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## BOOK REVIEW: POLAND AND SLOVAKIA: BILATERAL RELATIONS IN THE MULTILATERAL CONTEXT (2004 – 2016)

Ivana Slobodníková\*

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DYDUCH, J. – JAKUBOWSKI, S. – KOSÍR, I. – UŠIAK J.: *Poland and Slovakia: Bilateral Relations in the Multilateral Context (2004-2016)*. Stuttgart: ibidem Verlag, 2017. 286 p. ISBN 978-3-8382-0976-0.

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The book *Poland and Slovakia: Bilateral Relations in a Multilateral Context (2004 – 2016)* was published as a result of mutual project supported by the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Wrocław, the Faculty of Political Science and International Relation at Matej Bel University and the International Visegrad Fund. Its authors are **Dr. Joanna Dyduch**, **Prof. Igor Kosír**, **Dr. Sebastian Jakubowski** and **Dr. Jaroslav Ušiak**. **Prof. Igor Kosír** was a Professor at the Department of International Relations at Matej Bel University, where he focused on world economic development, international economic integration and the European Union's external relations. **Dr. Jaroslav Ušiak** works at the same faculty and university. He focuses on the issues of sector security of the state, state sovereignty, devoting primary attention to the societal sector and the problem of identities. He also deals with the security theories and focusing on regional security mainly in Central Europe. He is an author and co-author of several books: *Security as category; Security Policy of the Slovak Republic – Development, Cornerstones and Implications*. **Dr. Joanna Dyduch** is an Assistant Professor at the Department of European Studies at the University of Wrocław where she devoted her work to foreign policy analysis and energy policy. She is also a member of the Executive Committee of the European Association of Israel Studies at the School of Oriental and African Studies/University of London. **Dr. Sebastian Jakubowski** focuses on economic policy and structural changes that shaped Central and Eastern Europe after the

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collapse of communism. His career is filled with numerous visits to foreign universities, such as the University of California, Leipzig University etc.

The book consists of five main chapters, of which the first one focuses on theoretical and methodological issues, while the subsequent chapters encompass the most important realms of Polish-Slovak bilateral relationship in the multilateral context. In general, the book is based on diverse research material, including primary and secondary sources.

The first chapter serves as an introduction to the book and it includes general characteristics of bilateral relations between the European Union member states. Author emphasises that the Polish-Slovak relationship is characterised as good but has never been truly utilised. Furthermore, the relationship was strongly influenced by the accession of both countries to NATO and the EU. It is worth noting that this relationship is dependent not only on bilateral relations but also on external influences. Author correctly concludes that in order to be successful in analysis of this relation we have to look at multilateral context.

The first chapter entails methodological foundation. The book uses two major concepts: intergovernmental theory and Europeanisation concept. When attempting to do a synthesis of those two concepts, it can provide model version of "common grounds" on which Poles and Slovaks meet. Although they are not identical, they provide complementary approaches in order to analyse bilateral relations.

The second chapter focuses more closely on Polish-Slovak political cooperation and it analyses exclusive responsibility of public bodies authorised to take on legal and international commitments. Understanding the complexity of this matter authors scrutinize bilateral and international level. Furthermore, chapter presents the historical development of Polish-Slovak political relations based on deep international interdependence mostly driven by European integration. Key priorities and direction of Bratislava and Warsaw foreign policies author drawn from official government documents. In author's opinion, the dynamics of bilateral relations, as assessed based on bilateral agreements points to a low level of politicization. It is also important to note that after Poland and Slovakia acceded to the European Union, their relations were remodelled.

Being exposed to the model of Europeanisation the distinction between internal and foreign policies has become blurred. On the European level, the authors used example of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), specifically the Eastern Partnership (EaP) as this area encompassed both

Polish and Slovak diplomats, often becoming a subject of common decision-making and coordinated actions. Following the EaP cooperation, authors also shifts her attention to current Ukrainian crisis. They conclude that the process of reaching a common position on this issue was not easy. However, at the end it represented a “...unprecedented case of the Visegrad Group acting essentially as a single entity and joining the discourse in superpower politics.” (p. 79). Comprehensive analysis of political cooperation provides identification of several key factor that shape Polish-Slovak bilateral relations. It is noted that one need to take into account the role of historical, cultural and social experiences with emphasis on geopolitical and geoeconomic aspects. The second aspect entails their membership in the European integration. Finally yet importantly, Polish and Slovak foreign policy is subject to foreign policies pursued by actors outside of the EU (Russia and the USA).

The third chapter shifts focus from political cooperation to the field of defence and security. Defence and security bilateral relations are strongly defined by their membership in international organisations. Authors defines one clear difference between the development of defence and security between in Poland and Slovakia. After the Cold War, Poland (compared to Czechoslovakia) opted for a strict pro-Western orientation.

The first defence and security cooperation between Bratislava and Warsaw was established in 1993 by military agreement. Furthermore, the relationship was largely symbolic. In order to be successful in outlining the logic of this type relationship, the author also focuses on analysis of Slovak and Polish strategic document in relation to security and defence policy. The chapter also includes very insightful table on similarities and differences in the perception of threats for both countries. Both countries see terrorist attack, terrorism and proliferation of WMD as threats. As with the political cooperation, the accession of both countries to the EU and NATO structures influenced their cooperation. The creation of the Visegrad Group is considered as one of key factors of mutual defence cooperation. The presence of this group guarantees the absence of serious tension or major discrepancies. The chapters rounds with overall assessment of defence and security fields of cooperation between Poland and Slovakia.

The forth chapter is dedicated to economic relations between Poland and Slovakia. In chapter's introduction author states three phenomena that influence economic relations between Warsaw and Bratislava – namely economic transformation of the post-Soviet countries, accession to the European Union

and the global financial crisis. The analysis itself focuses on direct bilateral economic relations but also on strong economic ties of both countries with Germany. When defining bilateral economic relations, author looks not only on mutual direct investments but also on foreign investment and export/import indicators. In sub-regional level, strong economic ties with Germany play important role in Slovakia and Poland. Several common features (geography, culture, market rules) made both countries ideal for the expansion of German trade and investment. However, it has to be noted that German imports in Poland have greater diversity than in Slovakia. Furthermore, authors identify as a striking example of missed opportunities in Slovak-Polish cooperation the failure of Euro adoption. Overall, the future of cooperation between both countries lies in their participation in the fourth industrial revolution and further European integration.

The last chapter completes the assessment of Poland-Slovak relations with focus on fields such as science, culture, heritage, folklore and education. Author also provides an insight on cross-border cooperation and multilateral cooperation within the Euroregions. In order to scrutinize sectorial cooperation in education, science, culture and regional cooperation, brief assessment of the legal framework for bilateral relations is conducted. In the field of education, an increase in number of universities and university students in both states can be seen. Bilateral relations in education are focused on mutual recognition of undertaken studies and obtained degrees. Mutual cultural cooperation has been gradually enhancing due to geographical proximity, frequent contacts between cities and closeness of local folklore. Author also provides comprehensive table with all areas of cooperation in V4 region and selected joint V4 declaration related to educational, scientific, cultural as well as cross-border cooperation. As systematic cooperation in these sectors deepened, it become an important stabilizing factor for entire region.

The book is well-divided in chapters and provides comprehensive analysis of the state of Polish-Slovak relations on bilateral, but also on multilateral level. Identification of crucial areas in bilateral relation help to identify similar but also divergent interest. It can be concluded that the Polish-Slovak relations are significantly asymmetric. This logic and argument is followed through every chapter. Methodological approach used by the authors represents another contribution of the reviewed volume. Finding a synthesis of intergovernmentalism and Europeanisation proved to be vital for complex analysis. However, it must be noted that while the first two chapters work

strongly with this concept, the rest of the book is slightly missing theory analysis of different sectors.

The book *Poland and Slovakia: Bilateral Relations in the Multilateral Context (2004 – 2016)* underlines the fact that the relations cannot be simply built on bilateral level. Mutual cooperation has to be understood in sub-regional, regional, but also global context. After defining the common interest of Poland and Slovakia, further and deeper cooperation can be nourished.