



Weekly Briefing

**Poland External Relations briefing:
Trump-Putin meeting in Helsinki
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The latest discussions in the Polish policymakers' and think-tank people have been mainly concentrated on the result of Trump-Putin meeting in Helsinki. To what extent Polish foreign policy should be one-sided towards Washington? How to place Poland among powers: China, Russia, and the United States? And finally what conducts relations within the European Union especially with Germany and France? The analysis in the Polish media mainly concentrated on the geopolitical angel of the meeting in Helsinki, relations between Washington and the European Union (mainly Germany and Great Britain), and the future role of Putin-Trump relations.

The first important observation was made by Bogusław Chrabota in “Rzeczpospolita” (daily newspaper) who stated that along with the meeting in Helsinki, the leaders of the European Union met in Beijing with the leaders of China. The time of the summit in Beijing was probably accidental, but once it appeared at the same time in symbolized the possibility of global reversal of alliances. What is the background for the rapprochement between Moscow and Washington? China. Trump recognizes Beijing as the main competitor of the USA. The so-called trade war with China and opposition to China's political expansion brought Trump to the conclusion that Beijing should be targeted first. In this "global game", Russia is a potential ally that can fight terrorism more effectively, protect against the Iranian threat of the main partner in the Middle East, that is, Israel, isolate Tehran, and even strengthen control over political processes on the Korean Peninsula. When it comes to the relations with China, Russia is a strategic raw material provider to Beijing. Being highly dependent on Russian oil, uranium or coal Beijing's government needs to take into consideration the relations between the United States and Russia. The success of the program “Made in China 2025” is dependent on the sustainability of delivering raw materials and natural resources.

On the other hand, the meeting in Helsinki did not end with the "new Yalta" nor did it bring any provisions changing the global political system that

arose after 1989. The above-mentioned tendencies have been discussed in the Polish media since the meeting was announced. The meeting, however, showed that Trump recognized that the strategy towards Moscow needs to be changed. It is becoming more and more visible that it does not bring the expected effects of weakening Russia and its concessions in key issues from the West's point of view. Russia's international position has been strengthened in recent years, while the EU and the Euro-Atlantic community are being crushed. It is Moscow itself who actively stimulates the disintegration processes. The fundamental concerns in Poland are mainly based on the apparent tendency that Donald Trump gave Vladimir Putin confidence and attributed him to the leadership of democratic countries. As discussed in Polish media it shows a complete lack of orientation as to the cultural specificity of the Russian politicians. The further problem is that during the process of normalization with Russia, Trump will build a direct or indirect, perhaps friendly personal relations with the Russian president. This fears, however, was not confirmed by the historical meeting in Helsinki. The summit failed to bring breakthroughs that could have a negative impact on the security of Poland in the short term. Breaking the deadlock in bilateral US-Russia relations can almost potentially result in relaxation in some of the conflict issues. Too intimate relations between the two leaders, skillfully stimulated by Putin, may, in the long run, result in changes unfavorable from the perspective of Poland in US policy towards our region.

On the other hand, the international dimensions of the meeting in Helsinki should be limited by the fact that Trump conducts constant communication with his voters, not with foreign partners. He treats the latter as opponents, for whom the only salvation is to give money or become a client of American companies: armaments or energy producers. This is because of labor place in America. From this perspective Trump behave as the pure business person. Trump During a press conference at the end of the NATO summit, Trump, like a mantra, repeated that he forced allies to pay billions more for defense, treating the Alliance's strategic messages spontaneously. The second important point,

derived from the argumentation above, is about the fact that for Trump defense spending, energy policy and trade are one package and the common denominator in his policy towards Europe. This policy, according to Trump is mainly about Germany, which is hostile to the interests of America. According to Olaf Osica this policy it is completely devoid of a chance for success. NATO is a defense pact, there are no tools to shape the energy policy of the allies - just as trade issues belong to the Union, which in turn has little to do with the defense budgets of its members. The strong declaration by Trump that might provide the platform for rapprochement with Russia and deepen conflict with the European Union are fragile and dependent on the domestic environment. Without the consent of the Congress, he will not withdraw from NATO, what he was to threaten or impose sanctions on companies involved in the construction of Nord Stream 2. Trump demands on defense spending (2% of the GDP) in the time required by him is unreal today. The question of Trump's motivation is hard to answer, however, we can present two alternative visions. From one point of view is very rational negotiation tactics that will shake Europe, and clean the atmosphere and bring the improvement of the US-Europe relations in the next step. Going beyond the narrative and rhetoric of the American President during the NATO Summit the commitment to the eastern flank has been confirmed, as is the agreement that Russia is pursuing an aggressive policy and you must have an answer to it. On the other opposite the argument is mainly about the fact that Trump's strategy is breaking up Atlantic cooperation, and its incoherence is apparent because it consistently builds an excuse for withdrawing the US from allied commitments.

The final interesting point was presented by Agnieszka Bryc, professor of Russian studies, who stated that the majority of analysts overestimate Putin's strategic capabilities. According to her view, Putin is not the policy maker who plans up to two decades ahead, because he makes an of mistakes. The mistakes are one by one and mainly by bringing sanctions against Russia, supported Trump in the very open manner, and isolated Russia in the West. But Putin and

Trump might work together to weaken the European Union, which is beneficial for America in the context of the trade war, and for Nord Stream 2. America hopes to play a role in the international gas market. *However, we should not let go of the issue of international violations, especially not to recognize the annexation of Crimea* - concluded Agnieszka Bryc.

Conclusions

From the above-discussed perspective, the core issue is how does the role of Warsaw look like in the relations among powers? From the point of view of Poland's interests, however, it is crucial that such normalization does not take place on terms that may deteriorate our position in relation to Russia, in particular by questioning the direction of US and NATO policy in our region in recent years. It is also important that they do not cause weakening of the Alliance and do not disturb the process of its modernization and strengthening.

First, Poland should not overestimate the geopolitical position in Europe, however, the geographical location places Poland as the important crossroad between East and West. But, alone Poland will not play the significant role. It only matters as the member of the broader communities like the European Union or NATO. From this perspective, the problem arises from the fact that the close ally of Poland: Washington refers to this institutions with skepticism, while Russia refers with hostility. Regarding the economic power, Poland is the industrial base of Germany, and Poland is strong with German's strength. From the further perspective supporting Trump might provide the platform for supporting Putin and weaken the European Union. Moscow and Washington are perceived as the factors that want to overturn a favorable order. From this perspective, the active supporting of the integrations processes in Europe will strengthen the national security of Poland. Poland should not be reluctant to engage in the EU defense cooperation. The final question refers to Polish policy towards China. It should be active, making use of Beijing's investment interest, however, cautions and not diverge from the European Union standards. The

interesting new dynamics might be observed after the latest summit in Beijing. Both sides agreed to support open markets, and fight against protectionism. From the perspective of the international order, it might provide a space for closer relations between Brussels and Beijing. In the area of economic cooperation Poland should support the EU stance on China, and closely follow the decision taken by the European bodies and especially related to the EU-China Connectivity Platform. The current context of possible America rapprochement with Russia might tip the balance that brings Europe and China closer.