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Iran, due to the conduct of its internal policy, i.e. domestic and external – foreign, arouses great interest not only in individual international organisations and institutions but also in the academic community, including specialists in Oriental studies, Iranian studies, history of the Middle East and other scientific disciplines, as well as outside observers, readers and the media. The aforementioned academic community has been enriched by another important and scientifically relevant publication edited by Luciano Zacarra. The literature on Iran and the MENA area has become richer with new insights into Iran’s foreign policy when Hassan Rouhani (pronounced Rowhani) was President during his first term, which will be briefly presented, commented. Therefore, the discussed publication, together with the introduction, consists of 11 chapters.

Thus, in the introduction, the authors were the scientific editors. They made a retrospective and pointed out the political aspects in the context, for example, of the abolition of the position of Prime Minister as the head of government. There was more responsibility and scope of competence to the President, who could create foreign policy himself. Everything was done by the reform of the Iranian state constitution in 1989. On the one hand, this is a dangerous move because practically one person rules the country, even though there are other ministers, and can create foreign policy without the consent and approval of other prominent politicians, the Shiite clergy or the Iranian people.

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Concluding a brief recollection of the introduction, let’s move on to the first article. Mahdi Ahouie is the author of Exploring President Rouhani’s Foreign Policy Doctrine 2013–2017, in which he assessed whether President Hassan Rowhani developed Iran’s foreign policy during his first term (2013–2017). To this end, Rowhani’s foreign policy elements were analysed at the conceptual and operational levels.

Ali Fathollah Nejad is the author of Revisiting Rouhani’s School of Thought: A Critical Discussion of Its Developmental and Foreign Policy Doctrines. This text was intended to collect and present the areas of foreign policy in several points. Among other things, the author pointed out that it can be seen in retrospect that the Rowhani administration largely, and here it must be agreed, followed the set doctrinal lines in foreign and development policy before 2013, providing the basis for both relative success and failure. Among other things, the author pointed out that it can be seen in retrospect that Rowhani’s administration, to a large extent, should also be agreed here. Also, the author came to and also correctly concluded by saying that through the “moderate” school of thought. Rowhani often hit the limits set by the rival “hard” school of view, the nature and structures of the Islamic Republic, and the impact of US extraterritorial sanctions that undermined the effective implementation of Rowhani’s political agenda.

Luciano Zaccara and Mehran Haghirian are the authors of the text Rouhani, the Nuclear Deal, and New Horizons for Iran-US Relations. It was said that Rowhani’s election in 2013 was a turning point in the history of the Republic of Islam and allowed Iran to present a new image on the world stage that they believe is significantly different from the previous eight years. It is hard to disagree because the 6th President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, was a completely different politician who did not have good relations with the US and the EU but was more open to cooperation with countries such as Brazil, Turkey and India. The Sectarian Divide in Iran-Saudi Relations is an article proposed by Shahram Akbarzadeh. Akbarzadeh noted that Rowhani as President gave an opportunity and hope for a change in Saudi-Iranian relations. Because Ahmadinejad praised the Arab countries, or rather their communities, for the revolution in Iran in 1979, and Rowhani condemned the protests, fearing that they would also arise in Iran as it was rightly proved. Saudi Arabia saw Iran’s approach to the Arab world as destabilising and seriously dangerous. Iran’s propaganda against the ruling Arab sheikhs in the Persian Gulf, his support for increasingly militant President Bashar al-Assad in Syria, and his growing influence in Iraq after Saddam have been a source of serious concern in Riyadh. However, as the further months of Rowhani’s presidency
have shown, Saudi-Iranian relations still have not improved and have remained at their previous level, that is, hostility and dislike towards each other. The first symptoms indicated that there would be a huge breakthrough, but this did not happen.

Edward Wastnidge is an author of Iran's Own ‘War on Terror’: Iranian Foreign Policy Towards Syria and Iraq During the Rouhani Era. He leans into the issues of the war on terror in the context of Iraq and Syria after the so-called Islamic State (ISIS) took control in most parts of those countries and overthrew the then authorities, both in Iraq and Syria. When Hassan Rouhani took office in 2013, he was confronted with a rapidly developing crisis that affected its longtime ally, Syria and Iraq. Thus, this situation meant that Iran had to take one side in the fight against terror that was taking place in Syria and Iraq. Rouhani decided whether it was right to back up with Turkey, Russia, Hezbollah and pro-government Syrian and Iraqi security forces. In Iran and Russia: Between Pragmatism and Possibilities of a Strategic Alliance, Nikolai Kozhanov focused on Russia's approach to Iran and its relations. The considerations began with the return to the office of President by Vladimir Putin. Kozhanov stated in the text that Putin's return to power and the election of Rouhani opened a new chapter in Iranian-Russian relations. The ties during the tenure of Dmitry Medvedev and Ahmedinejad were not as tightened as during the term of Putin-Rouhani. Iran and Russia shared common interests and points in foreign policy as they thought the same about the situation in Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan and other Central Asian countries and were concerned about the legal status of the Caspian Sea.

Sergio I. Moya Mena proposed Regaining Space: Iranian Foreign Policy Toward Latin America During the First Presidential Term of Hassan Rouhani (2013–2017). The focus here is on discussing foreign policy towards the countries of South America. Iran's relations with Latin America, especially with the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA, its Spanish acronym), gained considerable vitality, even revival during Ahmadinejad's presidency. The author of the text stated that Rouhani did not continue his foreign policy towards many South American countries, as his predecessor did. The political approach towards Venezuela, Cuba (Latin America), Brazil, Nicaragua (Latin America), and Bolivia or Ecuador has changed.

Another exciting piece is From Ahmadinejad to Rouhani: Iran's Presence in Africa, by Mahjoob Zweiri and Alieu Manjang. The authors recalled that both Ahmedinejad and Rouhani were not the first presidents who had more or less intense contacts with African countries, as Iranian contacts with African countries were already several decades back. During the reign of the Shah, there was consider-
able involvement with the developing countries of Africa. One factor that encouraged this was Iran’s future demand for raw materials and export markets amidst the rapid industrialisation of Muhammad Reza Shah Pahlavi in the 1960s (p. 179). Thus, Africa is a continent of influence between the countries of the Middle East, and Iran is questioning the presence of many Arab states, including Saudi Arabia. As noted by M. Zweiri and A. Manjang during the tenure of Ahmadinejad, Iran had enormous influence in Africa and an established position on this continent. Especially with West African countries such as Senegal. Rowhani decided to be less active in Africa and slowly withdrew from Senegal.

The penultimate text is The Feasibility of Energy Cooperation between Iran and the Gulf Arab States by Anna Aleksandra Gawlik. It focused on discussing Iranian contacts with the countries of the Arabian Gulf. Especially after July 14, 2015, when there was a nuclear agreement between Iran and the countries of the Arabian Gulf. At this point, it is worth pointing to a specific aspect regarding nuclear weapons. Yuri Nazarkin, in his article, rightly noted that: “Like nuclear weapons, terrorism is also, in a sense, a tool. This tool is used to achieve specific political goals.” The text focuses mainly on nuclear weapons and cooperation between countries in this area. Also, later in the text, the identification of two regional energy needs is discussed, which could be solved by establishing closer cooperation with Iran. Another thread in the text was the aspect of the Gulf Cooperation Council’s energy projects implemented or planned.

And the last text proposed was From Isolation to Accommodation: Lessons Learnt from Hassan Rouhani’s First Term in Office, author of Anoushiravan Ehteshama. Ehtesham points out that Rowhani and his policies intended to end neoconservatism by being transformative and taking the necessary steps towards a better and brighter future for Iranians, but this was not the case. To better understand Rowhani, his profile has been presented from a mainly religious point of view. Thus, the accomplishment of the hitherto achievements in the sphere of politics by Rowhani did not give any chance to change Iran’s foreign policy because he came from a conservative and unintentionally substantial political changes, political and religious environment. Ehtesham also mentions that his crushing victory over Mohammad Baqir Calibaf (18.7 million against 6.1 million votes) was only possible because city voters and the middle class voted for him and made up many voters. Thus, they were the guarantors of his victory (p. 230).

Thus, ending this review, it should be noted that a multi-author work under scientific guidance is valuable for many experts and scientists, researchers of the Iranian state or the Middle East region
and international relations, as well as other readers. The advantage of the work is vain and accurate observations about Iran’s foreign policy during Rowhani’s tenure (2013–2017) which were not focused on foreign policy towards its neighbours, but also towards other countries from other continents, not Asian ones. For example, these are the countries of Central America, South America, Africa and Europe. Let us hope that this monograph will have a Polish translation, which will be fascinating reading and will make a massive contribution to Polish literature on the subject.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

