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AE MicroMacro – China

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Chinese media on judicial reform in Poland

What happened? On December 18 the Chinese News Network published an [article on the reform of the Polish judicial system](#) undertaken by the Law and Justice (PiS) government including the argument made by the Supreme Court of Poland, that the reforms can lead to Poland's exit from the EU. The article referred to "foreign media reports" without providing any details on the specific sources. It's possible that it was based on the [BBC report from December 17](#). Chinese media outlets including [Global Times](#), [China Daily](#) and many others have reported the news drawing the content from the Chinese article. Some cited other foreign sources, that were also largely based on the BBC report. e.g. [Sina](#) cited [Financial Times article on WeChat](#).

Why it matters? Chinese media coverage has presented the shortened version of the original BBC story with the following main points:

- judges who question the legality of the reforms can be dismissed on the grounds of "engagement in political activities"
- the Law and Justice justifies the reforms as a tool to tackle corruption in the judicial system
- Supreme Court opinion, that the reforms are against the EU law and can lead to Poles' exit.

The Chinese media coverage missed several important elements and it resulted in creating the distorted picture of the situation. Chinese media did not report on the mass protests of the Polish citizens against the government plans that were held earlier in December and were mentioned in the original BBC text. Most reports also missed the comment of the First President of the Supreme Court prof. Małgorzata Gersdorf [comparing PiS actions to the](#)



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[communist government repression of judges in 1981 during martial war](#) (with exceptions - [Guancha included this information citing Euronews](#)). There was also no backgrounder explaining to the Chinese reader how the planned and already partially implemented reforms of the judicial system actually endanger the rule of law in Poland. For the Chinese citizen living in the country, where the will of the Communist Party of China is the highest law, the idea of the judicial system's independence from the political influence can be hard to understand. Chinese coverage has also missed the very critical analysis of the reform published by the parliament's [Bureau of Research](#) and [the public protests organized in many Polish cities](#).

Wider picture. The limited reporting of the PiS judicial reform in the Chinese mainstream media is not surprising considering the little interest of the Chinese public opinion in Poland. Interesting is, that this distorted picture of the conflict focused almost exclusively on the dispute between the PiS government and Polish Supreme Court having EU administration on its side. The political opposition statements, public opinion's strong critical voices and protests were not reported. The open question is if this distorted narrative is the result of the poor understanding of the situation in Poland, despite the presence of the Chinese journalists on the ground, lack of interest in deeper insight or the result of the content adjustment to please the Chinese censors. However it's hard to blame Chinese media for the poor coverage when the Chinese expert from the government think tank presents the analysis of the dispute [focused mainly on the three actors: EU, Polish Supreme Court and PiS government](#) without including other actors and factors.