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American Diplomatic Engagement in the EU

Book review: Michał Dahl, *Aktywność dyplomacji USA wobec państw członkowskich Unii Europejskiej w latach 2009–2013*, Nicolaus Copernicus University Press, Toruń 2019, pp. 224

The United States has always been an intriguing subject for journalists and reporters. There are many documentaries and movies about this country about its culture and tourism. Moreover, the domestic and foreign policy of the US arouses great interest among scientists and experts from various fields and scientific disciplines. The reviewed monograph is also devoted to the United States, and more precisely, to its foreign policy and diplomacy toward the European Union in 2009–2013.

The book consists of an introduction, five broad chapters, a summary and conclusions, as well as bibliography and the list of tables, figures and annexes. In order to ensure a better understanding of this topic, two figures (both in the second chapter), 9 tables, of which 6 were included in the fourth chapter and 3 tables in the fifth chapter were used.

When it comes to the first chapter, *Methodological assumptions*, it explains why the content analysis was used as a research method. As the author notes, the applied method allows for both accurate verification of the demands contained in political manifestos and a precise analysis of the legal acts and reports from press conferences of entities responsible for US diplomacy (p. 18). In turn, the techniques useful for content analysis are content measuring and analysis of diplomatic and legislative bodies' documents (p. 19). The suggested method and research techniques are properly selected to verify the hypotheses. And as it can be concluded from two annexes (p. 221–225), which include the research questions, the hypotheses were positively verified.

The second chapter (*Foreign Policy of the Barack Obama's Administration*) is a part where the author suggested considering the conditions of the United States Constitution that were present during the establishment of Washington's foreign policy. It was also crucial

to mention that this constitution was one of the first in the world (1777). Later on, the book briefly describes the competences of the President of the United States in the context of foreign policy. A significant fact is that the American Congress, as well as the Secretary of State and the Supreme Court, also play a leading role in shaping it. The advantage of this part of book is that the responsibilities of the Secretary were presented in an easy and illustrative way. Also in this case, a retrospection was made, recalling that the first secretary of state was Thomas Jefferson (he held this function from September 26, 1789 to December 31, 1793), later the 3rd President of the United States. This chapter also presents the leading figures of American foreign policy in 2009–2013, among others: 44th President of the United States Barack Obama and Hilary Clinton – Secretary of State in his administration. This chapter aims to describe the “Doctrine” of Hilary Clinton, (p. 70–72), concerning the situation of women in the world, more specifically, protecting the women and girls and the fighting for the equal rights. In such context, the book recalls the cases of women in countries like Saudi Arabia, China or Egypt. This issue was particularly important because in those countries there were no indications, at the time, that the situation of women will improve. However, it is important to mention, that something started to change in context of women’s rights with the reign of Salman ibn Abd-al-Aziz al-Saud, who on September 26, 2017 issued a decree, by virtue of which on June 24, 2018 not only Saudi women but also foreigners residing in Saudi Arabia were allowed to drive a car.

Over time, these rights were extended to other road vehicles, such as motorbikes and bicycles. However, it is important to remember that the time period which is described by the author covers years 2009–2013. At that time, the king of Saudi Arabia was Abdallah ibn Abd-al-Aziz al-Saud, who was not as supportive as his brother Salman in terms of women driving on Saudi streets. Furthermore, the American policy toward the particular continents is presented in a rather interesting way. Speaking of the politics of Barack Obama’s Administration in Africa, the author noted that no mistakes were made while destabilizing this continent (contrary to actions undertaken by e.g. Ronald Reagan or Bill Clinton. When it comes to Clinton, the controversy was about his reaction to the genocide in Rwanda in 1994. It is important to add that the matter of genocide in Rwanda and the position of the American administration of Bill Clinton is largely described in one of the books of Philip Auerswald (2003).

The next chapter – *A place of EU member states in American political manifestos* – was focused on analyzing such documents as: National Security Strategy of 2010 (pp. 91–95), US National Strategy for fighting terrorism (pp. 95–96), US National Military Strategy of 2011 (pp. 97–98) and the annual speeches of Barack Obama delivered at the UN General Assembly during NATO summits and on US-EU forums. Selected statements of Secretary of State Hillary Clinton from July 15, 2009 and January 29, 2010 were also cited and analyzed.

The next chapter concerns the importance of Washington’s bilateral relations with the European capitals based on the regularity of official meetings of foreign policy entities. It is mainly an attempt to analyze and present the implications of the official visits of Barack

Obama and Hilary Clinton in the particular European Union countries in 2009–2013. And as it can be concluded from the author's own research based on the analysis of statistical data published on the website of the United States Department, Barack Obama in the period from 2009 to 2013 visited 16 selected EU countries only 16 times, Poland only once – in 2011. Whereas Hilary Clinton, as Secretary of State during the same time frame visited particular EU countries as many as 53 times. It is also important to add that Mrs. Clinton visited Poland in 2010.

It is worth mentioning that the author presented and analyzed the purpose of the official visit of EU leaders to the United States and their meetings with Barack Obama in 2009–2013. According to the author's research, based on statistical data published on the US Department of State website, representatives of the European Union countries paid 74 of such official visits. As for Poland, the former Polish president Bronisław Komorowski visited the White House twice, in 2010 and 2012. As it can be concluded from Table 3 (p. 130), it is one more visit compared to the number of visits paid by representatives of other countries, e.g. Estonia, Greece, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Hungary, Romania, and Slovakia.

The last chapter concerning European Union member states in the US Congress legal acts is based on the legal acts presented by the American House of Representatives and the Congress. The author, due to the small number of available sources, had to narrow down to laws and resolutions (without the reports of individual committees, reports on their work and nomination acts) initiated by the American Congress concerning the foreign policy and international affairs. It can be noted that the "stronger position" in Europe of a particular country, the more laws and resolutions were devoted to it. In terms of Poland, seven laws and 17 resolutions were approved. According to the analysis of the author, it concerned such circumstances as: the events near Smolensk on April 10, 2010; commemorating the 20th anniversary of the overthrow of the communist system in Poland; the 10th anniversary of Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary's accession to NATO, or the 90th anniversary of the establishing interstate diplomatic relations between Poland and the United States (a resolution introduced on January 7, 2009).

Summing up the discussion of the particular chapters, I would like to mention an interesting fact. At some point the book with its formula (it concerns mainly pages 103–108) can resemble publications such as: *Clinton's foreign policy. A documentary record* (Auerswald, 2003, p. 280) and *Zatrzymać terroryzm!* (Kwaśniewski, 2002, p. 164), where after describing a specific case, the speech delivered on a given day and place has been quoted – during presidencies of (among others) Bill Clinton, as the 42nd President of the United States and Aleksander Kwasniewski as the President of Poland during his second presidential term after the attacks on World Trade Center on September 11, 2001. It is undoubtedly another strength of the monograph.

Speaking of any potential reservations, the only disadvantage might be that the presented issues could have been more thoroughly discussed, such as the activity of the United States'

diplomacy towards Poland. However, such a disadvantage does not in any way obscure the quality of this book, which is written and presented in an extremely mature way¹.

To summarize this review it should be stated that the book presents in a clear way what happens on the current political stage in Ukraine, and shows the reasons and effects of American policy toward the European Union countries, including Poland, in 2009–2013. A crucial part of the book is a complete and carefully made bibliographic summary that provides an outstanding contribution to the future research on the history of US policy. The right and adequate documentation of theses by the author, allows it to be useful and helpful not only to political scientists, experts in the United States, but also to a wider group of readers who will want to extend their knowledge about the past and present of America or European Union countries. The book will also allow them to get acquainted with the behind-the-scenes of Barack Obama's foreign policy toward the EU. The reviewed book definitely introduces a reader to one of the very important, currently discussed matter, which is the foreign policy toward e.g. Poland, Spain, Germany or France. We can only hope that the presented book will be an inspiration for future research on the US foreign policy in 2009–2013 and can also raise a discussion in the Polish academic community.

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¹ It is worth recommending other books co-edited by this author, related to the change of the world order, Japan in international relations and geopolitics of the Middle East and North Africa: Bryc et al., 2015a; Bryc et al., 2015b; Dahl et al., 2018; Marszałek-Kawa & Dahl, 2018; Dahl et al., 2019a; Dahl et al., 2019b.