



Warsaw aftermath: Challenges for Central Europe

The second and last panel discussion of the Visegrad Youth Forum 2016 took place at the Faculty of Political Science and International Relations of the Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica on December 8, 2016. The discussion was titled “Warsaw aftermath: Challenges for Central Europe”. Róbert Ondrejcsák, the State Secretary of the Ministry of Defense of the Slovak Republic, gave the opening commentary. In his commentary, Mr. Ondrejcsák focused on the outcomes of the Warsaw summit, stating that not everyone is satisfied with the results, as some expected more and some expected completely different results. He also touched on the current situation in Ukraine, saying that a potential solution will be strongly affected by the current events unfolding in the world.

The panelists of the discussion were Radovan Javorčík, Director of the State Secretary Office of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic, István Gyarmati, Ambassador, Professor and President of the Center for Democracy Public Foundation, Jakub Wisniewski, Vice President of GLOBSEC and Director of the GLOBSEC Policy Institute and Michal Šimečka, research fellow at the Institute of International Relations Prague. The panel was chaired by Euro-Atlantic Center member Róbert Vancel.

Speaking first, Mr. Javorčík said that during the recent past, the definition of deterrence has significantly changed. Since the 90's, the focus of Central European countries has been to become more militarily stable. Nowadays, we live in times of uncertainty, as the security environment has been constantly changing and maintaining stability in the region is currently challenging more than ever. Mr. Šimečka spoke second, stating that the Warsaw summit didn't bring anything new, as the results aren't anything ground-breaking. Yet, the circumstances have now been influenced by the outcome of the US presidential election and Brexit. Due to the outcome of the elections in the US, the V4 countries are now uncertain whether they can rely on the US and on NATO if the need arises.



Speaking third, Mr. Wisniewski further elaborated on the influence of the US presidential election, being skeptical about the prospect of President-elect Donald Trump helping Europe in case of need. He also mentioned Brexit, describing it as a very serious threat for the EU, as it could create a precedent for other countries. If countries like France or Germany would opt to leave the EU, the entire continent would be destabilized. Mr. Gyarmati spoke last, criticizing the outcome of the Warsaw summit, as the decisions that were made during the summit should've been made when NATO was inviting new states to become members. He pointed out that NATO is only now beginning to catch up with the 90's. Furthermore, Mr. Gyarmati warned that NATO is facing its biggest crisis since 1949, because of Russian efforts to create a rift between member countries. Because of Russian propaganda, it's difficult to recognize the truth, which is the reason why Europe is becoming more pro-Putin.

The questions from the audience focused on whether NATO will hold together and overcome the various challenges it currently faces. The panelists agreed that although NATO overcame many crises in the past, the current situation is different, mostly because NATO is unsure about the involvement and cooperation with the US after the election of Donald Trump. The key to overcoming this crisis is maintaining strong leadership that will settle any disputes within NATO itself.