

Abstract

This thesis examines the Free State of Bavaria's bilateral relations with the Russian Federation in the period from the annexation of Crimea in 2014 to the beginning of the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. The thesis begins by defining the modality of subnational entities' foreign engagement in relation to the national level and raises the research questions of whether and how the line of Bavarian-Russian relations differed from that pursued by German Federation. The thesis then examines the historical shape of the relationship to determine whether the statements of Bavarian politicians referring to the tradition of Bavarian-Russian relations are based on reality and whether they are indeed continuing in the course set essentially in the late 1980s. The main research period analyses two levels – political-rhetorical and economic level. On the political-rhetorical level, it shows that Bavaria's relationship with Russia was influenced by internal political and intra-party interests, which were also the driving force behind Bavaria's foreign policy going beyond the level of coordinated foreign policy with the Federation and the Länder and coming into conflict with the Federation in 2016. On the economic side, the long-standing course of economic pragmatism is evident, which was further strengthened after the accession of Markus Söder, who wanted to differentiate himself from his predecessor. At the same time, the thesis traces a double, contradictory argument: on the one hand, the strengthening of economic ties was presented as a way of helping Russia on the path of transition and democracy, while on the other hand, Bavarian politicians in other cases argued that it was possible to separate economic relations from the political context.