



Weekly Briefing

Poland External Relations briefing:

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The most important event related to the foreign affairs was the information on the Polish foreign policy tasks delivered by the MFA Jacek Czaputowicz in front of the Parliament. Following his address the questions of the Polish foreign policy's priorities, how does Poland interact with neighbours and what is the plan for the future foreign policy actions?

At the beginning of his speech, he presented three significant arguments. First, Poland has the strong position in Europe and powerful impact in decision-making processes in NATO and the European Union. By advocating its well as promoting and defending interests of countries in the region Poland has strengthened its position. The second argument was based on the assumption that the European Union is a crisis that started from the financial crisis in 2008. The major problem is the over bureaucracy brought to the light re-nationalisation and sceptics voices on the future on the European integration. Then, the presence of the United States was mentioned. The relations between Europe and the United States are of fundamental significance for the security and *Poland is vitally interested in sustaining strong transatlantic bonds* as was said by the Minister. The fourth argument was related to the relations with Russia, that is perceived as the revisionist state, the seeks the opportunity to revise the political order that was shaped in the post-1989 period.

In the context mentioned above, Poland takes extraordinary measures to secure its security, and the relations with the United States mainly delivered it as well as building the regional network for security cooperation. With Romania, Poland makes the “Bucharest 9” Format. In 2017, Poland took part in 13 foreign missions, e.g. in Afghanistan, Kosovo, Latvia, Romania, and the Baltic states. From the energy security perspective, in 2018 Poland will be the first year when Poland will receive the US gas.

Poland will be the reliable member of the European Union, and as said by the Minister Jacek Czaputowicz according to a Public Opinion Research Centre survey taken this January, 87% Poles declared their support for Poland's

membership of the EU. It is the highest rate in Europe. As observed by the Polish Minister the crisis of the European Union is mainly driven by the fact that European citizens do not think they have any impact on the policymakers. In other words, the European Union institutions are far from being close to the people. This is very visible when it comes to the deficit of the democracy in Europe. *The rising tide of protest against integration on the European continent is not the cause of the EU's common weakness, but its consequence* as analysed by the Minister. Poland, what might be interpreted, is afraid of a multi-speed European Union narratives. The future or today problem should be discussed together, and any member should be excluded. Regarding the democratic values Poland should not be treated as the country that implemented democracy from the West. As said in the address *This year we are celebrating the 550th anniversary of the Polish parliamentary system*. Poland has the second constitution in the World. The Polish Parliament passed the Constitution of Third May in 1791. Moreover, Poland is in favour of strengthening European military capacity via PESCO. This should be mainly made by exercising three pillars: the development of national defence industry, the structure of a national defence budget and the effectiveness and speed of cross-border military mobility for allied forces.

When it comes to the importance of partners, the United States was mentioned in the first place, Germany, France and the United Kingdom as second, third and fourth, respectively. From this perspective, the Polish government is interested in reviving the Weimar Triangle to solve common problems and enhance the European Union unity and cohesion. Then the importance of Italy, Spain and the Netherlands. What is worth noticing is that the Visegrad Group and Hungary, in particular, are mentioned after the Western Europe, and the Netherlands.

The Minister elaborated further on the Three Seas Initiative. This initiative comprises 12 EU Member States are have access to the Baltic, Adriatic, and Black Seas. In this context the particular place is occupied by Romania, then

Scandinavia Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Finland, Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia. Regarding the relations with Russia the pragmatic cooperation was mentioned, but only conditional to Russian next step in easing tensions in Eastern Ukraine. Ukraine and Belarus were equally discussed.

Regarding the relations with China, the Minister mentioned the key/pivotal role of Poland in cargo transport between China and Europe. As much as 90 percent of rail transport between China and the European Union passes through the Małaszewicze terminal (border with Belarus). Tourism was pointed as the essential part of bilateral cooperation. Finally, local governments were mentioned as critical vehicles in narrowing trade deficit with China. Japan and South Korea were named strategic partners in achieving the goals of the Strategy for Responsible Development. There are expectations that both economic will help Poland in the reindustrialisation and development of electric mobility. Moreover, the fact that Warsaw is the founding member of the Asia Investment and Infrastructure Bank was noticed. Interesting is that the membership in the AIIB was mentioned in the context of cooperation with Singapore, and the future of the Polish Airlines LOT.

The final points in the speech were dedicated to the Polish development aid under the Multiannual Development Cooperation Programme 2016-2020. The funds mainly go to Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine, Ethiopia, Kenya, Myanmar, Palestine, Senegal, and Tanzania.

Local governments' engagement in such projects as Silk Road or Three Seas significantly complements international agreements. The local government dimension takes on particular importance in the light of the COP24 climate summit in Katowice.

Conclusions

Regarding the interpretation of the address delivered by the Minister of Foreign Affairs professor Jacek Czaputowicz, the picture is somewhat transparent. Poland's foreign policy is mainly driven by the fact that Russia is perceived as the real threat to the Polish security. From this perspective, Polish

government will pay more attention to the cooperation in the military sector, than other directions of the foreign policy. This approach, however, should be balanced by the good economic relations with the international partners. From the perspective of economic cooperation China, Japan and South Korea should be perceived as the crucial pillars of Polish economic diplomacy. Regarding the cooperation with this three countries, the Minister draws quite clear-cut distinctions. China is the primary partner in the field of trade, contrary to Japan and South Korea that are perceived as the partner in investment and more advanced industries.

To sum up, this year address was slightly different from this of 2017. Although the economic dimensions of the cooperation was placed as priority, the Minister of Foreign Affairs in 2017 mentioned that *In an effort to strike a balance between different foreign policy components, Poland has taken a sharp turn in its non-European policy by opening more strongly to collaboration with countries in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East.* In this regard, China and the broader Asia were placed as the balancing factor in shaping Polish foreign policy. Strategic partnership with the People's Republic of China has become a permanent part of Poland's foreign policy. The Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs Witold Waszczykowski declared to take advantage of the favourable atmosphere in Chinese-Polish relations brought about by last year's contacts at the highest level. The further developing cooperation in the 16+1 format, between Central European countries and China, including through the Secretariat for Maritime Affairs based in Poland were welcomed. The maritime collaboration brought both sides to the practical oriented cooperation. As discussed by Croatian Presidential Office the China-Europe Land-Sea Express Line launched at the China+16 CEECs summit in Suzhou corresponds significantly with the objectives of the Adriatic-Baltic-Black Sea Initiative. Developing the seaport corridor based on the ports of Adriatic and Baltic countries is in line with the development of the Belt and Road and cooperation on industrial capacity.

Compare to the last year China fails to be perceived as the factor that might balance power relations in the Central and Eastern European region, but rather as the economic powerhouse with which the trade deficit needs to be adjusted. This approach might reflect more pragmatic and real policy toward China that is taken by the new government. Discussing the assumptions as mentioned above in the context, Polish "pivot to Asia, Africa and the Middle East" did not perform well, and Polish diplomacy needs to concentrate on its European action. As was said by Minister Czaputowicz the priority in Europe is given to Germany and France, not Budapest or Prague. The latest visits of Prime Minister Morawiecki in Brussels and Berlin suggested that Poland needs to change attitude towards the Western Europe. This means that Polish policy vectors are more on the West-East line, than the North-South. From this perspective Polish foreign policy goals should be addressed as follow: 1. joining the club of the co-deciding states about the shape of the European Union, 2. becoming the main voice of the EU countries outside the Euro area, 3. becoming the spokesperson of the new EU member states. Finally, the lesson learned since 2015, when the Law and Justice formed the government teaches that the relations with Western Europe are more beneficial for Poland than of those with Hungary or Romania.