



Chinese Media Watch: Pompeo's United Front against Huawei?

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CHINESE MEDIA WATCH

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1 Tackling the China threat theory

In mid-February, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo visited Hungary, Slovakia, and Poland, cautioning European allies against cooperation with China and Russia. Combined with the Huawei Incident in Poland and the Czech Republic earlier this year, China sees Pompeo's CEE visit as Washington's effort of forming a *"united front against Huawei"* (反华为统一战线) to curb China's development.

In this effort, CEE is viewed (*Global Times*) as an *"arena of struggle among great powers"* despite the fact that *"China is different from other major powers, since its presence is focused on economic development rather than security"*. In this dichotomy, China is presented as a power striving to make *"economic cooperation the mainstream of Central and Eastern Europe"* while USA is *"trying to transform the mainstream in the region from economic cooperation to security"* and intending to *"use its advantage in security to push China's economic influence out from the region"*.

People's Daily reported on the official positions of the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Ministry's spokesperson Hua Chunying equated Pompeo's visit to the Central European nations as a continued campaign to spread the *"China threat theory"*. According to Hua, Pompeo's visit and overall US policy it represented were an example of *"ideological bias as well as cold-war and zero-sum mentality"*, which ought to be abandoned in favor of *"fair, inclusive, transparent and standardized environment for normal international friendly and mutually beneficial cooperation"*.

Reference News (参考消息) informed that last September, Pompeo already stated that *"China is a bigger threat to the US than Russia"* (他称中国是美国的主要威胁, 将中国置于“俄罗斯威胁”之上). This article continues to explain that according to experts China's threat to the US is first and foremost reflected in its economic model, embodied particularly in the Belt and Road Initiative (中国对美国的危险主要在于其经济模式[...]具体表现就是'一带一路'项目); the second

danger is that China tries to “invade” the high-tech area that traditionally belonged to the US (美方认为的第二大“危险”是中国试图“入侵”美国的传统领域——高科技领域).

2 Saving Huawei

A recent representation of the China-US high-tech war is obviously the Huawei Incident. Guancha (观察者网) highlighted Washington’s hostility towards Huawei, quoting both Pompeo’s speech in Hungary and US ambassador to the European Union’s recent announcement:

“Pompeo threatened that the deployment of China’s Huawei equipment by the Hungarian side would lead to difficulties in cooperation between the two countries [US and Hungary]. The US ambassador to the European Union recently publicly declared that any country that allows the use of Chinese enterprise equipment will face the risk of US sanctions retaliation.”

蓬佩奥威胁称，匈方如部署中国华为设备将导致两国合作困难。美国驻欧盟大使近日也曾公开宣称，任何允许使用中国企业设备的国家都将面临美制裁报复风险。

However, it seems Beijing believes that Washington’s agenda of forming an “anti-Huawei united front” is facing challenges, and Hungarian Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó’s response towards Pompeo’s speech is an example of such challenges. Guancha (观察者网) quoted Szijjártó’s comments on the West being hypocritical and his suggestion for the US to mind its own business instead:

“If some countries always spend their time interfering with other countries’ internal affairs, the world will not get better,” said Szijjártó, who stated that Hungary can maintain a transparent relationship with China, Russia, and the West. Szijjártó said that Washington’s accusation of the Hungary-China and Hungary-Russia relationships is “very hypocritical.”

“如果某些国家老把时间花在干涉他国内政上，这世界并不会变得更好，”西阿尔托说，匈牙利可以与中国、俄罗斯，以及西方国家保持透明的关系。单独把匈牙利与中俄的关系挑出来加以指责“非常虚伪”。

Understandably, this response from Szijjártó has earned credits for Hungary among Chinese audience. In the comments section below this report, some netizens commented “it comes the time to test CEE state leaders” (看来是到了鉴

别中东欧国家领导人的时候了), suggesting that Hungary has “*passed*” the test but Poland and the Czech Republic, where Huawei encountered a backlash, have “*failed*”. Moreover, People’s Daily reported that according to the MFA spokesperson Hua Chunying, Szijarto’s views were “*independent, fair and objective*”.

3 New Warsaw Pact’s Cold War trauma

Even though it is reasonable to assume the Chinese side, after more than six years of cooperation with the CEE countries through the 16+1 Initiative, must feel disappointed by Poland and the Czech Republic in terms of Huawei (some comments do reflect this sentiment), the mainstream Chinese media have largely remained calm. *Global Times* (环球时报), for example, instead of blaming the CEE chose to be “*understanding*”, suggesting the CEE countries to “*walk out of the cold war trauma and avoid pushing themselves to the frontline of geopolitical conflicts*” (中东欧国家有必要走出冷战留下的心理阴影，避免将自己推向地缘政治震荡的锋线位置).

Global Times even went as far as describing the CEE countries (as well as other NATO allies) heeding Washington’s advice on Huawei as resembling the “*old Warsaw Pact*”. The USA and its allies are viewed as “*simplistically formulating countermeasures following the bipolar model of the old Cold War*” against the Sino-Russian “*new axis*”.

Even though Chinese media presented a grim picture of China and its flagship enterprises as being under siege from the USA and its allies in the CEE (and elsewhere in the world), Chinese media also presented an image of China and Huawei as fighting back against the purported bias. According to *Global Times*, “*Huawei shows Chinese firms can defend interests*”. This was presented especially in the case of the recent blocking of Huawei’s bid for a public tender for a taxing information system in the Czech Republic on security grounds, where it was reported that Huawei is going to take a legal action against the Czech authorities, even though “*Chinese entrepreneurs are usually unwilling to start a conflict with foreign authorities*” because they are “*influenced by traditional Chinese philosophy that suggests friendliness is conducive to business success*”.

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