

# A Framework for Advancing U.S.–Polish Relations During President Duda’s Visit

*Daniel Kochis*

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

Poland will continue to be a key pillar of security in Europe, and an important gateway for U.S. engagement with central and eastern European nations.

President Trump should make clear that the U.S. views Chinese companies as a security threat to telecommunications networks.

The U.S. should work with strong allies like Poland to oppose the Nord Stream II Germany–Russia pipeline project, an unnecessary threat to future European security.

On June 12, Polish President Andrzej Duda is scheduled to visit the White House. The visit will mark the 20th anniversary of Poland’s membership in NATO and the 30th anniversary of the fall of communism.<sup>1</sup> Poland is situated in the center of Europe, sharing a border with four NATO allies, as well as a long border with Belarus and Ukraine, and a 144-mile border with Russia alongside the Kaliningrad Oblast. Poland, because of its large size, geographic location, and historical experience has become the lynchpin of security in Eastern Europe since joining NATO on March 12, 1999. The Trump Administration has focused on rebuilding ties with the Polish government and sought new avenues of cooperation, including defense procurement and energy.

One of President Trump’s first visits overseas as President was to Warsaw in July 2017. Poland is a net security provider who continues to meet NATO

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spending benchmarks, hosts hundreds of American troops, and actively seeks deeper ties with the U.S. President Trump and President Duda may even reportedly announce the establishment of a permanent U.S. presence in Poland at their meeting next week.<sup>2</sup> During President Duda's visit to Washington, the U.S. should further engage on a host of important issues, including liquefied natural gas (LNG) exports, Poland's inclusion in the Visa Waiver Program (VWP), and the security risks resulting from Chinese infiltration of Poland's telecommunications infrastructure.

## A Valuable Ally

In 2018, Poland was one of only seven NATO allies who spent 2 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) on defense and one of 16 allies that reached the benchmark to spend 20 percent of their defense budget on equipment. Last year, Poland spent 2.05 percent of GDP on defense and 26.54 percent on equipment.<sup>3</sup> Not content with 2 percent, in October 2017, Poland legislated defense-spending increases that will culminate in the nation spending 2.5 percent of GDP on defense in 2030.<sup>4</sup>

Poland has often prioritized purchasing American equipment. In March 2018, Poland signed a \$4.75 billion deal for two Patriot missile batteries—the largest defense procurement contract in the nation's history.<sup>5</sup> In February of this year, Poland signed a \$414 million deal to purchase 20 high-mobility artillery rocket systems from the U.S. for delivery by 2023.<sup>6</sup> These procurements are good news for the U.S. Not only is Poland investing in improving its capabilities and, by extension, the capabilities of NATO, when a government buys American military equipment it not only receives battle-tested equipment, it also gains a deeper military relationship with the U.S.

The U.S. and Poland continue to enjoy strong military-to-military links. Poland has partnered with the Illinois National Guard through the State Partnership Program since 1993.<sup>7</sup> Today, the U.S. serves as the framework nation for NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence (EFP) in Poland, contributing 889 U.S. soldiers stationed in Orzysz. In addition, the U.S. deploys part of a rotational armored as well as a rotational aviation brigade to Poland, along with the rotational Atlantic Resolve Logistical Rotation Sustainment Task Force based in Poland. However, Poland continues to seek a permanent U.S. presence, offering to contribute \$2 billion to assist in its establishment.<sup>8</sup> Additionally, Poland contributes towards NATO's Ballistic Missile Defense: A second Aegis Ashore site is currently under construction in Redzikowo, Poland.

Although Poland's focus is territorial defense, it has contributed to missions outside the nation—including deploying 303 troops to Afghanistan as part of NATO's Resolute Support Mission.<sup>9</sup> Poland's air force has taken part in Baltic Air Policing eight times since 2006, most recently from January through May 2019.<sup>10</sup> Poland also is part of NATO's EFP in Latvia<sup>11</sup> and contributes 100 troops to NATO Mission Iraq.<sup>12</sup> It maintains a Polish frigate as part of the Standing NATO Maritime Group 1<sup>13</sup> and has 240 troops taking part in NATO's Kosovo Force mission.<sup>14</sup>

## Continue Solidifying U.S.–Polish Relations

Poland is a crucial European ally and one that sees eye-to-eye with the U.S. on the threat from Russia. One recent survey found that 77 percent of Poles believe Russia to be a significant threat to their country.<sup>15</sup> The same poll found that 87 percent of Poles believe that NATO and allies are the key to Poland's security, with low support for a potential EU army.

Poland will continue to be a key pillar of security in Europe, and an important gateway for U.S. engagement with central and eastern European nations. There are other important issues in the U.S.–Polish bilateral relationship, including Poland joining the Visa Waiver Program, the importance of the Three Seas Initiative, and concerns over Chinese companies taking part in 5G networks.

## What the Trump Administration Should Do

During his visit with President Duda, President Trump should address these issues by:

**Announcing the Establishment of a Permanent Military Presence in Eastern Europe.** U.S. basing structures in Europe harken back to a time when Denmark, West Germany, and Greece represented the front lines of freedom. The security situation in Europe has changed, and the U.S. should account for this shift by establishing a permanent military presence in allied nations further east, including the Baltic states and Poland. A robust, permanent presence displays the U.S.'s long-term resolve to live up to its NATO treaty commitments.

**Recognizing that Permanent Forces Provide Far Greater Deterrence Value than Rotational Forces.** In addition to providing greater deterrence value, permanently stationed forces in Europe are better prepared, better able to exercise, build greater interoperability with allies, and are more cost-effective. In addition, permanently stationed forces may be better for morale.<sup>16</sup>

**Reassuring NATO Allies that New Deployments Are Additions and Not Subtractions.** The U.S. should be transparent with other NATO allies that any new deployments to Poland will not come at the expense of pre-existing deployments to countries such as Italy and Germany.

**Continuing Robust Defense Cooperation with Poland.** The U.S. should continue its already robust defense cooperation with Polish forces, including taking part in exercises in the region. The U.S. should also, when appropriate, promote the export of U.S. defense equipment to Poland. These exports not only improve Polish—and by extension, NATO—capabilities, they provide for long-standing engagement and cooperation across time in the form of exercises, maintenance, interoperability, training, and periodic upgrades.

**Committing to Including Poland in the VWP.** The VWP pays security dividends as countries in the program share information on serious criminals, terrorists, and lost and stolen passports with the U.S. in exchange for visa-free travel up to 90 days. In addition, the VWP smooths business travel and tourism between foreign countries and the U.S. and further strengthens the transatlantic bond.

**Remaining Engaged—But Pushing for Results from the Three Seas Initiative.** The Three Seas Initiative launched in 2016 to facilitate the development of energy and infrastructure ties among 12 nations in Eastern, Central, and Southern Europe. Poland was one of the two founders of the Three Seas Initiative. In 2017, President Trump set an important precedent by attending the Three Seas Summit in Warsaw. Secretary of Energy Rick Perry led the U.S. delegation to this year's Summit in Ljubljana, Slovenia, from June 5 to June 6. The U.S. should continue supporting the Three Seas Initiative while encouraging tangible results from the four-year-old effort.

**Taking Advantage of the Economic Opportunities in Eastern and Central Europe.** While in Warsaw in July 2017, President Trump stated, “We support your drive for greater prosperity and security. We applaud your initiative to expand infrastructure. We welcome this historic opportunity to deepen our economic partnership with your region.”<sup>17</sup> Eastern and Central Europe represent a significant economic opportunity for American businesses. The Administration should encourage U.S. firms not to overlook Poland and the wider region for future investments and business opportunities.

**Working with Poland to Lessen Russia's Grip on Europe's Energy.** Poland is working to diversify its supply of energy, including with an LNG import terminal in Świnoujście and through a planned second LNG import

terminal at Gdansk. In addition, a planned pipeline between Norway's gas fields and Denmark/Poland appears on track for completion in 2022. Last November, a Polish state-owned oil and gas company, PGNiG, signed a 24-year deal with U.S. gas company Cheniere for delivery of LNG. Under the deal, Poland will receive 700 million cubic meters of gas from 2019 through 2022 and 39 billion cubic meters from 2023 through 2042. The U.S. should continue increasing efficiency to export LNG,<sup>18</sup> while publicly supporting projects such as Poland's LNG import terminals.

**Pushing Back Against Nord Stream II.** The Nord Stream II pipeline project that would connect Germany with Russia is neither economically necessary nor is it geopolitically prudent. Rather, it is a political project to greatly increase European dependence on Russian gas, magnify Russia's ability to use its European energy dominance as political trump card, and specifically undermine U.S. allies in Eastern and Central Europe.

The U.S. should work with like-minded nations such as Poland to oppose the project and recognize Nord Stream II's danger to future European security. The U.S. and Poland should work to bolster the resolve of nations such as Slovakia, who are increasingly being targeted by Russia to take part in Nord Stream II and another pipeline project, Turkstream.<sup>19</sup>

**Firmly Presenting Concerns over Chinese Threats to 5G Telecommunications Infrastructure.** Chinese company Huawei already controls over half of the Poland's telecommunications infrastructure. These vulnerabilities were laid bare in January, when a Polish counterintelligence official and a Chinese executive who worked for Huawei in Poland were arrested on espionage charges.

President Trump should make clear the U.S. views Chinese companies as a security threat to telecommunications networks and should communicate:

which legal frameworks, activities, and business practices will result in exclusion from U.S. 5G infrastructure, services, and other emerging-technology integrations. Further, the U.S. should encourage other nations to adopt these standards as a way of maintaining pressure on countries and companies working against U.S. and allied interests.<sup>20</sup>

## Conclusion

Poland is a net security contributor and a valuable ally in Europe. The Trump Administration has made significant strides since taking office in rebuilding the U.S.-Polish relationship. The U.S. should utilize President Duda's visit to Washington to further economic and security cooperation

with Poland, while recognizing and addressing the threat from China and Russia faced by the transatlantic community.

**Daniel Kochis** is Senior Policy Analyst in European Affairs in the Margaret Thatcher Center for Freedom, of the Kathryn and Shelby Cullom Davis Institute for National Security and Foreign Policy, at The Heritage Foundation.

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