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Introduction

Quick growth of Chinese economy heralded a shift in the balance of power in the Asia-Pacific. In recent years China's growing assertiveness, manifested by growing military presence in South China Sea, has been perceived as a major security challenge by most of the countries in the region. This situation is not simply a result of the recent changes in economic and political situation in the country, but rather a manifestation of a long history of building economic and political ties in the region and materialization of Chinese ambitions. It seems that China is finally able to materialize its long-time political ambitions in the region.

Other security challenges like the nuclear program of North Korea and changing political situation in Myanmar attested to the increasing uncertainty of security situation in Asia which affects the global geopolitical landscape. Change of power in the United States, and Election of Donald Trump as American president in November 2016 was a signal of another shift in the regional security situation. New president following the slogan "America First" launched a process of renegotiating existing security treaties with Asian allies and presented a more aggressive stance on China which very soon turned into a serious trade conflict. This monograph illustrates different aspects of these complex power shifts and their influence on the current geo-political situation in the region. The research results presented herein by authors from several universities were initially discussed during the 7th LEAM conference which was held at the Faculty of International and Political Studies of the University of Lodz, on 7–8 June 2018. The book is divided into three the thematic blocks.

In the first part Alessandro Albana analyzes the growing maritime policy of China. He concludes that China pursues a twofold maritime strategy depending on the proximity to the Chinese coast and the ability to perform

effective military operations. Marcin Przychodniak examines documents and statements on bilateral relations between China and the United States. He argues that misunderstandings between the two countries result from electoral politics in the U.S. and following the ideology of build-up and rejuvenation in China. On the part devoted to changes in contemporary Chinese politics, Adrian Brona explains the processes of selecting cadres in the Communist Party of China. The chapter by Gabriel Hasik proves, that apart from international and security concerns, Chinese government must also respond to a series of developmental challenges. Fast economic growth in China resulted in growing income inequality and a greater gap between rural and urban areas.

Second part of the book shows that growing position of Beijing is not only a result of recent economic growth and geopolitical changes, but also a consequence of a historical experiences and carefully cultivated international contacts. Alicja Bachulska shows that experiences of “the century of humiliation” are used by the CCP to fuel nationalism and legitimize Chinese expansionism in the international arena. Yumei Chi examines the history of Franco-Chinese diplomacy and an attempt to utilize those historical ties in promoting current international investment platforms like the Belt and Road Initiative. Mark Hoskin using Western primary sources, provides an interesting overview of a long history of Chinese activities across the South China Sea. Sitthiphon Kruarattikan turns to a more recent history of international relations by showing the instrumental use of Cuba in Chinese policy towards the Soviet Union.

Third thematic bloc is devoted to the ongoing security shifts in Asia Pacific. David Jervis identifies the reasons behind the unsuccessful policy regarding the North Korean nuclear program. He examines the strategies used by the different U.S. administrations to approach Pyongyang in the context of Johnson’s idea of the seven “sins” of American foreign policy. Andrzej Demczuk analyses hypothetical solutions to the North Korean nuclear program under the presidency of Donald Trump. Karol Żakowski examines Japan’s policy towards North Korea under the Second Abe Administration, which is being affected by the conciliatory approach of the United States. Agnieszka Batko is looking at Japan-South Korea relations and suggesting that the neo-functional theory of regional integration can be applied outside of the European integration context. Michał Lubina examines the history of U.S. relations with Myanmar, which has an important influence on current political changes and crises in the country.