

Book review:

**Tobias Haimin Wung-Sung (2019),
*Beyond the Border. Young Minorities in the
Danish–German Borderlands, 1955-1971*,
Berghahn Books, New York – Oxford, 270 pages**

Jaroslav Dvorak, Klaipėda University (Klaipėda, Lithuania)

E-mail: Jaroslav.Dvorak@ku.lt

ORCID ID: 0000-0003-1052-8741

In his book *Beyond the Border. Young Minorities in the Danish–German Borderlands, 1955-1971*, Tobias Haimin Wung-Sung studied youth minority segments on the Danish-German border. The book consists of an introduction, seven chapters and conclusions. The book starts with the terminology used, the interpretations of the translation and the language, which is indeed highly useful for readers, who are not familiar with the languages in question (Danish and German languages). The introduction is balanced. Elements of modern scientific research (the critical evaluation of other researchers' works, and the descriptions of research sources and structure) are presented together with enriched visual material.

In the first chapter of the book, the author reveals the context of minorities living on the German-Danish border and the circumstances of their emergence and development. The author successfully introduced both youth minority groups through the dimension of the political system. The research carefully examines various types of groups, institutions representing the interests of youth minorities, the forms of community governance of Danish and German minorities, interest coalitions and political self-regulation.

The second chapter reveals the features of structural differentiation of the Danish-German youth minorities as both countries became members of NATO. It turns out that service in the military was a very sensitive area for youth minority. The evidence provided by the author demonstrates that Danish youth took a hostile attitude towards service in the German army, but not against the service itself in general (p. 76). In fact, they were probably one of the first to speak in favour of service in united European force (p. 77). For part of German minority youth, service in the army was not considered a problem. This basically presupposes the belief that one can only be German if they graduate from a German school and are familiar with the culture, language and traditions of his/her

country of national identity. Therefore, the Copenhagen Declaration, which allowed the German minorities to build their own secondary school and express their gratitude to graduates for ensuring the presence of the German identity at the border, stands as the greatest achievement presented by the author (p. 88).

The third chapter of the book discusses the position of the minorities on the idea of a united Europe. According to the author, the responses of the Danish and German minorities to the idea of a united Europe were completely different (p. 99). The German minority faced the dilemma of dual national loyalty. It turns out that the German minority strongly supported the idea of a united Europe, because such solution could ensure dual loyalty. It is true that there is a lack of convincing evidence of the attitude of German minority youth towards a united Europe. At this point, the author relies on derived assumptions to present the position of one young German student. For its part, the idea of a united Europe was not so attractive to the Danish minority. They saw their identity in Denmark and its political community. A similar position was taken by youth from the Danish minority (p. 109). The author shows that young people are divided into two camps: (1) those who support the idea of Scandinavianism; (2) those seeking identity in Europe. Opponents of a united Europe apparently use the standard arguments they hold for inciting Nazism and Communism, arguing that Danes and Germans are too different to be together in a united Europe (p. 115).

In the fourth chapter, the author continues the chosen line of research and looks at the relationship of minorities with the past, namely to what extent past events have affected the present i.e. the years from 1960 to 1965. The positions of both minorities were different. The German minority sought to distance themselves from the Nazi past, so they looked more to the future. The Danish minority had a different approach and focused more on the past, raising the issue of identity, the legitimacy of the region, etc. It also affected the mood of young people, as German youth organisations distanced themselves from politics by focusing on sports. For their part, the Danish minority saw itself as part of a democratic, peaceful Danish nation (p. 135). Evidence suggests that consensus between Germans and Danes was sought with the help of historians and in order not to load the youth with the burden of the past (p.135). Of course, there were those who thought otherwise, relying on nationalist doctrine, although the author did not directly label it as such. Although the discourses of Danish unity and the metaphor of the youth battlefield were developed by leaders of minorities, it seemed confusing and conflicting to the target audience of youths (p. 140).

In the fifth chapter, Haimin Wung-Sung showed the changing attitudes of youth towards improving their quality of life and quality of leisure. As the author notes: „recreational activities organised by minorities have reached more people than the education system” (p. 148). In the past, youth minorities had focused on traditional forms of leisure, but this began to change in the later 1950s as they abandoned traditional national songs for jazz and pop music. In other words, the new youth culture has turned the traditional, stagnant way of life upside down. Sport on both sides of the border is also evolving according to national identity and has been seen as part of national identity. While it is acknowledged

that talent has been welcomed in national teams and training (p.151). It is obvious that the diffusion of globalisation has focused the attention of minority youth on fashion and new music, which has allowed them to distance themselves from the values of traditionalism, though it is thanks to traditionalism that they were different from the majority. However, minority youth found a sense of community and solidarity in their new identity, especially knowing that older people are constantly opposed to the views of youth.

In the sixth part, the author raises an important issue for the survival of national minorities. Youth emigration and the brain drain has affected the situation of national minorities in Denmark and Germany. The author bases his arguments on an analysis of the local media and provides excerpts from interviews with youth at the time. The youth minority at the time faced the dilemma of whether to stay in the country where they were born or go to their historic homeland. On the other hand, like any youth, it was tempting to run away from their parents. The community of national minorities examined by the author has very traditional, inflexible views. Even in this context, the issue of youth employment and identity also arises. It turns out that there were opinions that the German territorial concept mentioned in the first stanza of the song (from the Mass to the Memel, from the Etsch to the Belt) should not be taken literally (p. 202).

Chapter seven provides more evidence that youth is transformed over time. Naturally, they have begun to articulate their interests differently compared to the past. It is clear that the main arguments of the author are based on sources who blame liberalism and globalisation. But perhaps the youth have seen the community as a marginalised, unsustainable and opposition "ghetto" that lacked the space for pluralism? However, within minorities, the same issue remains important. What does it mean to be a minority in a border area? At the same time, the issue of gender equality has arisen. Young women are being opened up to hitherto closed male communities, which is pushing traditionalists from minority communities into a corner (p. 219). The discourses presented in the book clearly show that they are very often based on both authoritarian discourses and the fact that, even in debate, there is one truth. The author shows the impact of global problems on the youth of national minorities in a rather reductive way. It is difficult to answer whether this is due to the fact that the topic is quite broad and requires a deeper understanding of these processes as we move into the field of vibration politics.

The book is written in a clear rational manner, on a purposeful and appropriate level based on the scientific sources and a wealth of empirical material and cases that form the content of the subject of this topic.

Jaroslav Dvorak – Ph.D. in Political Sciences (2011), since 2020 – Full Professor at the Klaipėda University (Lithuania). He was visiting researcher at the Uppsala University, Institute of Russian and Eurasian Studies in Sweden (2017), and visiting professor at the Białystok University of Technology in Poland (2017–2018). Since 2021 Jaroslav Dvorak is visiting associate professor at the University of Johannesburg (South Africa). He is also involved in the editorial boards of international scientific journals. He is research board member at *People Powered*. Research interests: political economy, international relations, comparative politics, public management, good governance.

Jaroslav Dvorak – doktor nauk politycznych (2011), od 2020 roku – profesor, pracuje na Uniwersytecie w Kłajpedzie (Litwa). Wcześniej był badaczem wizytującym na Uniwersytecie w Uppsali, w Instytucie Studiów Rosyjskich i Eurazji w Szwecji (2017) oraz profesorem wizytującym na Politechnice Białostockiej w Polsce (2017–2018). Od 2021 roku Jaroslav Dvorak jest profesorem wizytującym na Uniwersytecie w Johannesburgu (RPA). Jest także członkiem rad redakcyjnych w międzynarodowych czasopismach naukowych. Jest członkiem rady badawczej *People Powered*. Zainteresowania badawcze: ekonomia polityczna, stosunki międzynarodowe, polityka porównawcza, zarządzanie publiczne, dobre rządzenie.