Use of Force Issue in American Political Discourse: Problems of Ideas Typology (Part 1)

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Abstract: The article underlines problems occur when it is needed to describe ideas in American political science on use of force issue. The survey comes to the conclusion that despite there are classifications none of them can be applied when ideas of use of force should be analyzed. Therefore the author through explaining the problems of existing general typologies argues the need of new classification which would take into account all ideas on use of force issue.

Key words: American political dispute • Use of force • Conservatism • Realism

INTRODUCTION

Safety is a basic human necessity. Despite contemporary world is considered to be peaceful no one cannot be sure about his or her wellness. Conflicts occurred during last 20 years in different parts of the world (Yugoslavia, Iraq and Afghanistan) have shown that peace and safety are not guaranteed. Like centuries ago states and its citizens are vulnerable to outside intervention. In order to predict outside influence and be ready to respond each nation should think beforehand and be aware of the ways danger can come from. Political science can help to solve this task. One of the methods is to make prognoses basing on analyses of military ideas circulating in the most powerful state - United States of America which was the main initiator of last military interventions. Taking into account close cooperation of political establishment and academic society of this state we can predict how US policy can change if we know the tendencies in US political circles. Before we predict we need to describe use of force concepts. We will analyze existing classifications of American political concepts such as realism/idealism, conservatism and neo-conservatism with special concern on use of force issue.

Realism/idealism Approach: Classic political science division on realism and idealism cannot be applied to use of force issue directly. We will argue the position.

Criteria whom should we consider to be realist were described in M.I. Rihtic’s. Realists those who: a) view foreign policy and internal policy separately; b) consider conflict to be basis of international relations character. And then idealist are those who: consider that not only states are subject of international policy; b) view international organizations to be regulator of states policy on international arena; d) think that collective actions and especially international law are effective measure to avoid war [1].

Thus only second criterion b in each structure is related to use of force issue directly. However this criterion is very blurred to classify all the concepts and ideas exist in American theoretical circles on force issue.

Firstly all American political experts who are proponents of military operations declare that collective actions are useful tool [for more details see 2]. Distrust to modern system of international institutions also can be found in all works of those scientists who are in favor of military actions.

It is not clear to what category should we put those authors who share Perl’s point of view [3]: «US should preserve international organizations’ existence however use their power on conditions profitable for Washington». He advises to conduct military operations out of UN system to observe international law.

Secondly realism/idealism does not make difference what positions towards force can be considered to be soft
and hard. That means that those who insists on military answer on each situation will be in one group with those who consider that use of force is the last measure.

Thirdly balances of power, offshore balancing selective engagement, self-defense use of force strategies are equal to intervention position if we use realism/idealism approach. However logically it is incorrect because all these concepts are opposite to military intervention.

**Conservatism/Neo-Conservatism Approach:**
Conservatism and neo-conservatism systematization does not suite properly to describe ideas on use force issue because of general character of this systematization.

M.N. Khanov makes clarifications that conservatism in the sphere of international policy is reflected in «adherence to military methods to achieve goals» [4]. This characteristic does not make difference between soft and hard approach to use of force. Thus if we use conservatism/neoconservatism approach we need to name conservatives all the authors who support intervention and those who support offshore balancing and selective engagement. It would be logically incorrect because offshore balancing and selective engagement are not aggressive concepts.

Moreover there are two opinions inside pro-intervention group of authors. One group of interventionists adheres to opinion that use of force should be the last resort; another group does not support this position.

For example Abe Greenwald in Washington post criticizes Barafk Obama’s unwillingness to use force in Iran to support opposition to official Iran’s government. The author argues that active use of force is always better: “only overwhelming American military power succeeded in liberating Kuwait. The American show of force also succeeded in establishing the U.S. as the single, unrivaled post–Cold War superpower…” [5].

Another approach we can see in J. Steinberg and I. Daalder works. The expert is a proponent of the position that «military answer should always be the last option» [6].

These two groups are neglected if we use classification which is based on conservatism approach. However positions of above mentioned groups are crucial for comprehension of tendencies exist in political experts’ society.

The same problems arise when we try to use neo-conservative classification to use of force issue. We will pay attention to the idea whom we should consider to be neo-conservative. Francis Fukuyama describes 4 criteria:

- A belief that the internal character of regimes matters and that foreign policy must reflect the deepest values of liberal democratic societies.
- A belief that American power has been and could be used for moral purposes and that the United States needs to remain engaged in international affairs.
- A distrust of ambitious social engineering projects. The untoward consequences of ambitious efforts at social planning is a consistent theme in neoconservative thought that links the critique of Stalinism in the 1940s with The Public Interest's skepticism about the Great Society in the 1960s.
- And finally, skepticism about the legitimacy and effectiveness of international law and institutions to achieve either security or justice» [7]. This point is also supported by P.U. Rahshmir [8].

Despite these criteria are fair they are not applicable to describe full tendencies in American political discourse on use of force issue. The following reasons are the obstacles to do that:

All three arguments are equal for pro-intervention authors. All intervention-proponents speak about the same ideas: regime change, preventive force and responsibility of the government for all political processes and limited sovereignty for failure to carry out this responsibility. If we use the Fukuyama’s criterion we would neglect again division on the question whether use of force the last resort or not.

Moreover all American political experts express skepticism about the institutions. Thus if we use this criterion for classification authors who deny the need of international organizations and those authors who have skepticism about international institutions but proposes ways to improve it will be in the same group-neo-conservatives. Obviously it is incorrect.

**CONCLUSION**

Basing upon above-mentioned arguments we can say that classifications realism/idealism and conservatism/neo-conservatism are not applicable to systematization of American political experts’ opinions on use of force issue.

As these classifications do not work we propose new classification in order to describe sufficiently tendencies which exist in American political science.

We consider that the main criterion in new classification would be attitude use of force. Thus there would be groups: interventionists with within division into soft and hard approach to use of force;
conceptualists – those who are not against use of force in general but against open aggressive approach: selective engagement, offshore balancing, balance of power and other not-aggressive strategies (we will describe all of them in next article on the issue); and defenders [for more details see 9]: those who are not pacifists but argue that US use military force should only in a case of self-defense.

REFERENCES