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EU-China Summit

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Polish presidential elections

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中国媒体观察

CHINESE MEDIA WATCH



EU-CHINA SUMMIT



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During the 17th EU-China summit, taking place in Brussels at the end of June, a number of issues related to facilitating trade development between the two partners was discussed. Issues such as the extension of Visa services points, management of trade barriers, technological assistance, and research funds were given the most attention. Whereas the mutual relations are seen on a very positive note, the new impetus also brings about a new starting point for both sides (中欧领导人会晤为双边合作建立新起点). The most important point, however, seems to be the suggested complementarity between the Juncker's investment plan and Chinese One Road, One Belt initiative that partially embodies the issue of investment and trade agreements.

Chinese media suggest that Beijing's investment would lead to mutual benefits, economic growth and global prosperity (二是开辟合作新天地, 将“一带一路”、国际产能合作等倡议同欧洲投资计划有效对接, 推动互联互通和经济增长, 共同开发第三方市场). At first glance, both partners are seemingly equal. Soon after, however, readers of the Chinese press may learn about financial problems facing EU and that China might help out with economic recovery. Indeed, Chinese media pointed at EU's hope that Beijing will be able to provide infrastructure funds (希望中国能够为欧洲基础设施基金注资). By the same token, mutual cooperation was also described in a way that Europe needs to benefit from Chinese economic vitality. Allegedly economically passive EU should welcome vigorously thriving countries such as China. In other words, EU needs to cooperate with China to keep the economy running (欧洲则需要中国这个发展中国家的活力, 如果没有中国强劲的发展动力, 欧洲可能也没有意识到自己正处于被动的发展状况, 可能会受到其他竞争对手的威胁).

Furthermore, also geopolitical reasoning for such a need was offered by Chinese press. Supposedly, after the emergence of political problems with Russia, EU started to strengthen its relations with China (在已与俄罗斯产生裂痕的情况下, 欧盟试图加强与中国的合作). Citing foreign me-

dia, the Chinese press stresses that both sides may develop a partnership where human rights and trade struggles may eventually disappear in the light of economic cooperation (文章称, 随着中国寻求在国际事务中发挥更大的作用, 欧盟找到一个更具合作性的伙伴, 中欧峰会释放出积极信号, 中欧可以通过改革创新推动经济增长, 中国人权及中欧贸易争端等困扰将逐渐淡化).

Such enhanced cooperation would not only benefit both sides directly - China is also quite vocal with its support of European integration and strong Euro currency and Beijing hopes that the contemporary financial crisis in Greece will be handled successfully to keep the EU strong. Indeed, the support in the form of infrastructure funds may be understood as a means to keep EU stronger (李克强表明欧洲在应对国际金融危机的挑战和处理希腊债务问题上, 有中国的支持. 他承诺中国政府将投资欧盟新的基建基金). Possible infrastructure investments were, however, followed with promotion of Chinese high speed rail technology and nuclear power plants, clearly suggesting further interests on China's side.

Another point recurring in media was China's effort to portray itself as a protector of the world peace established after WW2. From this perspective, not only may this economic cooperation help to build universal prosperity, but China also seems to project its political interests globally (在世界反法西斯战争胜利和联合国成立70周年之际, 中欧同为战后国际秩序的参与者和建设者, 要带头坚定奉行《联合国宪章》的宗旨和原则, 促进世界和平稳定). Europe has become one of the focal points of such Chinese drive. After all, also Chinese media noticed increased focus of Chinese leaders on Europe, as it has welcomed the highest number of the top-official visits among the world regions during the Xi's administration (... 在三年半时间里共出访68个国家, 耗时167天. 其中, 53天时间先后访问了23个欧洲国家. 不论是出访国家和时间, 欧洲都占领导人出访十分之三强).

In conclusion, China's hopes to get involved in EU's economic recovery reflect not only its will to bolster global influence, but at the same time Beijing is depicted in an economically superior position by the Chinese press. Facilitation of trade, investments, and other related issues are presented as bringing huge benefits to EU, which is now struggling not only economically, but also politically.

Ondřej Macháček

POLISH PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS



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Polish presidential election closed on 24th May, with Andrzej Duda, candidate from the largest opposition party Law and Justice defeating the incumbent President Bronisław Komorowski and becoming the new Polish President. Chinese media, in general, did not pay as much attention to this issue as they might have been expected to. Major official newspapers like People's Daily and Xinhua News gave only two-sentence brief reports. Longer articles from other media were also mainly composed of translations of foreign media analyses. Still, these few reports deliver interesting message on the Chinese perspective toward the Polish election.

One of the common features of the Chinese media reporting on Polish election is that all of them confirmed its importance for Europe and Russia. An article from Huanqiu stated that the Polish elections have and Duda's success immediately caught the attention of Russia and members of the EU (杜达当选立刻引起俄和欧盟国家注意). Words like "shocked", "anxious" and "worried" repeatedly appeared in the article to show strong and intensive emotional reaction from Russia and Germany (德俄“焦虑”波兰新总统; 德国媒体的反应是“吃惊”和“焦虑”).

After a general account, Chinese media went further to explain where these "worries" and "anxiety" come from. Huanqiu quoted Die Welt that Duda is against "following the EU blindly", and that he thinks Poland should have more autonomy (反对波兰“跟着欧盟政策随波逐流”, 认为波兰应拥有更多主权). Xinmin, a Shanghai local newspaper, gave a more detailed description of Duda's policy - Duda believes that the Poles should protect their national interests by not entering the Eurozone and should support their own national industry, even if the result might be its

withdrawal from the climate change policy of the EU (他表示波兰应该保卫自己的国家利益, 不应该加入欧元; 他还支持波兰重振内向型的、倚赖污染严重煤炭储备的民族工业, 即便波兰因此退出欧盟制定的气候变化政策也在所不惜). Regarding the relations with Russia, Huanqiu and Xinmin both agree that the Polish relations with Russia are not going to get any better - a more right-wing party means a tougher challenge for Polish-Russian relations (来自更为激进的右翼候选人当选总统, 意味着波兰与俄罗斯的关系将面临更加严峻的考验). Furthermore, as was reported, Duda firmly believes that Poland should ally with the US and hopes NATO could have a permanent base in Poland as a leverage against Russian power (杜达坚定相信波兰应该与美国结盟, 希望北约在波兰设立永久基地与俄罗斯抗衡).

Although Chinese media are fully aware of the importance of this election in Poland for Europe, considering Poland being the sixth largest economy in the EU, it seems China has not realised the potential influence of this election for China itself, or at least has not started to be anxious about it yet. No article commented on Duda's right-wing affiliation's impact on the Chinese "One Belt, One Road" strategy. China seems to be still completely optimistic about the New Silk Road policy, without worrying that Duda's more inward-looking attitude might hinder the Chinese agenda in this region.

While insufficient attention has been paid to the Polish election from the Chinese side, Xinhua has already spared a column for 2016 American election. A layman comment under the Polish election report from Huanqiu might explain this slightly odd phenomenon: "No matter who is elected in Eastern Europe, they always have to bend with the wind, just like grass on the top of the wall" (在东欧不管谁上台都是墙头草的宿命).

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Chinese Media Watch is a project of the Institute of Asian Studies which aims to shed light on the Chinese media perception of the most impactful stories in Europe.