

ПОЛІТИЧНІ ПРОБЛЕМИ МІЖНАРОДНИХ СИСТЕМ ТА ГЛОБАЛЬНОГО РОЗВИТКУ

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GERMAN-POLISH RELATIONS: ASYMMETRY OF INTERESTS AND MUTUAL PERCEPTION

The purpose of the study is to analyze the asymmetry of interests and mutual perception in German-Polish relations, to consider them through the prism of asymmetry, to determine the level of its danger and destructive effects. German-Polish relations encompass a wide range of disparities in the socio-economic, political, and military spheres. The relationship between Germany and Poland is a typical model of asymmetric interaction between two asymmetric powers, with different ways of pursuing interests, despite numerous common features. The specifics and development of these relations, determined by historical, geographical, economic, and cultural factors, are a kind of key to understanding the complex nature of asymmetric relations. The lack of not only symmetry of potentials and decision-making, but also interests, goals, aspirations between Germany and Poland moves their interaction into the plane of asymmetric relations, which are sometimes extremely difficult to bring to the level of identical perception of each other. The asymmetry of interests can generate conflict situations and the search for reconciliation between the parties is rather complicated. The vector of development of relations between countries is influenced by the asymmetry of mutual perception. The advantage of the Federal Republic of Germany over the Republic of Poland in terms of power indicators, quantitative and qualitative parameters of socio-economic development, creates a basis for asymmetry of interests and mutual perception. Despite their mutual interest in the development of trade and economic cooperation, the Federal Republic of Germany and the Republic of Poland act as competing parties and express different visions of the further development of the EU, the conditions and prospects of bilateral cooperation, which largely depends on the level of interdependence and asymmetry of potentials.

The consequence of the asymmetric nature of German-Polish relations, the asymmetry of interests and mutual perception are bursts of tension and hostility.

Keywords: *German-Polish relationship, Germany, Poland, asymmetry of interests, mutual perception, asymmetric relations.*

Statement of the problem in general terms. The phenomenon of asymmetry in international relations has gained special relevance in scientific thought during the last decades. The study of asymmetry is a relatively new direction in the theory of international relations. The use of the paradigm of asymmetry is necessary for understanding the complex nature of international relations, especially the interaction between unequal actors, determining the strategy of behavior in the bilateral format of relations between stronger and weaker parties.

The need for a comprehensive study of the asymmetry of international relations arises from the specifics of international interaction, the scale of modern transformational processes, the growth of planetary power asymmetry and the strengthening of confrontation in the world political space.

The study of asymmetric relations is important and relevant in connection with the discussion about the main factors, trends of asymmetry in international relations, its impact on multilateral cooperation and the development of interstate bilateral cooperation. The development of a model of relations between asymmetric actors, the center and the periphery should be aimed at minimizing asymmetry, overcoming destructive processes and meet the conditions of socio-economic and socio-cultural development.

A demonstrative and extraordinary example of asymmetric relations is German-Polish relations, which cover a wide range of disparities in the socio-economic, political, and military spheres. The specifics and development of these relations, determined by historical, geographical, economic, and cultural factors, are a kind of key to understanding the complex nature of asymmetric relations.

Complex structural transformations in the international security system caused by the aggressive war of the Russian Federation against Ukraine force Germany and Poland to reconsider the meaning of asymmetry in their relations. After all, the asymmetry and divergence of interests between the Federal Republic of Germany and the Republic of Poland may pose a certain threat to the stability of the EU and disrupt the unity of the European community.

The asymmetry of interaction between Germany and Poland is obvious, but the question of the destructive effects that asymmetry of interests and mutual perception can cause remains open.

The purpose of research. It is necessary to analyze the asymmetry of interests and mutual perception in German-Polish relations, to evaluate them through the prism of asymmetry, to determine the level of its danger and destructive effects.

Analysis of recent research and publications. The concept of asymmetry for the study of bilateral international relations has been used quite often in the last decade.

The topic of German-Polish relations has been in the focus of attention of a considerable cohort of scientists for a long time. It is presented in the works of both foreign and domestic scientists. Polish scientists Y. Schulz, E. Hillebrand, K. Zimer, G. Braus, M. Neuf, K. Schell-Mazurek, Kai-Olaf Lang, M. Bainszyk, A. Stadnytskyi, S. Plotzennik pay special attention to this topic. H. Malinovskyi, J. Yanchak, S. Erb, R. Bartek, S. Zherko, K. Shevyor, T. Kralinskyi [1], K. Woycicki, V. Kachur [2], who in their research consider a wide range of issues related to historical aspects, political problems, bilateral interaction in trade, economic, security and cultural spheres

A significant achievement in the study of the asymmetry of German-Polish relations is the work of S. Shved, a researcher at the Center for International Studies, Department of Politics and International Relations, Oxford University, «Poland, Germany and State Power in Europe after the Cold War: Asymmetry Matters», in which Polish-German relations after the end of the Cold War and growing differences in foreign policy and security between the two states at the beginning of the 21st century. By analyzing four political issues – the mandate of NATO outside the territory, the European Constitution and the division of votes in the Council, relations with the Russian Federation and its eastern neighbors, as well as the energy policy of the EU – the researcher reveals the roots of their conflict in the structure of material, spatial and temporal asymmetry [3].

In domestic political science, the asymmetric aspect of German-Polish relations remains an understudied and unspecified phenomenon. A review of the scientific literature gives reason to assert that the topic of asymmetry in German-Polish relations has received wide coverage in Polish scientific circles.

Taking into account various aspects, views on the problems of relations between Germany and Poland, is certainly necessary when considering the genesis and nature of the German-Polish asymmetric interaction.

Main research results. Despite the absence of fundamental contradictions regarding the concept of asymmetry of international relations in scientific and practical discourse, there are still certain disagreements in its interpretation.

In the field of international relations, the use of the concept of asymmetry as a categorical antipode of the concept of symmetry is regarded as a violation of a certain normal state. Asymmetry is an expression of only those relations where the necessary symmetry is violated.

To ensure mutually beneficial cooperation and development, it is not necessary that all relations between states be symmetrical. In general, the concept of asymmetry is used to describe relations between unequal subjects, which involve the presence of elements of inequality and disproportionality in the political, economic, and military spheres.

Using the theory of asymmetry of international relations makes it possible to understand the German-Polish relations and find out the roots of their contradictions. Placing German-Polish relations in a more abstract framework helps to better understand and explain the basis of their asymmetry of interests and mutual perception.

One of the modern researchers of international asymmetry, Brantley Womack, notes that «the perspective of each state is within the horizon determined by its capabilities and location» [4, p. 1]. He also states that «asymmetry theory holds that to the extent that A is greater than B, there will be structural differences in interests and perspectives between them» [4, p. 14].

The structural difference of interests, hidden in asymmetry, leads to differences in perception, and therefore to differences in behavior. The weaker party (B) will be more focused on the relationship with the stronger party (A) because the vital results of the cooperation will depend on it. And its behavior in relation to a stronger state (A) will be more coordinated and active. Instead, a stronger state (A) is less sensitive and attentive to cooperation with a weaker state [5].

One of the main characteristics of German-Polish relations in the political, socio-economic, and security spheres is asymmetry, which is expressed in both quantitative and qualitative indicators. In general, the formation of German-Polish relations, which takes place depending on political and economic interests, is definitely influenced by the asymmetry factor.

Of course, geographical proximity, economic interdependence, complex pages of the historical past, strengthen the importance of cooperation between the two countries and reduce it to the rank of necessity. Germany and Poland as neighboring states remain the points of the most intensive contact, which is of decisive importance in the context of asymmetry.

The vector of development of relations between countries is influenced by the asymmetry of mutual perception. If Germany is the main political and economic reference point for Poland, then the main political partner for the latter is its western neighbor – France, with which relations are developing in a symmetrical format [6].

Germany, being one of the main creators of the European reality at the political and economic levels, is the most important economic and political partner of Poland in the list of priorities. Whereas for Germany, Poland is an important partner, but not the main one. The role of Poland in the foreign policy orientations of Germany is undoubtedly smaller than that of Germany in Polish politics, which is the result of an asymmetry in favor of Germany and evidence of an asymmetry of mutual perception.

B. Womack sees the different role of these relations for a large and a small country. He notes: «We are all set on the same rules, but the reality turns out to be different, when the real weight of international players does not coincide on one side, the discrepancy between countries creates an inadequate understanding of intentions, and misunderstanding can lead to conflict. On the other hand, in contrast to Western theories of realism and neorealism, stronger countries are usually unable to exert pressure on weaker ones, since negotiations are conducted taking into account the autonomy of the two parties» [7].

Germany and Poland are in asymmetric relations, which determine the difference in approaches to bilateral cooperation and exert a direct influence on EU policy.

Germany should be considered as a classic trade and economic state with supra-regional dominance, and Poland as a growing political-economic and military power in the Central and Eastern Europe region [8, pp. 8–9]. Both partner states have different potential in the EU, so their bilateral relations are conditioned by asymmetry. In addition, there is an asymmetry of interests within the EU between countries. Germany seeks to play a leading role in the further development of the EU in order to realize its own European interests. While Poland seeks to expand its influence in the EU and push European, regional and continental ambitions, the implementation of which is impossible without expanding the German-Polish European integration base.

Despite the fact that Germany and Poland have strong economic ties, the deepening of military-political relations, which would be so important for both sides, is not happening. The German government's miscalculations in the military sphere, neglecting the expansion of its own component of military deterrence turned Germany into a soft partner in the NATO collective security system. Currently, Germany, which is technically not ready even for a fragmented expansion of security in the EU, is unable to offer real assistance to Poland in the event of an acute security threat [9].

And this despite the fact that Germany is the political and economic leader of the EU, a member of NATO and the «Big Seven», the fourth economy in the world, and a technological leader in many fields. In addition, it seeks to exert a decisive influence on the EU's foreign, economic, and migration policy, to be an arbiter in matters of the rule of law, and to determine value priorities. But at the same time, due to the lack of political will, rather than industrial and demographic potential, Germany does not intend to become a guarantor of security for the countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

It should be noted that the effectiveness of Germany's political actions in the international arena is not absolute. According to Western experts, after the defeat in the Second World War, Germany, having suffered long-term international restrictions, does not have enough experience in conducting an effective international policy, especially in the military sphere [10].

After the end of the Cold War, Germany, becoming less dependent on external security guarantees, was skeptical of Washington's plans to transform the North Atlantic Alliance into a more multifaceted organization increasingly focused on security beyond its borders.

Whereas, during the 2000s, Poland intensified its activities within NATO, demonstrated political loyalty during key military interventions initiated by the USA, thus becoming a consistent and influential supporter of Atlanticism in the EU.

Poland, representing a middle-level power, is the largest among the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, with traditions and ambitions of political leadership primarily in the CEE region. The Russian Federation is one of the key players in the CEE, which seeks to create effective formats of operational cooperation with those states that could potentially be threatened by the Russian Federation.

Military-strategic competition between countries is limited because they are members of the EU and NATO. At the same time, the military and political ambitions of the Federal Republic of Germany, even on a small scale, have no prospect of threatening the national interests of the Republic of Poland. Moreover, Poland has significantly strengthened its military potential, especially against the background of the Russian Federation's war against Ukraine. Thus, Poland is trying to become a new military superpower in Europe, which will fundamentally change the balance of power in the region. And although Germany's military budget (Germany's military spending in 2022 increased by 2.3% to 55.8 billion dollars) is larger than Poland's, in the ranking of the world's armies, the Polish armed forces (occupying the 20th place) occupy a higher place than the German ones (occupying 25th place) [11].

But this development of events related to Poland's build-up of military power does not cause concern for Berlin, as it, in his opinion, will further secure Germany. Thus, Germany, using Poland as a shield against possible threats, deliberately refuses to play a leading role in the security sphere. Poland's activity in the field of security and defense is much higher than that of Germany. Precisely under these circumstances, in terms of asymmetry, Poland is in the role of a stronger side.

At the same time, Poland's foreign policy ambitions, which foresee the growth of its role in the EU and NATO, should be considered in the context of inevitable transformations in the European security system. Poland's plans include the acquisition of regional leadership in the Baltic-Black Sea region and in the space from the Baltic to the Adriatic and the role of a full NATO ally, which allowed to obtain actual security guarantees. [10].

Unlike Germany, Poland still has a gap between its political ambitions and capabilities. Germany, as the leading center of European politics, has a significant influence on Poland's situation. Therefore, Germany's important foreign policy steps do not go unnoticed and are accompanied by immediate interpretation and comments from the Polish side.

Although the issue of security between Germany and Poland is no longer on the agenda, the conflict of national interests has not lost its sharpness. Since Germany is a priority power for Poland, Warsaw tends to be hypersensitive to German political gestures, whereas Germany does not show these signs towards its eastern neighbor. Therefore, in German-Polish bilateral relations, the factor of asymmetry of opportunities plays a far from constructive role.

By helping a weaker state to solve its most important economic and social problems, a stronger state expands the surrounding perimeter of security and stability, and also mitigates the potentially negative consequences of basic asymmetry.

In the early 1990s, in view of the historically determined asymmetry, the difference in potentials, the united Germany tried to demonstrate its goodwill to Poland as soon as possible. So that Warsaw would not see Germany as a potential threat, Berlin focused on multilateralism at the European level. It is worth noting that the most successful format of interaction, at least from 1991 to 2004, was the Weimar Triangle (an informal association of France, Germany and Poland that was formed in 1991). Close cooperation between the three countries contributed to the qualitative strengthening of Poland's position, as the «triangle» supported its European integration aspirations.

Poland's accession to the EU in 2004 was an important milestone for both the state and Polish society on the way to reducing the German-Polish asymmetry. The dynamic development of Polish-German relations made both sides understand the scope of these relations and dependencies. The multifaceted dialogue between Germany and Poland, which is based on asymmetric interdependence, cannot be called symmetrical, which the Polish side seeks.

Poland and other countries of Central Europe have become a significant strengthening of the economic potential of Germany, fruitful cooperation with which contributes to the neutralization of possible anti-German fears. CEE countries, especially Poland, are becoming an increasingly valuable ally for Germany. They are characterized by not only political, but also economic stability, unlike the problematic countries of the EU's south.

History may divide the Federal Republic of Germany and the Republic of Poland for a long time, but mutually beneficial economic cooperation can overcome deep differences. In general, Poland seeks to move to more equal relations with Germany. However, the lack of trust and political tension in the context of asymmetry will not contribute to the realization of national economic interests, which will mean lost economic opportunities.

German-Polish relations are still burdened by the ballast of exceptionally tragic pages of history. The historically burdened German-Polish neighborhood (467 km of common border), in contrast to the German-French one, has been widely discussed regarding its importance for the stability of Europe. Because unlike German-French relations, German-Polish relations were not and still are not symmetrical.

In the German-Polish dialogue, the term «asymmetry» on the one hand reflects reality, and on the other hand has become a certain way of interpreting bilateral relations [2, p. 39]. The relationship between Germany and Poland is a typical model of asymmetric interaction between two asymmetric powers, with different ways of pursuing interests, despite numerous common features. The advantage of the Federal Republic of Germany over the Republic of Poland in terms of power indicators, quantitative and qualitative parameters of socio-economic development, creates a basis for asymmetry of interests and mutual perception.

Historical, political, socio-economic factors undoubtedly remain decisive in shaping the nature of German-Polish relations. A very difficult area of relations between Germany and the Republic of Poland is the problem of cooperation in the matter of Nord Stream (Ukrainian: «North Stream»), and in recent years also Nord Stream–2. Poland, which constantly protests against the implementation of the German-Russian project, believes that Berlin is neglecting its interests.

Subsequently, the degree of tension between the countries raised the issue of war reparations. The German side considers the issue of reparations closed, while the Polish side firmly rejects Germany's position as completely unfounded and erroneous.

«The Germans do not pursue a friendly policy towards Poland, they want to establish their zone of influence here and treat Poland as a vassal», noted Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland A. Mulyarchyk. At the same time, he called the negative response of the German Foreign Ministry to the note of the Polish government regarding German reparations «disrespect to Poland and the Poles» [12].

Asymmetry of interests, criticism of Germany from the side of Poland intensifies the confrontation between neighboring countries. A serious danger for the unity of Europe is the possibility of increasing contradictions between Poland and Germany. The risks in current German-Polish relations are associated with the harsh rhetoric of the Polish side and the ambition of Polish foreign policy plans [10].

American researcher Lily Gardner Feldman notes that «reconciliation always has a reason. The party initiating it is guided by moral considerations or pragmatism (sometimes both). Looking back over the last decades, it is hard not to notice that in the case of Germany, the desire for reconciliation with Poland was mostly (if not exclusively) pragmatic in nature. The goal was to eliminate Berlin's image problems, which are the result of a tragic history, and to focus on the future and economic development (mutually beneficial), but at the cost of marginalizing the past» [13].

The increase in tension in German-Polish relations is also explained by the distance of Germany from a constructive dialogue with Poland. Germany, using an excess of insignificant gestures, tries to avoid discussing problematic issues with Poland and divert attention from differences of opinion.

Deep crisis situations in the relations between Warsaw and Berlin arose not only because of the superior, contemptuous and paternalistic attitude of the Federal Republic of Germany to the Polish Republic, but also because Poland was not frank in the political dialogue with Germany, wanting to avoid tension in relations with an influential neighbor who supported their integration with the EU and NATO. If controversial issues were considered on the agenda, their importance was usually downplayed in Germany so as not to create additional obstacles to mutually beneficial, dynamic cooperation. Historically, the asymmetric nature of relations between states often became the cause of misunderstandings between them.

Polish researcher M. Stolyarczyk believes that «in Polish-German relations, there are few chances for the development of «strategic cooperation» or «strategic partnership» in the short term, mainly due to the difference in interests, the very large asymmetry in many areas between the two countries and the connected with this and other factors determining Polish-German relations [14, p. 615].

Despite the reconciliation between the countries, Polish-German relations, which cannot be called cloudless, remain ambivalent. There are notable differences in the perception of Polish-German ties: The vast

majority of Poles – 56% – feel sympathy for their western neighbor, while in Germany only a third of German society sympathizes with Poland. At the same time, 64% of Poles positively evaluate German-Polish relations, while only 31% of Germans hold this opinion. Therefore, according to the results of the polls, Poles mostly sympathize with Germans than Germans with Poles, which demonstrates a certain asymmetry in the perception of Polish-German relations.

However, it still remains an open question why it is so easy to cause a wave of anti-German sentiments in Poland after long years of hard work by many German foundations and institutes, financial infusions and with a strong pro-German lobby. In this context, asymmetry can also be used to generate anti-German sentiment. This is food for thought for both Polish and German politicians [15].

According to the researcher S. Shved, the asymmetry repeatedly led to the fact that mutual expectations and hopes failed at the political level. At the same time, relations between the countries have always been characterized by a desire for rapprochement and the development of harmonious relations. Close economic ties and strong contacts of civil society and regions are an important vector for minimizing the asymmetry of German-Polish interaction. The partnership between North Rhine-Westphalia and the Silesian Voivodeship is just one of many examples. The importance of these decentralized, non-governmental connections is obvious, but regardless of this, interstate relations have always tended to develop along political currents that are largely motivated by domestic politics. Ultimately, S. Shved believes that it is necessary to pay more attention to structural and cognitive asymmetries in the formation of German-Polish relations [3].

And yet, the asymmetry of German-Polish relations is less pronounced compared to, for example, asymmetric Chinese-Vietnamese or American-Mexican relations, the experience of which is best applied in cases where the level of asymmetry and the level of interaction between the two countries is very high.

Conclusions. Розглянуто роки діяльності президентів Б. Клінтона та Дж. В. Буша і прем'єр-міністрів Дж. Мейджора, Т. Блера та Г. Брауна. Вони свідчать про високий рівень „особливих відносин” США та Великобританії, які стали взаємозалежними. Період був насичений драматичними подіями у Європі і США та поза їх межами. Дві країни зіграли одну з ключових ролей у боротьбі з міжнародним тероризмом та іншими проблемами і довели життєздатність їхнього альянсу, який є важливим фактором у досягненні стабільності та безпеки в міжнародних відносинах.

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Дерев'яно І. П. Німецько-польські відносини: асиметрія інтересів і взаємного сприйняття

Метою дослідження є аналіз асиметрії інтересів і взаємного сприйняття в німецько-польських відносинах, розгляд їх крізь призму асиметрії, визначення рівня її небезпеки, руйнівних ефектів. Німецько-польські відносини охоплюють широке коло неспівмірностей у соціально-економічній, політичній, військовій сферах. Відносини між Німеччиною та Польщею – це типова модель асиметричної взаємодії між двома асиметричними повноваженнями, з різними шляхами переслідування інтересів, попри численні спільні риси. Специфіка і розвиток цих відносин, що обумовлені історичними, географічними, економічними, культурними чинниками, є своєрідним ключем до розуміння складної природи асиметричних відносин. Відсутність не лише симетрії потенціалів і прийняття рішень, а й інтересів, цілей, прагнень між Німеччиною та Польщею переміщає їх взаємодію у площину асиметричних відносин, які іноді вкрай важко вивести на рівень тотального сприйняття один одного. Асиметрія інтересів здатна породжувати конфліктні ситуації і пошук примирення між сторонами є досить ускладненим. На вектор розвитку відносин між країнами має вплив асиметрія взаємного сприйняття. Перевага ФРН над РП за показниками могутності, кількісними і якісними параметрами соціально-економічного розвитку, створює підґрунтя для асиметрії інтересів і взаємного сприйняття. Попри взаємну зацікавленість у розвитку торговельно-економічної співпраці, ФРН і РП виступають у якості конкуруючих сторін і висловлюють різне бачення подальшого розвитку ЄС, умов і перспектив двосторонньої взаємодії, яка значною мірою залежить від рівня взаємозалежності та асиметрії потенціалів. Наслідком асиметричного характеру німецько-польських відносин, асиметрії інтересів та взаємного сприйняття є сплески напруженості і неприязні.

Keywords: німецько-польські відносини, Німеччина, Польща, асиметрія інтересів, взаємне сприйняття, асиметричні відносини.