

Defence diplomatic relations between Poland and China and how they can be improved

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Abstract

The main purpose of the article is to examine diplomatic relations between China (official name: the People’s Republic of China) and Poland with a special focus on defence. It also gives an overall assessment of the relations between the armed forces of the two countries and evaluates what has been achieved so far and possible involvements that the countries (especially Poland) should take. A comparative analysis and a historical approach were used whilst investigating the facts. Qualitative research, including participant observation, archival resources, analysis and selection of studies, reports and expertise were the methods employed for collecting research material. Comparative studies were used to analyse other countries’ relations with China to help come to a conclusion. Based on the research, the author recommends an intensification of defence diplomacy between Poland and China which would bring a number of defence and economic benefit to both Warsaw and Beijing. The latest changes in the global balance of power, especially economic, political and military, should be taken into account in the process of developing and implementing a comprehensive and long-term strategic programme in the field of defence diplomacy between Poland and China.

Keywords:

defence diplomacy, arms embargo, Polish-Chinese military cooperation

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Introduction

Throughout history, Poland and China have managed to deal with numerous adversities, although the overall balance of relations in an extremely difficult period was rather positive for both countries. Poland supported the policy of “One China” (i.e. including Tibet and Taiwan) and the desire of China to join the UN. In addition, Warsaw took a moderate position in certain conflicts (Korean and Vietnamese) and Soviet–Chinese disputes. The Chinese-American talks at ambassador level that took place in Warsaw in 1956 are proof that Beijing recognised this. At the same time, China supported Poland, especially in the most difficult security situations. In 1956, China strongly opposed any Soviet Union intervention in Poland. Mao Zedong wrote to Paweł Judin, Soviet Union’s ambassador in Beijing on November 19, 1956: “We received a request from the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union to express an opinion on the announcement in which it is said that you intend to direct your troops to intervene in Poland. This afternoon, our political office, after discussing this issue, stated that we are categorically opposed to your behavior. Please, tell Khrushchev by phone that if the Soviet Union uses the army, we will support Poles against you and publish a message stigmatizing your armed intervention in Poland” (Rowiński, 2009, pp. 267–268). It is also worth noting that: “Poland’s leader Władysław Gomułka succeeded in blocking a number of key initiatives by Khrushchev aimed against China” (Selvage, no date). In this way, both parties gained the historically valuable capital of trust and mutual assistance.

Good relations and a lack of contentious issues in the history of relations between the two countries have always been emphasised at every meeting, including those at the highest level, and served to develop cooperation in all areas. This is expected by China side, which appreciates the fact that in the history of our bilateral relations there were no wars, disputes or hostile behavior. These principles should be the basis for building mutual relations between Polish and Chinese armed forces.

The history of political relations between Poland and China

Polish-Chinese contacts began with the missionary Michał Boym (Kajdański, 1988, pp. 26–58), who became the envoy of Pope Innocent at the time of the declining Ming dynasty, and other missionaries in the 17th century (Stec, 2013, p. 76), but closer political contacts were established in the first decade of the 20th century. The first Polish diplomatic missions were in Shanghai and Harbin (Skóra, 2016, p. 677). At the beginning, the Polish representative office was in Shanghai. After that, in 1919, a consulate was created in Harbin the main centre of Polish emigration (Burdelski, 2011, p. 213). A delegation covering all of China’s activities was created in 1922, and from 1936, it was the Consulate General. In April 1939, the Consulate General of Manchukuo (See more on Manchukuo history: Liu 2011, pp. 9–23) was also created in Warsaw. Manchukuo’s recognition was withdrawn in 1942, shortly after the outbreak of the USA-Japanese war. The Japanese authorities also closed the Polish Consulate General in Harbin.

After the end of World War II, Poland followed the Soviet in opening a new diplomatic mission. The official date for diplomatic relations being established between Poland and China is assumed to be October 7, 1949 (Burdelski, 2011, p. 212). Post-Yalta Poland recognised China as a new international entity under law on October 5, 1949. Two days later, both countries established diplomatic relations at the level of embassies. In the years 1949–1950, Poland’s relations with China were sometimes good, sometimes bad.

In addition to the political sphere, both parties made many important decisions in different fields in the 1950s, e.g. on June 15, 1951, the Polish-Chinese Shipping Company Chipolbros was established – with its headquarters in Shanghai and Gdynia). It was the first Chinese-foreign company in the economic, social and cultural history of China. An agreement on scientific and technical cooperation and cultural cooperation was concluded at the same time. Moreover, hundreds of Chinese students studied at the best Polish universities (significantly fewer Poles at Chinese universities). Visa-free tourist exchange also developed. After the late 1950s, political contacts seriously weakened or even stalled for almost 30 years. It was a period of internal turmoil in China (“cultural revolution”) or Russian-China disputes. However, the Polish leader Gomułka favoured the Chinese side in the Sino-Soviet rift. The Chinese side suspended all political and state contacts. In 1967, after the dismissal of Chinese ambassador from Poland, the rank of diplomatic missions was downrated. Contacts and cooperation were suspended in all areas.

In the 1970s, there were attempts to rebuild relations between Warsaw and Beijing, although Chinese side was primarily concerned with establishing economic cooperation. After a period of freezing, normalisation of Polish-China relations at the political and diplomatic level emerged from 1983, mainly during meetings at the United Nations ([China Radio International, 2016](#)). In May 1983, after almost twenty years, the deputy minister of foreign affairs of China paid an “unofficial” visit to Poland. The purpose of this visit was, among other things, to prepare a meeting of the heads of diplomacy of Poland and China during the session of the UN General Assembly in New York in autumn 1983. This meeting was followed by a revival of Polish-China relations and visits at the highest political level in summer 1986, which resulted in the signing of economic, commercial, scientific and technical cooperation agreements between Poland and China in many fields, i.e. agriculture, biotechnology, electronics, machinery, mining, energy and maritime economy ([Chiny-Polska. Umowa o współpracy kulturalnej i naukowej, 1986](#)).

At the turn of the 1980s and 1990s, some weakening of mutual relations again took place. Western European countries and America watched the situation in Poland, awaiting confirmation of political and economic changes. The dialogue with China resumed in 1991, after a meeting of foreign affairs ministers and economic cooperation developed. The need to strengthen bilateral political consultations and to restore contacts between parliamentarians was pointed out at the time. In 1993, a new agreement on economic and trade relations was signed ([Starzyk, 2009, p. 318](#)). During this period, in addition to visits by high-ranking Chinese and Polish authorities, the first military visit of the Chiefs of General Staffs of the Polish Army took place. However, this visit was more courtesy and was not aimed at developing military cooperation. In 1997, the President of the Republic of Poland, Aleksander Kwasniewski, officially visited China. It was the first visit of the head of the Polish state to China in thirty-eight years ([Kancelaria Prezydenta Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, 1997](#)).

In June 2004 in Warsaw, after Poland joined the European Union, the President of the Republic of Poland and the Chairman of China signed “Joint Statement between the Republic of Poland and the People’s Republic of China”. This statement set a new framework and general principles for the development of bilateral relations in the next few years ([China Internet Information Center, 2004](#)). As a consequence of this joint statement, parliamentary and ministerial contacts, including military relations, were revived. The peak of mutual relations and visits took place in the years 2002-2005. Numerous delegations of both countries visited either Warsaw or Beijing.

The key year in the history of bilateral relations was 2011, in particular the visit of the President of the Republic of Poland, Bronisław Komorowski, to China and the raising of

relations between the two countries to the level of a strategic partnership (Chołaj, 2014, p. 14). As a result of this decision, there was an unprecedented intensification of high-level exchanges of visits and the creation of new cooperation structures. Making such a historic decision was preceded by a series of meetings and conversations in various areas of mutual relations, including, 15 official delegations at the level of ministries visiting China in 2011. At the same time, six Chinese delegations were in Poland. In April 2012, a summit of the heads of government of China (Kundnani and Parello-Plesner, 2012, p. 7) Poland and 15 other Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries was held in Warsaw (Tianping, 2015). During this meeting, Chinese side announced “12 initiatives” for the development of cooperation between China and Poland in various fields – from economics and politics to science and tourism. During this time, the foreign ministers of both countries agreed on the creation of an Intergovernmental Committee, which aims to discuss specific mechanisms of dialogue and cooperation. Heads of diplomacy of both countries headed this committee.

In the following years, high-level mutual visits were carried out at a similar level, which proved that both governments considered bilateral cooperation important. Many important Chinese delegations visited at the central and local level in Poland. Visits by China party delegations and developing contacts with Polish parties of all orientations were a new phenomenon. All official Polish authorities tried to be ‘politically correct’ recognising China territorial integrity and systemic originality -but accepting the Dalai Lama as a religious leader. However, after the Dalai Lama’s visit to the Republic of Poland (in the first half of 2009), three powerful Chinese economic missions came to Europe – two for trade and one for investment. They bypassed those countries that the Dalai Lama visited (France and Poland) and serious contracts and considerable Chinese investment was lost.

After the assumption of power in Poland by the new government in 2015, it seemed that the current policy regarding Polish-China cooperation would be continued. Chinese President Xi Jinping in 2016 was welcomed in Poland with full honours and hoped to intensify mutual relations. In Poland almost everyone spoke about the great significance of the visit of the president of the People’s Republic of China. During this visit, the Polish and Chinese Presidencies solemnly greeted the freight train that came to Warsaw from Chengdu, the capital of the Chinese province of Sichuan. This ceremony was a symbolic opening of the New Silk Road, i.e. Poland’s explicit acceptance of China concept of a new trade route connecting Asia with Europe. This Polish position was confirmed by President Andrzej Duda in the summer of 2017, during the opening of the International Forum of the New Silk Road and the Fourth Polish-Chinese Forum of Regions. The President of the Republic of Poland stated: “I would like more air connections, I would like this business flow opportunity to be more efficient, I would like us to create additional connections: road, sea connections, everything that will promote cooperation, everything that will also support trade.” It was then also established that one of the first new Chinese investments in Poland, would be the construction of a large Polish-Chinese rail transshipment terminal in Łódź.

Unfortunately, high-level common relations have declined significantly in the last three years (Sarek, 2017). However, during the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic, China held a video conference of health experts with 17 Central and Eastern European countries (CEECs), including Poland, to share information and relevant measures on epidemic prevention and control. A phone conversation between the Polish and Chinese Presidents was also organised. It is hoped that mutual relations will return and the intensity of high-level relationships will be continued.

Defence industry cooperation and the EU embargo on trade in military equipment to China. Attempts to abolish it and the consequences for Europe

Cooperation in the field of defence industries and the sale of weapons and military equipment has recently become increasingly important. It is one of the most important instruments of mutual cooperation between states in the framework of defence diplomacy (Drab, 2018, pp. 47–55). It applies not only to the transmission of equipment and armaments, as it did in the past, but to broadly understood defence cooperation, the transfer of technology and the transfer of some production to other countries. This approach builds trust between countries related to the transfer of military technology, and also enables training, use and implementation of combat tasks using the same or technologically similar equipment. This has a huge impact on the conduct of joint exercises, coalition missions and operations. This is the role of defence industry cooperation between allied states. A good example of such cooperation is the alliance between Poland and the United States in the field of sale of equipment and armaments and the transfer of technology.

The cooperation of Western countries with China in this area looks much different. An arms embargo to China was introduced on June 27, 1989 as a package of sanctions against China after the events at Tiananmen Square in early June 1989. The scope of the embargo has never been precisely defined by the European Union, and Member States have the option to freely interpret its rules (Janicka, 2010, p. 275). For example, the United Kingdom does not sell any military goods to Beijing that could be used to carry out internal repression. Although, according to Amnesty International, the United Kingdom exported components, technology, software and systems for military use to China, e.g. equipment for Chinese JH-7 fighters. Military equipment was sold to Beijing by Italy (e.g. air-to-air missiles and radar), France (e.g. air-to-air missiles, Dauphin helicopters, Lafayette frigate, marine and land radar) and Germany (including shipbuilding elements with nuclear propulsion (Bräuner *et al.*, 2015, pp. 19–32 and Hellström, 2010, pp. 23–24). According to the Financial Times, in spite of the embargo being in force, European Union countries issued licences for the sale of weapons and military equipment to China for a sum of EUR 400 million (\$ 531 million) in 2003 – almost twice as much as in 2002 (SIPRI, 2012).

In the years 2003-2005, the European Union expressed its political will to lift the embargo on arms delivery to China, which had been in force for 16 years. Paris and Madrid were lobbying hard for abolishment of the embargo, as was the German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder, whose position was not supported by his own Social Democratic Party, exerting considerable pressure on EU policy in this matter because of their broad economic interests in Asia. The delay in the whole process was influenced by the adoption, in March 2005, by China of the anti-secession law, allowing military action against Taiwan if the authorities of that country, considered by Beijing to be a rebellious province, formally declared independence. In September 2006, during the 9th EU-China Summit, the EU repeated its declaration on the lifting of the embargo, although on January 18, 2007, it officially announced that it would remain in force.

France, Spain and Germany support the lifting the sanctions. According to these countries, China plays an important role in international relations, and due to changes in their internal policies, the ban can be considered obsolete and motivated only by “hostility towards Beijing”. On the other hand, in their opinion, maintaining friendly relations with the PRC will contribute to deepening the reform process and introducing stability on the Asian continent. In this way, France, like Germany, believes that deeper economic relations with

China will counterbalance American unilateralism. In addition, they count on economic benefits and increased trade with Beijing in the field of arms. China is seen as a huge market, and closer economic cooperation may in the future result in the signing of favourable commercial contracts in other areas as well (Bräuner *et al.*, 2015 pp. 15–18).

On the other hand, in the years 2004–2008 and even until 2014, cooperation between France, Germany (Hellström, 2010, p. 23), Italy and Spain with Russia was developing intensively, which, in the face of the EU and the US embargo, is the main supplier of defence technologies to China. Maintaining sanctions against Beijing seems to be beneficial for Moscow for financial (defence industry cooperation) and political (closer contacts with Beijing) relations.

However, the lifting of the embargo on the supply of arms to China is opposed by Denmark (Hellström, 2010, pp. 42–43) and by the Netherlands, due to violations of human rights in China, incl. in Tibet and East Turkestan. According to these two countries, Beijing has an unfriendly policy towards Taiwan, does not comply with export control rules, and is not able to protect the transfer of sensitive arms technologies to third countries.

The United States is also against the lifting of the embargo because of the threat to Taiwan's security and American interests in Asia. Therefore, lifting the EU ban is part of the ongoing bilateral consultations. The US is threatening to freeze the transfer of strategic arms technologies to community member states if the embargo is lifted. In addition, sanctions may be imposed on European defence companies selling their products or systems to China. They will not be able to participate in joint research and scientific projects and production in the field of armaments. The United States argues that lifting the embargo would threaten the process of strengthening human rights protection in China and disrupt stability and security in Southeast Asia (Bräuner *et al.*, 2015, pp. 5–11).

According to China, the imposition of the embargo by the EU was “inadequate” for the situation, and all the circumstances on the basis of which the organisation introduced the ban have ceased to exist. In its view, maintaining the ban on the supply of weapons is a barrier to cooperation in the field of defence industries and military technology and it should be removed as soon as possible. Lifting the arms embargo on China will also be important for strengthening their diplomatic position in the international arena.

Equally important are the voices of European armaments companies, which hope that the lifting of the embargo on arms deliveries to China will ensure the export of their products to the Asian market, which until now was mainly the responsibility of Russia and other countries that did not apply the embargo e.g. Ukraine (Kuznetsov, 2016, p. 93) and Israel. The position of European enterprises largely depends on the level of their sales outside Europe; therefore, access to a new market is very important for them. In this sense, lifting the embargo for Europe would be very beneficial. On the other hand, such a step does not automatically guarantee that China will purchase European armaments. Russia is too strong in China market and derives tangible benefits from it, so it is possible to intensify competition. Russian armaments are more suitable for the modernisation of the Chinese armed forces, based on Soviet standard equipment. Therefore, European companies can only fulfil the role of an additional competitor, thanks to which the final prices of military goods will be cheaper for Chinese recipients, and the benefits of lifting the embargo on the European arms industry will remain small. However, for the sale of European technologies in the field of management, control and communication, embargoes do not have to be lifted, as the freedom to interpret the rules of the embargo allows the sale of dual-use goods and this is used by EU countries.

In accordance with Vennesson's analyses, lifting the embargo can have many negative effects (Vennesson, 2007, pp. 433–437), namely:

- further tensions in European-American relations and deterioration of transatlantic relations;
- ending the unanimous position of the West towards the China, which may cause irreversible negative political consequences;
- a political victory for China and de facto recognition of its human rights policy after the events in Tiananmen Square.

Europe sees the lifting of the embargo on arms deliveries to Beijing mainly in economic terms, which contributes to deepening disputes with the US, which alone will have to counteract the political and military repercussions of the economic policy pursued by the EU (SIPRI, 2019). Therefore, one should consider whether a good way to end disputes between the EU and the US regarding the lifting of the embargo might be for both parties to adopt a legally binding list of military products and defence technologies whose sale to China would be banned.

Regardless of the EU decision to maintain or lift the embargo on arms deliveries to China, the Polish defence industry has a great opportunity to develop cooperation with Beijing. The Polish defence industry, supported by the Ministry of Defence and Foreign Affairs, should therefore consider looking for opportunities for cooperation in this area without violating the embargo. The grounds for a joint search for such opportunities were built in the years 2012–2014 and agreed for further discussion during the first Polish-Chinese strategic dialogue in 2014. During discussions on this topic, China welcomed the need to create a team that would prepare cooperation proposals. Unfortunately, since the end of 2014, talks on this topic have ceased and the opportunities of for the Polish defence industry, based largely on Soviet technologies (Oznobishchev, 2017, pp. 45–48), like Chinese, have been wasted. The topic of defence diplomacy relations is not included in other bilateral frameworks, such as the Intergovernmental Committee or the strategic dialogue.

Poland and China defence diplomacy cooperation – an attempt to strengthen the relationship

On December 16, 2009, a historic agreement was signed, concerning Polish-China defence diplomacy cooperation (Niewiński, 2010). The bilateral defence cooperation agreement was the first document of this type in the history of diplomatic relations between the Polish Armed Forces and the People's Liberation Army (PLA). This agreement sets out the basic principles of cooperation in the area of defence. Its main goal was to establish and then search for opportunities to deepen contacts in defence between the Republic of Poland and the People's Republic of China. Among the areas of future cooperation, the agreement listed:

- functioning of the armed forces, including the implementation of international treaty provisions in the fields of defence, security and arms control,
- military education and training of military personnel,
- military medicine,
- military science and research,

- environmental protection – in particular caused by the activities of the armed forces in relation to damage caused by the various military units,

The agreement also indicated the forms and instruments of cooperation that allowed it to be carried out in agreed areas. The most important included:

- meetings of defence ministers, chiefs of general staffs and other high civilian and military representatives of both sides – one of the most important areas of cooperation in defence diplomacy ([Drab, 2018, p. 50](#)),
- exchange of experience at expert level,
- political and military consultations, conferences and seminars,
- participation of observers in military exercises,
- participation in peacekeeping missions and humanitarian operations.

In addition, it was agreed that specific projects would be agreed and included in annual plans for military cooperation. It should be emphasised that the conclusion of the agreement did not constitute a violation of the current embargo on trade in arms and military equipment to China, as it did not suggest cooperation in this area. The position of Chinese side presented in the negotiation process was rational and balanced, and it did not even propose to include areas of cooperation in this regard. Information exchange was another “delicate” area of military cooperation. A cooperation agreement in the field of defence diplomacy and an agreement on the protection of classified information are usually negotiated and agreed in parallel, but this applies mainly to countries who like Poland are members of organisations in the field of regional and international security (e.g. NATO and the EU). Therefore, it was agreed with China that the exchange of information under the concluded contract would be limited to unclassified information.

The signing of such an agreement was unusual because Poland had mostly taken a Western course since regaining sovereignty. The most important political groups saw Poland's future based either on „merging” with NATO, the EU or an alliance with the United States. Therefore, it seemed that the Polish political establishment had forgotten or preferred not to remember the rest of the world, and the emerging power in Asia was treated as large, far away and basically of little interest to Poland. However, the reality turned out to be different. Signing the agreement on cooperation in the field of defence ([Burdelski, 2011, p. 224](#)) opened a new chapter of collaboration between Poland and China. Cooperation in the areas of defence diplomacy could not include defence industries, operational forces and joint exercises, but allowed for the development of mutual relations in other areas.

The mere signing of the said agreement did not immediately guarantee that either country would increase military relations. Poland was already a member of the North Atlantic Alliance and a close ally of the United States at that time. Therefore, military cooperation was developed gradually and in neutral areas, which did not oblige any party to go beyond the areas agreed in the agreement. At the beginning, the Polish side were probably more willing to strengthen the cooperation. However, neither party went beyond the agreed framework and areas of cooperation and both countries were cautious and prudent.

The intensification of mutual defence diplomacy relations took place in 2014 as part of a special bilateral meeting. The plan of mutual ventures implemented both in China and

Poland was agreed and approved annually from 2014. It was also agreed that at least once a year, alternately once in China and then once in Poland, high level meetings would be organised at defence minister level. In addition, for the first time, it was agreed to:

- establish a strategic dialogue at deputy defence minister level in order to start a deeper discussion on defence cooperation,
- increase cooperation in the field of military education,
- establish mutual relations between the National Defence University and the Academy of Military Sciences of the People's Republic of China. Poland also had a permanent place on a course at General level to which a representative of the Polish armed forces was directed every year,
- strengthen the cooperation of the management staff of the armed forces of both countries, and Chinese and Polish generals visited each other's countries to this end,
- increase cooperation in the area of information exchange on the preparation and conduct of peacekeeping operations within the UN. Constant contacts were established in this regard between the Preparation Centre for Foreign Missions in Kielce and appropriate structures preparing soldiers for peacekeeping missions in the PLA.

The PLA treated the last mentioned initiative as a priority because their experience regarding the participation of PLA troops in UN operations was very poor. They were just beginning to build a system for the training and sending of their soldiers, in particular, uniform units for carrying out tasks in peacekeeping missions and operations. Therefore, exchange of conclusions and experience from the participation of Poland's armed forces in missions and operations in various regions of the world have been very helpful and useful to the Chinese army. Consequently, it was not surprising that our military representatives were invited (as speakers and, at the same time, covering travel and participation costs) to various types of international conferences organised by the PLA side. The conferences focused on matters related to preparation of training bases, the process of preparing units and the implementation of tasks under the mission.

At the same time, during the strategic meeting in Beijing in 2015, equally interesting and useful discussions with PLA think tanks were conducted during the strategic dialogues. There was surprise at the openness of PLA officers in presenting a position that offered a different interpretation of threats and the security situation in the region, of relations with neighbouring countries, the security threats related to the development of nuclear weapons by North Korea, relations with Russia and the United States and their ideas regarding cooperation with European countries.

Defence diplomacy cooperation between the Polish Ministry of Defence (MoD) and the PLA was laboriously built in 2014-2016. The annual plans for military cooperation set the framework for military activities and specified concrete projects for implementation in a given year by both the PLA and the Polish Ministry of Defence. This document also allowed financial resources to be appropriated for the implementation of these projects. The annual cooperation plan was also the main document supporting the preparation and conduct of strategic dialogues and detailed analysis of complete or incomplete joint ventures.

The intensification of Polish-Chinese defence diplomacy cooperation in the years 2014-2016 provided hope for a qualitative breakthrough and a major improvement in Warsaw-Beijing relations. Defence relations developed particularly positively, which allowed for

deeper analysis not only in the area of information exchange, international peacekeeping operations and military science and education, but also in the search for cooperation opportunities between the defence industries of both countries. Unfortunately, due to the security situation in Eastern Europe, mainly concerning the situation in Ukraine and Russia's aggressive policy towards NATO members, the military cooperation between the Polish MoD and PLA has been forgotten.

The deterioration of the security situation in Europe, related to Russia's aggressive policies, did not prevent the USA and Western European states from continuing their military diplomatic cooperation with China. In the years 2003-2016, military diplomatic interactions continued, and the activity of European states in relation to China was considerable (see Table 1).

Table 1. PLA military diplomatic activity by region, 2003-2016
(own study, based on: [Allen et al., 2017, p. 56](#))

Region	Military exercises	Naval port visits	Senior-level meetings	Total number of activities	% of total activities
Asia	204	105	842	1151	41.3
Europe	51	33	543	627	22.5
Africa	13	22	259	294	10.6
South America	8	12	201	221	7.9
Middle East	10	76	113	199	7.2
North America	27	13	130	170	6.1
Russia	38	4	81	123	4.4

It is worth mentioning that defence cooperation with China is maintained not only by world powers, such as the United States and Russia ([Allen et al., 2017, pp. 44–57](#)), but also by the largest European states, such as Germany ([Globalsecurity.org, 2013](#)), France ([Xuequan, 2018](#)), Italy, Spain and even Hungary.

When taking part in inter-state relations, China is patient, prudent and rarely makes sudden ill-considered decisions. Therefore, Poland needs to think about the possibility of re-establishing defence diplomacy cooperation in accordance with the good example provided by that of previous years.

Conclusion and recommendations

It is hard to disagree with Professor Matyja's opinion that "despite systemic, economic and military competition, the international community should be interested in cooperation with a predictable and responsible China. An isolated and weak middle state would certainly be a greater threat to the Western World. Mutual trust facilitates cooperation, especially in times of crisis, but the initiative for cooperation should come from both sides" ([Matyja, 2020](#)).

The PLA conducts defence cooperation on all continents with the most important countries in the world ([Ministry of Defence, 2020](#)). The main countries in Europe also maintain defence relations with China. This cooperation is carried out at different levels depending on the capabilities of a given country and the prospects for the development of cooperation. Poland should therefore consider joining other European countries and develop defence cooperation in accordance with the existing conditions.

Poland's diplomatic relations with the "middle state", despite ups and downs, should be considered as good and promising. Both sides have gained an historically valuable capital of trust and mutual assistance, which should be maximised in their current and future contacts.

Building good relations with China, it is necessary to return to defence diplomacy cooperation, which is perceived by Beijing as an important element of trust between states. In order to improve this cooperation it is recommended that:

- a coherent defence foreign policy and the principles of Polish MoD cooperation with the PLA is adjusted and agreed upon,
- a comprehensive and long-term strategic programme in the field of defence cooperation is developed and implemented. This programme must take into account the latest changes in the global balance of power, especially those of an economic, political and military nature. The role and importance of the defence diplomacy cooperation of both countries should also be taken into account,
- regional cooperation and contacts between non-governmental, social and creative organisations such as tourism, sports exchange etc. is developed on a large scale,
- an efficient system for promoting the Polish defence industry, is established,
- the severe information, environmental and psychological gap between the two countries and societies, in particular young people and opinion leaders, entrepreneurs, people of science, technology and culture is closed (Turcsanyi and Kachlikova, 2020, pp. 63 and 67),
- the anachronistic, irrational and harmful attitude of some decision makers towards China is abandoned.

However, Poland does not need to build mutual defence diplomacy relations with the PLA from the beginning. It only needs to take advantage of the good and proven experience of cooperation from the past. The first step for intensifying joint cooperation should focus on preparing and agreeing the annual cooperation plan between the Polish MoD and the PLA.

Implementing these recommendations would not only guarantee the intensification of mutual defence diplomatic relations, but above all bring defence and economic benefits for both Warsaw and Beijing.

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