



## The US Presidential Elections: Phase Two Possible Foreign Policy Directions of the Candidates

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The US election process started with the candidates announcing their candidature to run for the office of the President of the United States of America. The first phase involved all the candidates campaigning to win the support of party delegates through the state held primaries and caucuses. In July 2016, about a year since the first candidate announced his intention to run for office, the two major political parties announced their 'tickets'- the Presidential and Vice Presidential candidate.

In its Convention in Cleveland (18-21 July 2016), the Republican Party formally announced Mr. Donald Trump as the party's Presidential candidate and Governor Mike Pence as his Vice President running mate. In a similar process in Philadelphia (25-28 July 2016), the Democratic Party made history by announcing Ms. Hillary Clinton as its candidate for President with Senator Tim Kaine (D. Virginia) as her running mate. By accepting the nomination, Ms. Clinton became the first woman candidate to be representing a major political party for the presidential election in the United States.

With the two candidates now announced, the election enters the next phase of campaigning for the general election to be held on 08 November 2016. With the field narrowed the elections will witness three debates between the Presidential candidates and one Vice Presidential debate. The first debate would be on 29 September 2016 and the last on 19 October 2016. During these debates the candidates will answer questions on their policy choices and bring forth their vision for the next four years as President. During this phase of campaigning, the discussion expands beyond the mostly domestic issues that were at the forefront of the primaries and caucuses, to include issues of foreign policy and national security. While the election is a domestic affair for the United States, nonetheless given its power in the international arena, it is followed internationally as

well. The foreign policy choices of the candidates indicate the possible direction the new administration would take forward.

There have been some indications from the two candidates, on their views on the future course of American foreign and security policy as well as steps they would like to take to maintain the dominance of the United States in international affairs. The issues have ranged from the United States and NATO, to future relation with China and Russia. However, the United States relations with countries of South Asia such as India, a strategic partner nation in the region, Afghanistan, where the United States continues to be engaged etc have not yet found much mention in discussion on foreign policy. It is hoped that as the candidates further espouse their foreign policy agenda, they would bring forth their views on how they will further develop the US's Asia rebalance policy, a major strategy of the United States for the region.

As the two candidates continue with their campaign, more and more issues would be discussed and their position on policies would be highlighted. They have expressed their view on some issues during their campaigning leading up to the convention and thereafter as candidates of their respective parties.

Issue	Views expressed by Ms. Clinton	Views expressed by Mr. Trump
1) Iran Deal	In her acceptance speech at the Democrat National Convention (DNC), Ms. Clinton stated that she was proud that America was able to cap Iran's nuclear programme without firing a single shot and also ensure Israel's security. Now the United States has to work towards ensuring that the deal is enforced. <sup>1</sup>	Mr. Trump has repeatedly criticised the deal and has also termed it as the 'worst deal ever made.' He is of the view that the deal has given Iran US\$ 150 billion with nothing in return for the United States. <sup>2</sup>
2) Syria	In an interview to The Telegraph Newspaper, Mr. Jeremy Bash, who served as chief of staff for the Pentagon and the Central Intelligence Agency, a senior foreign policy advisor to Ms. Clinton's campaign has stated that Ms. Clinton will order a "full review" of the United States' strategy on Syria as a "first key task" of her presidency, resetting the policy to emphasise the atrocities of the regime of President Assad. She will work towards getting President Assad removed. <sup>3</sup>	Mr. Trump in his acceptance speech at the Republican National Convention (RNC) stated that while President Obama had announced 'a red line' that Syria should not cross, it has meant nothing to the world. In his answer to a question on removing President Assad from power in Syria, in an interview to the New York Times Newspaper he stated that, he would like to remove President Assad from power. However, for the moment ISIL is a bigger threat than Syria. His priority would be ISIL.

<p>3) Libya</p>	<p>Ms. Clinton has throughout her campaign defended her decision to support the United States decision to intervene in Libya.</p>	<p>He has during his campaign blamed Ms. Clinton for the loss of American lives in Libya. He stated that the symbol of American prestige-the consulate was also burnt down. He further claimed that America is less safe and the world is far less stable since President Obama made the decision to appoint Ms. Clinton in charge of US foreign policy. He qualified this statement by stating that, "In 2009, pre-Hillary, ISIS was not even on the map. Libya was cooperating. Egypt was peaceful. Iraq was seeing a reduction in violence. Iran was being choked by sanctions. Syria was under control. After four years of Hillary Clinton, what do we have? ISIS has spread across the region, and the world. Libya is in ruins, and our Ambassador and his staff were left helpless to die at the hands of savage killers. Egypt was turned over to the radical Muslim brotherhood, forcing the military to retake control. Iraq is in chaos. Iran is on the path to nuclear weapons. Syria is engulfed in a civil war and a refugee crisis that now threatens the West."<sup>4</sup></p>
<p>4) Russia</p>	<p>In her critic of the comments made by Mr. Trump on Russia, Ukraine and Crimea she has stated that as President, she would support the United States allies to stand up against Russia. In an interview to Fox News Channel after her accepting the nomination she speculated that Russia may have hacked and later leaked the emails on the DNC to support Mr. Trump.<sup>5</sup></p>	<p>Since his acceptance as the Republican Party candidate, he has stated that if he became President then he would improve relations with Russia. He has not been critical of Russia's 'annexation' of Crimea or Ukraine. He has also called on Russia, alleged to have hacked and thereafter leaked emails related to the workings of the DNC, to release any emails that they have on Ms. Clinton. He believes as Heads of Governments, he and President Putin would get along well. At a rally in Ohio state he claimed that if the two nations could work together to defeat ISIL, and also be friendly with Russia it</p>

		would be in the interest of the United States.
5) China	Mrs. Clinton has been a constant critic of China’s human-rights record. She has called the current US/China dynamic “one of the most challenging relationships we have,” but she has also said the two countries share a “positive, cooperative, and comprehensive relationship.” <sup>6</sup>	Mr. Trump has been critical of China from his opening speech as a candidate, describing it as one of the United States’ top adversaries, particularly when it comes to economic policy. He has accused China to be a currency manipulator. <sup>7</sup> He has pledged to take steps towards stopping hacking of US websites especially government website from Chinese entities and threaten the Chinese government with steep tariffs if it doesn’t agree to rewrite trade agreements.  He has also stated that he would also expand the US’s military presence in the South China Sea as a deterrent to China’s territorial claims to artificial islands there. He said he would toughen rules against the theft of intellectual property and combat subsidies China offers to boost exports. <sup>8</sup>
6) Turkey Coup Attempt	In a statement issued by Ms. Clinton she, urged “... respect for laws, institutions, and basic human rights and freedoms – and support for the democratically elected civilian government.” Her statements called on all parties to work to avoid further violence and bloodshed, and the safety of American citizens and diplomatic missions.	Mr. Trump has stated that he would like to give credit to President Erdogan and the people of Turkey for the failed coup. He further stated that he would hold meetings between Turkey, and the Kurdish forces, who are friendly but fighting each other. He believes that through talks they would be able to come together to help fight the ISIS. <sup>9</sup>
7) Europe	Ms. Clinton has time and again in her speeches stressed the importance of working with the United States allies in Europe to fight terrorism. She has stated that the United States would work with both the United Kingdom	Mr. Trump has been sharply critical of European leaders for not doing more to combat the flow of terrorists across their borders, saying France and Belgium in particular have laws that made it difficult for national security officials to thwart

	<p>and the European Union to build a stable and peaceful Europe.</p>	<p>recent attacks. He has said restrictions on gun ownership in these countries have prevented innocent civilians from protecting themselves during terror attacks. Mr. Trump was engaged in a sharp exchange of words with former UK Prime Minister David Cameron and Mayor of London Mr. Sadiq Khan over Mr. Trump’s proposal to ban the entry of Muslims into the United States.</p>
<p>8) International Trade Treaties</p>	<p>In her campaign Ms. Clinton has stated that she supported the TPP as Secretary of State however, the final document does not meet her expectations. This has led many to believe that while she is not supportive of the trade agreement in its current form, she will be supportive of it after her administration makes changes to it. Her major critique against TPP is that it does not do a good job of disciplining the misbehaviour of countries that manipulate the value of their currencies for trade gain. It is believed that if this issue is addressed in a separate legislation she would be supportive of the agreement.</p>	<p>At the RNC Mr. Trump pointed out that, “The TPP will not only destroy our manufacturing, but it will make America subject to the rulings of foreign governments.” He pledged to never sign any trade agreement that hurts US workers, or that diminishes freedom and independence of the US. Instead, he has stated that he would make individual deals with individual countries.” In other statements he has been critical of WTO and stated he would reconsider the United States’ membership to the organisation. He also wants to renegotiate trade agreements with China, Japan, South Korea and other nations and he would leave the NAFTA.</p>
<p>9) NATO</p>	<p>She has time and again cautioned against the rhetoric of Mr. Trump and pointed out that the United States’ under her leadership would continue to work with its allies across the world.</p>	<p>During the RNC in an interview to the New York Times newspaper, Mr. Trump raised questions on the commitment of the allies to the NATO and stated that he would have a relook at the alliance to ensure that the United States is not left with the burden of defending its allies. He has also questioned if the other alliance members are playing their part of the NATO’s budget commitments. He further commented that if the allies have fulfilled their obligations to the United</p>

		<p>States then the United States would fulfil its obligations to them.<sup>10</sup>Other countries need for assistance would have to be considered but would not be automatic. At a rally in Ohio he reiterated his view that NATO, the security alliance formed as a bulwark against the Soviet Union, was “obsolete.”</p>
<p>10) Nuclear Policy</p>	<p>Her campaign website highlights her work to “...ensure ratification of the New START treaty, which will make the world safer by reducing U.S. and Russian nuclear arsenals to their smallest size in 50 years.” In an interview with the Daily News she stated that, “As President, I’ll intensify our efforts to safeguard nuclear material and work with our allies to block nuclear proliferation, not expand it. We need to ensure that no terrorist is ever able to threaten our country or our allies with a weapon of mass destruction.”<sup>11</sup></p> <p>She has stated that she would work with South Korea and Japan to respond to threats from North Korea. She has also stated that the United States would continue to apply sanctions on North Korea till it abandons nuclear weapons.</p>	<p>Has said that while he would not like to be in a position to use nuclear weapons but he would not be able to comment if he is supportive of a ‘No First Use’ policy for the United States. He has also refused to comment if the United States under his presidency would reduce its nuclear arsenal. He has however, stated that the triad would continue to be important. During his campaign he has stated that he would not hesitate to use nuclear weapons if the United States were attacked.</p> <p>He has also stated that he would pressure on China to check nuclear weapons development of North Korea.</p>
<p>11) Terrorism</p>	<p>In her acceptance speech at the DNC she stated that as President she will work with the allies to defeat terrorism.</p> <p>In outlining her strategy for defeating ISIS, she stated that, “We will strike their sanctuaries from the air, and support local forces taking them</p>	<p>In his acceptance speech at the RNC he stated that the United States would need three things to protect it from terrorism. They are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. We must have the best intelligence gathering operation in the world.</li> <li>b. We must abandon the failed</li> </ul>

	<p>out on the ground. We will surge our intelligence so that we detect and prevent attacks before they happen. We will disrupt their efforts online to reach and radicalize young people in our country.” During her campaign speeches and her campaign website also outline her policy on defeating ISIL strongholds in Syria and Iraq by intensifying the coalition air campaign, and support for Arab and Kurdish allies on the ground.</p>	<p>policy of nation building and regime change that Hillary Clinton pushed in Iraq, Libya, Egypt and Syria. Instead, we must work with all of our allies who share our goal of destroying ISIS and stamping out Islamic terror. This includes working with our greatest ally in the region, the State of Israel.</p> <p>c. Lastly, we must immediately suspend immigration from any nation that has been compromised by terrorism until such time as proven vetting mechanisms have been put in place.</p>
<p>12) Cyber warfare</p>	<p>Ms. Clinton has regularly challenged China, even saying the country is “trying to hack into everything that doesn’t move” during a campaign event in New Hampshire last year. During the same rally, Clinton described cyber security as “one of the biggest challenges for our next president” and vowed to make any country carrying out hacks to “pay the price.”<sup>12</sup></p>	<p>He is supportive of the need to build better cyber warfare technology and cyber weapons.<sup>13</sup></p>
<p>13) Immigration</p>	<p>During her acceptance speech she proposed, the United States would always be welcoming on immigrants and her administration will work towards building paths which will allow the immigrants who are contributing to the US economy to get citizenship. According to her, “it would be self-defeating and inhumane to kick out immigrants who are hard working and contributing to the</p>	<p>He has reiterated his plans to build a wall to stop illegal immigrants from coming to the United States and is also critical of plans by the current Administration to allow more Syrian refugees to come to the United States. He stated that he would, “...only want to admit individuals into our country who will support our values and love our people.”</p>

	<p>economy in a positive manner.” Her campaign is going to stress on how comprehensive immigration reform will help grow the US economy while keeping families together.</p>	
<p>14) Climate Change</p>	<p>She has been supportive of the steps taken by President Obama and his administration in addressing climate change. She has stated that she is committed to achieving the goals that the United States has accepted internationally. Her campaign is to make America the world’s clean energy superpower and creating millions of good-paying jobs</p>	<p>Over the course of the campaign Mr. Trump has repeatedly referred to global warming as a hoax during speeches and has advocated the same on his Twitter account in recent years.</p>

Apart from the above stated issues there are a number of other subjects on which it is expected that they will make statements during the course of the debates, leading to Election Day. These may include the future course of the United States relations with China, and its alliance partners in the Asia and Pacific region. This gains importance in light of the recent ruling by the international tribunal discounting China’s historical claims to determine its maritime boundary (particularly its EEZ), on the South China Sea and due to the military presence maintained by the United States in this region. It would also be important with a view to the US Asia rebalance policy, an important policy that was supported by Ms. Clinton but on which she has not spoken much till now. Mr. Trump has also not yet articulated his foreign policy strategy for the region. This is a gap in his campaign as he has been critical of President Obama foreign policy on nearly all issues. Though the two candidates have spoken about their respective views on nuclear weapons for the United States, they have yet to articulate their views on the United States adopting the ‘No First Use’ policy as part of its nuclear strategy. The candidates from both parties have also not yet articulated their strategy to bring peace and stability to the Middle East and more importantly, a plan to assist in rebuilding economic stability in Latin America.

It is expected that over the course of the campaigning the candidates would bring forth not just their respective plans to address the domestic challenges within America, but steps they will undertake to meet the foreign policy and security challenges that confront it beyond its borders.

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Disclaimer: Views expressed are of authors and do not reflect the views of the Council.*

**Endnotes:**

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<sup>1</sup> Democratic Party, "Acceptance Speech of Hillary Clinton at DNC," <http://www.politico.com/story/2016/07/full-text-hillary-clintons-dnc-speech-226410>, Accessed on 03 August 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Republican Party, "Acceptance Speech of Donald Trump at RNC," <http://www.politico.com/story/2016/07/full-transcript-donald-trump-nomination-acceptance-speech-at-rnc-225974>, Accessed on 03 August 2016.

<sup>3</sup> Ruth Sherlock, The Telegraph (29 July 2016), "Hillary Clinton will reset Syria policy against 'murderous' Assad regime," <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/07/29/hillary-clinton-will-reset-syria-policy-against-murderous-assad/>, Accessed on 04 August 2016.

<sup>4</sup> Op.Cit. 02, Republican Party Donald Trump Acceptance Speech

<sup>5</sup> Fox News, "Hillary Clinton on tight race, accusations against Trump," <http://www.foxnews.com/transcript/2016/07/31/hillary-clinton-on-tight-race-accusations-against-trump/>, Accessed on 03 August 2016.

<sup>6</sup> Damian Paletta, The Wall Street Journal, "Where Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump Stand on Foreign-Policy Issues," <http://graphics.wsj.com/elections/2016/donald-trump-hillary-clinton-on-foreign-policy/>, Accessed on 08 August 2016.

<sup>7</sup> Donald Trump, "US China Trade Reforms," <https://www.donaldjtrump.com/positions/us-china-trade-reform>, Accessed on 08 August 2016.

<sup>8</sup> Op. Cit 06, Damian Paletta, The Wall Street Journal

<sup>9</sup> The New York Times, "Transcript: Donald Trump on NATO, Turkey's Coup Attempt and the World," [http://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/22/us/politics/donald-trump-foreign-policy-interview.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/22/us/politics/donald-trump-foreign-policy-interview.html?_r=0), Accessed on 03 August 2016.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Daily News 14 April 2016, <http://www.nydailynews.com/opinion/hillary-clinton-trump-dangerous-loose-nuclear-talk-article-1.2600169>, Accessed on 04 August 2016.

<sup>12</sup> Nash Jerkins, "Hillary Clinton Says China Is 'Trying to Hack Into Everything That Doesn't Move'," Time Magazine (July 2016), <http://time.com/3946275/hillary-clinton-china-hacking-cyberwarfare-usa/>, Accessed on 04 August 2016.

<sup>13</sup> Op.Cit 09, The New York Times.