



# Weekly Briefing

**Poland External Relations briefing:  
Foreign Policy in 2017  
Dominik Mierzejewski**

## China-CEE Institute

Kiadó: Kína-KKE Intézet Nonprofit Kft.

Szerkesztésért felelős személy: Chen Xin

Kiadásért felelős személy: Huang Ping



1052 Budapest Petőfi Sándor utca 11.



+36 1 5858 690



office@china-cee.eu



china-cee.eu

In 2017 Polish foreign policy was mainly driven by political realism, seeking the pragmatic solutions, and followed the Polish *raison d'etat*. The above quoted statement was embodied into the document issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in January 2017. Regarding the foreign policy actions taken by the Polish government we need to discuss the following three aspects: basic assessments of international environment, relations with the United States and the European Union, and policy towards Russia.

As described by the Law and Justice government Poland's foreign policy is mainly based on three pillars:

1. security: activities aimed at expanding own defence capabilities, strengthening the potential of Poland's allied relations within NATO and the EU and active regional policy;
2. development: international activity serving the economic and social development;
3. international credibility: the factor enabling the development of a positive image of Poland and strengthening its credibility on a European and global scale.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs recognized the general tendency of the global weakening of the West against the dynamic development of the non-Western world. This processes are embodied into the current global trends and mainly driven by the digital revolution, sharp urbanization, demographic change and migrations. Although the West remains global economic and political power, the landscape is changing. The growing interdependencies between different continents and regions, and the civilizational changes created the ground for stronger economic and political competitions between states. The events taken place in Asia, Africa, and Latin America are affecting Europe. This trend, according to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, will intensify with both positive and negative impact. The beneficial outcome of globalization are trade

agreements and tightening economic ties, the negative outcomes belongs to armed conflicts and political tensions that are expected in the years to come.

What should be noticed is the assumption that international relations are the sphere of action of sovereign states. Regardless of cooperation in various forms, states remain their solid subjectivity. At the same time, however, it is accompanied by the conviction that in today's complex world, no country, even the most powerful, is able to effectively pursue its policies alone. This implies a common imperative, especially where it is based on a deep community of interests based on a strong foundation of solidarity and the common values, reflected in the Atlantic Charter (1941) and the Final Act of the OSCE (1975). This philosophy is accompanied by the rejection of all attempts to revise the order formed after the Cold War, building spheres of influence and treating the war as an extension of diplomatic efforts.

Discussing the role the United States in Polish foreign policy we need to discover that the Law and Justice government perceives Washington as the major security guarantor. It is in the interest of Poland to further develop allied bilateral relations with the United States. In strategic planning, it is necessary to ensure balance between defence of eastern and southern flanks of NATO. In NATO forum and in the bilateral dimension, Poland strengthened defence cooperation with the US, especially with regard to the American military presence in Poland and, more broadly, on the entire eastern flank. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Defence strongly recommended building the collective defence capabilities in Europe, as the critical factor of the US involvement in Europe. The eastern flank is perceived as the most important part of NATO activities in Central Europe. The presence of NATO troops and infrastructure in Poland, the Baltic States, Romania and Bulgaria denied the possibility of returning to the "gray zones" of security in Central Europe. Through the cooperation with the United States Polish government can accomplish the joint defence projects including the program to build an anti-missile shield. Moreover Poland will be consistent in implementations of the

Member States' commitments to spend 2% of GDP for defence while allocating one-fifth of this sum to the modernization of the armed forces. From the security perspective the relations with NATO members states, Visegrad Group, Romania and Bulgaria are the most important in Polish foreign policy. An important element of this security policy are closer ties with Sweden and Finland, as well as with countries from Eastern partnership namely Georgia and Ukraine. The energy security and diversification of energy sources are secured by actions taken by the government in order to develop the infrastructural ties: energy, transport and communication in the Baltic-Black Sea-Adriatic triangle.

Regarding the policy towards Russia the historical dimension should be discussed as the priority reasons in bilateral relations. As perceived by the Polish government the problem is that Russia, not in the open manner, but by actions declared readiness to treat military power as one of the instruments of implementation foreign policy and security goals. This was confirmed by real actions, the demands with seriousness look at the modernization program of the Russian armed forces, the expansion of military infrastructure, in particular, announcements of the deployment of capable rocket systems near Poland's borders for carrying tactical nuclear weapons. The further perception is driven by hybrid war, as some sources said, sponsored by the Russian government.

As perceived in Poland the policy of the Russian Federation plays a destructive role, which on the one hand seeks to transform the former Soviet Union's zone of influence into a buffer zone, and on the other hand it is unable to provide neighbouring countries with a positive political and economic projects. From this perspective Russia is trying to make up for shortcomings in this area, using misinformation, more or less open political and economic pressures, corruption, and also provokes ethnic conflicts and attempts to revive historical disputes between nations once subjected to its rule, and when these instruments fail, they refer to military force, as evidenced by wars in Georgia and Ukraine. However, the isolation of Russia is not and will not be the goal of Poland's policy. Poland supports the idea of maintaining regular channels of

dialogue with Russia. Normalization of the EU-Russia relationship cannot, however, be based on premises originating from the logic of the Yalta system and spheres of influence. Poland tried to facilitate the NATO-Russia dialogue, but only based on the "3xD" principle: defence, deterrence, dialogue. The "3xD" principle can only be fulfilled by continuation of cooperation in the field of strengthening the eastern flank with the Baltic state and Romania, in areas as the Airspace Patrol Mission (Air Policing) and Enhanced Forward Presence.

Regarding the economic diplomacy Poland has tried to exit from the group of "emerging markets" or "developing markets" and joined a group of "developed countries". This should contribute to the inclusion of Poland into the G20 format. Being named as "developed country" should increase the investment attractiveness, and reduce the cost of capital on foreign markets. To achieve this goal, Poland must move away from the competitiveness model based on low labour costs and build a model that grows from high quality and innovation, which would lead to its promotion in the international value chain, using the ongoing processes in the EU.

### **Conclusions**

To sum up, the long term strategic goal of Poland is to counteract the disassembly of the European security architecture based on OSCE principles and primacy of international law. The basic goal of this policy will be to avoid military incidents and increase trust and transparency in Europe. The stability in Europe can only be achieved by further cooperation with the United States, the European Union, and the Western Balkans. The core initiative of "Three Seas Cooperation", Via Carpatia or the TEN-T Baltic-Adriatic network corridor, connecting Polish seaports with the ports of the Adriatic Sea might provide the basis for energy security and by economic cooperation will contribute to the stability in the region. From this perspective Polish government considers "Belt and Road Initiative" as possible option that will increase the economic cohesion in Europe, and Central Europe in particular.

Furthermore, Poland became more active at the United Nations forum. Being the non-permanent Security Council member Polish government hopes to contribute more to peacekeeping operation of the UN.

On the one hand, Polish government introduced narrative of “Poland first”, but contrary to the policy taken by Trump it does not imply that Poland will leave international organizations. Contrary to this Poland perceives the United Nations as the most important body that have an impact on the international relations. When it comes to European arena, Polish government believed that strengthening relations with the United States will provide the necessary security measures, but what is currently discussed in Poland will limit the cooperation with other powers, and to the certain extent dictate the “red lines” with relation with the European Union, China and especially Russia.

The problem for pragmatic and “observe calmly” foreign policy is rooted in discussing about the conspiracy theory. The very subjective interpretations of the current international scene presented by some conservative circles in the Polish government might challenge the very realistic and down-to-earth foreign policy. One example might be seen when it comes to Poland and China relations. Shaping the narrative on relations between Russia and China as a plot against the West might limit Sino-Polish interactions in any spheres starting from common business and infrastructure projects, through cooperation at the European Union level, to more broaden political cooperation. But according the statement issued by the Minister of Foreign Affairs in front of Polish parliament China was mentioned three times and as was said *strategic partnership with the People's Republic of China has become a permanent part of Poland's foreign policy*. From this perspective Polish government is expecting further developing cooperation in the 16+1 format, that is, between Central European countries and China, especially through the Secretariat for Maritime Affairs based in Warsaw.