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The world public opinion towards the American foreign policy of presidents of the United States of North America in the years 2001–2016

STUDIA I ANALIZY

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Abstract: *The article is based on an analysis of certain aspects of how the public opinion of selected nations in years 2001–2016 perceived the American foreign policy and the images of two Presidents of the United States (George W. Bush, Barack Obama). In order to achieve these research goals some polling indicators were constructed. They are linked with empirical assessments related to the foreign policy of the U.S. and the political activity of two Presidents of the United States of America which are constructed by nations in three segments of the world system. Results of the analysis confirmed the research hypotheses. The position of a given nation in the structure of the world system influenced the dynamics of perception and the directions of empirical assessments (positive/negative) of that nation's public opinion about the USA.*

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Introduction

The United States of North America is a state which played the key role in international relations after the “cold war” ended. It became stronger after the competition with the Soviet Union – it became the only superpower in the world. The striving of the United States to keep its hegemonic status within the global international system is perceived in the literature of the subject as a sign of capitalist imperialism¹. This expansion is of military and non-military character while the consequences of those activities are visible on the level of inter-state relations, economic relations, cultural exchange, perception of the foreign policy of the United States and the assessment of the image of the American president by the world public opinion. It is worth emphasizing that the research problems concerning the role of public opinion in the process of shaping the American foreign policy was the object of scientific interest already after the end of World War II and it resulted from the process of accumulation of the polling data produced by the companies dealing with market research². If the activities of a given state are analyzed in a systemic way, where the reaction of the international environment to its policy is one of the effects of the processes inside the system, then the world public opinion becomes the factor affecting the strategic goals formulated by politicians and public institutions in reference to the state’s relation with the exterior environment. Public opinion in particular states will react to two types of messages: *persuasive messages* and *cueing messages*. The former include definite rhetorical arguments and the shaping of the image, while the others include those which inform on the ideological and party context of persuasive messages³. The possibilities of decision-makers shaping foreign policy of a given state affecting the world public opinion (its components including domestic public opinion on the level of a particular state) are limited due to the cultural, organizational and situational factors. This is a process which is characterized by a high probability of divergences between the assumed communicative goals and the achieved psychological effects (the shaping of attitudes, stereotypes and their durability). In such a situation the phenomenon of *incompatibility of image* occurs which takes either of the two forms: (1) *real incompatibility* – the achievement of a definite future state of a given ele-

¹ F. Ilkowski, *Dialektyka imperializmu kapitalistycznego*, «Studia Politologiczne» 2016, vol. 41, p. 89.

² O. R. Holsti, *Public Opinion and American Foreign Policy*, Ann Arbor 2004, p. 22.

³ J. Zaller, *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion*, Cambridge 1992, p. 41–42.

ment of international relations means the appearance of contradictions in interstate relations, (2) *illusory incompatibility* – a lack of understanding and the appearing tension are of situational character and they do not follow from differences in the interests of the subjects of international relations which get into interactions⁴. A definite information policy, which is an element of public diplomacy, can contribute to the beginning of an effective process of sequential transformation of *real incompatibility* into the form of *illusory incompatibility*, which can change into a long-term⁵ positive change in the attitude of state A to a definite area of state B's foreign policy. Public diplomacy strengthens political activities which result from allied strategies⁶ and from situational factors which are an effect of different forms of pressure applied by state A towards state B (the scale from informational influence to military violence).

Due to the growing complexity of information environment of the global international system, which is an effect of the formation of information society in different countries of the world (decentralized diffusion of information in the public sphere⁷), the processes of influencing the world public opinion increasingly gain importance in decision-making processes connected with the realization of foreign policy of a given country. This problem is the subject of increasing interest on the part of foreign researchers who submit to analysis various aspects of influence by a given state's foreign policy on the public opinion in the national and international dimensions. The area of these interests includes for example such issues as cognitive and emotional aspects of the image of states, the effect of development assistance on the perceived image of the donor state, the perception and preference related to a given state in the context of its foreign policy, the effect of media messages concerning the subject of the political leader on the perception of the emotional aspect of the latter's image and the typical features of this state's citizens⁸. The presented catalogue of research problems is only an example

⁴ K.E. Boulding, *National images and international systems*, «Journal of Conflict Resolution» 1959, vol. 3, p. 130.

⁵ Long-term, meaning reaching beyond the time horizon of one election.

⁶ Cf. R. Kuźniar, *Polityka i siła. Studia strategiczne – zarys problematyki*, Warszawa 2006, p. 206.

⁷ Cf. J. Habermas, *Strukturalne przeobrażenia sfery publicznej*, Warszawa 2007.

⁸ Cf. R.K. Herrmann, J.F. Voss, T.Y.E. Schooler, J. Ciarrochi, *Images in international relations: An experimental test of cognitive schemata*, «International Studies Quarterly» 1997, vol. 41; B.E. Goldsmith, Y. Horiuchi, T. Wood, *Doing well by doing good: The impact of foreign aid on foreign public opinion*. «Quarterly Journal of Political Science» 2014, vol. 9; E. Castano, A. Bonacossa, P. Gries, *National Images as Integrated Schemas: Subliminal Primes of Image Attributes Shape Foreign Policy Preferences*, «Political Psychology» 2016, vol. 37; M. Balmas, *Tell me*

and it shows the multi-dimensionality of the research problems concerning the conditions and dependencies of foreign policy of a given state in the context of the functioning of public opinion and the processes of the shaping of this state's image and its leader. Polish researchers analyzed the problems presented above only to a limited extent – the area of their interests referred only to narrowly defined theoretical and empirical aspects of perceiving a given country in the context of its activity as the subject of international relations: the images of the United States and Russia in the Polish press releases, the reaction of public opinion of selected countries to military actions in the 1990's⁹. Such a diagnosis of the Polish state of research in this sphere induces attempts at broader systematization and diagnosis of the phenomena and processes resulting from the effect of the instruments of foreign policy in the general (assessment of diplomatic and military activities of a given state on the international arena) and personal (perception of the political leader of a given state) dimensions on the public opinion of other countries (polling dimension).

It seems in connection with the context in the scope of the state of research outlined in this way that an attempt is possible at systematization of the state of research concerning public opinion on the perception of the foreign policy of the United States and the American presidents within a critical reflection on the role played by this superpower on the international arena after the terrorist attacks from 11 September 2001. Those events became a turning point for the whole international system because of the deepened power projection of the American superpower. The theoretical background for an outline of research goals and hypotheses will be the theory of the world system whose author is Immanuel Wallerstein in the spatial aspect. He points out that the world can be divided into three zones of different functions following from the kind of government, the levels of wages, social services, the character of export and import: core, semi-periphery and periphery¹⁰. The basic research thesis is as follows: the character of the reaction of the public opinion

who is your leader, and I will tell you who you are: Foreign leaders' perceived personality and public attitudes toward their countries and citizenry, «American Journal of Political Science» 2018, vol. 62.

⁹ Cf. A. Krzywdzińska, *Wizerunek Rosji i Stanów Zjednoczonych w polskich tygodnikach opinii po 1991 roku*, Kraków 2012; A. Wojciuk, M. Michałek, *Opinia publiczna wobec „wojen Zachodu”: przypadki wojny w Zatoce, Bośni oraz Kosowie*, «Stosunki Międzynarodowe» 2015, vol. 51, No. 3.

¹⁰ J. Czaputowicz, *Teorie stosunków międzynarodowych. Krytyka i systematyzacja*, Warszawa 2008, p. 161.

in a given country to the activity of the American superpower in the years 2001–2016 (the presidencies of George Bush and Barak Obama¹¹) will depend on the position of a given state within the world system. Theoretical concretization of the research thesis outlined in this way are three cognitive goals whose achievement is expected to depend on the temporal variability analysis of the polling data from the selected states of the world. Their selection was made by means of a case study based on the criterion of considering the whole range of variability of the units of analysis, which means the states belonging to the core countries, semi-periphery and periphery of the world system. In the literature of the subject the method is called *diverse case study* – it consists in choosing the variable or a few variables whose range of values can be assigned to definite categories and next at least one case is chosen for analysis from each category¹². The catalogue of cognitive goals of this analysis comprises three goals:

- (1) exploration of polling data (on a yearly basis) concerning the attitude of public opinion in selected states creating three sub-systems of the world system in relation to the general assessment of the American foreign policy and the assessments of selected aspects of this policy in the years 2002–2016;
- (2) determination of the time order of the dynamics (increase, decrease, stabilization) of the attitude of public opinion in selected countries (core, semi-periphery, periphery) towards both American presidents (image aspect) and their activities on the international arena in the years 2002–2016;
- (3) exploration of polling data (on a yearly basis) concerning the attitude of public opinion in Poland (a detailed case analysis of public opinion created by the society of a semi-peripheral country) to the general assessment of the American foreign policy, the assessments of selected detailed aspects of this policy, the perception of both presidents (image aspect) and their activities in the sphere of the American foreign policy 2002–2016.

These research goals will be realized on the basis of the analysis of the range of temporal variability of the polling data produced in the

¹¹ Encyclopædia Britannica, *George W. Bush*, July 02, 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/George-W-Bush>, Encyclopædia Britannica, *Barack Obama*, November 19, 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Barack-Obama> (10.01.2021).

¹² J. Gerring, *Case Selection for Case-Study Analysis: Qualitative and Quantitative Techniques*, [in:] J. Box-Steffensmeier, H. Brady and D. Collier (eds), *Oxford Handbook of Political Science: Methodology*, Oxford 2008, pp. 650–652.

course of the activity of three entities concerned with collecting and analyzing the polling data which publish the results of qualitative and quantitative studies. These entities are Gallup, Pew Research Centre and Centrum Badania Opinii Społecznej (CBOS). To achieve each of the three cognitive goals, three research hypotheses will be formulated. They will be tested (confirmation, falsification) using the polling data from the years 2002–2016. Those hypotheses are as follows:

- (1) H_1 – the location of a given state within the world system is related to the attitude of public opinion in a given country to the foreign policy of the United States (core – high level of acceptance, semi-periphery – medium level of acceptance, periphery – low level of acceptance);
- (2) H_2 – independently of the status of a given state within the world system the assessments of both presidents' activities and their image became worse in connection with the termination of their terms of office;
- (3) H_3 – the attitude of the Polish public opinion to the activities undertaken within the American foreign policy and the assessment of both American presidents' activities and images will become worse in connection with the termination of their terms of office.

The attitude of the world public opinion to the foreign policy of the United States

It seems that the dynamics of the attitude of public opinion in particular states of the world to the foreign policy of the United States, both in the general and the detailed aspects, is clearly related to the change in the way the outside environment is perceived by the American superpower in the sphere of defining their strategic goals and the means to achieve them in the field of international relations. The activities undertaken by president G.W. Bush in this area is an example of the policy of unilateralism, whereas president B. Obama, in the declarative sphere and by undertaking diplomatic relations, presented a change of this policy towards multilateralism¹³. The activities of the American diplomacy in the years 2002–2016 were characterized by a high level of involvement aimed at the United States maintaining the position of superpower, espe-

¹³ K. Czornik, *Ewolucja pozycji międzynarodowej USA w okresie pozimnowojennym*, «Studia Politicae Universitatis Silesiensis» 2018, vol. 21, p. 83.

cially by means of military measures, with a simultaneous decreasing superiority over China, which fact will probably not lead to an increase of tension on the international arena in the short-term perspective¹⁴. Changes of the instruments and goals of foreign policy cause changes in perceiving the image of a given country, both in the domestic and external (societies of other states) dimensions. This re-configuration of the image consists in intentional strengthening of its chosen attributes and in undertaking activities within the frameworks of public diplomacy (foreign visits of the president of the United States), which will ensure the effect of image synergy¹⁵.

The events from 11 September 2001 are treated in the present analysis as the turning point in the influence (planned or situational) exerted by the United States on different segments of the world public opinion, especially in case of the states belonging to the group of semi-peripheral or peripheral countries. The American studies from those times clearly communicated this consciousness to the decision-makers: "U.S. public diplomacy programs could be expanded in an effort to help counter perceptions of the United States as a center of vice and anti-Islamic sentiment and to explain U.S. objectives in fighting terrorism and seeking peace in the Middle East"¹⁶. The military actions carried out in later years in Afghanistan and Iraq led to the situation when the anti-American favourable attitude of the societies of the countries in the Near East got stronger and deeper, which led to increased costs of running the American foreign policy in that region of the world. It should also be remarked that the American public opinion in the years 2002–2016 showed an increasingly lower level of satisfaction with the current position of their country in the world – the Gallup studies from that period clearly point to this (satisfaction balance): in February 2002 its value was 44%, whereas in February 2016 it declined to the level of 27%¹⁷.

Public opinion in semi-peripheral and peripheral states which became the object of the direct influence of the American foreign policy in the years 2002–2016 showed a systematically lowering tendency in relation

¹⁴ The geostrategic dilemma called "the Thucydides Trap". Cf. E. Halizak, *Stosunki USA–Chiny: falsyfikacja hipotezy „pulapki Tukidydesa”, «Stosunki Międzynarodowe»* 2016, vol. 52, No. 4.

¹⁵ Cf. B. E. Goldsmith, Y. Horiuchi, *Spinning the globe? U.S. public diplomacy and foreign public opinion*, «The Journal of Politics» 2009, vol. 71.

¹⁶ A.B. Prados, *CRS Report for Congress. Middle East: Attitudes toward the United States*, December 31, 2001, p. 17, https://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metacrs1796/m1/1/high_res_d/RL31232_2001Dec31.pdf (19.12.2020).

¹⁷ The Author's own calculations on the basis of Gallup, Inc., *In Depth: Topics A to Z. U.S. Position in the World*, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/116350/position-world.aspx> (09.12.2020).

to the United States. Two examples deserve to be mentioned. The first one is Russia (an example of a semi-peripheral country), where public opinion in the years 2006–2016 clearly became anti-American after the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014. In 2006, 37% of the studied Russians declared that the United States were a country which was most hostile towards Russia, whereas in 2016 this opinion was supported by as many as 72% of the respondents¹⁸. The factor which certainly largely affected such a big polling change were the American financial transactions and the propaganda of the Russian governing elite who treated it as an element of strengthening the Russian identity. Another example is Pakistan (a peripheral country), which – due to its geographical location – became an object of an increasing influence during the military operation “Enduring Freedom” carried out in Afghanistan. The Pakistani public opinion in the years 2002–2012 was clearly anti-American – over 60% of the respondents in that period had unfavourable views of the United States, while in the years 2008–2012 less than 10% of the respondents expressed their trust to both American presidents¹⁹. It is worth remarking that the necessity of increasing the scale of influence through different instruments of the American foreign policy on peripheral countries after September 2001 became a premise of the increased scale of American development assistance in African countries. Examples of such programs include President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, Women’s Justice and Empowerment Initiative, Africa Education Initiative, Congo Basin Forest Partnership, African Global Competitiveness Initiative or Economic Support Fund²⁰.

It can be assumed that the possibilities of the United States influencing public opinion within the world system are in a high degree conditioned by three groups of factors (considering the conditions of shaping and changing the hierarchy of factor affecting public opinion in three segments of the world system): (1) geostrategic factors in case of the core-countries – Transatlantic Community, (2) military factors related to the states of the Near East – semi-peripheral and peripheral countries, (3) cultural factor (soft power) – semi-peripheral and peripheral coun-

¹⁸ D. Volkov, *Anti-American Sentiment in Post-Soviet Russia: Dynamics and Contemporary Characteristics*, «Russian Social Science Review» 2020, vol. 61, p. 141.

¹⁹ Pew Research Center, *Pakistani Public Opinion Ever More Critical of U.S.*, June 27, 2012, pp. 9–10, <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2012/06/Pew-Global-Attitudes-Project-Pakistan-Report-FINAL-Wednesday-June-27-2012.pdf> (19.12.2020).

²⁰ P. Matera, *Rywalizacja gospodarcza Stanów Zjednoczonych z Chinami w Afryce Subsaharyjskiej w XXI wieku*, «Stosunki Międzynarodowe» 2012, vol. 46, No. 2, p. 173.

tries (e.g. the countries of Central Europe)²¹. The analysis of the polling data included in table No. 1 and concerning the perception of the United States by the inhabitants of 14 selected countries of the world in the years 2002–2016 points out that the research hypothesis presented above is justified. The division of those 14 countries within the frameworks of the world system into three groups reveals the occurrence of the following polling phenomena:

- (1) core countries (*France, Germany, Japan, Spain, United Kingdom*) – differences in the balance index between the years 2002–2008 and the years 2009–2016 (in the first period the value of the index declined, in the second the value was clearly higher and stabilization of the index was observed);
- (2) semi-peripheral countries (*China, Mexico, Poland, Russia, Turkey*) – no uniform pattern of variability of the value of this index for the analyzed states in the group (e.g. the index value stably low in case of Turkey, stably high in case of Poland, oscillation showing signs of regularity in case of China);
- (3) peripheral countries (*Indonesia, Jordan, Lebanon, Pakistan*) – no similarities in the range of values of the index in his group of countries (Pakistan and Jordan are characterized by negative values of the balance in the perception of the United States; in case of Lebanon the value of the index is both negative and positive, in case of Indonesia there is a difference between the terms of office of G.W. Bush and B. Obama).

It needs to be remarked that in the perception of the position of the United States in the international system in the years 2002–2016 by the societies of the aforementioned states one should also consider the way the public opinion of those countries perceived the hierarchy of the official military motifs in the intervention of the countries of the West in Afghanistan (2001) and in Iraq (2003). The analysis of those motifs shows that: (1) “hard” interests of security were the most important in case of Afghanistan (the least important: economic motifs), (2) in case of Iraq the top in the hierarchy of motifs was occupied by the interest of the international community (the least important: economic motifs)²². It can be assumed that the greater range of divergences perceived by public

²¹ Cf. I. Wallerstein, *Analiza systemów-światów: Wprowadzenie*, Warszawa 2007 (electronic version).

²² M. Madej, *Dlaczego Zachód idzie na wojnę?: motywy interwencji zbrojnych Zachodu po zimnej wojnie w świetle oficjalnych wystąpień zachodnich przywódców*, «Stosunki Międzynarodowe» 2015, vol. 51, No. 3, p. 25.

opinion between the sphere of official declarations and diplomatic activities on the one hand and the sphere of military activity on the other, the less favourable the attitude of the world public opinion will be to the foreign policy of the United States and the role of American president in the process of stabilization of the world order. The polling data of the *Gallup World Poll* from the years 2007–2017 prove that the approval of the global leadership of the United States is the function of the degree of contradiction of interest between this superpower and other states – the German public opinion accepted this leadership to the greatest extent (although the percentage of those opinions was lower than 50%) while in case of China and Russia the approval was expressed by less than 1/3 of the surveyed persons²³.

The perception of the role of American presidents in the foreign policy of the United States in the years 2002–2016

The specific character of the American political system (presidential system) makes linking the functions of the head of state and the head of the government within one office the factor which has a direct impact on the perception of American foreign policy. In the theoretical approach, this phenomenon can be treated as an example of personalization of the executive power in a democratic political system²⁴. This creates a connection between the structural as well as chronological aspects of public diplomacy and the process of creation and perception of the American president. If this image is positive, it strengthens the polling in estimating the directions and effects of the activity of the United States on the international arena. When negative elements prevail in this image, it becomes an obstacle in effective influence on the world public opinion. One should also remember about different cognitive filters which can be the effect of cultural factors on public opinion in a given country²⁵.

The thesis on the existence of a relation between the president's image and the assessment of the American foreign policy is confirmed in table 1, which includes the data on the difference between trust to

²³ Gallup, *Rating World Leaders: 2018. The U.S. vs. Germany, China and Russia*, 2018, <https://news.gallup.com/reports/225587/rating-world-leaders-2018.aspx> (27.12.2020).

²⁴ Cf. P. Potocki, *Uwarunkowania zjawiska personalizacji postrzegania rządu w demokratycznym systemie politycznym*, «Zeszyty Naukowe ALMAMER» 2013, No. 1.

²⁵ Cf. B.E. Goldsmith, Y. Horiuchi, *In search of soft power: Does foreign public opinion matter for US foreign policy?*, «World Politics» 2012, vol. 64.

a given president of the United States and the favourable perception of this country in the years 2005–2016. The analysis of the value of the index for countries in that period shows that the image of president G.W. Bush did not strengthen positive assessment of the American foreign policy in the year 2005–2008, while in the years 2009–2016 the image of president B. Obama was an advantage of the American diplomacy in the eyes of public opinion from France, Germany, Jordan, Pakistan and the United Kingdom. An exception is Russia – in this case the value of this index was negative throughout the analyzed period but in case of B. Obama’s presidency it was relatively less unfavourable than during the presidency of G.W. Bush.

Table 1. The difference between trust to the president of the United States and the positive perception of his state in the years 2005–2016

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
France	-18	-24	-25	-29	16	14	9	17	19	8	10	21
Germany	-12	-12	-11	-17	29	27	26	35	35	20	23	29
Jordan	-20	-8	-12	-12	6	5	15	10	10	5	0	NDA
Pakistan	-13	-18	-8	-12	-3	-9	-4	-5	-1	-7	-8	NDA
Russia	-24	-22	-23	-24	-7	-16	-15	-16	-22	-8	-4	NDA
United Kingdom	-17	-26	-27	-37	17	19	14	20	14	8	11	18

Source: *the author’s own analysis and calculations on the basis of the data from Pew Research Centre: U.S. Image: Opinion of the United States*, <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/database/indicator/1> (19.12.2020); *Trump’s International Ratings Remain Low, Especially Among Key Allies, October 2018*, https://www.pewresearch.org/global/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2018/10/Pew-Research-Center_U-S-Image-Report_UPDATED_2018-10-01.pdf (19.12.2020); NDA – No Data Available.

Like in case of the analysis of temporal characteristics in the perception of the American foreign policy by the societies of selected states from three segments of the world system, identification and description of the polling phenomena which are an effect of the reaction of public opinion in those countries to the American president’s activity (both in the domestic and foreign dimensions) can be made in reference to the perception of the president of the United States. The following temporal regularities concerning 14 analyzed cases are visible in relation to the variability of the trust balance which are included in table 3:

- (1) core countries (*France, Germany, Japan, Spain, United Kingdom*) – the value of the index in all states of this group was negative (a decreasing trend) in case of president G.W. Bush, while during both terms

- of office of president B. Obama it was positive (the highest level of stability in France and Germany);
- (2) semi-peripheral countries (*China, Mexico, Poland, Russia, Turkey*) – clear differences between particular countries (Turkey – a distinct improvement in the analyzed period, a very big decrease of the index in case of Russia, a stable positive value of the index in relation to the Polish public opinion, in case of China a declining trend during second term of office of president G.W. Bush);
 - (3) peripheral countries (*Indonesia, Jordan, Lebanon, Pakistan*) – in all analyzed cases (except for Indonesia during both terms of office of president B. Obama) the index had only negative values (a particularly low value of the index occurred in Jordan).

Summing up the conclusions presented above and concerning the perception of the presidents of the United States in reference to the net index of trust (the difference between the level of trust and distrust from table 3), it should be emphasized that in the years 2003–2016 the world public opinion did not have a uniform character. A polling phenomenon of “image gap” occurred, which indicated clear differences in the perception of the United States presidents in these three groups of countries. The polling consequences of both terms of office of president G.W. Bush both for the American domestic policy and for the perception of the United States in the world were critically evaluated by the American analysts: “President George W. Bush’s popularity in the United States has sunk to the level of Richard Nixon’s just before he resigned from office. The president’s standing abroad is still worse”²⁶. Experimental studies on the influence of the perception of president B. Obama’s by the citizens of other states showed that this influence also occurs (*the Obama priming effect*). This is a positive effect, and the range of its influence is connected with the level of political awareness – its effect is the strongest in case of persons characterized by average levels of awareness²⁷. The image of president G.W. Bush possessed other characteristic features in comparison to the image of B. Obama, which was noticed by the public opinion in different countries in the world and posed a challenge to the American effective public diplomacy in the world in the years 2002–2016: Bush was perceived as a manipula-

²⁶ Pew Research Center, *Global Public Opinion in the Bush Years (2001–2008)*, December 18, 2008, <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2008/12/18/global-public-opinion-in-the-bush-years-2001-2008/> (19.12.2020).

²⁷ N.I. Dragojlovic, *Priming and the Obama effect on public evaluations of the United States*, «Political Psychology» 2011, vol. 32, pp. 1000–1001.

tor, while Obama aroused hopes that it would be possible to solve the problems created by the decisions made by his predecessor in the areas of the American foreign policy²⁸. The hopes associated with the first term of office of president B. Obama are linked with the fact that in October 2009 he, as the fourth American president, received the Nobel Peace Prize. In the context of this event it should be pointed out that the American total national defense outlays in the years 2011–2016 calculated as the share of total government outlays decreased from 19.6% to 15.3%²⁹. On the other hand, the polling studies of the Pew Research Centre from 2014 pointed out that the majority of the tested persons in 39 out of 44 countries were against the attacks of American drones on the extremist military groups in Pakistan, Yemen and Somalia³⁰.

The Polish public opinion towards the United States and the American president – selected aspects

The results of American polling studies (Gallup and Pew Research Centre), which are presented above and which concern the attitude of foreign public opinion to the foreign policy of the American superpower and its president indicate that the Polish public opinion belongs to the most pro-American in the world. The majority of the Polish political elite, independently of their ideological orientation and biographical factors, on the declarative level demonstrate a friendly attitude to the United States. The latter was recognized by prime ministers of successive governments which functioned in the year 2001–2016 to be the Polish key ally and guarantor of national security³¹. The Polish literature on the subjects points to three conditions of the pro-American attitude of the Polish society which began to get shaped even before 1989: (1) economic emigration to the United States in the 19th century – a wide scale of the phenomenon, (2) support for political and economic transforma-

²⁸ C. Belim, P. Calca, *Final remarks*, [in:] C. Belim, P. Calca (eds), *Image of U.S. Presidential Administrations: The Cases of George W. Bush and Barack Obama*, Lanham 2013, p. 235.

²⁹ A. Fleurant, *II. US military expenditure*, [in:] *SIPRI YEARBOOK 2017: Armaments, Disarmaments and International Security*, p. 340, <https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/SIPRIYB17c-09sII.pdf> (17.12.2020).

³⁰ Pew Research Center, *Global Opposition to U.S. Surveillance and Drones, but Limited Harm to America's Image*, July, 2014, p. 5, https://www.pewresearch.org/global/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2014/07/2014-07-14_Balance-of-Power.pdf (19.12.2020).

³¹ J. Marszałek-Kawa, P. Siemiątkowski (comp.), *Exposé Prezesów Rady Ministrów 1989–2019*, Toruń 2020, pp. 183 ff.

tions – in the context of structural changes taking place in the countries of Central and East Europe after the collapse of the communist bloc, (3) high level of political and social acceptance in Poland of the leading role of the United States in the world³². As a member of NATO, Poland belonged to that group of this military alliance which after the events of 11 September 2001 clearly supported the war actions of the United States in Afghanistan after 2001³³ and in Iraq in 2003. Military actions of the United States in those two cases had influence on how the character of relations (military and non-military) between our country and the American superpower was perceived after 2001, which is seen in the surveys of the Polish public opinion from the years 2002–2016 conducted by CBOS. The polling data concerning four selected aspects of those relations are submitted to analysis: (1) dynamics of Poles' favourable attitudes to Americans, (2) the way Poles perceive presidents of the United States, (3) assessment of Poland's military activity in Afghanistan, (4) presence of the American army in Poland – in the context of the anti-missile shield.

The analysis of the CBOS data from the years 1993–2014 (no data for 2000, 2009) which refer to the balance of Poles' sympathy towards Americans (the difference between sympathy and antipathy)³⁴ reveals that the pro-American attitude of the Polish society to the American society gradually worsened: (1) in the 1990's the level of sympathy exceeded 60%, while in the years 2004–2014 it crossed the level of 50% only once (in 2012); (2) the level of distrust increased from 14% in 2001 to the level of 21% in 2014; (3) the balance of sympathy decreased from 46% in 2002 to 20% in 2014. The balance of sympathy as an index which synthetically makes it possible to determine the direction of long-term changes (identification of trend) shows that the attitude of Poles to Americans can be divided into two major periods: (1) till the moment Poland acquired membership in NATO, (2) the period of Poland's allied activity as a member of this political and military alliance. Noticeable

³² A. Kamiński, T. Paszewski, *Stany Zjednoczone i Amerykanie w polskiej polityce zagranicznej i sondażach po upadku komunizmu*, «Sprawy Międzynarodowe» 2006, No. 2, p. 52.

³³ In Afghanistan there were 10 contingents of the Polish Military Contingent within the mission "Enduring Freedom" (totally, 1,210 soldiers), 15 contingents of the Polish Military Contingent within the mission International Security Assistance Force (totally, 27,500 soldiers) in the years 2002–2014, cf. J.Z. Matuszak, *Wojsko Polskie w Afganistanie 2002–2014*, Warszawa 2014, p. 323.

³⁴ The author's own calculations on the basis of Komunikat CBOS, *Stosunek Polaków do innych narodów*, No. 20/2014 Warszawa, February 2014, pp. 3–4, https://www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2014/K_020_14.PDF (04.12.2020).

changes are also visible in the attitude of the Polish public opinion in the area of analysis concerning the perception of the presidents of the United States by Poles (CBOS data from 2002–2015)³⁵: (1) in the years 2002–2005 president G.W. Bush was most frequently indicated as a foreign politician acting on the world arena who should obtain the title of the politician of the year (in 2003 as many as 23% of indications, in 2005 only 7%); (2) in the years 2006–2015 the surveyed persons most frequently pointed to Angela Merkel (in the years 2010–2015 the second place was occupied by B. Obama), (3) the largest group of respondents throughout the analyzed period included the persons who showed no interest in the subject. This would indicate that in case of the Polish public opinion the images of both American presidents (and other foreign politicians) in the years 2002–2015 were probably not a significant factor affecting the polling assessments of the international environment of Poland. In the years 2007–2010 as many as 3/4 of the surveyed persons declared no support for the participation of Polish soldiers in the NATO operation in Afghanistan (in November 2010 as many as 53% of the surveyed persons chose the answer “I definitely don’t support”), more than 60% of those surveyed in the years 2007–2010 expressed their conviction that the NATO operation in Afghanistan would not contribute to peace in this country³⁶. Such a structure of social preferences in the field of Poland’s military presence in Afghanistan indicates that a clearly pro-American tendency among the majority of the political elite did not agree with the growing skepticism of the Polish society towards this aspect of the Polish foreign policy in that period. At the same time it is worth emphasizing that the attitude of the Polish public opinion to the issue of linking Poland’s national security with a greater presence of NATO soldiers in our country was changing. The attitude of the Polish public opinion to the problem of allowing for the stationing of the NATO soldiers in Poland improved in the years 1999–2016: in 1999 only 32% of the surveyed persons accepted this solution, while in 2016 as many as 65% supported the opinion that the forces of other NATO countries should be stationed in Poland (58% of those surveyed supported the building of a rocket launcher belonging to the system of

³⁵ Komunikat CBOS, *Polityk roku 2015 w Polsce i na świecie*, No. 1/2016, Warszawa, January 2016, p. 6, https://www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2016/K_001_16.PDF (04.12.2020).

³⁶ Komunikat CBOS, *Udział Polski w operacji NATO w Afganistanie i jego konsekwencje*, BS/159/2010, Warszawa, November 2010, p. 1, p. 4, https://www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2010/K_159_10.PDF (04.12.2020).

the anti-missile shield)³⁷. This change in the attitude of the Polish public opinion was caused by the Russian invasion on Crimea in 2014 which brought about a definitely negative reaction of NATO and the European Union. This caused negative consequences for the TransAtlantic system of security³⁸. In the years 2002–2016 the Polish public opinion presented a distinct pro-American attitude to a lesser and lesser degree. Although in comparison to other analyzed countries (China, Russia, Turkey) Poland as a semi-peripheral country did not change its attitude from positive to negative, the image potential of the United States in that period decreased, which might in the long run contribute to the Polish political elites undertaking an attempt to redefine the character of Poland's allied relation with the United States.

Conclusions

The above presented analysis of the polling data concerning the attitude of public opinion of selected countries of the world creating three different segments of the world system point out that *Western liberal interventionism*³⁹, that is strengthening the hegemonic position of the United States in different regions of the world after the end of “cold war” following the declared defense of human rights and political democracy, during the terms of office of presidents G.W. Bush and B. Obama gradually ceased to be positively perceived and accepted by the countries in different regions of the world. This process of changing the attitudes of public opinion to the leading role of the United States was noticeable to the smallest extent in the core countries, which was due to the cultural closeness (strengthened by soft power) and military cooperation within NATO, whereas in semi-peripheral countries public opinion showed ambivalent reactions and in peripheral countries negative directions of changes prevailed. The surveys show that this process – though stopped at the end of B. Obama's term of office – also appeared in the core countries in the second year of D. Trump's presidency (e.g. in Germany

³⁷ Komunikat CBOS, *Stosunek do NATO i obecności sojusznicznych wojsk na terenie Polski*, No. 99/2016, Warszawa, July 2016, p. 8, p. 11, https://www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2016/K_099_16.PDF (08.12.2020).

³⁸ Cf. R. Zięba, *Międzynarodowe implikacje kryzysu ukraińskiego*, «Stosunki Międzynarodowe» 2014, vol. 50, No. 2.

³⁹ R. Kuźniar, *Liberalny interwencjonizm Zachodu po zimnej wojnie: przestanki i konsekwencje*, «Stosunki Międzynarodowe» 2015, vol. 51, No. 3.

the share of assessments favourable for the United States decreased from 57% to 30%)⁴⁰.

The presented polling data, indexes and their analysis indicated that the following theoretical conclusions can be drawn as for the confirmation/rejection of the three research hypotheses formulated at the beginning:

- (1) H_1 was confirmed – the location of a given country within the world system is connected with the attitude of public opinion in a given country to the foreign policy of the United States (in case of peripheral and semi-peripheral countries the temporal characteristics of the values of the analyzed indexes showed greater variability);
- (2) H_2 was confirmed – assessments of both presidents and their image got worse during their terms of office;
- (3) H_3 was confirmed in part – the attitude of the Polish public opinion to president G.W. Bush got worse while in case of B. Obama's presidency the indexes based on the polling data revealed stabilization of the assessments of this president (which should be related to the American reaction to the Russian invasion on Crimea in 2014).

Will the polling phenomena discussed above also occur in case of the American foreign policy realized by successive American presidents? This seems highly probable. The analysis of the temporal and spatial aspects of the reaction of the world public opinion to the ways of realizing the goals of foreign policy of the United States using the theoretical assumptions of the concept of the world system shows the heterogeneous character of the world system, where the role of the American hegemon starts to undergo transformations. Survey-based experiments via online surveys (participants from Australia and Canada) revealed that exposing the role of president Donald Trump in the area of the American foreign policy might have a selective impact on the way the United States are perceived – “negative ‘Trump effect’ in trade policy”⁴¹.

Within the list of research problems concerning the research area described in the present article attention should be drawn to the one which refers to reorientation of particular regional segments of the world public opinion, to the state aspiring to the role of an equal partner of

⁴⁰ Pew Research Center, *Trump's International Ratings Remain Low, Especially Among Key Allies*, October 2018, p. 18, https://www.pewresearch.org/global/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2018/10/Pew-Research-Center_U-S-Image-Report_UPDATED_2018-10-01.pdf (19.12.2020).

⁴¹ T.B. Gravelle, *Trumping foreign policy: public diplomacy, framing, and public opinion among middle power publics*, «Australian Journal of International Affairs» 2018, vol. 72, p. 484.

the United States in the field of the world order in the political and economic dimensions, which is China. The geostrategic domination is not conditioned only by the scope of military or economic superiority. To achieve it, it is necessary to create the psychological superiority understood as the possibility of having a permanent impact on the public opinion of the state lying within the zone of influence of a given power.

Table 2. Balance of how the inhabitants of selected countries perceived the United States in the years 2002–2016 (difference between favourable and unfavourable assessments)

Country	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
China	NDA	NDA	NDA	-11	4	-23	-7	1	21	-2	-5	-13	7	-5	6
France	28	-15	-25	-14	-21	-21	-15	50	47	49	38	28	50	46	32
Germany	25	-9	-21	-12	-23	-36	-35	31	28	27	8	13	4	5	19
Indonesia	NDA	NDA	NDA	-19	-37	-37	-16	33	25	14	NDA	30	26	36	NDA
Japan	46	NDA	NDA	NDA	28	25	2	22	34	71	45	40	36	39	49
Jordan	-50	-98	-88	-59	-70	-58	-60	-49	-58	-71	-74	-71	-73	-69	NDA
Lebanon	-23	-44	NDA	-16	NDA	-5	2	10	5	0	-1	-6	-16	-21	NDA
Mexico	39	NDA	NDA	NDA	NDA	15	3	42	21	11	22	36	32	37	NDA
Pakistan	-59	NDA	-39	-37	-29	-53	-44	-52	-51	-61	-68	-61	-45	-40	NDA
Poland	68	NDA	NDA	39	NDA	30	44	43	55	51	43	43	54	57	58
Russia	28	-18	2	12	-4	-7	-2	0	24	22	18	11	-48	-66	NDA
Spain	NDA	-17	NDA	-9	-50	-26	-22	30	33	35	26	33	26	38	33
Turkey	-24	-68	-33	-44	-64	-74	-65	-55	-57	-67	-57	-49	-54	-29	NDA
the United Kingdom	59	44	24	17	23	9	16	49	41	33	29	28	39	41	35

Source: the author's own analysis and calculations on the basis of the data from Pew Research Centre, U.S. Image: Opinion of the United States, <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/database/indicator/1> (19.12.2020); NDA – No Data Available.

Table 3. Balance of trust to the president of the United States in selected countries in the years 2003–2016

Country	2003	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
China	NDA	NDA	-3	-20	-15	39	22	11	-3	-15	15	3	21
France	-59	-50	-70	-71	-74	83	73	69	72	66	66	66	70
Germany	-33	-39	-47	-61	-71	88	81	76	75	77	43	46	73
Indonesia	NDA	-54	-54	-65	-43	49	38	27	NDA	18	31	41	NDA
Japan	NDA	NDA	-35	-23	-44	76	57	68	52	43	24	37	61
Jordan	-98	-99	-86	-80	-82	-27	-38	-40	-51	-51	-63	-69	NDA
Lebanon	-65	-53	NDA	-31	-32	-4	-13	-14	-20	-25	-30	-28	NDA
Pakistan	NDA	-56	-55	-59	-54	-38	-52	-60	-53	-42	-45	-42	NDA
Poland	NDA	7	NDA	-26	-9	41	33	20	11	14	19	37	33
Russia	-73	-29	-44	-52	-47	-3	4	-2	-8	-22	-65	-75	NDA
Spain	-45	-62	-83	-81	-80	50	40	35	24	10	18	17	52
Turkey	-80	-75	-81	-87	-87	-19	-42	-61	-42	-34	-44	-1	NDA
The United Kingdom	4	-22	-38	-46	-65	76	71	53	62	48	50	54	59

Source: the author's own analysis and calculations on the basis of the data from Pew Research Centre, *Confidence in the U.S. President*, <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/database/indicator/6> (19.12.2020); NDA – No Data Available.

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