

**Von der Versöhnung zur Alltäglichkeit?** 30 Jahre deutsch-polnische Nachbarschaft. Hrsg. von Martin Dahl, Magdalena Lemańczyk und Peter Oliver Loew. (Veröffentlichungen des Deutschen Polen-Instituts Darmstadt, Bd. 39.) Harrassowitz. Wiesbaden 2022. VIII, 348 S., Tab., Kt. ISBN 978-3-447-11902-3. (€ 38,-)

The thirtieth anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Good Neighborship and Friendly Cooperation between Poland and Germany fell on June 2021, in the shadow of the Covid-19 Pandemic. It posed a unique opportunity to reflect on the past three decades of partnership in various fields, which also involved many compromises and challenges. This edited volume is an outcome of the jubilee's events organized in Poland and Germany, and offers an interdisciplinary perspective on the past 30 years of Polish-German relations and fosters dialogue about the future of the partnership.

The 26 essays are arranged in six sections that explore different aspects of Polish-German partnership, namely: the economy ("Treibende Kraft der deutsch-polnischen Beziehungen: Die Wirtschaft," six essays), reconciliation ("Versöhnung und Alltag: Grenznahe Zusammenarbeit," four essays) civil society engagement ("Wegbereiter der Versöhnung: Die zivilgesellschaftlichen Akteure," three essays), historical politics and memory culture ("Geschichtspolitik und Erinnerungskultur," six essays), the status of national minorities ("Deutsche in Polen. Polen in Deutschland—Erfolge und Kontroversen der Minderheiten Politik," three essays) and security policies ("Deutsche und polnische Sicherheitspolitik—ausgewählte Aspekte," four essays). The sections are arranged in a kind of descending order, starting with analyzing institutional "top-down" aspects of cooperation and finishing on social and "bottom-up" or grass-roots forms of neighborly partnership.

The opening section concerns a main pillar of Polish-German cooperation, namely the economy. The authors of the essays examine the future perspectives of economic partnership and astutely point out the risks and potential challenges, namely integration politics, deglobalization, protectionism, and digitalization (Sebastian Płóciennik). The selected essays look at economic collaboration on various levels and from different angles. The contribution by Ewelina Florczak concerns infrastructural investments and the expansion of the motorway network, while the text by Maciej Rogalski tackles the topic of telecommunication. The strongest essay in this section investigates energy politics and the construction of the NordStream 1 and NordStream 2 pipeline systems (Matthias Dornfeld, Urs Unkauf). The authors formulate important questions about Polish energy sources, state security, and the future of Polish-German relations in the context of economic alliances with Russia and European solidarity. Since the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, these questions have never been more relevant. The weak side of this section is the echoing of particular topics, such as the historical background of the Polish-German Treaty and the summary of cooperation, which is repeated in several articles. Unnecessary repetition like this also appears in other parts of the volume.

The next section looks at the social dimension of Polish-German cooperation, providing explanations and practical examples. Peter Ulrich introduces three fields of partnership: (1) civil and social participation in Euro-regional politics, (2) cross-borderland public services, and (3) societal, bottom-up innovations. He presents interesting case studies which support his argument about successful and multifaceted cross-border cooperation. Similarly, the essay provided by Joachim Otto Habeck and Agnieszka Halemba investigates the social dimensions of the Polish-German borderlands and explores the question of identity among younger generations, as well as the idea of "fast integration." In this context, the researchers formulate a call for more research to be done around the Covid-19 Pandemic and its impact on local communities and neighborly partnerships in the borderland regions

The following section addresses the important topic of reconciliation. The articles here examine the subject of partnership on a number of levels, for example the activities of the Catholic Church, as well as in various fields of cross-cultural dialogue, such as sport, philanthropy and through the stories of individual migrants, who Hans-Werner Retterath

calls “cultural brokers” (pp. 155–156). Besides examples of cooperation, this section also tackles the problematic spheres of potential conflicts, such as different approaches towards LGBT communities and possible conflicts of values on regional and international levels.

The fourth part of the book focuses on political and cultural aspects of the Polish-German partnership, particularly the issue of the politics of history and memory culture in both countries. The thematic scope of this section overlaps with the previous part of the book as it also concerns the issue of reconciliation, though in another context. The opening article by Piotr Madajczyk points out challenges in overcoming dissimilarities and facilitating a coherent historical narrative. He looks at different “points of gravity” in historiography, mythologization processes, and imbalances in the effectiveness of the politics of history. Łukasz Jasiński explores one of these “points of gravity” mentioned by Madajczyk in his essay by describing the role of the “turning points” of 1989, namely round table negotiations, and their location in the collective memory of Poland and Germany. This article demonstrates the asymmetry in the narrative and the evaluation of the events across the two countries. An interesting context is provided by the contribution of Bartosz Dziewanowski-Stefańczyk on the Polish-German textbook project.<sup>1</sup> Although this article provides valuable insights into the conceptual side of the initiative, information about the practical use of the textbook in schools in Germany and Poland is missing.

The fifth section is dedicated to national minorities. Magdalena Lemańczyk provides case studies to show the fields of collaboration, while Kamila Schöll-Mazurek’s article critically reflects on the passivity of the Polish government regarding the status of the Polish minority in Germany. She advocates for a narrative about Polish-German relations based on the principle of a community of equality of opportunity and treatment rather than that of an interest-community, and she argues that “equal chances lead to empowerment and independence, which in effect leads to more effective usage of resources and potential” (p. 292).

The last section of the book explores Polish-German relations in the context of security and the development of the EU security systems. Containing only two articles, this extremely important field of inquiry is unfortunately underrepresented in this publication. Krzysztof Miszczak analyzes the Polish-German economic alliance in the shadow of global competition, instability, and the neo-imperial politics of Vladimir Putin, while Jens Boysen examines Polish-German cooperation within NATO programs and structures. This section does not exploit the potential of the topic of security. The matter of international crime prevention, the migration crisis of 2015, or the issue of Polish-German collaboration within the juridical system have not been brought up here. Moreover, positioning this section at the end of the volume diminishes its contribution to the whole book. The volume would profit more if this section were placed at the beginning.

The volume delivers a multidimensional analysis of dynamics within a multi-faceted view of cooperation. It does not limit itself to the timeframe of the past 30 years, but provides a wide socio-historical context for the Treaty of 1991, including discussion of the political changes of 1989 and early postwar initiatives for reconciliation and cooperation in the 1970s. As the year 2022 was rich in political events of great significance for European internal politics and solidarity, such as the outbreak of the war in Ukraine and Poland’s claim for war reparations from Germany, it would be interesting to read a “post scriptum” that problematizes, for example, the matter of security, reconciliation, and the migration crisis in light of recent events.

Warszawa

Izabela Paszko

<sup>1</sup> “Europa—Unsere Geschichte / Europa—Nasza Historia.” For more information on the project, see: <https://en.europa-unsere-geschichte.org/> (2024-04-23).