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### **FROM ENDURING TO DEVELOPMENT. TRUMP'S FOREIGN POLICY AND CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE**

#### **Introduction**

Unpredictable – this seemed to be the dominant descriptor of President Donald Trump's foreign policy. One explanation of his unpredictability was the lack of any previous political experience and the unclear ideological backbone. Although, he won the Presidency with the Republican ticket, many of the GOP members questioned his ideological credentials. Others deducted his unpredictability from the nature of his "tweeter communication", aggressive and often politically incorrect behavior or controversial statements.<sup>1</sup> Undoubtedly, these preconditions do not make the analysis of his foreign policy any easier. They also do not release researchers from reflecting on the nature of Trump's foreign policy. For most observers, the challenge to understand and correctly predict his foreign policy simply becomes more difficult. Relying on Trump's tweets or speeches

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<sup>1</sup> The influence of his tweets was discussed briefly by A. Banka, "How the Baltic States Can Win Trump Over on NATO", *World Politics Review*, May 25, 2017, <https://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/22268/how-the-baltic-states-can-win-trump-over-on-nato> [accessed: 2.06.2021].

seems to be like walking on a thin ice, since the president himself can change his mind between the tweet and the preceding or subsequent meeting. Especially that, as in the case of NATO, Trump is able to tweet, revise or completely rebut his own statements.

Regardless of these difficulties, this paper will aim to analyze the policy of Trump's administration towards the countries of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). The paper will aim to verify Zbigniew Lewicki's argument that in the case of Trump "we deal not so much with a fundamental revolution as with functional continuity" of the American foreign policy.<sup>2</sup> In order to verify this hypothesis the paper will conduct a comparative analysis of the change and continuity of the US policies towards CEE from the Barack Obama to Donald Trump administrations. However firstly, the paper will accent on the specific conditions in which CEE faced the 2016 US presidential elections.

### **Trump's election and Central Europe**

The European Union's political elites accepted with mixed feelings the election of Donald Trump as the 45<sup>th</sup> president of the United States. Unlike the Eurocratic elites and some of the western governments, most of the Central and Eastern European countries reacted with much more temper. Particularly, Poland and Hungary recognized many common arguments in Trump's election rhetoric that fitted their own political narratives towards the elites in Brussels, the EU integration, the migrant's crisis and political opponents at national level.

President Obama's "celebrity" type of presidency had a profound impact on CEE. During most of his first term, Obama sacrificed the region on the Reset policy altar with Russia. Only after the economic crisis was over and his administration signed the new START treaty, Obama changed his approach towards the region. Although his administration intensified relations after 2011, the turning point was the Ukrainian Revolution of Dignity that started in late 2013. Overall, Obama's foreign policy led to substantial deterioration of the US position across the world and the rise of authoritarian assertiveness in Russia and Turkey. In that context, the countries from CEE were looking for clearer and more active US presence in the region. It was obvious that the democrat candidate Hilary Clinton was not going to bring any "new opening" towards the region. Although, under the pressure of the events in Ukraine, President Obama agreed to strengthen NATO's military presence in Europe, Poland, Romania and the Baltic states required further engagement.

Donald Trump's election campaign was replete of inconsistent, provocative and controversial statements. His anti-immigrants and protectionist tones

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<sup>2</sup> Z. Lewicki, "Od Baracka Obamy do Donalda Trumpa: fundamentalna rewolucja czy funkcjonalna rewolucja?", *Sprawy Międzynarodowe* 2017, No. 1, pp. 7–24.

seemed to be pure unreliable rhetoric with little reference to the European migration crisis, but his argument on the reassessment of the NATO brought not only confusion, but also silent hysteria among the members of the Alliance. Trump was also quite ambiguous on Russia and President Vladimir Putin himself sending inconsistent signals of enthusiasm for Putin that collided with his campaign slogan "Make America great again". Hence, when he won the elections, the big question mark was what CEE should expect from him? Especially, that despite the general post Euromaidan hard security consolidation among the countries from the region, the particular capitals still accent substantial differences in their approaches towards Moscow. Whereas the Baltic States, Warsaw and Bucharest insist on the reinforcement of NATO's eastern flank, Prague, Bratislava and Sofia does not consider this a burning priority. In the meantime, Budapest's approach towards the Russian federation remains much more flexible, despite the sanctions and political pressure that the EU tries to exert on Moscow.

The next aspect that deserves attention before focusing on the substance of the US relations with the Central European countries is the silent political revolution, taking place in some of the Central European states. After a quarter of a century of blind quest for Europeanization the political elites sensed the growing popular frustration with the slow pace of catching-up and the uneven distribution of wealth as a result of the economic transition.<sup>3</sup> Building a new political narrative based on renationalization, regain of control and nationalism rebellious political elites took over in Hungary in 2010 and in Poland five years later. Both of them rejected the silent Berlin–Brussels domination and promoted much more interventionist role of the state braking up with the neoliberal dogma of the EU's political mainstream.<sup>4</sup> Thus, Viktor Orbán's Hungary and Jarosław Kaczyński's Poland enthusiastically embraced Donald Trump's presidential campaign political narrative contesting many of the dominant globalist assumptions. Consciously or not, Trump became their main political ally. Especially, that his controversial and offensive style irritated western European political elites keeping their fingers crossed for Hilary Clinton's victory in the quest for the White House. This silent "marriage" will open another avenue for enhanced cooperation.

Thirdly, during the election campaign Trump's ambiguous comments on Russia and president Putin painted him as a pro-Russian and subconsciously anti-American. These claims resonated in CEE narrowing the political discourse between the options whether Trump's win will mean worst or the same, unsatisfactory type of relations with Washington as during the Obama administration.

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<sup>3</sup> This argument is further developed in the inspiring essay of J. Feffer, "Who Could Have Predicted Trump? Poland, and Hungary, and Slovakia", *The Nation*, December 5, 2017, <https://www.thenation.com/article/who-could-have-predicted-trump-poland-and-hungary-and-slovakia> [accessed: 2.06.2021].

<sup>4</sup> *Ibidem*.

## Trump and the NATO controversy

Donald Trump's criticism of NATO's reliance on the United States during the election campaign calling it "obsolete" undermined this undisputed importance of the Alliance.<sup>5</sup> Trump argued that member states have to pay their share for common security claiming that substantial renegotiation of the security arrangements will take place when in office. Although Trump's arguments were devoted to those countries spending less than 2% of their GDP for defense the European allies started wondering what the consequences of Trump's election for the structure of the transatlantic security will be.

However, beyond the lousy political rhetoric exploited by the media, the argument on the uneven security share between the United States and its European allies is not new. Presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama insisted repeatedly on the same without much success.<sup>6</sup> Hence, Trump's shocking approach turned more attention to this matter, but did not lead to any drastic changes in defense spending.<sup>7</sup> The Eastern flank members started increasing their defense spending because of the war in Ukraine and the annexation of Crimea, most of which before Trump came to power.<sup>8</sup>

## United States, Ukraine and the security environment in Central and Eastern Europe

The war in Ukraine is a turning point in the relations between Moscow and the western world. Until 2014, the dominant model of relations between the United States, NATO and the Russian Federation was grounded in the NATO-Russia

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<sup>5</sup> I. Kottasova, "NATO in the crosshairs: Who's not paying their bills", CNN, January 24, 2017, <http://money.cnn.com/2017/01/24/news/donald-trump-nato-spending/index.html> [accessed: 2.06.2021].

<sup>6</sup> See: "Bush to Press Allies for More Defense Spending at NATO Summit", Fox News, November 27, 2006, <http://www.foxnews.com/story/2006/11/27/bush-to-press-allies-for-more-defense-spending-at-nato-summit.html>; E. MacAskill, "US presses Nato members to increase defence spending", *The Guardian*, June 23, 2014, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jun/23/us-nato-members-increase-defence-spending> [accessed: 2.06.2021].

<sup>7</sup> For more data on the NATO defense spending in the period 2010–2017 see: NATO, Defence Expenditure of NATO Countries (2010–2017), Communique PR/CP(2017)111, June 29, 2017, [https://www.nato.int/nato\\_static\\_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf\\_2017\\_06/20170629\\_170629-pr2017-111-en.pdf](https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2017_06/20170629_170629-pr2017-111-en.pdf) [accessed: 2.06.2021].

<sup>8</sup> R. Browne, "NATO members to increase defense spending", CNN, June 29, 2017, <http://edition.cnn.com/2017/06/29/politics/nato-members-increase-defense-spending/index.html> [accessed: 2.06.2021]. Romanian President Klaus Iohannis also made explicit commitments during his visit to United States in June 2017, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-president-trump-president-iohannis-romania-joint-press-conference> [accessed: 30.01.2018].

Founding Act<sup>9</sup> which in practical terms approved the nominal enlargement of NATO to the East, simultaneously *de facto* retaining the no man's land status of the territory between Oder and Bug rivers. This silent agreement forced those CEE countries particularly exposed to potential Russian intervention to mobilize their efforts in order to obtain NATO military presence, thus challenging the agreement with Russia. Only after the Ukrainian crisis and the Russian annexation of Crimea, both the Obama administration and the western European allies had to acknowledge that the CEE countries "Russophobia" was reasonable.

The hybrid nature of the war in Ukraine and the annexation of Crimea required sound and united response from the West. The emergence of little green people, the skillful disintegration of Ukrainian territorial integrity and the conscious denial of facts defined the battlefields of this confrontation. The war in Ukraine has severe consequences for the US, EU and NATO relations with the Russian Federation, but also for the whole CEE regardless whether being part of the Western Alliance or not. In this context, what seems to be important for this paper is the level of consistence of the commitments made by the Obama administration to the countries from the NATO's eastern flank and the attitude towards Russia in comparison with the subsequent actions of the Trump administration.

NATO remains the main structure of regional security in CEE. The Ukrainian Revolution of Dignity and the following Russian aggression underlined the importance of the Alliance. During the first summit after the war in Ukraine sparked, held in Wales in September 2014 Allies acknowledged the need for credible deterrence and defense. In the shadow of Russian aggression, the Alliance finally agreed to reconsider its policy towards its post-communist member states and to supplant their formal membership with tangible military presence able to respond to the new security challenges inspired in Kremlin. A part of it became the Readiness Action Plan (RAP) aiming to strengthen NATO's collective defense. As Louisa Brooke-Holland and Claire Mills summarized, the RAP is "primarily geared towards the Eastern part of the Alliance, this includes plans to establish a Very High Readiness Joint Task Force that can deploy within a few days, and an enhanced military presence involving exercises and a continued military presence on a rotational basis."<sup>10</sup> The answer to the hybrid warfare was NATO's decision to establish NATO response force, part of which is the Spearhead Force ready to move in as little as 48 hours.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between NATO and the Russian Federation signed in Paris, France, May 27, 1997, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official\\_texts\\_25468.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_25468.htm) [accessed: 2.06.2021].

<sup>10</sup> See: L. Brooke-Holland, C. Mills, "NATO Wales Summit 2014: Outcomes", House of Commons Library, SN06981, September 12, 2014, p. 1, <http://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/SN06981#fullreport> [accessed: 2.06.2021].

<sup>11</sup> "NATO's new spearhead force conducts first exercise", April 7, 2015, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news\\_118667.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_118667.htm) [accessed: 2.06.2021].

Two years later, during the NATO Warsaw Summit the Alliance further strengthened this policy by adopting the, unfortunately labelled, Enhanced Forward Presence (EFP). Within this policy the Alliance planned to deploy four battalions in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland, on a rotational basis, Romanian framework brigade and strengthening the readiness and interoperability of air and maritime forces in the Black Sea region.<sup>12</sup> The United States<sup>13</sup> offered to serve as one of the framework nations for the multinational presence in Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia and Poland respectively.<sup>14</sup> Within the EFP, the United States agreed to contribute a US Army battalion stationed in Poland with heavy equipment. Since 2012 US Air Force are also present in Poland on a rotational basis since 2012. As Grzegorz Kostrzewa-Zorbas points out, in practical terms all three main branches of the US (Navy, Army, Air Force) are present in Poland and the Baltic states.<sup>15</sup> The United States actively participate in the NATO led reinforcement of its Eastern flank with over 6000 soldiers deployed only in Poland in two, infantry and air, brigades.<sup>16</sup> American troops are also present in Romania and Bulgaria and the United States actively participate in all NATO exercises from the Black Sea to Norway. Notwithstanding the US antimissile installation in northern Poland the picture of the enhanced American military presence is complete. More importantly, it was the Obama administration taking all these decisions. After the change in the White House, the implementation of the deterrence and defense strategy continued as scheduled. The American involvement in the rotational deployment of military units within the EFP, prospective contract with the Polish army of Patriot missile system and the cyclical joint military exercises show continuity and persistence in the American commitments towards its Eastern European allies and a growing number of contracts for military equipment. Hence, Trump's ambiguous remarks on Putin and Russia during the election campaign did not affect the US strategic position towards Russia, and particularly, towards the Eastern flank allies. An aspect of significant importance, if one recalls Obama's neglect for the Central European partners in the context of the Russian reset.

This closer relationship does not seem to be a conscious pursuit of better relations of Washington with particular countries from the region, but a part of

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<sup>12</sup> Warsaw Summit Key Decisions, NATO Fact Sheet, February 2017, [https://www.nato.int/nato\\_static\\_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf\\_2017\\_02/20170206\\_1702-factsheet-warsaw-summit-key-en.pdf](https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2017_02/20170206_1702-factsheet-warsaw-summit-key-en.pdf) [accessed: 2.06.2021].

<sup>13</sup> Together with Canada, Great Britain and Germany.

<sup>14</sup> Warsaw Summit Communiqué, July 9, 2016, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official\\_texts\\_133169.htm#rap](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_133169.htm#rap) [accessed: 2.06.2021].

<sup>15</sup> See: G. Kostrzewa-Zorbas, "Amerykańskie siły lądowe, powietrzne i morskie w Polsce – krajobraz w dniu zmiany władzy w USA", wPolityce, January 20, 2017, <https://wpolityce.pl/swiat/324151-amerykanskie-sily-ladowe-powietrzne-i-morskie-w-polsce-krajobraz-w-dniu-zmiany-wladzy-w-usa?strona=2> [accessed: 2.06.2021].

<sup>16</sup> W. Waszczykowski, "Witając Rexa Tillersona", Onet, January 26, 2018, <https://wiadomosci.onet.pl/tylko-w-onecie/witajac-rexa-tillersona/bwc2gq1> [accessed: 2.06.2021].

a larger strategy against the Russian Federation. The first argument in support of this statement is the fact that diplomats from different countries from the region admit that they face enhanced and much more focused cooperation with the Trump administration on various levels.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, right before the deadline, the Trump administration extended the US sanctions on Russia related to Crimea and the situation in Eastern Ukraine. The Congress also adopted a law obliging the White House to impose additional sanctions on Russia for its interference in the last US elections. A bill that Trump signed regardless of his fierce opposition towards it.<sup>18</sup>

Additional minor and yet important differences between the Trump and Obama administrations support this argument. Although generally Washington's position towards Ukraine, Russia and the war in Ukraine did not change, the Trump administration made it clear that it will harden the course towards Moscow. First, Trump did not hesitate to respond with power to the use of gas in Syria and recently the United States started openly accusing Moscow for the use of chemical weapons in this war. Second, although numerous voices advocated the support of the Ukrainian army with defensive weapons, Obama's administration was firmly against it. Only recently, the Ukrainian president Petro Poroshenko informed that Kiev would obtain the long-hoped Javelin missiles that can substantially increase the costs of Russian military involvement.<sup>19</sup> Thus, Washington's course towards Russia is hardening in line with the NATO's eastern flank allies.

### Trump's visit to Poland

President Obama visited Poland for the first time in 2011 during his seventh trip to Europe and on the third year of his first term. Unlike him, President Trump visited Warsaw less than six months after taking office during his second trip to Europe. Two dominant narratives emerged around his visit. The first one, largely replicated by the media, argued that president Trump's decision to visit Poland as a first stop in Europe was a PR move in order to secure a more friendly welcome before his next stop at the G20 summit in Hamburg.<sup>20</sup> The second one,

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<sup>17</sup> See: A. Banka, *op. cit.* and K. O'Donnell, "Hungarian minister: We prefer Trump to Obama, or Europe", *Politico*, January 20, 2018, <https://www.politico.eu/article/hungarian-minister-we-prefer-trump-team-over-obama-team> [accessed: 2.06.2021].

<sup>18</sup> L. Koran, "Trump admin announces fresh Russia sanctions", CNN, January 26, 2018, <https://edition.cnn.com/2018/01/26/politics/us-russia-sanctions-ukraine/index.html> [accessed: 2.06.2021].

<sup>19</sup> "Poroszenko: nowa broń od USA zmieniła nastawienie Rosji", WP, January 26, 2018, <https://wiadomosci.wp.pl/poroszenko-nowa-bron-od-usa-zmienila-nastawienie-rosji-6213632642443393a> [accessed: 2.06.2021].

<sup>20</sup> See: W. Przybylski, "Poland Is Way Too Happy About Donald Trump's Visit", *Foreign Policy*, July 5, 2017, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2017/07/05/poland-is-way-too-happy-about-donald-trumps-visit> or K. Ponniah, "Trump in Poland: Five reasons why he is going there", BBC, July 5, 2017, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-40497732> [accessed: 2.06.2021].

largely exploited by the Polish government accented on the opportunity to meet the regional leaders gathered in Warsaw for the Three Seas Initiative summit.<sup>21</sup> Supporters of the recent government in Poland saw it as another confirmation of the growing role of Poland in international relations, whereas critics saw it as a rubberstamping of the anti-democratic alliance between anti-liberal populists from the both sides of the Atlantic. Regardless of the reason, President Trump's visit was of significant importance for the region.

President Trump's speech at Krasiński Square in Warsaw provided important guidelines of Trump's administration priorities in global and domestic affairs. For CEE, the speech was important since it accented the defense of the Western civilization as a highest priority. Trump also clearly identified Russia as a destabilizer of regional peace and security, replicating the arguments of most of the Eastern flank NATO allies. His reconfirmation of Article 5 of the Washington Treaty cut any further discussion on the future not only of the American attitude towards CEE, but also towards the Alliance itself.<sup>22</sup> His soundly conservative and much more hawkish rhetoric also highlighted the question of migration, thus backing the Visegrad Group (V4) countries in their clash with the European Commission on the policy of forceful relocation of migrants within the EU member states.

The Polish and Hungarian governments promptly welcomed Trump's political credo. The shared perception of the contemporary challenges is concentrated around Christian values and migration. Beyond the diplomatic correctness, the Hungarian foreign minister Péter Szijjártó emphasized the substantially different approach towards the countries from the region by the Trump administration emphasizing partnership relations instead of internal matters related to the rule of law.<sup>23</sup> The leader of Poland's Law and Justice Jarosław Kaczyński made similar comments after his meeting with the US State Secretary Rex Tillerson, arguing that the question of rule of law was discussed only in the context of US investments in Poland.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> One should not forget that the preliminary venue for the Three Seas Summit was Wrocław and the venue was changed few weeks before the summit after Trump's administration confirmation that he will visit Poland at the same time.

<sup>22</sup> Remarks by President Trump to the People of Poland, July 6, 2017, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-president-trump-people-poland> [accessed: 8.07.2017].

<sup>23</sup> See: K. O'Donnell, *op. cit.*

<sup>24</sup> *dbd*, "Spotkanie Tillerson-Kaczyński. Szef Amerykańskiej dyplomacji przy stoliku na Nowogrodzkiej", *Gazeta.pl*, January 27, 2018, <http://wiadomosci.gazeta.pl/wiadomosci/7,114883,22950134,spotkanie-tillerson-kaczynski-szef-amerykanskiej-dyplomacji.html> [accessed: 2.06.2021].



### Three Seas Initiative

Even more importantly from purely business perspective, Trump's visit to Poland played well for the both, the US and the Polish President Andrzej Duda's Three Seas Initiative (TSI). While portrayed as geopolitical endeavor<sup>25</sup>, this initiative accents primarily on infrastructural projects aiming at security gains and increased regional integration. As Grzegorz Lewicki points out, TSI's "goal is to modernise technologically the eastern wall of the European Union."<sup>26</sup> On the one hand, the presence of the US president at the TSI summit held in Warsaw at the same day increased its publicity. On the other, Donald Trump treated the US support in purely economic terms. As the American president emphasized in his speech at the summit, "Greater access to energy markets, fewer barriers to energy trade and development, and strengthening energy security is what we're looking to do".<sup>27</sup> The initiative opened completely new perspectives for energy cooperation in CEE fostered by the rapid changes in the energy infrastructure of the region.<sup>28</sup> Although the participating states present TSI as an internal EU initiative, they do not want to rely solely on EU funding. Thus, new opportunities appeared for American companies and capital to participate in energy, road and railway projects across CEE.

The rationale behind the TSI has several root causes. Firstly, the CEE is comparatively more dependent on Russian energy supplies. Secondly, the growing Russian assertiveness requires reconsideration of the existing bonds with Moscow. Thirdly, the countries from the region still lack good road connections in comparison to the western part of the EU. Paradoxically the CEE has better road connections on the East-West axis than on the North-South. Fourthly, such a project can significantly boost the economic potential of the region and further integrate CEE into the EU.

Firstly, despite these sound arguments, the future of this initiative is not clear since there is genuine skepticism among the non-participating EU members among which are all net payers to the EU budget. Secondly, this initiative is rather presidential than governmental and as such can easily become a hostage of internal political trade-offs. Thirdly, it has the potential to become a hostage in the political confrontation between the EU and the Polish and Hungarian

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<sup>25</sup> P. Kowal, A. Orzelska-Stączek, *Inicjatywa Trójmorza: geneza, cele i funkcjonowanie*, ISP PAN, Warszawa 2019.

<sup>26</sup> G. Lewicki, "The Three Seas Initiative will strengthen Europe", *Visegrad Insight*, July 3, 2017, <http://visegradinsight.eu/the-three-seas-initiative-will-strengthen-europe> [accessed: 2.06.2021].

<sup>27</sup> M. Farber, "Read Donald Trump's Remarks at the Three Seas Initiative Summit in Poland", *Time*, July 6, 2017, <http://time.com/4846780/read-donald-trump-speech-warsaw-poland-transcript> [accessed: 2.06.2021].

<sup>28</sup> The opening of the Polish LNG terminal in Świnoujście, the floating LNG terminal in Krk and the interconnector between Bulgaria and Greece.

governments on the rule of law, migrants and the German energy interests related to Nord Stream 2.

Hence, Trump's participation in the summit can be twofold. Firstly, for Trump and his administration TSI is nothing else but a good business opportunity that deserves closer observation for its tangible benefits and as such silent support. Secondly, it can be a good chance to strengthen the US presence in the region, which in the context of Brexit might be necessary both towards the EU and towards Russia. Although these two options do not exclude each other, it is obvious that most of the CEE EU member states on this particular issue are closer to Washington than Brussels.

The American support for the TSI has both geopolitical and purely economic reasons. The quest of the largely dependent on Russian fossil fuels CEE countries matches with the growing export potential of American companies. The practical diversification of the Polish energy infrastructure caused by the Świnoujście LNG terminal opened new possibilities for American companies not only in Poland but also in the entire region. The regional demands for energy security have apparently attracted the attention of the US government. For the first time, the US State Secretary Rex Tillerson made an explicit comment that the Russian-German energy project Nord Stream II is a threat to Europe's energy security.<sup>29</sup>

## Conclusions

After a year in office, Trump's foreign policy obtains a clearer shape. The analysis of his administration activities not only towards CEE, but also towards Iran, Israel and Russia itself prove that his administration is much more hawkish, conservative and hard power-oriented comparing to his predecessor. Trump's narrative became part of the contemporary ideological clash between the globalized elites and the growing national and community discontent. Since this transition is most visible in Central Europe, it naturally brought it closer to the Trump's administration. Furthermore, in the context of the ongoing geopolitical clash with Russia, the region's importance has further increased.

Finally, after a year in office, there is a need to reflect on Zbigniew Lewicki's argument that instead of fundamental revolution so far, we face functional continuity.<sup>30</sup> So far, there is a noticeable intensification of cooperation between the United States and Central Europe. Behind the, correctly acknowledged functional continuity, there is a vast potential of opportunities that seems to be

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<sup>29</sup> R. Tillerson, "Polska wyjdzie z tego o wiele silniejsza", Onet, January 27, 2018, <https://wiadomosci.onet.pl/kraj/rex-tillerson-polska-wyjdzie-z-tego-o-wiele-silniejsza/hj2etkj> [accessed: 29.01.2018].

<sup>30</sup> Z. Lewicki, *op. cit.*

beneficial for the United States and the countries from the region. Indeed, in the area of hard security and multilateral cooperation with NATO we surely observe continuity, but it goes beyond the functional dynamic. As already mentioned, the US government is much more open and supportive of the Polish ideas for further rearmament and improvement of its military capacities through the purchase of newest US military equipment. In other words, the US–Polish relations moved from endurance towards development.

In purely economic terms, the energy diversification of CEE opens new perspectives for American companies. The uneasy relations with the western part of the EU and the lack of criticism towards president Trump from its Eastern side increase the political attractiveness of the region. Central European states see the US as a natural and sole ally in their attempts to contain Russian expansion. So far, the dynamics between CEE during the Trump administration proves that there is a substantial intensification of relations with the countries from the region.

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Addendum: The publishing road of this article outlived Trump's term in the White House. Now, four years after its submission, there is no sense to revise its concept and arguments. Today, when looking back at Trump's legacy in the region, and in the eve of the most severe confrontation between Russia and the West since the Cuban Missile Crisis, Trump's legacy in the region endures. The TSI, which was considered by many (including one of the reviewers of this paper) a seasonal initiative endures until today and was endorsed also by Joe Biden's administration. The NATO driven military build up in the region is driven by the need to counterbalance Russia's ambition to modify or destroy the existing international order. Interestingly, in the face of Russia's invasion to Ukraine, also Biden is hesitant to use rule of law considerations in his relations with Warsaw. Hence, as Zbigniew Lewicki pointed out already at the beginning of Trump's term in office, there is a consistent approach towards the region hidden behind the lofty political rhetoric. Since the war in Ukraine, the strongest bond between the United States and CEE remains security considerations.

Today, this article serves more as a modest attempt to capture the Central and Eastern European hopes and concerns related to the early days of the Trump administration than a comprehensive analysis of Trump's presidency. Still, despite the time that passed since its coming into being, I still stand behind my judgements. (Warsaw, 14.02.2022)

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## **From Enduring to Development. Trump’s Foreign Policy and Central and Eastern Europe**

Donald Trump is probably the most controversial American president after the end of the Cold War. Until now, any journalist attempt for analysis of his foreign policy falls in the immediate trap of ideological and emotional bias. The aim of this paper is to avoid (as much as it is possible) this trap and to focus on the nature and essence of Trump’s administration foreign policy towards the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. The paper conducts qualitative and comparative analysis of the Barack Obama and Donald Trump administrations towards the region in pursuit of the elements of change and continuity between the two administrations. Based on the research findings the author argues that during the Trump administration the region plays more important role in the American Foreign Policy.

**Key words:** Central Europe, Donald Trump, American Foreign Policy, Central and Eastern Europe, Change, Continuity

## **Od trwania do rozwoju. Polityka Donalda Trumpa wobec Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej**

Donald Trump to zapewne najbardziej kontrowersyjny prezydent Stanów Zjednoczonych od końca zimnej wojny. Do tej pory wszelkie próby publicystycznej analizy jego polityki zagranicznej wpadają w pułapkę ideologicznego i emocjonalnego subiektywizmu. Celem artykułu jest uniknięcie (na tyle, na ile jest to możliwe) tej pułapki i skoncentrowanie się na istocie polityki zagranicznej Trumpa wobec państw Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej. Artykuł oparty jest na jakościowej i porównawczej analizie polityki administracji Baracka Obamy i Donalda Trumpa wobec tego regionu w poszukiwaniu elementów zmiany i kontynuacji między tymi dwoma administracjami. W oparciu o wyniki badań autor dochodzi do wniosku, że za czasów administracji Trumpa region odgrywa ważniejszą rolę w amerykańskiej polityce zagranicznej.

**Słowa kluczowe:** Europa Środkowa, Donald Trump, amerykańska polityka zagraniczna, Europa Środkowo-Wschodnia, zmiana, ciągłość