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Report from the 9th Cross-Border Scientific Conference in the series "Development on the Periphery?"

Sprawozdanie z IX Transgranicznej Konferencji Naukowej z cyklu „Rozwój na peryferiach?"

Keywords: European Union, geopolitics, Polish-German relations, crisis, conference

On 29–30 May 2025, the Aula of Jacob of Paradies University in Gorzów Wielkopolski hosted the ninth edition of the scientific conference in the series "Development on the Periphery?". The theme of this year's edition was framed by the title "Nothing Will Ever Be the Same Again! The Polish Presidency, Germany, and the European Union in the Face of Transformations in the International Order." The event was organized by the Academic Center for German and European Studies of Jacob of Paradies University and the Konrad Adenauer Foundation. The conference was held under the honorary patronage of Professor Elżbieta Skorupska-Raczyńska, Rector of Jacob of Paradies University, Marek Cebula, Voivode of the Lubuskie Province and Jacek Wójcicki, Mayor of Gorzów Wielkopolski.

Partners of the conference included the Faculty of Law and Security of Jacob of Paradies University, the European Centre of the University of Warsaw, the Euroregion Pro Europa Viadrina, the Western Chamber of Industry and Commerce, the Polish European Studies Association (branches in Gorzów Wielkopolski and Rzeszów), the Polish Political Science Association (Gorzów branch), and the Polish European Community Studies Association (PECSA).

The aim of the conference was to provide space for reflection and debate on the role of Poland, Germany, and the European Union in the context of dynamic changes in the global order. Participants analyzed the challenges facing European foreign and security policy, and discussed both the opportunities and risks associated with Poland's presidency of the EU Council amid growing geopolitical tensions. A number of more specific issues were also addressed, including EU policies, the policies of Poland and Germany, as well as developments in the

Polish-German border region. Poland's presidency of the Council of the European Union represents a key moment for national and regional politics, offering an opportunity to shape the EU agenda and strengthen Poland's position on the international stage. The conference provided a platform for interdisciplinary exchange of views on the challenges and opportunities arising from Poland's assumption of this important and prestigious role.

The conference was opened by Professor Małgorzata Trocka, Vice-Rector for Education at Jacob of Paradies University, who emphasized the continuity of the event and its focus on important current issues affecting the region, Poland, and Europe. Subsequently, Marek Cebula, Voivode of the Lubuskie Province, addressed the audience, underlining the significance of the topics under discussion. On behalf of the Faculty of Law and Security of Jacob of Paradies University, the guests were welcomed by the Dean, Professor Beata Orłowska. Dr. Piotr Womela, representing the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, then spoke about the history of cooperation in the implementation of joint projects with the Gorzów university. The final speaker during the opening session was Professor Zbigniew Czachór, Director of the Academic Center for German and European Studies at Jacob of Paradies University, who expressed his gratitude to the University authorities, partners, co-organizers, and members of the Organizing Committee. Following the opening speeches, the inaugural lecture was delivered by Dr. Kai-Olaf Lang from the Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik in Berlin. His presentation, entitled "What Shall We Do About It? Poland and Germany in Search of Lost Security," sought to address the central question posed in the title of the conference. The lecture was followed by a discussion.

Panels on the First Day

The first panel was chaired by Professor Beata Orłowska, Dean of the Faculty of Law and Security atJacob of Paradies University. The first speaker was Professor Tomasz Kubin from the University of Silesia in Katowice, who addressed the question of whether the Visegrad Group still exists in the context of the war in Ukraine. He was followed by Professor Agnieszka Bielawska from Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, who spoke about German leadership in the European Union's foreign policy. The third presentation was delivered by Professor Zbigniew Czachór of Jacob of Paradies University, who discussed the process of creating a communicative security community, drawing on the work of Karl Wolfgang Deutsch. At the end of the panel, the speakers responded to questions from the audience.

After the coffee break, the second panel began under the moderation of Professor Joanna Lubimow, Vice-Dean of the Faculty of Law and Security at Jacob of Paradies University. The first presentation was delivered by Professor Beata Przybylska-Maszner from Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, who discussed the Common Security and Defence Policy of the EU in the context of transformations of the international order. She was followed by Dr. Piotr Womela from the Konrad Adenauer Foundation in Warsaw, who addressed the timely and important topic of challenges facing the new Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, Friedrich Merz. The third speaker was Professor Aleksandra Szczerba of Jacob of Paradies University, also representing Team Europe Direct and the Polish European Community Studies Association (PECSA). Her presentation focused on the issue of "Soft Power or Girl Power? The European Union as a Promoter of Non-Discrimination in the Age of (American) Backlash Against Gender Equality." After the final presentation, the panelists answered questions from the audience and engaged in a lively discussion.

After the lunch break, the third panel of the conference took place, moderated by Dr. Tomasz Marcinkowski, Deputy Director of the Academic Center for German and European Studies at Jacob of Paradies University. The session focused on more practical issues. The first speaker was Krzysztof Szydłak, Director of the Euroregion Pro Europa Viadrina Office in Gorzów Wielkopolski, who presented examples of Polish-German cross-border cooperation over the past 30 years of the Euroregion's activity. He was followed by Joanna Szymańska-Bica (Regionalexpertin im Bundesverband, Region West, Polnischer Sozialrat e.V., Berlin), whose presentation, entitled "From the Community of Policies to a Policy of Community: Evaluation of Diaspora Policy 20 Years after Poland's Accession to the European Union in the Case of Germany – New Challenges, New Needs?" examined the evolution of diaspora policy. The third presentation was delivered by Kamila Szwajkowska, Director of the Western Chamber of Industry and Commerce in Gorzów Wielkopolski, who analyzed the challenges and opportunities of cross-border cooperation among entrepreneurs. Following the presentations, the speakers answered questions and participated in a discussion.

The final panel of the first day was moderated by Dr. Ryszard Bodziacki from Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań. The first presentation was delivered by Dr. Arkadiusz Machniak from the University of Rzeszów, who addressed the issue of left-wing terrorism in Europe, both in the past and today. He was followed by Dr. Arkadiusz Sójka from Adam Mickiewicz University, whose presentation focused on the relationship between the European Green Deal and the EU's

security and defence policy. The next speaker, Dr. Jacek Jaśkiewicz from Jacob of Paradies University, analyzed the objectives and challenges of the European Union's cohesion policy for the years 2021–2027.

In the final part of the panel, Dr. Joanna Lubimow, Dr. Łukasz Budzyński, and Dr. Tomasz Marcinkowski from Jacob of Paradies University presented the latest publication of the university's academic press. The volume, entitled "Ukrainian Refugees in Their Own Words"[1] contains the testimonies of refugee women who fled to Gorzów Wielkopolski following Russia's attack on Ukraine. The collection is supplemented with interviews with individuals engaged in providing assistance to war refugees in Gorzów, as well as scholarly articles. The panel concluded with a discussion.

Panels on the Second Day

The second day of the conference was held in the conference hall of the Main Library of Jacob of Paradies University. The session was opened by Professor Beata Orłowska, Dean of the Faculty of Law and Security at Jacob of Paradies University, and Professor Zbigniew Czachór, Director of the Academic Center for German and European Studies and President of the Polish European Studies Association. The first panel was moderated by Dr. Piotr Womela from the Konrad Adenauer Foundation in Warsaw. The first speaker was Professor Aleksandra Kruk from the University of Zielona Góra, who analyzed narratives about Germany on the example of Olaf Scholz's coalition (2021–2025). She was followed by Dr. Maciej Dudziak from Jacob of Paradies University, whose presentation entitled "When Authoritarianism Knocks at the Door: The Cunning of Anti-Reason" addressed the dangers of rising authoritarian tendencies. The panel concluded with a presentation by Oliwia Radkiewicz, MA from Jacob of Paradies University, who delivered a comparative analysis of climate policy in the election programs of Polish presidential candidates. The session ended with a discussion.

The second panel was chaired by Oliwia Radkiewicz, MA. The first presentation was given by Dr. Albin Skwarek from Jacob of Paradies University, who discussed changes in the international order and their impact on the security of Poland and Europe. He was followed by Dr. Tomasz Marcinkowski, also from Jacob of Paradies University, who presented his theses on the emergence of a new (or perhaps old?) security order in Europe. After the presentations, a discussion was held, followed by the formal closing of the conference proceedings.

[1] *Ukraińscy uchodźcy własnym głosem o sobie*, eds. Ł. Budzyński, T. Marcinkowski, J. Lubimow, Gorzów Wielkopolski 2024.

Conclusion

The ninth edition of the Gorzów conference in the series "Development on the Periphery?" was, in the opinion of both participants and organizers, an engaging and important academic event. The debates addressed current issues concerning the Polish-German borderland, Poland and Germany, as well as the European Union in the context of transformations of the international order. The inspiring presentations of the speakers and the discussions of their research findings constituted a valuable contribution to the broader debate on contemporary social and political processes.