

# Poland and Germany in the European Union

The Multidimensional Dynamics of Bilateral Relations

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## Introduction

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# Introduction

## Poland and Germany in the European Union: Multidimensional dynamics of bilateral relations

*Anna-Lena Kirch, Elżbieta Opilowska  
and Monika Sus*

This edited volume deals with bilateral relations between Germany and Poland since 2004. By studying the impact of three explanatory categories – the historical legacy, interdependence and asymmetry – on the bilateral relationship, this book explores the patterns of cooperation in different policy areas at the supranational, national and subnational level. Its aim is to identify the driving forces and hindering factors of the bilateral relationship. Moreover, by applying the concept of embedded bilateralism, as defined by Krotz and Schild (2012), to the Polish–German relationship, this book tests the premises of this approach and, thus, contributes to its further development.

Most books on Polish–German topics are dominated by outlines of historical context. Moreover, there is a lack of scholarship that systematically analyses the contemporary relations between both neighbours in the context of their EU membership. A comprehensive picture of the dynamics between Poland and Germany as analysed in this book contributes to filling this gap in the literature. Furthermore, the book recognises the importance of bilateral relations between countries as the linchpin for multilateral cooperation. By exploring the drivers and obstacles of bilateralism, it provides a better grasp of the dynamics of intergovernmental and multilateral cooperation, mainly at the EU level.

The introduction is structured as follows. First, we examine the state of research regarding Polish–German relations and review the main concepts and categories that have been used so far to study the bilateral cooperation on the supranational, national and subnational levels. Then, in search of theory-driven research into bilateralism in Europe, we review the literature that goes beyond the Polish–German context and covers cooperation between different states in general. We identify the concept of embedded bilateralism as one of the most comprehensive conceptual tools developed to study bilateral cooperation between states and present its main premises. Against the backdrop of the literature review, we then introduce the rationale of the edited volume and formulate two research questions. Next, we engage in the operationalization

of our dependent variable (DV) – Polish–German bilateral relations and the operationalization of the three explanatory categories: the historical legacy, interdependence and asymmetry. All three are defined and their importance in the Polish–German context is emphasised. Finally, we present the methodological underpinnings and make a case for the abductive approach that this book follows. We conclude with an overview of the structure of the book as well as with brief summaries of individual chapters.

## **State of research into Polish–German relations**

Research into Polish–German relations has expanded rapidly since the fall of communism and the reunification of Germany. Until then many publications were ideologically burdened by the Cold War conflict (see, e.g., Piskorski, Hackmann & Jaworski, 2002). The scholarship on bilateral relations published since the 1990s has explored the process of rapprochement between both countries and developed categories to appraise new forms of interactions, such as the concepts of reconciliation (Gardner Feldman, 1999a, 1999b), the community of values and interests (Eberwein & Kerski, 2001) and Germany’s advocacy of Poland’s accession to the EU (Kinkel, 1994; Truszczyński, 2007). However, the categories developed in the period from 1990 to 2004 are not equally valid for the current political situation.

Since this book focuses on the post-2004 period, we review relevant academic contributions on Polish–German relations (without the ambition of delivering an exhaustive overview) in order to set the background for our edited volume and identify research gaps. Since Poland’s accession to the European Union, Polish–German relations have been examined from the perspective of the membership of both states in the EU and their interaction at the supranational level. For instance, Malinowski (2015) evaluates Polish–German relations during the years from 2004 to 2014 through the prism of European issues and comes to the conclusion that the character of mutual relations at that time was determined by Germany’s strong position in the Union. Additionally, Schweiger (2014) examines Poland’s role in the EU and argues that, in light of the weakening of the Franco–German leadership in the Union, Poland has the chance to move from its role as policy taker towards being an agenda setter. Furthermore, there is a lot of literature that explores the bilateral relations in the EU context within one particular policy area, namely foreign and security policy (Chappell, 2012; Sus, 2018a; Yoder, 2018; Szwed, 2019). The most recent book written by Szwed (2019) analyses Polish–German relations since the Cold War by focusing on ‘high politics’ and demonstrating the discrepancies between the two countries on selected policy issues, such as the European constitution, relations with Russia and EU energy policy. The study provides important input for the conceptualisation of the asymmetry category in our book.

With regard to the national level, a significant proportion of the publications dealing with Polish–German relations are historical or interdisciplinary

studies that offer important insights but are rather descriptive. Many volumes published on the occasion of anniversaries of relevant historical events deliver interesting empirical insights yet lack a coherent theoretical and methodological approach (Wolff-Powęska & Bingen, 2004; Jäger & Dylla, 2008; Bingen *et al.*, 2011; Sakson, 2013). Taking into consideration that interpretation of the shared Polish–German history is still a point of contestation, a large number of publications deal with the issue of collective memory. For example, the project of the Polish–German memorial sites by the Center for Historical Research of the Polish Academy of Science in Berlin has contributed to the scholarship a nine-volume collection on mutual relations and ways of remembering them.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, Gardner Feldman (2012) addresses the role of reconciliation in West Germany and Germany’s relations after German reunification in 1990 with France, Israel, Poland and the Czech Republic. She includes the categories of symmetry/asymmetry, functional interdependence as a driver, institutional embeddedness and shared symbolic acts as stabilisers of mutual relations. Opiłowska, Ruchniewicz and Zybura (2017) focus on collective symbols of Franco-German and Polish–German reconciliation. Their book deals with various facets of German–French and German–Polish relations and analyse also bi- and trinational places of remembrance and their impact on the collective memory of the respective societies.

With regard to the subnational level, Szytniewski and Spierings (2018), for instance, focus on cross-border shopping tourism in the border cities of Frankfurt (Oder)/Ślubice by applying the concept of (un)familiarity. In turn, Yoder (2008) examines the implications of Poland’s accession to the Schengen area in 2007 for German–Polish cross-border cooperation. Stokłosa (2012) compares neighbourhood relations in the Polish border regions with Germany, Ukraine and Russia and Kozak and Zillmer (2013) scrutinise territorial cooperation in the Polish–German–Czech border regions. Significant insights are provided by Jańczak (2018) with an analysis of the transformation of Polish–German cross-border cooperation by applying the concept of symmetry/asymmetry. He demonstrates that, after the collapse of the communist regimes, the key objectives of European, national and local authorities were convergent and therefore contributed to a process of debordering. Additionally, Opiłowska and Roose (2015) takes a close look at the Polish–German border in order to describe and understand the multiple patterns and shapes of cross-border links – especially the deficiencies in such connections.

Finally, there are a lot of up-to-date think tank analyses that supplement the academic literature (e.g. Balcer, Blusz & Schmieg, 2017; Lang, 2018; Czerwiński *et al.*, 2019; Buras, 2013; Chromiec, 2017; Karolewski, 2019; Sus, 2018b). Their authors elaborate on different aspects of the bilateral relations, and also in the context of EU and transatlantic relations, but do so without an explicit theoretical foundation. Nevertheless, they provide relevant insights into current political debates and into perceptions of bilateral relations by societies in both countries.

In conclusion, the scholarship briefly reviewed above demonstrates that Polish–German bilateral relations are mainly explored from a historical perspective or as case-by-case analysis. We argue, therefore, that there is a research gap when it comes to studies that shed light on different levels of Polish–German relations and different policy areas with the aim of identifying the drivers of and hindering factors to bilateral relations. Accordingly, there is a need for the development of a research framework with a coherent multidimensional approach that captures the current dynamic of bilateral relations across different policy areas, which this edited volume aims to provide.

### **State of research on bilateralism beyond Polish–German relations**

As in the case of Polish–German relations, theory-driven literature on other bilateralisms is rare. There is a rich corpus of literature on Franco-German relations (see, e.g., Webber, 1999b, 1999a; Bibow, 2013; Mourlon-Druol, 2017; Schoeller, 2018) and some other bilateral relationships (see, e.g., Tampke, 2003; Schweiger, 2004; Jones, 2011). However, most books and articles are descriptive and historical in nature, or they focus on single policy areas. Other contributions specifically deal with aspects of bilateralism in the EU context, such as the role of bilateral embassies by EU member states in forging coalitions and influencing EU decision-making (Bátora and Hocking, 2008; Uilenreef, 2013, 2016). The only systematic and comprehensive approach for studying bilateralism in the EU context, more specifically Franco-German bilateralism, has been provided in the book *Shaping Europe: France, Germany, and Embedded Bilateralism from the Elysée Treaty to Twenty-First Century Politics*, by Krotz and Schild (2012). They raise the question why the two countries ‘continued to hang together amidst frequently dramatic domestic or international change, and despite abiding socio-political differences’ (Krotz & Schild, 2012: 4). Moreover, they show particular interest in the interaction between the Franco-German relationship, on the one hand, and the ‘European polity’, with its policy-related nuances, on the other, investigating how the two countries have jointly influenced the EU institutional framework and individual policies since the 1950s. Their concept of embedded bilateralism provides the answer to their guiding question, since it captures the intertwined nature of a robustly institutionalised and normatively grounded interstate relationship. Krotz and Schild identify three types of bilateral practices in order to operationalise and measure robust and resilient institutionalisation: regularised intergovernmentalism; symbolic acts and practices; and parapublic underpinnings of international relations. Regularised intergovernmentalism assumes that the relationship is rooted in legal procedures, such as a bilateral treaty. Its function is to structure cooperation and to ensure its resilience during domestic or international change. A treaty outlines mechanisms of intergovernmental cooperation between two states and defines processes and practices that create a certain bilateral reality.

Additionally, there are a number of standardised practices, such as regular ministerial consultations, meetings at different political levels (including the highest one) and the creation of special posts within the administration of both countries, that ensure coherence in the bilateral cooperation. Another important component of regularised intergovernmentalism is the socialisation of diplomatic personnel via, for example, exchange programmes that enhance mutual knowledge and make elites in both countries more prone to engage in bilateral cooperation. Such practices lead to the creation of a special bilateral reflex among policy-makers and fuel the routinisation of bilateral cooperation despite periodic tensions arising from domestic causes. With respect to the second precondition – symbolic acts and practices, they illustrate the value-charged character of the bilateral cooperation, which outlives individual governments' terms in office. Krotz and Schild refer to a manifold of interstate structures creating social meaning, such as demonstrative speeches, gestures and symbolic public actions. Some of these practices are recurrent as the commemorations and celebrations of historical anniversaries, and, with time, they become perpetuated and validated. Following the logic of neofunctionalism applied by Krotz and Schild, by strengthening the feeling of connection and connectedness, such practices contribute to the development of a collective identity between two countries. As they have to be carried out jointly, by definition, they are characterised by so-called 'collective intentionality' (Krotz & Schild, 2012: 79), underlining the commitment of both sides to the bilateral bond. In other words, 'symbols are part of a social fabric that provides reasons for actors to cohere and act together' (Krotz & Schild, 2012: 97). In turn, parapublic underpinnings of international relations refer to cross-border interactions on the level of civil society or subnational actors more broadly. Examples are bilateral school and youth exchanges or town-twinning programmes (Krotz & Schild, 2012: 30–33).

In comparison to other forms of bilateralism, embedded bilateralism is thus defined as a bilateral relationship with a strong intrinsic and strategic foundation which national actors consider to be 'a major part of their *Staatsräson* beyond party cleavages' (Krotz & Schild, 2012: 9). Bilateral links and relations are regularised, durable and predictable. Moreover, Krotz and Schild address the interrelationship between embedded bilateralism and EU multilateralism. They argue that the Franco-German bilateralism is a crucial building block of the EU polity and strongly affects EU politics. A bilateral relationship therefore qualifies as being embedded if the two countries exert a joint leadership role on the EU level by proactively engaging in shaping the EU agenda – for instance, by coordinating positions or playing an important role in crisis management – and displaying some willingness for compromise in order to overcome EU-related conflicts.

Even though the authors focus solely on France and Germany in their book, they argue that the embedded bilateralism approach might be applicable to other cases within the EU and other multilateral settings – such as UK–US relations within the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). It

will thus be one of the goals of this book to test the applicability of the concept to the Polish–German case.

### **The rationale and research questions**

This edited volume explores the political and social dynamics of the bilateral relations between Germany and Poland at the national and subnational levels (taking into account the supranational dynamics) across different policy areas. The point of departure of the book is the recognition that the level of interaction between these two countries and the two societies has never been as close as it is now. Despite the deterioration of Polish–German inter-governmental relations since 2015, when the Law and Justice party (*Prawo i Sprawiedliwość: PiS*) won parliamentary elections in Poland and formed a government, the two countries continue to be greatly intertwined (Balcer, Blusz & Schmieg, 2017; Opiłowska, 2017; Sus, 2018a).

Against this backdrop, this book is guided by two main research questions.

- 1 What are the external and internal factors at the supranational, national and subnational levels that support or hinder bilateral relations between Poland and Germany in specific policy areas?
- 2 To what extent can the relations between Poland and Germany qualify as embedded bilateralism in the European Union in line with the conditions defined by Krotz and Schild and presented above?

The relevance of the edited volume is twofold. First, existing literature on bilateral relations between Poland and Germany is neither up to date nor complete. Second, the categories that have been used so far in the analysis of German–Polish relations were developed in the 1990s. Therefore, they cover a period of time that was characterised by a strong imbalance with regard to the state of development of the countries (economically and politically), as well as their institutional embeddedness. The analytical frameworks of those studies prior to Poland’s EU accession are therefore hardly applicable to the current political situation and relations between the two neighbouring countries. There is, thus, a need to develop a renewed research framework that takes account of the changes that have occurred within the last 15 years. It needs a more analytical and less descriptive outlook that aims to disentangle the Polish–German relationship by acknowledging the complexity of their bilateral relations at the national and subnational levels.

### **Research design**

The time frame for the studies presented in the book ranges from 2004 to 2020, in order to take account as well of the most recent dynamics in Polish–German relations. The in-depth case studies were selected by the logic of diversity (Seawright & Gerring, 2008: 297) in order to provide variation in terms of

the dependent variable. Such a method of case selection offers great explanatory power, which is needed for an understanding of the bilateral relations in all their complexity. The following policy areas are covered: trade and economic cooperation; foreign, security and defence policy; energy policy; cross-border cooperation; healthcare; labour mobility and migration; and mutual perceptions of the societies.

The multidimensional DV covers Polish–German bilateral relations (interchangeably: Polish–German bilateralism), examined at the national and subnational levels, while the supranational level provides a point of reference for bilateral relations and serves as a framework within which bilateral interaction takes place. Under the overarching concept of bilateral relations, different channels of interaction and mutual interference, joint institutions and policies and mechanisms of cooperation across various political domains and time can be subsumed.

In order to offer a comprehensive understanding of Polish–German relations across political domains and time, we identify three explanatory categories that might have a causal impact on relations since 2004. Based on the literature review presented above, we consider *the historical legacy, interdependence and asymmetry* to be potentially relevant. Even though these three categories have been used before to examine other bilateral relations, they have not been systematically applied to the different levels and policies of Polish–German relations.

The following sections provide a conceptualisation of the three categories and embed them in the Polish–German context. It is worth noting that the three categories are interwoven and, in some cases, may reinforce each other.

### ***Historical legacy***

The historical legacy relates to the question of how history matters in the contemporary world and the extent to which it can explain politics, the economy, culture and social attitudes at the current time. It also refers to material remnants, such as the lack of infrastructure, the destruction of the environment or the dominance of the state sector (Wittenberg, 2011, 2015). Wittenberg states that historical legacies occur in two varieties. One is the endpoint of a causal chain that began at some point in the past (a reaction to the past). Another kind of legacy is ‘a phenomenon that persisted from the past’ (a continuation of the past). Furthermore, there are three conditions to be met in order to define a phenomenon as a legacy. First, it has to be measurable at a minimum of two historical periods: past and present, separated by demarcations (e.g. pre-war, war, post-war eras). Second, the phenomenon in the latter period must be the same as the one in the previous period. The sameness can be interpreted as ‘literal unchangingness, stability of key features, unbroken existence, or pragmatic comparison of what counts as the phenomenon in each period’. Third, the phenomenon must have been carried over from the past and not simply be a replication (Wittenberg, 2011: 16–17).



Additionally, an outcome is to be defined as a historical legacy if it cannot be fully explained with simultaneous causes. Moreover, there are two positions to identify legacies in the causal framework, as Croissant (2019: 518) argues. The first position addresses the question of how inheritances have been routinised in everyday life (for instance, in political consciousness, or the attitudes and social practices of citizens). According to the second position, legacies are defined as resource structures that ‘enable or hinder the actions of political actors by providing them with political or material resources and thereby influence their strategic interactions’.

LaPorte and Lussier (2011) scrutinised a wide range of scholarship on legacy in order to assess how the term is defined and applied in interdisciplinary research. The analysis demonstrates four ways in which legacy is used in literature on comparative politics and sociology. Some scholars use ‘legacy’ as a simple synonym for ‘the past’. Moreover, legacy is placed into a causal framework as a dependent variable. However, it is unexplored why some legacies persist while others have disappeared. Similarly, but as an independent variable in a causal framework, legacy is explored as a factor affecting social attitude (e.g. mistrust in public institutions). Finally, legacy is applied as a variable that moderates more immediate causal factors in the respective decision-making process. In addition, the scholars propose a classificatory typology in order to facilitate comparative and more comprehensive studies. They identify three domains – political, economic and social – in which the persistence of historical legacies can be observed. Moreover, they propose three levels – institutional, attitudinal and behavioural – on which legacy manifests (LaPorte & Lussier, 2011: 649).

The historical legacy variable is often linked with the historical institutionalism approach and path dependence (Thelen & Steinmo, 1992; Levi, 1997). Whereas the former puts emphasis on ‘how institutions emerge from and are embedded in concrete temporal processes’ (Thelen, 1999: 371), the latter pays attention to past dependence, preceding actions and previous decisions of actors to explain social processes (Krylova, 2017). As highlighted above, historical legacy is a very broadly defined concept whose implementation often lacks accuracy. However, taking into account the interdisciplinary approach of our book, such a broad conceptualisation enables the contributors to apply the category to multiple policy areas on various levels.

For the purpose of this study, the historical legacy as an explanatory category is applied to the framework of bilateral relations. It refers to the joint history and relations of two countries and assumes that historical patterns reproduce themselves and that earlier decisions can have unforeseen consequences over time.

Regarding the typology, the focus will be at the institutional level in all three areas – political, economic and social. The institutional level includes ‘structures, organizations and laws as well as the norms, practices, and interactions promulgated by them’ (LaPorte & Lussier, 2011: 646). The aim is to explore how historical institutions persist and influence cooperation modes.

As Guiso, Sapienza and Zingales (2008) state, social norms of cooperation and trust rest on the intergenerational transmission of beliefs about others' trustworthiness and on real experiences of cooperation. Thus, a pre-existing lack of trust in a mutual relationship can affect the functioning of institutions and the cooperation culture.

In the Polish–German context, as Gardner Feldman (2010) argues, neither is the past forgotten nor does it represent a mere footnote; it is, rather, a productive irritant to be confronted (see, e.g., Pflüger & Lipscher, 1993; Opiłowska, 2017). Polish–German history is often presented as a sequence of mutual struggles and conflicts. From Teutonic order, through partitions by Prussia, Austria and Russia, to rebirth after the First World War (but with the contested German-speaking territories of Western Prussia, Silesia and Pomerania) until Hitler's invasion of Poland in 1939, bilateral relations are perceived as disastrous and conflictual. The fate of history allows Poles to see themselves as victims and heroes – an image that has been further strengthened by literary works and cultural memories. In addition, the communist period made it impossible to come to terms with history. Only after the fall of the Iron Curtain could the shared history, which was a taboo under the communist rule, be revisited and reinterpreted. As Kopp and Niżyńska emphasise, Germans and Poles are intricately linked through shared spaces that mark the dark and traumatic moments of their nations' histories: 'Nazi atrocities perpetrated on what is today Polish territory and the expulsion of the German population from this same space after the Second World War inextricably link Germans and Poles in relationships of victim and perpetrator, of suffering and guilt, and of contested identity' (Kopp & Niżyńska, 2012: 6).

The new developing dialogue on Polish–German bilateral relations among politicians, intellectuals and societies was ideologically driven by the reconciliation process. It should be emphasised that the German term for 'reconciliation' has two equivalent meanings: *Versöhnung* is underpinned by the theologically based 'forgiveness school', whereas *Aussöhnung* provides a more practical approach and means the interest-based 'rapprochement school' (Gardner Feldman, 1999a). Gardner-Feldman (1999b) argues that Germany, in its international policy, 'reflected both meanings, melding moral imperative with pragmatic interest'. Germany's advocacy of Polish accession to the European Union and NATO has been interpreted, on the one hand, as an act of partnership and reconciliation but, on the other hand, as one based on economic interest: to gain a new market for German products, cheap labour for German industry and new land for German investors (Jarząbek, 2012: 30). Moreover, the excessive use of the reconciliation category as an umbrella term for multiple political meetings and countless projects has led to the depreciation of the rapprochement process between Germans and Poles, as reflected by the notion of '*Versöhnungskitsch*' (Bachmann, 1994).

Nevertheless, it can be argued that the historical legacy can function not only as a barrier but also as a stimulus to mutual relations. On the one hand,

the shared past can motivate actors in both states to initiate joint projects and social events. More specifically, it can drive politicians to engage in symbolic acts in order to present reconciliation processes as a moral obligation. On the other hand, the traumatic history can be instrumentalised by political parties, as demonstrated by the example of the German–Russian Nord Stream Pipeline, which in Polish public debates was referred to as the ‘Molotov–Ribbentrop Pipeline’ (Sus, 2018b: 79; Yoder, 2018: 560). This case shows the persistence of the image of eternal hostility between Germany and Poland, which has been repeatedly misused in public discourses.

By considering the historical legacy as an explanatory category, the aim of the study is to analyse the extent to which it still functions as a stimulus and source of legitimisation for bilateral relations. Furthermore, we intend to identify domains and levels of relations in which the historical legacy is a hindering factor.

### *Interdependence*

Interdependence is another factor that has explanatory power with regard to bilateral relations. There are a variety of definitions of interdependence in social sciences, yet de Wilde has developed one of the most accepted. For him, interdependence refers to distinctive social actors who wish to preserve their identity, but who are also structurally affected by one another’s behaviour (de Wilde, 1991: 17). Since the level of mutual impact might be different for each partner, interdependence can be asymmetrical.

Keohane and Nye (1977) introduce interdependence to the field of international politics as a reaction to political realism and as a foundation of liberal institutionalism. In their seminal work *Power and Interdependence* they characterise the growing interdependencies between states by three main features: (1) the use of multiple channels of action between societies in interstate, transgovernmental and transnational relations; (2) the absence of a hierarchy of issues with changing agendas and linkages between issues prioritised and the objective of (3) bringing about a decline in the use of military force and coercive power in international relations (Keohane & Nye, 1987). Governments may accept or create procedures, rules or institutions in order to regulate and control transnational and interstate relations. Such a network of norms and procedures leads to interdependence.

Interdependence between two countries can be multidimensional and can be perceived along economic (Barbieri, 1996; Lang, 2002), political (see, e.g., Bussmann & Niclek, 2018) and social dimensions. Social interdependence refers to the situation when individuals or collectives share common goals and the achievement of the objectives of each individual depends on the actions of the others (Deutsch, 1962; Putnam, 1995).

The social science literature offers a variety of conceptual and theoretical considerations regarding interdependence between state actors. One of the most prominent concepts is the interdependence theory. It states that

governments regulate and control transnational and interstate relations and introduce cooperation frameworks by creating or accepting procedures, rules or institutions for certain kinds of activities. The theory mostly concerns state actors. However, interdependence is a multidimensional occurrence. De Wilde proposes a typology that contributes to better comprehension of various aspects of interdependence. According to him, there are three types of interdependence:

- 1 integrative interdependence, meaning the intertwining of actor activities, or even the (partial) integration of actors;
- 2 functional interdependence, which occurs when some form of formal, institutionalised governance with juridical responsibilities replaces or goes beyond those of the participating actors and takes over the coordinating function;
- 3 systemic interdependence, when individual actors depend upon one another because they inevitably and involuntarily belong to the same system; interdependence is thus an automatism (de Wilde, 1991: 19).

All three types of interdependence occur in particular between countries that are members of the same international organisations.

Furthermore, the scholarship has introduced two variables that are crucial in studying interdependence between countries: sensitivity and vulnerability. *Sensitivity* embraces degrees of responsiveness and relates to the questions: how quickly do changes in one country bring about costly changes in another, and how great are those effects? *Vulnerability* can be defined as an actor's liability to suffer costs imposed by external disruptions. Waltz argues that an international hierarchy of vulnerability perpetuates a hierarchy of diplomatic influence (Waltz, 1970: 205). Another way to operationalise interdependence is to examine the mechanisms it is impacted by. Scholars have formulated four different mechanisms, namely *learning*, *competition*, *emulation* and *coercion*, that shape interdependence (for more, see Gilardi, 2014: 187–193).

There is also a rich literature on the question of how to measure or qualify interdependence between countries. Holsti (1978: 517) puts forward a concept of the 'extent of interdependence', which has been applied by many scholars subsequently (Schimmelfennig, Leuffen & Rittberger, 2015: 778–779). It means that we can distinguish a high level and a low level of interdependence. Others claim that, when it comes to the normative understanding of this phenomenon, interdependence can have a twofold implication: it can catalyse the emergence of international – in our case, bilateral – cooperation, but it may also generate conflict or tension between two interdependent actors (Yu & Xiong, 2012). In other words, we can have a positive interdependence, leading to cooperation (interdependence as a driver of cooperation and increased policy convergence), and a negative interdependence, leading to conflict.<sup>2</sup> With respect to the EU context, interdependence is considered a major

driver of integration in both major European integration theories: in liberal intergovernmentalism (Moravcsik, 1998) and in neofunctionalism (Sweet & Sandholtz, 1997). The latter claims that interdependence in one policy area spills over into other policies, triggering bargaining, reforms or even crisis management (Schimmelfennig, Leuffen & Rittberger, 2015: 777).

Polish–German interdependence varies across policies and over time. It is shaped by many factors, such as the distribution of economic power, membership in international organisations and value systems. As for political interdependence, the main cooperation framework for Poland and Germany at the supranational level and across all policy areas is the EU, which also serves as an intervening variable in this book. Other international fora that both countries are members of are the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, the Council of Europe and NATO. In turn, the manifestations of bilateral political interdependence between Poland and Germany at the national level include Polish–German intergovernmental consultations, held on an annual basis since 2003, and the existence of various Polish–German treaties. At the subnational level, political interdependence manifests itself mostly via bilateral Euroregions and via Polish–German coordination committees in twin cities.

Economic interdependence between Poland and Germany is, in turn, mostly visible at the national level, yet of course it is constituted in part by advantages from the single market at the supranational level and by the four freedoms it guarantees. Since its accession to the EU, Poland has advanced from 12th to seventh position in terms of Germany’s largest trade partners (in 2019), and, if current trends continue, it may overtake in the coming years much larger economies, such as Italy and the United Kingdom. According to the Polish Central Statistical Office (Główny Urząd Statystyczny: GUS), in 2018 the value of trade between Poland and Germany reached €62 billion – the largest share of Poland’s trade in goods, at 28 per cent of the total (Czernicki *et al.*, 2019: 8). Moreover, Poland, together with the Visegrád countries, occupies a key place in the German economy’s value chain as the main subcontractor in the industrial field.

As far as social interdependence is concerned, it is mostly to be observed at the national and subnational levels. It manifests itself via numerous governmental and non-governmental institutions and associations, and a significant number of exchange students from one country in the partner country. Furthermore, in 2017 Germany was the country most visited by Poles (Statista, 2019b) and, likewise, tourists from Germany constituted the largest group going to Poland (Statista, 2019a). In addition, invariably the most frequently declared destination of labour migration for Poles in the last decade has been Germany, according to the Public Opinion Research Center (Centrum Badania Opinii Społecznej: CBOS, 2018). According to the German Federal Statistical Office, in 2018 Poles comprised the largest group (860,000) among foreigners living in Germany from EU member states, and the second largest (after Turks) among all foreigners (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2019).

Yet, despite interdependence being perceived as a driver of integration (Schimmelfennig, Leuffen & Rittberger, 2015: 769) and authors claiming that growing interdependence improves relations between countries (de Wilde, 1991: 12), as mentioned in the previous section, interdependence can also have negative effects and trigger competition depending on the policy field. Hence, the different authors of this collection operationalise interdependence according to their discipline and with regard to the specific policy area in order to examine how this category impacts bilateral relations in the selected policy area and at the given governance level.

### *Asymmetry*

In political science, realist authors often refer to asymmetry as an imbalance between states in geographic or population size, or in terms of political, economic or military power. Womack defines a bilateral relationship as ‘asymmetric when there is a clear and relatively stable disparity between the capabilities of the states involved’ – without the disparity being so overwhelming ‘that the smaller side lacks even the capability of significant resistance’ (Womack, 2016: 7; 11).

Within international organisations, asymmetry can also exist with regard to immaterial power dimensions (see, e.g., Mearsheimer, 2014), which can be also understood as soft power. Stone differentiates ‘structural power’ (meaning the availability of attractive outside options that impose negative externalities on other states), ‘formal power’ (including voting rights, veto power and committee membership) and ‘informal power’ (meaning the ability to obtain desirable outcomes other than through normal channels) (Stone, 2013). Further sources of immaterial power can be superior positions in a social hierarchy or high levels of credibility that others attribute to a country. Szwed adds the dimensions of temporal and spatial asymmetry, the former relating to the duration of membership in international organisations and the latter to the effects of state distance from potential threats and of core–periphery divides within the international organisations (Szwed, 2019).

Capability- or status-related asymmetry between countries can result in diverging degrees of power potential – especially when asymmetry materialises across multiple indicators such as size, gross domestic product (GDP) and military strength. Accordingly, Long (2017: 146) states that ‘a focus on asymmetry facilitates enquiry into how power differentials structure relationships’. In the political and diplomatic realm, diverging power potentials can have various effects. They can impact bargaining power, the effectiveness of agenda setting, crisis management and coalition building. Although there is broad support for the assumption that the existence of asymmetry has an effect on the formation of national interests and on the dynamic of interstate relations, there are no clear-cut findings as to whether and how asymmetry hinders or promotes bilateral or multilateral cooperation (Long, 2017).

On the one hand, symmetric relations are often characterised as more stable than asymmetric ones (Pfetsch, 2011). The Central European Policy Institute (CEPI) (2012) argues, for instance, that ‘co-operation among countries of comparable size will work better than the alternative’, since ‘asymmetry in size raises fears of one side “dominating” the other and ignoring the smaller party’s needs’. Moreover, the institute claims that military symmetry is a necessary precondition for fruitful collaboration (CEPI, 2012: 4). Maras (2015) argues similarly that asymmetry can have an impeding effect on cooperation. More specifically, she characterises asymmetrical institutional embeddedness as a hindering factor, referring to the example that Poland’s cooperation potential with France and Germany in the EU context is limited as a result of Poland’s status as Eurozone outsider (Maras, 2015: 15). On the other hand, asymmetry can also promote cooperation – for instance, when it is accompanied by complementary resources or structures. It would therefore be too simplistic to claim that asymmetric relations are ‘worse’ than symmetric ones (Pfetsch, 2011).

Another approach to analysing asymmetry and its consequences in the realm of politics is to compare national strategies depending on the respective power position within a relation. The stronger country is – by tendency – less aware of asymmetry, has less to lose and is usually more interested in sustaining asymmetry. The weaker country, on the other hand, is more likely to try to overcome asymmetry – especially if it is accompanied by the notion of a security threat or economic and diplomatic disadvantages. As Womack states, ‘even in a normal, nonthreatening situation, the smaller will tend to game the system and the larger will try to systematize the game’ (Womack, 2016: 1). Thus, a differentiated approach to asymmetry is required. The question of whether asymmetry drives or impedes bilateral collaboration very much depends on the metrics, source and strength of asymmetry, the perceptions by the relevant actors in both countries and the institutional context in which countries interact. First, it makes a difference if asymmetry between two countries is limited to single indicators, such as population size, or if it materialises across different indicators. Second, and closely related to the questions of coherence and the strength of asymmetry, there is a need for differentiation between institutional and policy contexts in order to make predictions as to how asymmetry will impact intergovernmental or cross-border collaboration. Wivel (2005: 407) states that the EU context has a softening effect on the effects of interstate asymmetry. Szwed focuses, in particular, on bilateralism within multilateral organisations and claims that, in the EU context, immaterial asymmetries – with regard to bargaining power or institutional ownership – matter at least as much as, if not even more than, material asymmetries (Szwed, 2019: 44).

With regard to Polish–German relations, several of the above-mentioned dimensions of asymmetry can be observed and can be expected to be of relevance at different governance levels and across different policy areas. For EU standards, asymmetry between the two countries is relatively weak with

regard to geographic size: at 357,578 square kilometres, Germany is only slightly bigger than Poland, at 312,696 square kilometres. However, asymmetry is strong with regard to population size and in the diplomatic, economic and military spheres. Germany has more than twice as many inhabitants as Poland. As to the economic sphere, Germany's nominal GDP per capita in 2018 (US\$48,260) was almost three times the Polish one (US\$15,430).<sup>3</sup> In the military sphere, the assessment is more nuanced. Poland has more military individuals than Germany (as of 2017,<sup>4</sup> 180,000 personnel in Germany versus 191,000 in Poland). However, in terms of absolute military spending, Germany is by far the stronger country: in 2018 Germany spent more than four times as much as Poland (US\$49.5 billion versus US\$11.6 billion).<sup>5</sup> It is therefore likely that asymmetry might serve as a relevant variable in areas such as trade, energy and migration as well as foreign, security and defence policies.

In terms of the EU framework, Szwed identifies temporal asymmetry between Poland and Germany with regard to EU membership, ownership and impact on the scope and shape of the European Union. As an EU founding member, Germany has influenced the set-up of EU institutions and EU governance from the very beginning, whereas Poland joined only in 2004, when major EU governance structures such as Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) were already in place. As a consequence, literature that focuses on asymmetry within the EU very often centres on the role of Germany, identifying it as a (potential) hegemon (Bulmer, 2018).

### **Methodological approach**

As a result of the exploratory character of this book, we follow an abductive approach and restrain from formulating hypotheses regarding the impact of the three categories on bilateral relations at this stage. Depending on the level of analysis and the specific policy field, the relation between the categories and the German–Polish relationship will probably vary. For example, economic asymmetry might be a hindering factor for sustainable Polish–German relations at the national level, but it could constitute a driving force at the subnational level by providing access to particular funding opportunities and by using the border as a resource.

The abductive approach, which iterates between deduction and induction, accounts for such a research design (Della Porta & Keating, 2008). Moreover, it also allows the identification of further factors that might prove to be relevant in the course of the contributors' research. Through selected case studies, the individual chapters qualitatively examine the impact of the categories on bilateral relations between Poland and Germany. The authors draw on the operationalisation of these categories provided above. Yet, since this book features authors from different disciplines (international relations scholars, political scientists, sociologists, economists, geographers), each of them will study the categories from the perspective of their discipline.



### **Structure of the edited volume**

The book is divided into two parts. The first part includes four conceptual chapters that aim to reflect different theoretical concepts that could be used to study bilateralism in Europe and that might be seen as complementary to the embedded bilateralism stance. Dyduch makes a case for the application of the horizontal Europeanisation approach in studying the patterns of bilateral cooperation and argues that, in the current stage of European integration, the conceptualisation of bilateral relations has to take into account the EU institutional and normative framework. In the following chapter, Mattelaer focuses on the increased interest in bilateralism at the EU level and tries to uncover reasons for this phenomenon. In turn, Cianciara, drawing on Bourdieu's concept of the field of power, discusses how asymmetry structures the dynamics of the Polish–German relationship and puts forward the idea of an asymmetric bilateralism. The first part of the book is concluded by Dębicki and Makaro, who propose a concept of national neighbourhoods as a potentially useful category that allows us to capture the social dimension of the bilateral cooperation.

The second part is dedicated to case studies that examine the bilateral cooperation at the national and subnational levels and their intersection with the supranational level. Kirch and Sus start the debate by engaging in the examination of the impact of the three explanatory categories of this book on bilateral cooperation in the fields of security and defence. Their analysis identifies the overwhelming role of the asymmetries between Poland and Germany, which overshadow the cooperation and leave little hope for change in this regard. Płóciennik, in turn, pays attention to Polish fiscal policy and looks at the reasons for remaining outside the Economic and Monetary Union from the context of Polish–German bilateral relations. His text represents an attempt to uncover the role of the German ‘factor’ in the Polish ‘No to the euro’ calculations. In the following chapter, Jajeśniak-Quast deals with Polish–German cooperation in the context of the EU single market and examines the impact of asymmetry in bilateral relations on foreign trade and foreign investment. Duszczyk changes the focus and pays attention to the question of migration. Reflecting on the debate that followed the migration crisis in 2015/16, he studies the differences in Polish and German migration policies and assesses their impact on bilateral cooperation. Ceglarz aims to uncover the nuances of Polish–German relations in the fields of climate and energy policies. He argues that weak formalised cooperation between Poland and Germany results from different perceptions of their roles in the EU policy-making process. Polish–German mutual perceptions are highlighted by Łada. She demonstrates that the attitude towards representatives of the other country is crucial for the development of good relations on various levels. The next five chapters focus on cross-border cooperation in the Polish–German borderland. Opiłowska explores determinants of the cross-border cooperation and argues that bilateralism at the subnational level may be considered

as stable and rooted in EU programmes. Dołzbłasz and Raczyk, in turn, apply the network approach to the local level by analysing cooperation programmes co-financed by EU funds. They conclude that cooperation networks are dominated by territorial authority units. The Interreg programmes are the focus of the chapter by Jańczak and Martín-Uceda. They map local and regional power relations in the borderland and identify an (a)symmetrically framed model of cooperation. By dealing with economic cooperation at the subnational level, Steinkamp points out enhancing and inhibiting factors in terms of German–Polish relations. Finally, Svensson elaborates on the transborder activities within healthcare and health policy and demonstrates deficiencies in this area of cooperation.

The concluding chapter discusses the outcomes of the different contributions, systematically compares them and acknowledges that, out of the three categories that have been hypothesised as having a causal impact on Polish–German relations, asymmetry proves to have the strongest explanatory power. Moreover, it is concluded that the bilateral relationship remains historically burdened, and therefore is not resilient to crises, and that there is little to indicate that this might change in a short- to medium-term perspective.

## Notes

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- 1 See [www.cbh.pan.pl/pl/projekty-naukowe/polsko-niemieckie-miejsca-pamieci-deutsch-polnische-erinnerungsorte](http://www.cbh.pan.pl/pl/projekty-naukowe/polsko-niemieckie-miejsca-pamieci-deutsch-polnische-erinnerungsorte) (accessed 23 September 2020).
- 2 Social interdependence theory offers interesting insights into how interdependence between individuals and groups can unfold; see Johnson, Johnson and Smith (2007).
- 3 International Monetary Fund, ‘GDP per capita, current prices’: [www.imf.org/external/datamapper/NGDPDPC@WEO/OEMDC/ADVEC/WEOWORLD/DEU](http://www.imf.org/external/datamapper/NGDPDPC@WEO/OEMDC/ADVEC/WEOWORLD/DEU) (accessed 23 October 2020).
- 4 World Bank, ‘Armed forces personnel, total’: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/MS.MIL.TOTL.P1> (accessed 23 October 2020).
- 5 World Bank, ‘Military expenditure (current USD)’: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/MS.MIL.XPND.CD> (accessed 23 October 2020).

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