



Weekly Briefing

Poland External Relations briefing:
Warsaw Security Forum
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

Warsaw Security Forum

The Warsaw Security Forum is one of the leading platforms in Central Europe dedicated for debating and building the network in the international security arena. Established in 2014, the Warsaw Security Forum (WSF) the conference is devoted to issues of international security, military affairs, cyber threats, transatlantic cooperation, as well as challenges and opportunities lying ahead not only for Poland but the entire region of Central and Eastern Europe. This year the major subjects touched the issues of Russian policy towards the neighboring countries and the future of American engagements in Europe and Central Europe in particular. The briefing discusses the growing role of the Central European countries in Sino-American relations, as well as touches the geopolitical moment when the Warsaw Security Forum took place.

The first panel *Security in Europe – Fault Lines in the East* was dedicated to debates between Ministers of Foreign Affairs from Poland, Lithuania, Ukraine, and Georgia. Poland calls for further engagement with the United States and as said by Minister Jacek Czaputowicz due to the fact that Warsaw faces security threats from Russia Poland hopes to have the more military presence of the American army that will ensure the security and stability in the region. Moreover, Poland will take more active position vis a vis Eastern Partnership for the participating countries to join the European Union and turn the Eastern Partnership into a Berlin Process as in the case of the Western Balkans. This process is seen as the vehicle for a deeper form of integration with the European Union. As debate by Pavlo Klimkin Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, Ukraine hopes to *a very normal European democratic country, where decisions are taken by us*. The Lithuanian Minister strengthen the role of

democratic values, but the necessity of defending the values shall be seen as the most important. Otherwise, the democratic values mean nothing. The Georgian Foreign Minister underscored that *the process of European integration is very interesting itself, which gives strong democratic institutions, where human rights are protected and corruption is eliminated*. This process of the further integration of Georgia into the European community is limited by the relations between Georgia and Russia.

During the Warsaw Security Forum, the bilateral meetings also took place. An interesting conversation was held by Lithuanian Minister with his counterpart from Hungary. Both sides ensured that cooperation with the Eastern partners and promotion of interconnectivity projects in the region are priorities for both governments. Moreover, Peter Szijjarto supports all kinds of endeavors in the Western Balkans which will accelerate the accession to NATO and the European Union.

The subject of the European Defense Industry was discussed by e.g. Marcin Wróblewski from the Polish Ministry of Defence. The whole European military complex should create an inclusive competition among all. Thus, the European Union will increase its strength. Paul Taylor, the Senior Fellow at Friends of Europe, commented that "the status of the UK has to be defined in terms of European Defense Industry. We should keep in mind that this industry creates and is linked with many jobs."

One of the very provocative declarations was raised by Retired Lt. Gen. Ben Hodges who speaks to reporters on the sideline of the Warsaw Security Forum in Warsaw. The former commander of the U.S. Army in Europe warned Wednesday that it's very likely the United States will be at war with China in 15 years. From his perspective, America will pay more attention to the relations in Asia and the Pacific and confront rising China. This approach clearly defines that the European America allies need to take more responsibility for their own security, and e.g. pay more for the defense budgets. These kind of people are

likely to be consulted by the American government when difficult security decisions have to be made. They are well experienced in the area of national security. Moreover, they have a quite large network and personal connections and might use them to transmit their understanding to the decision makers.

Apart from the above-mentioned assumption, the special panel: *Is a New World War Approaching? – the New US Security Strategy towards Russia and China* was organized. This issue was discussed, by one of the panelists prof. Steve Tsang from SOAS¹. He pointed out that the future plan of building the well-off society (*xiaokang shehui*) and rising power in order to be equal with the United States by 2050. According to his opinion, it gives the prospects for the conflict with Washington, however, in Tsang's opinion the conflict is not inevitable. China would not trigger a war they could not win. As he discussed the issue of Taiwan is still the most important part of the relations between China and the United States. The American perspective was presented by Julianne Smith, a former Deputy Security Advisor to the US President in the administration of Barack Obama. According to her view, the prospect of a high probability of open conflict with China was overestimated. Currently, US policy towards China faces two problems: the first is the escalation of the trade war, and the second is the escalation of the arms race with China. Smith does not see significant changes in the US administration in response to these problems. New challenges on the part of China but also Russia do not create new positions, reform government institutions or create new strategic concepts. The Russian perspective was discussed by Paweł Felgenhauer, the journalist for Nova Gazeta and defense analyst. He noticed that recent Vostok 2018 military exercises were, among others, an attempt of the Russian-Chinese alliance. However, this is a difficult alliance and alliance that face a lot of challenges. One the one hand

¹ An associate fellow since 2015, Mr. Tsang is a professor of Chinese Studies and director of the SOAS China Institute at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London. He previously served as head of the School of Contemporary Chinese Studies and director of the China Policy Institute at the University of Nottingham. Before that, he was a professorial fellow at St Antony's College, Oxford, where he served as dean, and director of the Asian Studies Centre

Russian named it “strategic cooperation”, while the Chinese side named the relations “strategic coordination”. Moreover, both sides have divergent interests in many areas. Felgenhauer notes that contemporary international relations can be seen through the prism of the new Cold War, where Russia and China - each in their own way - challenge US hegemony. The previous Cold War was only cold in Europe - it resulted in substitute or proxy wars in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. The global and regional scenes should be analyzed through the prism of conflicts at the periphery. The key to maintaining security on a global scale will be the ability to manage substitute conflicts on the periphery so that they do not turn into a wider confrontation.

Conclusions

The above-discussed point of views indicates that future global relations might be determined by the relations between the United States and China. The current tensions over trade issues should be handled with cautions and should produce the impact for further collaboration. The Warsaw Security Forum was organized in the shadow of the American Vice President Mike Pence on Sino-American relations as well as in the shadow of declaration produced by A. Wess Mitchell, the Assistant Secretary, Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs. In his declaration, he debates the dichotomy of China and Russian behavior in the Central European countries. He perceives the current course of events in the Central European countries as the geopolitical competition *From the Baltic to the Adriatic, across the Balkan Peninsula and through the Caucasus, America’s rivals are expanding their political, military, and commercial influence. Russia is again a military factor in this region, following the invasions of Georgia and Ukraine.* From the American point of view restructuring, the Overseas Private Investment Corporation is perceived as the alternatives to Chinese financing. Washington will double the existing portfolio capacity of OPIC from USD 29

billion to USD 60 billion and the United States will offer the new financial vehicles for countries of 16+1.

The current context allows to discuss the future Sino-American relations in Central Europe, and to what extent it will have an impact of the multilateral platform of 16+1. As said by Minister Czaputowicz America is perceived as the security guarantor for Poland and the Baltic States. The closest cooperation in military areas might have an impact on the limitation of cooperation with China. On the other hand, if both sides will come to the conclusion that cooperation within competition is possible the common projects sound be possible. As we see both sides China and America support North-South corridors: China because of transportation of Chinese goods from Pireus to the Northern part of Europe, the United States because of LNG project in Krk (Croatia) and Swinoujcie (Poland). This dynamic should be taken from the more positive perspective that will strengthen the role of Central European countries in Sino-American relations.