

## Hubert Zglinicki

Nicolaus Copernicus University (Poland)

e-mail: [zglinicki.h@gmail.com](mailto:zglinicki.h@gmail.com)

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1058-5287>

### **Book review: Piotr Kochanowski, *Analiza realizacji polityki zagranicznej państwa na przykładzie Wielkiej Brytanii czasu II wojny światowej*, Toruń 2018, pp. 505.**

The richness of Europe's historical heritage does not facilitate the work of historiographers who carry the burden of finding the truth in the depths of closer and further history. Understanding past events and their entire context is necessary to learn about politics, society, or, generally speaking, the world itself. After all, it's impossible to shape the future without explaining and understanding the past. Multi-level, and thus a high level of complexity of historical events, makes it difficult for experts to explain historical events in a clear, complete, and accessible way.

Piotr Kochanowski attempted to analyze and at the same time describe the political situation of Great Britain during World War II and the time immediately preceding it. At the outset, the author explains the purpose of his work with great precision, which focuses primarily on showing the foundations for how the British policy was implemented at the given time. One of the work's main assumptions was to undertake an indirect, substantive battle with myths that could have taken root in public opinion in recent decades. As the author himself emphasized, he did not want to refute false claims in a traditional way but to create an opportunity for a reader to independently interpret and understand the past thanks to the cited sources of historical knowledge.

The reviewed book consists of an introduction, four main chapters, and a summary. The whole is connected logically, making it easier for the reader – especially one who is not familiar with the subject matter – to get acquainted with the substantial layers of material. The chapters focus on presenting objective theoretical and practical assumptions that determine the basis for: foreign policy (Chapter I), the period of appeasement policy toward the Third Reich (Chapter II), the silhouette of Winston Churchill (Chapter III), and the period of World War II (Chapter IV). The last of the chapters, for understandable reasons, is the most extensive because it already refers directly to the very assumption of the work. Thanks to the broad first three parts of the study, the reader can comprehend British political

action basics during the war. It may be vital for a Polish reader whose interpretation of the history of the 1930s and 1940s can be quite different.

While reading the thesis, it is noticeable that the author's ambition was to explain the mechanisms of shaping foreign policy in the most reliable way possible. Sometimes it is possible to get the impression that the form used seems like the one used in textbooks. The issues discussed are very specific, often in a bulleted and systematic way. It may introduce a sense of ponderosity, but the method does its job. The variety of information is considerable, which means that using a different method could blur the overall picture. After understanding a particular specificity, individual for each author, the text assimilates relatively pleasantly. The author's involvement in the subject of work is strongly felt on each subsequent page and engages a reader as well. Step by step, further issues are explained that help to understand many cause and effect relationships. One of the main is the explication of the connection between the British political tradition, the country's internal situation, the international political landscape, personalities in power, and the form of foreign policy, which can be called the foundation.

Hard work done by Kochanowski can be seen, among others, in the variety of sources used. The multitude of studied documents or transcripts of parliamentary debates shows how much time has been devoted to finding sufficiently reliable support for the presented content. However, as the author notes, some documents prepared or owned by the British were manipulated by the secret service after the war. Notwithstanding, it seems that the burden of a similar problem may be borne by almost all sources of information, especially regarding such vital issues from a political point of view. The subject is burdened with the specter of a lie, which cannot be refuted today, and you may feel a certain amount of uncertainty when reading this book, which of course, is not an exception in the discipline. It only illustrates the broader problem of historiography as such.

General feelings after reading the study prepared by Piotr Kochanowski are positive. Although the style may sometimes seem difficult to perceive, such a choice is most justified in the subject's case. Studying the book will undoubtedly take the reader more than a few days or evenings while devoting more time to reading is worth the candle. Particular attention should be paid to the already mentioned multitude of sources, their diversity, and the multithreading of individual chapters. The apparent author's effort in preparing the publication equals his level of substantiveness, and an additional plus is the uniqueness of the work in terms of the chosen theme on the Polish scientific scene. It is difficult to find another position that would equally comprehensively treat implementing British policy during World War II.