

УДК 327[(73):(55)]«2009/2013»

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## DEVELOPMENT OF THE US FOREIGN POLICY UNDER OBAMA'S FIRST ADMINISTRATION: MAIN IMPACT FACTORS

Primary aim of the article is to indicate the role of subjective and objective aspects within the foreign policy-making of the US. Special emphasis is made upon overcoming of the negative image of the US, acquired during the George W. Bush presidency, as well as upon president Obama's attempts to implement reforms, designed to support the US foreign policy renewal.

**Key words:** foreign policy, the United States, Barak Obama, public image, internet-based technology.

Taking into account current international role and place of the US, understanding of the outcomes of the Barak Obama's first administration performance represents one of the most critical and relevant topics of the political science field. The US foreign policy under Obama is considered in the present article in the light of factors, which affected the president and his administration.

The aim of the article is to discover the implications of various US foreign policy aspects, period of 2009–2013, such as, for instance, the overcoming of a negative «legacy» of George W. Bush, especially within the domains of international policy, nonconventional diplomacy, racial and computer factors.

There is a substantial number of diverse scientific writings on the topic, which are represented mainly by the American and British schools. American researchers Perl Ford, Tekla Johnson and Angie Maxwell adhere to the opinion that «election of Barak Hussein Obama for the US presidency became a real milestone for the nation, which was weakened by the racial contradictions from its onset, and which nowadays from time to time employs capitalism in order to exploit the coloured nations» [1, p. 462]. American scientist Bart Schultz also emphasized an importance of the fact that Obama was perceived as a «participatory president», who made considerable efforts to improve the economy: in 2008 an average of 60 % of citizens approved Obama's policy [2, p. 168].

After extreme unpopularity of George W. Bush administration, a democratic candidate was foremost expected to re-establish the trust towards the US abroad, to revitalize the economy and to move to a new post-racial state. Nonetheless, even more important for Obama's accession to power, was the factor of computer internet technologies, which enable a fast distribution of video, photo and text among the internet users. These technologies helped to

unite and energize the participation of Afro-Americans. Enrolment of black voters was at the highest point since 1984 [1, p. 465].

Nonetheless, when taking a closer look at the elections, we can see that the picture is more sophisticated than a simple racial dichotomy of voters. Obama was supported by a smaller number of white voters than John McCain (43 % to 55 %), but he acquired more «white» voices than preceding presidential candidates of the Democratic Party — Gore and Kerry. Afro-Americans supported Obama with 95 % of votes. In whole, Obama and McCain were respectively supported by ( %): 49 to 48 of men, 56 to 43 of women, 67 to 30 of Latin Americans, 67 to 35 of Asians, 54 to 45 of Catholics, 75 to 23 of atheists and even 79 to 21 of Jews (though during the electoral campaign, Obama was seriously suspected by the Jewish of formerly having relations with the anti-Semitic organization of «The Nation of Islam». The property factor as perceived by the middle class and the wealthy elites was of a smaller importance if compared to cultural and ideological advantages. Postgraduate voters gave Obama 18 solid points in advance of his competitor [2, p. 169]. It helped to verify the hypothesis, which claimed that the American society was going exactly through the cultural-based separation and that there have virtually emerged «two Americas». One of them being traditional, less educated but more religious and the other one — modernized, open-minded America of well-educated people. On the 4<sup>th</sup> November, 2008 the more politically significant part of the US society prevailed [3, p. 3].

«Obama-mania» resembled a mass hypnosis session. Obama's speeches made a tremendous impression: in the view of historians, the country hasn't evidenced such a speaker since the times of Lincoln and even Kennedy wasn't gifted with eloquence that much [3, p. 4]. The colour of Obama's skin was an additional emphasis on the need of restoration.

Obama won the elections thanks to his pledge of changes, inter alia the promise that his administration will stop the economic downfall and restore an international trust to the US. According to the American researchers, the US still has many advantages: the strongest armed forces in the world, a well-developed network of allies and partners, a scientific and technological superiority, the world's best higher education system, a leadership in the domain of innovations and technologically advanced production. We can mention also the transparent political system, helping to attract foreign investment, as well as rich environmental assets and natural resources, elaborated and energetic civil society and an experience of global leadership [4, c. 166].

Nevertheless, it was a mindful usage of technology, which was the primary reason for Obama's electoral win. The innovations embraced blogs, micro-blogs (in particular Twitter), video broadcasting websites, online storages of documents, sharing of files and the social networks (including Facebook and MySpace). These sources are accessible for anyone, who has an internet access (i.e. for millions of users). The Obama's team understood an importance of web technologies and used internet to maintain contacts, raise funds and mobilize the voters [1, p. 470]. Thus, the win of Obama resulted to a certain extent from the technological development of the XXI century.

Obama won the elections by means of what Steven Shonorek called a «political time». James Norman, who covered the Obama's campaign from Europe, pointed out that the use of internet technologies by the democratic candidate was striking, if compared to «fear and paranoia» of technologies (phone tapping etc.), which had been associated with the former president George W. Bush during the war on terror times. Furthermore, the republican candidate J. McCain during the primaries publicly acknowledged that he was computer illiterate. In his interview with Dan Shon, McCain said: «I learn «to be on-line» and to use internet and it won't take long. But I don't expect myself to become a perfect communicator». A low self-esteem of McCain provided an advantage to Obama, who he positioned himself as a president of technology. Even before the 1<sup>st</sup> May, 2008 when his figure was approved by the party, he had more than 800 000 friends on Facebook, in contrast with 120 000 friends of McCain and 150 000 of Hillary Clinton. Till the end of his campaign, Obama gained 13 million supporters via social networks and video-broadcasting websites [1, p. 471-472].

What matters is that internet and video technologies allow politicians such as Obama, to distribute unfiltered addresses. One can view his speeches online in full and without mutilations. The technologies brought fundamental change. Joe Trippi concluded that the Obama's win proves that in future, a particular candidate will win the elections not because of his strength and approval of the party, but because he makes a better use of the new mass media [2, p. 129].

It was the first time the president appointed a general technology manager — Anish Chopra. The White House website was totally reconstructed and now it included the blogs, written by several employees closest to the president and a YouTube video channel (<http://www.change.gov>) [1, p. 472].

One of the most critical causes for attacks on Obama during his electoral campaign was the absence of experience in the domain of international politics. Hillary Clinton attempted to make out of Obama a person unable of to rule the country in the situations of international conflicts. McCain was promoted by the Republican Party because he was appreciated by people as the one, who has extensive experience in this sphere. He tried to describe Obama as a person not ready for presidency, but he did not manage to reassure the voters. Aiming to neutralize the criticism, the team of Obama pictured him as a politician able of tackling the problem of the US leading international role degradation. In June 2008, Obama made a trip to Europe and the Middle East. For instance, 200 000 thousand people came to listen to his speech in Berlin [2, p. 134].

Since Obama took presidential office, the world has suffered significant changes. Due to the development of mass media, Iran ran through the events, which were called the «Twitter revolution». Twitter and Facebook has been on numerous occasions mentioned with relation to the events in the Middle East and North Africa. People used the abovementioned online media to organize events and «meetings». Considering that the regimes in these countries did not support civil organizations, internet-based computer technologies have

become the only possible way of communication. The people of Sudan voted for its future. The peoples of Tunisia and Egypt, both in a virtual and real-life manner, gathered in the squares in order to be heard. Yet other Middle East countries, such as Bahrain, experience mass protests. Were these events influenced by the «Obama effect»? American researchers Efe Sevin, Spencer Kimball and Mohammed Khalil give a positive answer. They think that the United States demonstrated its growing commitment to the tools of communication. In 2009, the US government addressed Twitter with the request to postpone the scheduled server maintenance operations, in order to be sure that Iranian activists have an access to this social medium. The same year, Google, AT&T and Twitter representatives were invited by the Iraqi interior minister to his country in order to study current and future role of technologies for the process of democratic consolidation. Wael Ghonim, who used to be the top manager of Google and prominent activist during the events in Egypt, put it in a blunt way: «If you want a government to be liberalized, give them an internet» [5, p. 806].

We live in the era, when people with similar way of thinking do not need any more to invest capital, create infrastructure or to be closely situated in order to stay together. In this new system, the Barak Obama's administration enjoyed an opportunity to promote the programs, aimed at providing the human element within the technological horizon with an added value.

Certain remarks of Hillary Clinton during the times of the first Obama's administration, indicated a departure from traditional diplomatic channels within the US foreign affairs. Separate persons and civil groups has been from now on deemed to be international actors. Non-traditional diplomacy, especially the civil one, is viewed as an adequate method for sending messages directly to the target audiences. The goal of civil diplomacy is to move the dialogue down from the international level to the level of separate persons. Arguably, civil diplomacy represents «attempts of a state to influence foreign public». In fact, bottom-up initiatives provide a new opportunity for establishing of a connection with foreign audiences. Focal point of the standard definition of civil diplomacy is made upon reaching of a foreign society by a state, however it is not specified, whether nongovernmental organizations, entities, corporations or individuals could do the same. The notion of a «bottom-up initiative» includes non-state actors as the message senders. By way of taking part in the bottom-up initiatives and civil diplomacy, the administration of Obama acquired an opportunity to develop direct pathways for communication with foreign societies [5, p. 807]. This way, the diplomatic arena has turned into a social platform, created to involve individuals into communicational activities.

Obama's electoral win in general contributed toward restoration of the US credibility. However, none of the US presidents has yet occupied a seat under such unfavourable internal and external circumstances, and in addition, Obama didn't have any solid political experience. Notwithstanding, the first time he entered the Senate, he applied for the Foreign Affairs Committee, so he had certain experience. Obama was lucky enough to occupy the office im-

mediately after Bush, who showed the World the worst ever appearance of the US. It is especially true for the war in Iraq: if it hadn't taken place, neo-conservatives could have preserved their influence for a long time. In 2008, American politicians and mass media were extremely pessimistic about the global role of the USA; they repeated the words about the decay of the great power's influence. Well-known «arrogance of power» wasn't popular no more; however, the weakness (the hints of McCain's supporters that Obama might be «too soft») was inexcusable for the new president [2, p. 147].

It didn't take long for Obama to get tested by the international conflict. Russia invaded Georgia during his first year in office; he was also challenged by the Somali pirates and Iran. These were followed by the revolutions in Egypt, Libya and the Greek crisis, which all happened at the time the US needed an international stability in order pay its full attention to solving of the economic problems.

Notwithstanding his enormous powers, the US president is not a dictator. He depends on the Congress, on public opinion and on his own team. In this regard, I consider that it is important to characterize the first Obama's team — the one of the time he entered the office.

As far back as during the electoral campaign, Obama created a rather strong team, which was called «The work group for issues of national security». Its task was to help with preparation of Obama's speeches and to cover certain topics for him. Some of the group's participants, for example Richard Holbrooke, later entered the Obama's presidential team [3, c. 10]. Part of them became unofficial advisors. Obama demonstrated a political courage and a significant self-confidence, which allowed him to invite such people. It was not only Hillary Clinton but also a very potent national security advisor Jim Jones, who entered the team. During the course of the Bush's presidency, the interdepartmental coordination considerably declined; Obama was more attentive with his advisors and the heads of separate departments. As concerns the State Department, here Hillary Clinton tried to prove herself to be a strong leader [6].

When Obama started his campaign, he relied on and was supported by the group associated with Kennedy and Clinton families. He set record by finishing the building of cabinet within 27 days. While doing so, Obama was enlisting everyone he needed [6].

The team created by Obama, consisted mainly of the former renowned politicians and economists. Robert Gates was the defence minister under Bush, but his competence was not questioned. When Obama was reproached on the grounds that: «Those are the old people, so who will bring the changes?» he bluntly replied: «I will bring about the changes» [3, c. 3]. This illustrates his self-confidence.

Obama was well aware that the US society is very much fragmented and it will require a considerable effort to consolidate it. He had a talent of finding compromise solutions. Such Obama's qualities as flexibility, ability to reach consensus and formulate propositions could have made him a diplomat. However, as it is pointed out by some researchers, the major problem was the Obama's habit of commenting on the ways he verifies information [5, p. 808].

Thus, Obama won the presidential elections through the pledge of changes, in particular, through the promise that his administration will manage to stop the economic recession and re-establish the US global credibility. Obama and Clinton tried to excel their predecessors at using multilateralism and civil diplomacy. That is why foreign political priorities of the US under Obama's presidency differ of that under George W. Bush. The colour of the president's skin appeared to be not that important for both the American citizens and international community, as was the efficient use of new technologies by the Obama's team. It may be called the «Obama effect». Though indirectly, this effect influenced and was reflected over the Arab spring events, which turned to be a new and unexpected challenge to the democratic administration of the United States.

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*Стаття надійшла до редакції 31.08.2015*

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## ВИРОБЛЕННЯ ЗОВНІШНЬОЇ ПОЛІТИКИ США ПЕРШОЮ АДМІНІСТРАЦІЄЮ Б. ОБАМИ: ОСНОВНІ ЧИННИКИ ВПЛИВУ

### Резюме

Стаття має на меті показати роль об'єктивних та суб'єктивних чинників, що впливали на вироблення зовнішньої політики США. Особливу увагу приділено подоланню негативного іміджу США в світі, що був створений за Буша-молодшого; намаганням президента Обами провести реформи, що сприяли оновленню зовнішньополітичного курсу США.

**Ключові слова:** зовнішня політика, США, Барак Обама, імідж, Інтернет-технології.

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**ВЫРАБОТКА ВНЕШНЕЙ ПОЛИТИКИ США ПЕРВОЙ  
АДМИНИСТРАЦИЕЙ Б. ОБАМЫ: ОСНОВНЫЕ ФАКТОРЫ ВЛИЯНИЯ**

**Резюме**

Статья призвана показать роль объективных и субъективных факторов, которые влияли на выработку внешней политики США. Особое внимание уделено преодолению негативного имиджа США в мире, созданного при Буше-младшем; попыткам президента Обамы провести реформы, помогавшие обновлению внешне-политического курса США.

**Ключевые слова:** внешняя политика, США, Барак Обама, имидж, Интернет-технологии.