

Part 2

Bilateral relations at the supranational, intergovernmental and subnational levels: case studies

PROOF

5 Polish–German cooperation in security and defence

Falling short of potential or doomed to be fragile?

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Introduction

In the ongoing crisis mode since the late 2000s, the intergovernmental dimension of EU politics has substantially gained in importance, with bilateral relationships being one relevant building block. Effective bilateral cooperation is, arguably, indispensable for the proper functioning and the resilience of international and regional organisations (Krotz & Schild, 2012: 9–10; Mattelaer, 2019). Although various studies have been conducted on the Franco-German tandem and its role within the European Union, the Polish–German relationship remains under-researched even though it forms a relevant and insightful case study for various reasons (e.g. Vassallo, 2013; Schoeller, 2018). The first reason is the two countries’ conflictual history and geographic proximity, and their diverging path dependence trajectories and their positions within the European Union. Second, the two countries are part of the EU Big 5 and can both be characterised as ‘*Mittelmächte*’, implying that they are powerful enough to influence and shape regional structures and coalitions, while not being powerful enough to have an impact on the international order (Jäger, 2008; European Council on Foreign Relations [ECFR], 2017). It is therefore worthwhile to shed light on their bilateral cooperation within the EU, analysing the extent to which they pool their power and leverage to pursue their interests and promote joint initiatives.

This chapter focuses on Polish–German cooperation in security and defence – both bilaterally, within the EU, and within NATO. This specific analytical lens is justifiable because of the fact that Polish–German bilateralism has been at the centre of regional and transatlantic security dynamics in many regards: due to the geographic proximity to Russia and joint membership in security-related alliances (Michta, 2004, p. 3). Furthermore, bilateral collaboration in security and defence is particularly crucial on account of the intergovernmental functioning logic of the policy area, giving scope, in theory, for great cooperation potential at the national level.

With regard to the timeframe applied, the presented research mostly concerns the period after the Polish accession to the EU, since it profoundly

changed the character of bilateral cooperation by providing a new reference framework. However, since the foundation of security and defence cooperation was laid in the early 1990s, we briefly refer to the pre-2004 period.

As outlined in the Introduction to this volume, it is this book's overarching goal to assess if the Polish–German relationship qualifies as an example of embedded bilateralism as conceptualised by Krotz and Schild. Contributing to this, it is the goal of the present chapter to examine whether Polish–German cooperation in the fields of security and defence can be perceived as a building block of embedded bilateralism. We thereby aim to provide an in-depth understanding of the factors that impact the bilateral cooperation in security and defence. To explain the extent of bilateral cooperation, we hypothesise that all three explanatory categories that were put forward in the Introduction – historical legacy, asymmetry and interdependence – play an essential role. In our analysis we aim to discover whether they support or limit bilateral cooperation.

This chapter is based on the secondary literature as well as on primary sources from both countries (mainly documents formulated by foreign offices and defence ministries). We supplement our findings with the results of 12 semi-structured interviews with policy-makers and experts from both countries, which provided us with in-depth insights into the bilateral cooperation in security and defence.

The chapter proceeds as follows. First, we briefly outline the analytical dimensions of embedded bilateralism (Krotz & Schild, 2012). Second, and directly touching upon the components of the aforementioned concept, we deliver a short overview of the current state of Polish–German cooperation in security and defence. Subsequently we identify the extent to which the three explanatory categories explain the dynamics of bilateral cooperation and whether they hamper or stimulate it. In the conclusions, we sum up our claims and answer the question about the extent to which Polish–German cooperation on defence and security corresponds with the concept of embedded bilateralism.

Embedded bilateralism: a brief recapitulation

Embedded bilateralism is one of the few theoretical concepts developed to capture the relationship between two countries. Krotz and Schild explore the reasons why France and Germany have continued to hang together amidst frequent domestic or international change and despite abiding differences between them. They wanted to uncover the dynamics of the Franco-German relationship in shaping the European polity and policies over time. Their starting point was the acknowledgement that the Franco-German relationship has been more resilient than would be expected (Krotz & Schild, 2012: 4). To explain this resilience, they put forward several components that form the concept of embedded bilateralism: regularised intergovernmentalism, symbolic acts and practices, parapublic underpinnings and the acceptance by both

parties of their common responsibility for providing leadership for shaping the multilateral framework.

Bilateral embeddedness of Polish–German cooperation in security and defence

In the following paragraphs, we examine Polish–German cooperation in terms of security and defence after 1989 with a focus on the period since 2004, using the benchmarks put forward by Krotz and Schild. Reflecting the state-centric character of security and defence policy and related national sovereignty considerations, the focus lies on the regularised intergovernmentalism and symbolic acts and practices, as well as the ability to provide leadership and promote joint projects in multilateral frameworks. In the case of security and defence, the essential multilateral framework in which the Polish–German cooperation is embedded is constituted primarily by the EU and NATO.

Regularised intergovernmentalism

The fundamental element of regularised intergovernmentalism between Poland and Germany is provided by the 1991 Treaty of Good Neighbourship and Friendly Cooperation, whose articles 3, 5, 6 and 7 refer specifically to cooperation in security and defence (Sejm, 1991). The treaty announced various practices of collaboration, such as regular intergovernmental consultations including the heads of state to discuss aspects related to foreign, security and defence policy. Additional cooperation agreements followed, such as a detailed agreement on military cooperation between Germany and Poland (Lasoń, 2016: 61–63), as well as annual meetings of the French, Polish and German foreign ministers within the Weimar Triangle framework. Polish–German bilateral cooperation developed constantly throughout the 1990s and it included the exchange of experience between both militaries, especially during joint exercises of all military branches, joint participation in EU and NATO missions, the training of Polish military personnel in Germany and the handing over military equipment that was no longer used by Germany to Poland (mainly tanks and fighters). In short, the bilateral military cooperation was perceived as a ‘significant achievement of the decade’ (Michta, 2004: 913). One of the most tangible results of this cooperation was the establishment of NATO’s Multinational Corps Northeast (MCN) in 1997, initiated by the ministers of defence of Poland, Germany and Denmark.

The accession of Poland to both NATO and the EU facilitated further bilateral cooperation in security and defence and led to greater institutionalisation. One of the milestones was a comprehensive cooperation package that was agreed in 2011, on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the treaty of 1991 (Federal Foreign Office & Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 2011). The new programme not only confirmed the bilateral commitment to regular

intergovernmental consultations, and significantly expanded the exchange of personnel, but also advanced further cooperation within security and defence. It underlined shared interests and priorities within this policy area and the willingness to strengthen cooperation in NATO and the EU (Federal Foreign Office & Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 2011: 21). One of the highlighted initiatives was the Weimar Battlegroup, which was launched in 2006 within the EU framework. Additionally, both countries announced the enhancement of cooperation within various military branches, such as land and naval forces, as well as aircraft (Federal Foreign Office & Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 2011: 22–23), implemented in the form of detailed agreements between 2013 and 2015. A significant manifestation of the bilateral cooperation was the decision to subordinate a Polish battalion to a German brigade and a German battalion to a Polish brigade during exercises (Siebold, 2015).

Yet, after the Law and Justice party (*Prawo i Sprawiedliwość*: PiS) won the parliamentary elections on 25 October 2015 and formed a government on its own,¹ the implementation of the provisions of the 2011 programme have been significantly limited (Interviews 2, 3, 11). Bilateral intergovernmental consultations have taken place less frequently than in the period from 2008 to 2015. In addition, the military cooperation has continued predominantly on a technical and operational level (i.e. only within the framework of NATO exercises), stripped of the long-term strategic dimension that was envisaged by the 2011 programme (Interviews 2, 11; Palowski, 2019).

Symbolic acts and practices

Another component of embedded bilateralism is symbolic acts and practices. Reflecting the tangled Polish–German history, there are numerous examples of such events (see Chapters 10 and 11 in this volume). The following paragraphs focus solely on those that touched upon the security and defence dimension in one way or another. One of the first symbolic acts after 1989 was the meeting in 1994 of military commanders from both countries at Westerplatte, commemorating the 55th anniversary of the first battles in Germany’s invasion of Poland. Similarly, since 1989 German chancellors and presidents have attended the commemorations of various anniversaries related to the Second World War. In short, over the last three decades German and Polish leaders alike have delivered numerous speeches full of symbols and expressing commitment to close collaboration. Thus, there has been no lack of normative anchors beyond the Polish–German cooperation.

The spirit of symbolic acts, aiming to break down barriers related to the history of Polish–German relations, can also be observed at a more operational level. For example, in 1996 the ministers of defence from both countries shook hands at the border and committed themselves to further strengthening the cooperation. Such gestures continued in subsequent years (Lasoń, 2016: 60–62). Another established practice was mutual visits by foreign ministers shortly after taking up their posts. However, there were differences visible between the

two countries. For the Polish side, Berlin was usually the first capital city to be visited – a custom that did not change till after 2015. However, for Germany, Warsaw came only second, after Paris.

Despite the recurrent symbolic practices that have been developed since 1989, there have also been attempts to instrumentalise the bilateral history and use the war rhetoric in the context of current security and defence policy. In particular, the right-wing Polish political elites have tended to reach for anti-German rhetoric. For example, Jarosław Kaczyński, the leader of PiS, referring to attempts by the Polish government to strengthen the NATO presence in Poland, said that German troops should not be allowed on Polish soil ‘for at least seven generations’.²

Joint leadership in multilateral frameworks

The willingness and ability to provide joint leadership in multilateral frameworks is another essential component of embedded bilateralism. With respect to joint leadership in the EU, in 2011 both countries declared their eagerness to support the development of a strong and effective Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) by close bilateral coordination and the launch of joint initiatives (Federal Foreign Office & Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 2011: 18). In particular, they revealed their interest towards further developing the eastern dimension of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) and strengthening cooperation between Russia and the EU. Indeed, these policy areas were the subject of joint initiatives, in particular between 2007 and 2015 during the governments led by Civic Platform (Platforma Obywatelska: PO) (Fix, 2016; Kirch, 2016; Zaborowski, 2020). An example was the close cooperation between foreign ministers Radosław Sikorski and Guido Westerwelle with regard to the East, as exemplified by their joint visit to Belarus in 2010, where they pushed for fair presidential elections and wrote a joint letter on EU–Russia relations, which they addressed to EU officials in November 2011 (*Economist*, 2010; Guérot & Gebert, 2012). Another illustration was the joint involvement of the Polish and German foreign ministers in looking for a solution to the political crisis in Ukraine, starting in November 2013. Sikorski and Frank-Walter Steinmeier visited Kiev a few times and, together with their French counterpart, they jointly facilitated the negotiations of the 2014 agreement to settle the political crisis (Easton, 2014; Fix, 2016; Sikorski, Steinmeier & Fabius, 2014). Yet, with the further escalation of the conflict, the Weimar Format lost its relevance and was replaced by the Normandy Format, which included France, Germany, Russia and Ukraine (Buras, 2014). This decision cast a shadow on Polish–German cooperation, since Warsaw wanted to participate in the talks. At the same time, despite the differences on Russia and transatlantic relations (a detailed discussion follows), instruments established in 2011 continued to function, thanks to the commitment to bilateral cooperation on both sides (Interviews 2, 11).

However, many of the joint bilateral initiatives were put on hold in late 2015 when PiS came to power (Interviews 2, 7, 11). Notwithstanding the boom in economic relations, political cooperation between Berlin and Warsaw hence deteriorated. As experts claimed in 2018, ‘the relationship is widely viewed as being weaker than at any time since 1989 – so weak that it hampers efforts to re-energize the European project’ (Buras & Janning, 2018). Indeed, despite the fact that the EU has faced unprecedented dynamics within the CSDP since 2016 (Martill & Sus, 2018; Sus, 2019), Polish and German views on the new initiatives were largely disparate. Joint leadership was therefore impossible. The Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) offers a good example. It was launched as a result of a joint German–French endeavour that was immediately backed by Spain and Italy as well as by Belgium, the Netherlands, the Czech Republic and Finland (Fiott, Missiroli & Tardy, 2017: 23). Poland, on the other hand, not only remained absent from the preparations of this new instrument but also waited until the very last moment to join (Muti, 2018; Terlikowski, 2018). As at the beginning of 2020, Poland led one PESCO project and participated in nine projects, whereas Germany led seven and participated in 16 projects (Blockmans & Crosson, 2019: 7). Moreover, both countries cooperate to a limited extent with each other in PESCO projects (Blockmans & Crosson, 2019: 7).

With regard to NATO, the only clear manifestation of joint leadership was provided by the above-mentioned multinational cooperation, which was developed to a High Readiness Force Headquarters in 2014. The raised level of readiness facilitated the execution of command over the NATO Force Integration Units in the Baltic states and Poland, in which Polish and German soldiers are deployed.

Reflecting the three sections dedicated to the compliance of Polish–German cooperation in security and defence with the three components of the embedded bilateralism, we observe that, despite the dense web of inter-governmental practices and a rich spectrum of symbolic acts, the bilateral cooperation was not as resilient over time as one might expect from the premises of the concept by Krotz and Schild. Additionally, the component of the ability and willingness to provide leadership in the multilateral frameworks proved to be underdeveloped.

What impacts Polish–German cooperation within security and defence?

This section seeks to explain the above-presented lack of resilience of the cooperation in security and defence by shedding light on the drivers and impeding factors shaping this part of the Polish–German relationship. There is an evaluation of the extent to which historical legacy, asymmetry and inter-dependence support or hinder bilateral cooperation in the areas of security and defence.

Historical legacy

Based on the literature review as well as on the interviews we conducted, we argue that the historical legacy has been relevant in two regards for Polish–German cooperation in security and defence. First, immaterial aspects, such as ideational path dependence and ideas concerning the depth of European integration in the future, seem to matter. Second, material path dependence also appears to be pertinent.

The immaterial aspect mainly touched upon the experience of the Second World War and the collective memory more broadly, which have impacted contemporary relations (Gardner Feldman, 1999; Gießmann, 2008; Interview 1). The Polish–German relationship is thus historically burdened (Jäger, 2008: 30). This historical burden has, arguably, spilled over into the sphere of security and defence. In the Polish narrative, negative experience and mistrust in German solidarity and loyalty was a crucial factor, especially under the PiS government after 2015 (e.g. Interviews 3, 5). As already indicated earlier, German positioning on issues such as Nord Stream and Poland’s exclusion from the Normandy Format were interpreted as yet further incidents of a lack of trustworthiness and solidarity (Interviews 3, 5, 11, 12). The historical legacy thus served as an impeding factor for bilateral relations with Germany on security-related questions.

From a German perspective, the theme of guilt was mainly referred to as a reason why close collaboration with Poland was considered a priority and moral obligation (Interviews 6, 8). The historical legacy therefore had a driving effect on bilateral cooperation instead, at least in rhetorical terms. A German official, for instance, argued that ‘Poland’s strategic importance to Germany had historical reasons’ (Interview 8). On the other hand, German lessons from history also led to strong hesitancy among the majority of German decision-makers and the German public for the country to become a strong actor in security and defence (Iso-Markku, 2016; Kunz, 2018; Wiegold, 2019). Despite a gradual decrease in citizens’ hesitancy over a more active involvement in international crises (Körber Stiftung, 2019: 33), this argument has often been referenced by policy-makers in order to dispute increased defence spending or binding commitments to defence cooperation frameworks that would result in the automatic involvement of the German Bundeswehr. This hinders far-reaching mutual interdependence, for instance with regard to pooling and sharing, and thus defence cooperation that goes beyond joint training missions or consultation formats. From this angle, Germany’s historical legacy has – in general – served as an impeding factor to defence cooperation, and at a bilateral level too (Kunz, 2018).

The second immaterial aspect of the legacy is linked to Polish and German ideas regarding the depth of European integration in the future. Both countries are characterised by historically rooted disparities that lay at the base of attitudes towards European integration: the ‘divergent historical experiences

with the nation-state makes it unlikely that Warsaw's and Berlin's positions towards supranational integration will merge in the near future' (Zaborowski, 2002: 184). As demonstrated earlier, Germany is committed to the multilateral approach as a guarantee that the Second World War will not be repeated. In turn, Poland tends to put national interest at the centre of its political considerations. As a result, 'the general position of the main Polish political forces, irrespective of their particular ideological outlook, is less European and more national-minded than it is the case with their German counterparts' (Zaborowski, 2002: 184; see also Iso-Markku, 2016). As a result, Poland is more reluctant to support the idea of close cooperation at the EU level, especially in high-policy areas where national sovereignty is at stake.

Additionally, the different views on the future of the European Union have implications for the relations of both countries with the United States in the realm of security and defence. Poland represents a clear Atlanticist approach to security. For Germany, in turn, although NATO and the EU are both equally important reference frameworks with regard to security, bilateral cooperation with Washington is not as valued as it is by Poland (see also Lanoszka, 2020). In the case of the latter, the 'America first' policy is particularly important for the right-wing parties, and thus it became more prominent after 2015. Yet even the more liberal parties, which simultaneously attach great importance to EU cooperation, also value the bilateral link with Washington very highly. An example illustrating such an attitude is given by the efforts made by the pro-EU and PO-led governments between 2008 and 2015 to persuade the United States to increase its military presence on Polish soil. The Ukraine crisis has intensified the Atlanticist approach to security over a Europeanist approach (Yoder, 2017), and the presidential victory of Donald Trump did not change it. Chancellor Merkel did not refrain from criticising Trump for his unilateralism in foreign policy (Wintour, 2019), while Polish leaders continued to praise him (Rubin, 2017; Sieradzka, 2018). As reflected in the literature (Chappell, 2012; Szwed, 2019; Taylor, 2019) and by our interlocutors (Interviews 7, 8), strong bilateral relations with the United States still constitute the backbone of Polish security.

Reflecting the distinct views on the United States as security provider, both countries ascribe varying degrees of importance to the European Union as a security and defence actor. As the interviews and opinion polls show, for Poland (especially since 2015) the EU has not been high on the agenda as a reference framework in security and defence (ECFR, 2017, 2018; Interviews 3, 6, 7, 11, 12). Warsaw considers the CSDP an additional security mechanism that complements the national defence capacity, membership of NATO and the bilateral partnership with the United States (Gießmann, 2008; Terlikowski, 2018). For Germany, on the other hand, the EU has been the most important political reference framework, resulting in a higher commitment to strengthening the CSDP. The *EU Coalition Explorer* showcases that, in 2018, German policy-makers were more committed than their Polish counterparts to promoting an 'integrated foreign and security

policy’ at the EU level, to strengthen common defence structures as well as to conduct a joint Syria or US policy (ECFR, 2018; see also Iso-Markku, 2016: 56). Thus, this immaterial aspect of the historical legacy reflects on the limited potential for close Polish–German cooperation in security and defence: Berlin is more prone to the further enhancement of EU integration in this area, whereas Poland prioritises cooperation with the United States – at a bilateral level and via NATO.

Finally, material path dependence, touching upon the impact of infrastructure and existing equipment on interconnectivity or cooperation potential between states and actors, is considered a relevant impeding factor on Polish–German defence cooperation (Wittenberg, 2011, 2015). Defence structures and industries are not easily compatible because of the different trajectories and historical developments in the two countries after 1945. This aspect has negatively affected initiatives such as joint procurement and resulted in limited military interoperability.

As a result of diverging national perspectives on history and different lessons drawn, the historical legacy has explanatory power regarding the limited Polish–German cooperation in security and defence, even though derivable predictions can be contradictory, as delineated above. In general, the historical legacy has mainly served as an impeding factor.

Asymmetry

As elaborated in the Introduction to this volume, asymmetry is a multidimensional category, which can be of a political, economic, military or spatial nature. Political asymmetry in the case of the Polish–German relationship is characterised mostly by diverging agenda-setting power or coalition potential. First of all, as a fully integrated EU founding member, the degree of German involvement in EU decision-making and agenda setting is higher than for Poland, which is not a Eurozone member and thereby holds the status as a partial EU outsider (Bulmer & Paterson, 2013; Schweiger, 2014). Germany’s political power therefore exceeds Poland’s power potential, because German officials are involved in all relevant decision-making and crisis management formats, while Poland is not (Maras, 2015: 15). Furthermore, the *EU Coalition Explorer* reveals the strong political asymmetry regarding the two countries’ coalition potential (ECFR 2017, 2018). Whereas Germany is identified as the overall ‘most contacted’ EU member state and the one with most ‘shared interests’ in both 2017 and 2018, Poland ranks in fourth and sixth position respectively with regard to the ‘most contacted’ category and in sixth and tenth position respectively with regard to shared interests. The pattern is replicated for the areas of security and defence. When asked about the preferred partner with regard to an ‘integrated foreign and security policy’, Germany ranks in first place; Poland follows in sixth position (ECFR 2017, 2018). Consequently, Germany is faced with a high number of coalition partners, which arguably has a negative effect on the joint Polish–German

leadership potential within the EU, and to some extent their bilateral collaboration as well.

Economic asymmetry (see Chapters 6 and 7 in this volume) is, equally, a given with regard to Polish–German bilateralism, on account of diverging macroeconomic indicators, such as GDP, employment rates and competitiveness, but also, more specifically, with regard to defence-related economic and business structures. Moreover, since the German defence industry is much stronger than the Polish one in terms of the number of active companies and their sales of arms, it naturally has a stronger negotiation position than the Polish one (Roth, 2017). As a result, the Polish industry remains, overall, an unattractive partner for German enterprises, especially compared to the French and British industries (Interviews 10, 11; Kunz, 2018; Blockmans & Crosson, 2019).

Closely related to the economic dimension, the two countries also display military asymmetry, measurable based on military spending, the number of armed forces or military capabilities. Germany is militarily more powerful than Poland in total numbers. In 2016 total military personnel in Germany added up to 177,608, compared to 98,586 in Poland.³ The picture was similar with regard to defence expenditure: Germany spent an amount of €457 per capita; Polish defence spending amounted to €221 per capita. However, in relative terms, this was equivalent to 2.0 per cent of GDP in the Polish case, whereas Germany spent only 1.2 per cent of GDP, thus lagging behind NATO commitments. Nevertheless, regardless of the absolute figures, interviewee assessments did diverge regarding which of the two countries has had superior credibility as a military actor. From a Polish perspective, the poor state of the German armed forces regarding its equipment and procurement processes was addressed as an indicator of weakness so that Germany was not seen as a reliable and attractive partner – both bilaterally and at the EU level (Interviews 5, 6, 7, 8, 11; Kunz, 2018). From that viewpoint, (perceived) military asymmetry was thus seen as a particularly relevant impediment to a strong bilateral cooperation, since, as elaborated in detail in the previous section, Warsaw assigns more military credibility to the United States than to Germany or to the European Union in general.

Looking at both countries' geographic location, spatial asymmetry is arguably granted in the sense that Poland borders the Russian exclave of Kaliningrad as well as Belarus and Ukraine, and thus the EU external border, while Germany has no geographical proximity to the EU external border. The two countries' diverging physical distances from potential threat result in varying threat perceptions and policy preferences. The overarching divide relates to the view on Russia. Interviewees repeatedly emphasised that Poland considers Russia to be the major threat to European security while the German position was perceived to be more nuanced and ambiguous. Although Germany strongly supported sanctions against Russia and contributed to enhancing NATO's presence on the eastern flank, the government adhered to the Nord Stream II project, which has been criticised by Warsaw. The diverging

assessment of Russia's role spills over into different spheres of security and defence policy. For instance, the two governments differ with regard to their view on the NATO–Russia Founding Act. Whereas Poland considers it to be void as a result of Russian breaches, Germany adheres to it, and is therefore against the permanent placement of NATO soldiers in the Baltics or in Poland (Interviews 1, 5, 6, 8, 11, 12; ECFR, 2018). Moreover, as argued in the literature, unlike the Polish case, Germany's approach to security policy is influenced by the perceived absence of immediate external threats and strong trust in its neighbours (Frank, 2008: 110).

Finally, the above-mentioned dimensions of asymmetry result in differences in the potential to exert power. There is an ongoing debate in academia on various aspects of the German potential to wield power and about the evolution of the historically rooted 'leadership avoidance reflex' (Paterson, 1993). In recent years Germany has been labelled as a 'cooperative hegemon' that exercises power together with France (Pedersen, 1998; Szabo, 2019), a 'civilian power' unwilling to use military force (Maull, 2007), a 'reluctant hegemon' whose leadership is recognised but politically contested and constrained by domestic politics (Paterson, 2011; Bulmer & Paterson, 2013) and an 'assertive hegemon' with respect to the EU's relations with Russia (Siddi, 2018). The concepts differ in interpretations of Berlin's willingness and ability to exercise its political, economic and diplomatic potential but they all share one assumption: that Germany has become *the* shaping power (*Gestaltungsmacht*) in the EU and enjoys a 'hegemon-like position' (Bulmer & Paterson, 2019). Moreover, another essential component of hegemony introduced in the literature – the consent of its followers (Bulmer & Paterson, 2019: 4) – also seems to be a given (Fix, 2018; Siddi, 2018).

In the areas of security and defence, German leadership was especially evident during the Ukraine crisis in 2013/14. As Fix argues, 'Germany has become the central axis of policy-making between the EU and Russia during the Ukraine conflict, decisively shaping discourse and content of EU policy towards Russia' (Fix, 2018: 509), whereas Siddi even claims that Germany to a large extent in fact exerted hegemonic power in this crisis (Siddi, 2018). At the same time, because of the above-demonstrated politico-economic asymmetries, Poland is not able to exert a similar kind of power and to influence the EU position as much as Germany. In the case of the Ukraine crisis, 'Poland's subsequent exclusion from the negotiations concerning Ukraine showed that the country had not achieved the same status as France and Germany in European foreign policy leadership' – despite explicit attempts to play a leading role in shaping the EU's policies towards eastern Europe (Siddi, 2018: 104; see also Fix, 2016: 122). There is thus a particularly far-reaching clash between Polish self-claims and reality in the case of crisis management in the aftermath of the annexation of Crimea. This adds another layer to Polish–German asymmetry. As a result of the significant difference in the potential to exert power, Poland is doomed to be a junior partner to Germany. Cooperation on an equal footing, which is desired by the Polish

side (Interviews 3, 5, 11; Körber Stiftung & Institute of Public Affairs, 2018), is highly problematic. This imbalance implies that the realisation of Polish objectives is more achievable if they are consistent with German ones – in other words, if Warsaw does not contest German leadership. This makes bilateral cooperation problematic, since the two countries differ with regard to key security priorities, as previously demonstrated. In addition, from the German perspective, bilateral cooperation with Poland is not particularly attractive, as it can only amplify the German position to a limited extent. Compared to France, Poland has too little to offer: its military needs modernisation, its defence industry is weaker than the German one and its security policy expertise does not exceed the German one.

All the above forms of asymmetry are considered relevant factors when it comes to Polish–German cooperation in the areas of security and defence and have, overall, an impeding effect. Moreover, they reinforce each other. Military and economic asymmetry, for instance, are likely to add to political asymmetry, based on immaterial power: the more economic resources and military capabilities a country holds, the more credible and attractive as a partner it is likely to be.

Interdependence

The third explanatory category to take into account is interdependence. It has been taken as a given in different aspects with respect to Polish–German cooperation in security and defence. First, they are neighbouring countries. This means that security threats to one country are likely to spill over to the other. Second, both countries are members of the same security-relevant multilateral organisations. Third, as presented earlier in this chapter, bilateral cooperation in security and defence is characterised by regularised intergovernmentalism in different areas. For all these reasons, it can be assumed that the security and defence policy of one country by definition affects the other country's policies. Hence, it is to be expected that interdependence is a driver of close Polish–German cooperation in security and defence.

However, this driving effect can primarily be observed on a normative, and declaratory, diplomatic level with only very limited effects on practical cooperation. German and Polish officials and analysts alike emphasise that 'Poland and Germany need each other' or that their partnership should become stronger after Brexit (Interviews 5, 9). However, effects on practical cooperation have remained limited so far. As an explanatory factor, interviewees stressed diverging threat perceptions between Poland and Germany, based among other things on diverging historical legacies and cooperative path dependences. Despite geographic proximity, views on Russia strongly diverge between the countries, as delineated above. Their relationship with the United States also differs, as previously showcased (Buras & Janning, 2018). Poland's 'hawkish' stance on Russia and the belief that the United States is Poland's

ultimate security guarantor are deeply enshrined in the country's foreign and security policy DNA, shaped by the Second World War and Cold-War-related experiences. For Germany, on the other hand, European integration, including a strong Franco-German bond, and the transatlantic security alliance are assessed as two more or less equally important foreign policy pillars. This somewhat diverging prioritisation within shared institutional frameworks is thus one explanatory building block that has prevented strong Polish–German rapprochement. Bilateral cooperation in the areas of security and defence has not been as close as the strong interdependence of the two countries and diplomatic statements would suggest. Interdependence, therefore, has no visible explanatory power.

Reflecting on the three explanatory categories, we observe that their explanatory power varies. Asymmetry has strong explanatory power, serving as an impediment to Polish–German cooperation in security and defence. The historical legacy also has explanatory sway, but mainly adds to the negative effect of asymmetry, in the sense that an 'asymmetry of historical legacies' can be detected between Poland and Germany. Diverging immaterial and material path dependences both have an impeding effect on close and far-reaching cooperation in security and defence. Interdependence, as the third explanatory category, appears to be the empirically least relevant category. Based on the strong interdependence of the two countries, far-reaching and resilient cooperation might be predicted. Since the analysis refutes this prediction, the category contributes no explanatory power in the given case.

Conclusions

The study presented above points to a well-developed web of practices of bilateral cooperation between Poland and Germany that seems to include the crucial elements of regularised intergovernmentalism defined by Krotz and Schild. However, at the same time, it also reveals the weaknesses of bilateral cooperation in security and defence – the fragility of intergovernmental cooperation at times of domestic change and challenges (such as the change of government in Poland in 2015) and the limited ability to provide joint leadership in multilateral frameworks. Strong incidents of and calls for close Polish-German cooperation have been far more dependent on individuals, such as the respective foreign ministers, Sikorski and Westerwelle, and thus less structural and systemic than in the model case of the Franco-German relationship. Polish–German cooperation on defence and security thus corresponds with the concept of embedded bilateralism only to a limited extent.

Our analysis shows that shortcomings in the two countries' bilateral cooperation can be explained by historical legacy and various dimensions of asymmetry. In fact, these two explanatory categories reinforce each other, limiting the possibility for close cooperation. As we demonstrated above, the strong political and economic asymmetry between Warsaw and Berlin results in an equally strong asymmetry regarding power projection and leadership

potential. Despite the historically rooted constraints that limit Germany's willingness to exercise leadership, the country holds a hegemon-like position in the European Union. Notwithstanding Berlin's strong commitment to multilateralism and its inclusive approach to leadership, the huge discrepancy in the potential to exert power puts Warsaw under a great deal of pressure to adapt to or agree with German priorities. Nevertheless, various aspects of the historical legacy interfere with this scenario, such as Poland's reluctance to consent to the German leadership role.

However, close Polish–German cooperation is not impossible. The period between 2008 and 2015 can be interpreted as pointing in the direction of closer cooperation, with political willingness and personal commitment under the PO-led governments observed. The two countries promoted joint initiatives in security and defence, for instance towards the East. Poland's security policy priorities were boosted and positioned at the European level on account of the close cooperation with Germany, which, in turn, gained legitimacy for its policy and enriched it, at least symbolically, with the eastern European reflex. After initial hesitancy Germany, for instance, supported the Polish–Swedish Eastern Partnership initiative from 2008 (Kirch, 2016). Moreover, the speech that Sikorski delivered in Berlin in 2011 signalled a readiness not to perceive German leadership as a threat and to focus even more on identifying shared interests in security and defence going forward. Reflecting on the Eurozone crisis, he said that he feared Germany's power less than its inactivity as long as German leadership was inclusive, and embedded in the EU framework (Sikorski, 2011). Altogether, cooperation in that short time period was still asymmetric but perceived to be mutually beneficial.

However, the exclusion of Poland from negotiations with Russia during the Ukraine crisis and the subsequent coming to power of the PiS government changed the bilateral dynamic and the narratives used. Various effects of the historical legacy re-emerged or were reassessed, such as Poland's 'America first' policy and its prioritisation of NATO over the CSDP. Stronger reluctance to accept German leadership returned. Without personal commitment on both sides to push for closer bilateral cooperation, structural limitations for joint leadership resurfaced again. Formally, political dialogue continued on the diplomatic level, as could be predicted based on drivers related to historical legacy and interdependence, but, overall, the bilateral political climate cooled considerably compared to the period between 2008 and 2015. The improvement in close relations hence turned out to be very fragile, which reaffirms the observation that Polish–German bilateralism is not in line with the concept of embedded bilateralism.

List of interviews

- 1 Interview with a former German official from the Federal Foreign Office, Berlin, 18 December 2018.
- 2 Interview with a Polish expert, Warsaw, 20 December 2018.

- 3 Interview with a Polish official from the Office of the President of the Republic of Poland, Warsaw, 20 December 2018.
- 4 Interview with a Polish expert, Warsaw, 20 December 2018.
- 5 Interview with a Polish official from the Foreign Office, Warsaw, 20 December 2018.
- 6 Interview with a former German official from the Office of the Federal President, Berlin, 22 January 2019.
- 7 Interview with a German official from the Federal Foreign Office, Berlin, 30 January 2019.
- 8 Interview with a German official from the Federal Ministry of Defence, Berlin, 18 February 2019.
- 9 Interview with a German official from the Federal Chancellery, Berlin, 5 March 2019.
- 10 Interview with an official from the Council of the European Union, Brussels, 18 June 2019.
- 11 Interview with a Polish expert, Berlin, 10 July 2019.
- 12 Interview with a Polish official from Poland's delegation to NATO, Brussels, 6 November 2019.

Notes

- 1 In 2005 Law and Justice also won the parliamentary elections, but it was forced to enter into a coalition with two smaller parties in order to form a government. During its two-year term Polish–German relations started to deteriorate, over both historical and political issues concerning, for example, voting power in the EU Council (Bowen, 2006). However, at the end of 2007 the PiS-led government lost power, and the new government formed by Donald Tusk and his Civic Platform party declared the return to close cooperation with Germany as one of its priorities (Lang & Schwarzer, 2011: 3; Bieńczyk-Missala, 2016: 110–111).
- 2 The source for this quote was a 2014 entry on the Inside Poland website, entitled 'NATO allies welcome ... unless they are German – Kaczyński', at www.inside-poland.com/t/nato-allies-welcome-unless-they-are-german-kaczynski, but it would appear that the whole site has now been closed.
- 3 European Defence Agency, estimated figures for 2017: www.eda.europa.eu/docs/default-source/documents/defence-data-2005-2017.xlsx.

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