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Tekijä-Författare-Author Cantell, Mikko			
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<p>Tiivistelmä-Referat-Abstract</p> <p>The weight of neoconservative ideology in world politics is generally identified and acknowledged. In spite of this more profound studies are found wanting. I attempt to make the ideology more understandable and approach it from a distinct point of view, examining neoconservatism's attitude to torture in the United States' "Global War on Terror". In so doing, my aim is also to clarify the thus far somewhat vague distinction between the current U.S. administration and neoconservatism in political and academic writing.</p> <p>I have utilized the theory of cognitive dissonance created by Leon Festinger to study the mechanisms in play concerning the different attitudes toward the use of torture. The theory has so far found very few applications in the study of international relations, but I believe there to be significant potential in its future use. On a more concrete level, I undertake to examine whether the core values of neoconservatism (human rights, liberal democracy, "American values" and "moral use of power") on the one hand, and condoning attitudes toward the use of torture on the other, give rise to an intolerable inner conflict that could be called cognitive dissonance.</p> <p>The use of torture is absolutely prohibited in international law, standards and norms. The most central internationally binding legal obligation prohibiting the use of torture is the Convention against Torture from 1984. The convention prohibits the use of torture in all cases and without exception. My study examines the question of torture in the context of the "War on Terror" and the relation of torture to the individual. The individual rises in fact to be one of the most salient levels of analysis in the paper: each of neoconservatism's core values can be said to be based on defending the rights of the individual while torture can simultaneously be defined as being the ultimate denial of the individual worth and dignity.</p> <p>I conclude my study by asserting that neoconservatism's attitude toward torture has led to severe conflicts with its own core values. Although accurate definitions of the mechanisms used in alleviating the dissonance are impossible to find, the study gives evidence indicating that denial of responsibility and a rearranging of the hierarchy of internal values can have been included in the reduction of dissonance. I consider the notion that attempts to reduce dissonance typically "spill over" to other seemingly unattached areas of decision-making very important. This means that in addition to core values or the fundamental level of ideology, past decisions also influence future decisions.</p>			
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