

Neoconservative “Think Tanks”: President J.Bush's Foreign Policy and Middle East Strategy

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Abstract:

This article highlights the role of neoconservative circles and think tanks in the US in foreign policy decision-making, mainly considering their influence on the organization of military operations against Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq in 2003.

Keywords: neoconservatism, foreign policy, USA, "think tanks", analysis, Middle East-Iraq, political decision, Project for a New American Century (PNAC).

INTRODUCTION

Determining the directions of the foreign policy of the states is a complex political process that requires a high level of preparation and responsibility from the political elite. Therefore, in the experience of developed countries, there is a reference to expert think tanks that provide advice or analytical information for certain political decisions. Sometimes such "think tanks" are directly connected to the political elite. In this regard, it is possible to evaluate the general global political conjuncture by studying the experience of "think tanks" in the USA and evaluating their influence on the domestic and foreign policy of the state. In this regard, it is important to study the influence of neoconservative "think tanks" in the US on foreign political decision-making.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

First of all, let's talk briefly about the "think tanks" that are gaining a strong place in modern political and geopolitical processes. "Thinking centers" have existed as an important phenomenon in American political life since the 1940s. Every year think tanks develop new proposals and recommendations in the field of foreign policy. In them, intelligent scientists conduct research and give scientific recommendations. In the 60s and 70s of the 20th century, a special type of "think

tanks" appeared, whose main task appeared to be the defense of certain ideological positions rather than impartial research.

A political expert is not only a political scientist, but also a political culture. Therefore, the role of the political expert in the political life and political processes of the industrial and post-industrial society is very large. In the United States, socio-political academic and research laboratories or "think tanks" have a great influence on the formation of public policy. For example, Yeheskil Dror appreciates their influence on the policy-making process [1].

Most think tanks appeared after the Cold War. Based on conservative and protectionist values, they began to focus on the development of technologies that were successful for the US in order to maintain political hegemony in the world. Unlike think tanks, think tanks represent strong conservative views and tend to be Republican in the US.

Russian political scientist T.I. Vinogradova describes think tanks as organizations engaged in consulting on corporate and state contracts "in the field of political production and assessment of the possible socio-economic consequences of political decisions" [2].

According to some political scientists, the peculiarity of "think tanks" is their similarity to commercial organizations, since ideas can also be sold. That is why think tanks are also called "idea brokers" or "idea sellers"[3]. The main products of think tanks are ideas formed in the form of reports, analytical notes and recommendations, as well as articles. The product of such organizations is characterized by "setting strategic goals based on certain ideas about the desired socio-economic and political results"[4].

Expert-analytical centers have been performing tasks such as studying current problems of global development and the experience of solving them, conducting consultations with representatives of state bodies, developing strategies and programs for achieving goals, proposing new ideas and forecasting the situation[5]. In this regard, think tanks are one of the components of the complex decision-making process in US foreign policy.

It should be noted that since the 1970s, decision-making in US foreign policy began to be decentralized. New non-institutional players have entered the game: business organizations, lobby groups. They were given the opportunity to change political decisions in their favor. This period was associated with the Vietnam War, which changed the process of making foreign policy decisions in the United States. As the researchers noted, during the same period, under the pressure of the public and mass media, foreign policy did not become an elitist and closed process.

The openness of the political process soon led to the addition of the above non-institutional players: public opinion, think tanks, ethnic groups, mass media, religious organizations, human rights organizations and trade associations. According to experts, the role of these organizations has increased so much that the clear distinction between foreign and domestic political relations has begun to disappear[6].

DISCUSSION

New realities and the growing complexity of global problems have led decision-makers to turn more and more to representatives of the expert community, who have begun to provide government officials with the information they need to make decisions.

Many leading think tanks participate in the formation of the US foreign policy doctrine. Some "think tanks" seek to respond to requests of different ideological orientations, while others operate on the basis of a long-standing and firmly established ideology. But all of them are trying to influence the formation of US foreign policy in different ways, trying to achieve the greatest competitive advantages in this segment of the consulting services market. On the other hand, "think

tanks" serve as a channel for new ideas of researchers-scientists to penetrate to the leaders of the world's leading countries, and through the application of political research to practice, they allow to influence the determination of the political course.

According to the analysis, more geopolitical issues were put forward in the concepts of governance and security promoted by the neoconservatives of the 1990s. For example, in the context of the 1998 Iraqi regime change letter presented to President B. Clinton by the neoconservative "Project for a New American Century", it is not the democratic reform of Iraqi society, but rather energy security related to geopolitical issues, in particular, the fact that the world consists of issues such as the security of oil supply[7] calls for skepticism about approaches that reject the use of military force. Even in the letter of the "New American Century Project" to J. Bush, Jr. on September 20, 2001, there were no calls to support democracy in Iraq or in regions where democracy is "deficient".

By the beginning of the 21st century, international security problems have become more urgent. In particular, the fight against international terrorism has become a priority in world politics. After the bombings in the USA on September 11, 2001, the promotion of the ideas of the US neoconservatism ideology became stronger. In particular, the responsibility of the United States in ensuring global security, the support of the community of democratic states and the preservation of US statehood became relevant. The positive acceptance of these ideas by the entire US society created the conditions for large-scale neoconservative policy practice.

The book focuses on the analysis of the sources that serve as a basis for the practice of the US military operation in Iraq, based on the careful preparation of neoconservative circles for many years, on the political decision-making of various levels of state and non-state structures, as well as the influence of the political culture of the US society and the political mood of citizens. For example, the role of the "New American Century Project" is obvious. For example, after the events of September 11, 2001, the Project for a New American Century published an "Open Letter to President George W. Bush, September 20, 2001," which stated: Although the evidence does not directly link Iraq to the attack, any strategy must include a determined effort to eliminate terrorism and its sponsors, and to remove Saddam Hussein from power in Iraq. Failure to do so would mean a swift and complete surrender in the war against international terrorism[8].

In the fall of 2002, US political leaders began to talk about the need to start a campaign on television. The launch of Operation Iraqi Freedom on March 20, 2003 marked a period in PNAC's worldwide prominence as the primary think tank for the Bush administration and the organization that planned the Iraq War.

After the victory of J. Bush Jr. in the presidential elections in the USA, although the neoconservatives could not fully agree with his foreign policy views, they had an opportunity to increase their political influence. Richard Cheney became the Vice President, and D. Rumsfeld, who is close to neoconservative views, became the Minister of Defense. It can be seen that the views of K. Rice, who was the adviser to the president on national security, were much closer to neoconservative approaches. In addition, among the leading neoconservatives, P. Wolfowitz was the Deputy Minister of Defense, J. Bolton was the Deputy Secretary of State, later a representative to the UN, R. Pearl was appointed to the Defense Policy Council, L. Libby was the Chief of Staff of the Vice President, and D. Faith was the Minister of Defense. was appointed to the leadership. So, it can be seen that the neoconservatives have formed a very influential group in the government. The U.S. has now shifted to a different deterrence concept, a strategy directed against "rogue states" that might attack the U.S. in the future. But the events of September 11, 2001 completely changed the situation. This event played a decisive role in the formation of the future foreign policy directions of J. Bush's administration. Before the terrorist attacks on September 11, the main threats were "superpowers" and countries that were not friendly to the United States, but now, the fight against terrorism is recognized as a new direction of the national security policy of the United States. . The

phenomenon of 9/11 changed the views of the United States regarding threats. As noted by F. Fukuyama, who is known for his neoconservative views, the United States has never faced such threats as the combination of radical Islam and the threat of weapons of mass destruction, as well as terrorist organizations [9].

It can be said that the 9/11 attack was a response to the intervention policy of the United States around the world, especially in the Middle East. Even the neoconservatives did not pay much attention to the issue of terrorism. Such a new threat and the call to fight against it appeared as a new call for both the ruling circles and the ideologues of neoconservatism. In his address to the Congress on September 20, 2001, J. Bush listed the main directions of this war, focusing on Al-Qaeda and the terrorist bases located in Afghanistan, and in his speech, the beginning of this war with Al-Qaeda, but he specifically emphasized that it would not end with him.

Although the operation of regime change in Iraq was carried out in 2003, it can be seen that such an operation has been called for by the US neoconservatives many times since the end of the "Cold War". In particular, as early as 1995, the Republican Senator B. Dole emphasized that the next important aspect of the American political strategy is to preserve access to natural resources, and that the main attention should be paid to the Persian Gulf energy resources [10].

After 2000, when the Republicans came to power in the United States and after the terrorist events of September 11, 2001, neoconservatives gained complete dominance in policy making. With the emergence of a team with neoconservative views in making major domestic and foreign political decisions, information wars justifying the goals of overthrowing the Iraqi regime began to escalate. In addition, the desire for a coalition of countries supporting similar goals also increased.

At this point, it should be noted that the importance of geopolitical interests in the Middle East region for the neoconservatives is evident in the content of the letter of the "Project for the New American Century" to J. Bush dated September 20, 2001. For example, even in the absence of evidence of Iraq's direct involvement in the September 11 terrorist attacks, it is openly recognized that the S. Hussein regime in Iraq should be overthrown. Three years before 9/11, on January 26, 1998, this neoconservative "think tank" presented a new conceptual approach to US Middle East policy.

After Afghanistan, it is time to establish order in the Middle East and the need to use direct military interventions has been put on the agenda by representatives of the US elite. During the 1990s, US neoconservatives presented a series of letters to President B. Clinton and Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu urging them to confront S. Hussein's regime with stronger force mechanisms. By this time, neoconservatives made up the majority of the US political leadership elite and rose to important management positions in the government. In particular, 11 of the 18 theorists who participated in the letter of the "Project for the New American Century" to B. Clinton on the issue of Iraq, in particular, on the overthrow of the S. Hussein regime, got management positions in J. Bush's government. As a neoconservative solution to the problem, recognition of S. Husain as a war criminal was envisaged. The neoconservatives strongly believed in the idea of changing the Iraqi regime and that the democratization of Iraq would work on the basis of the "domino principle". According to them, this initiative should serve as an impetus for the transformation of dictatorial regimes in the Middle East. It was noted that this process should be supported by the US armed forces.

In his speech at the UN in September 2002, President J. Bush reported on the weapons of mass destruction in Iraq and emphasized the need for decisive action. According to the conclusions of the "Bush Doctrine", if democracy wins in the Middle East, the security problems of the United States, such as the elimination of terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction in this region, will disappear. Against the background of these views and a sharp increase in the tendency

of the US society to fight against external threats, military operations began to be planned. In this process, Defense Minister D. Rumsfeld and his deputy P. Wolfowitz proposed to include the issue of overthrowing S. Hussein's regime in Iraq in the operation of the war against terrorism. Despite Secretary of State K. Powell's cautious approach to the possible loss of the US position among the international community and allies and in Islamic countries, serious measures are being taken to find connections between Baghdad and terrorists. But it was difficult to come to objective conclusions in the process of work in this direction. Studying the information provided by the MRB in this regard, P. Wolfowitz and D. Feitlar sharply criticize the administration and emphasize that their information shows probabilities rather than specific goals[11].

J. Kemp, an American expert on the Middle East, said that as early as 2002, the Bush government announced that Iraq would be the target of military operations after Afghanistan, and that the regime of S. Hussein would be overthrown by 2005. a decision has been made[12]. Although the Middle East accounted for an average of 18% of US energy resource imports by this time, former Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan and Senator John McCain admitted that the Iraq war was started because of oil. As it was mentioned several times above, it is clear that economic interests, in particular, the geopolitical importance of the energy factor is increasing. It can be seen that the formation of the military operation against Iraq is directly related to this factor.

While the use of military force by the US neoconservatives was justified by ideological theorists, it was also necessary to take into account the attitude of the opposition political forces to this issue. In this regard, some researchers have assessed that both neoconservatives and democratic-liberals equally supported the solution of the Iraqi problem by force. For example, according to A. Shumilin, for such a national consensus, the Iraqi regime posed the following threats: a) to the security of the United States; b) US interests in the Middle East (prospective resolution of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, stability of the Persian Gulf monarchies). In addition, US control over Iraq can be a weapon of external encirclement for Syria and Iran.... The presence of American military forces in Iraq can be a tool for exerting significant pressure on the regimes of these countries[13].

J. Bush's administration cites three reasons justifying the military operation against Iraq. First, S. Hussein has weapons of mass destruction, and this directly threatens the security of the United States. Secondly, Iraq has close ties with terrorist groups such as Al-Qaeda and can help them acquire weapons of mass destruction. Thirdly, to free the suffering Iraqis from the oppression of S. Hussein [9; 78-79].

One of the unique facts about the regime change in Iraq is that the Shiite population in Iraq welcomes the US soldiers as ambassadors of freedom in high spirits[14]. So, it turns out that the use of "soft power" is taken into account in the Iraqi strategy of the neoconservatives.

The military operation in Iraq began on March 20, 2003, and the US-led coalition forces occupied Baghdad on April 9. Neoconservative mass media rushed to draw the attention of the whole world with their speeches about the victory in this struggle. In particular, U. Kristol stated in his magazine "The Weekly Standard" that the population of the countries freed from evil governments as a result of the overthrow of the Afghan Taliban ruling the Persian Gulf and S. Hussein's regime in Iraq are orderly and normative. they got a chance to live [15]. He hails the end of the war through this assessment. One of the well-known neoconservatives, M. Bout, even put forward proposals such as the occupation of oil fields in Saudi Arabia.

As a result of the military actions, it was explained that the regime of S. Hussein did not have weapons of mass destruction, the Bush administration began to try to justify the Iraq war. In particular, the fight for freedom and democracy began to be used as the main weapon in the war against terrorism. But the claims of democracy as a cover for the wide spread of US hegemony caused the international community to protest. When neoconservatives think about this negative

relationship, in particular, according to R. Kagan, "No event of the last decade, except the events of September 11, brought negative results to the position of the United States in the world. As for the opinion of many about the situation in Iraq, the results of US military actions in the Middle East and elsewhere did not cause fundamental changes in the strategic configuration" [16].

Iroq urushi qarori ishtirokchisi bo'lgan K. Pauer Iroq operasiasidan ikki yil o'tib, Iroqda ommaviy qirg'in qurollari mavjudligi borasida BMT XKga noaniq va qalbakilashtirilgan ma'lumotlar taqdim etilganligini ma'lum qilgan edi.

In a short time, the real situation in Iraq has changed. A struggle began between local opposing forces. Neoconservatives began to be sharply criticized. Nevertheless, the content of neoconservative views aimed at strengthening military operations has not changed. They assessed the lack of readiness of the local population for democratization as a consequence of S. Hussein's long-term dictatorship.

The neoconservatives have not been able to offer any effective quick solutions to the Iraq problem. As a result, they have come under criticism from various political forces. In particular, P. Buchanan, the leader of the far-right forces in the Republican Party, sharply criticized the ineffective work of the neoconservative circles around the president. In turn, he admitted that the aggressive foreign policy had seriously damaged the position of the United States. Republican isolationists tried to blame neoconservatives for influencing the inexperienced president. After the sharp accusations, there was also a division in the neoconservative circles, a number of representatives of the movement denied that they had anything to do with this movement and that they influenced J. Bush.

The Project for a New American Century evaluated the process by explaining the mistakes of the President's administration in 2001 to close the program of creating weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. According to neoconservatives, Jr. Bush relied on information used by the Clinton administration during the 1997 crisis. They accused the MRB of providing false information, not P. Wolfowis and D. Feith, who were involved in collecting any acceptable information about weapons of mass destruction in support of the Iraq war. At the same time, they also criticized D. Rumsfeld as an incompetent Minister who was not ready for the current challenges. F. Fukuyama, a well-known representative of neoconservatives, USA. The political crisis and ideological contradictions that have arisen in Iraq have created a mood of protest in the American society. On the one hand, there have been attempts to convince neoconservative ideas of relevance, such as conservative commentator Michael Dougherty's "every crisis is a new opportunity for neoconservatism"[17], and on the other hand, between neoconservative ideas and their specific expression differences began to emerge. After criticism, influential neoconservatives began to be removed from the presidential administration.

In general, the ideas put forward by the "think tanks", which include the US neoconservative community, and their implementation have led to a number of positive results for the geo-economic and geopolitical interests of the United States, but have left the task of finding solutions to a number of problems for the new US government. . Many fear that the operations in Afghanistan and Iraq could serve as a model for the US's various defensive actions against threats from any region. The Russian scientist E. Satanovsky emphasized that in his time, Iraq was a territory of civil war "all against all", and today's Iraq has become a training ground of international jihad [18].

While US neoconservatives are encouraged by recent results, they emphasize that future success will require tension and speed, a strategy of hegemony. In particular, they advocated drastic measures to pressure Iran. In addition, there are theorists who are trying to take control of the unstable situation in Iraq and protests in the entire Persian Gulf region, and to formulate scenarios of the development of events.

The fact that the Bush administration started fighting terrorism without the cooperation of the UN

Security Council is a crisis of the legitimacy of the American global power, and it leads to the fact that the international activities of the United States are recognized as illegitimate by many [19].

The well-known theorist Z. Brzezinsky, while focusing on the tasks of the US policy at the beginning of the new century, said: "America should secretly feel that if people perceive it as an unfair model of globalization, this situation may lead to the emergence of a new anti-American idea in the world. . America can get a political dividend from the world cultural revolution it has fostered only if it really gives priority to common global interests" [20].

CONCLUSIONS

In general, military operations carried out with the aim of implementing neoconservative ideas are the reason for evaluating the ideology of neoconservatism as a system of ideas with a destructive nature. It reduces the chances of neoconservative ideas, which are intended to serve the sustainable development of the US state, becoming a world ideology. Because it is expressed in a unique way from the point of view of national interests and relies on double standards, critical attitudes towards the US neoconservatism ideology are increasing.

Military operations such as the fight against international terrorism and regime change in Iraq were carried out entirely on the basis of neoconservative ideas. The initiative to overthrow S. Hussein's regime in Iraq was ideologically justified by US neoconservatives, and the political decision in this regard was theoretically and conceptually actualized.

In ensuring the implementation of US national security priorities, in particular, the "democratization" initiatives in Iraq for the security of the state of Israel and other allied countries in the region, as well as international anti-terrorism operations, making the implementation of the neoconservatism ideology relevant, actively supporting the US political-ideological discourse achieved

The activity of "think tanks" based on neoconservative ideas in the USA did not slow down even after the Iraq war. He has been constantly trying to influence the formation of foreign political strategies. At the same time, it is trying to implement neoconservative ideas by introducing its leading experts into the presidential administration.

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