

УДК 327

OBAMA'S FOREIGN POLICY LEGACY: AMERICAN ASSESSMENTS

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Political discourse in the US is characterized by deep disagreements in assessing the outcome of Obama's foreign policy. The incumbent President keeps on trying to revise its results. The article is an overview of the most frequently used arguments made by the main political opponents – the Republicans and the Democrats, by those who had been working for the last two administrations and by the leading experts, who were directly involved in the elaboration and implementation of the American foreign policy. Their arguments and views shape the public opinion and constitute the ideological basis for the active politicians. The content of the article demonstrates that, despite the unity in determining the objectives of foreign policy, there is a sharp divide in assessing the results that have been achieved, in choosing methods of achieving goals, and the views on the strategy and tactics of ensuring national interests are diametrically opposed. The polarization of the ruling circles seriously complicates the activities of the ruling administration. D. Trump's electoral promises on foreign policy could hardly be fulfilled without its substantial modification.

Key words: Obama's presidency; political legacy; US foreign policy.

ВНЕШНЕПОЛИТИЧЕСКОЕ НАСЛЕДИЕ Б. ОБАМЫ: АМЕРИКАНСКИЕ ОЦЕНКИ

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Политический дискурс в США характеризуется глубокими разногласиями в оценке итогов внешней политики Б. Обамы. Действующий президент не оставляет попыток пересмотреть ее итоги. В статье предпринята попытка обобщения наиболее часто встречающихся оценок и взглядов основных политических оппонентов – республиканцев и демократов, политиков-практиков, ведущих экспертов, имевших непосредственное отношение к разработке и реализации внешнеполитического курса двух последних администраций. Их аргументы и взгляды формируют общественное мнение, составляют идейную базу для действующих политиков. Содержание статьи демонстрирует, что, несмотря на единство в определении целей внешней политики, методы достижения этих целей, оценки полученных результатов, взгляды на стратегию и тактику в обеспечении национальных интересов носят диаметрально противоположный характер. Поляризация правящих кругов серьезно затрудняет деятельность действующей администрации. Выполнение данных Д. Трампом предвыборных обещаний без серьезной их модификации представляется невозможным.

Ключевые слова: президентство Б. Обамы; политическое наследие; внешняя политика США.

The internal political discourse in the United States is characterized by deep disagreements in the assessment of Obama's foreign policy. The incumbent president does not abandon attempts to revise its results.

In this respect, the assessments of direct participants in the events, politicians and experts, leading experts that were directly relevant to the development and implementation of the foreign policy course of the previ-

Образец цитирования:

Варивончик ИВ. Внешнеполитическое наследие Б. Обамы: американские оценки. Журнал Белорусского государственного университета. Международные отношения. 2018;1:30–34 (на англ.).

For citation:

Varivonchik IV. Obama's foreign policy legacy: American assessments. *Journal of the Belarusian State University. International Relations*. 2018;1:30–34.

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ous republican and democratic administrations are of particular interest. Their arguments and views constitute the ideological basis for existing politicians and form public opinion. The experts whose evaluations are examined in this article include Leon Panetta, the former head of the administration of B. Clinton, the CIA director and the defense minister in the Obama administration; Derek Chollet, deputy defense minister and national security adviser in the last democratic administration, author of "The Long Game: How Obama Changed Washington and America's Role in the World" [1]; Vikram Singh is a leading specialist in the Ministry of Defense, adviser to the Secretary of State for South and South-East Asia in the same government; Fareed Zakaria is one of the most influential and popular political analysts and experts in the field of international relations, the editor of *Newsweek International*, Robert Kaufman, a professor of political science at the University of Pepperdine, author of "Dangerous Doctrine: How Great Obama's Strategy Weakened America" [2]; Eliot Cohen Professor, Director of the Strategic Studies Program at Johns Hopkins University, an expert on the problems of the Middle East, advisor to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, author of the book "The Big Stick: The Limits of Soft Power and the Necessity of Military Force" [3]; Kristen Silverberg, Assistant Secretary of State and US Ambassador to the European Union in the George W. Bush Administration, Michael Doran, Senior Fellow, Hudson University, Member of the National Security Council and Leading Specialist for the Middle East in the J W. Bush, Michael Mandelbaum, Professor of the Johns Hopkins University Center for International Relations Studies, author of the book 2016 "Mission Failure: America and the Post-Cold War Era" [4].

Foreign political heritage of B. Obama is severely criticized by his political opponents. The doctrinal bases of politics are criticized, the promises are not fulfilled, the results are negatively evaluated. Most observers believe that Obama did not have a specific foreign policy doctrine and, responding to the challenges that emerged, acted as a neorealist and a pragmatist. At the same time, he is accused of the fact that he, like R. Reagan or M. Thatcher, wanted to radically change US foreign policy based on his vision of the world. In the opinion of critics, Obama considered the process of reducing weight and the role of the United States in world affairs as an objective process and advocated limiting the excess, depleting forces of US power use, trying to replace military and economic levers with mild force, sought to abandon unilateral actions in favor of multilateral cooperation. Neorealism and pragmatism of Barack Obama manifested itself in ignoring the aggressive nature of partner countries with undemocratic power regimes and abandoning priority relations with democratic countries and traditional allies. The attempt to implement such a policy

led to a weakening of positions in three vital regions for the US – in Europe, the Middle East and East Asia [5; 2, p. 7–60, 185–198]. Obama's critics pointed to the self-assurance of Obama, who believed that it was possible to solve complex international problems, such as questions of Middle East politics, relying on new rhetoric and origin [6]. It is noted that Obama, like many other politicians, is used to act in conditions when the constants of international relations were the evolutionary nature of their development and US leadership. He was elected by the Americans so that he would return the soldiers home. He did this, but was not ready for the newly emerged threats [4].

Unlike the successful foreign policy of such his predecessors as G. Truman, D. Eisenhower or R. Reagan, Obama cut defense spending. His plans could lead to a reduction of the navy to 220 surface ships, which would be less than before the outbreak of World War I and the army in numbers less than on the eve of the Second World War. Military expenditures averaged 3.1 % of GNP, while in Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy and Reagan they were 13, 9.1, 8.6 and 6.6 % respectively. Under Reagan, 29 % of the federal budget was spent on defense, with Obama almost half as much, 15 %. There is no alternative to American power in ensuring order in the three key areas of the world. Therefore, the US should continue to adhere to the doctrine of American exclusiveness, to dominate the military sphere [2, p. 39–60]. For reducing military spending, which was the reason for the struggle to reduce the deficit of the state budget, the president was also criticized by his supporters. Panneta noted that the budget sequestration, supported by both the Democrats and the Republicans, was conducted without coordination with the military and damaged the country's defense capability [7].

In hopes of establishing partnerships and cooperation with Russia in the Middle East in 2009, Obama stopped deployment of anti-missile defense systems in Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic, which, he believed, destabilized the situation and provoked Russia. The result was a growing military threat to US allies from Russia and Iran. Thanks to not muted microphones during the meeting between Medvedev and Obama, the world learned about the intention of the latter to continue the policy of pacification of Russia after the presidential elections of 2012. A green light was given to expand not only Russia, but also other repressive regimes [5; 2, p. 61–96]. The policy of resetting relations with Russia ended in failure. Relations with Russia are worse than during the Cold War. In 2009, being in Moscow, Obama said that in the modern world it is impossible to reflect on the categories of the 19th century, that the time of power politics, spheres of influence and block systems is a thing of the past. After the events in Ukraine in 2014, he had to admit that this is exactly the policy pursued by Russia. The

imposed sanctions against the Russian Federation are not effective enough [6].

In his pre-election speeches and policy statements, Obama promised to stop the bloodshed in the Middle East and achieve success in Afghanistan, restore US credibility in the world, reduce nuclear weapons and strengthen the nuclear non-proliferation regime. The war in Afghanistan continues. In Syria, there is the most profound humanitarian crisis since the Second World War – 0.5 million Syrians were killed, 13 million left their homes [8].

The hasty withdrawal of Americans from Iraq caused the emergence of a vacuum that was filled by IGIL. There is an increase in the influence of Iran, to a level comparable to the 1970s. the presence and influence of Russia increased. Obama broke strategic relations with Israel by putting an extremely strict condition on the refusal of construction in new territories. The Israelis are negative about the deal with Iran [8].

A blow to US authority was the unfulfilled threat of using military force against Assad if the latter used chemical weapons and kept him in power, despite Obama's repeated statements that Assad should leave. Responsibility for this lies solely with Obama, since the use of force was expressed by the military, CIA Director, Secretary of State, a written protest was signed by 51 State Department employees. Potentially there were opportunities besides direct entry of troops into Syria – no-fly zones, security zones as it was done in Yugoslavia [7; 8].

Obama underestimated the importance of the Middle East. It is in the interests of the US and its allies to maintain a balance of power when no country dominates, the nuclear nonproliferation regime operates and access to oil that is less important to the US remains, but remains vital for their European allies and Japan [5]. In the face of new challenges in the face of China and internal problems, Obama wanted to establish partnerships with hostile US Iran. Despite the agreement to limit its nuclear program in 2015, the threat of Iran's acquisition of nuclear weapons has not been eliminated. The key moments of the agreement will cease to be effective in 10 and 15 years. Iran has been lifted sanctions, its financial resources have been unblocked, but in violation of UN resolutions Iran continues its missile program, sponsors terrorist organizations [2, p. 97–144; 8]. Obama failed, as he had hoped, to change the trajectory of Iran's development – no progressive changes are expected in the country, his foreign policy has not changed. The balance of power policy in the Middle East presupposes deterring Iran, which seeks to become the dominant power in the region and has greater resources for this than Iraq or Turkey. Obama's policy gave free hand to Iran, which he used. Only the US can offer the region a stable order system. Among other things, the events in Syria are a manifestation of the conflict between Sunnis and

Shiites, in which the United States must support the Sunnis [5].

In Asia, Obama, to the detriment of relations with a democratic India, gave priority to China, which increased its economic and military power. The latter contains a potential threat to the security of the US and its allies. Sooner or later, China will face the need for domestic reforms, an alternative to which can be external expansion. Weakness of the US provokes the latter. The agreement on the Transatlantic partnership is not supported by the policy of military and economic pressure on China. It is impossible to recognize the success of the Paris agreements on the prevention of climate change in 2015, as it harms the economic interests of the United States, the agreement has not received the support of the congress [2, p. 145–184].

The policy of nuclear disarmament declared by Obama was fiasco. Russia and China modernized their nuclear capabilities. North Korea continued its nuclear program and was close to creating missiles capable of reaching the US territory [8].

Obama's supporters propose to evaluate the results obtained on the basis of what legacy he got from George W. Bush and whether the US was in a better position by the time of the end of the presidency [9]. It is not true that Obama rejected the idea of American leadership or that he was against the use of military power. He carried out a balanced policy, taking into account internal and external priorities [10]. In 2008, the United States was in a difficult situation: the deepest in the country since the Great Depression, which threatened the economic crisis. In foreign policy – a dead end in the Middle East, which limited the ability to respond to new challenges. Bush relied excessively on the strength component. Unilateral actions of George W. Bush were not supported by US allies. Not enough attention was paid to East Asia. Obama managed to restore the confidence of the Allies [9].

The US refused excessive interference in the affairs of other countries, from unpredictable military adventures, Obama fulfilled the promise of withdrawing troops from Iraq and saved the lives of thousands of American soldiers. In Iraq and Afghanistan in January 2009, there were 175,000 US troops, in December 2016, 15,000. Obama's supporters recall that the agreement on the withdrawal of troops was signed by Bush. The reason for the transition of a large part of the Iraqi military to the side of the IGIL was the persecution of Shiites by the Nuri al-Malaki government, which is hard to blame Obama. To combat terrorists, special operations and new technologies – drones – were effectively used. Under Bush, 10–12 billion US dollars a month was spent on the war in Iraq and Afghanistan. Costs with Obama were an order of magnitude less. On 2 May 2011, Osama bin Laden was liquidated [11].

In 2008, George W. Bush invaded Iraq under the false pretext of having weapons of mass destruction

there. In 2013, there really was such a weapon in Assad. And the question about it was resolved diplomatically – 12 thousand tons of chemical weapons were destroyed. It could be in the hands of terrorists. According to the calculations of the Pentagon, an attempt at a military solution would lead to the destruction of only 25–50 % of the available stockpiles of these weapons. The threat of their capture by terrorists was prevented. In Syria and Iraq, not the Americans are fighting now, but a broad coalition. Military options were considered by the administration, but the president proceeded from the fact that Syria is not the main priority for the US and there are enough calls, the answers to which require the consolidation of available resources. Obama is accused of not supporting a moderate opposition, but she was weak. He is sure that he chose the lesser of evils [10].

In 2009, it was considered a matter of time that Iran would receive a nuclear bomb. Iran had the materials to create at least one bomb. Attempts at negotiations were not successful. The situation went out of control, options for a military solution to the problem were considered. Under Obama, the US conducted a successful cyber operation against the Iranian nuclear program, secured the introduction of the strictest sanctions and Russia's consent to them, without which they lost their meaning. The sanctions were supported by China and the European allies. As a result of the negotiations and the agreement of 2015, control measures have been introduced, there are no materials for the creation of nuclear weapons, and there will be no next 10–15 years [12].

Despite the disagreements between Obama and Netanyahu, and understandable concern about the Iranian threat from Israel, relations remain the closest. Israel receives military-technical support from the United States at a greater than ever scale – 30 billion US dollars in 2008–2018 [10].

In the relations with Russia, the success was the conclusion of an agreement on a new reduction of the nuclear potentials of the two countries of START III. Russia cooperated with the United States on sanctions against Iran and the war in Afghanistan. In worsening relations, Obama can not be blamed. His actions should be evaluated in terms of reaction to the actions of the Russian side. After the events in Ukraine in 2014, the USA and Western Europe imposed severe sanctions, which cause serious damage to Russia [9].

The success of the administration was the policy in the Pacific basin. Relations with the countries of the region for the United States are more important than the Middle East. The US has a stable relationship with China, a new relationship with Vietnam. In 2016, an agreement was signed on the Trans-Pacific Partnership, which is beneficial to the US and limits China's influence. As an accomplishment that has a long-term positive significance not only for the United States, but for the entire

world community, Obama's supporters cite the Paris Agreements of 2015 on climate, in the preparation of which the United States played a decisive role [12].

During the election campaign, D. Trump solidarized with almost all the arguments of critics of Obama's foreign policy, while he argued that "... after the end of the Cold War, the United States could not develop a new vision for the new era, with time, foreign policy had less and less meaning, which gave birth to one misfortune after another. Iraq, Libya, Egypt, Syria – it all started with the dangerous idea that we can build Western democracy in countries that have neither the relevant experience nor the interest to become Western democracy Our foreign policy has no goal, vision, strategy, a certain direction" Trump claimed that only he could remedy this situation. He considered it possible to pursue a foreign policy, which will support both Democrats and Republicans. It was not ruled out that it was possible to improve relations with Russia on the basis of a joint fight against terrorism, but on conditions that were exceptionally favorable for the United States. It was intended to force the NATO allies to pay more or take care of their own defense, to force China to abandon the manipulation of the national currency and industrial espionage, and to minimize the trade deficit in trade with it, to restore US military dominance at the expense of the expected revenues from reformed on the basis of low taxes and investments in the infrastructure of the economy. The program proposals included the restriction of illegal immigration and the construction of an insurmountable wall on the border with Mexico at its expense, the denunciation of the treaty with Iran, the withdrawal from the North American Free Trade Zone and the Paris Climate Agreements, the denial, as far as possible, of multilateral cooperation and commitments to international organizations in favor of greater freedom of the US and resolution of issues on a bilateral basis [13].

The fate of B. Obama's foreign policy heritage depends on the actions of his receiver. Practice of the first half-year of D. Trump's rule demonstrates inability to fulfill the undertaken obligations. And it's not just an understandable discrepancy between pre-election rhetoric and real politics. Opponents and supporters of B. Obama are adherents of the idea of American exclusiveness and maintaining the dominant position of the United States in world politics, so the difference in approaches to this or that question is substantially leveled. Promised by D. Trump, there will not be a sharp turn. But the existing disagreements make it unlikely that the consensus needed between the Democrats and the Republicans on the methods and means to achieve the desired goals is necessary for an effective foreign policy. Fears are a potential threat of immediate, irresponsible decisions of the aspiring to justify themselves in the eyes of voters and promised to make America again a great president.

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Received by editorial board 23.11.2017.