

A black and white photograph of the Statue of Liberty's head and crown, looking slightly to the left. The crown has seven spikes. The background is a dark, solid color.

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Should Poland be afraid of Donald Trump?

Poland and the rest of Europe have long looked to the United States for leadership in difficult times. The upcoming elections in America could upend the political establishment and herald a new era in American foreign policy. The instability of the EU and Russia's growing assertiveness are serious problems that must be met firmly and with resolve. Allowing events to unfold by themselves is a risky proposition.

Our experts in this issue of the Freedom Institute Bulletin, including several from the United States, offer a trans-Atlantic perspective on what Europe and Poland may face as a result of the presidential elections and what they have to do regardless of the outcome to maintain the integrity of the NATO alliance. No one can predict the future, but with a firm commitment to its national interests, Poland may have the opportunity to demonstrate that it is a leader on the world stage.

**Dr. Thomas H. Henriksen, senior fellow at the Hoover Institution,
interviewed by Nicholas Siekierski**

Do you think Donald Trump will become president? Why or why not?

I don't think he'll become president, there are several reasons. One, he's managed to alienate many of the voter blocs, that is to say Hispanics, he never had much support with black Americans, which tend to vote Democratic in the upper nineties in the percentage of their numbers, and he's also alienated women, which is a natural constituency for Hillary Clinton, but by his remarks I think he's alienated some women who may have considered coming over to his side. And I think he's offended independents, and that's a growing number in American politics, people not registered as Republicans or Democrats, but rather as independents and those people are more toward the middle of the road and they vote on candidates, but he has by his rhetoric and by his insults has turned so many people off. And then the final ingredient is that Republican candidates, conservative candidates, always have an uphill struggle, because the majority of the American media leans left, it is liberal, with a few notable exceptions, Fox News, perhaps the Wall Street Journal and some other newspapers and magazines, but by and large the major networks, the major news outlets are liberal, and so they'll be focusing intensely on how good a candidate or how wonderful a person Hillary Clinton is and how bad a person Donald Trump is. So for all of those reasons I think it's going to be very, very hard for him to win.

If Donald Trump is able to convince enough people to vote for him and he is able to win, how would that affect US foreign policy towards NATO and Eastern Europe?

Most of us who follow him closely are puzzled and it is sort of an enigma with him, because he is very erratic and very unpredictable and he shoots from the hip, so it's difficult to make predictions. But, given what he's said so far, I don't think he's going to be a staunch supporter of NATO. NATO of course, as you know, has very many problems, it has many countries that don't own up to their obligation of spending at least 2% of their GDP building their militaries through defense spending, troops, planes and so forth. So it has those problems and then of course it's challenged by out of area activities such as terrorism and finally and most dramatically as we all know, the fear of Russia. A resurgent Russia under Putin who has taken all of the Crimea and the eastern section of Ukraine, and making continual threats and having his Russian air force planes transgress other people's zones and fly close to American and European planes. So it's a very grave situation and it requires a steady hand and someone who will not blink when a show-down comes and that is sorely needed because President Obama has not been as strong a president for NATO as would have been hoped.

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Dr. Thomas H. Henriksen

On the other hand, assuming that Hillary Clinton becomes president, how do you think that would affect US foreign policy, would it be much of a departure from the Obama Administration's policy in Eastern Europe?

In some ways she has a little tougher character and I base that on some of the internal debates that were going on when she was secretary of state, for example she was much more robustly behind the intervention into Libya than Mr. Obama was and she wasn't the only one, even some of his closest aides, Susan Rice for example, or Samantha Power who was the representative of the United States to the UN, they were all most forward with their position, but Mr. Obama has always taken a very retrenchment view of international policy, he doesn't want to involve the United States in wars, particularly in the Middle East, he's been extraordinarily cautious and also very deliberative and takes a lot of time, and even when he does the right thing, for example, sending one armored brigade back to western Europe, he did this in a very slow, deliberate way, almost grudgingly as if he were doing it, but he wasn't really doing it without any forceful rhetoric or any sort of strong stance, so I think the Russians feel that he's weak. Now Mrs. Clinton also has another problem, because she is a woman, she will be challenged internationally and she probably knows that, her advisors know that, so she might actually have to double down even stronger than a male candidate would, just to prove her bona fides, that she is actually in charge of things. So I expect her to be a little stronger and more steady, though I don't agree with her on many, many issues, though on policy I don't expect her to be so unpredictable and erratic as Mr. Trump would be.

You've written about U.S. foreign policy cycles, do you think that the hypothesis of the U.S. vacillating from engagement to disengagement factors into the equation here?

Yes, the book I'm finishing is called "Cycles in U.S. Foreign Policy Since the Berlin Wall Collapsed". American policy has oscillated between a more engaged overseas presence under the first George Bush then it pulled back slightly under Clinton, was much more exuberant initially under George W. Bush, and Mr. Obama has taken it back much more to as I said, retrenchment, retreat, pulling back, hesitancy to intervene to stand up, even to back up his own red lines, the case was in September 2013 when he did not sustain his own red lines about chemical weapons in Syria. The Syrians had them and he really didn't do very much, and finally the Russians saved him by authoring a plan that the Syrians would hand their chemical weapons over to UN agencies which would dispose of them, so you can say that Mr. Obama was allowed to escape from that, and more recently his own secretary of state, also regarding Syria, has promised to deliver food even if the Syrian government stops it, the United States would use forceful means and that hasn't happened either, and that was said about three weeks ago, and he has left Secretary of State John Kerry high and dry, because Kerry made that pledge. So I think U.S. policy has oscillated and there is every prediction that Mrs. Clinton will have to move forward a little bit, again I think she'll be a domestic policy president as Obama was, but her hand

will be forced to do something, so the cycle will continue, and in this case it will be more of an engagement rather than a disengagement cycle.

Is there anything more that Poland and other NATO members can do to strengthen their alliance with the United States?

The number one thing that Poland can do, and Poland is a very important player in international affairs because of its geographical location, because of its own sad history, plays a very important part, it's a front line state so to speak. And one thing that the Europeans have to do is to begin to look towards themselves and not wait around for American leadership. It's also important that some countries that don't spend the mandated 2% of GDP, do so. Another thing the Europeans should do and they were doing a lot of this prior to the problems of the terrorist attack on 9/11 and also the Russian intervention in Ukraine, that they should take leadership themselves and realize that this is their defense and they can't spend too much time focusing on the United States, and this is something Trump has raised, and while Trump may lose, it's going to be a reoccurring issue. He has tapped into an isolationist phenomenon in America that we haven't really seen since the 1930s and some people have the feeling that the United States does too much, pays too much, and other countries have to do more that issue will linger in American politics, so I think it serves the Europeans well, when Poland, Germany, France, particularly Britain, really begin to exert a lot more leadership and not to always consider the United States in every decision.

Dr. Paul R. Gregory, Department of Economics at the University of Houston, Texas, interviewed by Nicholas Siekierski

Do you think Donald Trump will be elected president? Why or why not?

No one knows who will be elected president, at this point polls don't mean very much, to date, all the pundits have gotten the election wrong. Trump is a very unusual candidate, he appeals to a different constituency, so no one knows whether he will win or not. The odds are one out of three if you look at the betting odds, so all I would say is that Trump has a chance, for many months there was the feeling that he didn't have a chance, now we don't know. So I would say that I don't expect him to win, but I think he does have a decent chance.

If Donald Trump is elected, how would he affect US foreign policy towards NATO and Eastern Europe?

We have two pieces of evidence, none very firm. One is the offhand campaign remarks he makes which tend to be alarming. We also have his prepared foreign policy speech which was read with a teleprompter, and so we don't know which is the real Trump. Is it the Trump with the prepared address or is it the Trump who makes unfortunate remarks throughout the campaign? The most unfortunate ones are positive remarks about Putin. There are some negative remarks about NATO, but if you read the prepared speech, he is making two or three valid points. Point number one is that America's foreign policy should be designed in America's interest, which is unlike the Obama 'citizen-of-the-world' approach, where we should think very broadly about in whose interests foreign policy should be conducted. Saying our foreign policy should be designed with our national interests in mind is really a return to the historical norm, and I always thought, personally, that Obama was an outlier, with his emphasis on international institutions, the UN and coalitions, and not simply focusing on what's in the U.S. interest. With respect to NATO, Trump is making an important point that the NATO countries should meet their obligations particularly to the 2% defense spending rule and we should wean NATO from too heavy a reliance on the U.S. This is called the 'free rider problem' and for many years we have not really dealt with finding a solution. It is important to say to Europe and NATO that you need to meet your own obligations and one way to look at that is the 2% rule. Trump will want to be perceived as a strong president, so he would not want to preside over a collapse of NATO. I think Trump is still in a learning phase so it's very important whom he listens to and who is advising him. To some extent it's difficult to answer your question because Trump is still sort of an empty slate and we don't know what the end result is going to be. I kind of dismiss the positive statements that he's made about Putin, these were sort of throw-away remarks. It does say however, that the one thing he admires about Putin is that he's perceived as being a strong person or strong political figure and this tells us that Trump wants to be perceived in the same way. I know Europeans are very worried about Trump. We really don't know what Trump's foreign pol-

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Dr. Paul R. Gregory

icy is going to be, but those that think the worst, I think, will find that their fears are not justified, that's just a personal opinion.

Assuming a Hillary Clinton presidency, what would that mean for US foreign policy in Eastern Europe?

One reason it's hard to answer that question is that Clinton was secretary of state under Obama and we don't know what our foreign policy would have been had we had another president. So you can't really say let's look what Hillary Clinton did as secretary of state and say that that will be indicative of what she is going to do as president, because I think she was sorely constrained by Obama who did not want to get involved in anything that could be avoided. My biggest, personal disappointment with the Obama years really was the neglect of Eastern Europe, the failure to provide more assistance to Ukraine which was authorized by Congress but never implemented by Obama, so this is one case where it was clear who the enemy was, and who the ally was. Russia was the enemy, Ukraine was the ally, and we, under Obama, really failed to support our ally for very strange reasons that I still don't understand. So that was, with respect to NATO and Europe, the biggest failure in my opinion of the Obama presidency. Will Hillary be better? The upside and downside are much smaller with Hillary than they are with Trump, who is an unknown quantity. So I would say, probably a status quo foreign policy under Hillary. Hillary, at least at this point, does understand the danger that Russia and Putin poses. I think Trump will learn this over time, so that's what the difference is as of right now. Hillary understands who Putin is and Trump, maybe, does not yet understand that.

Is there anything more that Poland and other NATO members can do to strengthen their alliance with the United States? You mentioned the need for countries to spend the minimum 2% of GDP on defense.

It seems to me that some of the biggest problems are internal. Namely the rise of right and left wing parties, the fact that it's very hard to figure out the disruptive role Russia is playing in internal politics in Europe. So Europe getting its political house in order would be very important, because if not, it simply gives the United States a reason not to provide the proper assistance to Europe, so Poland is currently a worry, Hungary is a worry, France is a worry. Meeting the 2% target would be a good sign showing that parties that are pro-Russia and anti-Europe, are not getting anywhere. That's a tough task because Europe consists of many countries that have different interests.

Łukasz Warzecha, publicist W Sieci

It Doesn't Change Anything for Poland

The candidacy of Donald Trump remains a great unknown. The problem is that, despite everything, he is a novice and has never held any high political office. He is sometimes compared to Ronald Reagan, but the latter had serious experience as a union leader and Governor of California. Although Trump has been present in the public sphere for many years, business isn't the same thing as politics. The situation is really unforeseeable, and on top of it we have the overall unpredictability of today's geopolitical scene.

What do we know today? There is no doubt that Trump has a transactional attitude towards politics, including the allied obligations written into the North Atlantic Treaty. We can assume that if he becomes president, he will put pressure on other members of NATO to live up to their defense obligations to a much greater degree. The question to ask is, what would happen if they did not want to or could not carry out their duties? Despite all appearances, Poland also struggles with this issue; of course, Poland is among the few countries which spend 2% of their GDP on defense, but in absolute numbers, this isn't a substantial amount.

From Poland's perspective, Trump's possible relations with Russia are problematic. Signals sent by the presumptive Republican candidate don't sound very good. We are reminded of George Bush, who was initially fascinated by Vladimir Putin. Trump claims that he would come to an understanding with Moscow, whereas there is no doubt that Putin would take advantage of Trump's weaknesses.

The next problem is the general American tendency towards isolationism. Two trends compete with one another in American politics: the internationalist or idealistic represented by Hillary Clinton, and the isolationist course of Donald Trump. He keeps repeating that America is the most important and the hard-earned money of its citizens should not be spent on allies who do not make any efforts to enhance the defense capability of NATO. European countries are referred to as "fellow travelers", who do not pay but are willing to "travel", meaning to have their security guaranteed with American money.

These are only hypotheses; Trump is a nebulous figure, uncertain in his declarations. Some say that we shouldn't despair because advisors always play a crucial role. Nevertheless, we look in vain among them for someone who would guarantee at least the continuation of the current course. Instead, we should expect a revision.

Neither of the two candidates is good from the Polish point of view. In large part, Polish right-wing parties sympathize with Trump, who is not afraid to break with political correctness. However, the situation needs to be looked at in a critical way. For us as Poles, these types of sentiments shouldn't be important, but rather how the U.S. will pursue its

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Łukasz Warzecha

foreign policy. Clinton is a left-wing candidate, but is more predictable and is anti-isolationist. So, if I were to support one, with great distaste and reluctance, I would choose the Democratic candidate.

Poland has not prepared any plans for the upcoming changes in America. Now, we should be in the final phase of developing various scenarios, but our governmental institutions in charge of strategic planning aren't doing so. Nothing is happening in this regard. As usual, Polish foreign policy will be spontaneous. Regardless of which of the two candidates is elected president of the United States, as always, we will be unprepared. Just as we had no plan for Polish-American relations for the past eight years, the same remains true today.

Jacek Bartosiak, senior fellow Potomac Foundation

The importance of who is elected president of the United States, whether it's Donald Trump or Hillary Clinton, is overestimated in Poland. The changing international situation, American global interests, which are currently focused mainly on Southeast Asia, and limited resources, are forcing the American administration to redefine the U.S. presence in other regions of the world. This leads to it that the next president of the United States, regardless of who it is, will have to define a new paradigm, a new view on American relations with Europe, including East-Central Europe and Poland, as well as redefine the role of the United States and its extended position into our part of the world.

What distinguishes Donald Trump from the Democratic candidate and the representatives of the current U.S. administration is his openness in proclaiming ideas which are just starting to be spoken about more loudly in Washington. It's worth asking whether the eccentric presidential candidate realizes that his pronouncements about U.S. foreign policy are setting certain mechanisms in motion on the international political scene. As Poles we should realize and count on it that the ideas proclaimed by Trump are increasingly shared by members of the American establishment.

Regardless of who is elected to the presidency of the United States, Poland should think about its own strategy to play out its own game in the dynamically changing situation in the international arena. The first occasion will be the upcoming NATO summit in Warsaw, the resolutions of which we have to properly appraise, but which we aren't able to fully predict. We should constantly monitor and assess the American presence in Europe and draw conclusions, and from this angle actualize our own strategy, which should not only be original but also reflect our own interests. Let's remember that we should care for our security and interests ourselves, the Americans don't intend to adopt us and do it for us.

The one thing Poland can do before the upcoming presidential election is to search for channels of communication with both the Trump and Clinton teams and to meet with them both officially and privately. Our elites ought to meet with both political camps, and seek contact with Republicans and Democrats in order to feel out who will be responsible for American foreign policy in East-Central Europe. This is a very practical example of how we can prepare for the new Oval Office occupant.

As a side note, it's worth remembering that as the rivalry between Washington and Beijing deepens, the United States, as the dominant sea power, will seek an understanding with the weak land power that is Russia. Such a scenario is possible and one Poland should be aware of regardless of who becomes president of the United States.

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Jacek Bartosiak



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