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LONGIN PASTUSIAK,

PREZYDENT DOBRYCH INTENCJI. POLITYKA ZAGRANICZNA BARACKA OBAMY
[*PRESIDENT OF GOOD INTENTIONS. FOREIGN POLICY OF BARACK OBAMA*]

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The end of George W. Bush's presidency fell on the unfavourable period of the economic crisis and the deterioration of the image of the United States on the international arena as a result of external actions he had undertaken. The time when Barack Obama began his presidency required him to quickly begin the implementation of the assumptions which he presented as a candidate under the common slogan of 'Change'. They concerned mainly the idea of getting out of the economic crisis quickly, reducing unemployment or improving healthcare for Americans. The issue of foreign policy was also present, and among the most important points of Obama's plan we can distinguish, among others, the intention to withdraw from expensive operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, a new reset of relations with Russia, striving to reduce nuclear arsenals, and rebuilding trust on the international arena. We know that despite the efforts of the president and his administration, many of these problems have not been solved to this day.

Professor Longin Pastusiak's monograph is the study entitled *Prezydent dobrychintencji. Polityka zagraniczna Baracka Obamy* [*President of Good Intentions. Foreign Policy of Barack Obama*]. The author of the publication is a highly respected political scientist, specialist in the field of issues related to the United States and its practices, holding in his career positions in permanent delegations to NATO and the Western European Union.

The monograph is divided into sixteen chapters. Each of them raises a different problem related to President Obama's foreign policy, from the

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time of his candidacy for the post of Commander-in-Chief, to the problems and challenges the 44th President faced just before the end of his term.

The author's goal was to analyse the actions taken by President Obama in the field of foreign policy, both in the global and regional dimension. Already in the introduction to the book the author rightly notes that the beginning of Barack Obama's presidency fell on a time which was very difficult for Americans, especially in socio-economic terms. At the same time, he points out that: 'US voters assess the president primarily according to the effectiveness of solving internal, social and economic problems'. As a result, foreign policy has actually receded into the background in recent years. However, the improvement of internal conditions went hand in hand with the reconstruction of the image of the USA on the international arena, the image that had been undermined by the actions of the previous president – George W. Bush. Therefore, Barack Obama took action also in the field of foreign relations, although his administration was not able to implement all of his endeavours in the way he assumed.

In the first chapter, the author discusses the path that Barack Obama followed on the way to obtaining the nomination for the presidency of the United States. Starting from his birth in Hawaii, which is still being questioned by his opponents, through his achievements in the process of engaging in social campaigns, to the post of an Illinois senator. Obama's path to the White House was spectacular considering his origin and the fact that he came from outside the main establishment, as he called Washington in general. Nevertheless, as the author rightly points out, the future president had a unique gift of winning people over and he also willingly cooperated with representatives of the competitive party. The chapter finishes with a brief description of the views on the foreign policy issues of the three main presidential candidates – Barack Obama, Hilary Clinton and John McCain.

The second chapter of the monograph contains a much more in-depth analysis of Barack Obama's views on international affairs from the period when he was a presidential nominee. The author advances the thesis that the US president gained his position and won the election because his electoral programme was more credible than that of his rival from the Republican Party – John McCain. One can certainly agree with the thesis, but it is worth adding that the period of his candidacy was also a time of behind-the-scenes activities that drew the image of the Republican as a direct continuator of George W. Bush's policy. Considering public opinion polls in the United States, a significant portion of Americans blamed the Iraq war for economic problems in the US, which is why in some areas of domestic and foreign

policy, Barack Obama's candidacy corresponded to changes awaited by society at the time.

In the next chapter of the monograph, the author analyses the beginning of Obama's presidency. The author rightly observes that the first months turned out to be divergent from Barack's expectations. Despite of a good beginning, internal problems quickly emerged and they effectively hampered the implementation of the new president's ideas. The author also draws attention to a heated discussion that took place in the world after Barack Obama received the Nobel Peace Prize.

The fourth chapter concerns Barack Obama's debut on the international arena and the first foreign contacts established by the new president. The author defines Obama's very enthusiastic reception in many countries during his travels as a reset. It is worth noting, however, that the president was also accused of excessive pragmatism and generalities.

The author devoted the following chapter of the monograph to the analysis of the fight against terrorism as an element of Barack Obama's foreign policy. The author rightly sums up successes in this field as moderate. The greatest one was the liquidation of Osama bin Laden in 2011, which resulted in a significant increase in public support for the president. At the same time, Obama departed from his predecessor's rhetoric and involvement in so-called global fight against terrorism, reduced the use of conventional troops and significantly increased the scope of the use of combat drones. The author rightly classifies the implementation of the plans to withdraw from Iraq and Afghanistan and persistence in the matters of Pakistan as successes of the president.

The sixth chapter of the publication touches on the subject of Barack Obama's approach to the Islamic world. The author rightly notes that the new president started with making a small but meaningful gesture by making the first call to the President of the Palestinian Authority, thus sending a signal to the world that he intends to seek a new path in relations with the Islamic world. At the same time, throughout the presidency, the new president took great care to not put Islam together with words such as terrorists or jihad in his speeches. This change of practice resulted in a significant increase in support for the USA in selected Arab countries, though it did not last long. The use of drones in military operations, his passive attitude to the situation in Egypt, and poorly evaluated activities that did not prevent the emergence of ISIS, all these elements caused a rapid drop in support for Obama in Muslim countries.

In the next chapter of the monograph the author describes the problem of ending the US military intervention in Iraq. As he rightly notes, the withdrawal of land forces contributed to increased internal problems of Iraq. At the same

time, Barack Obama adhered to his position of not re-engaging in a war in that country, which in spite of increasing popularity of the president resulted in a decrease in his ranking in the sphere of foreign policy and the fight against terrorism.

The eighth chapter concerns, as the author himself defined it, Obama's Achilles heel, or the war in Afghanistan. The author points out that the US president from the very beginning claimed that Afghanistan was the source of terrorism and problems, not Iraq. The chapter contains an analysis of Barack Obama's activities from the moment of taking office until the end of the war in Afghanistan.

In the next chapter of the monograph the author analyses Euro-Atlantic relations during Obama's presidency. He also drew attention to the problem of tapping European leaders and its consequences in the construction of a positive image of the USA among its European partners. The author also stressed the fact that President Obama achieved a success in obtaining the mandate of some NATO countries in the fight against the Islamic State and increasing defence spending.

The tenth chapter raises the important problem of a reset of relations with the Russian Federation. The author draws attention to the most important points of the reset, such as signing the START II treaty, at the same time he also mentions problems on the Washington-Russia line concerning, among others, the anti-missile shield and the situation in Ukraine.

The subsequent chapter of the monograph concerns the shift that occurred in US foreign policy in relation with Asian countries. The author describes the promotion of the Trans-Pacific Partnership trade agreement by President Obama and the strengthening of cooperation with Asian countries. He is also correct in his observation that by visiting selected countries of the region, the president wanted to slow down the growth of the sphere of influence of the People's Republic of China.

In the twelfth chapter the author analyses the US-China relations. He aptly states that Americans recognise the PRC not only as an economic competitor, but also a potential military threat due to large military investments made in recent years. The intensified foreign policy of Barack Obama in Asia did not lead to a substantial improvement in contacts with China, which is afraid of the encroaching US influence. At the end of the chapter the author points out that one of Obama's notable successes in the PRC was the fact that both countries reached an agreement on reducing CO₂ emissions in specified quantities and time frames.

The next chapter of the monograph discusses the problems of the Middle East. The author analyses Barack Obama's engagement in the continuation of peace processes in the region. He discusses the problems of Egypt and points out that the new president moved much closer to Palestine, which was criticised by Israel. The author rightly summarised Obama's policy by paying attention to good intentions and willingness to get involved, but without any significant successes.

The author devoted the fourteenth chapter to the subject of the new US partnership with Africa. As noted at the beginning of the chapter, the administration of President Obama was concerned about the growing involvement of China on the continent. Unfortunately, the US president did not achieve notable successes in Africa to reverse this trend and develop economic cooperation, despite high costs incurred by American taxpayers.

In the next chapter, the author discusses US foreign policy towards Latin America. He notes the dissonance between Obama's words about cooperation and the promotion of democracy in the region and the lack of significant reactions to the coups and overthrow of democratically elected authorities in Paraguay and Honduras. The author advances the thesis that the situation of Latin American countries changed more than US policy in the region, which contributed to the lack of effectiveness of the applied strategy.

In the last chapter of the monograph, the author presents an analysis of Polish-American relations during the presidency of Barack Obama. The author extensively debates the issue of building an anti-missile shield as the dominant topic in the relations of our country with the US, and at the same time advances the thesis that at present there are no unsolved problems between our countries. It is difficult to agree with this assertion when we look at the matters from the Polish point of view. Polish citizens are still waiting for the visa issue unresolved for years. The missile shield issue has not been finally resolved either and still arouses a lot of doubts and emotions in our country, which is why, I think, there are still topics our countries need to continue working on, although it is now the legacy of the next US president.

The monograph by Longin Pastusiak describes many aspects of President Obama's foreign policy. The study is at a high substantive level and written in understandable language, analysing the subject matter very thoroughly. An additional advantage of the monograph are the final remarks contained in it, in which the author succinctly and briefly analysed the problem of the internal situation of the US and the impact of the establishment on changes that left a mark and led to a change in foreign policy of President Barack Obama.

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