



Individual Advanced Research Opportunities Program

Research Report

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1. Title of Research Proposal:

'Security Communities' as 'Interest Communities' in Post-Communist Europe: Polish-German Defense and Security Relations After 1989

2. Topic of Research

What is the *nature* of Polish-German relations post-1989? After centuries of competition and conflict, the relationship between the two countries has improved notably since Poland's independence from the Soviet bloc and Germany's reunification. The convergence of their broad strategic interests (German unification and Polish independence first, and institutional enlargement of NATO and the EU second) led many scholars and policy practitioners to speak of an 'interest community,' later followed by references to a 'value community' based on broadly converging attitudes as displayed by governing elites in Poland and Germany. It is not surprising that the

Polish-German *pojednanie* or *Versöhnung*,¹ rooted in, as a leading German historian put it, “the resolution of Europe’s two principal problems in the 20th century,” (Winkler, 2000) soon raised the question whether the relationship between the two countries constitutes a ‘security community.’ And if so, of what kind?

The question was made more complex by events in the latter half of the 1990s. Many scholars argued that relations between Poland and Germany, after a short spell of improvement, began to deteriorate. Commentators pointed to the divergence of interests, power asymmetries, the recurring importance of historical memory, or more generally, the rise of ‘realism’ in the bilateral relationship, stimulated by domestic political changes. Instead of continuous and linear improvement, the Polish-German relationship exhibited increased conflict that challenged the view of an ascending ‘security community.’

Therefore, the idea of stable peace between Poland and Germany is not unproblematic. The evidence suggests that there has been significant improvement in relations, but conflict has not given way to cooperation only – in fact, there is ample evidence to suggest that there has been rise in conflict starting in the latter half of the 1990s – and not just conflict about ‘distribution of resources’ or ‘proximity to the core’ of the security community, as anticipated by scholars of security communities, but also that of more traditional ‘geo-political’ and ‘geo-economic’ nature – though it remains tied to resources and alliances, and is explicitly no longer about territory or ideology, the traditional determinants of conflict outside the zone of peace.

3. Relevance and Contribution to Field

Rather than examining the nature of cooperation and conflict between the ‘old’ and ‘new’ Europe as a whole, my research maps the evolution of the Polish-German relationship as a ‘representative’ case study: their historic rivalry, the shift from conflict to cooperation, institutionalization of cooperation in NATO and the EU, and the subsequent rise of different conflict inside the ‘zone of peace.’ There are three reasons for adopting this approach – reasons that also underline the relevance of examining this specific case study:

First, the evolution of Polish-German relations after 1989 cannot be understood outside their European context. This relationship represents both a *significant* case because of the size and intrinsic importance of the two states, and a *hard* case because, even in the European context or the context of Germany’s relations with its neighbors, the history of conflict between the two countries is particularly long and brutal.

Second, while a plethora of studies on the Polish-German relationship have been written since 1989, there are surprisingly few accounts that go beyond a descriptive, normative or prescriptive dimension. The reconciliation process and subsequent

¹ Translation of these terms is not unproblematic: the Polish *pojednanie* translates into *unification*, whereas the German *Versöhnung* into *reconciliation*.

deterioration in relations were treated by scholars in various disciplines, but very few authors tackled the question of the very *nature* of this relationship after 1989 with a degree of systematic rigor. My research seeks to fill the existing gap.

Finally, my research attempts to examine the nature of Polish-German relations with implications that go beyond policy relevance. By adopting the explanatory power of various approaches that include classical realism and constructivism, it contributes to the existing theoretical debates about the role of material power resources, interests, ideas and identities within and without the 'zones of peace,' and the relationship between them.

4. Approach and research methodology; list of research sites

Approach: Theory

In my dissertation I apply a theoretical framework based on classical realism and constructivism. Classical realism alone, I argue, fails to explain the nature of interstate relations in the post-Westphalian 'zone of peace.' The constructivist approach that allows for various reinterpretations of *interest* seems better suited to explain the nature of state relations in Europe today. Yet, asymmetry in relations between 'old' and 'new' Europe, and 'new' Europe's peripheral location on the verge between the 'zone of peace' and the 'zone of turmoil' renders the constructivist approach insufficient for addressing the 'meeting point' cases (such as that between Germany and Poland after the end of the Cold War). I argue, therefore, that 'meeting point' cases require a more eclectic theoretical approach that allows for classification of state behavior in accordance with 'state system' within which the state operates its foreign policy. As such, both classical realism and constructivism contribute to the understanding of the nature of the Polish-German relationship after 1989.

Approach: Cases

In analyzing the character of the Polish-German relationship, my research employs the analytical framework developed by Emanuel Adler and Michael Barnett ("Security Communities," 1998). To this end, Part I of my dissertation focuses on the 'nascent' and 'ascendant' phases in the development of the security community. I identify the triggering mechanism, which allowed for ground-breaking transformation in Polish-German relations, focusing on convergent *interests* at the root of this paradigmatic shift: Polish independence and German reunification. Furthermore, I examine how 'European' identity of both actors allowed the two countries to capitalize on this convergence and helped turn the mere confluence of interests into a sustained process that triggered the emergence of stable peace order.

Subsequently, I explore how convergence in broad geo-strategic interests helped sustain the cooperation dynamic behind the evolving Polish-German security

community through the ascendant phase, which cumulated with the enlargement of NATO and the EU.

In Part II of my dissertation I explore the question why the dynamic of integration in the Polish-German security community began to stall in the second half of the 1990s. To this end I examine three case studies (European integration, transatlantic relations, relations with Russia) that broadly correspond to the conflict areas in Polish-German security relations. These conflict areas, or complexes of conflict areas, were chosen because all other conflicts appear to be in some way related to these three broad themes. My research in Poland focused specifically on these three case studies.

By focusing on the interplay of the same variable that made possible the nascent and ascendant phase of the Polish-German security community (i.e. a positive interplay structural elements of interests and identities, complemented by positive interplay of process elements of transactions, institutions and learning) my dissertation seeks to identify the determinants of conflict in the Polish-German relationship that challenges the move to the 'mature' phase of the Polish-German security community.

Methodology

The vast body of largely descriptive and normative literature on Polish-German relations has not provided rigorous explanation of the nature of this relationship. It has, however, generated an impressive amount of empirical data. Secondary analyses of Polish-German relations are most often available in Polish, less often in German, and seldom in English. It is necessary for scholars, therefore, to seek this secondary research on site, in particular in Poland. During my stay in Poland, I visited various institutions to collect material and discuss my research on Polish defense and security policy. These included:

In Warsaw:

- Institute of International Relations (*Instytut Stosunkow Miedzynarodowych*), Faculty of Journalism and Political Science of the University of Warsaw
- Polish Institute of International Affairs (*Polski Instytut Spraw Miedzynarodowych*)
- Center for International Relations (*Centrum Stosunkow Miedzynarodowych*)
- Center for Eastern Studies (*Osrodek Studiow Wschodnich*)
- Central Military Library (*Centralna Biblioteka Wojskowa*)
- National Defense Academy (*Akademia Obrony Narodowej*)
- National Library (*Biblioteka Narodowa*)
- Warsaw University Library (*Biblioteka Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego*)
- *Sejm* Library (Polish Parliament)

In Poznan:

- Western Institute (*Instytut Zachodni*)

In Szczecin:

- Northern and Western Europe (*Instytut Europy Polnocnej i Zachodniej*)

Where empirical gaps exist, I conducted a number of interviews, as well as made provisional appointments to conduct additional interviews over the telephone. These include interviews with former and current politicians, bureaucrats and policy experts.

5. Research findings and preliminary conclusions

While I set out my research originally to collect data in support of a thesis arguing the importance of identity and ideas in shaping state behavior, my research has led me to de-emphasize these in favor of *interests* and 'political' will more broadly. Identity and ideas matter, but security community scholarship appears to have neglected interests to the detriment of its explanatory power. My research on Polish-German relations after 1989 indicates that while interests may not necessarily be exogenously defined (or not only), the way they are shaped and articulated has direct effect on state behavior. In other words, while mutual constitution between interests and identities may exist, interests matter.

Accordingly, I found that Polish-German rapprochement in the early 1990s was made possible by positive interplay between structural factors such as interests and identities (as well as process factors such as transactions, institutions and cognition). Similarly, subsequent deterioration in relations in the latter half of the 1990s was facilitated by divergence in interests and identities.

Furthermore, I found that a 'zone of stable peace' has emerged in the enlarged EU, which is defined by the absence of war or threat of war as recourse for resolving conflict between members. This means that relations between states were transformed to include a broader range of considerations than struggle for power, security and influence. States no longer consider using military force or coercive diplomacy in relations between each other. As Hyde-Price argues, this has had important effect in that if physical violence no longer looms likely, the whole notion of sovereignty has been weakened (1999). As consequence, neither security dilemma nor balance of power remain features of relations amongst European states. Integration within the 'zone of peace' has replaced the logic of anarchy.

In this sense, the very nature of interstate relations inside the 'zone' is different from that outside it. Classical theories of International Relations try to comprehend the nature of relations among states in general, there is a growing body of literature suggesting that relations between states depend on the nature of the domestic and international order they are in. My findings support this thesis.

The paradox of the 'zone of peace' is that it is based on interdependence, and interdependence leads to increase in a number of transactions. Increased transactions,

in turn, open the possibility of increased conflict. As such, however, the persistence of conflict in Polish-German relations does not counter the 'stable peace' thesis. Zone of peace does not assume harmony of interests, and reasonably only stipulates resolution of conflict via use of non-violent means. The distinguishing feature of the zone of peace is that conflicts over resources and influence, which remain a constant feature of international politics are resolved peacefully – threat of violence or coercion are no longer acceptable.

Going further, my research found that membership in the zone of peace affects the identity of its members. As such, the nature of conflict within the zone is affected. This explains the absence of territorial and ideological disputes, as well persistence of institutionalized forms of cooperation, degree of interaction and economic interdependence.

Poland's accession to the 'zone of peace,' consolidated most tellingly by its accession to NATO and the EU, has effectively transformed the structural dynamic that governed the Polish-German relationship for centuries. Until the second half of the twentieth century, all European states were locked into a complex and volatile system of balance-of-power, with Germany at its heart. Since the Second World War, this system was first replaced by a system that tamed competition for power, and subsequently supplanted by process of deep integration consolidated by the end of the Cold War. The post-1989 integration of East Central European states into the fabric of the transatlantic 'zone of peace' effectively signified the end of the balance-of-power system in this part of Europe as well. The evolution of Polish-German relationship after the end of the Cold War is a case in point.

6. Future research agendas

Scholarship of recent events and topics often suffers from insufficient data to draw out rigorous scientific conclusions about social phenomena at hand. This is not to say it is not useful. Positivist approaches to European politics today, by the nature of European interstate relations, are of limited utility. Instead, interpretive accounts can and do upgrade our understanding of the *nature* of these relations today. Over time, however, scholars may wish to address similar topics using more positivist methodologies.

What is generally missing from the security community scholarship is a more clearly defined *scope* of these communities. Recent work on security communities *and their neighbors* seeks to fill this gap, but there is room for more interpretive analyses of 'meeting point' cases, where the 'zone of peace' meets the 'zone of turmoil.' Other bilateral relationships between states of 'old' and 'new' Europe should be analyzed to help upgrade our understanding of the very process of enlargement of security communities. Beyond the scholarly benefit of this kind of research, its value to policy practitioners appears significant in light of current debates about democratization and marketization.

7. Policy recommendations

My research topic does not lend itself easily to making significant policy recommendations. It underlines, however, the divergence in interests and identities of European states today. One of the striking findings not only in my research but in general, is how favorably disposed towards America and its foreign policy the general population (not just the government) in Poland is, especially compared with most West European societies. At the same time, anti-Americanism is slowly becoming fashionable with the generation of younger Poles looking towards Europe, increasingly, like many of their West European counterparts, articulating their European identity in anti-American terms. It is important that countries like Poland and its 'new' European neighbors not be 'lost' as partners. To this end, academic exchange and programs such as IARO help establish an important link between small circles on both sides of the Atlantic. This and other forms of exchange should be actively supported.