

A b s t r a c t s

Undesirable Success

The German-Polish Community of Conflict

Felix Ackermann

After Reconciliation

Poles and Germans: A Relationship Diagnosis

Every conversation between Germans and Poles is marked by how the visible and invisible asymmetries between the two countries are handled. The practices of German-Polish reconciliation and dialogue were social mechanisms for creating symbolic symmetry. Since Poland's government has increasingly refused to continue these forms of dialogue, resentment has come to dominate. At the same time, the Polish right is struggling against its opponents at home and Germany's power in the EU. Many Germans see in Kaczyński's Poland a country that has gone backwards and is posing a threat to Europe's future viability. With this form of classification, they at the same time sustain their own interpretive supremacy in the present. What was once the German-Polish dialogue has degenerated into a collective soliloquy of like-minded people. Thus, the once beneficial spaces of German-Polish dialogue have become echo chambers. This exacerbates the ongoing crisis between Poland and Germany.

Kai-Olaf Lang

Frustration and Alienation

Warsaw's Confrontational Policy toward Germany

Disagreements over European policy, differences over the appropriate response to Russia's war against Ukraine, and now demands from Warsaw for reparations stemming from the Second World War. All of this is straining German-Polish relations. Poland's governing coalition accuses Germany of instrumentalizing the EU in order to assert German hegemony and destroy Polish sovereignty. These shrill tones are not only due to the election campaign. They are an expression of fundamental differences in the political thinking within the national-conservative and liberal camps in Poland and the EU. In light of the war in Ukraine and challenges facing European security and energy policy, German diplomats and politicians should respond with calm to the harsh rhetoric coming from Poland and show strategic forbearance.

Stefan Garsztecki
Poland, Germany, and Reparations
The Long Shadow of the Second World War

The Polish government has submitted an investigative report addressing the damage inflicted on Poland by Germany during the Second World War. The report puts the amount of reparations due at EUR 1.3 trillion. Whether there is a legal basis for such claims is doubtful. Poland received reparations from the Soviet zone of occupation in Germany as well as the German Democratic Republic, and then in 1953 issued a waiver of reparations. The Federal Republic of Germany settled individual claims for compensation. The German government views the issue of compensation as settled by the 1990 Two Plus Four Treaty. Legally, this may hold true, but politically and morally, the question of “compensation” remains current.

Jochen Böhler
Trauma Here, Repressed Memories There
Invasion and Occupation in Poland, 1939–1945

It is well known that the Second World War began on September 1, 1939, with Germany’s invasion of Poland. But what the war and the occupation meant for the population found its way into German memory only much later and most superficially. From the very first day of the attack, German military operations had all the characteristics of a war of extermination. Prisoners of war and civilians were shot. The entire population was at the mercy of the occupiers. People were murdered for no reason, put in ghettos, where they died of starvation and disease, deported to killing centres, where they fell victim to mass murder, or sent away to work as forced labourers. There is not a family in Poland that did not lose relatives as a consequence of the war and occupation. And the material and immaterial damage that Germany inflicted on Poland through devastation, theft, and the deliberate destruction of towns, villages, cultural property, and infrastructure was immense.

Reinhold Vetter
Political Paranoia
The Polish Right’s Anti-German Propaganda

Poland’s next parliamentary elections in the autumn of 2023 are already casting a shadow over the country’s political landscape. According to polls, it remains open whether the ruling right can stay in power. Jarosław Kaczyński and his PiS party consider Germany bashing to be a proven means of keeping their clientele in line and winning over voters. Sometimes, criticism of Germany has a legitimate core; sometimes, it is mere propaganda, out of touch with reality to the point of absurdity. Anti-German polemics have a tradition in Poland, but the current harshness represents a new quality.

Arkadiusz Łuba
Toxic Conditions, Not Only on the Oder River
German-Polish Relations in Caricature

Political relations between Poland and Germany are bad. They are marked by disagreement and alienation. So, this is a good time for political cartoons. Traditionally, these are devoted to people and issues from domestic politics. But the debates about Poland's handling of refugees from the Middle East, the disagreements between Brussels and Warsaw over the rule of law, and the death of thousands of fish in the Oder River in August 2022 provide cartoonists with plenty of material. Some rely on the function of caricature as a means of exposing political folly and corruption, while others allow their art to be used for propaganda.

War und Conflict

Roland Götz
Operation "Z"
Russia's Lost War

Measured by its political objectives, Russia lost the war in Ukraine when its invading army had to withdraw from the northern theatre of war around Kyïv in March 2022. The northeastern campaign around Sumy and Kharkiv also ended with the withdrawal of the aggressor's troops in September. In the east and south, the campaign, which had been planned as a war of movement, turned into trench warfare and a war of attrition, in which Russia was quantitatively superior in weapon systems, while Ukraine had better-led personnel at its disposal. When and how the war ends depends not only on the will to fight among each country's population, but also on how much manpower and matériel both sides are able to mobilize.

Nikolay Mitrokhin
Eight Years and Nine Months of War
Ukraine's Precautionary Steps, Defensive Maneuvers, and Reconquest

The Ukrainian army has undergone significant modernisation since the start of the war in 2014. That said, it was inadequately prepared for Russia's invasion in February 2022. There was a shortage of heavy weapons, armoured vehicles, and ammunition. Nonetheless, the Ukrainian army proved itself able to cope

with the massive attack and to liberate occupied areas. Decisive factors were the strong will to fight, the support of the population, good coordination of mobile units acting with great autonomy, the delivery of western artillery and rocket systems, a smart tactical approach, and not least of all mistakes made by the invaders. This enabled the Ukrainian army to achieve great successes in the defence of Kiev and Kharkiv in the first two months of the war and in significant reconquests during the summer and autumn. Where the occupying army has entrenched itself in urban areas or along well-fortified front lines, the Ukrainian armed forces are running into difficulties and paying a high price in blood.

Marlène Laruelle
Frontline Philosophy
Ideologies for Russia's War

Russia's partial mobilisation in the autumn of 2022 brought the war against Ukraine home to the heart of Russian society. But why should a Russian citizen actually be prepared to sacrifice his life? The Kremlin is trying to cast the "special operation" in Ukraine as a continuation of the "Great Patriotic War", that is to say, as a defensive war against fascism. Producers of ideology of various shades offer their own interpretation: Their "new frontline philosophy" enthuses about the war as an existential experience. For Russian Orthodox propagandists arguing from the point of view of historical redemption, Ukraine is the arena in which Russia, as *katechon*, stops the Antichrist.

Zaal Andronikashvili
Georgian Nightmare
On Authoritarian Developments in Tbilisi

Georgia's ruling party features the word "dream" in its name, but its policies are causing nightmares for all of the country's pro-democratic political forces. Behind the party and the government stands oligarch Bidzina Ivanishvili, who has established an authoritarian regime and is driving Georgia into the arms of Russia. Relations with Ukraine have deteriorated enormously. The Georgian government is ostensibly trying not to provoke Moscow; in fact, its only goal is to secure power. The EU seems to face a dilemma: democratic standards or geopolitical interests. A clear and smart policy can achieve both, but with indecision the EU will gamble away both. This is all the more dangerous because in Georgia, as in many other countries around the world, Russia presents itself as a partner in the struggle against colonial oppression. But the Putin regime is showing its true face in Ukraine.

Otto Luchterhandt
The Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan Border War
Historical Causes and Current Reasons

In September 2022, the Tajik army attacked places along a broad front in south-western Kyrgyzstan. It was the largest attack in the conflict over the Tajik exclave of Vorukh, in the Batken region. This conflict has been waged by violent means on again, off again for over a decade. Tajikistan sees the Vorukh basin, which is surrounded by high mountains and is known for its fruit farming, not as an exclave, but as an integral part of its national territory. However, the narrow strip separating Vorukh from Tajikistan is Kyrgyzstan's only link to the city of Isfana and the Sülüktü coalfield in the western part of the country. With increasing motorisation, this corridor has become more and more important. The conflict is mainly driven by the rapid growth of the population in the densely settled Tajik part of the Fergana Valley, which is close to the exclave. Tajikistan is choosing a path of violence against the backdrop of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, which is further weakening Moscow's already battered position of power in Central Asia.

Franziska Davies
Disinformation Expert
Russia, Ukraine, and Ms. Krone-Schmalz

Gabriele Krone-Schmalz, former Moscow correspondent for the German broadcast network ARD, rose to prominence on television. In Germany, parts of the general public consider her a "Russia expert". Recently, she spoke in Reutlingen about "Russia and Ukraine" as well as the war. Her message is simple: the "West" is to blame, it has ignored Russia's interests, expanded NATO, and forced Russia to react. This thesis cannot be supported using facts. If one looks at the facts in Krone-Schmalz's lecture and books and checks her arguments and the presentation of the evidence, one finds numerous examples of distortions, half-truths, the manipulative use of sources, and false statements. Empirically and methodically, Ms. Krone-Schmalz's statements are untenable. She is engaged in disinformation.