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**United States policy in the years 2008 - 2016 and its impact on the  
security of Poland**

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## SUMMARY

This dissertation attempts to analyze the United States international and security policy during the presidency of Barack Obama and how it affected the security of Poland. The research is concentrated on the US foreign policy towards the main threats to the security and stability of the international system.

Maintaining close relations with the United States, both through bilateral ties and membership in NATO, is one of the most important instruments for ensuring security of Poland. The examination of the long-term strategy of the United States, through the study of its strategic documents, military actions and diplomatic initiatives, is of fundamental importance to the security of Poland and it was the main purpose of conducting this research.

The volume is divided into four parts. The time frame of the analyzed period covers the years 2008 - 2016. The first chapter provides an essential theoretical framework and defines the concept of security. Both national and international security concepts are thoroughly explained. The second chapter concerns the potential of the United States in terms of its security policy. In this chapter the most important national institutions and international organizations responsible for security policy have been described. It also describes the composition and status of the US Armed Forces, which remain the most powerful instrument of foreign and security policy restraining attempts to undermine the international order. The third chapter refers to the implementation of US security policy towards the three most important threats: Russia's aggressive policy in Europe, China's growing power in Asia and ongoing chaos in the Middle East. The last, fourth chapter, focuses on the security of Poland and Polish-American military and security cooperation. In this chapter the organization and status of the Polish Armed Forces were described. State defense expenditures were also analyzed and compared to those of other neighboring countries. This chapter also discusses the National Security Strategies of Poland. The chapter concludes with the subsection examining the issue of US and NATO military assistance to Poland in the event of an attack by Russia. This issue was analyzed both in terms of military and logistical problems, as well as political problems.

The main research hypothesis is that US policy during Barack Obama's presidency was aimed at limiting involvement in the world, which in his view contributed to the weakening of American power. However, world events have forced the president to partially

correct and modify the original strategy. US interests have been endangered by the growing instability around the world and because of that American engagement in the Middle East was continued and military capabilities in Europe were increased.

The additional hypothesis examined in this dissertation is: The deterioration of security in Europe and Russia's aggressive policy towards Ukraine have forced the United States to take a closer look at the region of Central and Eastern Europe. Poland, which is the furthest ally with the greatest potential on NATO's eastern flank, is playing an increasingly important role in global US policy aimed at maintaining American leadership in the world. China and Russia are striving to overthrow the existing world order and rebuild it at the expense of the US supremacy. It is in the US's interest to counter these plans. Attempts to undermine the *status quo* by Russia, taking place in our region, contribute to the strengthening of the Polish-American alliance.

The Obama Doctrine is not a coherent strategy that can be precisely defined. However, there are some key elements of US foreign policy conduct that can indicate the main purpose of the administration was the partial withdrawal from the world, reduction of military spending and overseas commitments, avoidance of further military conflicts, especially those which heralded a long engagement, and reallocation of the saved resources to solve the domestic problems. Many of the decisions made by the United States in the international arena resulted from a desire to limit involvement in world affairs and to persuade allies to take a greater responsibility for their own security. All those steps were consistent with the strategy of retrenchment that allowed the United States to secure its interests at a lower costs. Such a policy was motivated by the need of strengthening the weakened position of the USA, but it also contributed to the growth of chaos in the world.

President Obama was very persistent in the realization of this strategy, even when the political and military outcomes in some regions were disturbing and led to new regional conflicts. Unforeseen consequences of sticking to this strategy, like the outbreak of war in Ukraine and the creation of ISIS, forced the U.S. administration to make some adjustments but did not change the general direction, which was retrenchment. The grand strategy is first and foremost about balancing ends and means in order to achieve the best realization of national interest. Barack Obama decided that the most relevant strategy for his country is to reduce the means and set more modest ends.

However, war in Ukraine and the Russian annexation of Crimea were the events that changed the US policy towards Russia. The events in Ukraine forced the United States to take a closer look at Eastern and Central Europe. The United States may be willing to support the

democratic and western aspiration of Ukrainians but will not risk a major conflict with Russia over it. However the crisis in Ukraine is not only about Ukraine or Russia. It is also about US credibility around the world. Both friends and foes are watching closely the American reaction to the situation. That is why the United States has increased its military presence in those NATO countries that share borders with Russia. Since the end of Cold War the region became important again and focused the attention of the United States.

China and Russia are still not strong enough to stand against the USA and its allies directly but by systematic contesting and provoking the USA to act in many places around the world they are eroding the world order by undermining the norms and international law. The collapse of the system established under the leadership of the US could lead to instability and old threats to countries in Central and Eastern Europe. This makes these countries strong supporters of US presence in their region. It will require increased efforts on the part of those countries, especially military spending and the modernization of their armies. Poland and the United States have common interests. American technological and military support for countries like Poland, Romania and the Baltic states can help to create a stronger sphere of security in the region and balance for growing Russian aggressiveness. If the United States wants to preserve the world order it has to support its weakest and smallest allies because they will be the first targets of the powers that want to change the *status quo*.

It is not a foregone conclusion that America's relative international power is in decline. Barack Obama decided to implement the retrenchment strategy because he thought that this would be the best way to preserve the American power or to soften the decline. President Obama encountered escalation of many international crises, which demanded US attention and proved that without American engagement the world will sink into chaos. In the second term of his presidency Obama corrected some of the errors from his first term. He managed to consolidate NATO and increased the US military presence on the eastern flank of the alliance.