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Alexandra N. RASTVORTSEVA

**Impact of the Crimean Crisis on Russian-German Relations 2014-2021**

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Professor

Irina N. NOVIKOVA

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## Introduction

**Relevance of the topic.** Throughout their centuries-long history, relations between Russia and Germany have experienced different periods: from radical confrontation to close partnership. On November 9, 1990, after a difficult phase caused by the Cold War, the two countries concluded the Treaty of Good Neighborhood, Partnership and Cooperation, in which they expressed their will “to finally draw a line under the past and make a tangible contribution through mutual understanding and reconciliation to overcoming the division of Europe”.<sup>1</sup> From this moment came a period of “warming” in relations between Russia and Germany, building partnerships, creating and implementing joint projects.

The discourses of both countries, created in the media, contributed to the strengthening of a positive attitude towards each other in the minds of Russians and Germans, the images of the enemy were becoming a thing of the past. Heads of government built trusting relationships. Helmut Kohl, Gerhard Schröder and Angela Merkel received positive reviews from the Russian media, news reports appeared about the friendly atmosphere during business negotiations. For example, as former Russian President Boris Yeltsin noted in his memoirs, in the 90s on the 20th century, relations with German Chancellor Helmut Kohl were “sincere and open”<sup>2</sup>. Cooperation between countries developed in all areas, whether it be economics, politics, education or culture, and “characterized by considerable breadth.”<sup>3</sup>

Disagreements on various issues did not cause negative consequences that could force countries to take opposite positions and develop into confrontation. Countries were an integral part of each other's foreign policy. This can be evidenced, for example, by the foreign policy concepts of the Russian Federation of 1993, 2000, 2008 and 2013, in which Germany is singled out as one of the most important European countries for Russia.<sup>4</sup> On the German side, one can cite as an example the CDU, CSU and SPD coalition agreements of 2005 and 2013, which speak of close cooperation between countries and the readiness to implement a policy aimed at strengthening partnerships at various levels.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Treaty of good neighborliness, partnership and cooperation between Germany and the USSR URL: <http://docs.cntd.ru/document/901736371>

<sup>2</sup> Yeltsin B. N. President's Notes. M.: Publishing House „Ogonjek“ 1994 p. 102 (in Russian)

<sup>3</sup> Götz R. Deutschland und Russland - "strategische Partner"? 10.03.2006. URL: <https://www.bpb.de/apuz/29872/deutschland-und-russland-strategische-partner?p=all>

<sup>4</sup> The foreign policy concept of the Russian Federation 23 April 1993. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. Diplomaticheskyy Vestnik 1993. № 1-2. Spetsvypusk URL: <https://www.twirpx.com/file/1822127/> (in Russian); The foreign policy concept of the Russian Federation 28 June 2000 URL: <http://docs.cntd.ru/document/901764263> (in Russian); The foreign policy concept of the Russian Federation 15 July 2008. URL: <http://kremlin.ru/acts/news/785>; The foreign policy concept of the Russian Federation 12 February 2013 URL: <https://www.garant.ru/products/ipo/prime/doc/70218094/> (in Russian)

<sup>5</sup> Koalitionsvertrag zwischen CDU, CSU und SPD Gemeinsam für Deutschland – mit Mut und Menschlichkeit 11.11.2005 URL: [https://www.kas.de/c/document\\_library/get\\_file?uuid=16f196dd-0298-d416-0acb-954d2a6a9d8d&groupId=252038](https://www.kas.de/c/document_library/get_file?uuid=16f196dd-0298-d416-0acb-954d2a6a9d8d&groupId=252038)

The year 2014, however, brought its own changes to the established order. First, the political crisis in Ukraine, during which protests took place, as well as the coup d'état in Kiev and the consequent accession of Crimea to the Russian Federation on 18 March 2014, provoked a strong negative reaction from Western politicians, researchers and the media. The website of the German Foreign Ministry reported that the countries' political relations “are marred by Russia's violations of fundamental international legal principles, such as the annexation of Crimea and Russian actions in eastern Ukraine”.<sup>6</sup>

In the German literature, it is usually noted that 2014 was the point after which one can no longer speak of a cooling in relations, but of estrangement and even confrontation. For example, as Rheingold Bocklet, first Vice-President of the Bavarian State Parliament and participant in the St Petersburg Dialogue, noted: “The West and the European Union in particular are now confronting an expansive Russia.”<sup>7</sup> It is important to note that since 2014, the term “Krim-Krise” (Crimean crisis) has been used in German academic and socio-political discourse to describe the events in Crimea in March 2014, which is the focus of this paper.

Secondly, as already mentioned, the situation in Ukraine has led to a noticeable deterioration not only in relations between Russia and the European Union, but also between Russia and Germany, which is one of the pillars of the EU. Many German sources emphasize that such a distance is caused not only by the crisis itself, but also by other events that have taken place since 1990, such as, for example, NATO's eastward expansion and Russia's reciprocal strengthening.<sup>8</sup> Gradually, the so-called “inattentive blindness” arose between the countries - a term borrowed from psychology, meaning that neither of the parties in a difficult situation could pay enough attention to the interests and problems of the other, which led to such a sharp, negative reaction to Russia's actions in Crimea.<sup>9</sup>

Thirdly, since that time, stigmatizing neologisms associated with this have increasingly appeared in the German media, such as “Putinverstehler” or “Russlandverstehler,”<sup>10</sup> denoting people

Koalitionsvertrag zwischen CDU, CSU und SPD Deutschlands Zukunft gestalten 18. Legislaturperiode. Union Betriebs-GmbH. 12/1213 URL: [https://www.kas.de/c/document\\_library/get\\_file?uuid=2f9f5a98-5d12-0987-7f12-aca250c6ea92&groupId=252038](https://www.kas.de/c/document_library/get_file?uuid=2f9f5a98-5d12-0987-7f12-aca250c6ea92&groupId=252038)

<sup>6</sup> Deutschland und die Russische Föderation: bilaterale Beziehungen. URL: <https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/de/aussepolitik/laender/russischefoederation-node/bilaterale-beziehungen/201542>

<sup>7</sup> Bocklet R. Putins Einfluss in Europa. Deutschland, Russland, die Ukraine und Europa // Politische Studien 472/2017. S. 58.

<sup>8</sup> E.g.: Heinemann-Grüder A. Kalter Krieg oder neue Ostpolitik? Ansätze deutscher Russlandpolitik. // Politik und Zeitgeschichte. 76(21-22). 2017. S. 4-10.; Dembinski M., Spanger H.-J. "Pluraler Frieden" - Leitgedanken zu einer neuen Russlandpolitik // HSFKReport, 2/2017. Frankfurt am Main: Hessische Stiftung Friedens- und Konfliktforschung. 2017. URL: <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-51093-2>; Böttger K. Die EU-Russland-Beziehungen: Rückblick und Ausblick im Zeichen der Ukraine-Krise. EU-Russland-Beziehungen. // integration – 3/2015.

<sup>9</sup> Bock A. Die unsichtbare Bedrohung. Kuba, die Ukraine und das Phänomen der Unaufmerksamkeitsblindheit // Z Außen Sicherheitspolitik 8. 2015. S. 505–550. URL: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12399-015-0533-1>

<sup>10</sup> E.g.: Bröckers M., Schreyer P. Wir sind die Guten: Ansichten eines Putinverstehlers oder wie uns die Medien manipulieren. Westend. Frankfurt am Main. 2014. 208 S.; Jahn E. Putin-Verstehler und Putin-Kritiker. Heftige Kontroversen um die deutsche und westliche Russlandpolitik. S.89 / Staack M. Der Ukraine-Konflikt, Russland und die europäische Sicherheitsordnung. Verlag Barbara Budrich. Opladen. Berlin. Toronto. 2017; Beyme K. Die Russland-

who understand the policy of Russian President Vladimir Putin or Russian interests. At the same time, it is noted that this is not about Russia as a country, its landscapes, culture or people, but about the political component, mainly about foreign policy. These concepts have a negative, or even extremely negative connotation and can even be used as a curse,<sup>11</sup> despite the fact that they are called politicians, scientists, public figures who are trying to understand the Russian position, find a compromise and abandon radical statements, such as, the unacceptable comparison made by German Finance Minister Wolfgang Schäuble.<sup>12</sup>

However, the Russian-German dialogue continued even under the pressure of sanctions imposed by the European Union, which affected the markets of both sides, despite noticeable alienation and mutual criticism. Russia and Germany carried out joint projects during the period under review, Germany remained the main economic partner of the Russian Federation,<sup>13</sup> German entrepreneurs remained the largest business community in the country.<sup>14</sup>

Thus, the relevance of the research topic is determined by the following factors:

- Russian-German relations have historically been of high importance for the foreign policy of both the Russian Federation and Germany;

- The study of the German perspective on the preconditions, the development of the Crimean crisis and its impact on Russian-German relations seems to be a necessary element for understanding the actions of German politicians in view of the aggravation of the crisis situation between Russia and Germany in 2022;

- the study of periodicals, public opinion as well as German-language studies from 2014 to 2021 will allow some sources to be introduced into Russian academic discourse for the first time, thereby enabling a deeper understanding of the developments, which in turn will contribute to the study of the picture of the Crimean crisis on both sides.

**The object** of this study is Russian-German relations. **The subject** of the study is transformation of relations between Russia and Germany under the influence of the Crimean crisis in the context of studying the German periodical press.

Kontroverse. Eine Analyse des ideologischen Konflikts zwischen Russland-Verstehern und Russland-Kritikern. Wiesbaden. 2016. S. 10.; Krone-Schmalz G. Russland verstehen. Der Kampf um die Ukraine und die Arroganz des Westens. München. 2015.

<sup>11</sup> Schulze I. Diffamiert als "Russlandversther" 31.03.2014. URL: <https://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/krim-krise-diffamiert-als-russlandversther-1.1925559>

<sup>12</sup> Schäuble vergleicht Putin mit Hitler 31.03.2014. URL: <https://www.zeit.de/politik/ausland/2014-03/hitler-putin-schaeuble-ukraine-krim>

<sup>13</sup> Bastian K. Die Europäische Union und Russland: Multilaterale und bilaterale Dimensionen in der europäischen Außenpolitik. Vs Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften. GWV Fachverlage GmbH. Wiesbaden. 2006. S.17; Deutschland und die Russische Föderation: bilaterale Beziehungen. URL: <https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/de/aussenpolitik/laender/russischefoederation-node/bilaterale-beziehungen/201542>

<sup>14</sup> Russian-German economic relations. Dossier // TASS. URL: <https://tass.ru/info/3193609> (in Russian); Deutschland und die Russische Föderation: bilaterale Beziehungen. 02.03.2020. URL: <https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/de/aussenpolitik/laender/russischefoederation-node/bilaterale-beziehungen/201542>

**The degree of knowledge of the problem.** The relationship between Russia and Germany has been the subject of much academic literature. Among domestic Germanists, V. B. Belov, who has published various monographs on Germany, is worth mentioning. For example, in 2015 a collective monograph appeared entitled „Modern Germany. Economy and Politics”. A special place in it is held by Russian-German relations, which are developing in a positive way thanks to different institutional mechanisms, various forms of cooperation in the political, economic, educational, cultural spheres, as well as through youth exchanges.<sup>15</sup> It is also important to name such monographs as “Germany. Challenges of the 21st century”, “Germany. 2017”, “Germany. 2021”.<sup>16</sup> In addition, V. B. Belov has published numerous articles on topical issues in Russian-German relations, such as an analysis of the start of the federal government and an assessment of the prospects etc.<sup>17</sup>

Bilateral relations were also studied by such authors as F. A. Basov who studied the role of Germany in the European Union, the Russian direction of German foreign policy, energy and environmental cooperation between Russia and Germany, etc.<sup>18</sup> Peculiarities of the development of economic and party-political system of the FRG, main foreign policy challenges, current state and prospects of Russian-German relations are considered in the works of I. F. Maksimychev.<sup>19</sup> The

<sup>15</sup> Belov V. B. Modern Germany. Economy and politics. Moscow, Ves Mir, 2015. 719 p. (in Russian); Belov V. B. German Foreign Policy in the Context of Current Challenges // International Analytics. 2021. Volume 12 (3). pp. 38–58. URL: <https://doi.org/10.46272/2587-8476-2021-12-3-38-58> (in Russian)

<sup>16</sup> Germany. Challenges of the XXI century: monograph / ed. V. B. Belova. - M.: Ves Mir, 2009. - 792 p.: ISBN 978-5-7777-0467-2. Text: electronic. URL: <https://znanium.com/catalog/product/1012933> (in Russian); Germany. 2017 = Germany. 2017 : [monograph] / [V. B. Belov and others; resp. ed. V. B. Belov]. - M.: Institute of Europe RAN, 2018. - 140 p. URL: <https://www.instituteofeurope.ru/images/uploads/doklad/354.pdf> (in Russian); Germany. 2021: [monograph] / [V. B. Belov and others]. DIE RAN, No. 393, M., 2022. DOI: [http://dx.doi.org/10.15211/report72022\\_393](http://dx.doi.org/10.15211/report72022_393) URL: <https://www.instituteofeurope.ru/publications/monografii/item/germaniya-2021-monografiya> (in Russian)

<sup>17</sup> E.g.: Belov V. B. The Nord Stream 2 project - the chances and risks of implementation // Scientific and Analytical Bulletin of the Institute of Europe of the Russian Academy of Sciences. 2018. №3 URL: <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/proekt-severnnyy-potok-2-shansy-i-riski-realizatsii> (in Russian); Belov V. B. Digital agenda of Russian-German economic cooperation // Modern Europe. 2018. No. 2 (81) URL: <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/tsifrovaya-povestka-rossijsko-germanskoj-hozyaystvennoj-kooperatsii> (in Russian); Belov V. B. Ten days of the new coalition government of Germany. // "Analytical notes of the Institute of Europe RAS" 2021 (Issue IV) No. 37. (No. 267) pp. 63-71 (in Russian); Belov V. B. Prospects for economic cooperation between Russian and German companies under sanctions // Scientific and Analytical Bulletin of the Institute of Europe RAS. 2018. No. 5. URL: <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/perspektivy-hozyaystvennoj-kooperatsii-kompaniy-rf-i-frg-v-usloviyah-sanktsiy> (in Russian); Belov V. B. Prospects for the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline // Scientific and Analytical Bulletin of the Institute of Europe of the Russian Academy of Sciences. 2021. №4 URL: <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/perspektivy-gazoprovoda-severnnyy-potok-2> (in Russian)

<sup>18</sup> E.g.: Basov F. A. Germany and European Elections 2019 // Elections to the European Parliament - 2019. National responses to the challenges of European integration. Moscow, IMEMO RAN, IE RAN, 2019 (in Russian); Basov F. A. Groups of interests of the Russian direction of foreign policy of Germany // Bulletin of the Udmurt University. Series: Sociology. Political science. International relationships. 2018. V. 2. No. 1. p. 51-56 URL: <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/gruppy-interesov-rossijskogo-napravleniya-vneshney-politiki-frg> (in Russian); Basov F. A. Relations between regions and cities of Russia and Germany // Scientific and analytical bulletin of the Institute of Europe RAS. 2018. No. 6. p. 146-152. DOI: 10.15211/vestnikieran620184 URL: <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/otnosheniya-mezhdu-regionami-i-gorodami-rossii-i-germanii> (in Russian)

<sup>19</sup> E.g. Maksimychev I. F. Russia and Germany: my friend, my enemy // Modern Europe. 2014. No. 4 (60). pp. 111-122 URL: <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/rossiya-i-germaniya-drug-moy-vrag-moy> (in Russian) ; Maksimychev I. F. The end of Merkel's Europe? On the upcoming end of one political career // Prospects. Electronic journal. 2018. No. 4 (16). pp. 66 – 83. URL: <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/konets-merkelevskoy-evropy-o-predstoyaschem-zavershenii-odnoy-politicheskoy-kariery> (in Russian)

economic policy in the Russian direction and the image of Russia at the present stage are covered in the works of Pavlov N. V., Vlasov N. A.<sup>20</sup>

The role of Germany in European and world processes, the influence of the United States on German policy, the mutual perception of Russia and Germany, the impact of the Ukrainian crisis and its consequences on bilateral relations are considered in the works of Vasiliev V. I.<sup>21</sup>, and Fedortsev V. A., who believes that Germany adheres to a “double policy”, as it is interested both in dialogue with Russia and in partnership with NATO.<sup>22</sup>

The impact of sanctions on the Russian economy introduced in 2014 is discussed in the works of Ilyina E. V., Vepreva I. T., Kupina N. A., Grishaeva L. E., Tsvetkova N. N.<sup>23</sup> The position of Germany in relation to the Ukrainian crisis in the context of European security issues and relations with the Russian Federation has been studied by such authors as Semenov O. Yu., Belashchenko D. A.<sup>24</sup> Pogorelskaya S. V. considers the topic of modern Germany,<sup>25</sup> Bagai A.V. - Russian-German relations “after the Crimea.”<sup>26</sup> The prospect of development of Russian-German relations in the scientific report was researched by Kuzyk B. N., Yakovets Yu. V.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>20</sup> E.g.: Pavlov N. V. History of German foreign policy from Bismarck to Merkel. M.: International relations. 2012. - 800 p.; Pavlov N. V. Russia and Germany: failed alliance (a story with continuation). - M.: "Aspect Press", 2017. - 560 p. (in Russian); Pavlov N.V. Foreign policy of Chancellor A. Merkel (2005-2017). — M.: MGIMO-University, 2018. — 388 p. (in Russian); Pavlov N.V. The era of Angela Merkel. Scientific publication. M.: "Aspect Press", 2023. - 431 p. (in Russian); Vlasov N. A. Russia in the security policy of Germany at the present stage // Bulletin of St. Petersburg University. Political science. International relations. 2018. №2 URL: <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/rossiya-v-politike-bezopasnosti-frg-na-sovremennom-etape> (in Russian); Vlasov N. A. Germany at the beginning of the XXI century / N. A. Vlasov; St. Petersburg State. un-t, Fak. intl. relations. - St. Petersburg: Publishing House of St. Petersburg University, 2008. - 307 p. (in Russian)

<sup>21</sup> E.g.: Vasiliev V. I. Germany: powerful economy, global player, important partner of Russia // Contemporary Europe-Sovremennaya— 2016. – № 1(67) (in Russian); Vasiliev V. I. The image of modern Germany in Russia // Actual problems of Europe. No. 2. 2016 pp. 87 – 108. (in Russian)

<sup>22</sup> Fedortsev V. A. German policy towards Russia: trends and prospects // International politics. Problems of national strategy. No. 2 (35) 2016 URL: [https://riss.ru/images/pdf/journal/2016/2/04\\_.pdf](https://riss.ru/images/pdf/journal/2016/2/04_.pdf) (in Russian)

<sup>23</sup> Ilyina E. V. Influence of sanctions on the Russian economy // Bulletin of Economics, Law and Sociology. 2015. No. 4 URL: <http://www.vestnykeps.ru/0415/7.pdf> (in Russian); Vepreva I. T., Kupina N. A. "Crimean" sanctions: cultural scenario and its reversals // Izvestia of the Ural Federal University. Series 2. Humanities. 16, no. 3(130), 2014, pp. 161-170. URL: <https://journals.urfu.ru/index.php/Izvestia2/article/view/1431>; Grishaeva L. E. Russia, the UN and the Crimean Sanctions // Economic Journal. 2014. №3 (35) URL: <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/rossiya-oon-i-krymskie-sanktsii> (in Russian); Tsvetkov N. N. Russian-German trade and economic relations at the present stage in the context of sanctions // Izvestiya St. Petersburg State University of Economics. 2015. No. 5 (95) URL: <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/rossiysko-germanskie-torgovo-ekonomicheskie-otnosheniya-na-sovremennom-etape-v-kontekste-sanktsiy> (in Russian)

<sup>24</sup> Semenov O. Yu., Belashchenko D. A. The position of Germany in relation to the Ukrainian crisis in the context of problems of European security and relations with the Russian Federation // Bulletin of the KemGU. 2015. No. 3-2 (63) URL: <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/pozitsiya-frg-v-otnoshenii-ukrainskogo-krizisa-v-kontekste-problem-evropeyskoy-bezopasnosti-i-otnosheniy-s-rossiyskoy-federatsiyey> (in Russian)

<sup>25</sup> Pogorelskaya S.V. Experience and lessons of German immigration policy // APE. 2015. No. 4. URL: <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/opyt-i-uroki-germanskoj-immigratsionnoy-politiki> (in Russian)

<sup>26</sup> Bagai A. V. Russian-German relations "after the Crimea": from the "Partnership for Modernization" to the degradation of dialogue formats // Bulletin of St. Petersburg University. Political science. International relations. 2019. №3. URL: <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/rossiysko-germanskie-otnosheniya-posle-kryma-ot-partnerstva-dlya-modernizatsii-do-degradatsii-dialogovykh-formatov> (in Russian)

<sup>27</sup> Kuzyk B. N., Yakovets Yu. V. Russia Germany-2050: Strategy for Innovative Development and Partnership. Scientific report. M., 2007 (in Russian)

It is also important to mention N. G. Timofeeva, L. M. Vorobiev, D. V. Filippova, V. N. Markov, I. N. Kuzmina, A. L. Solovyov,<sup>28</sup> who considered in their dissertations the formation of the foreign policy of a reunited Germany, S. Yu. Kostenko,<sup>29</sup> whose dissertation is devoted to Russian-German relations in the 90s of the 20th century, as well as P. A. Brovin, who examined the dynamics of cooperation between Russia and Germany at the beginning of the 21st century, paying special attention to economic relations.<sup>30</sup> Next, we should name Soroka Yu. V., Ledeneva M. V., Lisitskaya V. S., Yatskova I. B., Revyakina E. V., Novikov A. A., Shmelkov V. M., Tymchik V. V., Smirnova S. V., Parusov K. A. who studied the problems of Russian-German cooperation at the turn of the 20-21st centuries.<sup>31</sup>

The period of rapprochement between Russia and Germany at the beginning of the 21st century is considered in the articles of such researchers as Bozhik K. B., Egorov A. I.<sup>32</sup>, the humanitarian ties between Russia and the European Union were explored by V. I. Fokin in one of his articles.<sup>33</sup> The

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<sup>28</sup> E.g.: 238. Timofeev N. G. Germany in a Changing World: The Search for Foreign Policy Imperatives: Abstract of the thesis. diss. ... cand. political sciences M., 2000 (in Russian); Vorobieva L. M. Formation of a new foreign policy of united Germany: problems and prospects (political aspect): Abstract of the thesis. diss. ... Doctor of Political Sciences. M., 2001 (in Russian); Filippov D. V. Geopolitical Aspects of Germany's "Eastern Policy" at the Turn of the Century: Abstract of the thesis. diss. ... cand. political sciences. M., 2001 (in Russian); Markov V. N. Politics of the Federal Republic of Germany towards Russia: Political analysis. M., 2001; Kuzmin I. N. The collapse of the GDR. History. Consequences. M., 1996 (in Russian); Soloviev A. L. German unification: background, new realities, Russian security issues. M., 1992 (in Russian)

<sup>29</sup> Kostenko S. Yu. Transformation of Russian-German relations in the 90s of the XX century: Abstract of the thesis. diss. ... cand. historical sciences. M., 2003 (in Russian)

<sup>30</sup> Brovin P. A. Dynamics of cooperation between Russia and Germany at the beginning of the XXI century: political aspects of economic relations: Abstract of the thesis. diss. ... cand. political Sciences M., 2007

<sup>31</sup> Soroka Yu. V. Russian-German cooperation in 1991-2005: state and development prospects: state and development prospects: Abstract of the thesis. diss.... cand. historical sciences. M., 2007(in Russian); Ledeneva M. V. State and prospects for the development of Russian-German trade relations in the context of foreign economic liberalization: Abstract of the thesis. diss. ... cand. economical Sciences. M., 2004 (in Russian); Lisitskaya V. S. The political component of Russian-German cultural relations at the turn of the 20th - 21st centuries: Aftoref. diss. ... cand. political sciences. St. Petersburg, 2010(in Russian); Yatskov I. B. Russian-German economic and political relations: lessons of the twentieth century: Abstract of the thesis. diss. ... cand. economical Sciences. St. Petersburg, 2006 (in Russian); Revyakin E. V. Participation of the Federal Republic of Germany in the European Union and Russian-German trade and economic relations: Abstract of the thesis. diss. ... cand. economical sciences. Moscow, 2000 (in Russian); Novikov A. A. The development of Russian-German relations at the present stage: Abstract of the thesis. diss. ... cand. historical sciences. M., 2003 (in Russian); Shmelkov V. M. Trade and economic relations between Russia and Germany: Problems and prospects for development: Abstract of the thesis. diss. ... cand. economical sciences. M., 2002 (in Russian); Tymchik V. V. International relations of Moscow and German cities in 1992-2007: Abstract of the thesis. diss. ... cand. historical sciences. M., 2009 (in Russian); Smirnov S. V. Development of cooperation between the USSR and Germany, Russia and Germany in the energy sector in the late XX - early XXI century: Abstract of the thesis. diss. ... cand. historical sciences. M., 2013 (in Russian); Parusova K. A. Development of relations between Germany and the Russian Federation in the field of energy: Historical and international aspects of the problem: Abstract of the thesis. diss. ... cand. historical sciences. M., 2005 (in Russian)

<sup>32</sup> Bozhik K. B. A short "Golden Age" in relations between Russia and Germany (1998–2005) // Bulletin of the Moscow State Linguistic University. Social Sciences. 2018. No. 4 (812) URL: <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/korotkiy-zolotoy-vek-v-otnosheniyah-rossii-i-germanii-1998-2005>(in Russian); Egorov A. I. Russia-Germany: an attempt at a strategic partnership (1998-2005). // Bulletin of the Saratov University. New series. Series History. International relations. 2012. 12 (1), p. 80-88. (in Russian)

<sup>33</sup> Fokin V. I. The role of humanitarian ties in the context of relations between Russia and the European Union / V. I. Fokin // Russia and the European Union: in search of the optimal model of rapprochement : proceedings of International Scientific Conference of the Faculty of International Relations of Saint Petersburg State University, Saint Petersburg, 20



development of economic relations at the end of the first decade of the 21st century is devoted to the studies of Ermakov N. P., Raevsky V. A.<sup>34</sup> Rodovich Yu. V., Gamzalov S.<sup>35</sup> considered a new stage of bilateral relations at the beginning of the second decade of the 21st century. Tipailov E. A., Gabiev A. A.,<sup>36</sup> dedicated their research to gas energy dialogue, Spiridonov S. V., Gross V.<sup>37</sup> studied cooperation between Germany and Russia in the field of European security.

Sociocultural interaction between the two countries is studied in the dissertation Carlson Yu. V.,<sup>38</sup> problems and prospects of relations from 2009 to 2018 considered in the work of Avdeenko E. G.,<sup>39</sup> and the new "Eastern Policy" of the German government in 2013-2017, the Ukrainian crisis - in the article Sheludchenko N. P.<sup>40</sup> The works of Andreev N. I. are devoted to Russian-German military-political relations.<sup>41</sup>

In Germany, many researchers have dealt with various problems of bilateral interaction. S. Steinsdorff - a professor of political science studies contemporary Russian domestic politics as well as Russian and EU policy towards Ukraine.<sup>42</sup> P. Schulze examines Russian foreign policy towards the EU

October 2006 / Editorial Board: K. K. Khudoley, Y. G. Akimov, A. V. Izotov. - St. Petersburg: St. Petersburg State University Publishers, 2007. - C. 158 - 167. (in Russian)

<sup>34</sup> Ermakov N. P. Evolution and interconnection of foreign trade and investment activity as a form of development of Russian-German foreign economic relations in the context of globalization of world economic relations: Abstract of the thesis. diss. ... cand. economical Sciences. M., 2008 (in Russian); Raevsky V. A. Development of Russian-German economic relations in the context of globalization // Space of Economics. 2009. No. 3-3 URL: <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/razvitie-rossiysko-germanskih-ekonomicheskikh-otnosheniy-v-usloviyah-globalizatsii> (in Russian)

<sup>35</sup> Rodovich Yu. V. Germany and Russia at the beginning of the second decade of the 21st century: a new stage of relations // Via in tempore. History. Political science. 2013. No. 22 (165) URL: <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/germaniya-i-rossiya-v-nachale-vtorogo-desyatiletia-hhi-veka-novyj-etap-otnosheniy> (in Russian); Gamzalov S. Russian-German relations: specifics and development prospects // Power. 2010. No. 6. pp. 156-159. (in Russian)

<sup>36</sup> Tipailov E. A. Political features of the gas energy dialogue in Russian-German relations: Abstract of the thesis. diss. ... cand. political sciences. M., 2010 (in Russian); Gabiev A. A. The role of Germany in ensuring energy security in Europe: 1998-2010: Abstract of the thesis. diss. ... cand. historical sciences. M., 2011 (in Russian); Balashov I. B., Novikova I. N. History of energy cooperation between Russia (USSR) and Germany (FRG) (1922–2009) // Historical Bulletin. 2022. V.5. Issue. 3. S. 136 – 144 (in Russian); Balashov I. B., Novikova I. N. Features of energy cooperation between Russia and Germany at the present stage // Issues of national and federal relations. 2022. Issue. 8. T.12. (in Russian)

<sup>37</sup> Spiridonov S. V. The role of the "Eastern policy" of Germany in the transformation of the European security system: 2000-2013: Abstract of the thesis. diss. ... cand. historical sciences. M., 2014 (in Russian); Gross V. Geopolitical interests of Germany and Russia in the Eastern European political context: Abstract of the thesis. diss. ... cand. political Sciences. M., 2005 (in Russian)

<sup>38</sup> Carlson Yu. V. Thematisation of everyday life in the context of Russian-German sociocultural interaction: Abstract of the thesis. diss. ... cand. philosophical Sciences. M., 2012 (in Russian)

<sup>39</sup> Avdeenko E. G. Problems and prospects for the development of Russian-German relations (2000-2018) // Magistra Vitae: an electronic journal on historical sciences and archeology. 2018. №2. URL: <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/problemy-i-perspektivy-razvitiya-rossiysko-germanskih-otnosheniy-2000-2018> (in Russian)

<sup>40</sup> Sheludchenko N. P. New "Eastern Policy" of the Government of Germany in 2013-2017. // Vestnik MGOU. Series: History and political sciences. 2019. №3 URL: <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/novaya-vostochnaya-politika-pravitelstva-frgv-2013-2017-gg> (in Russian)

<sup>41</sup> Andreev N. I. The discourse of political parties in Germany in synchrony and diachrony: Abstract of the thesis. diss. ... cand. philological sciences. M., 2012 (in Russian)

<sup>42</sup> Steinsdorff S. Russlands Selbstwertgefühl und die Kurzsichtigkeit der Ukraine-Politik der EU. // VerfBlog 2014/3/24. URL: <https://verfassungsblog.de/russlands-selbstwertgefuehl-und-kurz-sichtigkeit-ukraine-politik-eu> DOI: [10.17176/20181005-170951-0](https://doi.org/10.17176/20181005-170951-0)

in general and Germany in particular.<sup>43</sup> The works of H. Haftendorf and G. Schöllgen are devoted to the history of German foreign policy.<sup>44</sup> The main directions and forms of German-Russian trade and economic relations, as well as the problems arising from this processes, are explored in the works by C. Mayer, B. Bergmann.<sup>45</sup> K. Mangold, the former chairman of the Eastern Committee of the German Economy in one of his articles emphasizes that Russia is a strategic partner of the FRG,<sup>46</sup> R. Goetz, an expert of the German Science and Politics Foundation, studies modern problems of relations between Russia and Germany, such as, for example, the Nord Stream 2 project, energy and economic relations between the two countries.<sup>47</sup>

A. Rahr - German journalist, political scientist, historian, former adviser to the government of Germany in his research considers such topics as Russia's domestic policy, energy and political cooperation between Russia and the EU, the Ukrainian crisis and others.<sup>48</sup>

Gabriele Krone - Schmalz, West German expert on Russia, professor, member of the steering committee of the St. Petersburg Dialogue and author of several monographs on Russia, aims in her research and articles to highlight facts and criticises one-sided reporting of events as well as the demonisation of Russia. The author emphasises that her aim is not to justify Vladimir Putin's actions, but “to have an understanding of the position as well as the actions of both sides when it comes to a crisis situation and not to stigmatise what is questionable or doubtful as 'wrong’”.<sup>49</sup>

Political scientist and Senior Research Fellow at the East European and Eurasia Research Unit Sabine Fischer studies Russian foreign and security policy, EU-Russian relations, unresolved conflicts in the EU's “eastern neighbourhood” and regional relations in Eastern Europe and Eurasia. Her articles focus on sanctions and their impact on relations between Russia and Germany. In one of her articles, the German researcher focuses on the fact that in recent years Russia's foreign policy “has taken many unexpected turns: from the annexation of Crimea to military intervention in Syria”. The element of

<sup>43</sup> Schulze P. W. Russische Außenpolitik im Machtdreieck USA - Europa – Weltgemeinschaft. Bonn. 2003 - 19 S.

<sup>44</sup> Haftendorf H. Deutsche Aussenpolitik zwischen Selbstbeschränkung und Selbstbehauptng 1945-2000. Berlin. 2002; Schöllgen G. Die Aussenpolitik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart. München. 2001.

<sup>45</sup> Meier C. Deutsch-russische Wirtschaftsbeziehungen 2005-2010. // Institut Français des Relations Internationales, 2010; Bergmann B. Verlässlicher Versorger. Energiepartnerschaft mit Moskau: Warum wir Russland auch weiter hinvertrauen // Internationale Politik. 2007. №2. S. 65-69

<sup>46</sup> Mangold K. Unser Markt in Moskau. Handel durch Annäherung: Deutsch-russische Wirtschaftskooperation // Internationale Politik. 2007. №2. S. 70-74; Rahr A. Russland gibt Gas. München. 2008.

<sup>47</sup> E.g.: Götz R. Russland – eine wirtschaftliche Großmacht? // Russland-Analysen Nr. 166 vom 13.06.2008, S. 5–8  
Götz R. Die »Lex Nord Stream 2«: Ein energierechtliches oder außenpolitisches Projekt? // Russland-Analysen Nr. 354. 04.05.2018. S. 8–11; Götz R. Die Zukunft des ukrainischen Gastransmissionssysteme // Ukraine-Analysen Nr. 190. 25.10.2017. S. 2–5.

<sup>48</sup> E.g.: Rahr A. Kein Europa ohne Russland // Internationale Politik 1. Januar 2009. S. 45 - 50. URL: <https://internationalepolitik.de/de/kein-europa-ohne-russland>; Rahr A. Der kalte Freund. Warum wir Russland brauchen: Die Insider-Analyse. Carl Hanser Verlag GmbH & Co. KG; 1. Edition. 2011. 352 S.; Rahr A. 2054 - Putin decodiert: Politthriller. Das Neue Berlin Imprint von Eulenspiegel Verlagsgruppe Buchverlage GmbH; 1. Edition 2018. 400 S.

<sup>49</sup> Krone-Schmalz G. Russland verstehen – der Kampf um die Ukraine und die Ignoranz des Westens. 9. Auflage. Verlag C.H.Beck, München. 2015.; Krone-Schmalz G. Auf den Westen ist kein Verlass // Cicero Magazin für politische Kultur. 05.03.2014. URL: <http://www.krone-schmalz.de/presseschau/artikel/09%20Auf%20den%20Westen%20ist%20kein%20Verlass.pdf>

surprise for Germany and the EU is, in her view, the result of a combination of “political opacity” in Russia, the West's misperception of Russian actions, and the “purposeful unpredictability” used by the Russian leadership.<sup>50</sup>

Stefan Meister, head of the Robert Bosch Center for Central and Eastern Europe, Russia and Central Asia of the German Foreign Policy Society, has devoted a large number of articles to various issues related to domestic, foreign and energy policy of Russia and Russian-German relations. He opens one of his articles with a question about how the West should perceive Russian actions, such as “the annexation of Crimea, the war in eastern Ukraine and interference in US elections,” and answers it with “more equanimity”, since Germany cannot change Russia. However, he emphasizes that it is not worth contributing to the strengthening and growth of Russia.<sup>51</sup>

Professor Andreas Heinemann-Grüder researches conflict, conflict resolution and the stability and instability of non-democratic regimes. Many of his articles are devoted to the conflict in Ukraine and the politics of Vladimir Putin, whom in one of his works he unjustifiably equates with Benito Mussolini and Robert Mugabe, since he believes that the Russian president proceeds from the principles of authoritarian nationalism and, accordingly, is an “autocrat.”<sup>52</sup>

Other authors should also be singled out: G. Erler, a retired state minister, studies the problems of contemporary Russia,<sup>53</sup> H. Timmerman, an employee of the Science and Politics Foundation in Berlin, researches Russian-German relations in a European context,<sup>54</sup> H. J. Spanger, an associate member of the Hessian Foundation for Peace and Conflict Research at the Leibniz Institute also devotes his work to the Russian dimension of German foreign policy.<sup>55</sup>

K. D. Voigt, a senior fellow and member of the Presidium of the German Foreign Policy Council, sees Russia as the most important country east of the EU and NATO borders, but emphasizes that Russia is no more important to German politics than all of Germany's relations with its eastern neighbors.<sup>56</sup> J. Baberowski, a German historian of Eastern Europe, a specialist in the history of the USSR, and H. Winkler, a historian, considered the Ukrainian conflict in a historical perspective in a

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<sup>50</sup> Fischer S., Klein M. Denkbare Überraschungen. Elf Entwicklungen, die Russlands Außenpolitik nehmen könnte. // SWP-Studie. Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik. Berlin. Juli 2016. URL: [https://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/studien/2016S15\\_fhs\\_kle.pdf](https://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/studien/2016S15_fhs_kle.pdf)

<sup>51</sup> Meister S. Gefährlicher Scheinriese. 01.05.2017. URL: <https://internationalepolitik.de/de/gefaehrlicher-scheinriese>

<sup>52</sup> Heinemann-Grüder A. Politik als Krieg. Die Radikalisierung des Putinismus // OSTEUROPA 9-10/2014. URL: <https://www.zeitschrift-osteuropa.de/hefte/2014/9-10/politik-als-krieg/>

<sup>53</sup> Erler G. Analyse: Den Eskalationsprozess stoppen - Ziele der Deutschen Russlandpolitik. 08.05.2018. URL: <https://www.bpb.de/internationales/europa/russland/analysen/268835/analyse-den-eskalationsprozess-stoppen-ziele-der-deutschen-russlandpolitik>

<sup>54</sup> Timmermann H. EU-Russland: Hintergründe und Perspektiven einer schwierigen Beziehung // Integration 2/2008. S.159. URL: <http://iep-berlin.de/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Timmermann-EU-Russland.pdf>

<sup>55</sup> Spanger H.-J. Paradoxe Kontinuitäten. Die deutsche Russlandpolitik und die koalitionsfähigen Farbenlehren // hsfk-Report (Frankfurt) Nr.12/2005.

<sup>56</sup> Voigt K. D. Russland, Deutschland und die europäische Ordnung / Karsten D. Voigt. - Berlin : Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Referat Mittel- und Osteuropa. September 2017. 4 S.

joint article.<sup>57</sup> S. Spahn - Doctor of Philosophy, historian of Eastern Europe, political scientist and journalist, explores the influence of media on public opinion, information wars. In particular, her work on the role of the media in creating a picture of Ukraine in the German mind plays an important role to understand the modern German media discourse of Russia.<sup>58</sup>

In Anglo-American historiography various aspects of the Crimean crisis are studied in the works of such authors as J. F. Jeffery,<sup>59</sup> K. Holmes,<sup>60</sup> it is important to pay attention to the article by J. J. Carafano, N. Gardiner, L. Coffey, D. Dakota.<sup>61</sup> The role of energy in the crisis in Ukraine is studied in the article by the authors Chow E.Ts., Ladislav S.O., Melton M.,<sup>62</sup> the accession of Crimea to Russia is devoted to the article by the authors L. Van Meter, V.G. Ginger, K. Kuehnast.<sup>63</sup> Also, such authors as Cherron A., Traisman D., Larrabee F.S., Wilson P.A., Gordon J., Besemeres J. and others devoted their works to the study of the Crimean crisis.<sup>64</sup> The works of the famous American neo-realist political scientist John Mearsheimer, in which he considers the causes of the Ukrainian crisis quite objectively, should also be highlighted.<sup>65</sup>

Thus, despite the fact that the topic of Russian-German relations at the present stage as a whole is being studied by both Russian and German researchers, this work is an illumination of the understanding of the Crimean crisis in German media, which makes it possible to introduce new

<sup>57</sup> Baberowski J. Winkler H. A. "Erbschaft Der Sowjetunion. Der Ukraine-Konflikt in Historischer Perspektive. Eine Diskussion." // Journal of Modern European History / Zeitschrift Für Moderne Europäische Geschichte / Revue D'histoire Européenne Contemporaine. 2015. vol. 13. № 3. S. 291–305. URL: [www.jstor.org/stable/26266187](http://www.jstor.org/stable/26266187)

<sup>58</sup> Spahn S. Die Hilfe des großen Bruders. Wie Russland die Krise in der Ukraine sieht. // Russland-Analysen. Nr. 273. 14.03.2014. S. 2 - 4. URL: [https://www.academia.edu/8764572/Die\\_Hilfe\\_des\\_großen\\_Bruders\\_Wie\\_Russland\\_die\\_Krise\\_in\\_der\\_Ukraine\\_sieht](https://www.academia.edu/8764572/Die_Hilfe_des_großen_Bruders_Wie_Russland_die_Krise_in_der_Ukraine_sieht)

<sup>59</sup> Jeffrey J. F. The Ukraine Crisis and the Middle East. 03.03.2014. URL: <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/ukraine-crisis-and-middle-east> (дата обращения: 04.08.2021); Jeffrey J. F. U.S. Should send troops to quell Ukraine crises. URL: <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/us-should-send-troops-quell-ukraine-crisis>

<sup>60</sup> Holmes K. R. Is Ukraine a Watershed? 6.03.2014. URL: <https://www.heritage.org/international-economies/report/ukraine-watershed>

<sup>61</sup> Carafano J. J., Gardiner N., Coffey L., Dakota D. If Russia attacks: How the U.S. should respond to further aggression against Ukraine. URL: [http://thf\\_media.s3.amazonaws.com/2014/pdf/IB4185.pdf](http://thf_media.s3.amazonaws.com/2014/pdf/IB4185.pdf)

<sup>62</sup> Chow E. C., Ladislav S. O., Melton M. Crisis in Ukraine: What role does energy play? URL: <https://www.csis.org/analysis/crisis-ukraine-what-role-does-energy-play>

<sup>63</sup> Van Metre L., Gienger V. G., Kuehnast K. The Ukraine-Russia Conflict. Signals and Scenarios for the Broader Region. 2015 by the United States Institute of Peace. URL: <https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/SR366-The-Ukraine-Russia-Conflict.pdf>

<sup>64</sup> Charron A. Whose is Crimea? Contested Sovereignty and Regional Identity // Region. 2016(2), pp. 225–256. URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24896628> (дата обращения: 11.04.2022); Treisman D. Why Putin Took Crimea: The Gambler in the Kremlin. // Foreign Affairs. 2016. 95(3), 47–54. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43946857> ; Larrabee F. S., Wilson P. A., Gordon J. The Geopolitical Roots and Dynamics of the Ukrainian Crisis. / The Ukrainian Crisis and European Security: Implications for the United States and U.S. Army. (pp. 3–16). RAND Corporation. 2015. URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7249/j.ctt15sk8s2.8>; Besemeres J. Putin's last territorial demand. / A Difficult Neighbourhood: Essays on Russia and East-Central Europe since World War II (pp. 329–334). ANU Press. 2016. URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1rqc96p.31>

<sup>65</sup> E.g.: Mearsheimer John J. Mearsheimer on why the West is principally responsible for the Ukrainian crisis. 19.03.2022. URL: <https://www.economist.com/by-invitation/2022/03/11/john-mearsheimer-on-why-the-west-is-principally-responsible-for-the-ukrainian-crisis> (Дата обращения: 11.04.2022); Mearsheimer John J. Why the Ukraine Crisis Is the West's Fault. The Liberal Delusions That Provoked Putin // Foreign affairs. September/October 2014. pp. 1 – 12. URL: <https://www.mearsheimer.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Why-the-Ukraine-Crisis-Is.pdf> (Дата обращения: 11.10.2022); Mearsheimer John J. Playing With Fire in Ukraine // Foreign Affairs, 17.08.2022. URL: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/ukraine/playing-fire-ukraine>

research into the Russian scientific discourse and terminology, which in turn contributes to a fuller understanding of the crisis situation.

**The purpose of the work** is to identify the impact of the Crimean crisis on relations between Russia and Germany in the context of German public opinion.

The **tasks** of the research are:

- to trace the specifics of relations between Russia and Germany at the beginning of the 21st century, to identify the factors that influenced the perception of the parties' actions towards each other;
- investigate the image of Russia constructed in the German media, as well as the picture of the emergence and development of the Crimean crisis;
- to analyse the points of view presented in the German media discourse regarding the annexation of Crimea to Russia and the development of the Crimean crisis;
- establish the role of Germany and the German media in the current situation;
- identify the impact of the Crimean crisis on Russian-German relations in the areas of economics, politics, education, culture and civil society.

**The chronological framework of the study** covers the period from 2014 to December 2021. The starting point is the accession of Crimea to Russia. The end point is the end of Chancellor Angela Merkel's term of office. In order to provide a detailed analysis of the impact of the Crimean crisis on relations between Russia and Germany, the paper also pays some attention to the time period from 1991 to 2014.

**Source base of the study.** The sources used in the study can be divided into several groups.

The first group is formed by interstate documents and agreements, such as the Treaty on Good Neighborhood, Partnership and Cooperation between Germany and the USSR,<sup>66</sup> the Minsk Agreements<sup>67</sup> and other interstate agreements. Particular attention is paid to the documents adopted by the European Union, on the basis of which sanctions against Russia were introduced and then extended.

The second group consists of documents from Russian and German authorities, such as the Foreign Policy Concepts of the Russian Federation,<sup>68</sup> as well as governmental institutions of the

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<sup>66</sup>Treaty of good neighborliness, partnership and cooperation between Germany and the USSR. URL: <http://docs.cntd.ru/document/901736371> (in Russian)

<sup>67</sup> Full text of the Minsk agreements URL: <https://ria.ru/20150212/1047311428.html> (in Russian)

<sup>68</sup> The foreign policy concept of the Russian Federation 23 April 1993. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. *Diplomacheskyy Vestnik* 1993. № 1-2. Spetsvypusk. URL: <https://www.twirpx.com/file/1822127/> (in Russian); The foreign policy concept of the Russian Federation 28 June 2000 URL: <http://docs.cntd.ru/document/901764263> (in Russian); The foreign policy concept of the Russian Federation 15 July 2008 URL: <http://kremlin.ru/acts/news/785> (in Russian); The foreign policy concept of the Russian Federation 12 February 2013 URL: <https://www.garant.ru/products/ipo/prime/doc/70218094/> (in Russian)

Federal Republic of Germany.<sup>69</sup> These sources are of an official nature and make it possible to study the legal basis for the interaction of both states before, during, and after the crisis, as well as the main position of Germany and the European Union on its settlement.

The third group includes memoirs, speeches and interviews with German statesmen and politicians, which help to draw certain conclusions about the views of past, former chancellors (Altkanzler) and present politicians on Russian and German actions and their understanding of the parties' motivations. Such sources complement official documents and allow a deeper understanding of process of making certain foreign policy decisions.<sup>70</sup>

The fourth group consists of materials from the German periodical press. To study the designated period, materials from most influential in public opinion media were used, such as "Tagesschau", "Die Zeit", "Süddeutsche Zeitung", "Spiegel", "Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung" and others. According to "Statista", these media are the most trusted news sources in Germany for 2021.<sup>71</sup> In addition, the media reflect the "media reality", that is, the information that the inhabitants of Germany receive, presented as a reflection of real events. As known, it is the media that form certain constructs of what is happening, both in the individual and in the mass consciousness. Accordingly, for the recipient, for whom in the modern world the main source of information will be a media article, what events will be described and which will be missed, as well as what vocabulary will be chosen to describe them (i.e., its stylistic and connotational features).

The fifth group is statistical data - the results of public opinion polls conducted by various centers, such as: "Statista", "Forschungsgruppe", "Infratest dimap" and others, which show how much the information provided by the media affects the position of society. The statistics represent the positions of the people of Germany on various issues, such as: attitudes towards sanctions against Russia; opinion about the Ukrainian and Crimean crises; general attitude towards German foreign policy; trust in information provided by the media, etc.

### **Methodological base of the study**

When writing this work, various methods and principles were used, the application of which was determined by the complex nature of the research. In order to investigate the reasons for the estrangement of Russia and Germany before 2014 and the subsequent impact of the Crimean crisis on Russian-German relations, the principle of historicism was used, which involves establishing a causal

<sup>69</sup> E.g.: Koalitionsvertrag zwischen CDU, CSU und SPD Deutschlands Zukunft gestalten 18. Legislaturperiode. Union Betriebs-GmbH. 12/1213. S. 169. URL: [https://www.kas.de/c/document\\_library/get\\_file?uuid=2f9f5a98-5d12-0987-7f12-aca250c6ea92&groupId=252038](https://www.kas.de/c/document_library/get_file?uuid=2f9f5a98-5d12-0987-7f12-aca250c6ea92&groupId=252038)

<sup>70</sup> E.g.: Yeltsin B. N. President's Notes. M.: Publishing House „Ogonjek“ 1994 (in Russian); Naß M., Kampf um die Ukraine - „Putins Vorgehen ist verständlich“, Interview mit Helmut Schmidt URL: <http://www.zeit.de/2014/14/helmut-schmidt-russland/komplettansicht> (Дата обращения: 30.05.2020); Gloger K. Fremde Freunde. Deutsche und Russen. Die Geschichte einer schicksalhaften Beziehung. Berlin Verlag in der Piper Verlag GmbH. München. 2017. S. 377 – 383.

<sup>71</sup> Ranking der Nachrichtenquellen in Deutschland, denen die Bürger am stärksten vertrauen im Jahr 2021. Juni 2021. URL: <https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/877238/umfrage/ranking-der-vertrauenswuerdigsten-nachrichtenquellen-in-deutschland/>

relationship between events, the analysis of the internal logic of events in accordance with the historical epoch under study, and also the principle of determinism, in which “the notion that there are necessary connections between the past, present and future dominates”.<sup>72</sup>

To solve the tasks set, both general scientific and humanitarian special methods were used. The historical methods used in this paper include the historical-genetic method, which made it possible to show Russian-German relations in their evolution; the historical-descriptive method, the essence of which is to consider the primary factual information on which further theoretical conclusions will be based.<sup>73</sup> In this case, the method was used to examine which facts were considered by German researchers and which were omitted. This enabled conclusions to be drawn about the extent to which the development of the Crimean crisis was viewed objectively.

Since exclusion in Russian-German relations is seen by the author as a consequence of various factors, the paper uses a systemic approach, the essence of which is as follows: “the integrity of systems reflects an objective property of the phenomena of reality, which consists in the fact that in the process of their interaction, new qualities emerge that are inherent in the totality of objects as a whole and are not characteristic of individual initial objects of interaction.”<sup>74</sup> This means that this paper aims to explore not only the historical and political but also the psychological causes of the crisis situation.

In order to study the German-language discourse, which is a set of statements in a specific historical and social framework, having a direct impact on public opinion regarding the Crimean crisis, the following methods were applied:

- discourse analysis, through which the content of “holistic complexes of political activity” was studied, by using linguistic methods, paying particular attention to “intentional and virtual plans of discourse - the intent, motives, intentions of communication participants and mental layers of discourse”.<sup>75</sup> This method seems important for the study of German periodicals, as it reflects not only the social characteristics of the author, but also the mentality and culture, of the historical period;

- content analysis, which allows to establish “not only the characteristics of documentary sources, but also features of the entire communication process: social orientations and attitudes of the communicator (text creator); values and norms replicated in documents, efficiency of their perception

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<sup>72</sup> Bermus A.G. Introduction to humanitarian methodology: scientific monograph / A.G. Bermus. M.: "Kanon +" ROOI "Rehabilitation", 2007. 336 p. (in Russian)

<sup>73</sup> Kosolapov N. A. Epistemology and methods of analysis / N. A. Kosolapov // Essays on the theory and methodology of political analysis of international relations / A. D. Bogaturov, N. A. Kosolapov, M. A. Khrustalev - M.: Scientific and educational forum on international relations, 2002 pp. 69 – 85.

<sup>74</sup> Kovalchenko I. D. Methods of historical research. Moscow: Nauka, 1987. p. 174

<sup>75</sup> Irkhin Yu. V. Discourse analysis: essence, approaches, methodology, design // Social and humanitarian knowledge. 2014. No. 4. pp. 128 – 143. URL: <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/diskurs-analiz-suschnost-podhody-metodologiya-proektirovanie> (in Russian)

in different audiences“.<sup>76</sup> This allowed us to uncover different trends in the German media when describing the events related to the Crimean crisis.

In addition, a comparative method was used to identify the specifics of the perception of the crisis in German socio-political discourse, which involves the analysis of sources to identify similarities and differences in the positions of the authors. This allowed the author to undertake a comprehensive analysis of German-language texts that emerged in specific socio-political and historical contexts and to identify dominant trends.

#### **Provisions for defense:**

1. Since the late 1990s., relations between Russia and the European Union, and, consequently, Russia and Germany, have been undergoing a gradual decline due to the emergence of disagreements on various issues which were not taken seriously by the other side. This process led to the development of “inattentional blindness,” which in turn contributed to the development of a crisis in Russian-German relations.

2. The Crimean crisis of 2014 marked the alienation of the Russian Federation and Germany from each other. The accession of Crimea to Russia caused an extremely negative reaction in Germany, and most German experts from various fields harshly criticized Russian actions, describing them as “annexation” or “gross violation of international law.”

3. German-language sources often presented events in a one-sided manner, openly accusing Russia of developing the crisis situation, without analyzing the influence of Western powers on the escalation of the conflict. The German media, using various methods, made attempts to shape public opinion in such a way that the image of Russia as an aggressor appeared in the minds of the German-speaking audience, which led to a significant deterioration in the perception of Russia in German society.

4. In the context of the crisis, Germany has had to act, focusing on the need to preserve and maintain Russian-German relations, as well as to pursue a common foreign policy within the framework of the European Union.

5. The Crimean crisis had a significant impact on the economic and political cooperation between Russia and Germany. Sanctions and counter-sanctions that affected various levels negatively affected such indicators as, for example, the bilateral trade volumes, and political decisions regarding Russia's exclusion from international organizations became a negative factor for establishing international dialogue and finding a way out of the crisis situation.

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<sup>76</sup> Pashinyan I. A. Content analysis as a research method: advantages and limitations // Scientific periodicals: problems and solutions. 2012. №3. pp. 13 - 18. URL: <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/kontent-analiz-kak-metod-issledovaniya-dostoinstva-i-ogranicheniya> (in Russian)



6. The accession of Crimea to the Russian Federation did not have a significant impact on other areas of Russian-German cooperation, such as education or cultural interaction between the countries.

**The scientific novelty** of this paper lies in the fact that it represents an attempt to conduct a comprehensive study of the impact of the Crimean crisis on various areas of Russian-German relations, taking into account the impact of German public opinion on them, carried out for the first time in historiography. The paper considers the development of Russian-German relations from 1991 to 2014 in order to analyze various factors that influenced the development of Russian-German relations during this period of time, among which the so-called “inattention blindness” was singled out - a psychological factor that played an important role in the deterioration of interaction between Russia and Germany. In addition, German public opinion has been studied in terms of what trends stand out in the perception of the accession of Crimea to Russia, as well as the impact of the crisis on such areas of cooperation as politics, economics, education, culture and public opinion.

**The theoretical significance** of the study lies in the fact that the work conceptualises the psychological term "inattention blindness" in the context of international relations, namely the development of bilateral relations as one of the important factors influencing the deterioration of relations between Russia and Germany.

**The practical significance** of the work lies in the fact that the materials obtained through the study of German sources in their original language allow new documents and terms to be introduced into Russian academic discourse, which makes it possible to study the German point of view as well as the perception and assessment of the events that took place in Crimea and their impact on bilateral relations between Russia and Germany in more detail. The materials and conclusions of the study can be used to prepare textbooks and training manuals on the history of international relations, the history of German foreign policy, as well as special studies on the history of Russian-German relations at the present stage and the foreign policy of the FRG since 1991.

**Testing of the research results.** The main results of the dissertation research have been presented in the author's academic reports in Russian and German at 12 international and all-Russian scientific and practical conferences in Russia: in St. Petersburg, Moscow, Yekaterinburg, Tula, Magnitogorsk; Republic of Belarus: in Vitebsk. In addition, the results of the study were also discussed during the educational process at St. Petersburg State University.

The author published 11 scientific publications on the topic of the research. Scientific articles published in journals included in the list of peer-reviewed scientific publications, in which the main scientific results of dissertations for the degree of candidate of sciences should be published:

1. Rastvortseva A. N. Positions of Germany in relation to the Kosovo and Crimean precedents: a comparative analysis // Bulletin of the Omsk University. Series “Historical Sciences”. 2021. V. 8, No. 4 (32). pp. 226–233. DOI: 10.24147/2312-1300.2021.8(4). pp. 226-233. [Растворцева А. Н. Позиции

- Германии по отношению к Косовскому и Крымскому прецедентам: сравнительный анализ // Вестник Омского университета. Серия «Исторические науки». 2021. Т. 8, № 4 (32). С. 226–233. DOI: 10.24147/2312-1300.2021.8(4). с. 226 – 233.] URL: <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/pozitsii-germanii-po-otnosheniyu-k-kosovskomu-i-krymskomu-pretседentam-sravnitelnyy-analiz>
2. Rastvortseva A. N. Problems of cooperation between Russia and Germany in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic // Bulletin of the Saratov University. New series. Series: History. International relations. 2022. Vol. 22, no. 2. pp. 207 – 213. DOI: 10.18500/1819-4907-2022-22-2-207-213 [Растворцева А. Н. Проблемы сотрудничества России и Германии в борьбе с пандемией COVID-19 // Известия Саратовского университета. Новая серия. Серия: История. Международные отношения. 2022. Т. 22, вып. 2. С. 207 – 213. DOI: 10.18500/1819-4907-2022-22-2-207-213] URL: <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/problemny-sotrudnichestva-rossii-i-germanii-v-borbe-s-pandemiej-covid-19>
3. Rastvortseva A. N. Positions of the parties of the Bundestag in the debate on the accession of Crimea and the imposition of sanctions against the Russian Federation in 2014 // Russia and the modern world. 2022.1 (114). pp. 135 – 156. DOI: 10.31249/rsm/2022.01.08 [Растворцева А. Н. Позиции партий Бундестага в дебатах о присоединении Крыма и введении санкций против Российской Федерации в 2014 г. // Россия и современный мир. 2022. 1 (114). С. 135 – 156. DOI: 10.31249/rsm/2022.01.08] URL: <http://rossovmir.ru/article.php?id=2226>
4. Rastvortseva A. N. Opinion of ex-Chancellors of Germany on the Crimean crisis and sanctions against Russia // Bulletin of the Omsk University. Series "Historical Sciences". 2022. V.9, No. 3 (35). pp. 156–163. DOI: 10.24147/2312-1300.2022. 9(3).156-163 [Растворцева А. Н. Мнение экс-канцлеров Германии о крымском кризисе и санкциях против России // Вестник Омского университета. Серия «Исторические науки». 2022. Т.9, № 3 (35). С. 156–163. DOI: 10.24147/2312-1300.2022. 9(3).156-163] URL: <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/mnenie-eks-kantslerov-germanii-o-krymskom-krizise-i-sanktsiyah-protiv-rossii>
5. Rastvortseva A. N. Nord Stream 2 in the Mirror of Party Discussions in Germany. // Bulletin of St. Petersburg University. International relations. 2021. 14(1), pp. 97–111. DOI: 10.21638/spbu06.2021.106 [Растворцева А. Н. «Северный поток — 2» в зеркале партийных дискуссий Германии. // Вестник Санкт-Петербургского университета. Международные отношения. 2021. 14(1), С. 97 – 111. DOI: 10.21638/spbu06.2021.106]
6. Rastvortseva A. N. "Blindness of inattention" between Russia and Germany as one of the prerequisites for the "Crimean" sanctions in German scientific and political discourse // Proceedings of the International Youth Scientific Forum "LOMONOSOV-2021" / Ed. ed. I. A. Aleshkovsky, A.V. Andriyanov, E. A. Antipov, E. I. Zimakova. [Electronic resource] - M.: MAKS Press, 2021. [Растворцева А. Н. «Слепота невнимания» между Россией и Германией как одна из

предпосылок «крымских» санкций в немецком научном и политическом дискурсе // Материалы Международного молодежного научного форума «ЛОМОНОСОВ-2021» / Отв. ред. И. А. Алешковский, А. В. Андриянов, Е. А. Антипов, Е. И. Зимакова. [Электронный ресурс] – М.: МАКС Пресс, 2021.] URL: [https://lomonosov-msu.ru/archive/Lomonosov\\_2021/data/22069/125560\\_uid565061\\_report.pdf](https://lomonosov-msu.ru/archive/Lomonosov_2021/data/22069/125560_uid565061_report.pdf)

7. Rastvortseva A. N. The role of "inattentive blindness" in Russian-German relations 2014 - 2022 // Materials of the International Youth Scientific Forum "LOMONOSOV-2022" / Ed. ed. I. A. Aleshkovsky, A. V. Andriyanov, E. A. Antipov, E. I. Zimakova. [Electronic resource] - М.: МАКС Пресс, 2022. [Растворцева А. Н. Роль «слепоты невнимания» в российско-германских отношениях 2014 – 2022 гг. // Материалы Международного молодежного научного форума «ЛОМОНОСОВ-2022» / Отв. ред. И. А. Алешковский, А. В. Андриянов, Е. А. Антипов, Е. И. Зимакова. [Электронный ресурс] – М.: МАКС Пресс, 2022.] URL: [https://lomonosov-msu.ru/archive/Lomonosov\\_2022/data/25643/145824\\_uid565061\\_report.pdf](https://lomonosov-msu.ru/archive/Lomonosov_2022/data/25643/145824_uid565061_report.pdf)

8. Rastvortseva A. N. Mind Games: How Lack of Attention Can Lead to “Blindness” in International Relations? (on the example of Russian-German relations at the present stage) // XXI All-Russian readings of students, graduate students, young scientists with international participation "XXI century: humanitarian and socio-economic sciences": theses of speeches in 2 parts. Part 1. Tula: Publishing House of TulGU, 2022. pp. 121-122. [Растворцева А. Н. Игры разума: как недостаток внимания может привести к «слепоте» в международных отношениях? (на примере российско-германских отношений на современном этапе) // XXXI Всероссийские чтения студентов, аспирантов, молодых ученых с международным участием «XXI век: гуманитарные и социально-экономические науки»: тезисы выступлений в 2-х частях. Ч.1. Тула: Изд-во ТулГУ, 2022. С. 121 – 122.]

9. Rastvortseva A. N. Political games of psychology: framing, influence on perception and "blindness of inattention" (on the example of relations between Russia and Germany) // Actual problems of international relations and diplomacy: materials of the VI International scientific and practical conference, Vitebsk, May 19–20 2022 / Vitebsk. state un-t; editorial board: A.P. Kosov (editor-in-chief) [and others]. - Vitebsk: VSU named after P.M. Masherova, 2022. p. 263-265. [Растворцева А. Н. Политические игры психологии: фрейминг, влияние на восприятие и «слепота невнимания» (на примере отношений России и Германии) // Актуальные проблемы международных отношений и дипломатии: материалы VI Международной научно-практической конференции, Витебск, 19–20 мая 2022 г. / Витеб. гос. ун-т; редкол.: А.П. Косов (гл. ред.) [и др.]. – Витебск: ВГУ имени П.М. Машерова, 2022. С. 263 – 265.] URL: <https://rep.vsu.by/bitstream/123456789/33212/1/263-265.pdf>

10. Rastvortseva A. N. Features of Russian-German energy cooperation at the beginning of Olaf Scholz's chancellorship (on the example of the Nord Stream-2 transnational project) // Student and science (humanitarian cycle) - 2022: materials of the international student scientific and practical conference: [Electronic resource]: scientific publication / ch. ed. Ivanov A. G.; resp. ed. Makarenko E. A., Magnitogorsk State Technical University named after V.I. G.I. Nosov. – Electronic text data. (9.16 MB). - Magnitogorsk: FGBOU VPO "MGTU", 2022. p. 65 - 70. [Растворцева А. Н. Особенности российско-германского энергетического сотрудничества в начале канцлерства Олафа Шольца (на примере транснационального проекта «северный поток-2») // Студент и наука (гуманитарный цикл) – 2022: материалы международной студенческой научно-практической конференции: [Электронный ресурс]: научное издание / гл. ред. Иванов А. Г.; отв. ред. Макаренко Е. А., ФГБОУ ВО «Магнитогорский государственный технический университет им. Г.И. Носова». – Электронный текстовые дан. (9,16 Мб). – Магнитогорск: ФГБОУ ВПО «МГТУ», 2022. С. 65 – 70.]
11. Rastvortseva A. N. Russian-German relations after the Crimean crisis as a result of “inattentional blindness” // Global challenges in a changing world: trends and prospects for the development of social and humanitarian knowledge: 6th Ural Federal University youth convention: materials of international. conf. March 24–26, 2022. - Yekaterinburg: Ural university, 2022. - 1110 p. : ill. - ISBN 978-5-7996-3605-0. — Text: electronic. pp. 436 - 439 [Растворцева А. Н. Российско-германские отношения после Крымского кризиса как следствие «слепоты невнимания» // Глобальные вызовы в меняющемся мире: тенденции и перспективы развития социально-гуманитарного знания: 6-й молодежный конвент УрФУ : материалы междунаро. конф. 24–26 марта 2022 года. — Екатеринбург : Изд-во Урал. ун-та, 2022. — 1110 с. : ил. — ISBN 978-5-7996-3605-0. — Текст : электронный. С. 436 - 439] URL: [https://elar.urfu.ru/bitstream/10995/120501/1/978-5-7996-3605-0\\_2022\\_122.pdf](https://elar.urfu.ru/bitstream/10995/120501/1/978-5-7996-3605-0_2022_122.pdf)

**Structure of the paper:** The paper consists of an introduction, three chapters, a conclusion and a list of references and sources. The first chapter focuses on the development of relations between Russia and the European Union and between Russia and Germany from 1991 to 2014. The second chapter examines the reaction of German public opinion to the development of the Ukraine crisis in 2013-2014, with a particular focus on attitudes to the annexation of Crimea to Russia at different levels. The third chapter highlights the impact of the Crimean crisis on Russian-German relations in the areas of public opinion, economic, political, educational and cultural interaction between Russia and Germany from 2014 to 2021. The total volume of the text is 165 pages.

## Chapter 1. Major trends in Russian-German relations at the beginning of the 21st century

### §1. Main stages of EU-Russia relations in German-language sources

Speaking about the development of Russian-German relations since the early 1990s, it is worth paying attention to the general trends in the interaction between Russia and the European Union until 2013-2014 as this factor is important for understanding how the German side perceives the development of relations between Russia and the EU countries in general. Germany is one of the locomotive countries of the European Union and is guided, among other things, by the collective decisions of the EU in shaping and implementing its foreign policy.

The German academic literature presents different variants of periodisations. For example, A. Drofa, in her dissertation, examines the development of bilateral relations between 1991 and 2010 and distinguishes the following stages:

1) “The era of optimism and sobering up”, (1991 – 1999), when Russia was disarmed, oriented towards the West and took up integration because it needed EU assistance. For the European Union, this phase of relationship building took place in an “atmosphere of indecision.”<sup>77</sup>

2) The “course correction Era” (1999 – 2003), when the focus of overall attention shifted from domestic politics to global developments that became the determining factor in bilateral relations. Also, there was a reorientation of Russian foreign policy towards a more realistic one. During this period, the Strategic Partnership with the EU was given an important position in the Russian Foreign Policy Concept, all the more so as Russia sought an equal partnership with global actors.<sup>78</sup>

3) The “Era of pragmatism” (2004 – 2010), when both sides tried to respond to new global challenges and establish themselves as independent players on the world stage. This required a political rethinking of their strategies and a greater emphasis on pursuing their own interests. The Kremlin tried to take a pragmatic approach with the EU in order not to damage its economic interests. Criticism from EU representatives regarding violations of common democratic norms in Russia was regarded as unacceptable interference in internal affairs. As a result, uncertainty about what constitutes a “strategic partnership” has risen in parallel with dissatisfaction with the state of the relationship.<sup>79</sup>

This periodisation shows that the end of the 1990s was, from the author's point of view, a kind of tentative process in which certain preconditions for positive development of interaction could be outlined, and this trend which continued until 2004, when the actors shifted their focus to their own interests.

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<sup>77</sup> Drofa A. Strategische Partnerschaft zwischen der Europäischen Union und der Russischen Föderation im Wandel von Normativität zu Pragmatismus. 27.02.2013. URL: <http://publications.rwth-aachen.de/record/229258/files/4947.pdf> S. 27-33.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid. S. 39-42.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid. S. 46.

In the work of the German author A.M. Zumper “Relations between the enlarged European Union and the Russian Federation” the period from 1991 to 1993/5 is called the “romantic era”, since then, according to the author, Russia was set up for an unconditional orientation towards the West, liberalization and democratization. However, gradually, the author notes, by the early twenty-first century, Russia had developed a more serious awareness of national interests, which was a consequence of its disappointment in the actions of the West. Further, since 2000, which was marked by the coming to power of Vladimir Putin, a new course starts, which the author, referring to the work of K. Mayer<sup>80</sup>, refers to as “balanced Euro-Atlanticism”.<sup>81</sup> This point of view echoes the opinion of A. Drofa regarding the change in bilateral relations at the beginning of the 21st century.

Katrin Böttger, Director of the Institute for European Policy in Berlin, calls the “full of hopes” 1990s after the collapse of the USSR the first stage. In her view, the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between the European Communities and Russia, as well as the Kaliningrad dispute in 2002 concerning EU enlargement to the East, were the high points of that period.<sup>82</sup> During these years, the common interests of the parties were clearly identified and used by the parties as a guiding principle in the conduct of foreign policy.<sup>83</sup> As an employee of the Science and Policy Foundation H. Timmermann points out, at that time in the European Union they proceeded from the fact that after a systemic transformation and structural changes, the new Russia would fit into the framework of liberal democratic states and their value systems and, thus, would become “like” European countries.<sup>84</sup>

The early 2000s, according to Liana Fix, Program Manager for Russia and Eastern Europe at the Körber Foundation's International Policy Department, enabled to take place important initiatives from “strategic” to “modernization partnerships”.<sup>85</sup> This was followed by the “alienation phase”, caused by different perceptions of political situations,<sup>86</sup> when the parties unconsciously “turned away” from each other.<sup>87</sup> Then, since 2013, German experts speak of a more serious deterioration in relations

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<sup>80</sup> Meier K. Russland und die Welt. In: Informationen zur politischen Bildung. 4 Quartal 2003. S. 54.

<sup>81</sup> Sumper A.M. Die Beziehung zwischen der erweiterten Europäischen Union und der Russischen Föderation. diplom.de, 2005. S. 29 – 40.

<sup>82</sup> Spiegel Online: EU-Erweiterung: Kaliningrad-Frage gelöst, 11.11.2002.

URL: <https://www.spiegel.de/politik/ausland/eu-erweiterung-kaliningrad-frage-geloest-a-222436.html#:~:text=EU-Erweiterung%20Kaliningrad-Frage%20gelöst,Exklave%20Kaliningrad%20an%20der%20Ostsee>

<sup>83</sup> Böttger K. Die EU-Russland-Beziehungen: Rückblick und Ausblick im Zeichen der Ukraine-Krise. EU-Russland-Beziehungen // Integration – 3/2015. S. 205 – 206.

<sup>84</sup> Timmermann H. EU-Russland: Hintergründe und Perspektiven einer schwierigen Beziehung // Integration – 2/2008. S. 159. URL: <http://iep-berlin.de/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Timmermann-EU-Russland.pdf>

<sup>85</sup> Fix L. Keine Sonderbeziehung. Deutschland muss international Verantwortung übernehmen. Körber-Stiftung. Hamburg. 2018. S. 3-4.

<sup>86</sup> Timmermann H. EU-Russland: Hintergründe und Perspektiven einer schwierigen Beziehung // integration 2/2008. S.159-160. URL: <http://iep-berlin.de/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Timmermann-EU-Russland.pdf>

<sup>87</sup> Schiffer S., Vogel Th. Kommentar: Die EU vernachlässigt die Förderung der russischen Zivilgesellschaft // Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung: Dossier Russland. 14.04.2014.

against the backdrop of the Ukraine crisis, which in German literature is sometimes referred to as a “frozen conflict”.<sup>88</sup>

M. Dembinsky and H.J. Spanger in their article also consider the history of relations between Russia and the European Union, starting from the 21st century, and give the following periodization:

- The first stage, according to the authors, marks the year 2004, when the EU prioritised Partnership and Cooperation Agreements in developing its cooperation instruments. However, the situation changed when the European Union began to implement the Neighborhood Policy, the essence of which, according to European officials, was “to ensure democracy, stability and prosperity in order to prevent new dividing lines in Europe”. The Russian side responded by calling for securing the status of special relations between Russia and the EU. The combination of these positions was initially not problematic and was reinforced by a number of instruments, such as, for example, the 2005 agreement on the “four common spaces” of cooperation, on which the “strategic partnership” with Russia was based.<sup>89</sup>

- The second phase takes place between 2006 and 2009, when the EU decided to abandon the “Russia first” policy, since at that time new EU-countries that were skeptical towards Russia, such as Poland and the Baltic countries, began to express their position more actively. Moreover, Poland and Lithuania vetoed a new Partnership and Cooperation Agreement that was planned for 2006. Thus, the implementation of German initiatives such as the “modernizing partnership” became impossible, despite the fact that the United States and most of the countries of the European Union were ready to “reset” relations after the Georgian-Ossetian conflict in 2008.

- The third stage, according to M. Dembinski and H. J. Spanger, began in 2012, with the return of Vladimir Putin as president of the Russian Federation. Russia's alienation from the West deepened, according to German researchers, as a result of a “massive tightening of the internal course.” At the same time, with the creation of the Eurasian Economic Union, Moscow has emphasized its special relationship with its CIS neighbors. Most of the EU countries reacted to this only declaratively, in principle, acknowledging and at the same time confirming that they have thriving relations with Russia, and also strive for a parallel expansion of relations with all interested states. As a result, in late 2013, the “Eastern partners” of the EU faced a difficult and, in the case of Ukraine, “fatal choice” between European and Russian integration projects.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Pradetto A. Die Ukraine, Russland und der Westen. Die Inszenierung einer Krise als geopolitischer Konflikt / Staack M. Der Ukraine-Konflikt, Russland und die europäische Sicherheitsordnung. Verlag Barbara Budrich. Opladen. Berlin. Toronto. 2017. S.21.

<sup>89</sup> Main documents. URL: <https://russiaeu.ru/ru/osnovnye-dokumenty> (in Russian)

<sup>90</sup> Dembinski M., Spanger H.-J. "Pluraler Frieden" - Leitgedanken zu einer neuen Russlandpolitik. // HSFKReport, 2/2017. Frankfurt am Main: Hessische Stiftung Friedens- und Konfliktforschung. 2017. URL: <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-51093-2> S. 10-14.

M. Dembinsky and H.J. Spanger say that both sides presented the confrontation as inevitable, and the role of Moscow in the crisis in Ukraine is characterized as an act of asserting its rights. But this “violent reaction” occurred so suddenly that, according to the authors, there is reason to doubt the truth and objectivity of such a vision of the situation. The authors believe that this was an attempt by Russia to take advantage of the right moment to achieve its goal, but it has already lost its influence on Ukraine, has become involved in an escalation of the conflict with the West, and thereby strengthened the role of NATO as a collective defensive alliance in the eyes of Western society.<sup>91</sup>

This periodization indicates the gradual alienation of Russia and the European Union from each other and the transition from expanding cooperation to a divergence in understanding their development, which led to the fact that some states were forced to make a choice in favor of one of the integration projects: Russian or European.

Thus, based on the above-mentioned studies, the following trends can be highlighted. German authors agree that the last decade of the 20th century was marked by a positive development in relations between Russia and the European Union, since Russia was clearly oriented towards the West. That is why this period was called “romantic” and “full of hope.” However, the early 2000s and the coming to power of Vladimir Putin brought Russia on a new course aimed at strengthening the strategic partnership with the EU, but focusing on more “realistic” policy outlook, which was the first step towards distancing the actors from one another. Until 2012, certain disagreements gradually began to emerge in relations between the Russian Federation and the EU, the parties were rethinking their strategies in relation to each other. This was followed by a phase of distancing: the participation of Vladimir Putin in the elections and victory in them in 2012 were perceived negatively by the EU countries, and the gradually unfolding crisis in Ukraine led the parties to a “frozen conflict” and alienation.

It is worth noting that such a vision of the situation, namely, attempts to expand and deepen cooperation in the late 1990s, and then gradual estrangement from each other, in general, echoes the vision of the development of bilateral relations by domestic authors as well.<sup>92</sup> This allows one to draw a conclusion about the objectivity of the presented assessments. However, the German and Russian media, as a rule, see the reasons for the gradual alienation in different ways.

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid. S. 6.

<sup>92</sup>E.g.: Danilov D. A. Political relations between Russia and the EU: evolution and prospects // Bulletin of St. Petersburg University. Political science. International relationships. 2021. №2. pp. 121 – 138. URL: <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/politicheskie-otnosheniya-rossiya-es-evolyutsiya-i-perspektivy> (in Russian); Tairova Sh. S., Golovina E. E. International relations between Russia and the European Union: state, problems, development // Caspian region: politics, economics, culture. 2019. No. 4 (61). URL: <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/mezhdunarodnye-otnosheniya-rossii-i-evrosoyuza-sostoyanie-problemy-razvitiya> (in Russian)



## §2. “Inattentional blindness” as a factor of alienation in Russian-German relations

When examining Russian-German relations, it should be noted that, just like the Russia-EU relations discussed in the previous paragraph, since the late 1990s and in the first decade of the 21st century, they have generally developed and strengthened at various levels, be it economic, political or cultural cooperation.<sup>93</sup> At that time, Germany saw Russia as a strategical partner, relations between the heads of state developed mostly in a positive way.<sup>94</sup>

One of the former chancellors of the FRG, Helmut Schmidt, in his memoirs “Retired”, speaking about Russia, drew attention to the fact that in 40 years he had not encountered anti-German sentiments from Russians. The reason for this, the author believed such factors as the victory of the USSR in World War II, the realization of huge losses on both sides, or Russian self-consciousness, but in any case, according to Schmidt, for this reason Germany has no right to harbor anti-Russian sentiments, since “good-neighborly relations also means relations with those neighbors who live a little further.”<sup>95</sup>

However, it should also be noted that a certain misunderstanding and disagreement gradually emerged between the countries, causing criticism of each other's actions in one situation or another, gradually forming the preconditions for confrontation. In the dynamics of the development of Russian-German relations, as well as in relations between Russia and the European Union, one can also highlight some events that influenced mutual perception. These include, for instance, Russia's disappointment with the German position on the Yugoslav conflict, its support for NATO's eastward expansion, and the orientation of Berlin's foreign policy in the direction of greater Atlanticism. For Russia, these and other factors have signalled a drift away from each other.

At the same time, Germany saw other problems in bilateral relations. This is the establishment of an “authoritarian”, from the German point of view, model in Russia, as well as the transition to the oligarchic model of capitalism, Russia's cruelty in the Chechen conflict, cases of human rights violations, adherence to conservative and traditionalist values.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> E.g.: Veselov Yu. A. — Analysis of the development of the relationship of Germany to the Russian Federation in the framework of the formation of German national identity in the period after the reunification of Germany // International relations. - 2022. - No. 1. - pp. 16 – 36. DOI: 10.7256/2454-0641.2022.1.33611 URL: [https://nbpublish.com/library\\_read\\_article.php?id=33611](https://nbpublish.com/library_read_article.php?id=33611) (in Russian)

<sup>94</sup> Adomeit H. Bilanz der deutschen Russlandpolitik seit 1990 // SIRIUS 2020. 4(3). S. 276–292. De Gryter URL: <https://doi.org/10.1515/sirius-2020-3004>

<sup>95</sup> Schmidt H. Außer Dienst. Eine Bilanz. Siedler Verlag, München. 2008. S. 115

<sup>96</sup> Trenin D. Russia and Germany: from alienation to a new neighborhood 31.05.2018 URL: <https://carnegie.ru/2018/05/31/ru-pub-76473> (in Russian) \* Carnegie Endowment for International Peace has been added to the register of foreign agents by the Ministry of Justice of the Russian Federation. The representative office of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (USA) in the Russian Federation was excluded by the Ministry of Justice of the Russian Federation from the register of branches and representative offices of international organizations and foreign non-commercial non-governmental organizations for violations of the current legislation of the Russian Federation.

The presence of such disagreements, as well as the fact that the parties could not reach a compromise on the above problems, indicates that the estrangement of countries from each other only worsened over time, as new disagreements introduced more and more misunderstandings into bilateral relations.

German political scientist Stefan Birling describes the relationship between Russia and Germany with the words “Russia: a difficult partner.”<sup>97</sup> From the German point of view, despite many years of cooperation and building partnerships “astonishingly wide and large”,<sup>98</sup> relations with Russia have become “difficult” in recent decades.<sup>99</sup> The “publicly glorified friendship” of Russian leaders with German Chancellors Helmut Kohl and Gerhard Schröder,<sup>100</sup> which has become the subject of internal political debates in Germany more than once,<sup>101</sup> has been replaced by rather neutral relations between Russian President Vladimir Putin and German Chancellor Angela Merkel.

The hopes of many German politicians that over time, after rebuilding its system, Russia would switch to the Western system of values and become a full-fledged partner in the Euro-Atlantic context<sup>102</sup> gradually faded due to the increase in the number of disagreements in various international and socio-political issues. Forums of multilateral dialogue in Europe, such as the The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Russia-NATO Council, as well as bilateral initiatives such as the Petersburg Dialogue, failed, according to S. Birling, to counteract this process of alienation.<sup>103</sup>

Katrin Böttger, director of the Institute for European Policy in Berlin, believes that the reason for the distance was the lack of expression of interests on both sides, which could gradually lead to a common policy, since common goals could be determined through dialogue. The fact that in the 90s supported hopes for good relations, namely, geographical proximity, economic and energy interdependence, still persists, the author emphasizes.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Bierling S. *Vormacht wider Willen. Deutsche Außenpolitik von der Wiedervereinigung bis zur Gegenwart* Bonn: 1st ed. Verlag C.H.Beck. 2014. S. 244-248.

<sup>98</sup> Timmermann H. Die deutsch-russischen Beziehungen im europäischen Kontext. In: *Internationale Politik und Gesellschaft* (IPG). №1. 2007. S. 101.

<sup>99</sup> Ludwig A. N., Peterka S. Deutschlands Russlandpolitik: Von der Herausforderung des Dialogs // *Gesellschaft • Wirtschaft • Politik* (GWP) Heft 1/2018. S. 127-134.

<sup>100</sup> Bastian K., Götz R. Deutsch-russische Beziehungen im europäischen Kontext: Zwischen Interessenallianz und strategischer Partnerschaft. FG 5. 2005/03. Mai 2005. URL: [https://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/arbeitspapiere/Partnerschaft\\_ks.pdf](https://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/arbeitspapiere/Partnerschaft_ks.pdf)

<sup>101</sup> Adomeit H., Bastian K., Götz R. Deutsche Russlandpolitik unter Druck. // *Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik. Deutsches Institut für Internationale Politik und Sicherheit. SWP-Aktuell* 56. Dezember 2004. S.1 URL:[https://www.swp-berlin.org/publications/products/aktuell/aktuell2004\\_56\\_adm\\_bastian\\_gtz\\_ks.pdf](https://www.swp-berlin.org/publications/products/aktuell/aktuell2004_56_adm_bastian_gtz_ks.pdf)

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, S. 105.

<sup>103</sup> Bierling, S. *Vormacht wider Willen. Deutsche Außenpolitik von der Wiedervereinigung bis zur Gegenwart*. 1st ed. Verlag C.H.Beck. 2014. S. 244-248.

<sup>104</sup> Böttger K. Die EU-Russland-Beziehungen: Rückblick und Ausblick im Zeichen der Ukraine-Krise. *EU-Russland-Beziehungen // Integration* – 3/2015. S. 206

However, it is worth noting that, taking into account all the disagreements since the early 2000s, it was the events in Crimea and eastern Ukraine in 2014 that, from the point of view of the German government, no longer allowed to keep the situation under control. For a large part of politicians, the media and representatives of science, this alienation was the result of a “profound loss of trust in bilateral relations.”<sup>105</sup> As Russian political scientist Andrey Kortunov emphasizes, “Russia lost Germany in 2014.”<sup>106</sup>

In order to understand the origins of the situation that arose in 2013-2014, one should consider the previous period of relations between Russia and Germany to identify the factors that led to such a pronounced estrangement.

Some German sources, speaking about why Russia and Germany moved away from each other by 2014 so much that one could talk about confrontation, indicate that over the previous two decades there was a gradual formation of a problem that can be denoted by the term “Unaufmerksamkeitsblindheit”, which literally means “inattentive blindness”.<sup>107</sup> This term is taken from psychology, has not yet been sufficiently developed in the field of international relations either in Russian or in German discourse, but is used in some works of German researchers. It implies a situation where the situation is perceived as “blindness” not in the literal sense, since it does not depend on the quality of vision, but is formed at the psychological level due to the fact that neither side was able to pay due attention to the interests and problems of the other.

The German psychologist Ubaldo Hullin emphasizes that what an actor perceives depends on many factors, such as his or her expectations. In addition, the similarity of a situation to known or unknown processes is also a criterion for whether or not a person will be “blind” to obvious objects of perception.<sup>108</sup> Indeed, based on the proposition that politics is shaped by people, it is possible to move the term from the purely psychological sphere to the political sphere.

Andreas Bock, Head of Communications at the European Council on Foreign Relations, points out several conditions for its manifestation when speaking about “inattentive blindness”. These include situations where: attention is fixated on something specific (for example, Russia's further escalation of the crisis in Ukraine); there are certain theories (images) or expectations (mental maps) about the behavior of the actor (for example, stereotype, that Russia is pursuing an aggressive, expansionist foreign policy); there is a cognitively difficult task (for example, an international crisis scenario). In the presence of at least one of these factors, according to A. Bock, there is about a 50%

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<sup>105</sup> Meister, S. Deutschland im Übergang zu einer neuen EU-Russland- und Osteuropapolitik // DGAPkompakt Nr. 6 Sommer 2017. S. 16-18. URL: <https://dgap.org/de/article/getFullPDF/29846>

<sup>106</sup> Kortunov A. Spielraum nutzen. Für eine neue Dynamik zwischen Moskau und Berlin. Körber-Stiftung. Hamburg. 2018 S.1-2.

<sup>107</sup> E.g.: Bock, A. Die unsichtbare Bedrohung. Kuba, die Ukraine und das Phänomen der Unaufmerksamkeitsblindheit. Z Außen Sicherheitspolit 8. 2015. S. 505–550. URL: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12399-015-0533-1>

<sup>108</sup> Hullin U. Was hält die Zukunft für uns bereit? 20.11.2020. URL: <https://ubaldhullin.de/zukunftsangst/>

chance that the actor will show “blindness” to clearly recognizable and perceived stimuli or to information.<sup>109</sup>

These theses are echoed by the opinion of Jürg Dietrich, who points out in his study “Brain-friendly work and professional success” that during the course of evolution people have developed the ability to concentrate on one thing, focus all their feelings on something specific and neglect other things. Conscious limitation of attention leads to “non-perception” of objects or factual information due to the limited possibilities of its processing for the human brain. Attention, according to Dietrich, is like a spotlight that illuminates what a person is actively focusing on. Consequently, everything that is outside the cone of this light disappears from view, which, in turn, leads to “inattentive blindness”.<sup>110</sup>

Therefore, this process can also explain the fact that the information received by decision makers in the US and Europe during the process of NATO expansion to the east and the escalation of the Crimean crisis did not lead to a change in the image of Russia or a transformation of expectations, but only introduced the attitudes of Russia and Germany is in a bigger crisis.

Speaking about the first problem, that is, the dialogue between Russia and NATO, Mathieu Boulegue, a researcher for the Russia and Eurasia program at Chatham House, characterizes it as a “dialogue of the deaf”: there are diametrically opposed worldviews that are an obstacle for actors and lead to the fact that they cannot speak the same language. Their understanding of security and strategic interests indicate not just different, but even irreconcilable positions.<sup>111</sup>

Looking at the opposing positions of Russia and Germany with regard to the political crisis in Ukraine in 2013-2014 from this perspective, one can see the psychological reasons for the development of alienation: by the beginning of the crisis, the parties had already been focused only on their vision of the other side's problems for a long time and did not notice how the developing lack of attention to the interests of the other in dialogue turned into a gap and led to absolute “blindness” to the partner's position.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Bock A. Die unsichtbare Bedrohung. Kuba, die Ukraine und das Phänomen der Unaufmerksamkeitsblindheit. *Z Außen Sicherheitspolit* 8. 2015. S. 505–550. URL: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12399-015-0533-1>

<sup>110</sup> Dietrich J. *Gehirngerechtes Arbeiten und beruflicher Erfolg. Eine Anleitung für mehr Effektivität und Effizienz.* // Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden 2014. S. 8- 9.

<sup>111</sup> Boulegue M. The Russia-NATO Relationship Between a Rock and a Hard Place: How the ‘Defensive Inferiority Syndrome’ Is Increasing the Potential for Error // *Journal of slavic military studies*. 2017. VOL. 30. NO. 3. pp. 361–380. URL: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13518046.2017.1341769>

<sup>112</sup> E.g: Rastvortseva A. N. "Blindness of inattention" between Russia and Germany as one of the prerequisites for the "Crimean" sanctions in German scientific and political discourse // *Proceedings of the International Youth Scientific Forum "LOMONOSOV-2021"* / Ed. ed. I. A. Aleshkovsky, A.V. Andriyanov, E. A. Antipov, E. I. Zimakova. [Electronic resource] - M.: MAKS Press, 2021 (in Russian); Rastvortseva A. N. The role of "inattentive blindness" in Russian-German relations 2014 - 2022 // *Materials of the International Youth Scientific Forum "LOMONOSOV-2022"* / Ed. ed. I. A. Aleshkovsky, A. V. Andriyanov, E. A. Antipov, E. I. Zimakova. [Electronic resource] - M.: MAKS Press, 2022 (in Russian); Rastvortseva A. N. Mind Games: How Lack of Attention Can Lead to “Blindness” in International Relations? (on the example of Russian-German relations at the present stage) // *XXI All-Russian readings of students, graduate students, young scientists with international participation "XXI century: humanitarian and socio-economic sciences"*: theses of

This is confirmed by German authors involved in the study of political processes: Katrin Böttger points out that, although the 2014 conflict itself arose on the basis of competition between the EU project for the “Eastern Partnership” and the Russian project of the Eurasian Economic Union, its causes lie much deeper. They are rooted in disagreements that have accumulated since the end of the Cold War, which can be seen as the prerequisites for the later “inattentive blindness” that took shape.<sup>113</sup>

Political scientist Andreas Heinemann - Gründer in the article “Cold War or New Ostpolitik? Conditions of German Policy towards Russia” suggests that the attitude towards Russia has long been a subject of controversy in the FRG, whether within political parties, among the public or in the social sciences. And especially strongly, according to him, this has been manifested since the accession of Crimea to Russia and the beginning of the war in eastern Ukraine. But he sees the causes of the conflict in the deeper problems of German and European “Ostpolitik”.<sup>114</sup>

After the collapse of the USSR, according to the political scientist, there was never a consensus in the West as to what the policy towards Russia should be: whether it should be considered as part of Europe, as a partner, or as an adversary. No one could imagine Russia as a member of the EU or NATO, and as long as the country was weakened, it was considered *quantité négligeable*.<sup>115</sup> The political scientist and historian Egbert Jahn has the same opinion.<sup>116</sup>

An example in this case can also be found in the article “An inconvenient neighbour, but not an enemy” by Theo Sommer, a columnist for the German newspaper “Die Zeit”. In it, the author suggests that in 1991 a false belief spread in the Western world that Russia would henceforth “fall out of world politics and obediently adapt to the West”. At the same time, the German historian believes that even then it should have been clear that the country's return to its role as a world power was only a

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speeches in 2 parts. Part 1. Tula: Publishing House of TulGU, 2022. pp. 121-122. (in Russian); Rastvortseva A. N. Political games of psychology: framing, influence on perception and "blindness of inattention" (on the example of relations between Russia and Germany) // Actual problems of international relations and diplomacy: materials of the VI International scientific and practical conference, Vitebsk, May 19–20 2022 / Vitebsk. state un-t; editorial board: A.P. Kosov (editor-in-chief) [and others]. - Vitebsk: VSU named after P.M. Masherova, 2022. p. 263-265. (in Russian); Rastvortseva A. N. Russian-German relations after the Crimean crisis as a result of “inattentive blindness” // Global challenges in a changing world: trends and prospects for the development of social and humanitarian knowledge: 6th Ural Federal University youth convention: materials of international. conf. March 24–26, 2022. - Yekaterinburg: Ural university, 2022. - 1110 p. : ill. - ISBN 978-5-7996-3605-0. — Text: electronic. pp. 436 - 439. (in Russian)

<sup>113</sup> Böttger K. Die EU-Russland-Beziehungen: Rückblick und Ausblick im Zeichen der Ukraine-Krise. EU-Russland-Beziehungen // Integration – 3/2015. S. 204

<sup>114</sup> Heinemann-Gründer A. Kalter Krieg oder neue Ostpolitik? Ansätze deutscher Russlandpolitik. // Politik und Zeitgeschichte. 76(21-22). 2017. S. 4-10.

<sup>115</sup> French: «negligible quantity».

<sup>116</sup> Jahn E. Putin-Versteher und Putin-Kritiker. Heftige Kontroversen um die deutsche und westliche Russlandpolitik. Frankfurter Montags-Vorlesungen. Neue Folge 06. 04.05.2016. URL: <http://fkks.uni-mannheim.de/montagsvorlesung/Rußland-Politik/DSFraMoV06-NET-Rußlandpolitik-57.pdf>

matter of time. However, at that time Western society ignored this fact, as it was not considered relevant.<sup>117</sup>

Gabriele Krone-Schmalz, a West German historian and political scientist, criticized Germany's official position in the fourth chapter of her monograph "Understanding Russia"<sup>118</sup>. She believes that German society as a whole is characterized by the fact that it puts a certain stigma without understanding it: "As soon as something happens in Russia that "we" in the West cannot immediately understand, because we don't have relationships and reasons in our heads, immediately there is an "image of the enemy", which, it would seem, was a relic of the 80s."<sup>119</sup> The author cites 1989 as an example, when Willy Brandt at Moscow State University asked Mikhail Gorbachev what he wants to get from the West in these difficult times. Even then Gorbachev answered: "understanding."<sup>120</sup>

Thus, the above opinions of German authors show that many factors contributed to the increase in "blindness" between Russia and Germany, including uncertainty within the FRG itself about who Russia is for Germany and how to build foreign policy, an erroneous assessment of Russia's development, as well as disagreements that have remained unresolved since the end of the Cold War.

Of interest is the working paper by Matthias Dembinski and Hans-Joachim Spanger "Plural peace", which takes into account the mid-1990s as the source of discrepancies between Russia and Europe.<sup>121</sup> The authors carry out a deep analysis of the current situation from its root causes to possible ways out of the conflict and highlight the year 1994, when Boris Yeltsin, at the CSCE summit in Budapest, pointed out the danger that Europe could return to a "cold peace" in response to the officially announced NATO expansion. Even then, according to the authors, in relations between Russia and the West "irreconcilability arose, and political discourse began to unfold in parallel worlds."<sup>122</sup>

Like many other German experts,<sup>123</sup> Krone-Schmalz points out that the main crack in East-West relations has been NATO's eastward expansion. Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary joined NATO in 1999, and Bulgaria, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Estonia joined NATO in 2004. In 2009, Albania and Croatia joined the alliance. Justified criticism from Russia in the

<sup>117</sup> Sommer T. Ein unbequemer Nachbar, aber keine Feind. URL: <https://www.zeit.de/politik/2017-11/deutsch-russische-beziehungen-5vor8/komplettansicht>

<sup>118</sup> Krone-Schmalz G. Russland verstehen – der Kampf um die Ukraine und die Ignoranz des Westens 9. Auflage. Verlag C.H.Beck. München 2015. S. 88 – 116.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid, S.10

<sup>120</sup> Ibid, S.10

<sup>121</sup> Dembinski M., Spanger, H.-J. "Pluraler Frieden" - Leitgedanken zu einer neuen Russlandpolitik // HSFKReport, 2/2017. Frankfurt am Main: Hessische Stiftung Friedens- und Konfliktforschung. 2017. URL: <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-51093-2>

<sup>122</sup> Ibid, S. 3.

<sup>123</sup> E.g.: Struve K. "Faschisten" als Feindbild. Putins Krieg gegen die Ukraine und die deutsche Öffentlichkeit // Ost-West. Europäische Perspektiven 15 (2014). No. 4, S. 284-285; Kühn U. Der Ukraine-Krieg und die europäische Sicherheitsarchitektur. // Russland-Analysen NR. 295, 08.05.2015. URL: [https://www.academia.edu/15755568/Ist\\_die\\_Krim\\_wirklich\\_russisch\\_Russische\\_Juristen\\_diskutieren\\_über\\_die\\_Rechtmäßigkeit\\_der\\_Aufnahme\\_der\\_Krim?email\\_work\\_card=title](https://www.academia.edu/15755568/Ist_die_Krim_wirklich_russisch_Russische_Juristen_diskutieren_über_die_Rechtmäßigkeit_der_Aufnahme_der_Krim?email_work_card=title)

West mostly hit the “wall of silence” or “inattentional blindness” and the dominant thought was the lack of understanding why Moscow did not want to take a position based on the fact that NATO expansion was the result of free decisions of independent, sovereign countries.

It is worth noting that proponents of such a position most often insist that decisions were made voluntarily by states and not as a result of pressure from the North Atlantic Alliance, but Krone-Schmalz stresses that high-ranking German politicians have spoken to her privately, calling NATO expansion the biggest mistake since World War II. But she also emphasizes that, even saying this in a personal conversation, not a single politician signed off on these words so that it would be possible to refer to the authors of these words.<sup>124</sup> This situation shows that even after a while, Western politicians are not ready to admit the erroneous decisions of the past, leaving white spots in the international dialogue. In addition, this fact indicates the existence in Germany of a certain censorship, in some cases self-censorship, regarding which position can be expressed openly and which cannot.

In 1998, G. Krone-Schmalz made a report “NATO expansion to the East and other stumbling blocks in German-Russian relations.” She argued that there were two possibilities for ending the East-West confrontation: either to accept the entire post-Soviet space into the bloc, including Russia - which was not a realistic option - or to create a different, new international security structure. Since, according to the author, the existing structure has demonstrated its impotence in dealing with contemporary regional conflicts, she urged a reflection on what changes should be made in order to enlarge the OSCE rather than to think about how to maintain a military alliance.<sup>125</sup> However, her speech has remained ignored. No radical reform of NATO has taken place. Convinced of their victory in the Cold War, Western countries chose to ignore Russia's proposals for a pan-European security system, equal and indivisible to all.

It is a historical fact that on February 9, 1990, US Secretary of State James Baker, during a conversation with Mikhail Gorbachev and Eduard Shevardnadze in the Kremlin, gave “iron guarantees” that “neither the jurisdiction nor the military forces of NATO will expand to the East” if Moscow agree to the entry of a united Germany into the alliance<sup>126</sup>. With the condition of M.S. Gorbachev, which was that the expansion of the NATO zone is unacceptable, J. Baker agreed.

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<sup>124</sup> Krone-Schmalz G. *Russland verstehen – der Kampf um die Ukraine und die Ignoranz des Westens* 9. Auflage. Verlag C.H.Beck. München 2015. S.72

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid*, S.73

<sup>126</sup> Adomeit H. NATO Osterweiterung: Gab es westliche Garantien? // Arbeitspapier Sicherheitspolitik. Nr. 3/2018. URL: [https://www.baks.bund.de/sites/baks010/files/arbeitspapier\\_sicherheitspolitik\\_2018\\_03.pdf](https://www.baks.bund.de/sites/baks010/files/arbeitspapier_sicherheitspolitik_2018_03.pdf); Gorzka G. *Zwischen Annäherung und Distanz: 30 Jahre Deutsch-Russische Kulturbeziehungen (1988 – 2018) am regionalen Beispiel Kassel*. kassel university press GmbH. 2018. S.100; Baberowski J. Winkler H. A. “Erbschaft Der Sowjetunion. Der Ukraine-Konflikt in Historischer Perspektive. Eine Diskussion.” // *Journal of Modern European History / Zeitschrift Für Moderne Europäische Geschichte / Revue D'histoire Européenne Contemporaine*, vol. 13. no. 3. 2015, pp. 291–305. URL: [www.jstor.org/stable/26266187](http://www.jstor.org/stable/26266187). S. 294

In the same year, then German Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher made a public statement that NATO expansion “will not happen anywhere at all.”<sup>127</sup> But almost immediately after the collapse of the USSR, the West “began to surround Russia, which was not given an equal voice in the European security system, with a ring of NATO states.”<sup>128</sup> As already mentioned, the issue of expanding the alliance is still one of the key problems, which not only does not contribute to overcoming the crisis of mistrust, but also contributes to the growth of tension between states. Based on this, some German authors believe that one should not be surprised at the behavior of Russia today.<sup>129</sup>

Summing up, we can say that the alienation of Russia and Germany was facilitated by many factors at various levels. Due to the lack of consensus within Germany on whether Russia is a partner or rival of Europe, incorrect assumptions about the role of Russia on the world stage, as well as different understanding of the issue of security and cooperation, mutual misunderstanding gradually increased in bilateral relations, turning into “blindness“.

From the Russian point of view, the fact that the German side actually ignored Russia's opinion on such crucial issues as NATO expansion, the bombing of Yugoslavia, etc., meant that in certain situations the position of the UN Security Council was not taken into account. And this is confirmed by some German experts, for example, as G. Krone-Schmalz noted, the legitimization of actions in Yugoslavia from the point of view of international law was “not even on shaky legs”<sup>130</sup> For the Russian side, this meant that the West itself does not adhere to the standards by which it measures others, which served as another step towards deepening mistrust towards European countries and, accordingly, to subsequent alienation and “blindness of inattention”. For Germany, however, the changes taking place in Russia, the turn towards traditional values and the departure from Western-oriented policies, also symbolized Moscow's unwillingness to move in one direction, indicating rather a choice of a course that differs from the West, if not its opposite.

### **§3. Confrontation of interests or a new “cold war”**

Different views can be found in German sources as to how powerful the distance between Russia and Germany, and the West in general, had become in the second decade of the twenty-first

<sup>127</sup> Abmachung 1990 „Keine Osterweiterung der NATO“. URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JXcWVTpQF3k>

<sup>128</sup> Dieckmann F. Ratloses Erschrecken. Zum Stand der deutsch-russischen Beziehungen // »Blätter« 9/2018. S. 65-73. URL: <https://www.blaetter.de/ausgabe/2018/september/ratloses-erschrecken>

<sup>129</sup> E.g.: Eppler E. Putin, Mann fürs Böse 11.03.2014. URL: <https://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/russlands-praesident-wladimir-putin-mann-fuers-boese-1.1909116>; Jessen J. Teufelspakt für die Ukraine 27.03.2014. URL: <https://www.zeit.de/2014/14/ukraine-unabhaengigkeit>; Völkerrechtler über den Ukraine-Konflikt "Das wird Putin nicht stoppen" 17.03.2014. URL: <https://www.tagesschau.de/ausland/ukraine-interview-posth100.html>; Prittitz V. Politik-Logiken im Ukraine-Konflikt. POLITIK UND ZEITGESCHICHTE (APUZ 47–48/2014) 11.11.2014. URL: <https://www.bpb.de/apuz/194822/politik-logiken-im-ukraine-konflikt?p=1>

<sup>130</sup> Krone-Schmalz G. Russland verstehen– der Kampf um die Ukraine und die Ignoranz des Westens. 9. Auflage. Verlag C.H.Beck. München 2015. S. 78.



century. Although with the end of the Cold War one could see the view that a time of perpetual peace had come, and there was hope that global challenges would henceforth be addressed jointly by the global community, without reliance on political or ideological calculations,<sup>131</sup> only two decades later the situation had changed. In 2014, Russian and Western military advisers met in eastern Ukraine, supporting different opposing parties, Russia was excluded from the group of the most influential industrialized countries of the G8, and the issue of imposition sanctions was discussed. As the positions of the parties were clearly opposing, some authors were of the opinion that the “cold war” could again be observed on the world stage.<sup>132</sup>

A large number of German-language sources indicate that it was the political crisis in Ukraine, or, as Katrin Böttger calls it, the conflict of the “Inter-Europe” (“Zwischeneuropa”), that is, disagreements regarding the development of territories located between the EU and Russia, that led to fundamental changes in relations between Russia and the West, and the picture of a new “cold war”, in their opinion, became obvious.<sup>133</sup> According to some Western experts, this was indicated, first of all, by the external and internal images of enemies, as well as the growing solidarity of the alliance and zero-sum calculations when planning actions in the international arena. From the West, statements were increasingly heard that Russia was acting not only “cynically”, but also on the basis of considerations typical of the Cold War era: interests, double standards and power politics.<sup>134</sup> It is worth noting that from Russia one can see accusations of the West in such actions.

The position of Russia, according to German-language studies, is based on the following: Russia can claim the status of a great power only as a counterbalance to the West - this, according to some authors,<sup>135</sup> was the culmination of the speech of the President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin at the Munich Security Conference in 2007.<sup>136</sup> This means that the Kremlin can justify its claim to authenticity, that is, to “authoritarian rule”, only as a counterbalance to democratic universalism – this is how the main idea of another speech given by the Russian leader to the Valdai Club in September 2013 was interpreted.<sup>137</sup> These ideas after 2014 became, according to M. Dembinski, H.J. Schmidt and H.J. Spanger, “aggressively used by Moscow”, which is “actively spreading the ideology

<sup>131</sup> Rotter A. Die Ukraine-Krise und der Westen. // Politische Studien, 461. 66. Jahrgang | Mai-Juni 2015. S. 12 - 15.

<sup>132</sup> Fischer S. Eskalation in der Ukraine-Krise // Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik. Berlin. 2014. S. 1-4.

<sup>133</sup> Böttger K. Die EU-Russland-Beziehungen: Rückblick und Ausblick im Zeichen der Ukraine-Krise. EU-Russland-Beziehungen // Integration – 3/2015. S. 208.

<sup>134</sup> Dembinski M., Schmidt H.-J., Spanger H.-J. Einhegung: die Ukraine, Russland und die europäische Sicherheitsordnung. // HSFK-Report 3/2014. Frankfurt am Main: Hessische Stiftung Friedens- und Konfliktforschung. 2014. URL: <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-404057>

<sup>135</sup> Fix L. Keine Sonderbeziehung Deutschland muss international Verantwortung übernehmen. Körber-Stiftung. Hamburg. 2018 S.3-4; Dembinski M., Schmidt H.-J., Spanger H.-J. Einhegung: die Ukraine, Russland und die europäische Sicherheitsordnung. // HSFK-Report 3/2014. Frankfurt am Main: Hessische Stiftung Friedens- und Konfliktforschung. 2014. URL: <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-404057>

<sup>136</sup> Speech and discussion at the Munich Security Policy Conference. 10.02.2007. URL: <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/24034> (in Russian)

<sup>137</sup> Vladimir Putin's speech at a meeting of the Valdai Club 19.09.2013. URL: <https://rg.ru/2013/09/19/stenogramma-site.html> (in Russian)

of the Russian ‘special path’”, and Russian politicians “with unrelenting persistence”, indicate that the Ukrainian political crisis is not a cause, but a symptom of the current confrontation.<sup>138</sup>

To confirm their words, the authors cited several quotes from Russian politicians:

- quote by Vladimir Putin that Russia is a unique and independent civilization, which is reflected, among other things, in “significant differences between the dominant cultural trends in the West and traditional Russian values.”<sup>139</sup> This idea was supported by other researchers. For example, Uwe Halbach pointed out that in Russia there is an increasingly established view of the West as opposed to everything that constitutes Russian national values.<sup>140</sup>

- Words by Vladimir Putin that “the imposition of foreign values” under the guise of establishing democracy and the rule of law causes “mental suffering”, which is reflected in “an increase in crime, alcoholism, drug addiction” and “higher mortality rates, a decrease in life expectancy and an increase in the number of suicides” led the German authors to the conclusion that Russia accuses the West of being responsible not only for changing the geopolitical strategy, but also for the sociocultural weakening of Russia as a whole. In addition, it was emphasized that the Russian side supposedly insists on the independence of the Russian civilization and clearly defines its historical mission: “Moscow is the Third Rome.”<sup>141</sup>

- Speech by Vladimir Putin of March 18, 2014, in which he said that “Western partners, led by the United States, prefer to be guided in their practical policy not by international law, but by the law of the strong,” as they are confident in their selectivity, exclusivity, rightness, as well as the right to decide the fate of the world, including the use of force against sovereign states. At the same time, they build coalitions according to the principle “who is not with us is against us”, but “to give the aggression the appearance of legality, they knock out the necessary resolutions from international organizations, and if for some reason this does not work out, they completely ignore the UN Security Council, and the UN as a whole.”<sup>142</sup> From the point of view of German researchers, this also draws a clear line between Russia and the West, putting them on opposite sides.

<sup>138</sup> Dembinski M., Schmidt H.-J., Spanger H.-J. Einhegung: die Ukraine, Russland und die europäische Sicherheitsordnung. // HSFK-Report 3/2014. Frankfurt am Main: Hessische Stiftung Friedens- und Konfliktforschung. 2014. URL: <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-404057>

<sup>139</sup> Academicians of the Russian Academy of Sciences criticized the "Fundamentals of State Cultural Policy" Institute of Philosophy RAS // COLTA 16.04.2014. URL: <https://www.colta.ru/news/2912-akademiki-ran-raskritikovali-osnovy-gosudarstvennoy-kulturnoy-politiki> (in Russian)

<sup>140</sup> Halbach U. Russland im Wertekampf gegen "den Westen": propagandistische und ideologische Aufrüstung in der Ukraine-Krise. // SWP-Aktuell 43/2014. Berlin: Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik -SWP- Deutsches Institut für Internationale Politik und Sicherheit. URL: <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-397029>

<sup>141</sup> Dembinski M., Schmidt H.-J., Spanger H.-J. Einhegung: die Ukraine, Russland und die europäische Sicherheitsordnung. // HSFK-Report 3/2014. Frankfurt am Main: Hessische Stiftung Friedens- und Konfliktforschung. 2014. URL: <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-404057>

<sup>142</sup> Address by the President of the Russian Federation 18.03.2014. URL: <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20603> (in Russian)

- Words of the Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, who cited Alexander Nevsky as an example, saying that he “accepted temporary submission to the generally tolerant rulers of the Golden Horde in order to defend the right of a Russian person to have their own faith, to control their own destiny, despite the attempts of the European West to completely subjugate the Russian lands, deprive them of their own identity”. His words have been taken by German-language writers as a “remarkable twist” and portrayal of Russia as a victim of centuries of Western encirclement, Western expansionism, and documenting "reawakened paranoia" and the dynamics inherent in confrontation.<sup>143</sup>

- Vladimir Putin's speech at the St. Petersburg Economic Forum in May 2014, during which he announced the promotion of competitive import substitution, the creation of a special fund to promote Russian industry, the modernization of armaments and the restructuring of foreign currency reserves in favor of the yuan. Also, an announcement was made that state-owned companies could stop servicing their foreign loans, and that foreign investment in Russia could be nationalized. In addition, it was announced that the Russian Federation would leave the ISS space station by 2020, turn off GPS transmitters in Russia by September 1 (if the United States does not allow the use of Glonass transmitters), introduce a national payment system (with its own credit cards), and pay in rubles for the export of Russian goods, as well as deoffshorization, in which the headquarters of companies and foreign assets must be transferred to Russia.<sup>144</sup>

In these statements, German experts saw an attempt by Russia to use a situation characterized by tensions in relations with the West to create a certain internal mood, “eliminate” the opposition from the political elite and turn the country into a new, self-sufficient, state capitalism.<sup>145</sup> Vladimir Putin, from the point of view of M. Dembinski and H.J. Spanger, was forced to fight for the “survival” of his “authoritarian regime” and needed a “foreign political adventure”, since the needs of the Russians could no longer be satisfied. Accordingly, to strengthen its legitimacy, the Russian leadership resorted to such methods as, for example, the mobilization of patriotic feelings. Under these conditions, according to the authors, for Germany it was not only that mutual understanding with Moscow was excluded, but also that the West as a whole should already have been preparing for a new long-term confrontation.

According to German authors, Russia “explicitly separated” from the Western world, focusing on the international distribution of power, through the democratization of the international system in the spirit of multipolarity. The West, on the other hand, has been and is emphasizing the national

<sup>143</sup> Dembinski M., Schmidt H.-J., Spanger H.-J. Einhegung: die Ukraine, Russland und die europäische Sicherheitsordnung. // HSFK-Report 3/2014. Frankfurt am Main: Hessische Stiftung Friedens- und Konfliktforschung. 2014. URL: <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssaoar-404057>

<sup>144</sup> St. Petersburg International Economic Forum. 23.05.2014. URL: <http://eng.kremlin.ru/news/7230>

<sup>145</sup> Dembinski M., Schmidt H.-J., Spanger H.-J. Einhegung: die Ukraine, Russland und die europäische Sicherheitsordnung. // HSFK-Report 3/2014. Frankfurt am Main: Hessische Stiftung Friedens- und Konfliktforschung. 2014. S. 11. URL: <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssaoar-404057> (дата обращения: 26.03.2020)

distribution of power, which should be organized through the democratization of political orders in the spirit of liberal globalism.<sup>146</sup>

The result has been an intersection: although Russia is a revisionist power in terms of foreign policy, and the West defends the status quo, in terms of domestic policy, everything is completely opposite. Russia defends the status quo, and the West discusses regime change, “however, it is itself increasingly under pressure from right-wing populism with its essentially fascist collaterals,” which blames not least Russia and its “hybrid information war.”<sup>147</sup>

Based on this, M. Dembinski and H.J. Spanger come to the conclusion that, even without bipolarity and the ideological movement of the East-West conflict, today one can observe a symmetrical conflict of the world order. Russian leaders in their public speeches draw a dividing line between Russia and Europe, creating two opposing camps, partnership relations are moving into a confrontational phase, “to the heaviest tension between the Russian Federation and the West.”<sup>148</sup>

Journalist Kerstin Holm also believes that the current situation can be called precisely the “new Cold War,” the reason for which was the conflict in Ukraine, support for separatists and the “annexion“of Crimea. The author calls the Ukrainian crisis the last step of escalation on the way to mutual alienation. The “great friendship” between Russia and the West was cooling step by step.<sup>149</sup> Reinhold Bocklet speaks of clear Russian support for anti-European left and right parties, as well as all those who want to separate Europe from America and destroy the Atlantic Alliance.<sup>150</sup>

Thus, one can see that a fairly large number of German researchers see in the situation that has developed by 2014 not just an alienation, but a confrontation between Russia and Germany, which, in their opinion, is increasingly emphasized by Russian leaders. In their speeches, experts see Russia's desire to draw a certain restrictive line and emphasize the special status or even a special mission of the Russian side and point out the incompatibility of the parties' ideas about certain political processes, whether it be the development of domestic or foreign policy. They refer to these trends as signs of a new Cold War.

However, it should be noted that not all German authors support the idea that today Russian-German relations are going through a new stage of the Cold War and even oppose this definition. Their position is expressed in arguments, primarily concerning the fact that today that ideologically charged

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<sup>146</sup> Dembinski M., Spanger H.-J. "Pluraler Frieden" - Leitgedanken zu einer neuen Russlandpolitik // HSFKReport, 2/2017. Frankfurt am Main: Hessische Stiftung Friedens- und Konfliktforschung. 2017. URL: <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-51093-2>

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

<sup>148</sup> Klug E. Die EU, Russland und der Ukraine-Konflikt. In Trunk A. Russland und Europa. Facetten einer Beziehung. Band 8. Peter Lang Edition. Frankfurt am Main. 2017.

<sup>149</sup> Holm K. Russland auf der Flucht: Was die Entfremdung von Europa für die Kultur bedeutet / Trunk A. Russland und Europa. Facetten einer Beziehung. Band 8. Peter Lang Edition. Frankfurt am Main. 2017.

<sup>150</sup> Bocklet R. Deutschland, Russland, die Ukraine und Europa // Politische Studien. 68. Jahrgang | März-April 2017. S 54. URL: [https://www.hss.de/download/publications/PS\\_472\\_EUROPA\\_BREXIT.pdf](https://www.hss.de/download/publications/PS_472_EUROPA_BREXIT.pdf)

systemic conflict does not exist. “Traditional values”, which the President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin in 2013, unlike the postmodernist “Gayrope” do not carry that comprehensive ideology and from the very beginning could not hide their purely instrumental function.<sup>151</sup>

In addition, relations between Russia and the West, even in their confrontational version, can hardly be imagined as an axis of rotation of the international system and its organizational principle.<sup>152</sup> There are no longer those two worlds that were not only objectively incompatible, but also reduced relations to a minimum, expressing an uncompromising claim to sole domination.

But here we can see an indication that the latter can still be found today, albeit in an asymmetric form. “The Western side, on behalf of liberal democratic universalism, claims a place in the civilizational mainstream, being in harmony with historical progress, while Russia takes a defensive position and seeks the recognition of an alternative development model or competing civilizations.”<sup>153</sup>

The point of view that today's type of relationship cannot be called a new Cold War is also supported by other authors, such as August Pradetto<sup>154</sup> or Heinz Gärtner, who even calls today's disagreements between Russia and the West a "Cold War caricature", emphasizing the inconsistency of such a designation.<sup>155</sup>

Joachim Krause believes that the East-West analogy is wrong and even confusing. Now the world has completely different political and structural conditions compared to the Cold War, since then the conflict arose immediately after World War II and concerned mainly the redistribution of the world and spheres of influence. It appeared on a political, ideological basis and in the fields of economics, social policy and internal order (democracy against the dictatorship of one party).<sup>156</sup>

The German political scientist August Pradetto agrees that the current situation cannot be called a second Cold War due to the changed general situation in the world, as this would be a very limited comparison. The alignment of forces has changed, the bloc system that served as the basis of the confrontation no longer exists, and the USSR no longer exists. There is Russia, which has a much smaller territory and almost half the population, which has established completely different relations with neighboring countries and these relations are fundamentally different from interactions within the

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<sup>151</sup> Spanger H. J. Unheilige Allianz: Putin und die Werte // Osteuropa. 64. 2014, S. 43–62.

<sup>152</sup> Dembinski M., Spanger H.-J. "Pluraler Frieden" - Leitgedanken zu einer neuen Russlandpolitik // HSFKReport 2/2017. Frankfurt am Main: Hessische Stiftung Friedens- und Konfliktforschung. 2017. URL: <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-51093-2>

<sup>153</sup> Ibid., S.4

<sup>154</sup> Pradetto A. Die Ukraine, Russland und der Westen. Die Inszenierung einer Krise als geopolitischer Konflikt / Staack M. Der Ukraine-Konflikt, Russland und die europäische Sicherheitsordnung. Verlag Barbara Budrich. Opladen. Berlin. Toronto. 2017. S.21.

<sup>155</sup> Gärtner H. Ein neuer Kalter Krieg? Policy Paper / Österreichisches Institut für Internationale Politik, 2). Wien: Österreichisches Institut für Internationale Politik (oiip). URL: <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-58652-1>

<sup>156</sup> Krause J. Europa und Russland – Neuauflage des Kalten Krieges? / Trunk A. Russland und Europa. Facetten einer Beziehung. Band 8. Peter Lang Edition. Frankfurt am Main. 2017.

Soviet Union. At the same time, the EU and NATO have expanded and include more countries than in 1991. In addition, the author believes that Russia today is not a powerful force, such as the United States.<sup>157</sup>

Jörg Baberowski, a historian of Eastern Europe, in his interview also points to the absence of blocs opposing each other and a unified attitude towards Russia in the West. The era of ideologies has also passed in Russia. “There is no Putinism in the world, there is not even a single position among the ruling elites,” and Vladimir Putin is perceived, in his opinion, as a pragmatic politician.<sup>158</sup>

Thus, it can be seen that all the above arguments indicate that relations between Russia and European partners, and, in particular, with Germany, were gradually changing in a negative direction, the countries were moving away from each other due to different positions on many issues. For two decades, there has been a transition from a policy of cooperation, development of ties and hopes for Russia's transition to the Western model of development to mutual misunderstanding, criticism and cooling. The deterioration of relations is perceived by various researchers either as “inattentional blindness” to the interests of the partner, which arose due to ignoring the arguments and unrest of the other side, or as a full-fledged renewed confrontation - a new cold war with its inherent characteristics. From the point of view of German-speaking researchers, in the Russian perception, the liberal ideology of the West is only a veil to protect its superiority, while in the perception of the West, Russia's desire for a multipolar order serves only to protect its “authoritarian order.” It was the vision of the origins and development of the crisis situation, approaches to international processes, differences in ideas about values, mutual criticism of foreign policy that determined the further actions of the parties in the context of the 2014 crisis.

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<sup>157</sup> Pradetto A. *Russland und Europa vor dem Hintergrund der Ukraine-Krise.* / Trunk A. *Russland und Europa. Facetten einer Beziehung.* Band 8. Peter Lang Edition. Frankfurt am Main. 2017.

<sup>158</sup> Jörg Baberowski vs. Heinrich August Winkler. *Erbschaft der Sowjetunion. Der Ukraine-Konflikt in historischer Perspektive.* Eine Diskussion. 2014.

## Chapter 2. The Ukrainian crisis in the mirror of German public opinion

### §1. German view on the events in Ukraine and the situation in the Crimea in 2013-2014.

Journalist Gemma Pörzgen notes that until 2013, Ukraine was a so-called “blank spot” in German international reporting, which means that Ukrainian topics were not of interest to the German media either. Therefore, the stage when Viktor Yanukovich became president in February 2010, the return of Ukraine to an “authoritarian regime,” remained practically unnoticed in Germany, as well as the scale of oligarchic rule, as well as growing corruption.<sup>159</sup>

Furthermore, the escalation between Moscow and Kiev has also not been a well-publicized issue for a long time, because, from the German perspective, it concerned relations between third countries and did not directly affect German interests, which is why the FRG has taken a non-interventionist stance. In addition, the topic of the Russian project of the Eurasian Economic Union, the “Association Agreement” also did not find a clear response in the German media and did not receive wide coverage. This fact contributes to the development of “inattentive blindness” and the crisis between Russia and Germany, since the lack of awareness of the German public represented a wide opportunity for the media to create manipulations. It was the media, covering the development of a tense situation, that could either contribute to a more complete understanding of the situation on the part of the German-speaking audience, or construct a certain position in its mind.

Events in Ukraine 2013-2014 caused a sharp and wide resonance and were described both by many German researchers and by all the main media in Germany and Europe as a whole. Studying the German-language materials, one can notice the direction of the discourse: whether the incident is considered only from the so-called “pro-Western” point of view, or whether the authors attempt to analyze events from various angles in order to present the material more objectively. Sabina Fischer, senior fellow at the German Institute for International and Security Affairs, notes that diametrically opposed interpretations of the crisis in Ukraine and the role of international actors developed in Russia and the West, which naturally complicated the process of finding a negotiated solution to the crisis.<sup>160</sup>

Ukraine, according to a dossier posted on the Foundation for Science and Politics website, has become the deepest rift between Russia and the West since the end of the East-West conflict. The crisis in Ukraine is “an expression and apogee of the growing geopolitical competition between the EU and Russia for influence in the post-Soviet space,” - the dossier says.<sup>161</sup>

<sup>159</sup> Pörzgen G. Moskau fest im Blick: Die deutschen Medien und die Ukraine // Osteuropa. MAI-JUNI 2014. Vol. 64. No. 5/6. Zerreißprobe: Ukraine: Konflikt, Krise, Krieg. 2014. .S. 293-310 Berliner Wissenschafts-Verlag. URL: [https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/44937277.pdf?ab\\_segments=0%2Fbasic\\_search\\_gsv2%2Ftest&refreqid=fastly-default%3A3fe1d8e1afdf074a2320ca74d7d54638](https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/44937277.pdf?ab_segments=0%2Fbasic_search_gsv2%2Ftest&refreqid=fastly-default%3A3fe1d8e1afdf074a2320ca74d7d54638)

<sup>160</sup> Fischer S. Eskalation in der Ukraine-Krise // Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik. Berlin. 2014. S. 1-4.

<sup>161</sup> Krise um die Ukraine. 25.04.2019. URL: <https://www.swp-berlin.org/swp-themendossiers/krise-um-die-ukraine/>

The Ukrainian crisis, according to Ute Finckh-Krämer, a member of the German Bundestag, is a crisis that can theoretically be considered on three levels:

- the level of the nation-state, that is, political disputes within Ukraine;
- bilateral relations between Ukraine and Russia;
- the international level, at which states act as separate actors or as participants in international organizations. Here it is worth paying attention to the fact that, on the one hand, these levels can be separated, but at the international level they are nevertheless intertwined.<sup>162</sup>

In almost all sources on this topic, one can see information that the 2013 demonstrations arose due to the refusal of Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich to sign the Association Agreement with the EU in November,<sup>163</sup> as a result of which “hundreds of thousands of people”<sup>164</sup> decided to demonstrate support for the pro-European course for the country. However, some authors emphasize that, despite the negotiations and agreements, the EU itself still lacked a clear vision of the prospects for the accession of Ukraine,<sup>165</sup> which undoubtedly greatly complicated the already contradictory situation.

Professor Daniel Göler believes that the current crisis situation arose due to “pressure from Russia”. In his opinion, a possible free trade agreement with the EU for Ukraine was associated with great economic opportunities in the long term and was preferable to the Eurasian Union under the leadership of Russia, since the latter was considered, among other things, as a project to strengthen the Russian sphere of influence. That is why, according to the author, in order to achieve the goal of rapprochement with the European Union, in early September 2013, Ukraine took the first steps towards the reforms required by the EU.

However, the author also points out that since the end of July of the same year, this development was hindered by “massive pressure from Russia”: economic measures were taken that led

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<sup>162</sup> Finckh-Krämer U. Die Ukraine-Krise: Entscheidung über die Zukunft einer europäischen Friedensordnung. Berliner Wissenschafts-Verlag. Die Friedens-Warte. 2014. Vol. 89. No. 1/2. Die Ukraine-Krise. S. 17-22 URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24868485>

<sup>163</sup> E.g.: Daniljuk M. Demokratische Opposition vs. autokratischer Herrscher. Der Mythos in der Auslandsberichterstattung am Beispiel des Ukraine-Konflikts in deutschen Medien. / Daniljuk M. Facetten eines Konflikts. Hintergründe und Deutungen des kriegs in der Ukraine. r Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung. Dezember 2014. S. 6. URL: [https://www.rosalux.de/fileadmin/rls\\_uploads/pdfs/Materialien/Materialien6\\_Ukraine.pdf](https://www.rosalux.de/fileadmin/rls_uploads/pdfs/Materialien/Materialien6_Ukraine.pdf); Vor fünf Jahren: Russlands Annexion der Krim. 18.03.2019. URL: <https://www.bpb.de/politik/hintergrund-aktuell/287565/krim-annexion> ; Krone-Schmalz G. Russland verstehen – der Kampf um die Ukraine und die Ignoranz des Westens. 9. Auflage. Verlag C.H.Beck. München 2015; Böttger K. Auf dem sicherheitspolitischen Auge blind: Die EUAußenpolitik angesichts der Ukraine-Krise: Zustand und Entwicklungsoptionen. EU-Außenpolitik in der Ukraine-Krise // Integration – 2/2014 S.99

<sup>164</sup> Vor fünf Jahren: Russlands Annexion der Krim. 18.03.2019. URL: <https://www.bpb.de/politik/hintergrund-aktuell/287565/krim-annexion>

<sup>165</sup> E.g.: Tiede W., Spiesberger J., Bogedain C. Das Assoziierungsabkommen zwischen der EU und der Ukraine – Weichensteller auf dem Weg in die EU? // KritV, CritQ, RCrit. Kritische Vierteljahresschrift für Gesetzgebung und Rechtswissenschaft / Critical Quarterly for Legislation and Law / Revue critique trimestrielle de jurisprudence et de legislation. Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft mbH. 2014. Vol. 97. No. 2. S. 151-159. URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43265100> ; Müller-Brandeck-Bocquet G., Gieg P. Die Europäische Union und die Ukraine Von enttäuschten Erwartungen zu konstruktivem Krisenmanagement? Berliner Wissenschafts-Verlag. Die Friedens-Warte. 2014. Vol. 89. No. 1/2. Die Ukraine-Krise. S. 87. URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/i24868189>



to the fact that the Ukrainian leadership refused to sign the Association Agreement with the European Union. Russia, pointing out that Kyiv is dependent on a large volume of Russian-Ukrainian trade, put forward the conditions that, if this document is signed, the existing trade agreements between the countries will cease to exist, and also that Ukraine will not be able to be a member of the Eurasian Customs Union, which became a big obstacle to the decision<sup>166</sup>. That is, according to Göler, the crisis developed through the fault of the Russian side, which influenced Ukraine's decision to integrate with the EU,<sup>167</sup> which shows a clearly one-sided approach to the analysis of the development of the situation.

Professor of Eastern European history Gerhard Simon, agreeing with the opinion of Daniel Göler, in his study says that there was simply no alternative to the European vision of the natural development of the situation. Rapprochement with Russia, in his opinion, in any case would mean for Ukraine a path to the past, since Russia does not want to integrate into the international environment and become part of modern European society, but to integrate others, i.e. sees itself as the center of the future Eurasian integration space.<sup>168</sup> Accordingly, the choice of Ukraine in favor of Russia would become an obstacle to entry into the modern international community.

Dr. Michael Rühle expresses the same opinion when he says that within a few weeks Russia became “a revisionist power, forcibly changing the borders of a neighboring country.” From his point of view, Russian actions in Ukraine were aimed at depriving her of the opportunity to determine her political and economic orientation, which, according to Rühle, was Western.<sup>169</sup>

The opposite opinion is expressed by an expert on Russian foreign policy Christian Wipperfurth, who in his article focuses on the fact that in November 2013 the Ukrainian leadership invited Kyiv, Brussels and Moscow to jointly discuss the prospects for Ukraine. Russia and the German federal government expressed their agreement, but some Western countries disagreed, citing that in such a case Moscow would be able to obtain a “veto” in European affairs. Russia, the author emphasizes, remained ready for negotiations for more than two months, which was “clear evidence that the Kremlin was ready, or at least seriously considered the possibility of a friendly solution between the three parties.” But it was the West that proved itself unprepared for an open conversation

<sup>166</sup> Müller-Brandeck-Bocquet G., Gieg P. Die Europäische Union und die Ukraine Von enttäuschten Erwartungen zu konstruktivem Krisenmanagement? 2014. Berliner Wissenschafts-Verlag. Die Friedens-Warte. Die Ukraine-Krise. Vol. 89, No. 1/2, , S. 81-104. URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/i24868189>

<sup>167</sup> Göler D. Wenn normative Macht zur geostrategischen Herausforderung wird: Überlegungen zur aktuellen Ukraine-Krise // Zeitschrift für Politik. Neue Folge. Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft mbH. Vol. 62. No. 3 (September 2015). S. 289-305. URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43775875>

<sup>168</sup> Simon G. Die Ukraine. Ein gespaltenes Land? // Sicherheit und Frieden (S+F) / Security and Peace. 2014. Vol. 32. No. 3. Themenschwerpunkt: Geopolitik: Europa und die USA / Geopolitics: Europe and the U.S. Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft mbH. (2014). S. 215-216 URL: [https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/24234235.pdf?ab\\_segments=0%2Fbasic\\_search\\_gsv2%2Ftest&refreqid=fastly-default%3Af4ef911e668ae170eca9921f4327e57c](https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/24234235.pdf?ab_segments=0%2Fbasic_search_gsv2%2Ftest&refreqid=fastly-default%3Af4ef911e668ae170eca9921f4327e57c)

<sup>169</sup> Rühle M. Die NATO und die Ukraine-Krise // Politische Studien 461. 66. Jahrgang | Mai-Juni 2015. S. 25. URL: [https://www.hss.de/download/publications/PS\\_461\\_UKRAINE.pdf](https://www.hss.de/download/publications/PS_461_UKRAINE.pdf)

and decision-making.<sup>170</sup> That is, according to Wipperfürth, the blame for the development of the crisis cannot lie on one side - Russia, since European actors could not reach a compromise on the current situation and find a solution that would suit all parties.

Gabriele Krone-Schmalz expresses doubts about Ukraine's unanimous decision to choose the western path. Speaking about the protests in Ukraine and Russia's actions, she draws attention to the data of a sociological survey conducted in April 2013 by the Razumkov Center in Kyiv. The author says that 42% of respondents voted for an agreement with the European Union, 33% were in favor of a customs union with Russia, 12% did not agree with any option, and 13% found it difficult to choose an answer. Encouraged support, according to Krone-Schmalz, usually looks different.<sup>171</sup> These data show that the statements of the authors, who believe that only Russian pressure forced Ukraine to turn off the path of integration with the European Union, are rather wrong and aimed at convincing the audience of Russia's guilt.

Protests on Maidan in Kyiv continued for several months, with violent clashes of a “rapidly growing and radicalizing crisis”<sup>172</sup> coming to a head in February 2014. On February 22, 2014, a coup d'état legitimized by Western leaders took place in Ukraine, as a result of which the legitimately elected President of Ukraine Viktor Yanukovich was overthrown and forced to flee Kyiv under the pressure of protests on the Maidan, and a transitional government came to power.

The German media did not fully present these events to the Western audience and talked mainly about the “change of power”.<sup>173</sup> However, it should be noted that Friedrich Dieckmann, one of the authors of the largest political and scientific journal in the German-speaking region “Blätter”, still emphasizes that Yanukovich was the officially elected president of the country and was overthrown as a result of the shelling of a “group of assassins” who was never disclosed as a result of obstacles from Ukraine, which could not go unnoticed by Russia.<sup>174</sup>

<sup>170</sup> Wipperfürth Ch. Russland, die Ukraine und der Westen: Alle gehen leer aus. Weitere Verschärfung oder rechtzeitige Umkehr. // DGAPkompakt. N° 5. März 2014. S.4-5. URL: [https://dgap.org/system/files/article\\_pdfs/2014-05\\_dgapkomp\\_wipperf\\_ukraine\\_de\\_www-3.pdf](https://dgap.org/system/files/article_pdfs/2014-05_dgapkomp_wipperf_ukraine_de_www-3.pdf)

<sup>171</sup> Gabriele Krone-Schmalz. Russland verstehen. 9. Auflage. Verlag C.H.Beck, München 2015. S. 13

<sup>172</sup> Müller-Brandeck-Bocquet G, Gieg P. Die Europäische Union und die Ukraine Von enttäuschten Erwartungen zu konstruktivem Krisenmanagement? Berliner Wissenschafts-Verlag. Die Friedens-Warte. 2014. Vol. 89. No. 1/2. Die Ukraine-Krise (2014). S. 81-104. URL: [https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/24868489.pdf?ab\\_segments=0%2Fbasic\\_search\\_gsv2%2Ftest&refreqid=fastly-default%3Af4ef911e668ae170eca9921f4327e57c](https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/24868489.pdf?ab_segments=0%2Fbasic_search_gsv2%2Ftest&refreqid=fastly-default%3Af4ef911e668ae170eca9921f4327e57c)

<sup>173</sup> E.g.: Machtwechsel: Russland akzeptiert neue ukrainische Führung nicht // Die Zeit. 24.02.2014. URL: [https://www.zeit.de/politik/ausland/2014-02/uljukajew-russland-ukraine-handel?utm\\_referrer=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.ru%2F](https://www.zeit.de/politik/ausland/2014-02/uljukajew-russland-ukraine-handel?utm_referrer=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.ru%2F); Schilling T. Ukraine: Russland kritisiert Machtwechsel // DW. 24.02.2014. URL: <https://www.dw.com/de/ukraine-russland-kritisiert-machtwechsel/av-17453201> \* Listed by the Russian Ministry of Justice in the Register of Foreign Media Agents; Schuller K. Sturz von Janukowitsch: Kein Putsch aber auch nicht verfassungsgemäß // FAZ. 24.02.2015. URL:<https://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/ausland/janukowitschs-sturz-war-kein-putsch-13447563.html>

<sup>174</sup> Dieckmann F. Ratloses Erschrecken. Zum Stand der deutsch-russischen Beziehungen // Blätter für deutsche und internationale Politik. 9/2018. S. 65-73. URL: <https://www.blaetter.de/ausgabe/2018/september/ratloses-erschrecken>

Also, German sources say supporters and opponents of the change of power took to the streets in Crimea as well, but on 27 February 2014 strategic locations were allegedly “occupied by armed forces”. The soldiers without ranks and national emblems on their uniforms, whom the “Ukrainian public ridicules as “little green men”,<sup>175</sup> were Russian special forces who “blocked the objects of the Ukrainian police and army and, thereby, hindered their activities.”<sup>176</sup> They took control of the regional parliament and government building in Simferopol and raised the Russian flag on official buildings. The “occupied by the armed forces” regional parliament elected politician Sergei Aksyonov as the new head of government “without the consent of the President of Ukraine.”<sup>177</sup>

These actions, according to a study by Anna Peters and Christian Marxsen of the Max Planck Institute, ensured that a referendum was held in which the inhabitants of Crimea overwhelmingly voted in favor of joining Russia in a very short time.<sup>178</sup> Shortly thereafter, Crimea was proclaimed an independent Autonomous Republic, which was then annexed to the Russian Federation. At the same time, according to the author of the article “The paler the West, the more beautiful Putin,” Michael Thumann, Russian troops supposedly “took the Crimea”, “when not a single Russian was threatened with life and health, and Moscow acted “not for humanitarian reasons, but for strategic calculations.”<sup>179</sup> This shows that the author focused exclusively on Russia's actions on the territory of Crimea, since the facts of the threat to the life of the population of Crimea are not only not considered in the study, but are denied as such.

German journalist Kerstin Holm points out that for “underdeveloped, sparsely populated” Russia, Crimea is a strategic base for the fleet, as this is predetermined geographically: there will always be a navy in Sevastopol - either Russian or NATO. Whoever is at the head of Russia will always need this strong point, even if we do not take into account the historical significance of the peninsula, the desire of the inhabitants of Crimea to belong to Russia and other arguments. She also notes that there are NATO troops in Ukraine, which, on the one hand, “makes it possible to stabilize the situation in the country,” but on the other hand, this also means that NATO forces are close to Moscow. According to Holm, Russia saw the danger of losing Crimea even before the events on the

<sup>175</sup> Wipperfürth Ch. Russland, die Ukraine und der Westen: Alle gehen leer aus. Weitere Verschärfung oder rechtzeitige Umkehr // DGAPkompakt. N° 5. März 2014. S. 4-5 URL: [https://dgap.org/system/files/article\\_pdfs/2014-05\\_dgapkomp\\_wipperf\\_ukraine\\_de\\_www-3.pdf](https://dgap.org/system/files/article_pdfs/2014-05_dgapkomp_wipperf_ukraine_de_www-3.pdf)

<sup>176</sup> Brunner M. Vom Umgang mit dem Bären und seiner Beute. Zum territorialen Status der Krim nach Völkerrecht // Zeitschrift für Rechtspolitik. 47. Jahrg. H. 8 (27. November 2014). Verlag C.H.Beck. S. 250-251. URL: [https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/24771161.pdf?ab\\_segments=0%252Fbasic\\_search\\_gsv2%252Ftest&refreqid=excelsior%3Af50d3aab27f0f87389a95ce2487622c5](https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/24771161.pdf?ab_segments=0%252Fbasic_search_gsv2%252Ftest&refreqid=excelsior%3Af50d3aab27f0f87389a95ce2487622c5)

<sup>177</sup> Wipperfürth Ch. Russland, die Ukraine und der Westen: Alle gehen leer aus. Weitere Verschärfung oder rechtzeitige Umkehr // DGAPkompakt. N° 5. März 2014. S. 4-5. URL: [https://dgap.org/system/files/article\\_pdfs/2014-05\\_dgapkomp\\_wipperf\\_ukraine\\_de\\_www-3.pdf](https://dgap.org/system/files/article_pdfs/2014-05_dgapkomp_wipperf_ukraine_de_www-3.pdf)

<sup>178</sup> Peters A., Marxsen Ch. Die Krimkrise und die Reterritorialisierung internationaler Konflikte // Forschungsbericht 2014 - Max-Planck-Institut für ausländisches öffentliches Recht und Völkerrecht. URL: [https://www.mpg.de/8906607/mpil\\_jb\\_20141](https://www.mpg.de/8906607/mpil_jb_20141)

<sup>179</sup> Thumann M. Je blasser der Westen, desto strahlender Putin. 19.03.2014. URL: <https://www.zeit.de/politik/ausland/2014-03/russland-krim-annexion-gysi-Schröder>

Maidan, so it simply had no other choice but to “force the organization of the annexation of the peninsula.”<sup>180</sup>

Describing the procedure for holding the referendum, clearly biased political scientist Andreas Umland cites the results of various polls and draws attention to the fact that a particularly critical commentary on the “fictitious”, according to the author, referendum in Crimea came from three representatives of the Council for the Development of Civil Society and Human Rights under the President Russian Federation, which reported that participation in the referendum in Crimea was not 83.1%, as the “Kremlin-controlled authorities” officially stated, but from 30 to 50%. Of the residents of Crimea, according to their assessment, not 96.77% voted “for” joining the Russian Federation, but from 50 to 60%. This assessment of the vote in Crimea on March 16, 2014 is also consistent, according to the author, with another analysis of voter turnout,<sup>181</sup> which suggests that “the results of the vote were rigged”.<sup>182</sup>

In addition to Umland, other authors do not recognize the results of the referendum and put forward the following theses:

- “the most important violation of international law” was not the “Declaration of Independence” of March 11<sup>183</sup> and 17<sup>184</sup>, 2014 or the “official annexation of Crimea by Russia”, but the “Russian military intervention in Crimea” that preceded them, which, in their opinion, was subsequently allegedly confirmed Vladimir Putin. They explain it by the fact that otherwise the overwhelming majority of the Crimean population “in no case would support” the reunification of Russia with the peninsula.<sup>185</sup>

This statement cannot be considered an expert assessment, since it does not take into account the fact that the majority of the population in Crimea is Russian, and does not consider the situation

<sup>180</sup> Holm K. *Russland auf der Flucht: Was die Entfremdung von Europa für die Kultur bedeutet* / Trunk A. *Russland und Europa. Facetten einer Beziehung*. Band 8. Peter Lang Edition. Frankfurt am Main. 2017.

<sup>181</sup> Kireev A. *On the implausible turnout dynamics in regions and cities of Crimea* // Livejournal 03.16.2014. URL: <https://kireev.livejournal.com/1005294.html>

<sup>182</sup> Umland A. *Inwieweit war Russlands Anschluss der Krim historisch gerechtfertigt? Zur Problematik „realistischer“ Annexionsnarrative*. De Gruyter. SIRIUS 2018; 2(2): S. 162–169.

<sup>183</sup> *Declaration of Independence of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and Sevastopol* 11.03.2014. URL: <http://crimea.gov.ru/textdoc/ru/6/project/1203pr.pdf> (in Russian)

<sup>184</sup> *Resolution of the Supreme Council of the Republic of Crimea* 17.03.2014. URL: <http://crimea.gov.ru/act/11748> (in Russian)

<sup>185</sup> Behlert B. *Die Unabhängigkeit der Krim. Annexion oder Sezession?* // Bochum: Institut für Friedenssicherung und Humanitäres Völkerrecht an der Ruhr Universität Bochum, IFHV Working Paper, 5 (2), September 2015. URL: [http://www.ifhv.de/documents/workingpapers/wp5\\_2.pdf](http://www.ifhv.de/documents/workingpapers/wp5_2.pdf) (Дата обращения: 29.06.2020); Heintze H-J. *Völkerrecht und Sezession – Ist die Annexion der Krim eine zulässige Wiedergutmachung sowjetischen Unrechts?* // *Humanitäres Völkerrecht. Informationsschriften*. 27 (3), 2014. C.129–138; Luchterhandt O. *Die Krim-Krise von 2014. Staats- und völkerrechtliche Aspekte*. // *Osteuropa* 64 (5–6). 2014. S. 61–86; Luchterhandt O. *Der Anschluss der Krim an Russland aus völkerrechtlicher Sicht* // *Archiv des Völkerrechts*. 52 (2). 2014. S.137–174.; Singer. T. *Intervention auf Einladung / Bakalova E., Endrich T., Shlyakhtovska Kh., Spodarets G., Hrsg.: Ukraine. Krisen. Perspektiven. Interdisziplinäre Betrachtungen eines Landes im Umbruch*. Berlin; Wissenschaftlicher Verlag. 2015. S. 235–260.

that has developed on the peninsula in relation to the Russian-speaking population of Ukraine after the coup.

- Even if a “democratic referendum” were held, less than a third of the entire population of Crimea would vote for unification with Russia. This thesis is supported by the data of one of the polls conducted in mid-February 2014, according to which 41% of respondents in the ARC approved the merger of Russia and part of Ukraine into a single state.<sup>186</sup>

The author cited the result of a survey conducted before the coup d'état in Ukraine. However, it is worth noting that this figure already indicates that even then the number of those who advocated the reunification of Crimea and Russia exceeded a third of the population of the peninsula. Given the increase in violence against the Russian-speaking population during the protests in Ukraine, one cannot agree that the approval rate should have decreased.

- the results of the polls conducted after the “military and political takeover of the Black Sea Peninsula by Russia”, demonstrating overwhelming support (80% or more) for “annexation” by the residents of Crimea,<sup>187</sup> are of only limited significance, as they reflect the influence of the “wild campaign against Ukraine in the media controlled by the Kremlin.” Criticism of “annexation”, “repentance” on the peninsula is practically impossible, the protection of political and civil rights is guaranteed only to a limited extent. Politically dissenting, especially members of the Crimean Tatar minority, “were subjected to pressure from Moscow”, so the results of sociological studies of German institutions in Crimea since 2014 are viewed with great caution.<sup>188</sup>

This thesis again suggests that the Crimean crisis has increased mistrust between countries. For the German media, only those polls can be significant, the results of which strengthen the image of Russia as an “aggressor” and confirm his initial attitudes towards the actions of the Russian side, since he is confident in the “aggressive suppression” of any opinion that does not coincide with the official political course in Russia and, consequently, inconsistency with the reality of sociological surveys of the Crimean population after 2014. Such one-sided coverage of events can help strengthen the image of the enemy in the public mind, but not promote dialogue in a crisis situation.

- The preparation, referendum process, media support and questioning, according to Umland, could “serve as a textbook example for manipulated elections.” As an argument, the author refers to the change in the date of the referendum, allegedly in order to prevent the inhabitants of Crimea from publicly and freely discussing alternatives.

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<sup>186</sup> KIIS How relations between Ukraine and Russia should look like? Public opinion polls' results. Kiev International Institute of Sociology. 04.03.2014. URL: <http://www.kiis.com.ua/?lang=eng&cat=reports&id=236&page=1>

<sup>187</sup> Große Mehrheit stimmt für Beitritt zu Russland. 16.03.2014. URL: <https://www.spiegel.de/politik/ausland/krim-referendum-grosse-mehrheit-fuer-beitritt-zu-russland-a-958966.html>

<sup>188</sup> Halbach U. Repression nach der Annexion. Russlands Umgang mit den Krimtataren // Osteuropa. 2014. 64 (9–10), S.179–190.

This vision of the situation again ignores the rapid development of protests in Ukraine into a confrontation that led to riots and clashes, as a result of which more than a hundred people died. In addition, events in Crimea are not considered, for example, an indefinite protest rally near the building of the Supreme Council on February 25, 2014, at which the inhabitants of the peninsula demanded that the deputies not recognize the new leadership of the country that came to power in Kyiv.<sup>189</sup> On the Russian side, the unpredictable outcome of the unrest and the prevention of tragic events has become one of the main reasons for the accelerated holding of the referendum in Crimea.

- Failure to comply with the conditions of the OSCE<sup>190</sup> regarding the extension of the discussion of legal changes at the “national, regional and local levels”, as well as the invitation of representatives of “various foreign radical groups” as international observers to the elections.

This thesis deliberately overlooks the fact that the Supreme Council of the Republic of Crimea officially invited observers from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe to the referendum on March 16, however, OSCE representatives stated that they did not receive an invitation, and if they receive it, they will reject it, since Crimea is not a member state of the OSCE. The referendum procedure was monitored by an international group consisting of representatives of such states as Poland, Greece, Austria, Latvia and others. Observers agreed that the referendum was in line with democratic norms.<sup>191</sup>

- Psychological pressure, which was carried out by Russian troops without badges (“little green men” or “polite people”), as well as other pro-Russian armed forces.

This statement is not supported by factual data, studies of the so-called “psychological pressure” have not been conducted, therefore, this argument can only be considered as an assumption of a particular author.

- The inability to maintain the current status quo, that is, the republican constitution of the ARC, which has been in force since 1998, and the uncertainty of the alternative, since in 1992 there were two different texts of the ARC constitution. This, according to the authors, strengthened support for the first and much clearer option - joining Russia.<sup>192</sup>

If we consider the statements of the head of Crimea, Sergei Aksyonov, we can see that for the inhabitants of Crimea, the question was whether they see their future as part of Ukraine or Russia,

<sup>189</sup> Referendum in Crimea on the status of autonomy (2014) // RIA. 16.03.2015. URL: <https://ria.ru/20150316/1052210041.html> (in Russian)

<sup>190</sup> OSCE Chair says Crimean referendum in its current form is illegal and calls for alternative ways to address the Crimean issue // OSCE. 11.03.2014. URL: <https://www.osce.org/cio/116313>

<sup>191</sup> International observers: the referendum in Crimea met democratic procedures // TASS. 16.03.2014. URL: <https://tass.ru/mezhdunarodnaya-panorama/1051375> (in Russian)

<sup>192</sup> E.g.: Umland A. Inwieweit war Russlands Anschluss der Krim historisch gerechtfertigt? Zur Problematik „realistischer“ Annexionsnarrative. De Gruyter. SIRIUS 2018. 2(2). S. 162 – 169. URL: <https://www.degruyter.com/document/doi/10.1515/sirius-2018-2006/html?lang=de> (Дата обращения: 05.11.2021); Luchterhandt O. Die Krim-Krise von 2014: Staats- und völkerrechtliche Aspekte // Osteuropa Vol. 64, No. 5/6, Zerreißprobe: Ukraine: Konflikt, Krise, Krieg (MAI-JUNI 2014). 2014. S. 75. URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44937261>

while the option of the existence of Crimea as an independent state was not considered for security reasons.<sup>193</sup> The armed seizure of power in Ukraine and the non-recognition of the new leadership by the inhabitants of the peninsula were the events that played a decisive role in the decision-making at the referendum.

Based on the foregoing, it can be seen that when describing the events in Ukraine that led to the Crimean crisis, the authors proceed from different attitudes. Based on their position, some researchers are trying to conduct a comprehensive analysis of actions, considering the reasons for the actions of Russia, Ukraine and the European Union and, in particular, Germany, to draw the audience's attention to the mistakes of Western actors or the unpreparedness of the European Union itself to resolve the situation in practice. Others either do not fully consider the events, focusing on certain points, denying the existence and influence of other factors, or openly stigmatize Russia as the instigator of the crisis, perceiving Russia's arguments and actions as openly aggressive and turning a blind eye to the possibility of destructive actions from the West in the developing crisis.

## **§2. The attitude of Germany to the accession of Crimea to Russia**

As mentioned above, before the events of 2013-2014, relations between Russia and Germany could generally be characterized as one of continued partnership and cooperation. The countries developed joint projects and intensified interaction in various fields, despite their different positions on certain issues. Of course, just as one cannot speak of a complete rapprochement between Russia and Europe, as mentioned earlier, neither can one say that the beginning of the 21st century has already brought the countries to opposite sides. However, against the backdrop of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, relations have changed definitively in all dimensions and entered a new phase characterized by a sharp decline in interaction.

In German-language sources, one can see the opinion that on March 18th, 2014, a “new stage in relations between Berlin and Moscow”<sup>194</sup> began, or “the worst crisis in Europe since the 1984 missile crisis.”<sup>195</sup> When describing Russia's actions of Crimea's accession in German scientific and journalistic literature, the prevailing opinion is that this was an “annexation,”<sup>196</sup> which symbolized the

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<sup>193</sup> Independence Day: how Crimea was a sovereign state // Forpost. 03.17.2019. URL: <https://sevastopol.su/news/denezavisimosti-kak-krym-byi-suverennym-gosudarstvom> (in Russian)

<sup>194</sup> Rinke A. Vermitteln, verhandeln, verzweifeln. Wie der Ukraine-Konflikt zur westlich-russischen Dauerkrise wurde. URL: <https://internationalepolitik.de/de/vermitteln-verhandeln-verzweifeln>

<sup>195</sup> Richter W. Die Ukraine-Krise: die Dimension der paneuropäischen Sicherheitskooperation // SWP-Aktuell 23/2014. Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik -SWP- Deutsches Institut für Internationale Politik und Sicherheit. S. 233. URL: <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-389273>

<sup>196</sup> E.g.: Meister S., & Puglierin, J. Perception und Instrumentalisierung: Russlands nicht-militärische Einflussnahme in Europa // DGAP kompakt 10. Berlin: Forschungsinstitut der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Auswärtige Politik e.V.. 2015 URL: <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-53926-6>; Altes Denken statt Neues Russland. Innenpolitische Bestimmungsfaktoren der Außenpolitik. URL: <https://www.pw-portal.de/putins-russland/40508-altes-denken-statt-neues-russland#FNPutinsAutokratie>; Reitschuster B. Putins verdeckter Krieg: Wie Moskau den Westen destabilisiert. Econ.

complete collapse of Europe's security structures<sup>197</sup>. The German professor Egbert Jahn calls it “epoch-making,”<sup>198</sup> and the professor of comparative political science Gwendolyn Sasse calls it an “extreme event,”<sup>199</sup> saying that from that moment Crimea became *terra incognita* for Western observers and researchers.<sup>200</sup> On March 27th, 2014, the UN General Assembly condemned the accession of Crimea to Russia as a “violation of the territorial integrity of Ukraine.”<sup>201</sup>

After the accession of Crimea to Russia, the Max Planck Institute published an article stating that the actions of Russia and the international reaction to them can affect international law: from the prohibition of violence to armed conflicts and the law on sanctions. According to the authors, Russia interpreted international law „very broadly”, referring to the fact that the intervention was carried out in defense of citizens, in accordance with the right of peoples to self-determination. Accordingly, the possibility of different interpretations of the concepts raised the question of the independence of the international legal system from the political and the importance of international law as a regulatory factor in international relations in general.<sup>202</sup>

Several works interpret Russia's actions as a new type of “non-linear” or “hybrid” armed conflict, in which “both the military and the civilian population are deliberately involved.” This type raises difficult questions that are important in the legal sphere of state responsibility. In addition, the authors emphasize that “control of the media, manipulation of the ‘blogosphere’, coupled with massive

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Berlin. 2017.; Meister S. Gefährlicher Scheinriese. 01.05.2017. URL: <https://internationalepolitik.de/de/gefaehrlicher-scheinriese>; Staack M. Der Ukraine-Konflikt, Russland und die europäische Sicherheitsordnung. Verlag Barbara Budrich. Opladen. Berlin. Toronto. 2017.c. 157; Sasse G. Rückblick auf die Annexion der Krim 2014 // ZOIS Spotlight 1/2017. URL: <https://www.zois-berlin.de/publikationen/zois-spotlight-2017/zois-spotlight-12017/>; Becke J., Weiss S. Grenzen des Annexionsverbots. Der Golan, die Krim und das Völkerrecht // Osteuropa 9-11/2019; Gorzka G. Zwischen Annäherung und Distanz: 30 Jahre Deutsch-Russische Kulturbeziehungen (1988 – 2018) am regionalen Beispiel Kassel. kassel university press GmbH. 10.04.2018; Heintze H-J. Völkerrecht und Sezession – Ist die Annexion der Krim eine zulässige Wiedergutmachung sowjetischen Unrechts? // Humanitäres Völkerrecht – Informationsschriften / Journal of International Law of Peace and Armed Conflict, 3/2014. S.129-138. и др.

<sup>197</sup> Kühn U. Der Ukraine-Krieg und die europäische Sicherheitsarchitektur // Russland-Analysen Nr. 295, 08.05.2015. URL:

[https://www.academia.edu/15755568/Ist\\_die\\_Krim\\_wirklich\\_russisch\\_Russische\\_Juristen\\_diskutieren\\_über\\_die\\_Rechtmäßigkeit\\_der\\_Aufnahme\\_der\\_Krim?email\\_work\\_card=title](https://www.academia.edu/15755568/Ist_die_Krim_wirklich_russisch_Russische_Juristen_diskutieren_über_die_Rechtmäßigkeit_der_Aufnahme_der_Krim?email_work_card=title); Bocklet R. Deutschland, Russland, die Ukraine und Europa // Politische Studien. 68. Jahrgang | März-April 2017. S 48. URL: [https://www.hss.de/download/publications/PS\\_472\\_EUROPA\\_BREXIT.pdf](https://www.hss.de/download/publications/PS_472_EUROPA_BREXIT.pdf)

<sup>198</sup> Jan E. Putin-Versteher und Putin-Kritiker. Heftige Kontroversen um die deutsche und westliche Rußlandpolitik. Frankfurter Montags- Vorlesungen. Neue Folge 06. 04.05.2016. <http://fkks.uni-mannheim.de/montagsvorlesung/Rußland-Politik/DSFraMoV06-NET-Rußlandpolitik-57.pdf>

<sup>199</sup> Sasse G. Rückblick auf die Annexion der Krim 2014 // ZOIS Spotlight 1/2017 (15.03.2017) URL: <https://www.zois-berlin.de/publikationen/zois-spotlight-2017/zois-spotlight-12017/>

<sup>200</sup> Sasse G. Dekoder: Krim. 23.05.2018. URL: <https://www.bpb.de/269576/dekoder-krim>

<sup>201</sup> Resolution 68/262. URL: <https://www.un.org/Depts/german/gv-68/band3/ar68262.pdf>

<sup>202</sup> Peters A., Marxsen Ch. Die Krimkrise und die Reterritorialisierung internationaler Konflikte // Forschungsbericht 2014 - Max-Planck-Institut für ausländisches öffentliches Recht und Völkerrecht. URL: [https://www.mpg.de/8906607/mpil\\_jb\\_20141](https://www.mpg.de/8906607/mpil_jb_20141)



restrictions on freedom of expression, assembly, and freedom of demonstration in Russia and other countries, also raises analysts' questions from a human rights perspective.”<sup>203</sup>

According to a member of the Presidium of the German Foreign Policy Society Carsten Voigt, the decisions of the Russian leadership in relation to Ukraine are not influenced by international norms, but by the issue of zones of influence. The Russian leadership, contrary to the principles and values of the Charter of Paris<sup>204</sup>, proceeds from the hierarchy of states, which implies differences in the respective powers. Consequently, large and small states are not equal, since the latter are subject to stronger states, such as Russia, within their zones of influence. However, the author points out that this form of order is unacceptable for the European Union and its members.<sup>205</sup> This statement is another manifestation of the so-called "double standards," as it demonstrates disregard for the processes taking place both within the EU and in the international arena as a whole. In particular, there is silence about the U.S. influence on the domestic and foreign policy of European countries.

Otto Luchterhandt, Doctor of Law, calls the situation in Crimea a “bone of contention” and lists the following points in his article<sup>206</sup>:

- Violation of the General Prohibition of Violence - Article 2 paragraph 4: “All Members of the United Nations shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State, or in any other manner inconsistent with the Purposes United Nations”<sup>207</sup>;

- Violation of Article 53 of the 1969 Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties, which states: “A treaty is void if, at the time of its conclusion, it is contrary to a peremptory norm of general international law”<sup>208</sup>;

- actions contrary to resolutions 541 and 550 of the UN Security Council, in which the unilateral declaration of independence is declared illegal.<sup>209</sup>

<sup>203</sup> Meister S., Puglierin J. Perception und Instrumentalisierung: Russlands nicht-militärische Einflussnahme in Europa // DGAP kompakt, 10. Berlin: Forschungsinstitut der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Auswärtige Politik e.V.. 2015. S. 1. URL: <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssaoar-53926-6> ; Peters A., Marxsen Ch. Die Krimkrise und die Reterritorialisierung internationaler Konflikte // Forschungsbericht 2014 - Max-Planck-Institut für ausländisches öffentliches Recht und Völkerrecht. URL: [https://www.mpg.de/8906607/mpil\\_jb\\_20141](https://www.mpg.de/8906607/mpil_jb_20141)

<sup>204</sup> Charter of Paris for a new Europe. URL: <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/3/4/39520.pdf> (in Russian)

<sup>205</sup> Voigt K. D. Russland, Deutschland und die europäische Ordnung. Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung. Berlin. September 2017

<sup>206</sup> Luchterhandt O. Die Krim-Krise von 2014: Staats- und völkerrechtliche Aspekte // Osteuropa Vol. 64. No. 5/6. Zerreißprobe: Ukraine: Konflikt, Krise, Krieg (MAI-JUNI 2014), 2014. S. 61-86. URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44937261>

<sup>207</sup> Charter of the United Nations. United Nations. URL: <https://www.un.org/ru/sections/un-charter/chapter-i/index.html> (in Russian)

<sup>208</sup> Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties 23.05.1969. URL: [https://www.un.org/ru/documents/decl\\_conv/conventions/law\\_treaties.shtml](https://www.un.org/ru/documents/decl_conv/conventions/law_treaties.shtml) (in Russian)

<sup>209</sup> Resolution 550 (1984). URL: [https://undocs.org/ru/S/RES/550\(1984\)](https://undocs.org/ru/S/RES/550(1984)) (in Russian); Resolution 541 (1983) URL: [https://undocs.org/ru/S/RES/541\(1983\)](https://undocs.org/ru/S/RES/541(1983)) (in Russian)

All this leads O. Luchterhandt to the conclusion that Russia “violated not only the elementary principles of international law, but also international legal agreements through military actions, diplomatic, political, legislative acts.”<sup>210</sup>

Benedikt Behlert, a research fellow at the Institute for International Peace and Armed Conflict Law at the Ruhr University, also believes that Russia's involvement in Crimea in February and March 2014 “violated the prohibition of violence in an unjustified way.” The reunification treaty between Crimea and Russia was linked to this “violation of international law.” Thus, in his opinion, one can clearly trace the “element of violence”, and, accordingly, the accession of Crimea to Russia should be qualified as “annexation.”<sup>211</sup>

The head of the Berlin office and senior fellow at the European Council on Foreign Relations, Jana Puglierin, in her article also emphasizes the “violation of international law” by the Russian Federation. The author points out that any territorial changes should be regulated by consensus in international treaties. This, according to her, is not only obvious from the UN Charter, but has also repeatedly been an argument on the part of President Putin, for example, in the situation regarding Kosovo or Chechnya.

Puglierin is also surprised that while some “with a raised forefinger” oppose meetings and dialogue with Putin, others do not want to admit “a violation of international law.” Vladimir Putin actually convinced many Germans to show understanding to the “autocratic ruler”, who, under the threat of military violence, brought part of the neighboring country “home to the Reich” - this is how the author calls Russia: “Who could have imagined this after 1945?” - asks the author.

Yana Puglierin believes that the rhetoric of “understanding” Russia is unproductive, as it completely ignores the “destructive consequences of the Crimean crisis for international politics.” In her opinion, international agreements on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons will be the first to suffer from the emerging crisis. In 1994, Ukraine signed the “Budapest Memorandum” with Russia, the US and the UK<sup>212</sup>. In exchange for giving up Soviet nuclear weapons stationed in the country, the countries agreed to respect the sovereignty, borders, and political and economic independence of Ukraine. Now, however, Puglierin believes, the question arises: “after the annexation of Crimea, what country will be ready to surrender nuclear weapons or stop its development programs if, after 20 years,

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<sup>210</sup> Luchterhandt O. Die Krim-Krise von 2014: Staats- und völkerrechtliche Aspekte // Osteuropa Vol. 64. No. 5/6. Zerreißprobe: Ukraine: Konflikt, Krise, Krieg (MAI-JUNI 2014), 2014. S. 61-86. URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44937261>

<sup>211</sup> Behlert B. Die Unabhängigkeit der Krim. Annexion oder Sezession? // Bochum: Institut für Friedenssicherung und Humanitäres Völkerrecht an der Ruhr Universität Bochum. IFHV Working Paper. 5 (2). September 2015. URL: [http://www.ifhv.de/documents/workingpapers/wp5\\_2.pdf](http://www.ifhv.de/documents/workingpapers/wp5_2.pdf)

<sup>212</sup> Memorandum on Security Assurances in connection with Ukraine's accession to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. 05.12.1994. URL: <http://www.pircenter.org/media/content/files/12/13943175580.pdf>

treaty security guarantees are not even worth the document on which they are printed?”<sup>213</sup> Thus, the “annexation” of Crimea not only represents a “clear violation of international law”, it has a “new dimension: with the incorporation of Crimea, Russia, as the first state in Europe since 1945, by force seized parts of another state with revisionist intentions, military force is used to achieve political goals,”<sup>214</sup> - the author believes.

Sabine Fischer, head of the Eastern Europe and Eurasia research department of the German Institute for International Relations and Security, not only believes that in 2014, in response to the Kyiv Euromaidan, there was an “annexation,” but also believes that it was Russia that “provoked the war on east of Ukraine.” And since then, in her opinion, there has been an armed conflict in which people are still dying. Germany, S. Fischer is sure, and its Western partners tried to resolve this conflict politically, through negotiations for five years, but the attempts were unsuccessful. The Minsk ceasefire agreements were not implemented<sup>215</sup>. But at the same time, she points out that Crimea is excluded from the search for solutions in the Russian narrative, it is considered part of the Russian Federation, its “annexation” should already be perceived as “a closed chapter.”<sup>216</sup>

The German historian Heinrich Winkler considers the term “secession” in this situation an understatement and insists on the definition of “annexation”. In his opinion, a referendum cannot be considered democratic if the so-called “little green men” appear in Crimea - soldiers without national identifiers and military trucks without numbers; if the Russian military presence increases sharply within a few days; if a “manipulated vote in the regional parliament” (“pseudo referendum”) is held “under military pressure,” to which Western observers are not allowed. The referendum was to take place at the end of 1991, after the collapse of the Soviet Union. However, the inclusion of Crimea into the Ukrainian Soviet Republic in 1954, in his opinion, had nothing to do with international law.<sup>217</sup>

Kerstin Holm believes that the Crimean crisis is “an exemplary indicator of misunderstanding of each other.” After the Maidan, when Ukraine decided to turn its back on Russia and move closer to Europe, Crimea was “annexed by military forces.” Since the referendum was held without international sanctions and observers, this “annexation” was for the Europeans a violation of the treaty

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<sup>213</sup> Puglierin J. Wir dürfen die Annexion der Krim nicht einfach hinnehmen! Liebe man Russlands Präsident Putin gewähren, hätte dies verheerende Folgen für die internationale Politik // DGAP-Standpunkt, 3. Berlin: Forschungsinstitut der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Auswärtige Politik e.V. 2014. URL: <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168ssoar-53023-9>

<sup>214</sup> Ibid.

<sup>215</sup> Full text of the Minsk agreements URL: <https://ria.ru/20150212/1047311428.html> (in Russian)

<sup>216</sup> Fischer S. Der Donbas-Konflikt. Widerstreitende Narrative und Interessen, schwieriger Friedensprozess. Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik. Berlin. 2019. S. 25

<sup>217</sup> Baberowski J. Winkler H. A. “Erbschaft Der Sowjetunion. Der Ukraine-Konflikt in Historischer Perspektive. Eine Diskussion.” // Journal of Modern European History / Zeitschrift Für Moderne Europäische Geschichte / Revue D'histoire Européenne Contemporaine. vol. 13. no. 3. 2015. S. 303. URL: [www.jstor.org/stable/26266187](http://www.jstor.org/stable/26266187)

and “just theft.” “For our understanding, I will use the verb ‘krimen’”<sup>218</sup>. It means to give something and then take it back, that is, steal. The introduction of such occasionalism is a clear indicator of the stigmatization of the events of 2014, which carries a pronounced negative connotation.

Wolfgang Richter, Senior Fellow at the Department of International Security Studies at the German Institute for International and Security Affairs, in his article on the crisis in Ukraine, also speaks of “an annexation that not only violated international law, but provoked the most serious crisis in Europe since the missile crisis 1984.” The author believes that the concept of pan-European cooperation in the field of security, developed since 1989, and confidence in stable peacekeeping in Europe are “permanently undermined”, and the global consequences are “incalculable.”<sup>219</sup>

Another German historian, Kai Struve, supports Richter, saying that with the “occupation of Crimea” events in Ukraine have taken on a new international dimension.<sup>220</sup> The German public “quickly realized” that this meant a certain turning point in relations with Russia. In general, the position of the federal government, on the one hand, was to strongly condemn the actions of Russia, and, on the other hand, Germany nevertheless showed its readiness to continue the dialogue, despite the “annexation” of Crimea. The fact that the so-called “territorial expansion of Russia”, achieved, according to the German view, with the help of military means, was practically accepted and only “the mildest sanctions that existed at that time” were applied in response, according to the German historian Volker Ulrich - caused discontent, but only occasionally contradictions.<sup>221</sup>

M. Dembinski, H.J. Schmidt and H.J. Spanger believe that by his actions in the Crimea, the President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin not only “drew the border for Ukraine, but also showed his borders to the West.”<sup>222</sup> In addition, he embarked on a path that, in their opinion, is clearly aimed at revisiting the “greatest geopolitical catastrophe”<sup>223</sup> - the collapse of the Soviet Union. According to the authors, he “adorns his actions with eclectic lines of argumentation of national-ethnic, historical-romanticizing or even mythologically transformed origin, which were previously alien to official discourse in Russia and especially to Putin himself.” At the same time, despite the fact that Vladimir Putin emphasized that Crimea has always remained an integral part of Russia, which,

<sup>218</sup> Holm K. *Russland auf der Flucht: Was die Entfremdung von Europa für die Kultur bedeutet.* / Trunk A. *Russland und Europa. Facetten einer Beziehung.* Band 8. Peter Lang Edition. Frankfurt am Main. 2017. S. 91.

<sup>219</sup> Richter W. *Die Ukraine-Krise: die Dimension der paneuropäischen Sicherheitskooperation* // SWP-Aktuell 23/2014. Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik -SWP- Deutsches Institut für Internationale Politik und Sicherheit. URL: <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssaoar-389273>

<sup>220</sup> Struve K. „Faschismusverharmloser“ und „Russland-Versteher“ – die Ukraine-Krise in der deutschen Diskussion / *The Ukrainian Crisis in the European Media and the Public Sphere "Cultures of History"* Forum. Germany. Version: 1.0. 14.05.2014. URL: <http://www.imre-kertesz-kolleg.unijena.de/index.php?id=577&l=0>

<sup>221</sup> Volker U. *Wie Putin spaltet.* Die Zeit. 10.04.2014. URL: <http://www.zeit.de/2014/16/russlanddebatte-krimkrise-putin>

<sup>222</sup> Dembinski M., Schmidt H.-J., Spanger H.-J. *Einhegung: die Ukraine, Russland und die europäische Sicherheitsordnung.* // HSFK-Report 3/2014. Frankfurt am Main: Hessische Stiftung Friedens- und Konfliktforschung. 2014. S. 10. URL: <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssaoar-404057>

<sup>223</sup> Annual Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation 25.04.2005. URL: <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/22931> (in Russian)

according to the authors, not only did not give greater legitimacy to “unilateral land grabs that go beyond international law”, but simply “a poetic glorification of war.”<sup>224</sup>

S.Margolina, author of the article “The Russian Lesson”, was “shocked” to hear about Russia's “attack on Ukraine” despite events such as the 2008 war in Georgia. From her point of view, the Russian side attacked “from behind, armed to the teeth, a weak, fragmented, plundered country by oligarchs,” and then “the Kremlin’s propaganda machine tried to drag many good friends, including those in Germany, into a hurricane of cynical lies.” The “annexation” of Crimea revealed not only Russia's unpredictability, but also its desire for self-destruction. The unfolding events led, according to the author, to the fact that a country “the size of France, in which 45 million people live, separated from the Russian continent” and began to “drift” to the West. And the more it turned towards the West, the more Russia, in turn, strove towards the East. Most of all, “Easternization”, according to Margolina, is manifested in the state ideology of the “Russian world.”<sup>225</sup>

However, there is another point of view on the events that took place. In this regard, the article by Professor of Criminal Law and Philosophy of Law Reinhard Merkel is interesting. He recalls that in international law “annexation” means the forcible appropriation of land by another state against the will of the state to which it belongs. The annexations violate the international prohibition on violence, the basic norm of the legal world order. They regularly take place in the mode of “armed attack,” which is the most serious form of international violation. Then, in accordance with Article 51 of the UN Charter,<sup>226</sup> the countries in whose interests such actions are carried out initiate the powers of military self-defense of the victim and emergency assistance from third countries - permission to go to war without the approval of the UN Security Council. This consideration alone, according to Merkel, should discipline loud statements about “annexation”<sup>227</sup>.

At the same time, what happened in Crimea, according to the professor, was completely different: secession, the proclamation of state independence, confirmed by a referendum that approved secession from Ukraine. It was followed by a declaration of accession to the Russian Federation, which Moscow accepted. “Secession, referendum and accession exclude the possibility of annexation, even if all three were a violation of international law”, - Merkel believes.<sup>228</sup>

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<sup>224</sup> Dembinski M., Schmidt H.-J., Spanger H.-J. Einhegung: die Ukraine, Russland und die europäische Sicherheitsordnung. // HSFK-Report 3/2014. Frankfurt am Main: Hessische Stiftung Friedens- und Konfliktforschung. 2014. S. 11. <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-404057>

<sup>225</sup> Margolina S. Russischstunde // Raabe K. Gefährdete Nachbarschaften – Ukraine, Russland, Europäische Union. Wallstein Verlag. Göttingen. 2015. S. 130-135

<sup>226</sup> Charter of the United Nations. United Nations. URL: <https://www.un.org/ru/sections/un-charter/chapter-i/index.html> (in Russian)

<sup>227</sup> Merkel R. Die Krim und das Völkerrecht. Kühle Ironie der Geschichte // FAZ vom 7. April 2014. URL: <https://www.faz.net/aktuell/feuilleton/debatten/die-krim-und-das-voelkerrecht-kuehle-ironie-der-geschichte-12884464.html>

<sup>228</sup> Ibid.

Constitutional lawyer Karl Albrecht Schachtschneider assesses the Russian approach as a humanitarian act: “According to the prevailing opinion of international jurists, states have the right, if necessary, to protect their citizens by force with limited intervention against threats to human life and health.” This right has been consistently practiced and is still recognized within the framework of proportionality to customary law.<sup>229</sup>

Gabriele Krone-Schmalz also criticizes the stigmatization of Russia's actions as “annexation” and “violation of international law.” She, same as Reinhardt Merkel, believes that the word “annexation” has a very serious meaning, it is a gross violation of international law, and this gives the right to international armed intervention.<sup>230</sup> That is, the ban on violence can be lifted precisely with annexation, a classic example of which is the situation in Iraq. At the same time, conflicts of secession are a matter of national law, but not of international law. Accordingly, we are not talking about a violation of international law, despite the fact that politicians have so loudly declared this and continue to declare it.

In support of her words, she cites the decision of the Human Rights Court in The Hague in 2010,<sup>231</sup> when it was decided that Kosovo's secession did not violate international law.<sup>232</sup> On this basis, she concludes that the recognition of secession is often not a legal but a political issue:

“Crimea is a historically Russian land. What Putin did is not a capture, but a necessary measure of protection under the pressure of time. I accuse the West of underestimating the significance of the peninsula for Russia – in terms of emotions, military significance, geostrategic.... The fact is that the West did not take Russia seriously and even ignored it. Then you should not be surprised that Moscow reacts exactly the way it reacts.”<sup>233</sup> Krone-Schmalz herself notes that these words were not published. But the fact that this interview was not published was not a problem of lack of space, which indicates the presence of censorship.

Ambassador, lawyer and publicist Frank Elbe, speaking about the situation in 2014, asks the question: “Is it really about international law, Ukraine or Crimea, and not about the political struggle between the US and Russia for spheres of influence? Or is it not about the heavy internal conflict in

<sup>229</sup> Schachtschneider K. A. Der Kampf um die Krim als Problem des Staats- und Völkerrechts. URL: <http://www.wissensmanufaktur.net/krim-zeitfragen>

<sup>230</sup> Krone-Schmalz G. Russland verstehen – der Kampf um die Ukraine und die Ignoranz des Westens. 9. Auflage. Verlag C.H.Beck. München 2015 S. 23-24.

<sup>231</sup> Den Haag nennt Unabhängigkeit des Kosovos rechtens. URL: <https://www.zeit.de/politik/ausland/2010-07/kosovo-unabhaengigkeit-voelkerrecht>

<sup>232</sup> E.g.: Rastvortseva A. N. Positions of Germany in relation to the Kosovo and Crimean precedents: a comparative analysis // Bulletin of the Omsk University. Series “Historical Sciences”. 2021. V. 8, No. 4 (32). pp. 226–233. DOI: 10.24147/2312-1300.2021.8(4). pp. 226-233. URL: <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/pozitsii-germanii-po-otnosheniyu-k-kosovskomu-i-krymskomu-pretseidentam-sravnitelnyy-analiz> (in Russian)

<sup>233</sup> Krone-Schmalz G. Russland verstehen – der Kampf um die Ukraine und die Ignoranz des Westens. 9. Auflage. Verlag C.H.Beck, München 2015. S.21.

the United States over the fundamental orientation of American policy towards Russia and Europe, in which the Europeans, at best, play the role of observers?”<sup>234</sup>

Elbe, as well as Krone-Schmalz, emphasizes that his words do not serve to justify or release Russian President V.V. Putin from responsibility, but not to use the law as a political tool. Ultimately, the author believes, the very accusation of “annexing” Crimea in any case does not help, but rather blocks reflections on a political way out of the situation, since it is “like a block cast from concrete.”<sup>235</sup>

From Elbe's point of view, neither Ukraine nor the West has developed any ideas on how the question of the right to self-determination of the Crimeans could be resolved after the peninsula was accessed to Russia, and the Ukrainian government will not want to resolve this issue through a new referendum of inhabitants of the Crimea. The solution to the crisis cannot be achieved through a legal dispute, in this case diplomacy should find a solution, which will play the role of a kind of repair company. And if Europe wants to deal with Russia in the future, then it must make every effort to ensure that Russia can soon regain its place in the Euro-Atlantic community.

The security of Europe and the United States, the author emphasizes, is possible only with Russia, which requires respect for legitimate Russian interests and feelings of security. On the other hand, it should be borne in mind that Russia also takes seriously the problems and fears of its Western partners and helps to fight them. “No one can isolate Russia - a great, not a regional power with huge economic resources - without consequences for themselves,” - Elbe said.<sup>236</sup>

In support of his thought, the author cites the words of Pope Francis that security requires dialogue, as well as a quote from Henry Kissinger, who in 2014 addressed the Western world with a call to remember that foreign policy is the art of setting priorities, and “the demonization of Vladimir Putin is it's not politics. This is an alibi for the lack of politics.”<sup>237</sup>

Frank Elbe himself, speaking of Vladimir Putin, characterizes the latter as “a talented, predictable politician, more predictable than some of his Western colleagues. Putin is one of the so-called Westernizers in Russia, and we are strongly encouraged to recognize and exploit his European orientation.” The author calls on the European audience to remember the World Economic Forum in Davos in 1987, when Hans Dietrich Genscher asked to take Gorbachev seriously, to take his word for it, and he was right. He believes that Europe should start “taking Putin seriously, take his word for it”

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<sup>234</sup> Elbe F. Die Krise mit Russland: Gibt es Licht am Ende des Tunnels? // ifo Schnelldienst, ISSN 0018-974X, ifo Institut - Leibniz-Institut für Wirtschaftsforschung an der Universität München. München. Vol. 68. Iss. 16. S. 31-38. 2015

<sup>235</sup> Ibid. S. 35

<sup>236</sup> Elbe F. Die Krise mit Russland: Gibt es Licht am Ende des Tunnels? // ifo Schnelldienst, ISSN 0018-974X, ifo Institut - Leibniz-Institut für Wirtschaftsforschung an der Universität München. München. 2015. Vol. 68. Iss. 16. S. 31-38.

<sup>237</sup> Henry A. Kissinger: "Eine Dämonisierung Putins ist keine Politik" URL: <https://www.ipg-journal.de/kommentar/artikel/henry-a-kissinger-eine-daemonisierung-putins-ist-keine-politik-298/>

and stop spreading the picture of “a muscular despot with hegemonic ambitions that threaten world peace.”<sup>238</sup>

In the weekly newspaper “Die Zeit” of March 6, 2014, the writer Eugen Ruge turned to the history of Crimea and stated the following: “The gift of the Russian Crimea to Ukraine was originally made in the conditions of the existence of the Soviet Union. It was an arbitrary act that virtually every Democrat had to reject. How can you give a country and its population as a gift? [...] Anyone who really wants to protect our vital interests should remember this: Russia is a great power that is losing ground. In recent years, it has dangerously lost influence and power. For a long time it has been surrounded by US military bases, but now it is also surrounded by military bases in the former socialist countries, and more recently even in the former Soviet republics. Does it really take so much imagination to imagine how difficult it is for many Russians - the government and the population - to cope with this?”<sup>239</sup> Thus, Ruge emphasized the illegality of the transfer of Crimea to Ukraine, as well as the “blindness” of the West in relation to the Russian perception of NATO expansion as a direct military threat.

Jörg Baberowski, a German historian and specialist in the history of the USSR, believes that the “annexation” of Crimea is just one intervention among many. As an example, he names Ossetia, Abkhazia, Nagorno-Karabakh and Moldova. Abkhazia was also effectively “annexed” by Russia, and Abkhazians were issued Russian passports. But he emphasizes that it is not necessary to evaluate everything equally, since in some regions Russia is still a protective force for minorities. What looks like “annexation” is sometimes secession or vice versa. If a referendum were held in Crimea today that would be consistent with our democratic rules, the majority of the population would undoubtedly choose Russia. Therefore, the West must first recognize that there was such a will to secede in Crimea.<sup>240</sup>

However, a few years later, the official position remains unchanged. In 2017, the scientific service of the Bundestag determined that the accession of Crimea to the territory of the Russian Federation “is clearly described not only in German, but also in US international law, as a change in territory in violation of international law”, and, accordingly, in the categories of international law, will be classified as “annexation.”<sup>241</sup>

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<sup>238</sup> Elbe F. Die Krise mit Russland: Gibt es Licht am Ende des Tunnels? // ifo Schnelldienst, ISSN 0018-974X, ifo Institut - Leibniz-Institut für Wirtschaftsforschung an der Universität München. München. 2015 Vol. 68. Iss. 16. S. 31-38.

<sup>239</sup> Ruge E. Nicht mit zweierlei Maß messen! 06.03.2014. URL: <https://www.zeit.de/2014/11/pro-russische-position-eugen-ruge/seite-2>

<sup>240</sup> Baberowski J. Winkler H. A. “Erbschaft Der Sowjetunion. Der Ukraine-Konflikt in Historischer Perspektive. Eine Diskussion.” // Journal of Modern European History / Zeitschrift Für Moderne Europäische Geschichte / Revue D'histoire Européenne Contemporaine. vol. 13. no. 3. 2015. S. 303. URL: [www.jstor.org/stable/26266187](http://www.jstor.org/stable/26266187)

<sup>241</sup> Vor fünf Jahren: Russlands Annexion der Krim. 18.03.2019. URL: <https://www.bpb.de/politik/hintergrund-aktuell/287565/krim-annexion>



In German sources, those who make attempts to look at the situation from the Russian side, in order to understand the prerequisites for action, belong to the group of “understanding Russia” or “understanding Putin.” Among them there are several groups:

- representatives of the German economy who did not want to jeopardize their business with Russia and therefore avoided harsh words about Russian politics, as well as people who served Russian state-owned companies;

- Representatives of the “Die Linke” party, who did not admit that “fascism is currently growing not in Ukraine, but in Russia.” Many right-wing radical parties in Europe, who consider the internal politics of Russia as an example for their country. Some of these parties willingly provide political and media support to the policies of the President of the Russian Federation V.V. Putin.

- some left, communist or socialist groups, in the eyes of which “former KGB agent and communist” Vladimir Putin is a guarantee that Russia will not follow the capitalist road.

- supporters of the West German peace movement of the 1980s, journalists who criticized NATO for many years, and social democrats influenced by Willy Brandt's Ostpolitik. National-politically motivated, including very conservative-democratic critics of their country's membership in NATO and often also in the EU, who see Putin's Russia as a key player in the creation of a multipolar international system consisting of independent states free from US hegemony.

- many pacifists and other citizens concerned with world politics who fear a new Cold War or even a nuclear war because they believe that NATO and the EU, by virtue of their enlargement, are threats to Russia in its core security interests. This group includes various parties from the Greens to the Conservatives.<sup>242</sup>

It is interesting to note that an article in “Die Zeit”, newspaper with centrist views on politics, gives a different classification of “understanding Russia”:

- anti-European-minded right (“Alternative for Germany”) and right-wing extremists;
- people who love “non-existent Russia”: “a non-capitalist, slow, untouched world, the authenticity and depth of which can only be truly felt in Siberia or during the hours of the liturgy of the Orthodox Church”;

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<sup>242</sup> Bannas G. Schröder erklärt Putin: „Er handelt wie ich“ // FAZ 10. März 2014. URL: <http://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/inland/ukraine-gerhard-Schröder-erklart-putins-politik-12840337.html>; Jan E. Putin-Versteher und Putin-Kritiker. Heftige Kontroversen um die deutsche und westliche Rußlandpolitik // Frankfurter Montags-Vorlesungen. Neue Folge 06. 04.05.2016. URL: <http://fkks.uni-mannheim.de/montagsvorlesung/Rußland-Politik/DSFraMoV06-NET-Rußlandpolitik-57.pdf>; Eppler E. Putin, Mann fürs Böse // Süddeutsche Zeitung. 11. März 2014. URL: <http://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/russlands-praesident-wladimir-putin-mann-fuers-boese-1.1909116>; Beyme K. Die Russland-Kontroverse. Eine Analyse des ideologischen Konflikts zwischen Russland-Verstehern und Russland-Kritikern. Wiesbaden. 2016. S. 10.; Struve K. „Faschismusverharmloser“ und „Russland-Versteher“ – die Ukraine-Krise in der deutschen Diskussion / The Ukrainian Crisis in the European Media and the Public Sphere "Cultures of History" Forum, Germany, Version: 1.0, 14.05.2014. URL: <http://www.imre-kertesz-kolleg.unijena.de/index.php?id=577&l=0>

- representatives of the German elite, who were once fans of the United States, “disillusioned transatlanticists”, calling for the granting of a sphere of influence to Russia and for reaching an agreement with Moscow in the negotiations of the great powers on Ukraine's place in Europe;
- those who have never supported NATO expansion to the East<sup>243</sup>.

It is noted that for their argumentation, “those who understand Putin” most often use the topic of NATO expansion to the East and criticize the policy of the West. An important argument is that the Soviet Union under Gorbachev voluntarily renounced dominance over the socialist states and, not least, over the GDR, which contributed to the reunification of Germany. They are usually subjected to rather harsh criticism from colleagues who adhere to a “pro-Western” point of view.<sup>244</sup> At the same time, it is interesting to note that, according to Egbert Jahn, many “understanding Russia” know very little about Russia itself: about the country and its people, about its society and history, and often are not interested in this at all, since “understanding Russia” is often “only an expression of fundamental criticism of the existence of NATO and the world politics of the United States, sometimes also of the EU and the foreign policy of one's own country.”<sup>245</sup>

Thus, one can see that the accession of Crimea to Russia caused a strong reaction from German experts, whose opinions on how to qualify Russia's actions on the peninsula differ. Most researchers say that the entry of Crimea into the Russian Federation was a “gross violation of international law”, “aggression” or “annexation”. Since such an opinion is published in scientific research and is prevailing, it has a direct impact on the German media, which use the one-sided and mostly biased expert conclusions findings of experts to create news articles and form a certain information field. Based on the fact that the topic of Ukraine was not the focus of the German media before and, accordingly, there was no clear idea in public opinion about the prerequisites for the development of the Crimean crisis, a large number of negative assessments of Russian actions undoubtedly had an impact on the formation of discourse and image of Russia in the mass consciousness.

It should be noted that a number of German researchers have a different opinion and do not consider the term “annexation” as the only correct way to describe the events in Crimea, which fully reflects the current situation. In their works, they use the designation “secession” or even “humanitarian act”. However, it is important to understand that people who support such an opinion, whether they are political scientists, journalists or politicians, are stigmatized in German society by such negative terms as “understanding Russia” (Russlandversteh'er) or “understanding Putin”

<sup>243</sup> Thumann M. Je blasser der Westen, desto strahlender Putin. 19.03.2014. URL: <https://www.zeit.de/politik/ausland/2014-03/russland-krim-annexion-gysi-Schröder>

<sup>244</sup> Mutz R. Die Krimkrise und der Wortbruch des Westens // Blätter für deutsche und internationale Politik 4/2014. S. 5-10 URL: [https://www.blaetter.de/archiv/jahrgaenge/2014/april/die-krimkrise-und-der-wortbruch-des-westens#\\_ftnref5](https://www.blaetter.de/archiv/jahrgaenge/2014/april/die-krimkrise-und-der-wortbruch-des-westens#_ftnref5)

<sup>245</sup> Jan E. Putin-Versteher und Putin-Kritiker. Heftige Kontroversen um die deutsche und westliche Rußlandpolitik. // Frankfurter Montags- Vorlesungen. Neue Folge 06. 04.05.2016. S. 11. URL: <http://fkks.uni-mannheim.de/montagsvorlesung/Rußland-Politik/DSFraMoV06-NET-Rußlandpolitik-57.pdf>

(Putinverstehher), which again indicates the existence of a certain image of Russia, preferable for the official discourse of Germany.

### §3. Opinions of German politicians on the Crimean crisis

In order to consider the attitude of German politicians to the Crimean crisis and the accession of Crimea to Russia, it is important to pay attention to the opinion of the former Chancellors of Germany. Having completed their political career and not being bound by any of the parties, they express their point of view, based on political experience and views, while current politicians are bound by Atlantic solidarity, collective obligations within the EU and NATO.

So, the Ex-chancellors expressed the following points of view regarding the events of 2014: Helmut Schmidt did not recognize any violations of international law during the accession of Crimea. In an interview with the newspaper “Die Zeit”, he said that he had great doubts about whether there was a clear violation, which so often appears in various sources. He emphasized the importance of international law, but pointed out that it had already been repeatedly violated:

“For example, intervention in the civil war in Libya did not comply with international law, the West overfulfilled the mandate of the UN Security Council. The historical development of Crimea is more important than reliance on international law. The Crimean War of 1853, in which the British, French and Ottoman Empire fought together, played an important role for Russia, thanks to San Stefano. Until the early 1990s, there was no doubt in the West that Crimea and Ukraine - both - were part of Russia.”<sup>246</sup>

From the point of view of Helmut Schmidt, during the accession of Crimea to the Russian Federation, the state of Ukraine temporarily did not exist and did not function due to the revolution on the Maidan. At the same time, he considers the concept of “legitimate” to be a legal category and does not use as a characteristic of the actions of the President of the Russian Federation V.V. Putin, replacing it with the word “understandable.”<sup>247</sup>

Gerhard Schröder in the monograph “Alien Friends. Germans and Russians” also speaks on this topic. He believes that there is a loss of trust on both sides. However, he highlights the “special relationship” and shared history that is why many Russians are frustrated with the German position, and especially with the sanctions:

“We must ensure that alienation does not grow. This also applies to the general policy of the European Union towards Russia. The EU took Russia's proposal to create a free trade zone from Lisbon to Vladivostok lightly. Instead, he negotiated association with Ukraine without involving

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<sup>246</sup> Naß M., Kampf um die Ukraine - „Putins Vorgehen ist verständlich“, Interview mit Helmut Schmidt URL: <http://www.zeit.de/2014/14/helniut-schmidt-russland/komplettansicht>

<sup>247</sup> Ibid.

Russia, which is intertwined with Ukraine economically and culturally and has its own legitimate political interests. It was the EU that put Ukraine before a choice: Russia or the European Union,” - Schröder believes.<sup>248</sup>

When asked about the status of Crimea, Gerhard Schröder replied that N.S. Khrushchev would not have given Crimea to the Ukrainian USSR if he did not believe that the USSR would always exist. The significance of Sevastopol for Russia was not properly understood by the West, and with the admission of Ukraine to NATO, the stronghold of the Russian fleet would have been surrounded. And not a single president of Russia, according to G. Schröder, will separate Crimea from the Russian Federation.

“We in the West should not pretend that we do not proceed from our own interests. We do it. In Russia, there is a great need for a sense of security when it comes to the inviolability of one's own territory. Since the time of Napoleon, Russia has dealt with invasions and this still plays a big role in people's self-consciousness. Many people think that the West is not friendly to Russia. We should look at things more independently and, when observing the actions of Russia, not be guided by US interests. It is in America's interest to belittle a global competitor. It is in Europe's interests to live in peace with an important neighbour. Stability in Europe can only be with Russia. We must make it clear that Russia is welcome in Europe.”<sup>249</sup>

Also, in one of his interviews, Gerhard Schröder said the following: “Of course, NATO groups do not pose a direct threat to Russia. But this is absolutely the wrong signal when German soldiers are stationed at the Russian borders. You need to try to understand the historical ties and your counterpart. Therefore, the negatively perceived concept of “understanding Putin” is quite dangerous. Of course, one must want to understand Russia and its president. Only the one who talks and knows how to listen can understand the position of another, even if he may not share it. From Russia's point of view, NATO is located in the form of a ring from Turkey through Europe to the Baltic Sea.”<sup>250</sup>

It is worth noting here that the negative connotation of the word “understanding Russia” was also criticized by Gabriele Krone-Schmalz, who is convinced that when a person understands something, he sees the relationship, knows the background, and, relying on this, can say, what is happening and why. If someone wants to understand the picture of any events, he needs information.<sup>251</sup>

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<sup>248</sup> Gloger K. Fremde Freunde. Deutsche und Russen. Die Geschichte einer schicksalhaften Beziehung. Berlin Verlag in der Piper Verlag GmbH. München. 2017. S. 377 – 383.

<sup>249</sup> Ibid

<sup>250</sup> Ibid

<sup>251</sup> Krone-Schmalz G. Russland verstehen – der Kampf um die Ukraine und die Ignoranz des Westens. 9. Auflage. Verlag C.H.Beck, München 2015. S.6

Helmut Kohl also saw the problem that the West was not treating its Russian neighbor carefully enough, especially Vladimir Putin.<sup>252</sup> The “understanding Russia” also includes the former Minister of Foreign Affairs, the current President of the Federal Republic of Germany Frank - Walter Steinmeier, who is often characterized as a secret friend of Russia, since he, “despite the open wounds”<sup>253</sup> that arose due to the “annexation” of Crimea, tries to improve relations, despite the fact that he said in an interview for the “Bild” newspaper that the accession of Crimea was illegal.<sup>254</sup>

Another current politician, Sarah Wagenknecht, Deputy Leader of the Left Party, asked the Federal Government as early as March 2014 to accept the results of the “Crimean referendum”, which was supposed to legalize the accession of Crimea, before it took place on March 16th, 2014.<sup>255</sup> In an interview with “Handelsblatt”, the German politician said: “The West must be ready to change its policy towards Russia. For years, Russian interests were simply ignored and Moscow humiliated. It started with the expansion of NATO to Russian borders - contrary to what has been said otherwise. And this policy continued until the final demand for Ukraine to make a choice between Russia and an association agreement with the EU. Even the entry of Ukraine into NATO was clearly not excluded. This policy is causing a backlash. We see it now.”<sup>256</sup>

Gustav Gressel, a spokesman for the European Council on Foreign Relations, pointed out in 2017 that there are some parties in Germany that regularly support Russia's “dubious” behavior, in his opinion. He noted that “these parties are fully committed to the Western model, open society, free trade, political freedoms, social modernization and a secular state. But they are also in favour of closer relations or economic cooperation with Russia, of easing sanctions at the earliest opportunity, or of taking ambiguous positions when it comes to how the European security architecture should be set up.”<sup>257</sup>

Alexander Gauland, a spokesman for the right-wing populist Alternative for Germany (AfD) party, said in 2017 that “Crimea is pristine Russian territory and cannot be returned to Ukraine.”<sup>258</sup> Christian Linder, leader of the Free Democratic Party, known until then for its support of international

<sup>252</sup> Altkanzler Kohl kritisiert Umgang des Westens mit Russland 11.03.2014. URL: [https://www.t-online.de/nachrichten/specials/id\\_68436998/krim-krise-altkanzler-helmut-kohl-kritisiert-umgang-des-westens-mit-russland.html](https://www.t-online.de/nachrichten/specials/id_68436998/krim-krise-altkanzler-helmut-kohl-kritisiert-umgang-des-westens-mit-russland.html)

<sup>253</sup> Sommer Th. Ein unbequemer Nachbar, aber kein Feind. URL: <https://www.zeit.de/politik/2017-11/deutsch-russische-beziehungen-5vor8/komplettansicht>

<sup>254</sup> Russland offen für neue Gespräche mit dem Westen 16.03.2014 URL: <https://www.spiegel.de/politik/ausland/ukraine-reaktionen-auf-das-krim-referendum-a-958975.html>

<sup>255</sup> Sahara Wagenknecht warnt vor dem „dritten Weltkrieg“ // Der Tagesspiegel. 12. März 2014. URL: [www.tagesspiegel.de/politik/krim-krise-sahra-wagenknecht-warnt-vor-dem-dritten-weltkrieg/9605202.html](http://www.tagesspiegel.de/politik/krim-krise-sahra-wagenknecht-warnt-vor-dem-dritten-weltkrieg/9605202.html)

<sup>256</sup> Neuerer D., Rüdell N., „Wagenknecht über den Siemens-Chef: „Kaesers Besuch bei Putin war vernünftig“ // Handelsblatt vom 10. April 2014. URL: [www.handelsblatt.com/politik/deutschland/wagenknecht-ueber-den-siemens-chef-kaesers-besuch-bei-putin-war-vernuenftig/9743302-all.html](http://www.handelsblatt.com/politik/deutschland/wagenknecht-ueber-den-siemens-chef-kaesers-besuch-bei-putin-war-vernuenftig/9743302-all.html)

<sup>257</sup> Gressel G. Fellow travellers. Russia, anti-Westernism, and Europe's political parties. London: European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR) 14. Juli 2017. URL: <https://www.ecfr.eu/publications/summary/fellow-travellers-russia-anti-westernism-and-europes-political-parties-7213>

<sup>258</sup> AFD-Parteitag. „Die Krim ist nun einmal ur-russisches Territorium“ // Die Welt. 17. Juni 2017. URL: <https://www.welt.de/politik/deutschland/article165650240/Die-Krim-ist-nun-einmal-ur-russisches-Territorium.html>

law and European integration, believes Russia's accession of Crimea should be accepted as a “long-term provisional provision.”<sup>259</sup>

However, Wolfgang Schäuble, Federal Minister of Finance and member of the CDU, saw a unacceptable historical<sup>260</sup>. Of course, such a comparison is inherently false, and as incorrect and unreasonable as possible.

By November 2014, Chancellor Angela Merkel had almost 40 telephone conversations with Vladimir Putin. She criticized Russia's actions towards her neighbor, calling it “theft”. “There are still forces in Europe that do not use democratic and legal means to resolve the conflict, do not show mutual respect, but rely on the right of the strongest, ignoring the force of law.”<sup>261</sup> This happened now that Russia “annexed Crimea in violation of international law.” Moscow, according to Merkel, sees Ukraine as its sphere of influence, which calls into question the European world order that emerged after World War II.<sup>262</sup>

This view is supported by former Federal President Joachim Gauck, who criticized Moscow's decisions: “I am concerned that Russian actions undermine the sovereignty of Ukraine and contribute to the aggravation of the situation.” Gauck called on the European Union to take a unified position in the debate on sanctions against Russia.<sup>263</sup>

Thus, one can see several positions in relation to the Crimean crisis:

- the former Chancellors of Germany are unanimous in their opinion that the accession of Crimea is not an aggressive violation of international law, and the crisis situation itself has developed due to the fact that the European Union paid little attention to Russian interests or even itself became the cause of the crisis;

- German politicians, for example, F.-W. Steinmeier, S. Wagenknecht and others advocated a change in policy towards Russia and also for the fact that relations between Russia and Germany were improved.

- another group of politicians, for example, W. Schäuble, A. Merkel, J. Gauck, spoke negatively about the accession of Crimea; one could hear, for example, far-fetched accusations of “theft”. In addition, politicians advocated that sanctions against Russia should be applied in full.

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<sup>259</sup> „Dauerhaftes Provisorium“ Krim. Lindner will Moskau entgegenkommen // NTV. 5.08. 2014. URL: [www.ntv.de/politik/Lindner-will-Moskau-entgegenkommen-article19969480.html](http://www.ntv.de/politik/Lindner-will-Moskau-entgegenkommen-article19969480.html)

<sup>260</sup> Schäuble vergleicht Putin mit Hitler 31.03.2014.URL: <https://www.zeit.de/politik/ausland/2014-03/hitler-putin-schaeuble-ukraine-krim>

<sup>261</sup> Von Salzen C. Wenn die Kanzlerin die Geduld verliert 17.11.2014. URL: <https://www.tagesspiegel.de/politik/angela-merkel-und-der-ukraine-konflikt-wenn-die-kanzlerin-die-geduld-verliert/10992586.html>

<sup>262</sup> Altkanzler Kohl kritisiert Umgang des Westens mit Russland 11.03.2014. URL: [https://www.t-online.de/nachrichten/specials/id\\_68436998/krim-krise-altkanzler-helmut-kohl-kritisiert-umgang-des-westens-mit-russland.html](https://www.t-online.de/nachrichten/specials/id_68436998/krim-krise-altkanzler-helmut-kohl-kritisiert-umgang-des-westens-mit-russland.html)

<sup>263</sup> Ibid.

Such positions may serve as confirmation of the above thesis that politicians who have completed their careers have a more critical view of the actions of the West, while current politicians proceed from obligations due to their position in the political arena.

#### **§4. Scenarios for the development of the situation after the Crimean crisis in the German media**

Already in 2014, after analysing the development of the Crimean crisis, Professor Heinz Gärtner proposed the following steps to resolve the situation in Ukraine: the Western powers and Russia, in his view, were to make proposals on Ukraine's future geopolitical position: whether it would be open to NATO membership or neutral, and whether EU membership was a possibility. At the same time, Russia, the US and NATO must withdraw their troops from Ukrainian territory. Then the Ukrainian parliament was supposed to vote on the proposals made. Next, Ukraine and Russia were to negotiate on minority rights and language use in Ukraine and Crimea. However, the agreement was to be concluded within the framework of the OSCE, and the result was recognized by both Western states and Russia.<sup>264</sup>

Political scientist Sabine Fischer, analyzing the situation in the same year, pointed out that in recent years the EU has made the big mistake by engaging in a zero-sum geopolitical game without realizing it. In her view, a more critical approach by both sides to their own narrative would be an important step towards defusing tensions. However, Fischer had no hope that this would happen in the near future. The authors of the article “Putin’s Russia and European Security” also shared the same opinion, emphasizing that the gap between Russia and the West is unlikely to diminish in the foreseeable future, unless there is a radical turn in Russian politics caused by internal factors.<sup>265</sup> They also suggested that in the next few years there would be a division between the enlightened West, the so-called “secular West”, which gives the individual its place, and the orthodox, anti-Western East.<sup>266</sup>

In 2015, Wolf-Fabian Hungerland, a research fellow at the Institute for Economic History at the Humboldt University in Berlin, pointed to several different options for how events would develop after the accession of Crimea. In his work, the author listed the following scenarios.

- As the first, basic scenario, he cited the assumption that Vladimir Putin “will not go beyond Crimea.” In this case, Russia will be “satisfied” with its actions, and the tension will gradually subside. The result of such a development will be political, that is, economically soft sanctions, in which energy cooperation remains unchanged, thus the negative impact on markets and the economy will be

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<sup>264</sup> Gärtner H. Ein neuer Kalter Krieg? // Policy Paper. Österreichisches Institut für Internationale Politik, 2). Wien: Österreichisches Institut für Internationale Politik (oiip). 2014. URL: <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssaar-58652-1>

<sup>265</sup> Fischer S. Eskalation in der Ukraine-Krise // Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik. Berlin. 2014. S. 4.

<sup>266</sup> Nünlist Ch., Thränert O. Putins Russland und Europäische Sicherheit // CSS Analysen zur Sicherheitspolitik. Center for Security Studies (CSS). ETH Zürich. 2015 - 04. URL: <https://doi.org/10.3929/ethz-a-010681789>

temporary and insignificant. Export-oriented Germany and the Baltic states will suffer slightly more than the rest of the EU.

- However, the author believes that there are many signs that Russia will continue to support the Donbass - this option is scenario number two. Russia has been “causing and supporting unrest in the Donbass” for a long time, since it is the Donbass that is the economic heart of Ukraine. At the same time, the author does not believe that “Russia wants to have more than Crimea.” However, there are signs that Russia is supporting the pro-Russian militias and, accordingly, the risk of the conflict escalating is very high.

According to Hungerland, Vladimir Putin's statement about protecting Russian citizens abroad and tens of thousands of Russian troops on the border with Ukraine hangs like a sword over the crisis. Given current events, the West may adopt new sanctions, and then the level of uncertainty will be accompanied by a loss of confidence in the eurozone. The ECB will respond by easing monetary policy if the economic impact worsens.

- The author went on to express the view that if the second scenario did occur, Russia could easily move to „invade Donbass” and then “annex eastern Ukraine” - this was scenario 3 for Hungerland. In this case, Russia can gradually establish a de facto military presence in eastern Ukraine, while Kyiv will lose control over the territory. Such a “creeping invasion” would elicit serious Ukrainian resistance and escalate into a full - perhaps short - war between the two countries, from which Russia would emerge victorious. A military scenario would greatly influence politics, the economy, and the “business climate in Europe.” Moreover, the imposed sanctions would be even harsher, which would lead to a tightening of Russia's retaliatory trade policy. Recovery in the eurozone in such a situation would be slow.

- The fourth assumption concerns the complete cessation of Russian energy supplies before next winter, which, according to the author, is extremely unlikely, since in this case, Russian energy exports come to a standstill: if Russia completely cuts off energy supplies to Ukraine, the West will remain somewhat isolated.

If energy supplies to the European Union are cut off, the damage will be significant - both large companies and residents will suffer from rising energy prices. Depending on how long the supply is interrupted, Europe will either be ready, as there will be enough oil and gas reserves to compensate for Russian supplies, or, if the supply is cut off for a long time, there could be a GDP loss of 1% or more.

Ukraine will be restored as a sovereign state in its usual form and borders, including Crimea. This model of Ukraine is probably outdated. Russia cannot and will not give up Crimea, you cannot turn back the clock so far. Given these goals, the negotiations seem largely pointless.<sup>267</sup>

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<sup>267</sup> Hungerland W-F. Russland und die Ukraine-Krise was ist der Status Quo? Makro-Ausblick Osteuropa Joh. Berenberg, Gossler & Co. KG 17. April 2014. S. 3.



In response to the question of what could de-escalate the crisis, the author suggested a number of options:

- 1) More international observers or even peacekeeping forces, which will prevent the pro-Russian forces, in particular, from allowing the situation to escalate further.
- 2) Clearer Western sanctions, thanks to which Moscow is better aware of the cost of escalating the crisis.
- 3) A guarantee of greater autonomy for certain regions of Ukraine.
- 4) An even broader transitional government in Kyiv that can credibly represent the interests of eastern Ukraine.
- 5) More Western economic support for eastern Ukraine.
- 6) General easing of IMF lending conditions, especially the reduction of austerity.<sup>268</sup>

Other German publicist Christian Hacke also suggested similar scenarios:

- Restoration of the territorial integrity of neutral Ukraine, recognition of Crimea as Russian territory. This model could only be realized if the government and parliament in Kyiv abandoned NATO membership, unilateral orientation towards the West and association with the EU and opted for a neutral Ukraine as a bridge between West and East.

- Ukraine becomes a federal state with increased autonomy in the east; the rights of the Russian-speaking population are preserved.

- Given the continued supply of weapons to Ukraine from the West and the development of NATO relations with Kyiv, Hake pointed to the possibility of the following scenario: Russia reacts harshly to the division of Ukraine into a Europe-oriented western and Russian-oriented eastern part, which leads to the fact that called “Donetsk People's Republic” is part of the Russian Federation. The author considered this a fatal option both for Ukraine and for the entire European order.

- The next model was based on the assumption that Russia would support the “separatists” in order to destabilize all of Ukraine. In this case, the author considers the escalation of a proxy war between Russia and the United States on the territory of Ukraine almost inevitable.

However, the author comes to the conclusion that the only way to prevent the worst is to stop the policy of “driving Russia into a corner” and move on to creating incentives so that the parties agree to a compromise. And this will be possible, according to Hake, only if the West no longer unilaterally negotiates with Kyiv and supports it militarily, which will only deepen the rift and accelerate the confrontation with Russia. It was necessary to find a solution to the crisis that all actors could agree on: a sovereign, neutral Ukraine. In addition, the West needs Russia as a strategic partner in Europe.

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<sup>268</sup> Ibid.

“Putin is not our problem, our problem is that Western politicians themselves made Putin strong.” - this is the conclusion of Hake, made in 2015.<sup>269</sup>

Andrea Rotter, a researcher at the Hans Seidel Foundation, was convinced that the Crimean crisis presented an unexpected challenge to the West, a peaceful solution to which could only be based on renewed rapprochement with Russia. The long-term goal, in her opinion, should have been to put Moscow back on the path of cooperation, even if the means to achieve that goal still seem uncertain.<sup>270</sup>

Stefan Meister, also in 2017, spoke about the fact that conflicts of interest cannot be resolved in a short time. In his opinion, Moscow, due to its actions, will appear to the world community as more and more aggressive. With regard to security policy, the author believes that the federal government should prepare for various scenarios of aggressive Russian policy. Therefore, the medium-term goal of German policy towards Russia at the moment can only be peaceful coexistence based on the status quo accepted by both sides. It should have clear red lines, crisis options and channels of communication.

The most dangerous scenarios at the moment may arise due to military incidents on the border between Russia and NATO. Thus, the new federal government should help to coordinate the mechanisms of communication and action with the Russian leadership within the OSCE and the Russia-NATO Council in order to prevent overreaction or escalation. In addition, the federal government must play a central role in strengthening arms control in a multilateral relationship with Russia. The resilience of the EU must rise to limit the influence of the Russian leadership.<sup>271</sup>

As for actions in Ukraine itself, Wilfred Jilge, a researcher at the Robert Bosch Center for Central and Eastern Europe, Russia and Central Asia, pointed to the following opportunities for improving the situation: the restoration of transport infrastructure between Kyiv and Donbass so that residents do not feel isolated. In addition, Kyiv should use concrete measures to signal to the residents of Donbass that they are equal citizens of Ukraine, which, according to the author, would help to eliminate the ideological and cultural basis of the Kremlin's influence.<sup>272</sup>

Summing up, we can say the following: after 2014, the German media presented quite numerous scenarios for the development of a crisis situation, as well as options for preventing escalation. Some of the studies contained rather specific appeals to Western politicians, the purpose of which was to prevent the development of military scenarios. H. Gärtner advocated that a decision on the geopolitical position of Ukraine be found and recognized by all parties. S. Fischer drew attention to the fact that a change in the situation should begin with a change in the narrative in relation to Russia.

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<sup>269</sup> Hake C. Die Ukraine-Krise vor einer weiteren Eskalation? 461 // Politische Studien. 66. Jahrgang | Mai-Juni 2015. URL: [https://www.hss.de/download/publications/PS\\_461\\_UKRAINE.pdf](https://www.hss.de/download/publications/PS_461_UKRAINE.pdf)

<sup>270</sup> Rotter A. Die Ukraine-Krise und der Westen. // Politische Studien. 66. Jahrgang | Mai-Juni 2015. S.12 - 15.

<sup>271</sup> Meister S. Deutschland im Übergang zu einer neuen EU-Russland- und Osteuropapolitik // DGAPkompakt Nr. 6 Sommer 2017. S. 16-18. URL: <https://dgap.org/de/article/getFullPDF/29846>

<sup>272</sup> Jilge W. Mit Waffen, Worten und Wahlverwandten: Putin setzt weiter auf Destabilisierung in der Ukraine. Außenpolitische Herausforderungen für die nächste Bundesregierung // DGAPkompakt. März 2017. Nr. 7. S. 9 – 11.

In his scenarios for the development of the situation, V.F. Hungerland and C. Hacke see the possible dynamics in a similar way. Both authors see the first option as an opportunity for Russia not to go “beyond Crimea”. However, analyzing the situation in the East of Ukraine, V.F. Hungerland points to a possible escalation of the crisis in the Donbass, and C. Hacke proposes to expand the autonomy of Eastern Ukraine as a whole in order to prevent such a situation. The third option, the authors see the offensive of Russia and the possible accession of Eastern Ukraine to the territory of Russia. The fourth, most negative option involves a war between the US and Russia on the territory of Ukraine and the isolation of Europe by canceling Russian energy supplies to the EU, which would entail great economic difficulties.

Based on the situation by 2021, we can say that some of the assumptions of 2015 have indeed become reality: Not only have the Minsk agreements not been implemented by the Ukrainian leadership, but, as it turned out later, they have been used by Western countries to buy time and prepare Ukraine for war.<sup>273</sup> Economic sanctions by the European Union and reciprocal Russian sanctions were strengthened and the situation in Donbass not only failed to be resolved, but also continued to develop towards an escalation of the conflict. Kyiv continued its military actions against the DNR and LNR republics, while Russia maintained its position of protecting the Russian-speaking population in the event of open hostilities.

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<sup>273</sup> Hildebrandt T., di Lorenzo G. Angela Merkel: "Hatten Sie gedacht, ich komme mit Pferdeschwanz?" // Die Zeit. 07.12.2022. URL: <https://www.zeit.de/2022/51/angela-merkel-russland-fluechtlingskrise-bundeskanzler/komplettansicht>

### Chapter 3. The impact of the Crimean crisis on Russian-German relations

#### §1. German media and public opinion

The German sociologist Niklas Luhmann, in his monograph “The Reality of Mass Media”, emphasizes that everything we know about our society and the world in which we live in general, we learn through the media. Therefore, the aspect of the media is undoubtedly very important, especially when it comes to a situation that can only be judged on the basis of news reports.<sup>274</sup>

In a crisis situation, the main information that society receives from the media is warnings and fears. And, despite the fact that journalists know the future as accurately as their target audience, and the negative forecasts made by them are only ideas about the development of the situation, the impact of the media on public opinion is extremely high.<sup>275</sup> Indeed, depending on how the media construct and regulate the presentation of a particular situation in the world, they also determine which aspects the audience should pay attention to, as well as in what context this or that topic will be considered. Thus, they carry out framing: they create a certain frame through which the audience sees a specific situation.<sup>276</sup>

In the modern world, the media have a huge impact on the image of a state in the eyes of society. The Internet makes it possible to publish news about events in another country in the shortest possible time, and information that has entered the online space is distributed at a tremendous speed around the world. Accordingly, what appears in the news feed will be one of the determining factors in the perception of an event or a country in the eyes of the public.

Speaking about the actions of the German media covering the events of the crisis, Gabriele Krone-Schmalz points to the double standards inherent in them:

“We criticize Russia when Ukrainian TV channels are not broadcast in Crimea, but we ignore reports that Ukraine is turning off Russian channels. And the fact that in Donetsk and Luhansk the programs are changing depending on who has power - we do not know this at all. As well as the fact that public institutions, such as schools or hospitals, are checked for the presence of Russian TV channels.”<sup>277</sup>

The author wonders why in the German media “pro-Russian” and “Russian-speaking” are used as synonyms, although the meanings of the words are different. A journalist by profession, Krone-Schmalz encourages his colleagues not to forget the basic principles of journalism. She cites the

<sup>274</sup> Luhmann N. Die Realität der Massenmedien. Wiesbaden 2004. S. 9.

<sup>275</sup> Hullin U. Was hält die Zukunft für uns bereit? 20.11.2020. URL: <https://ubaldhullin.de/zukunftsangst/>

<sup>276</sup> Wehling E. Politisches Framing. Wie eine Nation sich ihr Denken einredet – und daraus Politik macht. Edition medienpraxis. Köln: Halem. 2016.

<sup>277</sup> Krone-Schmalz G. Russland verstehen – der Kampf um die Ukraine und die Ignoranz des Westens. 9. Auflage. Verlag C.H.Beck. München 2015. S. 35-54.

following events as an example: on May 2nd, 2014, a clash between supporters and opponents of the Euromaidan took place in Odessa, during which about fifty people died. German television described it as a clash between supporters of the Kyiv government and pro-Russian separatists, which is not the correct presentation of information.

The author also criticizes the releases of German TV channels, such programs as “Tagesschau”, whose audience is about ten million people.<sup>278</sup> The lowest point, according to Krone-Schmalz, was reached when “Tagesschau 20 Uhr” and “ARD Tagesthemen” allowed themselves to use the concept of “Russian rabble.”<sup>279</sup> On September 7, 2014, an afternoon report said that both sides were being charged with human rights violations, and in the eight-hour “Tagesschau”<sup>280</sup>, the wording already looked like this: “The army and pro-Russian separatists are accused”, the word “Ukrainian” was absent.<sup>281</sup>

In addition, the German media are in a hurry to hang certain labels, for example, in the case of a downed plane.<sup>282</sup> Despite the fact that at that time there was no irrefutable evidence of the Russian side's guilt, the German daily newspaper “Bild” of July 21st, 2014 came out with the following words on the front page: “When will the world finally stop Putin? A deadly missile was fired in Russia.”<sup>283</sup> Following this, a week later, “Spiegel” magazine chose the “Stop Putin Now” call in large letters as the headline for the cover, and also added a photo of the dead, which looked like a direct accusation of the Russian president.<sup>284</sup> “Die Zeit” reported that the use of force by Western countries was no longer taboo,<sup>285</sup> which looked like a call to action, and “Die Tageszeitung” even compared the incident to what happened on September 11th, 2001: “The 9/11 attack was declared a NATO case. The dead passengers of flight MH17 deserve the same solidarity.”<sup>286</sup>

Other incorrect information was also provided in the German media. For example, on July 31st, “Tagesschau” reported that “it was only now that experts were able to get to the wreckage” of the

<sup>278</sup> Reichweite der Tagesschau in den Jahren 1992 bis 2021 nach der durchschnittlichen Anzahl der Fernsehzuschauer (in Millionen). April 2022. URL: <https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/182978/umfrage/reichweite-der-tagesschau-seit-1992/>

<sup>279</sup> Sendung: Tagesthemen 04.05.2014 22:45 Uhr URL: <https://www.tagesschau.de/multimedia/sendung/tt5440.html> (Дата обращения: 18.07.2020); Sendung: Tagesschau 12.04.2014 20:00 Uhr URL: <https://www.tagesschau.de/multimedia/sendung/ts47732.html>

<sup>280</sup> Sendung: Tagesschau 07.09.2014 20:00 Uhr URL: <https://www.tagesschau.de/multimedia/sendung/ts-4290.html>

<sup>281</sup> Krone-Schmalz G. Russland verstehen – der Kampf um die Ukraine und die Ignoranz des Westens. 9. Auflage. Verlag C.H.Beck. München 2015. S.36

<sup>282</sup> This is a major plane crash that occurred on July 17, 2014. In the east of the Donetsk region, a missile fired by the Buk anti-aircraft missile system shot down a Malaysia Airlines Boeing 777 passenger jet en route from Amsterdam to Kuala Lumpur. Citizens of Russia and the DPR were accused of being involved in the deaths of 298 people in 2019.

<sup>283</sup> Bild. 21.07.2014.

<sup>284</sup> Der Spiegel. № 31. 28.07.2014. URL: <https://magazin.spiegel.de/EpubDelivery/spiegel/pdf/128364478>

<sup>285</sup> Luther C. Dieser Abschuss verändert alles. 18.07.2014. URL: <https://www.zeit.de/politik/ausland/2014-07/russland-ukraine-malaysia-airlines-abschuss>

<sup>286</sup> Johnson D. Eine Bankrotterklärung des Westens. 21.07.2014. URL: <https://taz.de/Kommentar-abgeschossenes-Flugzeug!/5037233/>

aircraft<sup>287</sup> - which, according to Krone-Schmalz, is fundamentally wrong, since the day after the crash it was already possible. This report, she said, could only be true if it was pointed out that the group of experts on July 18 and July 31 were not the same.<sup>288</sup>

The German jurist Frank Elbe points out that, in general, most of the media, especially the public legal institutions, with “breathtaking urgency” showed a completely distorted picture of the conflict, not caring to show it truthfully. “For the first time in my life”, the author had the feeling that this was done not to inform people about events, but to construct or transform their perception and form a certain point of view. What was allowed to print by the editors of magazines and newspapers, what was said by the talk show hosts in Germany, was a misunderstanding of the requirements for journalistic information. And the very fact that the events were covered deliberately one-sidedly, and anti-Russian speeches were shown on the air - this is a violation of the fundamental law of Germany, for which the editors in charge should be held accountable, Elbe believes.<sup>289</sup> In this regard, the German journalist and publicist Peter Scholl-Latour wrote of a “global disinformation campaign through American propaganda institutions” that succeeded in “completely manipulating the European media landscape”.<sup>290</sup>

However, according to Verena Blaser, a researcher at the Institute of Labor Law and Industrial Relations in the European Union, reality cannot always be distorted only by design: factors such as the lack of correspondents, real experts, economic pressure, the current focus of news reports, as well as stereotypes and prejudices. At the same time, she believes that the German media made “huge mistakes” already on the eve of the Ukrainian conflict: there was not enough clear coverage of what interests the parties had. Obviously, the European Union has its own interests in Ukraine, which is considered as a geostrategic base, because of which Russia may feel threatened and pressured from outside.<sup>291</sup> However, this information was not presented to the German-speaking audience.

In addition, the media have shown their inability to explain what the EU Association Agreement with Ukraine really means, namely, to what extent it provides for military cooperation. Ukraine's accession to the European Union was portrayed as a path to freedom and prosperity, something that Ukraine itself wants. However, the fact that opinions differ within Ukraine itself, and that many Ukrainians feel culturally and linguistically close to Russia, was largely not mentioned.

Media scholar Sabina Schiffer criticizes the German media for continually reinforcing traditional friend/foe images with clear role divisions. The “bad” Russia, personified mainly by

<sup>287</sup> Sendung: Tagesschau 31.07.2014 20:00 Uhr URL: <https://www.tagesschau.de/multimedia/sendung/ts-3716.html>

<sup>288</sup> Krone-Schmalz G. Russland verstehen – der Kampf um die Ukraine und die Ignoranz des Westens. 9. Auflage. Verlag C.H.Beck, München 2015. S. 35-54.

<sup>289</sup> Elbe F. Die Krise mit Russland: Gibt es Licht am Ende des Tunnels? // ifo Schnelldienst. ifo Institut - Leibniz-Institut für Wirtschaftsforschung an der Universität München. München. Vol. 68. Iss. 16. 2015. S. 31-38.

<sup>290</sup> Scholl-Latour P. Der Fluch der bösen Tat. Das Scheitern des Westens im Orient. Berlin 2015. S. 37.

<sup>291</sup> Bläser V. Zum Russlandbild in den deutschen Medien. 11.11.2014. // Politik und Zeit Geschichte (APUZ 47-48/2014) URL: <https://www.bpb.de/apuz/194826/zum-russlandbild-in-den-deutschen-medien?p=2>

Vladimir Putin – “power politician.” The idealized Ukrainian transitional government, as well as the EU and the US, were presented as “friends” as guarantors of future prosperity. As examples, she cites some headlines of articles and programs<sup>292</sup>: “The world should not watch how a dictator kills his people,”<sup>293</sup> “Who will stop Russia?”<sup>294</sup> or “Why Putin wants to create a new empire with a brutal campaign.”<sup>295</sup> The German media has also been criticized by Hanno Gundert, director of the NGO, the union of journalists writing about Eastern Europe, Netzwerk für Osteuropa-Berichterstattung, who said that all reports are “clearly characterized by black and white positions”.<sup>296</sup>

In addition, this division is clearly reflected in some terms, the most controversial of which, according to Schiffer, was the term “annexation” in connection with the accession of Crimea. Many media outlets very quickly spread the notion that this was a violation of international law even before there were studies that challenged this notion.<sup>297</sup>

There are also examples of false reports and outright fakes that have been spread in the German media: for example, the alleged “destruction” of a Russian military convoy,<sup>298</sup> or the report that military personnel held by pro-Russian separatists were only OSCE observers.<sup>299</sup> But the creation of false messages is also supported by existing clichés: their use helps to ensure that certain information fits into the already established picture in the mind of the recipient. It is because of the gradually formed habit of seeing the stigmatization of events in one way or another that messages containing clichés will be perceived by the audience faster and easier than those that do not use familiar stigmas. Ultimately, even unintentional false information leads to the fact that in the German media the image of Russia has become more and more negative and standardized.

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<sup>292</sup> Schiffer S. Obama vs. Putin, Sprachwissenschaftlerin Sabine Schiffer über Parteinahme in den deutschen Medien 20.06.2014. URL: <https://weltnetz.tv/video/560-putin-vs-obama>

<sup>293</sup> Klitschko V. Die Welt darf nicht zuschauen, wie ein Diktator sein Volk abschlachtet 20.02.2014. URL: <https://www.bild.de/politik/ausland/vitali-klitschko/die-welt-darf-nicht-zuschauen-wie-ein-diktator-sein-volk-abschlachtet-34756166.bild.html>

<sup>294</sup> ARD-Brennpunkt. Wer stoppt Putin? 17.03.2014. URL: <https://www.daserste.de/information/nachrichten-wetter/brennpunkt/videosextern/wer-stoppt-russland-104.html>

<sup>295</sup> Stern, Nr. 37 vom 04.09.2014

<sup>296</sup> Kern V. Unausgewogen? Wie deutsche Medien über den Ukraine-Konflikt berichten. 15.04.2014. URL: <https://www.dw.com/de/unausgewogen-wie-deutsche-medien-über-den-ukraine-konflikt-berichten/a-17571572>\* Listed by the Russian Ministry of Justice in the Register of Foreign Media Agents

<sup>297</sup> Schiffer S. Obama vs. Putin, Sprachwissenschaftlerin Sabine Schiffer über Parteinahme in den deutschen Medien 20.06.2014. URL: <https://weltnetz.tv/video/560-putin-vs-obama>

<sup>298</sup>We are talking about a message that was published on the official website of the President of Ukraine, as well as a conversation between President of Ukraine Petro Poroshenko and British Prime Minister David Cameron "about the invasion of the country's military equipment convoy and its partial destruction" in August 2014. This message was refuted by the Russian Ministry of Defense.

E.g.: Nikolsky A., Smirnov S., Mesropyan M. Poroshenko informed Cameron about the destruction of the Russian military convoy // Vedomosti. 08.15.2014. URL: <https://www.vedomosti.ru/politics/articles/2014/08/15/poroshenki> (in Russian); Neef Ch. Wenn Hysterie brandgefährlich wird. 16.08.2014. URL: <https://www.spiegel.de/politik/ausland/ukraine-und-militaerkonvoi-gab-es-einen-angriff-a-986481.html>

<sup>299</sup> Ukraine: Festgehaltene keine Mitglieder der OSZE-Mission - OSZE-Sprecher Neukirch URL: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mWeU\\_4UEAq8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mWeU_4UEAq8)

Political scientist Sylvia von Steinsdorff believes that the Crimean crisis of 2014 has changed Russia's image forever, whether it is the assessment of the domestic political situation in the country or the perception of Russia's role in Europe and the world. Above all, the perception of Vladimir Putin as a person and his political role has changed. "Autocratic", according to the German media, leadership style and "pompous self-presentation" of the head of the Russian state often became the subject of critical coverage even before the crisis. Steinsdorff said that recently one can see that with the help of the media in Germany a direct demonization of his role was carried out, and today it is difficult to draw a dividing line between Russian President Vladimir Putin as a person, his position and the country he rules. Putin, according to the author, is equated with Russia, he is portrayed as the personification of the "aggressive Russian policy of the superpowers." The result is not only an increasingly negative image, but, above all, an extremely monolithic image of Russia. It is not the Russian government that is responsible for policy, but the entire country, which brings back the perception of Russia during the Cold War, when US President Ronald Reagan called the Soviet Union an "evil empire."<sup>300</sup>

Charlotte Wiedemann believes that "it is wrong to present Putin's policy as illegitimate", and also that the conflict initiated the activation of the following trend: those who want to be "in a team" write without forcing themselves to strongly doubt the veracity of the information. And that is why Russia's policy is subjected to such harsh and quick criticism: "We want Putin to be naked and ugly. Because he's on the other side."<sup>301</sup>

Media researcher Sabina Schiffer, supports this view and says that German media reports are "definitely one-sided", there is a clear idealization of the Ukrainian transitional government, the actions of the Ukrainian side are not criticized, and any brutal actions are immediately attributed to "pro-Russian forces", and Vladimir Putin is presented as "a shadowy figure who pulls the strings." In general, according to Schiffer, the "demonization" of Russian President, is a "tradition" in Germany, which was born a few years before the Crimean crisis itself.<sup>302</sup>

Thus, it can be seen that the German media gradually built up and reinforced the image of Russia as an aggressive state, which was identified with the Russian leader – "an authoritarian and cruel ruler," which led to the emergence of rhetoric typical of the Cold War, namely, the return of the formation in the face of Russia the image of the enemy.

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<sup>300</sup> Steinsdorff S. Zwischen Russlandverstehern und (neuen) Kalten Kriegern. Die Auswirkungen der Ukraine-Krise auf die Wahrnehmung Russlands in der deutschen Öffentlichkeit // Russland-Analysen. Nr. 300. 17.07.2015. URL: <https://www.laender-analysen.de/russland/pdf/RusslandAnalysen300.pdf>

<sup>301</sup> Wiedemann Ch. Im Zweifel für Zwischentöne 12.03.2014. <https://taz.de/Schlagloch-Russland-Berichterstattung!/5046718/>

<sup>302</sup> Schiffer S. Obama vs. Putin, Sprachwissenschaftlerin Sabine Schiffer über Parteinahme in den deutschen Medien 20.06.2014. URL: <https://weltnetz.tv/video/560-putin-vs-obama>



I would also like to separately note the fact that immediately after the accession of Crimea to Russia, cartoons devoted to this topic began to appear in German publications. As noted in one of the articles devoted to the analysis of the image of Russia in cartoons, between February and May 2014, 47 cartoons related to the image of Russia, the personification of which in most cases was the President of Russia Vladimir Putin. For example, on one of them, Putin was depicted as a big cat, catching a mouse in its paw, symbolizing Crimea. The rest of the mice were at a distance, however, the collar with a bell lying nearby and the caption to the cartoon indicated that the mice wanted to put the collar on the “cat” in order to hear his approach.

In another cartoon, you can see a chess table at which Russian President Vladimir Putin and then US President Barack Obama are sitting. The Russian president checks the American, to which the latter is surprised: “Check? I thought we were playing a game of ‘Man, don’t get mad’”.<sup>303</sup> The distinction between "cat" and "mice" or between white and black pieces in chess indicates the existence of two camps and their opposition, which can evoke in the audience associations with images of enemies and the Cold War. Such images, due to their emotional impact on the reader, as well as the possibility of various interpretations, are undoubtedly another means of manipulating public opinion.

However, despite the actions of the media, one can observe the following trend in the discussion about the role of Russia in the Ukrainian conflict: public opinion and the opinion of the media sometimes differ greatly, and this is proved by the results of some polls. In one of them in 2015, the majority (60%) of those surveyed had little or no trust in the German media. The reason for this they called deliberate misinformation, manipulation (27%), one-sided presentation of information (20%), insufficient research of the issue (15%). Approximately one in ten respondents also criticized the alleged lack of independence of the media.<sup>304</sup> A 2018 poll showed that 46% of respondents in Germany believe that more lies and fewer facts are used in politics and the media than thirty years ago.<sup>305</sup>

In general, it should be noted that the independence of German journalists covering the crisis in Ukraine, as well as editors of print media, the work of radio and television have been criticized and become the subject of discussion in numerous reader publications, various critical articles and online

<sup>303</sup> Bührmann L. Modifizierte Stereotypen: Russland und die Krim-Annexion in der Karikatur. Osteuropa, 66(3), 2016. S.

140. URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44937118>

<sup>304</sup> E.g.: Die Zeit. Wenig Vertrauen in Medienberichterstattung. Mai 2015. <https://www.infratest-dimap.de/umfragen-analysen/bundesweit/umfragen/aktuell/wenig-vertrauen-in-medienberichterstattung/>; ZAPP. Mehrheit hat kein Vertrauen in Medien-Berichterstattung zum Ukraine-Konflikt. Dezember 2014. URL: <https://www.infratest-dimap.de/umfragen-analysen/bundesweit/umfragen/aktuell/mehrheit-hat-kein-vertrauen-in-medien-berichterstattung-zum-ukraine-konflikt/>; Haben Sie den Eindruck, dass die Medien in Deutschland einseitig berichten und von der Politik gelenkt werden? Dezember 2014. URL: <https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/436125/umfrage/umfrage-zur-berichterstattung-der-deutschen-medien-zum-konflikt-mit-russland/>

<sup>305</sup> Glauben Sie, dass es heute mehr Lügen und Missbrauch von Fakten in der Politik und den Medien gibt als vor 30 Jahren? September 2018. URL: <https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/922600/umfrage/umfrage-zu-unwahrheit-und-missbrauch-von-fakten-in-politik-und-medien/>

forums.<sup>306</sup> In particular, the state media have not escaped criticism for their reporting. In October 2014, “Tagesthemen” moderator Thomas Roth even had to apologize for a May broadcast that wrongly blamed a “pro-Russian separatist” for the violent deaths of two eastern Ukrainians. However, on the show's editorial blog, the editor-in-chief stated that “no one falsifies the facts because of bias, political calculations, or malicious intent.”<sup>307</sup>

The discrepancy between public and media-published opinion is also noticeable in connection with the reaction of the German-speaking audience, which accused the media of propagating war and calling for it to join. Following criticism from readers, editors have been forced to seek justification for their blog posts, for example regarding Russia and the DPR's culpability in the downing of Malaysian passenger plane MH17 over eastern Ukraine. However, it is worth noting here that those links that were given by the author of the article to the texts of the apology of the media are currently inactive, and the messages have been deleted.<sup>308</sup> This may indicate that the recognition of the untruthfulness of information is at odds with the main trends in the German-language media and is not desirable for the German government.

One of the “FAZ” articles says that if you read the reactions to the Ukrainian crisis in German electronic sources, you can see that “no one really thinks politicians and the media are so honest.”<sup>309</sup> On the contrary, U. Gumbrecht believes that the German word “verarschen” most accurately reflects the public mood, which can be translated into Russian as “keep for fools.” “Fundamental, systematic, distrust of the general public has become the price that the media and politicians must pay.”<sup>310</sup>

In addition, criticism of reporting on Russia is itself a topic in the German media: you can see articles that say that the media show anti-Russian tendencies, portray Russia as evil, thereby creating a hostile image of the country in readers.<sup>311</sup> It is important to note that in 2014 the newspaper Zeit published an appeal to the media, which stated that they must fulfill their obligations and provide objective information. More than 60 people joined this call - representatives of the economy, culture,

<sup>306</sup> Pörzgen G. Moskau fest im Blick: Die deutschen Medien und die Ukraine. // Osteuropa. Mai-Juni2014. Vol. 64. No. 5/6. Zerreißprobe: Ukraine: Konflikt, Krise, Krieg (MAI-JUNI 2014). Berliner Wissenschafts-Verlag. S. 293-310 URL: [https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/44937277.pdf?ab\\_segments=0%2Fbasic\\_search\\_gsv2%2Ftest&refreqid=fastly-default%3A3fe1dbef1afdf074a2320ca74d7d54638](https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/44937277.pdf?ab_segments=0%2Fbasic_search_gsv2%2Ftest&refreqid=fastly-default%3A3fe1dbef1afdf074a2320ca74d7d54638)

<sup>307</sup> Becker A. „Tagesthemen“-Moderator Thomas Roth entschuldigt sich on Air für Ukraine-Patzer. 02.10.2014. URL: <https://meedia.de/2014/10/02/tagesthemen-moderator-thomas-roth-entschuldigt-sich-on-air-fuer-ukraine-patzer/>

<sup>308</sup> Bläser V. Zum Russlandbild in den deutschen Medien // Politik und Zeit Geschichte (APUZ 47-48/2014) 11.11.2014. URL: <https://www.bpb.de/apuz/194826/zum-russlandbild-in-den-deutschen-medien?p=2>

<sup>309</sup> Gumbrecht H. U. Unter dem Strich: Morast. 20.03.2014. URL: [https://www.faz.net/aktuell/feuilleton/debatten/deutschland-und-die-krim-krise-12855289.html?printPagedArticle=true#pageIndex\\_2](https://www.faz.net/aktuell/feuilleton/debatten/deutschland-und-die-krim-krise-12855289.html?printPagedArticle=true#pageIndex_2)

<sup>310</sup> Ibid.

<sup>311</sup> Goeßmann D. Rebellion der Leser 10.05.2014. URL: [https://www.deutschlandfunk.de/ukraine-berichterstattung-rebellion-der-leser.761.de.html?dram:article\\_id=285010](https://www.deutschlandfunk.de/ukraine-berichterstattung-rebellion-der-leser.761.de.html?dram:article_id=285010) ; Halberschmidt T. „Lügenpresse“, wie wir das sehen. Kritikpunkt 9: „Tendenziöse Russland-Berichterstattung“. 23.01.2015. URL: <https://www.handelsblatt.com/unternehmen/it-medien/debatte-ueber-medien-kritikpunkt-9-tendenziöse-russland-berichterstattung/11258762-10.html>; Bidder B. Programmbeirat wirft ARD "antirussische Tendenzen" vor. 23.09.2014. URL: <https://www.spiegel.de/kultur/tv/ard-streit-um-ukraine-berichterstattung-a-993304.html>

the media, as well as “politicians of the old formation”, among which, for example, Gerhard Schröder, former Federal President of Germany Roman Herzog, former Mayor of Berlin Eberhard Diepgen, former Prime Minister Land of Brandenburg Manfred Stolpe, former chairman of the SPD Hans-Jochen Vogel, actor Mario Adorf and others.<sup>312</sup> Based on this, we can conclude that the German-speaking audience approaches news reports critically and expresses dissatisfaction openly, which is not an indicator of the success of the manipulative techniques of the German media.

However, there is another side to this as well. Some journalists justified their colleagues by pointing out that the publications in the German media touched on all topics. Hanna Beitzer's article, for example, says that the media printed information about various aspects, such as the influence of the “right sector” on the interim government and Maidan,<sup>313</sup> the connections of the Ukrainian Svoboda party with the National Democratic Party of Germany,<sup>314</sup> etc.<sup>315</sup> Kai Gniffke, editor-in-chief of “ARD-aktuell”, commented: “Journalistic work always means selection, weighing and therefore evaluation. Therefore, in the strictest sense of the word, “objectivity” never exists, and should not exist.”<sup>316</sup> However, it is worth noting here that objectivity is one of the fundamental principles of journalistic ethics and quality journalism in general. Highlighting the degrees of objectivity in this report can be seen as an attempt to justify ignorance of basic journalistic principles.

Another topic in the media is allegations that Russia uses a lot of “paid manipulators”, so-called “trolls”, who deliberately write propagandistic comments through social networks and on the pages of German-language media, in an attempt to influence German public opinion in this way.<sup>317</sup> This issue is debatable, since there is no direct evidence that comments that differ from the constructed point of view were left by non-existent people and are fictitious.

An important fact is the result of a survey conducted by Statista Research Department, a German online platform that provides data from market research and public opinion institutions in 2014 among the German population. This poll showed that 81% of the respondents agreed with the

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<sup>312</sup> Meister S. Reframing Germany's Russia policy – an opportunity for the EU // European Council on Foreign Relations: Policy Brief. April 2014; Zeit Online: „Wieder Krieg in Europa? Nicht in unserem Namen!“ 05.12.2014. URL: <https://www.zeit.de/politik/2014-12/aufruf-russland-dialog>

<sup>313</sup> Nienhuysen F. Rechte bringen Kiew ins Dilemma. 11.03.2014. URL: <https://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/nationalisten-in-der-ukraine-rechte-bringen-kiew-ins-dilemma-1.1909169>

<sup>314</sup> Beitzer H. Klitschkos rechte Hand. 07.02.2014. URL: <https://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/ukrainische-partei-swoboda-klitschkos-rechte-hand-1.1881049>

<sup>315</sup> Beitzer H. Blick aus der Blase. 19.03.2014. URL: <https://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/berichterstattung-ueber-die-krim-krise-blick-aus-der-blase-1.1914499-0>

<sup>316</sup> Ibid.

<sup>317</sup> Hans J. Russland: Putins bezahlte Trolle. 13.06.2014. URL: <https://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/1.1997470>; Stöcker Ch. Wie ich einmal Putins Trolle traf. 17.12.2017 URL: <https://www.spiegel.de/wissenschaft/mensch/trolle-von-waldirir-putin-propaganda-im-netz-kolumne-a-1183591.html>; Meister S., Puglierin J.. Perzeption und Instrumentalisierung: Russlands nicht-militärische Einflussnahme in Europa // DGAP kompakt, 10. Berlin: Forschungsinstitut der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Auswärtige Politik e.V.. 2015. URL: <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssaoar-53926-6> ; Online-troll im Dienste des Kreml „Putin ist genial!“ 07.04.2015. URL: <https://www.handelsblatt.com/politik/international/online-troll-im-dienste-des-kreml-rund-400-mitarbeiter-hat-die-trollfabrik/11602386-2.html?ticket=ST-6387507-3qoks00bYqm4STglcCok-ap4>

following statement: “President Putin has the right to use any methods to protect Russian interests.” In addition, 75% of respondents believed that Vladimir Putin is a politician who can be trusted. At the same time, more than half supported the assertions that the federal government should oppose Russia more decisively, the US and the EU should do everything to prevent other parts of Ukraine from passing to Russia, and that Ukraine should become an EU member soon. However, more than 60% did not agree that the division of Ukraine into Russian and Ukrainian parts is inevitable, and Russia and the West will cease to be partners for a long time. At the same time, most of them believed that Vladimir Putin was an “undemocratic politician.”<sup>318</sup>

Other polls conducted in 2014 at the request of the journalist Günter Jauch showed that Germans differed on whether or not they agreed with the accession of Crimea to Russia: the majority of East Germans were in favor of recognizing this fact, while the majority of Western Germans were against it. As for the political parties of Germany, only the Left Party and the Alternative for Germany were in favor. The majority took a 'no' position. The second poll was about whether Germans feel threatened. The data showed that both the majority of Germans and the majority of parties believed that danger emanated from Russia.<sup>319</sup> The results of another poll showed that 70% of Germans were afraid that there would again be a confrontation between the West and Russia.<sup>320</sup> However, data from another poll showed that the majority - 65% - hoped for a peaceful outcome of the conflict.<sup>321</sup>

If we consider the trend until the end of 2021, then the attitude of the Germans towards Russia has changed as follows. In 2015, according to ARD DetuschlandTrend, 81% of respondents were of the opinion that Russia “cannot be trusted”, 15% considered the country a reliable partner for the West. 12% of respondents answered that the Russian government respects basic democratic rights, and 83% - that it does not. At the same time, 50% denied the threat to Russia from the West, but 47% answered that they understood the fears of the Russian Federation. Confidence that the Minsk agreements to resolve the situation in eastern Ukraine was very low: only 13% of respondents thought so.<sup>322</sup> However, a year later, in 2016, the vast majority of Germans (81%) were in favor of closer relations with Russia.<sup>323</sup>

<sup>318</sup> Ansichten zur Krim-Krise. Statista Research Department. 07.03.2014. URL: <https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/291116/umfrage/ansichten-zur-krim-krise/#professional>

<sup>319</sup> Jauch G. Die Deutschen und die russische Außenpolitik. November 2014. URL: <https://www.infratest-dimap.de/umfragen-analysen/bundesweit/umfragen/aktuell/die-deutschen-und-die-russische-aussenpolitik/>

<sup>320</sup> Eine Umfrage zur politischen Stimmung im Auftrag der ARD-Tagesthemen und der Tageszeitung DIE WELT. Infratest dimap. Februar 2015. S.7 URL: [https://www.infratest-dimap.de/fileadmin/migrated/content/uploads/2015.02.05\\_DT1502\\_bericht.pdf](https://www.infratest-dimap.de/fileadmin/migrated/content/uploads/2015.02.05_DT1502_bericht.pdf)

<sup>321</sup> Glauben Sie, dass sich der Konflikt zwischen der Ukraine und Russland friedlich ohne Waffengewalt lösen lässt oder glauben Sie, dass es zu einer bewaffneten Auseinandersetzung kommt? 07.03.2014.URL: <https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/291090/umfrage/umfrage-zur-loesung-der-krim-krise/>

<sup>322</sup> Umfrage: Nur jeder Siebte hält Russland für vertrauenswürdig. 06.03.2015. URL: <https://www.zeit.de/politik/deutschland/2015-03/vertrauen-russland-umfrage>

<sup>323</sup> Umfrage: Deutsche wünschen sich engere Partnerschaft mit Russland. 27.04.2016. URL: <https://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/russland-deutsche-wollen-engere-partnerschaft-laut-umfrage-a-1089428.html>

By 2018, the trend continued: the majority of Germans - 58% - wanted rapprochement with Russia. Most supporters of rapprochement with Russia were supporters of the Alternative for Germany party (81%), a large number of supporters among supporters of the Left Party (72%) and the FDP (62%). The Union CDU/CSU (49%) and the SPD (47%) are also somewhat more in favor of rapprochement than distancing. Only supporters of the Greens (44%) were in favor of moving away from Russia. Residents of eastern Germany (72%) are much more likely to want rapprochement than residents of western Germany (54%).<sup>324</sup> The following year, 69% were convinced that too little cooperation with Russia was a complicating factor, and more than half of those polled envisioned more cooperation with Russia in the future.<sup>325</sup> 70% were in favor of Germany playing a more active role in resolving international crises. In 2021, most Germans were in favor of more intense relations between Russia and the EU as a whole.<sup>326</sup>

Thus, it can be seen that many German media, when covering the events in Ukraine and Crimea, presented false, unverified or one-sided facts, forming a negative image of Russia in public opinion, often transferring criticism of the political actions of the leadership to the whole country as a whole, which could not but affect the German public's perception of Russia. However, this formation of a negative information field in relation to Russia did not go completely unnoticed, as one can see quite a balanced criticism of the work of German journalists. At the same time, it should be noted that some messages regarding, for example, an admission to the dissemination of unverified data, are now deleted, which is an indicator of the existence of media censorship.

If we talk about public opinion, then it is worth pointing out the following trend: in 2014-2015 a large number of Germans believed that Russia was a threat and that she could not be trusted, they feared a new conflict. But at the same time, the majority of respondents during the time period from 2016 to 2021 advocated that relations between Russia and Germany and the EU as a whole be more intense. This shows that in the public minds of the people of Germany, the coverage of the Crimean crisis by the German media did not cause a negative reaction so much that the image of the enemy was formed, and the German society, despite the abundance of manipulative techniques, could be critical of the information provided and call on the media to perform their main function.

## **§2. German media about the role of Germany in the settlement of the Crimean crisis**

In general, for decades there has been a fairly stable view in Germany that peace and stability are only possible together with Russia, not against it. In December 2014, a call that criticism of

<sup>324</sup> Laut Umfrage: Mehrheit möchte Annäherung an Russland. 17.03.2018. URL: <https://www.merkur.de/politik/umfrage-zufolge-wuenscht-sich-mehrheit-deutschen-annaehderung-an-russland-zr-9703489.html>

<sup>325</sup> Ein Weckruf für die EU: Wie sicher fühlen sich die Europäer\_innen? // Security Radar 2019 Wake-up call for Europe! Wien. 2019. URL: <https://www.fes.de/e/ein-weckruf-fuer-die-eu-wie-sicher-fuehlen-sich-die-europaeer-innen>

<sup>326</sup> Klare Mehrheit wünscht engere Beziehungen zu Russland. 02.06.2021. URL: <https://www.ost-ausschuss.de/de/PM%20Forsa%20Gesamt>

Russian policy towards Ukraine should not lead to the destruction of relations between Germany and Russia built over the past 25 years was made by then-Chancellor adviser Horst Teltschik, former Defense Minister Walter Stütze, as well as one of the former Vice-Presidents of the Bundestag Antje Vollmer.<sup>327</sup> As one of the arguments, they cited the speech of Federal President Richard von Weizsäcker of October 3, 1990. On the day of German unity, he said:

“The Cold War is over. Liberty and democracy have gained the upper hand in all states ... Now they can so strengthen their relations and institutionalize them that from this a common way of life and peace emerges. For the peoples of Europe, this marks the beginning of a fundamentally new chapter in their history. Its goal is pan-European unification. This is a huge goal. We can reach it, but we can also miss it. We are faced with the clear alternative of either the unification of Europe or a return to nationalistic contradictions, which have become painful historical examples.”<sup>328</sup>

Taking into account the situation around Ukraine, the supporters of this position emphasize that at a time of great danger to the continent, Germany bears a special responsibility for maintaining peace. They appealed to the federal government to fulfill its obligations to ensure peace in Europe, as well as to the members of the Bundestag to pay tribute to the seriousness of the situation and to closely monitor the federal government's duty to maintain peace. In their opinion, anyone who only creates images of the enemy and deals with one-sided accusations only increases tension instead of helping to resolve the situation. The guiding principle of German politicians should be the integration of Russia, and not its exclusion from international organizations.<sup>329</sup>

Katrin Böttger points out that more than a hundred German-speaking experts on Eastern Europe also criticized the existing German policy and called for Russia to be clearly identified as the “aggressor”: “There is a clear aggressor and a clear victim in this war.”<sup>330</sup> The call was initiated by Ukraine expert Andreas Umland. His initiative was signed, among others, by the former correspondent of “ARD Russia” Klaus Bednarz, the European politician of the Green Party Rebecca Harms, the historian of Eastern Europe Karl Schlegel and others.<sup>331</sup>

Proponents of this position believe that if Moscow feels threatened by the EU and/or NATO, it should settle the issue in Brussels. In addition, according to them, Ukraine is not a member of these organizations and is not negotiating accession with them, but, nevertheless, citing the perceived danger

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<sup>327</sup> Zeit Online: „Wieder Krieg in Europa? Nicht in unserem Namen!“ 05.12.2014. URL: <https://www.zeit.de/politik/2014-12/aufruf-russland-dialog>

<sup>328</sup> Ansprache von Bundespräsident Richard von Weizsäcker beim Staatsakt zum "Tag der deutschen Einheit". URL: [https://www.bundespraesident.de/SharedDocs/Reden/DE/Richard-von-Weizsaecker/Reden/1990/10/19901003\\_Rede.html](https://www.bundespraesident.de/SharedDocs/Reden/DE/Richard-von-Weizsaecker/Reden/1990/10/19901003_Rede.html)

<sup>329</sup> Zeit Online: „Wieder Krieg in Europa? Nicht in unserem Namen!“ 05.12.2014. URL: <https://www.zeit.de/politik/2014-12/aufruf-russland-dialog>

<sup>330</sup> Böttger K. Die EU-Russland-Beziehungen: Rückblick und Ausblick im Zeichen der Ukraine-Krise. EU-Russland-Beziehungen // Integration – 3/2015. S. 204

<sup>331</sup> Zeit Online: Friedenssicherung statt Expansionsbelohnung. 11.12.2014. URL: <https://www.zeit.de/politik/2014-12/aufruf-friedenssicherung-statt-expansionsbelohnung>

from the West, Russia, in their opinion, is waging a “hybrid war” in the Donbass, which is already “killing and maiming thousands of people.”<sup>332</sup>

The appeal also states that “the Ukrainian Soviet Republic lost at least five million people between 1941 and 1944. More than two million Ukrainians were deported to Germany as forced laborers. About four million Ukrainian Red Army soldiers took part in the defeat of the Third Reich. In particular, we Germans cannot turn a blind eye again when it comes to the sovereignty of the post-Soviet republic and even the survival of the Ukrainian state.”<sup>333</sup>

According to experts, German policy towards Eastern Europe should be based on empirical values, factual knowledge and analysis, and not on “pathos, oblivion of history and general judgments”. And if the German government continues to call for caution and dialogue with Russia in this difficult situation, then there will be no progress. In their document, they indicate that this is not a call to war, but a change in attitude towards dialogue with Russia: a policy “based on reality” should take the place of “led by illusions”.<sup>334</sup>

Wilfred Jilge, a German historian and expert at the Center for the History and Culture of Eastern and Central Europe at the University of Leipzig, says that Germany could play one of the key roles in resolving the Crimean crisis, as the EU and NATO see it as a reliable partner in favor of order having political and economic weight. In addition, an important role is played by the fact that Germany has traditionally maintained good contacts with both Russia and Ukraine and has sufficient diplomatic experience to advance the Minsk process. From Jilge's point of view, Germany should have demanded a return to the rule of law in dialogue with Russia bilaterally and within the framework of the EU, NATO, G7/G20 and the OSCE.<sup>335</sup> Stefan Meister also agrees with him, believing that the policy towards Russia was a key area in which many allies of the Federal Republic of Germany advocated that the federal government should take responsibility for its implementation.<sup>336</sup>

Back in 2014, Professor Christian Wipperfürth emphasized that it was a serious mistake that the West made promises that it was not able to fulfill. In addition, there were no tripartite negotiations between Ukraine, the West and Russia in the winter of 2013/2014. Based on the situation that developed in the spring of 2014, advocating an early resolution of the conflict and reaching a compromise, he proposed the following steps:

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<sup>332</sup> Ibid.

<sup>333</sup> Zeit Online: „Wieder Krieg in Europa? Nicht in unserem Namen!“ 05.12.2014. URL: <https://www.zeit.de/politik/2014-12/auf-ruf-russland-dialog>

<sup>334</sup> Zeit Online: Friedenssicherung statt Expansionsbelohnung. 11.12.2014. URL: <https://www.zeit.de/politik/2014-12/auf-ruf-friedenssicherung-statt-expansionsbelohnung>

<sup>335</sup> Jilge W. Eine dauerhafte Verpflichtung: Die Ukraine. Außenpolitische Herausforderungen für die nächste Bundesregierung // DGAPkompakt. Sommer 2017. Nr. 6. S. 19 – 21.

<sup>336</sup> Meister S. Deutschland im Übergang zu einer neuen EU-Russland- und Osteuropapolitik // DGAPkompakt Nr. 6 Sommer 2017. S. 16-18. URL: <https://dgap.org/de/article/getFullPDF/29846>

- When the Crimeans vote for joining the Russian Federation, the West, Ukraine and Russia should come to a decision that Russia will not unite for at least six months, and also withdraw its troops. The West will refuse to tighten sanctions. Ukraine guarantees non-violence.

- The West recognizes that the current Ukrainian interim government has limited legitimacy until the upcoming elections. In return, Moscow will hold direct negotiations with Kyiv.

- Right-wing extremists will leave the government of Ukraine, after which a government will be formed with the involvement of representatives of the former ruling party. Acts of violence are investigated under international supervision.

- Ukraine declares its readiness to move to a federal type of state. The Ukrainian parliament is restoring the old language law. In return, Russia does not support pro-Russian separatists in eastern and southern Ukraine.

- The West provides Ukraine with a loan to prevent the country from going bankrupt: \$3 billion at a rate of 5%. In return, Moscow does not bring Ukrainian government bonds to the market.<sup>337</sup>

These steps, in the professor's view, could have been a pillar for building constructive dialogue, as they implied concrete actions by each side, which is the compromise solution. However, the arguments and proposals made by Christian Wipperfurth were not heeded by politicians in the FRG and the EU, and not a single point was used to resolve the crisis situation.

The opposite approach is represented by J. Puglierin. In her opinion, in his “bloody speech”<sup>338</sup> to the Russian people after the return of Crimea, Russian President Vladimir Putin has “made it clear” that he is no longer interested in a constructive partnership with the West, despite the fact that collective security in Europe can only exist if Western countries and Russia act together. But this would mean that Russia would have to refrain from “attacking its neighbors.” Vladimir Putin, according to Puglierin, in justifying Russia's actions, ignores the norms of international law, pointing to various past violations of international law by the West, but “the application of one “wrong” against another “wrong” does not lead to something right” - the author believes.<sup>339</sup>

In general, speaking about the conflict in Ukraine and the situation around it, the Germans seem to be “torn”.<sup>340</sup> On the one hand, they appreciate the importance of Western integration for security and stability. On the other hand, as already mentioned above, they cannot abandon the role of

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<sup>337</sup> Wipperfurth Ch. Russland, die Ukraine und der Westen: Alle gehen leer aus. Weitere Verschärfung oder rechtzeitige Umkehr // DGAPkompakt. N° 5. März 2014. S. 7. URL: [https://dgap.org/system/files/article\\_pdfs/2014-05\\_dgapkomp\\_wipperf\\_ukraine\\_de\\_www-3.pdf](https://dgap.org/system/files/article_pdfs/2014-05_dgapkomp_wipperf_ukraine_de_www-3.pdf)

<sup>338</sup> Note: We are talking about Vladimir Putin's address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation dated March 18, 2014. Address of the President of the Russian Federation 18.03.2014. URL: <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20603>

<sup>339</sup> Puglierin J. Wir dürfen die Annexion der Krim nicht einfach hinnehmen! Liebe man Russlands Präsident Putin gewähren, hätte dies verheerende Folgen für die internationale Politik // DGAP-Standpunkt, 3. Berlin: Forschungsinstitut der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Auswärtige Politik e.V. 2014. S. 2. URL: <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168ssoar-53023-9>

<sup>340</sup> Hacke C. Die Ukraine-Krise vor einer weiteren Eskalation? 461 // POLITISCHE STUDIEN 66. Jahrgang | Mai-Juni 2015. URL: [https://www.hss.de/download/publications/PS\\_461\\_UKRAINE.pdf](https://www.hss.de/download/publications/PS_461_UKRAINE.pdf)



Germany as a “bridge between East and West” after 1990, as well as the deeply rooted tradition of German-Russian cooperation and the so-called “feeling of kindred spirits of two nations” that arose based on cultural interaction. Former mayor of Bremen, Ralph Fücks, emphasizes that relations between Germany “oscillate between attraction and rejection, hostility and charm,” but in addition, anti-American sentiments are also appearing in Germany. Against this background, the German policy towards Moscow and Kyiv resembles a rather complicated balance.<sup>341</sup>

In Germany, there is an opinion that the international legal responsibility for resolving the current crisis lies with the United States, Russia, Great Britain and Ukraine, which signed the 1994 Budapest Memorandum, which subsequently, according to Fücks, turned out to be a disadvantageous exchange, since if Ukraine had retained nuclear weapons, Russia would, perhaps, “did not decide on the annexation of Crimea and intervention in the East of Ukraine.”<sup>342</sup> This statement is debatable, since if nuclear weapons were preserved, the status of Crimea and Sevastopol would most likely be defined differently.

Professor Christian Hacke, considering the actions of German Chancellor Angela Merkel in the situation of the crisis in Ukraine, points out that her tendency not to take ill-conceived, spontaneous foreign policy actions, her caution in making decisions showed themselves in this case too: she tried to prevent the escalation of the conflict, put before the president Russian Vladimir Putin certain commitments and lead the West to a common policy of moderate sanctions. Angela Merkel, according to Hacke, was trying to show that the conflict with Russia over Ukraine is primarily a European issue and that it should be resolved through diplomatic cooperation, and not escalate into a mediation war between two world powers through a forced US-Russian opposition. Also, Germany tried not to put itself in the foreground in matters of resolving the situation, relying on the understanding that Russia has vital interests in Ukraine, while Germany does not. At the same time, the author refers to German diplomacy as “Sisyphean labor”: Europe at that time was experiencing a euro crisis, partners could not reach a unanimous decision and had radically different opinions on key issues. At the same time, against the background of the aggravation of the conflict situation, the old confrontational reflexes towards Moscow were revived in Washington.<sup>343</sup>

The opinion that it was the German chancellor who played the leading role in the dialogue with Russia after the accession of Crimea, and also that the crisis around Ukraine is a “drama, the main characters of which are Vladimir Putin and Angela Merkel,” is also expressed by Kvortrup Matthew, a political observer and journalist, author of the biography “mathematics of power” - Angela Merkel. It

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<sup>341</sup> Fücks R. Seelenverwandte Gegner. 01.05.2014. S. 3. URL: <https://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/deutsch-russisches-verhaeltnis-seelenverwandte-gegner-1.1946467>

<sup>342</sup> Ibid.

<sup>343</sup> Hacke C. Die Ukraine-Krise vor einer weiteren Eskalation? // 461 POLITISCHE STUDIEN 66. Jahrgang | Mai-Juni 2015. URL: [https://www.hss.de/download/publications/PS\\_461\\_UKRAINE.pdf](https://www.hss.de/download/publications/PS_461_UKRAINE.pdf)

was she, according to the author, “in pure Russian”, in telephone conversations with Russian President Vladimir Putin said that the West could “help him save face” if Russia “leaves Ukraine”.<sup>344</sup>

One of the analyzes says that on the one hand, Russia is seen as a country with a huge “potential for destruction”, but on the other hand, Germany understands that the security of Europe can only be achieved together with Russia, and not against it. The authors point out that 2014 caused most German politicians to distrust Russia, a country that was previously considered a strategic partner.<sup>345</sup>

First, Germany took part in the settlement of the conflict between Russia and Ukraine through diplomatic actions and supported the concept of “strategic expectation” in the context of “Russian aggression.” However, when these efforts failed, Chancellor Angela Merkel advocated the imposition of sanctions, a decision supported by the majority of parties in the Bundestag. Some party representatives even thanked the chancellor for this method of solving the problem.<sup>346</sup>

For Germany, the situation that arose on the territory of Ukraine was “a violation of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of one of the European states,” and therefore a possible escalation of the conflict was seen as a prelude to an armed conflict in Europe as a whole. It is for this reason that the resolution of the conflict was the most important task for Berlin's foreign policy. Consequently, the doctrine of “strategic expectation” was the only method, since it was this that was the chance for a stable and consistent implementation of one's own policy.

Military operations in the Donbass became the reason for the Franco-German initiative. German Chancellor A. Merkel and French President F. Hollande paid visits to Kyiv and Moscow in February, during which they agreed on a ceasefire.<sup>347</sup> The debate over the legitimacy of possible NATO arms transfers to Ukraine also played an important role, since such actions could lead to serious differences of opinion between the United States and Germany.<sup>348</sup> Angela Merkel categorically ruled out this possibility, since, from her point of view, there was a danger of an aggravation of the conflict. Some German political scientists, for example, A. Rahr, believe that it was thanks to her policy that a pan-European war was prevented, which would have had much more devastating consequences than the Yugoslav wars of the 1990s.<sup>349</sup>

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<sup>344</sup> Qvortrup M. Angela Merkel: Europe's Most Influential Leader / transl. from English. N. Lisovoy. - M.: AST Publishing House, 2022. pp. 410-413.

<sup>345</sup> Kwiatkowska-Drożdż A., Frymark K. Analyse: Deutschland im Russland-Ukraine-Konflikt: eine politische oder eine humanitäre Aufgabe? 26.03.2015 URL: <https://www.bpb.de/203680/analyse-deutschland-im-russland-ukraine-konflikt-eine-politische-oder-eine-humanitaere-aufgabe>

<sup>346</sup> Deutscher Bundestag. Stenografischer Bericht. 20. Sitzung. Berlin. Donnerstag, den 13. März 2014. URL: <https://dip21.bundestag.de/dip21/btp/18/18020.pdf>

<sup>347</sup> Merkel und Hollande reisen nach Kiew und Moskau. 05.02.2015. URL: <https://www.welt.de/politik/ausland/article137141128/Merkel-und-Hollande-reisen-nach-Kiew-und-Moskau.html>

<sup>348</sup> Bittner J. Warum wollen die Amerikaner der Ukraine Waffen liefern? 31.08.2017. URL: <https://www.zeit.de/2017/36/ukraine-usa-waffenlieferung>

<sup>349</sup> Rahr A. Merkels Russlandpolitik. Zwischen Krisenmanagement und neuen Realitäten // WeltTrends • Das außenpolitische Journal. 131. September 2017. 25. Jahrgang. S. 31–36. URL: <http://welttrends.de/res/uploads/WeltTrends-131-Rahr.pdf>

From the beginning of the crisis, Germany tried to reach a ceasefire agreement.<sup>350</sup> This was the main task that formed the basis of the agreements signed in 2014.<sup>351</sup> For Germany, these documents were the first important step towards peace, and also served as the basis for further political negotiations. After the signing of the Minsk Protocol and the Minsk Memorandum, Angela Merkel announced that the sanctions imposed on Russia could be lifted depending on the full compliance with the agreements reached.<sup>352</sup>

The 2015 agreement, made necessary by the slow implementation of agreements already signed and the rapidly deteriorating security situation, outlined steps to resolve the conflict in Donbass.<sup>353</sup> Despite the fact that Germany saw this document as a way to a truce, at the same time, it was considered only as a way to temporarily de-escalate the conflict, since, from the German point of view, this decision would not allow Russia to achieve strategic goals regarding Ukraine. According to Sabina Fischer, for Germany, the Minsk Agreements to end the conflict in Donbass were not the result of a relationship of trust between Berlin, Paris and Moscow, but rather the result of Russia's isolation as well as increasing international pressure.<sup>354</sup>

But since Germany continued to view Russia as an important partner, without which many international conflicts could not be resolved, it was decided to use a dual strategy against Russia, which is a combination of a policy of containment and a policy of engagement.<sup>355</sup> It is this tactic that laid the foundation for further proposals for cooperation with Russia (such as, for example, the renewal of the partnership for modernization and the signing of a free trade agreement between the EU and the Eurasian Union).

Proposals for cooperation were submitted to Russia not only by leading representatives of the Social Democratic Party of Germany, but also by Christian Democrats led by Angela Merkel. At the same time, during the NATO summit held on 4 and 5 September 2014, Germany advocated strengthening NATO's eastern flank.<sup>356</sup>

<sup>350</sup> Ukraine-Treffen soll Waffenstillstand stabilisieren. URL: <https://www.dw.com/de/ukraine-treffen-soll-waffenstillstand-stabilisieren/a-18711325> \* Listed by the Russian Ministry of Justice in the Register of Foreign Media Agents

<sup>351</sup> Dokumentation: Minsker Protokoll vom 5. September 2014. 07.09.2014. URL: <https://www.bpb.de/internationales/europa/ukraine/191799/dokumentation-minsker-protokoll-vom-5-september-2014>  
Dokumentation: Das Minsker Memorandum vom 19. September. 02.10.2014. URL: <https://www.bpb.de/internationales/europa/ukraine/192488/dokumentation-das-minsker-memorandum-vom-19-september>

<sup>352</sup> Politische Konfliktlösung: Minsker Abkommen und Normandie-Format. 27.02.2017. URL: <https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/de/aussenpolitik/laender/ukraine-node/-/201850>

<sup>353</sup> Full text of the Minsk Agreements 12.02.2015. URL: <https://ria.ru/20150212/1047311428.html> (in Russian)

<sup>354</sup> Fischer S. Was Russland an Deutschland nicht versteht. 29.09.2020. URL: <https://www.ipg-journal.de/rubriken/aussen-und-sicherheitspolitik/artikel/was-russland-an-deutschland-nicht-versteht-4675/>

<sup>355</sup> Dembinski M., Schmidt H.-J., Spanger H.-J. Einhegung: die Ukraine, Russland und die europäische Sicherheitsordnung. // HSFK-Report 3/2014. Frankfurt am Main: Hessische Stiftung Friedens- und Konfliktforschung. 2014. S. 36. URL: <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssaoar-404057>

<sup>356</sup> Pressekonferenz von Bundeskanzlerin Merkel, Bundesaußenminister Steinmeier und Bundesverteidigungsministerin von der Leyen zur Teilnahme am NATO-Gipfeltreffen am 05.09.2014. in Newport/Wales. Mitschrift Pressekonferenz. URL: <https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-de/aktuelles/pressekonferenzen/pressekonferenz-von-bundeskanzlerin-merkel>

In general, it should be said that the official position of the Merkel government regarding the Russian-Ukrainian conflict was widely approved by a significant part of the German population. In 2014, almost 60% of respondents were in favor of Germany taking on the main role in resolving the crisis. The behavior of the European Union was also approved by the majority of respondents. Despite the reduction in German exports to Russia, the business community has accepted the primacy of politics over economics and the resulting sanctions imposed on Moscow.<sup>357</sup>

2019 brought some movement: a gradual withdrawal of troops in eastern Ukraine and an exchange of prisoners were carried out. In the meantime, Kyiv responded to Moscow's political demand and adhered to the so-called "Steinmeier formula," a proposal made in 2015 by then-Federal Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier for measures that could introduce a special status for the disputed territories of Donetsk and Lugansk.<sup>358</sup>

In 2020, the Munich Security Conference presented the "Twelve Steps to Strengthen Security in Ukraine and the Euro-Atlantic Region" - a statement that was another attempt to give new impetus to resolve the ongoing conflict on the territory of Ukraine.

The document was published by the Euro-Atlantic Security Leaders Group (EASLG), which is supported by four leading think tanks - the European Leadership Network ELN of the Munich Security Conference (MSC), the Russian International Affairs Council (RIAC) and Nuclear Treat Initiative (NTI). It was signed by 45 senior European and North American security experts, including former foreign ministers, former defense secretaries, former chiefs of staff, intelligence officers and a former US senator.<sup>359</sup> The statement includes four subject areas: security, humanitarian issues, economics and politics. It suggested the following steps:

Security steps:

1. Restoration of the JCCC - the Joint Center for Control and Coordination of the ceasefire and stabilization of the line of demarcation between the parties.
2. Establishment of the Normandy Four dialogue on crisis management at the military level.
3. Improving unhindered access and freedom of movement in the conflict zone.

Humanitarian steps:

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[bundesausseminister-steinmeier-und-bundesverteidigungsministerin-von-der-leyen-zur-teilnahme-am-nato-gipfeltreffen-am-05-09-2014-847870](https://www.bpb.de/203681/umfrage-die-meinung-der-deutschen-ueber-die-ukraine-krise)

<sup>357</sup> Umfrage: Die Meinung der Deutschen über die Ukraine-Krise. URL: <https://www.bpb.de/203681/umfrage-die-meinung-der-deutschen-ueber-die-ukraine-krise>; Statista Research Department. Stimmen Sie den folgenden Ansichten zur Rolle Deutschlands in der Ukraine-Krise eher zu oder stimmen Sie ihnen eher nicht zu? 30.04.2014. URL: <https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/299428/umfrage/umfrage-zur-rolle-deutschlands-in-der-ukraine-krise/>

<sup>358</sup> Goncharenko R. Minsk-2 zwischen Scheitern und Neustart. 12.02.2020. URL: <https://www.dw.com/de/minsk-2-zwischen-scheitern-und-neustart/a-52339518>\* Listed by the Russian Ministry of Justice in the Register of Foreign Media Agents

<sup>359</sup> Seiberling D. Großer Wurf oder Sackgasse? 25.03.2020. URL: <https://www.hss.de/news/detail/kontroverse-um-ukraine-positions-papier-news6068/> (Дата обращения: 29.06.2021); Twelve Steps Toward Greater Security in Ukraine and the Euro-Atlantic Region. URL: [https://media.nti.org/documents/EASLG\\_Statement\\_Ukraine\\_FINAL\\_updated\\_021920.pdf](https://media.nti.org/documents/EASLG_Statement_Ukraine_FINAL_updated_021920.pdf)

4. Consideration of cases of missing persons.
5. Planning and implementation of humanitarian demining initiatives.

Economic steps:

6. Assistance in the restoration of Donbass.
7. Studying the possibility of creating free trade zones.
8. Development of a roadmap for sanctions.
9. Elimination of radiological hazards.

Political steps:

10. Creation of a dialogue between the countries of the Euro-Atlantic region on building a system of mutual security.
11. Support and definition of the range of issues of electoral interaction between the EU and Russia.
12. National Identity Dialogue Initiative.

This document has attracted active criticism from various quarters:

- on the part of the United States, which saw in him an overly friendly tone towards Moscow, and on the part of the President of Ukraine V.A. Zelensky;
- from Ukrainian newspapers and bloggers;
- Petro Poroshenko stated that this document was drawn up in the Kremlin, and the Ukrainian Foreign Ministry announced that the Twelve Steps do not correspond to the official position of Ukraine and that the Ukrainian government does not consider this document as official Ukraine and that the Ukrainian government does not consider this document as official.<sup>360</sup>

The German political scientist Andre Hertel explains the Ukrainian criticism of the paragraph regarding the “national identity dialogue” with Russia by the fact that the text did not refer to “Russian aggression against Ukraine”. In Russia, there is talk of a “civil war” in eastern Ukraine. In addition, critics saw the Twelve Steps as a road map for easing sanctions against Russia. The Atlantic Council, in one of its statements, expressed the following idea: “The document describes the solution of the problem in a way that suits the Kremlin, perhaps to force members of the Russian elite to sign it.”<sup>361</sup>

The Ukrainian experts who signed the statement were not only criticized in the Ukrainian media, they were viewed as “traitors” on social networks, and they were also included in the “Mirotvorets” list, which now includes the chairman of the annual international security conference,

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<sup>360</sup> Theise E. Münchner Friedensplan in Ukraine umstritten. 19.02.2020. URL: <https://www.dw.com/de/münchner-friedensplan-in-ukraine-umstritten/a-52431986>\* Listed by the Russian Ministry of Justice in the Register of Foreign Media Agents

<sup>361</sup> Ibid.

Wolfgang Ischinger.<sup>362</sup> The following charges were brought against Ischinger: Attack on the sovereignty and territorial unity of Ukraine; Participation in propaganda activities of Russia (the aggressor state) against Ukraine; Manipulation of publicly significant information; Co-authorship of the Munich Twelve Steps Plan for Surrender and Partition of Ukraine.<sup>363</sup>

On the other hand, Daniel Seiberling believed that the Ukrainian criticism was not sufficiently substantiated and gave the following arguments: firstly, the document was developed and signed by people with rich experience in international politics. Secondly, Russia's participation shows the participation of a large number of parties, and not the “hand of the Kremlin.” Third, most of the moves are recognized as constructive, even by critics such as the Atlantic Council.<sup>364</sup>

The author explains the lack of dialogue on other controversial issues by two main reasons. The first is that in Ukraine there is no culture of constructive disputes and discussions in principle, and even in expert circles, since in debates the opponent is immediately attributed the inability to understand the scale of the theses presented, as well as this or that connection with the Kremlin.

The second reason is the ongoing domestic political struggle in Ukraine during Zelensky's presidency. Established in Minsk in March 2020 within the framework of the trilateral contact group (Ukraine, OSCE, Russian Federation), the „Consultative Group for Settlement of Peace in Donbas” to address practical issues related to cooperation with the People's Republics in such areas as elections and decentralization, also caused loud protests in Ukraine.

In general, by participating in the resolution of the Ukrainian conflict, Germany was able to strengthen its leadership role within the European Union. In public debate, there was little to no dispute about Germany's legitimacy to negotiate on behalf of the EU. Berlin played a key role in these negotiations. This is due not only to the fact that President Putin did not want to talk to any other country about resolving the conflict, but also to the fact that a significant part of the EU states, as well as the United States, were ready to entrust this task to Germany.

On the one hand, it was important for Germany and its Western partners to “put Putin in his place,” on the other hand, she still remained interested in continuing the dialogue and constructive relations with Russia.<sup>365</sup> Whether Germany's actions during the crisis in Ukraine were reasonable or opportunistic will become clear, according to the author, only in months or years.

However, the situation at the end of 2021 showed the following: the West's sanctions policy towards Russia has been preserved; The Munich agreements were not implemented by the Ukrainian

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<sup>362</sup> Note: The “Mirotvorets” website is a Ukrainian database created in 2014. It contains illegally obtained personal information of people who were in the war zone in Ukraine, in Syria, data of those who, from the point of view of the site owners, are the so-called “Kremlin agent”, separatist or “dangerous” for Ukraine.

<sup>363</sup> Seiberling D. Großer Wurf oder Sackgasse? 25.03.2020. URL: <https://www.hss.de/news/detail/kontroverse-um-ukraine-positionspapier-news6068/>

<sup>364</sup> Ibid.

<sup>365</sup> Wipperfürth C. Russland, die Ukraine und der Westen: Alle gehen leer aus // DGAP Kompakt. März 2014.

side; military actions in the East of Ukraine did not stop; there was a build-up of armaments in Western Ukraine. This indicates that the FRG, despite its political weight, was unable to play a decisive role and exert the necessary pressure on Kyiv to resolve the crisis.

It is worth noting that in an interview with Angela Merkel for the German newspaper “Die Zeit” in December 2022, there is an explanation for why the parties failed to achieve a diplomatic solution to the brewing conflict. The former chancellor admitted that the negotiations on compliance with the Minsk agreements were only an attempt by Western politicians to buy time so that the Ukrainian side could arm itself against Russia.<sup>366</sup> Her statement was later confirmed by F. Hollande.<sup>367</sup> This message was “unexpected” and “disappointing” for Russian President Vladimir Putin,<sup>368</sup> and, of course, had an extremely negative impact on the level of Russia's trust in Western countries, since such actions testify to the duplicity of Western politicians even in crisis situations that can provoke a serious armed confrontation.

### **§3. The imposition of sanctions and the attitude towards them in the German language discourse**

On March 13th, 2014, even before the official accession of Crimea to Russia, Angela Merkel made a statement at a meeting of the Bundestag that Russia's actions unfolding on the territory of Crimea are “illegal”, and the Russian government “uses the weakness of the neighboring state to its advantage.”<sup>369</sup> On March 20th, 2014, the Chancellor pointed to the “illegality of the referendum”, and also announced what consequences the accession of Crimea would have for Russia: isolation from membership in international organizations and the imposition of sanctions by the European Union. Angela Merkel's decision drew approval and gratitude from the majority of parties in the Bundestag, as well as from some researchers of the crisis.<sup>370</sup>

For example, Yana Pulgierin concludes in her article that the European community simply “needed to condemn Russia's steps” and apply diplomatic and economic sanctions so that international politics “was once again governed by the rules in force.” To do this, the Europeans, in her opinion, had

<sup>366</sup> Hildebrandt T., di Lorenzo G. Angela Merkel: "Hatten Sie gedacht, ich komme mit Pferdeschwanz?" // Die Zeit. 07.12.2022. URL: <https://www.zeit.de/2022/51/angela-merkel-russland-fluechtlingskrise-bundeskanzler/komplettansicht>

<sup>367</sup> Oysmüller Th. Nach Merkel auch Hollande: Minsk-Abkommen sollte Ukraine nur Zeit verschaffen // TKP. 02.01.2023. URL: <https://tkp.at/2023/01/02/nach-merkel-auch-hollande-minsk-abkommen-sollte-ukraine-nur-zeit-verschaffen/>

<sup>368</sup> Putin said that Merkel's words about the Minsk agreements were unexpected for him // TASS. 09.12.2022. URL: <https://tass.ru/politika/16553165> (in Russian)

<sup>369</sup> Deutscher Bundestag. Stenografischer Bericht. 20. Sitzung. Berlin, Donnerstag, den 13. März 2014. URL: <https://dip21.bundestag.de/dip21/btp/18/18020.pdf>

<sup>370</sup> Deutscher Bundestag. Stenografischer Bericht. 23. Sitzung. Berlin, Donnerstag, den 20. März 2014. URL: <http://dipbt.bundestag.de/dip21/btp/18/18023.pdf>; Rastvortseva A. N. Positions of the parties of the Bundestag in the debate on the accession of Crimea and the imposition of sanctions against the Russian Federation in 2014 // Russia and the modern world. 2022.1 (114). pp. 135 – 156. DOI: 10.31249/rsm/2022.01.08 URL: <http://rossovmir.ru/article.php?id=2226> (in Russian)

to overcome fears about their own economic vulnerability and stick to the course of imposing sanctions.<sup>371</sup>

Fabian Reinbold's article "Moscow's Pain Points" from March 4th, 2014 talks about the pros and cons of imposing sanctions against Russia. The advantage, from the author's point of view, is that they can be announced "arbitrarily and fairly quickly", and the disadvantage is that Russia will react with "punitive measures" against Western firms. In addition to general economic sanctions, the author considered it possible to introduce sanctions against individuals and firms. As for sanctions against the economic elite, they might have had the effect of increasing pressure on Russian President Vladimir Putin, but it is impossible to make only him responsible for the course of the Kremlin, Reinbold believes. In addition, he spoke about other punitive measures, such as entry restrictions and asset freezes abroad for government representatives and deputies who supported "intervention in the affairs of Ukraine." The only question for Reinbold was whether such pressure would be sufficient to resolve the situation.<sup>372</sup>

The mechanism and stages of the imposition of sanctions are described in detail by Sabine Fischer in the article "EU sanctions against Russia: objectives, action and further appeal." The author said that the European Union accused Russia of "an aggressive policy aimed at destabilizing Ukraine." The sanctions measures taken against the Russian Federation were aimed at a political settlement of the crisis, which was supposed to be based on the preservation or restoration of the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine. Russia, from the EU's point of view, should have reconsidered the "annexation" of Crimea and Sevastopol, renounce "illegal supplies of weapons and armed forces to Ukraine", and also use its influence to resolve the issue of the separatist movement in Donetsk and Lugansk, urging residents to surrender. But above all, the Kremlin leadership had to fulfill the Minsk agreements adopted in 2014-2015.

From the EU's point of view, sanctions are one of the tools, among other things, to advance the common goals of foreign and security policy. At the same time, in general, they should not have a "punitive" effect, but a certain influence on the policy or actions of the country, organization or individuals. It is important that the sanctions should have been aimed precisely at those who are "responsible for the crisis that has arisen", which, in fact, became the reason for their introduction, and not have negative consequences for the general population. From a European perspective, sanctions on Russia were supposed to change the calculation of the political leadership and encourage the choice and implementation of "more constructive policies in the conflict in Ukraine," thanks to pressure from

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<sup>371</sup> Puglierin J. Wir dürfen die Annexion der Krim nicht einfach hinnehmen! Liebe man Russlands Präsident Putin gewähren, hätte dies verheerende Folgen für die internationale Politik // DGAP-Standpunkt 3. Berlin: Forschungsinstitut der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Auswärtige Politik e.V. 2014. URL: <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168ssoar-53023-9>

<sup>372</sup> Reinbold F. Moskaus wunde Punkte. 04.03.2014. URL: <https://www.spiegel.de/politik/ausland/krim-krise-sind-sanktionen-gegen-russland-effektiv-a-956765.html>



outside - that is, through diplomatic and economic restrictions, as well as from inside - from actors directly affected by the sanctions.<sup>373</sup>

The picture of the aims of the sanctions policy that emerged in the political debate among the member states of the European Union and in the United States was rather blurred. The range of possible measures ranged from influencing the course of Russian politics to seeking to replace the Russian political leadership as a whole.

The heads of state and government of the EU member states decided to introduce sanctions measures in several stages.<sup>374</sup> On March 6th, 2014, a three-stage mechanism of sanctions was adopted, which were then called “Crimean sanctions”<sup>375</sup> in the program document of the Eastern Committee of the German Economy in 2017:

(1) diplomatic sanctions, such as the expulsion of diplomats, the exclusion of countries from international organizations, and the restriction of international contacts;

(2) “targeted measures” against individuals and entities, such as entry bans and asset freezes in the EU;

(3) sectoral economic sanctions.<sup>376</sup>

The first diplomatic stage was launched immediately and consisted of the suspension of bilateral negotiations between the European Union and Russia on the issue of a new agreement, visa facilitation and further visa waivers.

In March 2014, the first sanctions came into force, and at the end of June, the import of goods from Crimea and Sevastopol was banned. This ban was expanded at the end of July to include a refusal to invest in infrastructure and natural resource projects in Crimea, and also affected the provision of loans and credits to the peninsula and Sevastopol.

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<sup>373</sup> Fischer S. EU-Sanktionen gegen Russland: Ziele, Wirkung und weiterer Umgang. // SWP-Aktuell 26/2015. Berlin: Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik -SWP- Deutsches Institut für Internationale Politik und Sicherheit. 2015. URL: <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-424014>

<sup>374</sup> E.g.: Rat der Europäischen Union. Verordnung (EU) Nr. 208/2014 des Rates vom 5. März 2014 über restriktive Maßnahmen gegen bestimmte Personen, Organisationen und Einrichtungen angesichts der Lage in der Ukraine. URL: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2014/208/oj>; Rat der Europäischen Union. Verordnung (EU) Nr. 269/2014 des Rates vom 17. März 2014 über restriktive Maßnahmen angesichts von Handlungen, die die territoriale Unversehrtheit, Souveränität und Unabhängigkeit der Ukraine untergraben oder bedrohen. URL: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2014/269/oj>; Rat der Europäischen Union. Verordnung (EU) Nr. 811/2014 des Rates vom 25. Juli 2014 zur Änderung der Verordnung (EU) Nr. 269/2014 über restriktive Maßnahmen angesichts von Handlungen, die die territoriale Unversehrtheit, Souveränität und Unabhängigkeit der Ukraine untergraben oder bedrohen. URL: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2014/811/oj> и др.

<sup>375</sup> Metz A. Positionspapier. Schrittweise aus der Krise. Eine Bilanz des Ost-Ausschusses nach drei Jahren europäisch-russischer Wirtschaftssanktionen. Ost-Ausschuss der Deutschen Wirtschaft. 25.07.2017. URL: [https://www.oaov.de/sites/default/files/page\\_files/OA-Positionspapier-Drei-Jahre-Wirtschaftssanktionen.pdf](https://www.oaov.de/sites/default/files/page_files/OA-Positionspapier-Drei-Jahre-Wirtschaftssanktionen.pdf)

<sup>376</sup> Götz R. Wirtschaftssanktionen gegen Russland // Osteuropa. 7/2014. URL: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/264540835\\_Sanktionen\\_gegen\\_Russland](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/264540835_Sanktionen_gegen_Russland); Fischer S. Sanktionen als Dauerzustand? Vorschlag für eine Flexibilisierung der EU-Sanktionspolitik gegenüber Russland // SWP-Aktuell 24/2017. Berlin: Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik -SWP- Deutsches Institut für Internationale Politik und Sicherheit. URL: <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-51614-9>

In December 2014, a ban was added on the purchase of real estate, financial and service companies, as well as on the offer of tourist services from companies based in the European Union. The export of goods from the energy, transport and telecommunications sectors was also banned. As a result, Crimea and Sevastopol found themselves in economic isolation from the European Union.<sup>377</sup>

In mid-April, the list of targeted sanctions was expanded again. It included both Russians and Ukrainians who were held responsible for the destabilization in eastern Ukraine. In addition, the West reacted to the expansion of the military conflict in eastern Ukraine and the exercises that the Russian military had been conducting near the Ukrainian border since February.

In the summer of 2014, the EU tightened sanctions in two stages:

- In mid-July, the following decision was made: to impose sanctions on organizations and people, but targeted sanctions should also affect entities that provide support to decision makers. The EU justified the need for these measures by the fact that the fighting has escalated, and earlier efforts to establish peace have failed.

- At the end of July, high-ranking representatives of the Russian executive power were included in the list, including several members of the National Security Council of the Russian Federation, representatives of special services, Chechen President Ramzan Kadyrov and Krasnodar Territory Governor Alexander Tkachev.<sup>378</sup>

Finally, the EU activated the third stage of the sanctions mechanism: an arms embargo and restrictions on trade in dual-use goods and equipment necessary for oil production were introduced. In addition, access to the European Union capital market was restricted for a group of Russian banks and companies.

In September 2014, under the pretext of Russian support for the Donbass through the supply of weapons, materials, and military supplies, the EU again tightened sanctions. This was met with criticism in Moscow, as the move was made despite Russia's approval of the September 5th Minsk ceasefire protocol.<sup>379</sup>

Until January 2015, no further sanctions were applied against Russia. Only when the situation escalated again did the EU expand the list of measures. Sanctions introduced in March 2014 were extended until September 2015. Two deputy defense ministers and a deputy chief of the Russian General Staff were included in the list of Russians subject to individual sanctions. Accordingly,

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<sup>377</sup> Fischer S. EU-Sanktionen gegen Russland: Ziele, Wirkung und weiterer Umgang // SWP-Aktuell 26/2015. Berlin: Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik -SWP- Deutsches Institut für Internationale Politik und Sicherheit. 2015. URL: <https://nbnresolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ss0ar-424014>

<sup>378</sup> Ibid. S. 2.

<sup>379</sup> Protocol (following the consultations of the Trilateral Contact Group on joint steps aimed at the implementation of the Peace Plan of the President of Ukraine P. Poroshenko and the initiatives of the President of Russia V. Putin) 05.09.2014. URL: <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/a/a/123258.pdf> (in Russian)

between March 2014 and February 2015, the European Union implemented all three phases of sanctions.

Sabine Fischer in 2015 offered four recommendations for further consideration of sanctions:

1. The EU's position on sanctions must be as strong as it is transparent. The EU must make it clear that the purpose of the sanctions is not to bring about a complete regime change in Russia, but only to resolve the conflict in Ukraine. This should also include a clear indication of the conditions under which sanctions will be lifted, relaxed or tightened.

2. "Action must follow." Since Moscow will not "return Crimea and Sevastopol to Ukraine" in the foreseeable future, sanctions should be maintained. If Russia, for its part, makes a significant contribution to the de-escalation of the situation in Donbas, the EU should respond by easing sanctions. Moreover, this must be done, even if Washington does not take these steps. Washington, Brussels and Berlin should discuss sanctions policy openly and objectively so as not to jeopardize transatlantic cooperation.

3. If the conflict escalates further, the EU and the US could impose targeted restrictive measures on individuals.

4. Despite difficult conditions, the EU must still strive to improve its ties with Russian society in order to counteract the perception of its policies as anti-Russian and aggressive. There are various options for this, from stepping up work with the media to unilateral steps to increase mobility. Thanks to its many-sided relationship with Russia, Germany, according to Fischer, could play a key role here.

In her article, Fischer concluded that, in the medium to long term, sanctions should remain an element of the relationship between the EU and Russia. She stressed that such a policy could have a positive impact on the situation in Ukraine and the region as a whole only if it was included in a broader political strategy for Eastern Europe. This would include, among other things, diplomatic initiatives from the West in those areas where this is possible.<sup>380</sup> This position seems to be quite consistent, since it not only clearly indicates the goals of the Western side, but also demonstrates a willingness to maintain dialogue without allowing open confrontation.

Speaking about the consequences of the sanctions policy, an expert on economic relations with Russia of the German Science and Politics Foundation in one of his works Roland Goetz gives a table of sanctions scenarios in which he identifies 4 possible outcomes:

"Negotiations": Russia stops "military support for the separatists on the territory of Ukraine." The latter, in turn, cease fire and retreat. In response, the EU is gradually lifting the imposed sanctions.

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<sup>380</sup> Fischer S. EU-Sanktionen gegen Russland: Ziele, Wirkung und weiterer Umgang // SWP-Aktuell 26/2015. Berlin: Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik -SWP- Deutsches Institut für Internationale Politik und Sicherheit. 2015. URL: <https://nbnresolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-424014>

Such a scenario would give the Russian economy a chance to return to the path of cooperation and growth.

“Victory”: Russia reduces “military support,” the separatists are defeated, the EU gradually lifts the sanctions, which, as in the first scenario, will strengthen the position of the Russian economy.

“Split”: Russia increases “military support,” “separatists” conquer Eastern Ukraine, the EU expands sanctions, as a result of which the economic situation in Russia worsens.

“Intervention”: Russia “supports the separatists by conquering (Eastern) Ukraine”, the EU maximizes sanctions by imposing an oil embargo. The result will be a deep economic recession in Russia, a depreciation of exchange rates, a decrease in foreign exchange reserves, inflation, a fall in real incomes, and a large government budget deficit.<sup>381</sup>

Thus, the author saw two positive options for the European economy, implying the preservation of economic cooperation, and two negative ones, in which sanctions measures are expanded, and cooperation with Russia is reduced. At the same time, Goetz emphasizes that, despite the fact that sanctions play only an accompanying role, Western diplomacy cannot refuse them, as this would be an admission of its impotence.

In November 2014, the article “Crimean Crisis: No New EU Sanctions” stated that the European Union was refusing to impose new, heavier sanctions. Despite the fact that the use of force by Russia is unacceptable, and the European Union is “extremely concerned about dangerously growing” tension between Russia and Ukraine, it does not plan to take punitive measures, but only calls for restraint on both sides and requires Moscow to release Ukrainian ships and ensure free passage Kerch Strait.<sup>382</sup>

Further, on July 1st and December 19th, 2016, June 28th and December 21st, 2017, July 5th and December 21st, 2018, June 27th and December 19th, 2019, June 29th, 2020, March 12th, 2021 assessing the situation with the non-implementation of the Minsk agreements, The Council of the EU extended the restrictive measures for another six months to allow a further assessment of the situation.<sup>383</sup>

The imposition of sanctions has caused a wide debate in the European Union, and, of course, in Germany. Professor Gerhard Simon, in his article “Ukraine - a hindrance in German-Russian relations”, discussed the supporters and opponents of such measures, saying that the German

<sup>381</sup> Götz R. Wirtschaftssanktionen gegen Russland // Osteuropa. 7/2014 URL: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/264540835\\_Sanktionen\\_gegen\\_Russland](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/264540835_Sanktionen_gegen_Russland)

<sup>382</sup> Krim-Krise: Keine neuen EU-Sanktionen. 28.11.2014. URL: <https://www.zdf.de/nachrichten/heute/konflikt-mit-russland-ukraine-will-deutsche-schiffe-100.html>

<sup>383</sup> Restrictive measures in view of Russia's actions destabilising the situation in Ukraine (sectoral restrictive measures) URL: <https://www.sanctionsmap.eu/#/main/details/26/?search=%7B%22value%22:%22%22,%22searchType%22:%22%7B%7D%7D>  
Restriktive Maßnahmen der EU als Reaktion auf die Krise in der Ukraine. URL: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/de/policies/sanctions/ukraine-crisis/>

government and especially Chancellor Angela Merkel are consistently in favor of sanctions, but are heavily criticized in Germany and some southern countries EU. The arguments against sanctions, from the author's point of view, make it especially clear that Ukraine is perceived as a destructive factor in good relations with Russia.<sup>384</sup>

About the opponents of sanctions and their arguments, Simon said the following:

- those who oppose the sanctions either “completely ignore the reasons” for which the sanctions were imposed on Russia, or else “reject them as unimportant.” They cite such facts as, for example, that the population of Crimea independently decided to secede from Ukraine, that Russia is not waging a war in the east of Ukraine, but we are talking about a civil war in the Donbass. Thus, the realities, from Simon's point of view, are replaced by euphemistic terminology.

The expert's statement regarding the replacement of “realities” with special lexical devices is controversial, since even in German domestic political discourse, as can be seen from the above analysis of sources, there is no consensus on what causes the Crimean crisis, how the accession of Crimea to the Russian Federation should be indicated and what are the reasons for certain actions of Russia.

- Opponents of sanctions demand their lifting because they believe that this is the only way to improve relations with Russia, which is necessary to resolve conflicts in Europe and the world.

- Another argument is the statement that Germany is politically and economically dependent on good relations with Russia. Therefore, representatives of the interests of the German economy often call for an end to sanctions, as they will harm not only the Russian, but also the German economy.

These points can be called quite objective, since dialogue is always the most democratic option for resolving a crisis, especially if the actions taken by one of the parties turn out to be destructive both for the object of sanctions and for the initiator of such a policy.

Those who oppose sanctions, according to Simon, are also “against Ukraine.” But the author notes that they are not the majority in Germany, but have significant support and prominent supporters in the political class and in society. Among them are former Chancellor Helmut Schmidt, who died in November 2015, and Gerhard Schröder, as well as a number of prominent journalists and business leaders, right (Alternative für Deutschland) and left (Die Linke). Interesting is also the fact that there is a cross-party consensus in the state of Thuringia that sanctions against Russia should be lifted.<sup>385</sup>

Helmut Schmidt, for example, in an interview for the newspaper “Die Zeit”, called the sanctions, and especially the attempt to ban entry for the Russian elite, “stupid nonsense”<sup>386</sup> and

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<sup>384</sup> Simon G. "Die Ukraine–Störfaktor der deutsch-russischen Beziehungen." // Zeitschrift für Außen-und Sicherheitspolitik. 2019. S.1-11.

<sup>385</sup> Ibid. S. 57.

<sup>386</sup> Naß M. Kampf um die Ukraine - „Putins Vorgehen ist verständlich“, Interview mit Helmut Schmidt. 27.03.2014. URL: <http://www.zeit.de/2014/14/helmut-schmidt-russland/komplettansicht>

criticized: “If there was a general conference like the one held in 1975 in Helsinki - high-ranking employees cannot be excluded from the trip! One of the problems with these personal sanctions is who lifts them? And when will they be cancelled?...”; “Economic sanctions also have a symbolic meaning, but they affect the West as much as they affect the Russians.”<sup>387</sup> Gerhard Schröder also considers such measures meaningless.<sup>388</sup>

Gabriele Krone-Schmalz, speaking out against the sanctions, emphasizes that the accusation of violating international law is unlawful, and the application of sanctions will not give anything but a retroactive effect.<sup>389</sup> Christian Wipperfurth agreed with this, saying that sanctions lead to a dead end.<sup>390</sup>

Frank Elbe - ambassador, lawyer and publicist - is fundamentally against sanctions. He believed that if they are necessary, they should work, be legal, and the decision on their application should be made within the framework of the UN Security Council. In addition, anyone who resorts to the application of a sanction must expect a response in the form of counter-sanctions, which postpones the moment when the parties can sit down at the negotiating table indefinitely. At the same time, Elbe emphasizes that the EU would not have agreed to the imposition of sanctions if the defenders of Donbass and the Russian leadership had not been blamed for the crash of the Malaysian airliner, but talk about the culprits quickly subsided, and the only thing that was established was that the results of the investigation into the crash should not be published.<sup>391</sup>

Elbe also criticized the position of the then President of the Federal Association of German Industry, Ulrich Grillo, and the German Minister of Economics, Gabriel, who, in his opinion, were mistaken in talking about economic sanctions because they overlooked the fact that it is economic relations - as long as they remain intact - that contribute to understanding, especially in crisis situations. As a result of sanctions and counter-sanctions, Russia's imports from Germany decreased by

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<sup>387</sup> Ibid.

<sup>388</sup> Ismar G., Haselberger S., Blumenkron M.M. „Die unsinnigen Russland-Sanktionen müssen weg“. 03.05.2020. URL: <https://www.tagesspiegel.de/politik/altkanzler-Schröder-im-interview-die-unsinnigen-russland-sanktionen-muessen-weg/25795514.html>; Rastvortseva A. N. Opinion of ex-Chancellors of Germany on the Crimean crisis and sanctions against Russia // Bulletin of the Omsk University. Series "Historical Sciences". 2022. V.9, No. 3 (35). pp. 156–163. DOI: 10.24147/2312-1300.2022. 9(3).156-163 URL: <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/mnenie-eks-kantslerov-germanii-o-kryskom-krizise-i-sanktsiyah-protiv-rossii> (in Russian)

<sup>389</sup> Krone-Schmalz G. Russland verstehen – der Kampf um die Ukraine und die Ignoranz des Westens. 9. Auflage. Verlag C.H.Beck, München 2015. S. 116.

<sup>390</sup> Wipperfurth Ch. Russland, die Ukraine und der Westen: Alle gehen leer aus. Weitere Verschärfung oder rechtzeitige Umkehr // DGAPkompakt. N° 5. März 2014. S. 6. URL: [https://dgap.org/system/files/article\\_pdfs/2014-05\\_dgapkomp\\_wipperf\\_ukraine\\_de\\_www-3.pdf](https://dgap.org/system/files/article_pdfs/2014-05_dgapkomp_wipperf_ukraine_de_www-3.pdf)

<sup>391</sup> Elbe F. Die Krise mit Russland: Gibt es Licht am Ende des Tunnels? // ifo Schnelldienst. ifo Institut - Leibniz-Institut für Wirtschaftsforschung an der Universität München. München. Vol. 68. Iss. 16. S. 31-38. 2015.

20% already in 2014, and by 2016 the figure reached 41%.<sup>392</sup> At the same time, the vast majority of EU countries opposed the sanctions.

“Die Zeit” journalist Christoph Schlitz opined: “These Mickey Mouse sanctions will not impress anyone in Moscow, they do not contribute to Russia’s readiness for dialogue, they only serve the purpose of temporarily securing a fragile unity within the European Union [ ...]. Sanctions against Russia cannot be a targeted strategy: they are very risky and can lead to high costs without guaranteeing the achievement of the West's goals. [...] Anyone who uses sanctions as a means of pressure must be prepared to end the path they have chosen and enter the sanctions spiral. There are serious doubts that many European countries such as Spain, Portugal or Cyprus will take part in this. Putin knows this. In the case of Russia, the maximum level of sanctions escalation would be, for example, a boycott of oil and gas. On the one hand, this will cause significant damage to Russia, hit the Russian population hard, but on the other hand, it may first stabilize Putin's power in his own country. Does Europe really want this?”<sup>393</sup>

His colleague, Michael Stürmer, was also skeptical of such measures: “Sanctions are politics between war and peace. From the very beginning, they were conceived as a means of decisive communication, combined with an opportunity for both sides to retreat without losing face. Perhaps the sanctions prevented the worst. But they still have not been able to achieve their real goal. It doesn't look like this will change anytime soon. Western sanctions are working, but not as expected. The downturn in the Russian economy, along with falling oil prices, exacerbated the effects of the sanctions, but at the same time gave the Russian president the opportunity to blame the West in general, and Germany in particular, for the predicament. [...]. The situation is serious enough, but it can become even more serious. In the West, a key question needs to be asked about what relations with Russia should look like in the medium term, what kind of arms control and energy security is needed, and what remains of the modernization partnership dream.”<sup>394</sup>

The opposite opinion is shared by Richard Herzinger, a journalist for the newspaper „Die Welt”, who considers sanctions the only and necessary measure, since there can be no talk of an armed conflict. But at the same time, if the “Kremlin lord” feels that Western Europe stops fighting because of fear of possible economic problems and adopts a policy of violence that is contrary to international law, he will not stop at the accession of Crimea and will try to take control of other neighboring

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<sup>392</sup> Metz A. Positionspapier. Schrittweise aus der Krise. Eine Bilanz des Ost-Ausschusses nach drei Jahren europäisch-russischer Wirtschaftssanktionen. Ost-Ausschuss der Deutschen Wirtschaft. 25.07.2017. S.13. URL: [https://www.oaev.de/sites/default/files/page\\_files/OA-Positionspapier-Drei-Jahre-Wirtschaftssanktionen.pdf](https://www.oaev.de/sites/default/files/page_files/OA-Positionspapier-Drei-Jahre-Wirtschaftssanktionen.pdf)

<sup>393</sup> Pro und Contra: Sind Sanktionen gegen Russland sinnvoll? // Die Welt vom 18.03.14 URL: <https://www.welt.de/debatte/kommentare/article125926051/Sind-Sanktionen-gegen-Russland-sinnvoll.html>

<sup>394</sup> Stürmer M. Sanktionen gegen Russland reichen nicht // Die Welt vom 20.03.2015 URL: <https://www.welt.de/debatte/kommentare/article138629490/Sanktionen-gegen-Russland-reichen-nicht.html>

countries, primarily the turn of the Baltic countries. And this leaves the West no choice but to apply sanctions as a means to stop Putin's expansionism.<sup>395</sup>

Johannes Post, who has worked for many years as a lawyer, consultant and civil servant in Russia and Ukraine, is of the opinion that in any case, sanctions will hurt both sides. "But what will they do? A couple of visas and frozen accounts won't knock Putin off course if we don't first understand why he's doing it."<sup>396</sup>

So, positions regarding the need to impose sanctions against Russia and their effectiveness in the German-speaking discourse are again divided. As the analysis of studies shows, despite the fact that the official position of Germany is shared by the majority of authors, a fairly large number of experts either do not consider sanctions a method that can really bring countries out of a crisis situation, or see them as a danger of worsening it, as they emphasize their negative impact. in the opposite direction: to Germany and Europe.

If we look at the attitude towards sanctions among representatives of political parties in Germany, we can see the following: the German company specializing in market and consumer data Statista conducted a survey asking the question - do you think the imposition of Western sanctions against Russia because of its behavior in Crimea right? - and got the following results:

The Free Democratic Party of Germany, the Green Party, the Social Democratic Party were mostly (more than 55%) in favor, representatives of the Christian Democratic Union were both in favor - 45%, and "against" - 45%, and the results of the survey among the "left" showed a clear position "against" - 74%.<sup>397</sup>

Another 2015 poll found that 45 percent of CDU/CSU supporters thought sanctions were the appropriate response to Russia's actions, with another 45 percent disagreeing. The Social Democrats in the majority - 55 percent - agreed with the sanctions, and 41% believed that they should have been tightened. In both cases, the coalition parties must overcome another hurdle that could damage their anti-Russian rhetoric. On the right side of the political scene, the Eurosceptic Alternative for Germany (AfD) party is trying to defeat disillusioned CDU/CSU voters using pro-Russian slogans, on the other hand, the post-communist party of the Left has been clearly pro-Russian in its speeches.<sup>398</sup>

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<sup>395</sup> Pro und Contra: Sind Sanktionen gegen Russland sinnvoll? // Die Welt vom 18.03.14 URL: <https://www.welt.de/debatte/kommentare/article125926051/Sind-Sanktionen-gegen-Russland-sinnvoll.html>

<sup>396</sup> Völkerrechtler über den Ukraine-Konflikt "Das wird Putin nicht stoppen" 17.03.2014. URL: <https://www.tagesschau.de/ausland/ukraine-interview-posth100.html>

<sup>397</sup> Umfrage zu Sanktionen gegen Russland aufgrund der Krim-Krise. Statista Research Department. 10.03.2014. URL: <https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/292793/umfrage/umfrage-zu-sanktionen-gegen-russland-aufgrund-der-krim-krise/>

<sup>398</sup> Kwiatkowska-Drożdż A., Frymark K. Analyse: Deutschland im Russland-Ukraine-Konflikt: eine politische oder eine humanitäre Aufgabe? 26.03.2015 URL: <https://www.bpb.de/203680/analyse-deutschland-im-russland-ukraine-konflikt-eine-politische-oder-eine-humanitaere-aufgabe>



As for Germans, a survey conducted in March 2014 showed that the majority of respondents in both East and West Germany oppose the strengthening of already imposed sanctions, and 47% of East Germans believed that these measures should be lifted altogether.<sup>399</sup> After that, in September 2014, another survey was conducted regarding the tightening of sanctions, despite their negative impact on Germany. 54% of the respondents were in favor, 38% were against.<sup>400</sup> In November, the majority also agreed that the measures taken are sufficient.<sup>401</sup>

Poll Statista Research Department, in which the inhabitants of Germany were asked about who would be more harmed by the actions, 47% of respondents saw a danger for all EU countries, 44% - specifically for Germany. Only 7% of respondents believed that the measures would harm only Russia.<sup>402</sup> A 2014 article by Klaus Ulrich also states that the economic downturn due to the Crimean crisis will primarily affect those countries that have close trade relations with Russia.<sup>403</sup>

In 2016, another survey was conducted among German citizens regarding their partial or complete abolition. 35% of respondents said that the sanctions are justified, 34% believed that the sanctions should be partially lifted, 22% were in favor of a complete removal.<sup>404</sup>

Comparative statistics of 2016 and 2018 are also interesting, showing the results of answering the question of whether it is necessary to soften, maintain or tighten sanctions against Russia. The results were as follows: in 2016, 40% were in favor of easing sanctions, and in 2018 - 38% of respondents; 29% in 2016 and 45% in 2018 were in favor of cancellation; for tightening - 24% in 2016 and only 14% of recipients in 2018.<sup>405</sup>

In June 2021, 49% of respondents were in favor of maintaining or expanding sanctions, 44% were in favor of reducing sanctions or their complete abolition.<sup>406</sup>

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<sup>399</sup> Krim-Krise: Sanktionen gegen Russland. MoMa DeutschlandTREND März 2014. URL: <https://www.infratest-dimap.de/umfragen-analysen/bundesweit/umfragen/aktuell/100-tage-groko-mehrheit-unzufrieden-mit-start-der-neuen-bundesregierung/>

<sup>400</sup> Umfrage zur Verschärfung der EU-Sanktionen gegen Russland trotz Nachteilen für Deutschland. Statista Research Department. 05.09.2014. URL: <https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/321494/umfrage/umfrage-zur-verschaerfung-der-eu-sanktionen-gegen-russland-trotz-nachteilen-fuer-deutschland/>

<sup>401</sup> Ukraine-Konflikt: Sanktionen gegen Russland // MoMa DeutschlandTREND. November 2014. URL: <https://www.infratest-dimap.de/umfragen-analysen/bundesweit/umfragen/aktuell/sterbehilfe-hohe-akzeptanz-in-der-bevoelkerung-ukraine-konflikt-mehrheit-gegen-ausweitung-der-sanktionen-gegen-russland/>

<sup>402</sup> Wem würden Wirtschaftssanktionen im Kontext der Krim-Krise schaden? Statista Research Department. 13.03.2014. URL: <https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/292795/umfrage/umfrage-zu-den-betroffenen-durch-wirtschaftssanktionen-in-der-krim-krise/>

<sup>403</sup> Ulrich K. Krim-Krise: Welche Folgen gibt es für die Weltwirtschaft? 11.04.2014. URL: <https://www.dw.com/de/krim-krise-welche-folgen-gibt-es-für-die-weltwirtschaft/a-17561294>\* Listed by the Russian Ministry of Justice in the Register of Foreign Media Agents

<sup>404</sup> Meinung zu den Sanktionen der EU gegen Russland. Statista Research Department. 07.07.2016. <https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/572729/umfrage/meinung-zu-den-sanktionen-der-eu-gegen-russland/>

<sup>405</sup> Meinung zum Umgang mit den Sanktionen gegen Russland wegen Ukraine-Konflikt. Statista Research Department. 22.05.2018. URL: <https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/566902/umfrage/meinung-zum-umgang-mit-den-sanktionen-gegen-russland-wegen-ukraine-konflikt/>

<sup>406</sup> Klare Mehrheit wünscht engere Beziehungen zu Russland. 02.06.2021. URL: <https://www.ost-ausschuss.de/de/PM%20Forsa%20Gesamt>

However, Klaus Naumann, in his study, said that before Russia “eliminates the reasons that led to the sanctions”, their mitigation or cancellation “is out of the question”, since only the unity of NATO and the EU can force Moscow “think”. As a first step, the author suggested giving assurances that NATO would never use any weapon against Russia unless Russia attacked a NATO country. In return, Russia would have to ensure full and verifiable implementation of the Minsk agreements for eastern Ukraine, which would, according to the author, return the Russian-German relationship to cooperation. The goal of Germany, Europe and NATO, from his point of view, should be to force Russia to return to cooperation and avoid a protracted confrontation that only hurts both sides.<sup>407</sup>

According to Spangenberg, the sanctions were not an end in themselves; they were linked to very specific German and EU expectations. In particular, they discussed progress in resolving the Ukrainian conflict, that is, the implementation of the Minsk agreements. Negotiations were conducted within the framework of the OSCE and especially intensively in the format of the four countries of the so-called Normandy Group, which includes Germany. From the author's point of view, there are grounds for optimism: negotiations between Russia and Ukraine began after the exchange of prisoners and an agreement on further separation. However, the settlement of the conflict in Ukraine is still far away.<sup>408</sup>

Heinrich August Winkler in his interview expressed the hope that “after a sober analysis of its crisis, Russia will return to international cooperation and abandon its aggressive policy in the east of Ukraine.” Sanctions, in his opinion, were a kind of compensation for the fact that there were no other ways to respond to military aggression from Russia. At the same time, Winkler believes that these sanctions were so dosed that they dealt a kind of targeted blow: they influenced precisely certain people who were involved in the development of the crisis. In addition, these measures have been designed in such a way that they can be canceled at any time.<sup>409</sup>

That is, these actions, from the point of view of German experts, represent a “well-thought-out dual strategy”, which consists in preventing violations of international law, and, at the same time, in maintaining dialogue and offering cooperation. The author believes that one of the most bitter disappointments for the President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin was supposed to be that he was unable to withdraw Germany from the EU and NATO and that neither the EU nor the North Atlantic Alliance fell apart.<sup>410</sup>

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<sup>407</sup> Naumann K. Russland, die Ukraine und Europa // Politische Studien 461. 66. Jahrgang | Mai-Juni 2015 S. 23-24.

<sup>408</sup> Spangenberg A. „Es ist viel Vertrauen verloren gegangen“. 05.12.2019. <https://germania.diplo.de/ru-de/vertretungen/botschaft/-/2285404>

<sup>409</sup> Baberowski J., Winkler H. A. “Erbschaft Der Sowjetunion. Der Ukraine-Konflikt in Historischer Perspektive. Eine Diskussion” // Journal of Modern European History / Zeitschrift Für Moderne Europäische Geschichte / Revue D'histoire Européenne Contemporaine. vol. 13. no. 3. 2015. S. 291–305. URL: [www.jstor.org/stable/26266187](http://www.jstor.org/stable/26266187)

<sup>410</sup> Ibid.

Thus, one can see that the sanctions imposed after the annexation of Crimea to Russia were, from the point of view of the German government, a necessary measure. Angela Merkel received the support of the majority of parties in the Bundestag, many researchers also spoke in favor of the introduction of sanctions. However, a large number of experts spoke out against the imposition and extension of sanctions, pointing out the negative impact both on bilateral relations and on the internal situation in Germany and the EU as a whole. This position was supported by representatives of various spheres: ex-Chancellors of Germany, the Alternative for Germany party, the Left party, journalists, businessmen. They also made statements that the sanctions are illegal, their imposition not only does not contribute to the establishment of dialogue, but also leads to a dead end. In addition, counter-sanctions will be retaliatory measures that will affect the cooperation of countries and may worsen the crisis situation.

In terms of public opinion regarding sanctions, in 2014 the majority of Germans opposed the introduction of these measures. By 2021, the trend has remained roughly the same: almost half of those surveyed were in favor of easing or completely lifting sanctions.

#### **§4. Economic and political interaction between Russia and Germany after the Crimean crisis**

The basis of German-Russian relations after “Russia has become a market of unlimited opportunities” is formed by the economy.<sup>411</sup> Former German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder in his memoirs said that the strategic partnership between Berlin and Moscow is of fundamental interest for both states. Germany should be interested in economic cooperation with Russia and strengthening interaction, without fear of “too close rapprochement between Russia and Germany”, which, according to the ex-chancellor, is an unfounded statement in the 21st century.<sup>412</sup>

According to former Bundestag Deputy Gernot Erler, despite the fact that today one can often hear the phrase that the world is going through the most severe crisis in relations between Russia and the West since the end of the Cold War, stable areas of interaction remain, and among them is economic.<sup>413</sup> One of the aspects of the impact of the Crimean crisis on economic relations - the imposition of sanctions - was considered earlier. Further, it will be studied how the indicators of cooperation between Russia and Germany have changed under the influence of sanctions until 2021.

As Kerstin Westphal pointed out in 2014, relations with Russia and Russian-Ukrainian differences in energy have always been the focus and subject of differences in foreign and energy

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<sup>411</sup> Spanger H.-J. Paradoxe Kontinuitäten. Die deutsche Russlandpolitik und die koalitionenären Farbenlehren // hsfk-Report (Frankfurt) Nr.12/2005. S.19.

<sup>412</sup> Schröder G. Solutions. My life in politics / transl. from German G. Leonova. - M.: Publishing house "Europe", 2007. c. 464-465. (in Russian)

<sup>413</sup> Erler G. Analyse: Den Eskalationsprozess stoppen - Ziele der Deutschen Russlandpolitik. 08.05.2018. URL: <https://www.bpb.de/internationales/europa/russland/analysen/268835/analyse-den-eskalationsprozess-stoppen-ziele-der-deutschen-russlandpolitik>

policy towards each other. The Crimean crisis has raised fears that cooperation between the countries in the field of energy and climate policy, as well as foreign policy in the field of energy, will suffer significant damage.<sup>414</sup>

At the same time, it is worth noting that the Schwerin government has always been skeptical about the sanctions imposed against Russia, as they hit the shipyards in the federal state of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern and the food industry as a result of Russian counter-sanctions.<sup>415</sup> Other leaders of the East German states also criticized, including Lower Saxony and North Rhine-Westphalia. Saxony Minister of Economics Martin Dulig viewed the sanctions only as a catalyst for the already declining business in Russia.<sup>416</sup>

According to the Federal Ministry of Economy and Energy, already in 2013 the volume of bilateral trade fell by almost 5%. In 2014 - by 7.1%, and in 2015 the volume decreased by 23.9%, which was the strongest decline since 2009. Further, in 2016 there was a further decrease of 6.8%. However, in 2017 the trend reversed and a 19.2 percent increase could be observed compared to the previous year.

For exports, a similar picture emerged, with volumes falling by 18.4 percent in 2014 and then another 25.8 percent in 2015. In 2016, the decline was only 1.2%. The following year, exports from Germany to Russia increased again by almost 20 percent.<sup>417</sup>

In order to expand economic cooperation between the two countries, there is a German-Russian strategic working group on economics and finance,<sup>418</sup> and in September 2015, a Russian-German business platform was founded by four German and Russian business associations with the political support of both countries.<sup>419</sup>

In 2016, Germany was the second most important supplier country for Russia with 10.7% of Russian imports after China and the third most important buyer country (7.4%). Russia's most important export commodities are raw materials, especially crude oil and natural gas, as well as

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<sup>414</sup> Westphal K. Russlands Energielieferungen in die EU: die Krim-Krise: wechselseitige Abhängigkeiten, langfristige Kollateralschäden und strategische Handlungsmöglichkeiten der EU // SWP-Aktuell 11/2014. Berlin: Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik -SWP- Deutsches Institut für Internationale Politik und Sicherheit. URL: <https://nbnresolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssaoar-377593>

<sup>415</sup> Adler S., Hasselmann S. Die Sanktionen und ihre Folgen für ostdeutsche Unternehmen. 25.10.2020. URL: [https://www.deutschlandfunk.de/umgang-mit-russland-die-sanktionen-und-ihre-folgen-fuer.724.de.html?dram:article\\_id=486382](https://www.deutschlandfunk.de/umgang-mit-russland-die-sanktionen-und-ihre-folgen-fuer.724.de.html?dram:article_id=486382)

<sup>416</sup> Stöber S. Was bringen die Sanktionen? 18.07.2019 URL: <https://www.tagesschau.de/faktenfinder/eu-sanktionen-russland-135.html>

<sup>417</sup> Russische Föderation - Wirtschaftliche Beziehungen. Einleitung. URL: <https://www.bmw.de/Redaktion/DE/Artikel/Aussenwirtschaft/laendervermerk-russische-foederation.html>

<sup>418</sup> Russian-German Working Group on Strategic Cooperation in the Field of Economics and Finance URL: <https://russland.ahk.de/ru/mediacentr/novosti/detail/rossiisko-germanskaja-rabochaja-gruppa-po-strategicheskomu-sotrudnichestvu-srg-v-oblasti-ehkonomiki-i-finansov> (in Russian)

<sup>419</sup> The position of the Russian-German Chamber of Commerce. Russian-German business platform Moscow. 22 October 2015 URL: [https://russland.ahk.de/filehub/deliverFile/657ac5db-0c16-4ffb-8719-f904dcae8331/791542/2015-11-17\\_Positionspapier\\_AHK\\_Unternehmerplattform\\_ru.pdf](https://russland.ahk.de/filehub/deliverFile/657ac5db-0c16-4ffb-8719-f904dcae8331/791542/2015-11-17_Positionspapier_AHK_Unternehmerplattform_ru.pdf) (in Russian)

products from the metallurgical and petrochemical industries. Russia is an important market for German goods due to the continued high need to modernize its economy. In 2018, according to customs statistics, Russian exports to Germany increased by a third, and imports of German goods by five percent. Germany and the EU have retained their positions as suppliers and buyers of Russian products.<sup>420</sup>

The following year, Germany was able to increase its share in Russia's foreign trade by 0.7% to 8.7% and remained Russia's second largest trading partner. At the same time, the German-Russian trade turnover fell by 10.9 percent. Exports to Russia increased by about 3.6 percent, while Russian exports to Germany fell by about 13.4% mainly due to lower oil and gas prices.<sup>421</sup>

In 2020, Germany still ranked second in importance among Russia's trading partners, despite falling trade volumes. The share of the Federal Republic in Russia's foreign trade fell to 7.3%. German-Russian trade in goods reached a ten-year low. Russian exports fell by 35.2% due to raw material prices, imports from Germany - by 8.5%. Foreign direct investment fell to about 3.0 billion euros, a decrease of almost 90 percent compared to the same period last year.<sup>422</sup>

On the one hand, starting from 2020, we can talk about the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on the cooperation of countries,<sup>423</sup> on the other hand, according to Michael Harms, there is still a certain long-term trend that began with economic sanctions and the aggravation of the conflict in 2014.<sup>424</sup> In Germany's foreign trade, Russia as a trading partner dropped from 13th to 14th place. However, despite this, Federal Minister of Economics Peter Altmeier stated at the interregional conference on strategic cooperation between Russia and Germany in 2020 that “for the first time in several years, we again feel hope on major political issues ... The visit of the Federal Chancellor to Moscow was a clear indication of our determination and desire to expand our mutual economic relations. I would like to see a fresh start in our bilateral relations.”<sup>425</sup>

If we consider the impact of the Crimean crisis on the number of German companies in Russia, represented in almost all 83 subjects of the Federation, we can see the following picture: in 2017 their number fell by 5.2% (to 4965), and by 2020 it dropped to less than 4000 Overall, Russia's trade with

<sup>420</sup> Russland in Zahlen. Aktuelle Wirtschaftsdaten für die Russische Föderation. Frühjahr 2019. URL: <https://germania.diplo.de/blob/1231218/43104333277ade1e0276a67b5e3fa82c/2019-fruehjahr-data.pdf>

<sup>421</sup> Russland in Zahlen. Aktuelle Wirtschaftsdaten für die Russische Föderation. Frühjahr 2020. URL: <https://germania.diplo.de/blob/1257556/9f429cb9d04f0a6547083f572542cb58/2020-fruehjahr-data.pdf>

<sup>422</sup> Russland in Zahlen. Aktuelle Wirtschaftsdaten für die Russische Föderation. Frühjahr 2021. URL: [https://russlandahk.sharepoint.com/sites/web/Documents/russland.ahk.de/Infothek/Publikationen/RiZ/2021/RiZ1\\_2021.pdf](https://russlandahk.sharepoint.com/sites/web/Documents/russland.ahk.de/Infothek/Publikationen/RiZ/2021/RiZ1_2021.pdf)

<sup>423</sup> Rastvortseva A. N. Problems of cooperation between Russia and Germany in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic // Bulletin of the Saratov University. New series. Series: History. International relations. 2022. Vol. 22, no. 2. pp. 207 – 213. DOI: 10.18500/1819-4907-2022-22-2-207-213 URL: <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/problemy-sotrudnichestva-russii-i-germanii-v-borbe-s-pandemiy-covid-19> (in Russian)

<sup>424</sup> Harms M. Stellungnahme: »Entwicklung der deutsch-russischen Wirtschaftsbeziehungen« // Russland-Analysen NR. 399. 09.03.2021. S. 13-16. URL: <file:///C:/Users/alexa/Downloads/RusslandAnalysen399.pdf>

<sup>425</sup> Kinkartz S. Russland-Sanktionen: Was soll's? 18.02.2020. URL: <https://www.dw.com/de/russland-sanktionen-was-solls/a-52423759>\* Listed by the Russian Ministry of Justice in the Register of Foreign Media Agents

almost all other major partners has declined. Trade between the EU and Russia in 2020 was also at its lowest level since 2005. According to the “Deutschlandfunk” article, some Russian regions, where European and German companies used to be actively represented, are being filled with manufacturers and suppliers from the Asian region.<sup>426</sup>

Companies in Saxony that do business with Russia have experienced a rather tangible decline as a result of the restrictions imposed after the events in Crimea. Since 2013, trade with Russia in Saxony has decreased by 70%. No other federal state has suffered such losses. East Germans were generally more affected than western Germans, although the scale of their business was much smaller.

It is interesting to note that Klaus Kräher, director of Niles-Simmons, a machine tool company that is part of the world-famous NSH Machine Tool Group (NSH), in this situation draws attention to the policy of the United States: “In today's situation, we already see that the US is certainly pushing through certain interests. If you look at the investment activity of the United States or American investors in Russia, since 2014 it has not decreased, but has grown significantly.” Hans Naumann, the owner of the company, accused the United States of wanting to drive a wedge between the EU and Russia in order to prevent the expansion of the European alliance.<sup>427</sup>

In addition, the imposition of sanctions had an impact on the price of oil. The consequence of this was that the purchasing power of Russians, as well as the ability to invest and buy German goods, decreased significantly. Accordingly, imports fell sharply. It is also noted that other companies also suffered export losses, which had to look for other niches for interaction with Russia. For example, the company from Chemnitz, which began to carry out projects for the railway industry, or the electrical connector manufacturer Bals from Freiwald, which was forced to reorganize into the production of charging stations for electric vehicles.<sup>428</sup>

It is important to note that in order to support and develop enterprises, the work is carried out by the Russian-German Chamber of Commerce,<sup>429</sup> which represents the interests of German companies in Russia and supports Russian companies in their cooperation with Germany. In addition, the chamber formulates the interests of the German economy for the economic and political bodies of Russia and Germany, and also maintains active contacts between German and Russian business associations and ministries. Thus, the chamber of commerce promotes bilateral economic relations between Russia and Germany. For 2021, about 1,000 companies were members.

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<sup>426</sup> Adler S., Hasselmann S. Die Sanktionen und ihre Folgen für ostdeutsche Unternehmen. 25.10.2020. URL: [https://www.deutschlandfunk.de/umgang-mit-russland-die-sanktionen-und-ihre-folgen-fuer.724.de.html?dram:article\\_id=486382](https://www.deutschlandfunk.de/umgang-mit-russland-die-sanktionen-und-ihre-folgen-fuer.724.de.html?dram:article_id=486382)

<sup>427</sup> Ibid.

<sup>428</sup> Ibid.

<sup>429</sup> AHK Russland Für die Wirtschaft vor Ort – mit der Delegation der Deutschen Wirtschaft. URL: <https://russland.ahk.de/>

Michael Harms, as a representative of the Eastern Committee, points out that cooperation between Russia and Germany is necessary. To change the bilateral relationship, the following measures were taken:

- In 2018, the Russian Association of Entrepreneurs and Industrialists (RSPP) and the Eastern Economic Committee adopted a Memorandum of Understanding that led to the creation of the “German-Russian Initiative for the Harmonization of Technical Regulations”. The purpose of this initiative is to provide legislators with recommendations on how to adapt or change regulations to make it easier for companies to supply to the relevant economic zone (EU, EAEU) or to implement projects more easily.

- On December 11, 2020, a new body began its work - the German-Russian Council of Entrepreneurs, linking governments, the German-Russian Chamber of Commerce and Russian business associations. From the German side, it was headed by the chairman of the Eastern Committee, Oliver Hermes, and the president of the WTP, Rainer Seele. Council members are high-ranking representatives of companies and associations. From the Russian side, its members were deputy ministers of all ministries and departments dealing with economic issues.

In addition, it was planned that the Eastern Committee would be a partner and directly responsible, executing organization of the German-Russian theme year “Economy and sustainable development 2020-2022”. One of the main areas of work was to be cooperation in order to restructure the economy in order to change it towards climate neutrality. In addition, it was planned to consider opportunities for cooperation within the European Green Deal and in the field of hydrogen technologies. An important role was also assigned to such topics as digitization and the economics of healthcare and agriculture, technical regulation, the localization of German companies in Russia, the implementation and support of dual vocational training, as well as export from Russia.

On February 16th, 2021, the next conference on strategic cooperation between Russia and Germany was held, organized by the Russian-German Chamber of Commerce, the Association of German Chambers of Commerce and Industry and the Representative Office of the German Economy in the Russian Federation.<sup>430</sup> Andreas Schmitz, president of the Düsseldorf Chamber of Commerce and Industry, recommended that German companies carefully study the potential of the Russian market: “He who does not take risks does not drink champagne.”<sup>431</sup> In addition, it was emphasized that the interest of German companies in Russia is unchanged and “the prospects for good business are still high.” Russian companies are open to new technologies and offer great potential for German-Russian

<sup>430</sup> 8. Russland-Konferenz 2021 „Neue Wege: Deutsch-Russische Partnerschaften“. URL: <https://russland.ahk.de/events/russland-konferenz>

<sup>431</sup> Gute Gewinnaussichten trotz herausfordernden Marktumfelds in Russland. URL: <https://www.duesseldorf.ihk.de/aussenwirtschaft/auslandsmaerkte/russland/aktuelles-aus-russland/russland-konferenz-2021-4944000>

cooperation, especially in the hydrogen sector. Felix Neugart, Managing Director of NRW Global Business, a foreign trade promotion agency, stressed the importance of Russia for the German market.

Another significant factor in relations between Russia and Germany in the context of the situation in 2014 was the intensified discussion about the energy dependence of Germany and the EU on Russia, associated with the construction of the Nord Stream 2 pipeline.<sup>432</sup> For several years, the federal government maintained that this was a purely commercial project.<sup>433</sup> At a meeting between Vladimir Putin and Sigmar Gabriel in 2015, the German foreign minister announced that the issue should be resolved “among ourselves” so that there would be no “political interference”. He also assured that he would personally take care of the transfer of the project under the jurisdiction of Germany.<sup>434</sup> However, then the German side admitted that political factors should also be taken into account in the Nord Stream 2 project.<sup>435</sup>

The German position in relation to the new gas pipeline was as follows: in 2019, most politicians and parties in the Bundestag were in favor of building a gas pipeline along the bottom of the Baltic Sea. However, the imposition of sanctions, as well as the situation with A. Navalny\*, changed the balance of power of the German parties.

But, despite repeated attempts to stop the process of laying the pipe, the official position of the FRG has not changed. The German government opposed the application of US sanctions, which were considered direct interference in the energy policy of the European Union and Germany itself. In addition, politicians also expressed the hope that the construction will be completed soon, as the German chemical industry needs additional gas, and the economic benefits of double the supply are obvious. At the same time, it was emphasized that the Germans take the political problems of their partners seriously.<sup>436</sup>

However, the gas pipeline is necessary for both Russia and Germany, which became clear a few years after the commissioning of Nord Stream 1. According to German Ambassador to Moscow

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<sup>432</sup> Meister S. Die Sackgasse der deutschen Ostpolitik: wie die Bundesregierung ihre eigene Russland- und Ukraine politik torpediert // DGAP-Standpunkt 3. Berlin: Forschungsinstitut der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Auswärtige Politik e.V. 2019. URL: <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-61445-4>; Rastvortseva A. N. Nord Stream 2 in the Mirror of Party Discussions in Germany. // Bulletin of St. Petersburg University. International relations. 2021. 14(1), pp. 97–111. DOI: 10.21638/spbu06.2021.106 URL: <https://irjournal.spbu.ru/article/view/10678> (in Russian)

<sup>433</sup> Braucht Europa überhaupt das Nord-Stream-Gas? URL: <https://www.dw.com/de/braucht-europa-ueberhaupt-das-nord-stream-gas/a-47430064>\* Listed by the Russian Ministry of Justice in the Register of Foreign Media Agents

<sup>434</sup> Hans J. Was Gabriel und Putin besprochen haben. 29.10.2015. URL: <https://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/russland-was-gabriel-und-putin-besprochen-haben-1.2713657>

<sup>435</sup> Spangenberg A. „Es ist viel Vertrauen verloren gegangen“. 05.12.2019. URL: <https://germania.diplo.de/ru-de/vertretungen/botschaft/-/2285404>

\* included in the list of foreign agents

<sup>436</sup> Regierung wirft USA "Einmischung" vor. 21.12.2019. URL: <https://www.tagesschau.de/ausland/trump-nord-stream-2-sanktionen-103.html> ; US-Sanktionen gegen Nord Stream 2 in Kraft. 21.12.2019 URL: <https://www.tagesschau.de/ausland/trump-nord-stream-2-sanktionen-101.html> ; Bundesregierung verurteilt US-Sanktionen gegen Nord Stream 2 als "Einmischung" 21.12.2019. URL: <https://www.welt.de/newsticker/news1/article204499818/Energie-Bundesregierung-verurteilt-US-Sanktionen-gegen-Nord-Stream-2-als-Einmischung.html>



Dr. Geza Andreas von Geyr: “At present, we are firmly committed to the continuation of gas transit through Ukraine and support trilateral negotiations between the EU Commission, Russia and Ukraine, hopefully with success in the near future.”<sup>437</sup> Minister Altmaier, who announced the creation of a German-Russian working group on energy policy, stressed that he sees “great potential for our future cooperation” here.<sup>438</sup>

V. Schneider-Deters believes that the rapprochement between the EU and the Russian Federation has a chance of success only if the relationship is strictly focused on the economic aspect, not including the export of so-called “European values”. From his point of view, this should be guided by common economic interests, without putting mutual trust at the forefront. And the dialogue between the European Union and the Eurasian Economic Union on free trade could be the beginning.<sup>439</sup>

In addition to the imposition and tightening of sanctions, other measures were taken against Russia, such as, for example, depriving Russia of the right to vote in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe<sup>440</sup> or expelling it from the Group of Eight<sup>441</sup>, which Reinhold Bocklet called “inevitable”.<sup>442</sup> This was seen as a signal from “seven Western governments” about how much they resented Russia's actions and the violation of Ukraine's sovereignty.<sup>443</sup> On this occasion, Angela Merkel wrote the following: “Currently, there is no G8 - neither as a specific summit, nor as a format.”<sup>444</sup> In 2016, Spiegel magazine published an article stating that Russia's return to the group was “ruled out”.<sup>445</sup> In the same year, in the new “White Paper” of the German Defense Ministry, dedicated to ensuring national security, Russia ranked third in the list of the ten most serious threats to Germany. According to the document, it has turned from a partner into a rival, which “increases military activity

<sup>437</sup> Spangenberg A. „Es ist viel Vertrauen verloren gegangen“. 05.12.2019. URL: <https://germania.diplo.de/ru-de/vertretungen/botschaft/-/2285404>

<sup>438</sup> Kinkartz S. Russland-Sanktionen: Was soll's? 18.02.2020. URL: <https://www.dw.com/de/russland-sanktionen-was-soll/a-52423759> \* Listed by the Russian Ministry of Justice in the Register of Foreign Media Agents; Rastvortseva A. N. Features of Russian-German energy cooperation at the beginning of Olaf Scholz's chancellorship (on the example of the Nord Stream-2 transnational project) // Student and science (humanitarian cycle) - 2022: materials of the international student scientific and practical conference: [Electronic resource]: scientific publication / ch. ed. Ivanov A. G.; resp. ed. Makarenko E. A., Magnitogorsk State Technical University named after V.I. G.I. Nosov. – Electronic text data. (9.16 MB). - Magnitogorsk: FGBOU VPO "MGTU", 2022. p. 65 - 70. (in Russian)

<sup>439</sup> Schneider-Deters W. Ukrainische Schicksalsjahre 2013–2019 Band 2 Die Annexion der Krim und der Krieg im Donbass. Berliner Wissenschafts-Verlag. 2021 S. 18

<sup>440</sup> Stewart S. Der Europarat und Russland. Glaubwürdigkeit verlangt konsequente Entscheidungen // SWP-Aktuell. NR. 29 MAI 2019. S. 2 - 4

<sup>441</sup> G-8-Staaten suspendieren Russland. 18.03.2014. URL: <https://www.zeit.de/politik/ausland/2014-03/krim-russland-g8>

<sup>442</sup> Bocklet R. Deutschland, Russland, die Ukraine und Europa // Politische Studien. 68. Jahrgang | März-April 2017. S. 59. URL: [https://www.hss.de/download/publications/PS\\_472\\_EUROPA\\_BREXIT.pdf](https://www.hss.de/download/publications/PS_472_EUROPA_BREXIT.pdf)

<sup>443</sup> Frankenberger K.-D. Am Anfang stand der Katzentisch. 03.03.2014. URL: <https://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/ausland/russland-als-g8-mitglied-am-anfang-stand-der-katzentisch-12829515.html>

<sup>444</sup> Kein G8-Gipfel in Sotschi. Deutschlandfunk. 24.03.2014. URL: [https://www.deutschlandfunk.de/annexion-der-krim-kein-g8-gipfel-in-sotschi.2852.de.html?dram:article\\_id=281023](https://www.deutschlandfunk.de/annexion-der-krim-kein-g8-gipfel-in-sotschi.2852.de.html?dram:article_id=281023)

<sup>445</sup> Kanzleramt hält Rückkehr Russlands in die G8 für ausgeschlossen. 30.04.2016. URL: <https://www.spiegel.de/politik/ausland/russland-wird-nicht-wieder-in-g8-gruppe-aufgenommen-a-1090030.html>

on the external borders of the EU.”<sup>446</sup> Undoubtedly, exclusion from participation in a multilateral dialogue at the international level means a loss in all areas of cooperation on the world stage, a change in ties and contacts.

In order to promote the normalization of relations, Germany and France decided to continue to work on finding political methods to resolve the conflict in Ukraine, excluding any military intervention. The European countries expressed their hope for an understanding on both sides that the process of political and military escalation can no longer continue in this way: “It's time to flip the switch.” The image of the enemy is not a way out of a crisis situation, when a dialogue is needed, which should be carried out with the awareness of mutual responsibility for a better and peaceful future, G. Erler believes.<sup>447</sup>

In an article by Professor Jochen Franzke from 2017, which examined the approaches of German political parties to policy towards Russia, the following three scenarios for future German-Russian relations were proposed:

1. If the Kremlin's policy towards Ukraine remained unchanged, the federal government, depending on its composition, would act as follows:

- consisting of the CDU/CSU Union and the SPD, would continue the former German policy of readiness for dialogue and containment (the “status quo” scenario);

- in the government of the CDU/CSU Union with the “Die Grünen“ or the liberals, a tougher position of Germany in relation to the Kremlin would be expected;

- given the pro-Russian position of the CSU, the “grand coalition” led by the SPD could focus on improving relations with Russia;

- the approach of the left, according to the author, had no chance of being implemented, because neither the Greens nor the SPD would agree to the dissolution of NATO.

2. There were no statements in the election programs about a “pessimistic” scenario of an “escalation of Russian aggression in Ukraine” or any other conflict between Germany or the EU and Russia, however, according to J. Franzke, this option could not be ruled out. But here a note was made that only liberals are ready for such a scenario.

3. The "optimistic" scenario assumed that in late 2017 - early 2018 there would be an opportunity to "restart" German-Russian or European-Russian relations. In many ways, Jochen Franzke notes, this depended on the Kremlin's willingness to compromise on the eve of the 2018 Russian

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<sup>446</sup>Weissbuch zur Sicherheitspolitik und zur Zukunft der Bundeswehr. Bundesministerium der Verteidigung. Juni 2016. URL: <https://www.bundesregierung.de/resource/blob/975292/736102/64781348c12e4a80948ab1bdf25cf057/weissbuch-zur-sicherheitspolitik-2016-download-data.pdf>

<sup>447</sup> Erler G. Analyse: Den Eskalationsprozess stoppen - Ziele der Deutschen Russlandpolitik. 08.05.2018. URL: <https://www.bpb.de/internationales/europa/russland/analysen/268835/analyse-den-eskalationsprozess-stoppen-ziele-der-deutschen-russlandpolitik>

presidential election, on the behavior of the Franco-German tandem in the EU, as well as on the constructiveness of the Trump administration.<sup>448</sup>

Based on the current situation, it can be seen that, despite the fact that the programs did not state a “pessimistic scenario” and possible actions in such a case, Franzke was right that such a development of events could not be ruled out. The ineffectiveness of the sanctions policy, as well as the decrease in dialogue between countries, nevertheless led to a deepening of the conflict.

In 2018, an article by the Research Institute of the German Foreign Policy Society suggested that Vladimir Putin's policy towards Ukraine would not change, as he made it clear that Ukraine belongs to the Russian zone of influence, and Moscow will always rely on military power and talk about the “Russian world” to prevent stabilization in Ukraine. The potential for such a policy, according to the author, remains high, since Ukraine, far from stable democracy and economic stability, is a favorable ground for the spread of Russian influence. That is why Germany and the European Union as a whole must make great efforts to stabilize Ukraine by supporting important reforms in key areas such as the judiciary and the fight against corruption. Donbass must be in the spotlight to make it resilient to the ongoing Russian policy of destabilization and possible further attempts to escalate the situation - according to W. Jilge.<sup>449</sup>

The meeting of Angela Merkel and Vladimir Putin in Meseberg in 2018, according to Stefan Meister, marked a turning point in German-Russian relations, as it provided an opportunity to normalize German-Russian relations at the working level without abandoning fundamental differences.<sup>450</sup> Further meetings of heads of state, talks between the German Chancellor, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and Chief of the General Staff Gerasimov at the end of July in Meseberg, as well as other high-level joint events, indicated ongoing diplomatic dialogue and the search for possible solutions.<sup>451</sup>

However, the new dialogue, fueled by political pragmatism, did not mean, according to Sch. Meister, that there would be a new strategic partnership between Germany and Russia: Angela Merkel would not have abandoned her tough stance on the situation in eastern Ukraine and sanctions against Russia. Both sides continued to represent their interests without coming to fundamental compromises.

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<sup>448</sup> Franzke J. Ansätze künftiger deutscher Russlandpolitik in Wahlprogrammen von sechs politischen Parteien zur Bundestagswahl 2017 // RIE 11'17. 2017. S. 147-156. URL: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/329072457\\_Ansaetze\\_kunftiger\\_deutscher\\_Russlandpolitik\\_in\\_Wahlprogrammen\\_von\\_sechs\\_politischen\\_Parteien\\_zur\\_Bundestagswahl\\_2017](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/329072457_Ansaetze_kunftiger_deutscher_Russlandpolitik_in_Wahlprogrammen_von_sechs_politischen_Parteien_zur_Bundestagswahl_2017)

<sup>449</sup> Jilge W. Mit Waffen, Worten und Wahlverwandten: Putin setzt weiter auf Destabilisierung in der Ukraine / Meister S. (Hrsg.). In der Eskalationsspirale: Russland und der Westen nach der Wahl // DGAP kompakt 7. Berlin: Forschungsinstitut der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Auswärtige Politik e.V. 2018 URL: <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-56662-7>

<sup>450</sup> Meister S. Merkel und Putin im Dialog: die Rückkehr des Pragmatismus // DGAP kompakt 19. Berlin: Forschungsinstitut der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Auswärtige Politik e.V. 2018. URL: <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168ssoar-59248-2>

<sup>451</sup> Ibid.

This, according to the author, made a breakthrough in the conflict in eastern Ukraine unlikely, as Germany and Russia continued to need each other on issues such as energy security, migration from the Middle East, and stability in neighboring countries. However, despite tensions in transatlantic relations, the federal government did not plan to make any concessions to Moscow that were contrary to its interests, for example, in relation to its EU partners.

Frank Elbe draws attention to the fact that Germany needs cooperation with Russia, and joint work must be respectful and consistent with its own political values. Article 26 of the Basic Law prohibits actions that disturb the peace.<sup>452</sup> This is a constitutional obligation that applies not only to public authorities, but also to all citizens, the political sphere, as well as the media. The author believes that much could be achieved if this obligation was taken into account, and politicians thought about it before doing or saying anything, and also about whether their own behavior might lead to erroneous judgments that, in turn, will cause erroneous reactions on the other side. According to Elbe, further pragmatic cooperation with the Russian leadership should continue to be aimed at reaching compromises, despite differences in views on any fundamental issues.<sup>453</sup> However, in doing so, it must not question existing European norms and values or institutions such as the EU or NATO.<sup>454</sup>

Germany tried to engage pragmatically with Russia, which faced criticism from the governments of Eastern Europe. Accordingly, if the federal government were to change its policy of sanctions to recognize Crimea as belonging to Russia, there would not be more opportunities for more productive cooperation with Russia, but rather fewer. The discussion of the future international status of Crimea, from the German point of view, will only make sense when Russia “stops support for the separatists in eastern Ukraine and the fighting stops.”<sup>455</sup>

Stefan Meister said that in order to better understand Russia, German politicians had to talk not only to Russian liberals, who have little influence in the country, but rather to focus their efforts on creating ties with nationalists and Russian patriots, who are more likely to determine the future of Russia. In addition, Germany should have invested more in reaching out to Russian civil society. This could be reflected in decisions such as visa facilitation or significant investment in student exchanges.<sup>456</sup>

Meister emphasized that it is necessary to understand that a more differentiated picture should be created in relation to Russia: “Putin is not Russia, and Russia is not Putin.” Russian society is more pluralistic and critical than is commonly believed, but it is patriotic, especially in cases where, for

<sup>452</sup> Grundgesetz für die Bundesrepublik Deutschland URL: <https://dejure.org/gesetze/GG/26.html>

<sup>453</sup> Elbe F. Die Krise mit Russland: Gibt es Licht am Ende des Tunnels? // ifo Schnelldienst. ifo Institut - Leibniz-Institut für Wirtschaftsforschung an der Universität München. München. Vol. 68. Iss. 16. S. 31-38. 2015.

<sup>454</sup> Voigt K. D. Russland, Deutschland und die europäische Ordnung. Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung. Berlin. September 2017.

<sup>455</sup> Ibid.

<sup>456</sup> Meister S. In der Eskalationsspirale: Russland und der Westen nach der Wahl // DGAP kompakt 7. Berlin: Forschungsinstitut der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Auswärtige Politik e.V. 2018 URL: <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-56662-7>

example, politicians in countries such as the US or the UK are overreacting to current events. Maintaining a diplomatic tone in such a situation remains the task of the policy of Germany and the European Union, which must express their opinion based on the politics of interests and values, “without hysteria or idealism, which is a relic of the past.”<sup>457</sup>

Germany has played and continues to play an important, if not the most important role in relations with Russia among Western partners.<sup>458</sup> She had to, as she had repeatedly done in the past, use her weight to resolve the crisis. Russia is still the most important country for Germany east of the EU and NATO borders - whether as a potential partner or as a problem. But Russia is no more important to German politics than the integrity of Germany's relations with its eastern neighbors - says K. Voigt.<sup>459</sup>

In his analysis, he comes to the following important conclusions:

- Germany needs to play an important role in the modernization of Russia, but it is impossible to change Russia against its will from the outside. Anyone who sees Russia as part of European politics and culture and who adheres to the goal of a long-term agreement on European peacekeeping should not stop measuring the behavior of the Russian leadership against the binding principles and norms of such an order.

- Even if Russia does not accept the principles and values agreed in the Final Act of the CSCE and the Charter of Paris as the basis for its own policy, it is necessary to continue and expand the dialogue with the Russian leadership and Russian society. Understanding the interests of the other party does not mean underestimating existing differences in interests and values, nor does it mean agreeing to all actions. However, it is during a crisis that intensive communication should be the basis for its peaceful overcoming.<sup>460</sup>

In this difficult situation, the proposed solutions discussed by the experts focus on realistic steps.<sup>461</sup> In particular, we are talking about maintaining a dialogue, both within the framework of the Russia-NATO Council and in other formats. Return to the principles of Helsinki and arms control. The restoration of “bipolarity” is also being discussed, that is, a return to the international model formulated at Yalta in 1945, but as a model of cooperation, not confrontation.

At the same time, experts assessed the scale of actions as small. Russia is not ready to admit mistakes, such as the military presence in the Donbass, and compromises are seen as a sign of weakness. In line with the rather pragmatic European policy towards China, the removal of the “stumbling block called democracy” from EU-Russia relations by accepting distinctions between the

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<sup>457</sup> Ibid.

<sup>458</sup> Elbe F. Die Krise mit Russland: Gibt es Licht am Ende des Tunnels? // ifo Schnelldienst. ifo Institut - Leibniz-Institut für Wirtschaftsforschung an der Universität München. München. Vol. 68. Iss. 16. 2015. S. 31-38.

<sup>459</sup> Voigt K. D. Russland, Deutschland und die europäische Ordnung. Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung. Berlin. September 2017.

<sup>460</sup> Ibid. S 3.

<sup>461</sup> Dienes A. Russland im Sicherheitsradar 2019 // Russland-Analysen NR. 371. 21.05.2019.

respective types of regimes has been considered. In any case, one can expect - as expressed in the polls - an “eye-level” conversation, the acceptance of Russia as the main power and consideration of its interests.

The words of Katrin Böttger are also interesting: “It should be recalled that Putin is an episode. The Russians don't. If we don't find a common language soon, we will lose ourselves.”<sup>462</sup> This idea is echoed by the words of the German Ambassador to Russia, Dr. Geza Andreas von Geyr, who emphasizes the goal of interaction between countries – “creating security with each other, and not against each other.” He also says that today one can notice the loss of confidence, which must be “carefully and patiently” restored, since the German side is against the emergence of a new confrontation in Europe or a new arms race. On the contrary, Germany is in favor of creating and maintaining a productive and reasonable security policy dialogue to discuss risks, threat perceptions and necessary arms control policy tools. Germany demonstrated its willingness by resuming bilateral security talks at the level of deputy foreign ministers.

However, he also emphasizes that the conflict in Ukraine remains the greatest burden on common European security.<sup>463</sup> And only if there is real progress in resolving the situation, “we can make progress in resolving the overarching security problem.”

Thus, it can be concluded that, firstly, despite the Crimean crisis and a significant decline in bilateral trade, the economies of Germany and Russia remained closely intertwined, and, according to M. Sapper, were even “more closely intertwined with Russia than it has been for much of the past century.”<sup>464</sup> Despite the imposed sanctions and counter-sanctions, Russia played an important role as an energy supplier and trading partner, and Germany held a key position in the EU and also shaped European policy towards Russia.

In the political sphere, Russian-German relations underwent a rather ambiguous period. Quite a few proposals have been made in expert circles on exactly how Germany, as a state that plays the role of a certain “bridge” between NATO / EU and Russia, should act in order to prevent the current crisis from deepening. Many researchers have urged leading German politicians to take Russia's interests more seriously in order to identify possible dialogue scenarios that would not mean accepting the Russian position, but would become a solid basis for continuing negotiations and expanding a productive dialogue. However, the stigmatization of Russian actions did not allow politicians to find a way out of the impasse of “inattentive blindness”.

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<sup>462</sup> Böttger K. Die EU-Russland-Beziehungen: Rückblick und Ausblick im Zeichen der Ukraine-Krise. EU-Russland-Beziehungen // Integration – 3/2015. S. 204.

<sup>463</sup> Spangenberg A. „Es ist viel Vertrauen verloren gegangen“. 05.12.2019. <https://germania.diplo.de/ru-de/vertretungen/botschaft/-/2285404>

<sup>464</sup> Sapper M. Mehr Expertise wagen. Russland- und Osteuropakompetenz in Deutschland. 19.05.2017. [URL: https://www.bpb.de/apuz/248512/mehr-expertise-wagen-russland-und-osteuropakompetenz-in-deutschland](https://www.bpb.de/apuz/248512/mehr-expertise-wagen-russland-und-osteuropakompetenz-in-deutschland)

## §5. Cooperation in the field of education, culture and civil society after the annexation of Crimea to Russia

According to the German diplomat Geza Andreas von Geyr, Germany and Russia have long been linked by a wide network of relationships in the fields of education, culture, science and civil society, which gives the relationship a special depth and keeps the dialogue between our countries close and stable, even despite the political or economically difficult times.<sup>465</sup> More than 100 joint projects during the period under review were an indicator of a wide variety of relations in the field of science, and were also the basis for further initiatives.

However, after the events of 2014 in Crimea, which became “unexpected” for the Germans, German scientists came to the conclusion that the topic of Russia and the post-Soviet space was poorly studied in Germany. In the agreement on the coalition of the CDU, CSU and SPD back in 2013, the parties agreed to “put Russian and Eastern European competence in Germany on a solid basis” and strengthen “the scientific and analytical expertise of this region.”<sup>466</sup> But only in December 2015, the Bundestag established an institute - a center for Eastern European and international studies, which began to conduct research on the dynamics of conflicts, border regions, etc.<sup>467</sup>

In addition, in order to increase the number of studies, other centers began to study this topic:

- a network of expert institutions on institutions and institutional change in the era of post-socialism in Munich. Thanks to the emergence of a course in Eastern European studies and a postgraduate course organized jointly with the University of Regensburg, it became possible to expand research concerning Russia. For example, historian Andreas Renner studies the interaction between Russia and Northeast Asia. In 2016, Alexander Libman was appointed Professor of Social Research. He researches topics such as bureaucracy in the post-Soviet space, regions and regionalization, as well as the importance of historical heritage for assessing current events;

- Leibniz Science Campus “Eastern Europe - Global Zone”, established in Leipzig under the direction of the Institute for Regional Geography with the support of eight partner institutions from Saxony, Thuringia and Saxony-Anhalt;

- Leibniz Institute for the Study of Eastern and South-Eastern Europe;

- Institute of History and Culture of Eastern Europe, etc.

Also of interest is the fact that in order to better understand Russia, German researchers decided to pay attention to the study of theology. This is explained by the fact that recently Russia has begun to

<sup>465</sup> Spangenberg A. „Es ist viel Vertrauen verloren gegangen“. 05.12.2019. URL: <https://germania.diplo.de/ru-de/vertretungen/botschaft/-/2285404>

<sup>466</sup> Koalitionsvertrag zwischen CDU, CSU und SPD Deutschlands Zukunft gestalten 18. Legislaturperiode. Union Betriebs-GmbH. 12/1213. S. 169. URL: [https://www.kas.de/c/document\\_library/get\\_file?uuid=2f9f5a98-5d12-0987-7f12-aca250c6ea92&groupId=252038](https://www.kas.de/c/document_library/get_file?uuid=2f9f5a98-5d12-0987-7f12-aca250c6ea92&groupId=252038)

<sup>467</sup> Das Zentrum für Osteuropa- und internationale Studien URL: <https://www.zois-berlin.de/>

position itself more and more strongly as a defender of traditional values. Thus, from the German point of view, the Russian leadership drew a certain line between its views and the views of the so-called “decadent West”, which persecutes religion, undermines the family and promotes pedophilia and homosexuality to destroy marriage.<sup>468</sup>

Proceeding from this, Russia, according to German researchers, has shown itself to be one of the opponents of modernity. The Russian Orthodox Church in Russian discourse has increasingly become an ideological resource not only for organizing domestic political life, but also for foreign policy. This means that a deeper study of the traditions of the Orthodox Church and the theological foundations that form the basis of the so-called “anti-modernist thinking” has become increasingly important for understanding the processes taking place in Russia.<sup>469</sup>

As mentioned earlier, Russian-German relations are not limited to political and economic levels. According to the German Foreign Office, they remain active, thanks in part to the large number of human contacts maintained, as well as active social cooperation.<sup>470</sup> Germany and Russia, despite the Crimean crisis, continued to be connected by a wide network of relations in the field of education, culture, science and civil society. This mutual exchange gave the relationship a special depth and maintained a stable dialogue that persisted despite politically unstable times. The existing diversity of scientific connections for 2021 was demonstrated by more than 100 projects, which, in turn, initiated the emergence of new initiatives with new connections and activities.<sup>471</sup>

In the social and cultural spheres of cooperation between Russia and Germany, there were no signs of a strong decline in mutual interest in each other against the backdrop of the Crimean crisis.<sup>472</sup> For Russia, cooperation with Germany in the field of education, research and development was of great importance. Even after 2014, Germany was an attractive place of study for Russian students, and also provided the opportunity to publish scientific publications. More than 900 university and more than 1000 school partnerships can serve as evidence of this. According to Statista Research Department, in 2020 more than 14,000 Russian students received higher education in Germany, many of them are DAAD scholarship holders.<sup>473</sup>

<sup>468</sup> Spanger H. J. Unheilige Allianz. Putin und die Werte // Osteuropa 1/2014. S. 43–62.

<sup>469</sup> Sapper M. Mehr Expertise wagen. Russland- und Osteuropakompetenz in Deutschland. 19.05.2017. URL: <https://www.bpb.de/apuz/248512/mehr-expertise-wagen-russland-und-osteuropakompetenz-in-deutschland>

<sup>470</sup> Bilaterale Beziehungen. URL: <https://germania.diplo.de/ru-de/themen/politik/-/1606892>

<sup>471</sup> Spangenberg A. „Es ist viel Vertrauen verloren gegangen“. 05.12.2019. URL: <https://germania.diplo.de/ru-de/vertretungen/botschaft/-/2285404>

<sup>472</sup> Soest C. v., Haffner D., Sell J. Nebenwirkungen von Sanktionen: Kulturelle Beziehungen mit Iran, Kuba, Russland und Belarus // ifa-Edition Kultur und Außenpolitik. Stuttgart: ifa (Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen). 2016. URL: <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssaar-54710-8>

<sup>473</sup> Anzahl der ausländischen Studierenden an Hochschulen in Deutschland im Wintersemester 2019/2020 nach Herkunftsländern. September 2020. URL: <https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/301225/umfrage/auslaendische-studierende-in-deutschland-nach-herkunftslandern/>



It is worth paying attention to the fact that in terms of the number of grants from the German Academic Exchange Service in 2021, Russian students took first place. Also, German took second place after English in the Russian education system - almost 17,000 schools offered the study of this language.<sup>474</sup>

In July 2017, the German-Russian Year of Youth Exchange was successfully completed, followed immediately by the German-Russian Year of Local and Regional Partnership. As part of its implementation, a special Internet portal was created, which demonstrated a wide variety of cooperation between countries, both at the local and regional levels. On the site, which brings together participants and is a unique forum, one can see “the enormous activity and potential of German-Russian cooperation.” There are 30 country - level partnerships and 121 city - level partnerships and partnerships.<sup>475</sup>

In 2017 and 2018, many partner projects celebrated their 25th anniversary. In this regard, in order to raise public awareness and increase confidence between Russia and Germany, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation Sergey Lavrov and the Federal Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Federal Republic of Germany, Sigmar Gabriel, took the initiative to hold the Year of German-Russian Partnership at the local and regional levels 2017/2018, which continued the tradition of successful cross-years. The website of the German Foreign Ministry refers this agreement to one of the most important agreements between Russia and Germany.<sup>476</sup>

The German and Russian Foreign Ministries then agreed on further bilateral thematic years, the purpose of which was to deepen cooperation in certain thematic areas. Period from 2018 to 2020 was marked as the “Russian-German Year of Scientific and Educational Partnerships”.<sup>477</sup> Previous thematic years between Germany and Russia have been devoted to language and literature, youth exchanges and local and regional cooperation. Thematic year 2018-2020 focused on academic relations between countries. The goal was to make bilateral scientific cooperation more intimate, and cooperation and interaction between universities and stakeholders in science more transparent. In 2020-2021, after a break of 8 years, the Year of Germany was held in Russia, which is also focused on

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<sup>474</sup> Länderbericht: Russland. URL: [https://www.kooperation-international.de/laender/europa/russland/laenderbericht/?tx\\_contentaggregation\\_pages\[action\]=list&tx\\_contentaggregation\\_pages\[controller\]=AggregatePages#Überblick%20zur%20Kooperation%20mit%20Deutschland](https://www.kooperation-international.de/laender/europa/russland/laenderbericht/?tx_contentaggregation_pages[action]=list&tx_contentaggregation_pages[controller]=AggregatePages#Überblick%20zur%20Kooperation%20mit%20Deutschland)

<sup>475</sup> Deutsch-russische kommunale und regionale Partnerschaften. Германо-российские муниципальные и региональные партнерства. URL: <http://www.russlandpartner.de/partnerschaften/staedtepartnerschaften>

<sup>476</sup> Gemeinsame Erklärung über die Durchführung eines deutsch-russischen Jahres der kommunalen und regionalen Partnerschaften 2017/2018. 28.06.2017. URL: <https://germania.diplo.de/ru-de/themen/politik/gemeinsame-erklaerung-2017/1606776>

<sup>477</sup> Deutsch-russisches Jahr der Hochschulkooperation und Wissenschaft 2018-2020. URL: <https://www.dwih-moskau.org/de/themen/deutsch-russisches-themenjahr/deutsch-russisches-jahr-der-hochschulkooperation-und-wissenschaft-2018-2020/>

strengthening and expanding Russian-German relations in various spheres of life.<sup>478</sup> At the same time, Germany emphasized that its goal was to show itself as a reliable partner for Russia and its citizens.

In addition to various contacts between German and Russian non-governmental organizations, the St. Petersburg Dialogue, which has been held annually since 2001, was of particular importance. Its founders are Vladimir Putin and Gerhard Schröder. For a long time, this forum was a discussion platform for discussing Russian-German relations, as well as a “source of ideas for specific projects.”<sup>479</sup> The dialogue was aimed at intensifying cooperation between civil societies of both countries and offered such programs as: “German-Russian Forum”, “German-Russian Exchange”, “European Exchange” and many others. Through the involvement of central institutions and non-governmental organizations dealing with German-Russian relations, existing ties were strengthened and new concepts of interaction were developed.

Within the framework of the Dialogue, representatives of German and Russian society held consultations and met regularly to exchange views on the main topical issues of bilateral cooperation. It was also about further expanding contacts, promoting mutual understanding and learning from experience, especially in areas such as democratic development, the rule of law and human rights. In terms of funding, the forum received support from political and private foundations, various commercial enterprises in Germany and Russia, as well as the governments of both countries.

The year 2014 did not leave Russian-German cooperation in the framework of the St. Petersburg Dialogue unchanged, but it did not lead to a complete break in contacts either.<sup>480</sup> According to one of the authors of „Tagesspiegel”, the dialogue has entered “the greatest crisis in its 13-year history.”<sup>481</sup> Ronald Pofalla, co-chair of the Petersburg Dialogue, in his interview pointed out that after the “annexation” of Crimea, the forum ceased to be part of intergovernmental consultations, because the intergovernmental consultations themselves no longer existed. But since 2015, the forum has started its work again, and Pofalla has seen “improvements in the dialogue with civil society.”<sup>482</sup>

It should be noted that within the framework of the St. Petersburg Dialogue, the Crimean crisis became one of the topics of discussion. For example, in 2018 Sara Pagung, Program Officer at the Robert Bosch Center for the Study of Central and Eastern Europe, Russia and Central Asia, spoke about the problems caused by the crisis. In her opinion, major breakthroughs in the short term were unthinkable, since 2014, namely, the events in the Crimea and Donbass, led to a loss of European and

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<sup>478</sup> Deutschlandjahr 2020/2021 URL: <https://godgermanii.ru/de/>

<sup>479</sup> Ein Forum für den Dialog der Zivilgesellschaften. URL: <https://petersburger-dialog.de/ueber-den-petersburger-dialog/ein-forum-fuer-den-dialog-der-zivilgesellschaften/>

<sup>480</sup> Petersburg Dialog trotz Krim-Krise. 06.04.2014. URL: <https://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/vorab/petersburger-dialog-trotz-krim-krise-a-962772.html>

<sup>481</sup> Salzen C. Petersburg Dialog in der Krise. 10.10.2014. URL: <https://www.tagesspiegel.de/politik/deutschland-und-russland-petersburger-dialog-in-der-krise/10824130.html>

<sup>482</sup> „Sanktionen gegen Russland sind richtig“. 14.07.2019. URL: [https://www.deutschlandfunk.de/ronald-pofalla-ko-sitzender-des-petersburger-dialogs.868.de.html?dram:article\\_id=453784](https://www.deutschlandfunk.de/ronald-pofalla-ko-sitzender-des-petersburger-dialogs.868.de.html?dram:article_id=453784)

German confidence in Russia. She called the main reason supposedly “Putin's lies” about Russia's non-interference in the affairs of Ukraine. To restore trust, according to Pagung, Russia had to prove its reliability, and the West had to work out a common security order in Europe.<sup>483</sup> Another speaker of the dialogue from the German side, Ann Sophie Gast, also agreed that it was necessary to restore the trust of the parties from the very beginning. In her opinion, as long as “military operations” are taking place in Ukraine, in which, according to her, “Russia is actively participating”, there can be no normalization of relations.<sup>484</sup>

Also, after 2014, six German political foundations continued to operate in Russia, each of which belongs to one of the political parties in Germany: the Konrad Adenauer Foundation (CDU); the Heinrich Böll Foundation (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen); Friedrich Ebert Foundation (SPD); Rosa Luxembourg Foundation (Die Linke); the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom (FDP); Hanns Seidel Foundation (HSS).

They declared support for efforts to promote democracy, the rule of law and civil society in Russia, as well as contributing to a better understanding of political relations in Germany.<sup>485</sup> Thomas Kunze, Head of the Moscow Representative Office of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, outlined the foundation's purpose as follows: “With our work and our projects, we want to help Russia and Germany see each other as friends and partners in a common home in Europe. Despite all the differences, we must look to the future together.”<sup>486</sup>

Speaking of non-governmental foundations, one should also emphasize their connection with the St. Petersburg Dialogue. For example, the Heinrich Böll Foundation, which supported the forum, decided in 2014 not to be represented in Sochi, nor to provide financial support for the event. Ralph Fuchs, chairman of the fund's board of directors, made the following statement: “In view of the deteriorating situation in Ukraine and the crackdown on our partners in civil society, we do not think that we can simply continue to conduct business as usual.”<sup>487</sup>

In addition, the Heinrich Böll Foundation, Russian-German Exchange, European Exchange, representatives of Amnesty International and Greenpeace wrote a letter to the German Chancellor and Foreign Minister, which stated that Russia there was tangible pressure on the independent media, the opposition and non-governmental organizations. For this reason, NGOs were forced to register as “foreign agents” because they received support from abroad.

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<sup>483</sup> Russland und Deutschland. Ein Dialog über die Zukunft. Petschatnyj Element GmbH Sankt Petersburg. Sankt Petersburg. 2018. S. 25-26. URL: [https://petersburger-dialog.ru/images/lib/2018\\_brochure\\_de.pdf](https://petersburger-dialog.ru/images/lib/2018_brochure_de.pdf)

<sup>484</sup> Ibid. S. 67-69.

<sup>485</sup> Kauschanski A. Deutsche Stiftungen in Russland zwischen Misstrauen und Demokratisierung. 10.11.2019. URL: <https://www.dw.com/de/deutsche-stiftungen-in-russland-zwischen-misstrauen-und-demokratisierung/a-51181892>\* Listed by the Russian Ministry of Justice in the Register of Foreign Media Agents

<sup>486</sup> Ibid.

<sup>487</sup> Salzen C. Petersburger Dialog in der Krise. 10.10.2014. URL: <https://www.tagesspiegel.de/politik/deutschland-und-russland-petersburger-dialog-in-der-krise/10824130.html>

Under these conditions, from their point of view, dialogue with civil society, which was the goal of the St. Petersburg Dialogue, became impossible, since Russian public organizations “are not free due to the political and legal threat to which they are exposed”.<sup>488</sup> Accordingly, the decision to ban the activities of three German non-governmental organizations<sup>489</sup> was, according to the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, “the latest example of the Russian authorities' disregard for a vibrant civil society.”<sup>490</sup>

Back in 1993, the German-Russian Forum was founded as a private, independent and non-partisan association, headquartered in Berlin<sup>491</sup>. The purpose of the forum was to develop new opportunities for cooperation between Russia and Germany at the political, economic and cultural level, as well as to promote the dialogue of civil societies. The members of the forum were representatives of politics, business, science, mass media and culture. The forum continued its work after the Crimean crisis and continued to organize events and conferences on various topics related to bilateral relations, as well as the implementation of projects in the field of culture, promotion of young talents, German-Russian sister cities and civic engagement in the regions of Russia. The activities of the forum reflect the diversity of joint projects and testified to the great importance attached to the German-Russian partnership.<sup>492</sup>

A network of “Hallo Deutschland!” alumni has been created for Russian scholarship holders of numerous programs, the purpose of which is to maintain and strengthen contacts. The interprogramme and interdepartmental alumni network of more than 10,000 members organizes many events and projects, as well as provides information on current programs, publishes job postings and events with the participation of German specialists.<sup>493</sup>

In addition, within the framework of cooperation, mutual care is being taken for the graves of fallen soldiers on the territory of both countries, which is an important link between the peoples. Organizations such as War Memorials and the German War Graves Commission (Volksbund Deutsche Kriegsgräberfürsorge) work closely together to maintain war cemeteries together. Germany maintains Soviet memorials on its soil, including three large memorials in Berlin-Tiergarten, Pankow and Treptow Park.<sup>494</sup>

It is worth noting that an article was published on the organization's website regarding Russian-German relations after the Ukrainian events. The article says that in 2019, on the podium in the

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<sup>488</sup> Ibid.

<sup>489</sup> Berlin urged to cancel the decision to ban three NGOs in Russia // RIA. 28.05.2021. URL: <https://ria.ru/20210528/berlin-1734592839.html> (in Russian)

<sup>490</sup> Kritik an Russlands NGO-Verbot "Missachtung lebendiger Zivilgesellschaft". 27.05.2021. URL: <https://www.tagesschau.de/ausland/asien/russland-ngos-105.html>

<sup>491</sup> Deutsch-russisches Forum E.V. | Германо-российский форум. URL: <https://www.deutsch-russisches-forum.de/>

<sup>492</sup> Bilaterale Beziehungen. URL: <https://germania.diplo.de/ru-de/themen/politik/-/1606892>

<sup>493</sup> Alumni-Netzwerk "Hallo Deutschland!" URL: <https://hallo-deutschland.alumniportal.com/>

<sup>494</sup> Volksbund Deutsche Kriegsgräberfürsorge. URL: <https://www.volksbund.de/ueber-uns>

German-Russian House, a discussion took place between the Russian correspondent of the “Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung” Fritz Pleitgen, Friedrich Schmidt, and Alexei Gromyko, director of the Institute of Europe of the Russian Academy of Sciences. The moderator at the same time was the head of the representation of the German War Graves Commission in Moscow, Herman Krause. Participants agreed that deterioration in bilateral relations could be seen. The author notes that the deep disagreements of the parties became apparent when the conversation touched on the 2014 Crimean crisis. German journalist Fritz Pleitgen, for example, complained about the lack of adequate programs in the field of relations between Germany and Russia among the German parties. Aleksey Gromyko pointed out that Western sanctions have not shown their effectiveness, and also that the accession of Crimea to Russia was not an annexation. In addition, it is noted that there were also deep divisions on issues such as coverage of Russia in the German media.<sup>495</sup>

Next should be mentioned the German-Russian scientific cooperation, which has a centuries-old tradition. The German Foreign Ministry notes that one of the founders of the Russian Academy of Sciences in the 18th century was the German philosopher and mathematician Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz. Cooperation in the field of technology is also characterized by joint projects, such as the “Masters of Russia: Made in German” project, created with the aim of drawing attention to the achievements of German companies in the Russian market.<sup>496</sup> After the Crimean crisis, companies such as Siemens, which first supplied equipment to Russia in 1851, continued to develop technologies for adapting railway equipment to Russian climatic conditions.<sup>497</sup>

As for the public level, relations deteriorated immediately after the Crimean events, as evidenced by the statistics. For example, a survey among German residents in February 2015 showed that 78% of respondents believe that Russia is no longer a reliable partner and cannot be trusted. A month later, in March, this opinion was already expressed by 81% of respondents.<sup>498</sup> In addition, fewer Germans were in favor of building close relations with Russia. Only 32% considered it important to work closely with Moscow, compared to 55% in 2009. Most Germans associated Russia with corruption, disregard for human rights and freedom of expression, great social disparities, and insufficient legal security. And only a minority believed that the country was open to the world.<sup>499</sup>

But there is another view: the vast majority emphasized the political weight of Russia and associated it with pronounced national pride, mineral wealth, outstanding sporting achievements and

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<sup>495</sup> Der mühsame Weg zum Vertrauen. Moskauer Gespräche: Wie Russland und der Westen zum Dialog zurückfinden könnten. 23.04.2019. URL: <https://www.volksbund.de/nachrichten/der-muehsame-weg-zum-vertrauen>

<sup>496</sup> Die Russland-Meister: eine Leistungsschau der deutschen Wirtschaft. URL: <https://russlandmeister.ru/de/uber-das-projekt>

<sup>497</sup> Siemens. URL: <https://new.siemens.com/de/de/unternehmen/konzern/geschichte/stories/siemens-russland.html>

<sup>498</sup> Umfrage: Die Meinung der Deutschen über die Ukraine-Krise. URL: <https://www.bpb.de/203681/umfrage-die-meinung-der-deutschen-ueber-die-ukraine-krise>

<sup>499</sup> Mehrheit der Deutschen sieht Russland als Gefahr. 16.04.2014. URL: <https://www.zeit.de/politik/deutschland/2014-04/deutsche-russland-allensbach-umfrage>

impressive landscapes. 65% noted that Russia has a great cultural tradition, as well as a culture of hospitality.<sup>500</sup>

If we talk about the mood of the German society for 2020-2021, it is worth paying attention to the following data. In 2020, the ZOIS Center for Eastern European and International Studies (ZOIS) found that German residents do not consider Vladimir Putin a threat to Germany: 45% of men and 60% of women expressed precisely this point of view. The same result is shown by graphs in which the following trends of residents can be traced when answering the question of whether the Russian president is a threat to Europe: the majority of respondents answered in the negative. It is interesting to note that the majority of respondents do not consider Vladimir Putin to be an effective president. Also, a question was asked about what Russian-German relations look like: should they become closer, are they optimal or too close. It is noteworthy that the majority of respondents in all age groups could not choose any option and settled on the answer “don't know”.<sup>501</sup>

A joint study by Wintershall Dea and the Eastern Committee in 2021 showed that the echoes of crisis situations do not allow bilateral relations to develop to the fullest potential. 60% of survey participants believed that the interaction of countries was minimized. At the same time, the majority of German citizens were in favor of closer cooperation between the European Union and Russia: 62%, and these are two out of three Germans, are in favor of more intensive relations.<sup>502</sup>

According to the chairman of the Eastern Committee, Oliver Hermes, economic and energy relations are consistently positively assessed by respondents, and in 2021 Russia was even able to gain significant confidence as an energy supplier: 51% of respondents consider it a reliable energy partner. In 2020, 41% of respondents shared this opinion. In addition, the vast majority can imagine the creation of a common European economic space, which includes Russia. In addition, they advocated the following joint actions:

- Completion of construction and launch of the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline. Various sanctions have been repeatedly imposed against the completion of the construction of the gas pipeline by the United States, stopping work in the Baltic Sea. 75% of respondents were against them, and only 17% were in favor of stopping the almost completed project. The voters of the FDP - 82% - and the Greens - 69% also joined the opponents of stopping the construction;

- cooperation with Russia in the field of hydrogen technologies. As Germany makes the transition to greener energy means, to “decarbonization of the economy”, hydrogen is becoming a hot

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<sup>500</sup> Ibid.

<sup>501</sup> Sasse G. Russland2 : Russlandbilder in Ost- und Westdeutschland // ZOIS REPORT Nr. 5/2020. Oktober 2020. URL: <https://www.zois-berlin.de/publikationen/russland2-russlandbilder-in-ost-und-westdeutschland>

<sup>502</sup> Klare Mehrheit wünscht engere Beziehungen zu Russland. 02.06.2021. URL: <https://www.ost-ausschuss.de/de/PM%20Forsa%20Gesamt>

topic of cooperation. And here, 58% of the respondents were in favor of importing hydrogen from natural gas from Russia;

- ensuring greater freedom of movement for Russian youth;

- purchase of renewable energy sources: 52% believe that importing renewable energy from Russia is good, 43% are negative about it;

- taking into account the coronavirus pandemic, which has become a severe test for the world community, it is worth mentioning that the majority of Germans were also ready to accept and use the Russian vaccine: 71% in East Germany and 58% in West were in favor of Sputnik V.

Based on these data, Hermes urged the German government to work on improving ties with Russia.<sup>503</sup>

Thus, it is possible to single out key moments in Russian-German relations from 2014-2021 in the field of education, culture and civil society. First, the topic of Russia has become more studied in Germany, for which a special institute has been established, and research has been intensified in existing centers. Much attention was paid to the study of theology, since, according to German researchers, an understanding of religious motives could be an important factor in improving relations.

In general, in the field of education, culture, science and civil society, there were no signs of alienation of countries from each other, as indicated by numerous ongoing joint projects, cross-years, speeches by the heads of foreign ministries, etc.

A study of the impact of the crisis on public opinion showed that relations deteriorated immediately after the Crimean events, as evidenced by statistical data. However, by 2021, the majority of German citizens are in favor of closer cooperation between the European Union and Russia and for the implementation of various joint projects. This shows that for 2021, the majority of Germans preferred the development, rather than blocking, of Russian-German relations, which, among other things, would imply the easing or lifting of sanctions, since they had a negative impact on the economic and political interaction of countries.

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<sup>503</sup> Ibid.

## Conclusion

The study of Russia-EU relations in general and Russia-Germany relations in particular in the period from 1991 to the Crimean crisis through the prism of German-language studies has shown the negative dynamics of the development of relations since the beginning of the 21st century. Over the decades, there was a gradual mutual alienation of the countries from each other, caused by ignoring the problematic issues raised by the other side, which, in turn, caused the development of such a psychological reaction as “inattention blindness”, as well as the emergence of a deep crisis.

A study of German media attitudes toward the events in Ukraine that preceded the Crimean crisis revealed a tendency towards one-sided, categorical coverage of the events. In addition, the open stigmatization of Russia as being responsible for the crisis situation, the perception of Russia's arguments and actions as openly aggressive, as well as ignoring the possibility of the West's destructive actions influencing the evolving crisis were revealed.

The accession of Crimea to Russia was an event that caused a positive reaction in Russian society, as an act of historical justice. According to the All-Russian Center for the Study of Public Opinion (VTsIOM) for 2021, “the majority of Russians assess the annexation of Crimea to Russia positively (81%), 46% report an unconditionally positive attitude”.<sup>504</sup>

However, in the writings of German experts, as well as in the reports of the official German media, the tendency to cover events from one perspective only and to ignore facts that could cast doubt on the authors' positions prevailed. In addition, harsh criticism of Russia's actions, incorrect comparisons, the labeling of the accession of Crimea as “annexation,” as well as the appearance of neologisms such as “krymit”, “understanding Russia”, and “understanding Putin” indicate an extremely negative reaction from the German side.

At the same time, one cannot ignore the fact that some researchers, journalists, politicians, and representatives of various spheres of public life took the other side, making arguments against the concept of “annexation” to denote Russian actions in Crimea. But despite this, the position of the FRG did not change, and those who expressed an opinion different from the official position in their research and statements were characterized by the stigmatizing terms “understanding Russia” or “understanding Putin”. This affected experts, journalists, and former and current German politicians alike.

After studying a number of articles in the German media regarding the events in Ukraine and Crimea, it can be concluded that the prevailing trend was an attempt to construct an aggressive image of Russia in the minds of the German-speaking audience by presenting unreliable or one-sided

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<sup>504</sup> Crimea: 7 years with Russia. The Russians are proud of the entry of the Crimea and Sevastopol into Russia // VTsIOM. 12.03.2021. URL: <https://wciom.ru/analytical-reviews/analiticheskii-obzor/krym-7-let-s-rossiei> (in Russian)



information, as well as by using language with extremely negative connotations. Nevertheless, sociological surveys have shown that Germans are critical of the actions of the German media.

After examining Germany's role in the Crimean crisis, it was concluded that Germany had to find a balance between maintaining constructive relations with Russia and its role within the European Union, on behalf of which Germany had declared its condemnation of Russian actions and imposed sanctions, as well as negotiated and tried to find a way out of the crisis situation.

Regarding the impact of the Crimean crisis on the most important areas of interaction between Russia and Germany, the author drew the following conclusions:

- The imposition of sanctions and counter-sanctions had a tangible impact on economic cooperation between Russia and Germany, which had a negative impact on many aspects of cooperation, such as: bilateral trade indicators, exports, oil prices, the number of German companies in Russia. Data provided by the German Federal Ministry of Economics and Energy, as well as customs statistics, show that cooperation indicators have declined significantly from 2014 to 2017, with 2015 showing the strongest decline since 2009. Since the economy is the basis of Russian-German relations, this sphere is one of the most important indicators of the impact of the crisis.

- Despite calls by various experts for a continuation and even an expansion of a productive dialogue based on the recognition of Russia's national interests, and the fact that despite differences in political positions, a break in ties only means a worsening of the crisis situation, there have been significant negative changes in the political sphere. After the events of 2014, Russia was deprived of the right to vote in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, and was excluded from the G8 group, a club whose task is to harmonize approaches to topical problems at the international level. These events indicate a restrictive line in the EU-Russia international political dialogue, the deterioration of the Russian-German dialogue, and, as a consequence, the negative development of the crisis situation.

- The discourse of the German media covering the events of 2014 has led to a significant deterioration of Russian-German relations in the minds of German society. Opinion polls have shown that German residents have lost confidence in Russia, and have come to associate Russia with corruption, disregard for human rights and freedom of expression, large social disparities, and insufficient legal security. By 2021, however, the trend had reversed, with a majority of German citizens describing the Russian Federation as a reliable partner and advocating closer cooperation between Germany and Russia and various joint projects such as Nord Stream 2.

- The Crimean crisis has led German scholars to the conclusion that the topic of Russia and the post-Soviet space is poorly understood in Germany, for which a special institute has been established and other research centers have been intensified. At the same time, much attention is paid to the study

of theology, which, according to researchers, is one of the important areas for a better understanding of Russia's actions.

- The Crimean crisis did not have a significant impact on such areas of cooperation as education or cultural interaction, since joint projects were not massively halted or frozen, and contacts in these areas were maintained.

I would like to conclude with a quote from a 2015 discussion by Jörg Baberowski and Heinrich August Winkler that has not lost its relevance for international relations to this day: “The world is colorful, people and their governments are different. Some countries do some things differently than we do. If you understand this, you have already taken another step forward. Anyone can wage war, but only those who can understand each other's attitudes can engage in dialogue.”<sup>505</sup>

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<sup>505</sup> Jörg Baberowski vs. Heinrich August Winkler. Erbschaft der Sowjetunion. Der Ukraine-Konflikt in historischer Perspektive. Eine Diskussion. 2014.

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