in a number of areas, seem to challenge this claim:²⁴

- first of all, the conviction that American leadership is capable of changing regimes and political systems,
- secondly, the search for ideological justifications for current foreign policy,
- finally, lack of attachment to the role of community and society.

With these in mind, reiterating the earlier statement that imperialism and warmongering than neoconservatism are more proper when referring to the contemporary American leadership seems justified.

The global vision of American foreign policy after the events of the 11th September and accounting for the major elements of the new American doctrine (known as Bush Doctrine) found its full and complete expression in the National Security Strategy, published in September 2002.²⁵

The new strategy rejected doctrines of determent and containment that won the cold war and announced a new American policy of the preventive strike. It assumes potential preventive attack against the states that may threaten the security of the United States. Following Bush's concept, Americans may resort to such a strike against terrorist groups and organizations, or against hostile countries in possession of weapons of mass destruction or researching construction of such weapons. The strategy assumes the need to plan and prepare American forces to such a preventive action.

²² W. Szyborski, *op. cit.*, pp. 63, 72.

²³ *Ibidem*, p. 78.

²⁴ J. Smith, *Ought the Neo-Cons Be Properly Considered Conservatives? A Philosophical Response*, "Journal of Contemporary Analysis" 2003, No. 75 (6), pp. 32–33, 40.

²⁵ For original, see: www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss/html.

Generalizing, one may also point that one of Bush's fundamental declarations contained in the new global strategy of foreign policy was vesting the United States with the right to restrain other countries in the development and growth of their power that could challenge their strategic supremacy of America. That was tantamount to the claim that Bush administration was not planning to renounce the military cutting edge that United States retained after the fall of the Soviet Union. Americans are planning to use the unquestioned supremacy in the world in a unilateral manner. Even at the expense of a conflict with allies and the international community.

The foundations of the American doctrine binding in international policy may be gathered in the following three statements: promotion of democracy, preventive strikes, and unilateral action.

Planning a defensive preventive attack when the country is facing an imminent threat is nothing out of the ordinary. In the case of United States – the most powerful state in the world, at whose disposal lies a greater defensive power than in the case of any other country – it is not prudent to empower itself with the right to preventive attack and treat such a situation as a rule as this rallies the world's public opinion against the United States. Instead of focusing on the actual threat, this gives birth to a discussion concerning the generally conceived right to intervene at all.²⁶

It seems that the American strategy of security and preventive war fails to account for the reality we live in, where the military power has lost its significance and in many cases can hardly be used to solve the complex political and security-related questions we face in the contemporary world. It was rightly remarked that as far as the uncompromising attitude in the ideological struggle against Communism was an advantage of neoconservatism throughout the period of the cold war, the current hard-line and inflexible position of the United States in foreign policy leads to numerous distortions that in the final result may contribute to the drop in America's prestige and power on the international scene.

Moreover, the doctrine does not look ahead to see that action without the consent of the allies is not feasible from the physical point of view. The United States maintains hundreds of military bases all over the world, and operation from these bases may hardly ever be conducted independently of the will of the states, in whose territories the bases are situated. Thus strategic allies and their support, be it only passive, are necessary for any action. America assuming a position above the international law and order is too risky for the White House administration, and such a step will rather not be undertaken, and it's so not without a prior political campaign (as in the case of Iraq), which in turn rules out of the element of surprise, that is crucial for the concept of the preventive attack.²⁷

²⁶ Rozmowa z Richardem Holbrooke, "Gwałt na gwałt", "Wprost" 2002, November 3.

²⁷ T. Widłak, *Ameryka kontratakuję – nowa doktryna obronna USA*, after: www.paneuropa.l.pl/?plus=komentator&id=1063729003 (November 2006).

The new US National Security Strategy of March 2006 proves a greater realism in the assessment of challenges and ways of facing them than the one drafted in 2002. Although it invariably remains a “war” strategy with reference to the times of Cold War (The parallel between war on terror and the Cold War is ever more apparent:

The United States is in the early years of a long struggle, similar to what our country faced in the early years of the Cold War. [...] a new totalitarian ideology now threatens [...] Its content may be different from the ideologies of the last century, but its means are similar: intolerance, murder, terror, enslavement, and repression

and confirms the doctrine of the preventive strike, it also refers to the new threats. There is more emphasis on effective multilateralism and non-military means of policy. It is slightly less pervaded with the spirit of neoconservatism and more realistic in its approach to the threats and ways of opposing them. The major change is the greater emphasis on multilateral actions and diversification of instruments used to influence the international milieu. Both in the case of terrorism and weapons of mass destruction is on the one hand, and natural disasters “efficient multilateral effort” is defined as key to solve these problems.²⁸

Closing, it is worth to quote *America at the Crossroads: Democracy, Power, and the Neoconservative Legacy*,²⁹ the latest book of Francis Fukuyama, and repeat the four basic beliefs, on which today’s neoconservative worldview is based upon. First, America is obliged to defend democracy and human rights. This is why it has the right to intervene with the internal policy of the states that do not respect these standards. Second, American may use its power for moral reasons. Thirdly, international institutions – as e.g. the United Nations – are inefficient and nothing good can be expected from them. Fourthly, the results of high-flying social engineering often unexpectedly turn against itself, which can be understood as the need to avoid sudden top to bottom changes in the society.

²⁸ E. Posel-Częściak, *Strategia bezpieczeństwa Stanów Zjednoczonych z 16 marca 2006 roku*, “Biuletyn Polskiego Instytutu Spraw Międzynarodowych” 2006, No. 19 (359).

²⁹ F. Fukuyama, *Ameryka na rozdrożu. Demokracja, władza i spuścizna neokonserwatyizmu*, Warszawa 2006.