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THE ISSUE OF ARMED INTERVENTIONS IN THE FOREIGN POLICY OF THE U.S.A.

We, of America, have discovered that we, too, possess the supreme governing capacity, capacity not merely to govern ourselves at home, but that great power that in all ages has made the difference between the great and small nations, the capacity to govern men wherever they are found.

Elihu Root, 1904¹

Frequent resource to an armed intervention in the foreign policy of the United States has been the subject of repeated considerations and numerous publications recently. The book *Why do People Hate America?* published in 2002 contains the thesis that Americans' inclination for interventions follows from Washington's belief that America's interests should become the interests of the world and all those who come out against the interests, the culture and the outlook of America act in fact against well-being and safety of the world.²

This view is confirmed by the words of one of the most prominent American officers of recent years Tonny Zinni, General of the U.S. Marine Corps, commander-in-chief of CENTCOM in 1997–2000 and a special envoy of Colin Powell to the Middle East in 2002–2003. In his memoirs Zinni ascertains that the United States are not an empire in the traditional sense of the world, that is based on conquests, but an empire of influences, which, through the values that it adheres to, exerts an influence on the world. The world in turn demands help, instructions and leadership from the U.S.A.³

The one who chimes in with him is Zbigniew Brzezinski, who ascertains that we do not live in the world of utopia but in the real world and he puts a question if the world without any domination is possible.⁴

Ex-president of the U.S.A. George H. Bush has a similar opinion and he defines the role which the United States should play in the contemporary world. The U.S.A. as the

¹ United States Secretary of War 1899–1904 and Secretary of State 1905–1909.

² Z. Sarder, M. Wyn Davis, *Dlaczego ludzie nienawidzą Ameryki?*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo POST, 2004, p. 69.

³ T. Clancy, T. Zinni, *Gotowość bojowa*, Warszawa: Amber, 2004, p. 394.

⁴ Z. Brzeziński, *O Polsce, Europie i świecie 1988–2001*, Warszawa: Dom Wydawniczy Bellona, 2002, p. 126.

leading democracy and a country endowed with liberty, natural resources, as well as a good geographical location, bears the responsibility for using the possessed power to achieve the common weal. It is burdened with the duty of leading the world and if the United States shirk this duty, there will not be any leadership, which as a result will threaten with chaos of unpredictable consequences.⁵

Since the beginning of their country, Americans have had the feeling of exceptionality and a historic mission which the United States are to fulfil for the world, also in the sphere of international relations. Although this train has always been present in the American foreign policy beginning with the presidency of Thomas Jefferson, who in 1801 called the U.S.A. the "Empire of Liberty," this policy assumed the fullest shape during the presidency of Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson. The first one saw the role of the U.S.A. mainly as a guard of stabilization in the region, the other one as a teacher of democracy. It is difficult not to have an impression that the political visions of both presidents entered for ever the political canon of the elite of Washington in its relations with the external world, with the only difference that then it mainly concerned the western hemisphere whereas now it is world-wide.⁶

Theodore Roosevelt usurped the right to decide which of the countries in the western hemisphere conducts itself well and which one requires supervision in the form of an intervention: "Any country whose people conduct themselves well can count upon our hearty friendship [...] Chronic wrongdoing, or an impotence which results in a general loosening of the ties of civilized society, may in America, as elsewhere, ultimately require intervention by some civilized nation, and in the Western Hemisphere the adherence of the United States to the Monroe Doctrine may force the United States, however reluctantly, in flagrant cases of such wrongdoing or impotence, to the exercise of an international police power."⁷

Wilson began his office in the White House with an announcement that he would not accept the rule of the dictator of Mexico General Victoriano Huerta, who attained power by means of a bloody coup in 1913. This move initiated the Wilson Doctrine, proclaiming that the United States will not accept any government in Latin America who will attain power in a non-democratic way, i.e. by means of a coup. Wilson was ready to use armed forces to force democratic procedures of appointing authorities in the countries of the region, soon, however, because of the international situation, the U.S.A. as the outpost of democracy would get a chance to show this vision to the whole world.⁸

Because of the outbreak of World War I and the difficult situation of the Entente countries during the operations in France, the U.S.A. decided to support European democracies, entering at the same time the arena of international politics with its vision of "Wilson morality" in the foreign policy. Wilson himself in his speech before the Congress on Janu-

⁵ G. Bush, B. Scowcroft, *Świat przekształcony*, Warszawa: Politeja, 2000, pp. 577–78.

⁶ R. W. Tucker, *Exemplar or Crusader? Reflections on America's Role*, "The National Interest," Fall 1986, p. 64.

⁷ *Message of the President of the United States Communicated to the Two Houses of Congress at the Beginning of the Third Session of the Fifty-Eight Congress*, December 6, 1904, *The Works of Theodore Roosevelt: Presidential Addresses and State Papers*, New York: Collier & Son Publishers, 1915, vol. 3, pp. 176–77.

⁸ *Diary of Josephus Daniels*, March 11, 1913, *A Statement on Relations with Latin America*, March 12, 1913 [in:] A. S. Link (ed.), *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson* (1913), New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1978, vol. 27, pp. 169–70, 172–73.

ary 8, 1918, justified the U.S.A.'s joining the war by "morality and liberation of mankind." Since that time American armed forces accompany democratic changes in the world and they often force democracy, believing in their historic mission. The U.S.A. is a world-power possessing means which are indispensable to introduce the world order and the ideology which is written on the banners with the words: "liberty and democracy." It was not accidental when General Anthony Fisher said that Americans were also fundamentalists, but they were "fundamentalists of freedom," and the British historian Eric Hobsbawm called the American hegemony an "imperialism of human rights."⁹

However, it was not always and not everywhere that the United States were the promoter of stabilisation and democracy and during the Cold War they even supported non-democratic dictators, on condition that they were anti-communists, which was clearly reflected in Lyndon Johnson's Doctrine. Washington called this type of intervention a counter-intervention, pointing out that they are undertaken in response to the expansion of communism, as it can be guessed – the interference of Moscow in the Third World. A key example of it was the interventions in Lebanon in 1958, in the Dominican Republic in 1965 and in Vietnam in 1965–1975.¹⁰

After the end of the Cold War and the break-up of the Soviet Union the U.S.A. became the only superpower and believing in its power and superiority of democracy it began a new phase of "arranging the world." The American public opinion mostly shares this vision, and if we add to it a conviction prevailing among Americans that their country is a tool of an act of God for playing a positive role in the history of mankind, we can easier understand why the citizens of the U.S.A. mostly agree to frequent interventions of their country in other countries' affairs.¹¹

Of course, it is only part of the truth, since one should not forget that the political elite of Washington is first of all guided by the economic and political interest of their own country, willingly using arguments for their own as well as the foreign public opinion about the historic mission of the U.S.A. and the necessity of fighting in defence of the ideals of liberty. Skilful juggling with arguments about a necessity of ensuring their own national security as well as security of the world lets them carry out interventions relatively easily and frequently. This scheme has been repeated by Washington for over 100 years. The American interventionism depended in particular phases of history on the power of the country. That is why at the beginning the U.S.A. focused only on the western hemisphere, which was expressed in the doctrine formulated in 1823 by President James Monroe, in which, from now on, every interference of European countries in the affairs of the western hemisphere was to be perceived by Washington as a threat to peace and security. Two hemispheres were differentiated – the western one, in which the United States and young Latin American republics existed and the eastern hemisphere – the European one,

⁹ G. Sorman, *Made in USA: Spojrzenie na cywilizację amerykańską*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Prószyński i S-ka, 2004, pp. 216–19.

¹⁰ J. Norton Moore, *The Elephant Misperceived: Intervention and American Foreign Policy*, "Virginia Law Review," March 1970, vol. 56, pp. 364–70; N. Chomsky, *American Power and the New Mandarins*, New York: Norton and Company, 2002, pp. 31–36.

¹¹ Z. Karabell, *Architects of Intervention: The United States, the Third World and the Cold War 1946–1962*, Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1999, pp. 4–14.

which was the synonym of the reaction of the Holy Alliance, the fossilized monarchic order and invasive wars.¹²

According to American politicians it was the necessity of defending the free world of the western hemisphere that gave them the right to intervene. However, because of the possibilities of the state at that time, it was not able to go beyond interventions in the nearest countries of the region, mainly in Central America. Those interventions were of short duration and were executed in a small way and their task was first of all mediatory and stabilizing activities as well as protection of life and property of American citizens. After the American-Spanish war in 1898 and the announcement of the Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine in 1904 by Theodore Roosevelt, the U.S.A. took the path of imperial policy appropriating the right not only of the leader of the region but also the role of a policeman, judge and teacher of democracy. Interventions of the kind of small sorties of the Marine Corps units to the coasts of the countries where life and property of American citizens were endangered changed into long-lasting interventions on a large scale aiming at electing governments favourable to them and creating suitable conditions for the American capital in these countries. In the discussed period it was not only Latin America that became the object of intervention but also the countries of Asia and Far East. In spite of the fact that these interventions officially aimed at defending democracy, human rights and freedom, strangely enough, they always ended with securing interests of American business and at the same time the price for ensuring profitable markets for America was often giving power to dictators, who had nothing in common with the ideals of freedom and democracy. We can use here examples of the careers of bloody dictators such as Anastasio Somoza in Nicaragua or Rafael L. Trujillo in the Dominican Republic, who attained power after many years of bloody interventions of the American Marine Corps in these countries. Besides, both of them were trained in military schools supervised and run by marines.¹³

In that case the question arises whether the United States' interventions are a cynical realisation of imperial goals of this country under the pretence of the ideology of liberty and democracy or an authentic belief in these ideals, which should be propagated at all costs, a peculiar "crusade of freedom?" Henry Kissinger claims that contradictions between idealism and realism in the foreign policy of the U.S.A. result from the fact that it assumed the form of such a character in the 19th century, when the conflict between high-flown principles and a necessity to survive did not exist in America: "In time, the invocation of morality as the means for solving international disputes produced a unique kind of ambivalence and a very American type of anguish. If Americans were obliged to invest their foreign policy with the same degree of rectitude as they did their personal lives, how was security to be analyzed; indeed, in the extreme, did this mean that survival was subordinate to morality? [...] To this day, the push and pull of these two approaches has been one of the major themes of American foreign policy."¹⁴

¹² *President Monroe's Seventh Annual Message to Congress*, December 2, 1823; D. Perkins, *A History of the Monroe Doctrine*, Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1963, pp. 3–26.

¹³ K. Bermann, *Under the Big Stick: Nicaragua and the United States since 1848*, South end Press Boston, 1986, pp. 151–217; J. Pearce, *Under the Eagle: U.S. Intervention in Central America and the Caribbean*, South and Press, pp. 11–22.

¹⁴ H. Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994, p. 34.

This opinion gives the answer to the question why the United States so often resort to interventions. The ideology entangled in diplomacy, whose aim is an effective realisation of *raison d'état* produced an "explosive mixture." However, is there any alternative? Can the U.S.A. afford a different policy without jeopardizing its own security? For General Zinni there is no alternative. Globalization and the explosion of information technology made the world an even more restricted whole, whose particular elements depend on the remaining ones. Geographical barriers, such as oceans and mountain ranges are not borders that cannot be crossed any more and economic, political or social instability in remote parts of the world will influence also safety of the United States, as well as their interests and well-being. This in turn causes the fact that reasons of national safety of the U.S.A. will bring about greater and greater involvement in remote unstable parts of the world.¹⁵

It is nothing new, since already 30 years before, Henry Kissinger in his speech in 1973 stated that the world should be based on acknowledging the fact that the United States have global interests and global duties. It is worth pointing out that these words were said in the period when global domination of the United States decreased in comparison with its peak period after World War II and the country experienced the Vietnamese defeat, which recoiled both on its internal situation and international status.¹⁶

According to the report of the Congress of May 1999, in 1798–1999 American armed forces intervened outside their country 277 times. Until the outbreak of World War II they were mostly operations carried out with the forces of the Marine Corps in defence of American citizens' life and property or the U.S. interests abroad.¹⁷

Soon after the tragedy of September 11, 2001, Zoltan Grossman published a list entitled *Century of U.S. military interventions: From Wounded Knee to Afghanistan*, created on the basis of the materials from the archive of the Congress. Grossman enumerates 134 American interventions comprising 111 years between 1890 and 2001. As the list shows, till the end of World War II the United States intervened on average 1,15 times a year, during the cold war the number of interventions increased to 1,29 and after the collapse of the Berlin Wall it reached the number of 2,0 a year.¹⁸

American interventions can be divided into four stages in the 200-year history of this country:

1. Interventions carried out in 1800–1898 on a small scale and of short duration – not longer than a week, mainly of a pacificatory and mediatory character and in order to protect property and life of American citizens.

2. Carried out in 1898–1934, mainly interventions on a large scale lasting from a few weeks to a few years, usually aiming at changing the political situation in the country in which an intervention was carried out by giving power to politicians who were favourable towards the U.S.A. and creating suitable conditions for American business. The main area of interventions was Latin America (Nicaragua, Haiti, the Dominican Republic).

¹⁵ T. Clancy, T. Zinni, *op.cit.*, pp. 395–96.

¹⁶ H. Kissinger, *American Foreign Policy*, New York: Norton and Company, 1974.

¹⁷ *Instances of the United States Armed Forces Abroad, 1798–1999* [in:] CRS Report for Congress, Congressional Research Service, Foreign Affairs, Defense, and Trade Division, Washington 1999, pp. 2–29.

¹⁸ <http://www.zmag.org/CrisesCurEvts/Interventions.htm>

3. Interventions carried out in 1945–1990 in the circumstances of a bipolar division of the world – East-West aimed at not admitting communist regimes to power or fighting against the ones being in authority. The area of interventions comprised mainly Latin America, Asia and the region of the Middle East (Korea, the Dominican Republic, Granada, Lebanon).

4. Interventions carried out since 1990, i.e. after the collapse of the Berlin Wall aim at ending the destabilisation in the Third World countries in which there is a civil war (Somalia, Liberia) or in countries supporting terrorism (Afghanistan), they comprise mainly the area of Africa and the Middle East.

200 years of American interventions are symbolically bound with one purpose. From the intervention in Tripoli in 1801, whose aim was to overthrow a bey – enemy to the United States and raise to the throne a man who was favourable to Washington, until the second war in Iraq, in which the United States for several years after overthrowing Saddam Hussein have been trying to stabilize the situation and keep the government favourable to them in power.

General reasons for future interventions are:

1. America as the biggest superpower is responsible for law and order of the contemporary world.
2. America as a superpower has interests on the whole globe and has to take care of them for its own national security.
3. America is to fulfil a historic mission of propagating liberty and democracy in the world.

Particular reasons which can cause interventions:¹⁹

1. A world superpower with considerable military possibilities.
2. Regional leaders with asymmetric possibilities such as weapons of mass destruction and rockets, who will take steps in order to make it impossible for the U.S.A. to have an access to regions and regional allies that are important for this country.
3. International threats such as terrorist organizations, international criminal groups, including drug mafias.
4. Problems of countries in a state of decline, which require peaceful operations or humanitarian aid.
5. Foreign crises, which are dangerous for American citizens and their property.
6. Threats to the resources and information carriers which are crucial to the U.S.A.

It does not seem that the United States will avoid the policy of frequent interventions in the 21st century, either as an independent superpower or as the military arm of the United Nations, which would only give legal validity to *Pax Americana*, but at the same time the vision of co-operation with the United Nations and other countries in military operations in the Persian Gulf loses importance, since the recent years of the occupation of Iraq show that the United States are not able or not interested in submitting to multilateral agreements. The U.S.A. will rather be interested in subordinating armed interventions to American national interests and keeping them under strict control of Washington.²⁰

¹⁹ T. Clancy, T. Zinni, *op.cit.*, p. 397.

²⁰ A. Tonellson, *Superpower without a Sword*, "Foreign Affairs," Summer 1993, pp. 166–80; C. Jean, *Geopolityka*, Wrocław: 2003, Ossolineum, pp. 286–87.

In September 2002 President George Bush's administration announced the National Security Strategy, which grants America the right to use power in order to eliminate any noticeable threat to global domination of the United States.²¹ One of the known experts of international affairs, John Ikenberry defined this strategy as imperial. Noam Chomsky goes even further seeing a great danger for the world order in this strategy, because the U.S.A. granted themselves the right to start a preventive war, that is, according to Chomsky, to use armed forces in order to eliminate an imagined or fictitious threat.²²

These opinions might be exaggerated, however, the fact is that the U.S.A. striving after hegemony takes on a burden of playing the guard of the world order, which has to lead to numerous armed interventions in different parts of the globe. Irrespective of a wide variety of views on the policy of the U.S.A., both its opponents as the above mentioned Ikenberry and Chomsky and its supporters such as General Zinni, are unanimous about one thing: in the nearest future the United States are in for a period of many armed interventions. It is well rendered by the words of General Zinni, who has no doubts that taking on the burden of responsibility for the fate of the world, the United States will be forced to carry out even more interventions. In his opinion we will observe more countries in the state of collapse, such as Somalia or Afghanistan – and similarly dangerous. More and more American soldiers will participate in unsafe operations, in which the military aspect will be mixed with the political, humanitarian and economic one much more than before. People representing the United States – the most powerful country with the greatest possibilities – will have to cope with every complicated situation and it will happen more and more frequently.²³

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²¹ *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, September 17, 2002, White House, Washington, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nssall.html>.

²² N. Chomsky, *Hegemony or Survival: America's Quest for Global Dominance*, New York: Owl Books, 2004, pp. 19–20.

²³ T. Clancy, T. Zinni, *op.cit.*, p. 395.

