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The results of German European policy under Angela Merkel (2005–2017)¹

Introductory remarks

In November 2005, for the first time in German history, the rule of the Federal Republic of Germany was assumed by a woman – the fifty-one year old Angela Merkel, with zero experience in foreign policy. As leader of the Christian-democratic opposition she had made numerous visits abroad, including the USA, but she lacked diplomatic refinement. She learned quickly, though, and – like her predecessor Gerhard Schröder (1998–2005) – she developed a taste for foreign politics which soon became her political trademark. An underestimated novice or even a parvenue in the salons of Europe, over less than ten years she rose, becoming the ‘Empress of Europe’ or ‘Lady Europe’. Her leverage to gain international respect and success was her European policy. The Lady Chancellor moved around the European Union with utmost skill and bravery. Her precise mind, being a theoretical physicist, and the ability to profoundly analyze EU phenomena and processes, helped her take sometimes risky and controversial decisions. She followed in the footsteps of her predecessor in European policy, fully identifying herself with German national interests. For that reason, German activities in the EU can be divided into those the Chancellor was exceptionally committed to and those of secondary importance for Germany, which were handed over to the European Commission and other EU agencies. Merkel’s biographer, Stefan Kornelius, a journalist from “Süddeutsche Zeitung,” aptly described the main principles she followed in foreign politics: “Germany cannot solve its problems alone: the country is part of several alliances and confederations, European Union, the United States, the transatlantic alliance in the form of NATO, subordination to international law under the United Nations Charter and an acute sense of duty towards Israel – these are Merkel’s main prerogatives. Everything else stems from them: friendship with France, the importance of Poland, the balance of interests in Europe, the euro and being prepared for military intervention as a last resort” (Kornelius, 2014, p. 92).

1. Government of the CDU/CSU-SPD “grand coalition” (2005–2009)

The results of the early elections to the Bundestag on September 18, 2005, surprised the Christian Democrats who only marginally won over the SPD party (35.2% : 34.2%).

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This complicated the post-electoral situation and enforced a coalition with the Social Democrats for the second time in the history of the FRG. Chancellor Angela Merkel was forced to share power with a strong partner who seized half of ministries. Minister of Foreign Affairs Frank-Walter Steinmeier won a strong position in the Cabinet. His biographer, Sebastian Kohlmann notes that having been in charge of the Chancellery for many years during the Schröder administration, Steinmeier had influenced the decision-making process in German European policy because of a tradition that emerged at the time of Chancellor Helmut Kohl that the matters of European integration were part of the competence of the Federal Chancellor (*Chefsache*) and the European Department (*Europaabteilung*) in the Chancellery. Its staff was largely retained. Chancellor Merkel maintained and expanded the *Europaabteilung*, and appointed the gifted Uwe Corsepius as its Director. She brought in Christoph Heusgen, Javier Solana's collaborator from Brussels, to take the office of Foreign and Security Policy Adviser, Reinhard Silberberg to become State Secretary and Gernot Erler and Günter Gloser as Secretaries of State in the Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs (*Auswärtiges Amt*) (Kohlmann, 2017, pp. 131–132).

On November 12–14, 2005, the CDU, CSU and SPD signed a coalition agreement (*Koalitionsvertrag*) titled *Working Together for Germany. With Courage and Compassion*, which guaranteed political stability, security and prosperity to Germany and Europe. The 140 pages of this document (or 191 pages including annexes) featured a detailed description of how the government planned to handle European matters. Fiscal consolidation was to help maintain the principles of the Stability and Growth Pact by 2007. German economy was planned to become a stronger driver of growth in the EU in the near future, especially in the eurozone. The agreement also stressed that better legislative regulations and limited bureaucracy at EU level were absolutely indispensable in order to implement the European project. Thus, the coalition supported the Lisbon agenda, which aimed to increase the number of jobs, promote European growth and improve EU competitiveness in global markets. Special emphasis was given to the particular responsibility of Germany for maintaining and advancing the European integration project. The agreement declared a firm intention to implement the European Security Strategy. The European Union was acknowledged to be a “guarantor of political stability, security and prosperity in Germany and Europe.”

Special emphasis was given in the coalition agreement to the particular responsibility of Germany for maintaining and advancing the process of European integration. It also stressed the commitment and determination of Germany in leading to the ratification of the Constitution for Europe – a document drafted in 2002–2003 with active German contribution. The coalition partners emphasized their intention to provide a new incentive to the process of European integration during the third German presidency of the EU Council in the first half of 2007. After the negative outcomes of referenda on the Euroconstitution in France and the Netherlands in May and June 2005, the coalition decided it was a priority to force this project through and promised extensive public consultation on how to overcome the current impasse (*Gemeinsam für Deutschland*, 2005).

Chancellor Merkel's debut on the European stage was a success. In December 2005, she made her first appearance in Brussels during the debate on the EU's financial per-

spective 2007–2013 and she surprised her EU partners with her flexibility and efficacy. She was able to push for increasing the EU budget by EUR 13 billion and allocated a total of EUR 100 million, out of EUR 300 million of EU aid resources dedicated to the development of the Eastern lands and Bavarian borderlands, to Poland which was both a sensation and surprise. It was then already that she proved to be single-minded and determined. She did not fear the protests of her compatriots from the former GDR or the negative opinions of her Bavarian allies from the CSU (Koszel, 2008a, pp. 229–230).

The “grand coalition” government did not succeed in the implementation of its flagship project of the Constitution for Europe, though. At different stages, the Green party (Joschka Fischer) as well as the Social Democrats (Gerhard Schröder and Johannes Rau) were involved in it. German commitment followed from the fact that the Euroconstitution made the EU more of a political union whose final form conformed to German expectations (Koszel, 2013a, p. 208).

Merkel’s single-mindedness in pushing for the constitutional treaty, combined with her lack of experience in playing a subtle political game in Brussels, brought her to a dead end she could not easily get out of. She was rescued by French Minister of Internal Affairs, Nicolas Sarkozy, who was readying himself for a campaign to win the office of French president in 2007. He managed to persuade the German leader that it no longer made sense to stick by the name of the Constitution for Europe, which should be substituted by that of a ‘simplified treaty’ (*traiteé simplifié*), a ‘reforming treaty’ or a ‘minitreaty’, and which would encompass a majority of the provisions from the Euroconstitution while becoming far more digestible for opponents of the project (the United Kingdom, Poland and Spain). Sarkozy’s suggestion was tempting, the more so as the new treaty would maintain the crucial provisions of the old one, but would not have to be put to a referendum. Spain supported this standpoint, and in May 2006 Germany backed up. On May 27–28, EU ministers of foreign affairs held a meeting in Klosterneuburg where the head of German diplomacy, Frank-Walter Steinmeier admitted that presenting French and Dutch citizens the treaty once more in the same form would be inconceivable (Maurer, 2007, pp. 3–8).

During the German presidency of the EU Council in the first half of 2007, the details of the new treaty were worked out, albeit with difficulties. On December 13, 2007, the treaty was signed in Lisbon, but Germany could be only moderately satisfied with the final outcome. The treaty sanctioned a strong position of Germany in EU decision-making processes while strengthening the intergovernmental method of collaboration between EU members and postponing the model of federation as the target form of the EU, which Germany preferred. Following the decision of the Federal Constitutional Tribunal, the Bundestag adopted competence laws associated with the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty, thereby limiting the independence of the government in running European policies. The Tribunal indicated that the adoption of solutions that would apply to the whole federation would breach the Constitution. By virtue of the Tribunal’s verdict, the Bundestag had to express its consent every time an EU law was to be applied in Germany, in particular concerning penal law and foreign operations by the Bundeswehr (Węc, 2013, pp. 119–120).

The European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) constituted another field of intensified German activities in the European Union. Over the period of 2002–2004, the European

Commission developed the principles of collaboration between the EU and Belarus, Moldova, Ukraine and all those neighbors surrounding the EU that Brussels could not envisage becoming EU members in the foreseeable future. Apart from the EU's eastern neighbors, the ENP embraced South Mediterranean countries (Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestinian Autonomy, Syria and Tunisia) and Russia, whose status was unclear and was only to be determined and defined. The EU's neighbors should be made more stable, their security reinforced and living standards improved. By means of the ENP, the EU offered privileges to its neighbors on the basis of common values (democracy and human rights, the rule of law, good governance, market economy and sustainable development) that should be respected by all parties. The ENP sought political coordination and enhanced economic integration, increased mobility and interpersonal contacts (*Cele ogólne*, 2004).

Initially, the implementation of the ENP was so ineffective that the European Commission resolved to review the project and include its reform in the agenda of the German presidency of the EU Council in 2007.

Germany fully approved the general assumptions of the ENP, trusting that they would enable a sort of a protective belt to be created – a crescent of friendly countries where the EU could feel safer, surrounded by a 'ring of friends'. Berlin was of the opinion that the EU's eastern policy should be incentivized and founded on developing closer ties binding the countries covered by the ENP with the EU.

The concept of German government was not merely limited to the expansion of the ENP and its potential reach, to encompass Central Asia (and develop a cohesive geopolitical strategy towards Central Asian republics of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan that abounded in resources) but involved also the development of a specific strategy in relations with Moscow. This demanded considerable subtlety and diplomacy, because Russia treated Central Asia as its own zone of influence and was highly sensitive to any attempts to interfere in the problems of countries there (Jacobsen, Machowski, 2007, pp. 31–32).

The new principles of the EU's eastern policy were designed in parallel by the Office for Foreign Affairs and the Chancellery. Their operations were consulted and coordinated in order to prevent potential conflicts of power. Following numerous additions and amendments, on September 3, 2006, the document, whose motto read "rap-prochement through economic interlocking" (*Annäherung durch Verflechtung*), was ultimately presented by Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier at an informal meeting of EU ministers of foreign affairs in Lappeenranta, Finland.

Germany assumed that the new ENP would reach out to encompass the states of the Caucasus and Central Asia and – together with Russia – would lead to the stabilization of the region and intensified economic collaboration. The European Council authorized Germany to present the details of the Central Asian strategy at the EU summit held on June 21–22, 2007 in Brussels, where it was fully approved by EU states (*Rada Europejska. 21–22 czerwca 2007*).

Steinmeier promoted this German concept in person, which assumed that the problems faced by the EU's eastern neighbors would be excluded from the ENP, and that they would be offered a project Berlin named 'ENP+' or 'Partnership for Modernization'. Moscow was to receive a priority treatment, and it transpired over time that this

offer was addressed exclusively at Moscow. Caucasus countries, Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova slipped into the background. The main partner – Moscow – was to be bound with the EU by a multidimensional strategic partnership which translated into tighter economic connection and collaboration in Asia and the Middle East. This would also bolster democratic trends in Russia, leading to a ‘partnership of values’ between Russia and the EU. Germany was firmly convinced that such a policy should not be abandoned. Germany aspired to expand its experience and achievements in collaboration with Russia to the entire EU. Moscow was to be included in numerous EU integration initiatives, and mutual partnership should be enhanced in different fields, while respecting Russian discreteness (Kosman, 2011, pp. 134).

In this vein, in 2008, Germany on its own behalf turned to Russia with an offer to establish a “Partnership for Modernisation” (PfM) program. The conditions seemed advantageous. Putin’s presidency was drawing to an end in 2008, and he anointed a relatively young technocrat (43 years old) free of ideological obstinacy, Dmitry Medvedev, as his successor. Part of the German political elite, mainly in SPD circles, began to treat his election run as a true chance for modernization, democratization and liberalization in Russia. It was not apparent then that it was a purely political game, and Medvedev replacing Putin did not mean any changes in Russian foreign or domestic policies. To respond to the ‘modernization’ promises of the Kremlin, in 2009, Germany managed to persuade the European Commission to commit the resources of the entire European Union to the PfM that Berlin favored. Chancellor Merkel was focused on resolving the crisis in the eurozone at the time, and she was particularly intent on gaining the support of all EU members for this initiative. It was also a classical example of how German diplomacy could apply European rhetoric for the purpose of implementing its own particular objectives. German pressure and persuasion led to the preliminary framework of the “Partnership for Modernisation” project being officially presented to Russia by the President of the European Commission José Manuel Barroso at the Russia-EU summit in Stockholm on November 18, 2009, during the Swedish presidency. The general outline of this preliminary project included the two main postulates of its German predecessor, namely administrative reform and the enhanced rule of law. It also provided for combating corruption, development of NGOs and promotion of a good investment climate by means of the implementation of EU legislative and technical norms and standards. It was beyond any doubt that the PfM would strengthen the strategic Germany-Russia partnership and enable Germany to increase its exports of highly processed goods to Russia and enter into multi-billion-euro agreements (Koszel, 2013b, pp. 87–910).

German hopes for the modernization of Russia and its rapprochement to EU structures soon turned out to have failed. The Russia-Georgia war in August 2008 and Moscow’s reluctance to resolve the Transnistrian problem undermined Chancellor Merkel’s trust in the Medvedev/Putin duo. Stefan Kornelius wrote that, after the 2012 elections and Putin’s resumption of the office of president, Merkel felt cheated because she had been excessively positive about the new presidency before (Kornelius, p. 205). This did not alter the general assumptions of German policy towards Russia, though. The authoritarian ruling methods in Russia were criticized, but at the same time the formula of ‘strategic partnership’ was implemented, ensuring German economic interests in Russia.

Germany had an ambivalent attitude to two specific projects developed under the new ENP – the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) and Eastern Partnership (EaP). Germany was right that the UfM project, promoted by President Nicolas Sarkozy, was intended to increase France's influence in the Mediterranean and it was his response to intensified German interest in Central and Eastern Europe (Gougeon, 2012). It was not easy for Chancellor Merkel to persuade the leader of France that this should not be an exclusive project and that all EU countries should be involved in its implementation, which actually failed (Martnes, Thorel, 2013, p. 92).

In 2007, President Sarkozy proposed intensifying relations between the EU and the Mediterranean, and the PfM initiative enforced by Germany accelerated the work on strengthening the ties between Brussels and Eastern European states. Poland was particularly keen on this project, since it had an extremely negative attitude to Chancellor Schröder's policy of building a Russian-German 'strategic partnership' on conditions that were unfavorable for Poland (e.g. Nord Stream). Therefore, these projects were counterbalanced by a more extensive Eastern Partnership project, developed by Poland and Sweden in 2008. It envisaged a greater involvement of the European Union in eastern policy, in particular as concerned Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine and – to a limited extent – Belarus (Grela, Rapacki, 2016).

German enthusiasm towards the Eastern Partnership was rather moderate but, on account of the excellent relations with Poland, ruled by Donald Tusk's government at the time, Germany approved this initiative, seeing it as a continuation of its own former concept of the 'ENP+' and an idea that well suited the conclusions of German presidency in 2007. The Polish plans won the support of Chancellor Merkel during her visit to Gdańsk on June 17, 2008, and by Minister of Foreign Affairs, Frank-Walter Steinmeier on more than one occasion. After the war in Georgia, Berlin advocated offering enhanced German and EU development aid for Eastern Europe in order to increase the stability in this region. Berlin was quite open, however, in saying that the Eastern Partnership could not be aimed against Russia, constitute the first stage of Eastern European countries joining the EU or compete with the Partnership for Modernisation project, which was favored by Berlin (Barabasz, Koszel, Książniakiewicz, 2016, p. 101). Although the EU allocated financial resources for the EaP, it was not attractive for its partners on account of the restrictions introduced by Germany. Poland was too weak to carry the burden of building the EaP by itself. Russia took advantage of these weaknesses and limited the EU's influence in Ukraine, Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia. The lack of mutual trust and disputes between EaP partners exerted further adverse impact.

Merkel's government did not attach great importance to anchoring the last countries of the former Soviet bloc – Romania and Bulgaria – in the EU. This is particularly noticeable when the scale of German commitment to including Poland and Hungary, among others, in the European Union is taken into account. German government, accompanied by other EU countries, in particular France, Austria and Denmark, indicated their 'fatigue' with enlargement processes and opted for dealing with the issue of enhanced collaboration of member states. In the coalition agreement of November 11, 2005, the new CDU/CSU and SPD government promoted a 'reasonable EU enlargement policy' so as not to overburden EU structures. The provisions in the coalition

agreement ensured the support of the Christian Democrats and Social Democrats for the EU membership of only Bulgaria and Romania, and for the commencement of accession negotiations with Croatia. The concerns of the coalition were presented with respect to the principles of fair competition to be observed in the enlarged EU, ruling out wage-dumping and illegal workforces. As a consequence, a seven-year transition period was to be maintained, postponing the free access of Central and Eastern European workers to the German labor market, as were passport controls at the borders with new EU member states, which were to meet the high standards of the Schengen *acquis* (*Gemeinsam für Deutschland*, 2005; Paterek, 2008, pp. 199–200).

Germany was not involved in the accession process of the two Balkan states. Nevertheless, Germany was of the opinion that, despite considerable deficiencies in the implementation process of internal reforms (primarily the judiciary and public administration, combating corruption and crime), both states should enter the European Union in order to conclude the process of the enlargement incorporating all the post-communist countries of the former Eastern bloc. The geostrategic location of both countries along the Black Sea was important since they stabilized the situation in the turbulent Balkans. Germany vested all the technical and organizational matters concerned to the European Commission and other EU institutions. Romania's situation was slightly better as it could count on France, which it hoped to ensure a smooth course of negotiations (Lang, 2005, pp. 23–24).

On January 1, 2007, Bulgaria and Romania became members of the European Union. In his speech, delivered when the Bundestag ratified the accession agreement (October 26, 2006), Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier openly stated that Romanian and Bulgarian membership of the EU “would be a step to enhance the security in the Eastern Balkans and the Black Sea and German businessmen will find new sales markets. This accession provides the legislative framework for such activities and is indispensable” (*Rede von Bundesaußenminister Steinmeier*, 2006).

Croatia could count on German support for its European ambitions, having long been under German (Habsburg) cultural influence. Germany was among the first countries in the world which recognized its independence in December 1991 and then advocated Croatian interests in Brussels from the late 1990s. The good image Croatia enjoyed was considerably tarnished in the eyes of German public opinion when the atrocities committed by Croatian troops against the Serbian population during the Balkan war (1991–1995) gradually came to light. This attitude was augmented by Croatian reluctance to hand the criminals over to the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (Gen. Ante Gotovina) and insufficient laws to protect national minorities in Croatia.

In 2000, Croatia held presidential and parliamentary elections which marked the end of the authoritarian rule of President Franjo Tudman. This dramatically changed the political situation in the country and helped to end the period of its international isolation. On October 29, 2001, Croatia signed a Stabilization and Association Agreement which, to a certain extent, followed the model of the association agreements signed between the EU and Poland, among others. On June 18, 2004, Croatia was granted the status of candidate country. In those circumstances, Germany resumed the role of the ‘advocate’ of Croatian interests in Brussels. Unlike the case of Romania

and Bulgaria, the number of mutual visits at the highest level was conspicuous (*Beziehungen zu Deutschland*, 2011). After the dispute over the maritime border between Croatia and Slovenia was resolved, the EU signed an accession treaty with Croatia on December 9, 2011, during the Polish presidency of the EU Council. As expected, the vote in the Bundestag on May 16, 2013 was highly successful (6 abstentions), and on July 1, 2013 Croatia became the 28th member of the EU (*Gesetz*, 2013; Neuß, 2015).

The CDU/CSU-SPD coalition radically changed their perception of the future Turkish membership of the EU. From the time of the First World War, German-Turkish relations were friendly and stable, and thousands of migrant workers poured into Germany from the Bosphorus from the 1960s. The Schröder/Fischer administration stressed the secular character of the EU, relying on the legacy of the Enlightenment, and did not view Islam as an obstacle to European integration. At the same time, it openly said that the principal obstacle to Turkish accession was the deficit of democracy, lacking protection of minorities and breaching of human rights. Minister Fischer repeated on many occasions that the European Union was not a “religious community.” Chancellor Gerhard Schröder was personally involved in the negotiations with Turkey which resulted in the European Union resolving to commence official membership negotiations on October 3, 2005 (Winter, 2005, pp. 45–47).

The new CDU/CSU-SPD coalition declared in the coalition agreement that Germany had a “particular interest” in a deepening of mutual relations with Turkey and in binding this country with the European Union but, although Germany welcomed the accession negotiations, they were an open-ended process. The German stance became more rigid in 2006 when Chancellor Merkel agreed with her Christian Democratic allies, saying that the EU was a “Christian club.” A “privileged partnership” was offered to Turkey, where there was no mention of membership but of a deepened collaboration within the framework of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP), judiciary institutions and internal affairs agencies, especially as combating terrorism was concerned (Koszel, 2008, pp. 131–146).

2. Alliance with liberals (2009–2013)

On September 27, 2009, the CDU and CSU won the Bundestag elections (33.79%). A good result for the liberals (14.6%) and a poor one for the Social Democrats (23.03%) enabled the return of the CDU/CSU-FDP administration that had been tried and tested in 1982–1998. Angela Merkel retained her office, but that of Minister of Foreign Affairs and Vice-Chancellor was vested (by 2011) in the leader of the liberals, Guido Westerwelle, whose foreign policy prowess was negligible and whose English was poor. The coalition agreement signed on October 26, 2009, traditionally stressed that the future of Germany “in peace, freedom, security and prosperity” was inextricably linked to political developments in Europe and the world. The coalition wanted an “effective and self-confident EU that speaks with one voice and is vigorously committed to safeguarding peace, freedom and prosperity.” It stressed that only in a unified Europe can Germany successfully represent its interests in the world. The agreement also addressed the detailed matters of consistent implementation of the provisions of

the Lisbon treaty, paying more attention to the role of smaller EU members, developing contacts with Poland and France, EU competitiveness, transparency of decision-making processes, efficient operation of the internal market, continuation of the ENP and reinforcement of foreign and security policies (*Wachstum. Bildung. Zusammenhalt*, 2009).

The broad range of German objectives outlined by the new coalition was rapidly verified by reality. It became necessary to prioritize the issue of solving the financial crisis in the eurozone and responding to the Arab revolutions in 2011. Germany continued its commitment to a broadly understood European Neighbourhood Policy (Partnership for Modernisation, Union for the Mediterranean, Eastern Partnership and Black Sea Synergy) but it remained barely active in EU internal policy (e.g. Stockholm Programme) and supporting the European ambitions of Turkey and the Western Balkans.

In the face of the financial crisis which arrived from across the Atlantic in 2008, and spread over the eurozone, Germany initially made erroneous assumptions. The German premise was that the countries that had led light-hearted budget policies in terms of their internal debt (Greece) or inconsiderate credit policies (Ireland, Spain, Portugal and Cyprus) had brought the crisis upon themselves and they should get out of trouble on their own, applying austerity policies. International aid was to be granted as the *ultima ratio* under numerous conditions. Albeit logically justified, the German prescription did not take into account the severity of the financial trouble suffered by some countries, it raised the threat of the crisis spreading to further countries and put a question mark over the survival of the entire eurozone (Enderlein, 2010, pp. 7–12).

Only the deep crisis of public finances in Greece, and the unprecedented social protests and manifestations in Athens and other cities it generated, made Germany realize the necessity to come to the rescue. Chancellor Merkel had hitherto feared that generous financial aid allowed to Greece would make other EU countries – Ireland, Portugal and Spain – line up for their share. She was against granting the aid to an indebted Greece under the system of coordinated loans given by states within the single currency zone. In her opinion, the best solution was for Greece to limit consumption and take drastic austerity measures. On the other hand, the Chancellor was concerned about the stability of the euro and German interests in Greece. Its bankruptcy would harm German banks first, as they had bought Greek bonds for ca. EUR 40 billion (Meiers, 2015, p. 63).

In March 2010, Greece, alongside other countries of the eurozone, was forced for the first time to apply the Financial Support Mechanism and turn to the European Central Bank (ECB) and International Monetary Fund. Germany did not want to accept credit obligations towards Greece as, first, this would burden the German budget too heavily (ca. EUR 4 billion), and, second, the ECB did not have such resources or the appropriate authorization to grant loans. It was somewhat awkward for Germany to have pushed for commercial loans (at a rate of ca. 5%) to be granted to Greece. Granting loans to Greece and saving its financial credibility thereby took a long time. The reason for that was the strict position of the German government and Angela Merkel (Cziomer, 2013, p. 72).

It was with great reluctance that Germany got involved in the process of saving the states under threat. Among the instruments of financial aid created, the Greek Loan

Facility (GLF), European Financial Stabilisation Mechanism (EFSM) and European Financial Stability Facility (EFSF) were launched. As of 2012, the main source of financial aid for the eurozone was the European Stability Mechanism. Under all these programs, in May 2010, Greece received a financial package of EUR 110 billion, followed by another EUR 109 billion in July 2011. In November 2010, Ireland received EUR 85 billion; in May 2011, Portugal obtained EUR 78 billion and in March 2013 Cyprus was given EUR 10 billion.

In mid-November 2011 preparations began for the December summit of the European Council which was to determine further methods to combat the financial crisis in the eurozone. Chancellor Merkel continued to promote putting a halt to the increasing internal debts of EU countries, maintaining budgetary discipline and monitoring public spending. Germany tried to dispose of French ideas of persuading the ECB to be flexible and purchase the bonds of debt-ridden countries. Germany rejected one more expensive project, namely the issuance of Eurobonds, fearing communitarization of the debt. Therefore, the prescription to cure eurozone countries of the crisis was designed under strong pressure from the German government and was then supported by a decisive majority of EU states at a session of the European Council held in Brussels on December 8–9, 2011. The solution adopted took the form of a ‘fiscal union’, an intergovernmental agreement which clearly circumvented the treaties, and provided for a maximum of 60% deficit in public finances and 3% of budgetary deficit to be strictly observed by EU members and other volunteers, and included in the respective constitutions of these countries (Höchler, 2013, p. 149). Formal provisions were incorporated in a new intergovernmental treaty, signed in Brussels on March 2, 2012, which set the principles of reinforcing financial discipline in the EU (*Treaty on the stability, coordination and management in the Economic and Monetary Union*, 2013).

Chancellor Merkel was quite surprised by the resistance of the new socialist President of France, Francois Hollande, who did not share the German conviction that the austerity policy was imperative to overcome the financial crisis. He believed that the policy of belt-tightening would actually lead to an even greater recession and that priority should be given to generating economic growth in the eurozone and creating new jobs. After President Hollande won Spain and Italy over, Merkel had to agree to include activities aiming to promote EU growth and employment in the fiscal pact. At a European Council summit held on June 28–29, 2012, decisions were made and the pact for economic growth and employment was adopted (*Rada Europejska – Konkluzje, Bruksela, 27–28/06/2013*).

The EU’s Common Foreign and Security Policy faced an enormous challenge when the Arab revolutions broke out in North Africa and the Middle East (2010–2013). The German coalition made a formal statement in its coalition agreement to pursue deeper collaboration within the CFSP and CSDP, and expressed its high regard for the strengthened status of the Office of the High Representative of the EU for Foreign and Security Policy and the European External Action Service, which was in its opinion “an important step towards increased unity in EU foreign policy.” The coalition agreement addressed the need to improve planning and command skills of the CSDP. At the annual conference on international security, held in Munich in February 2010, Minister Guido Westerwelle left no doubt about the ultimate German target, namely

establishing a European army supervised by the European Parliament (*Westerwelle fordert EU-Armee*, 2010).

The idea of building a civil empire and promoting the culture of abstinence was strongly advocated by the Green Party, die Linke and part of the SPD, but it led to Germany losing credibility among its NATO partners. In 2010, France gave up its strategic military collaboration with Germany and signed agreements with the United Kingdom instead. In 2010–2011 the German government set about a profound reform of the armed forces, which later turned out to have been rather unsuccessful. On July 1, 2011, military conscription was abandoned in Germany and replaced by a professional army. By 2010 the headcount in the Bundeswehr shrank to 250,000 soldiers, and after the reform it was further reduced to 185,000 forecasted to go down to 175,000 (Przybyll, 2010).

Germany was in favor of a ‘soft’ response to conflict situations, but this was considerably undermined during the Arab revolutions in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Syria in 2010–2011. The events there additionally divided the Western allies and revealed the inefficiency and ineffectiveness of the CFSP and ESDP. The High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy, Catherine Ashton failed to coordinate a united standpoint and a joint action plan for EU countries. The differences in the attitudes of the main EU states soon surfaced. Both within NATO and outside the alliance, France, the United Kingdom and USA provided both arms and food to the insurgents fighting against dictatorships, while Germany remained extremely moderate and limited itself to expressing moral support and offering the aid of German officers working in NATO logistics. The American administration opted in the United Nations Security Council for a broad ban on flights over the territory seized by the Libyan insurgents. Although Berlin sympathized with the objectives of the resolution, on March 17, 2011, the German representative to the UNSC abstained in a vote over the document supporting NATO operations in Libya (Möller, 2011).

The German attitude was severely criticized in France, the United Kingdom and the USA, but also among the political elite of Germany. They were indignant that Germany did not vote alongside the old allies, but joined new ones: Russia, China, India and Brazil.

3. Return of the “grand coalition” government (2013–2017)

On September 22, 2013, Germans went to the polls aware of the fact that the election results were a foregone conclusion, since Merkel’s popularity among society had peaked. The hopes of the Christian Democrats to continue their convenient alliance with the liberals failed because the FDP was rent by internal problems and, for the first time in German history, did not cross the electoral threshold (4.76%) and was not elected to the Bundestag. In those circumstances, the great CDU/CSU and SPD parties agreed to return to the government of the “grand coalition,” and on November 27, 2013 they signed an agreement to this effect.

The agreement primarily emphasized Germany’s unwavering intention to build European unity, the more so as the EU was at a stage of profound economic, social and

institutional transformations. In those circumstances, EU partners had special expectations of Germany, as economically the strongest EU member and an ‘anchor of stability’. The coalition promised to do its best to overcome the existing crisis and achieve a breakthrough, leading to a Europe that would be politically, economically and socially stronger. Detailed provisions addressed the necessity of institutional reforms, promotion of youth exchange agencies and promotion of the equal use of the German language in European institutions.

In the field of the economy, the financial crisis of the eurozone was forecasted to be concluded by the proper use of warning and supervising mechanisms, strengthening the monetary and economic union, stressing competitiveness and increasing employment, in particular the employment of young people. No greater changes were announced with respect to EU foreign and security policy, which meant that Germany would continue its ‘culture of abstinence’. The EU would give more attention to the interests of smaller and medium countries than used to be the case. Poland and Czechia were mentioned as important partners in this context. A cautious standpoint was adopted in the matter of supporting European ambitions of Serbia, Kosovo and other Western Balkan states. As before, Turkey was offered a strategic partnership, and the process of Turkish integration with the EU was considered to be open, but no automatic outcomes should be assumed. The European Neighbourhood Policy was deemed to have been successful, but the best instruments for the Eastern Partnership would entail association agreements, free trade agreements and visa facilitation agreements. A short remark confirmed the strategic importance of the Mediterranean for Europe, and that its closer ties with the EU might contribute to the stability of the entire region. An extensive offer for Russia was expressed in the title: “Open dialogue and deepened cooperation” (*Offener Dialog und breitere Zusammenarbeit mit Russland*), (*Deutschlands Zukunft gestalten*, 2013).

In the first months of the new/old coalition’s government, Germany was convinced that emerging from the financial crisis in the eurozone would be the central issue. Germany continued corrective action, taking an active part in preparing a banking union, supported Junker’s investment plan and demanded that EU institutions be given greater supervision over the budgets of eurozone member states (Węc, 2014, pp. 33–34).

Angela Merkel’s third term in office soon turned out to be dominated by three great crises (the conflict in Ukraine, Brexit and the immigrants) posing the greatest challenge to the European policy in Germany in the 21st century so far.

Due to its excellent relations with Russia, an independent Ukraine was practically of no interest to German politics and economy. Under Polish pressure, Berlin agreed to the signing of an association agreement under the Eastern Partnership which would not, however, open the accession process to Ukraine (Wieliński, 2012). Although such an association agreement was initialed on July 19, 2012, the Ukrainian government announced on November 21, 2013, that it had suspended preparations for the agreement on association and the deepened, comprehensive free trade zone with the European Union. This was because Russia had left no illusions that it would not allow an agreement strictly binding Kiev with the EU to be signed. Earlier, Russia tried to threaten Kiev by cutting off gas supplies and discriminating against Ukrainian goods in Russian markets. Ukrainian society responded by taking to the streets, and blood was shed on

the barricades in Kiev. On December 17, Minister Steinmeier delivered a speech to inaugurate his return to *Auswärtiges Amt* in which he openly expressed being outraged (*empörend*) at Russia taking advantage of the difficult situation in Ukraine (*Rede von Außenminister Frank-Walter Steinmeier*, 2013).

A mission of the Weimar Triangle (Frank-Walter Steinmeier, Radosław Sikorski and Laurent Fabius) was urgently organized, headed by Germany, and managed to make President Yanukovych leave Ukraine in February 2014, which calmed the situation, but only for a short time. In March 2014, Russia annexed Crimea, forcing the EU and USA to impose economic sanctions against Russia and suspend its participation in the G-8 (*Entschlossene Reaktion der EU-Außenminister*, 2014).

Frank-Walter Steinmeier launched a diplomatic campaign and put in a considerable effort to mitigate the conflict. He travelled to the Baltic countries and Budapest, met the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sergey Lavrov, and thereby placed Germany at the forefront of countries involved in solving the conflict in Ukraine. After a parliamentary discussion in the Bundestag on March 19, 2014, Germany was unanimous in ruling out any military campaign, but nobody knew where Putin would stop and where the limits of the EU's concessions should be drawn. All instruments were to be applied: dialogue with Moscow, repeated sanctions against Russia – if necessary – and continued financial aid for Ukraine (Rinke, 2014, pp. 33–45).

The escalation of the conflict, following the annexation of Crimea by Russia and the outbreak of fighting in Eastern Ukraine in April 2014, was to be prevented by the 'Normandy format'. It was established on June 6, 2014, during a meeting of Angela Merkel, Francois Hollande, Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko and Valdimir Putin, held to commemorate the anniversary of the allies landing in northern France. The agreed Normandy format provided for a Ukraine–Russia–OSCE contact group to be set up; the Donetsk People's Republic and the Luhansk People's Republic were also invited to join the group. In early June the group negotiated a ceasefire deal which soon after collapsed. Under the pressure of Merkel and Hollande, Poroshenko and Putin concluded the first agreement in Minsk on September 5, but its provisions were soon breached as well (Meister, 2014).

As the conflict in eastern Ukraine was exacerbated, European leaders, with Merkel in the lead, intensified their activities seeking a diplomatic solution to the problem. On February 12, 2015, the second Minsk agreement was signed; its key points provided for a ceasefire and the withdrawal of heavy weapons from the frontline. Angela Merkel took the burden of negotiations on herself. During a 16-hour marathon in Minsk she threatened to break the talks if the separatists boycotted the agreed arrangements. There was no question that the second Minsk agreement was her personal success, which she paid for with physical and mental exhaustion. She managed to maintain the shaky unity of the EU in retaining the sanctions against Russia and to stop the noisy propaganda and offensive of those who 'understood Russia' (*Russlandversteher*) in her own country (Książniakiewicz, 2015).

Since the beginning of UK membership of the EU (1973), Germany was well aware of the fact that the United Kingdom would not be an engine of European integration. Mutual relations lacked any spectacular events and were described in terms of a 'quiet alliance' (*stille Allianz*). Yet Bonn, and then Berlin, found it difficult to accept the Eu-

roskeptic attitude of successive British Prime Ministers: Margaret Thatcher and John Major, as well as Tony Blair and Gordon Brown, although the latter two declared their pro-European sympathies (Meier-Walser, 1999). One should bear in mind that in signing the Maastricht Treaty the United Kingdom did not adopt the single currency, did not enter the Schengen zone, opposed including the Western European Union into the EU as its armed body, rejected the draft of the Constitution for Europe and refused to accept the Charter of Fundamental Rights (British protocol).

After a decade of Tony Blair and the Labour administration, the Tories won the 2010 election and took power (shared with the Liberals); Euroskeptic David Cameron was appointed Prime Minister. At the European Council summit held on December 8–9, 2011, when the fiscal pact was adopted, Cameron threatened to veto the change to the Lisbon Treaty and conditioned his agreement to the eurozone reform on London obtaining special guarantees ensuring that the financial services provided there would be untouchable.

His attitude was strongly criticized in Germany, which believed that Cameron had broken European solidarity at a difficult time. When the British Prime Minister visited Berlin in June 2012, Merkel refrained from criticism and she did not even try to persuade the UK to change its decisions, which might have encouraged the Prime Minister. In his speech of January 23, 2013, Cameron for the first time indicated that the UK might leave the EU and that this matter should be put to a referendum. He criticized European bureaucracy, the petrification of EU institutions and the way the eurozone operated; he demanded greater market competition and innovations. He believed that EU treaties would necessarily have to be changed along the lines desired by him (*David Cameron's EU speech*, 2013).

After the parliamentary elections on May 8, 2015, the Conservatives won a majority and could rule on their own. Holding a renewed mandate, Cameron began to pressure EU leaders to agree to reform the treaties. Otherwise, by 2017 the United Kingdom would hold a referendum whether it should remain in the EU. Chancellor Merkel hinted her readiness to meet the UK's expectations but she rejected the possibility to negotiate the fundamental freedoms in the EU, in particular the principle of free flow of people. The British Prime Minister was clearly in a difficult position: in order to please Euroskeptics in his own party he would have to demand that EU treaties be thoroughly reviewed, which his EU partners did not agree to.

Germany approached the British Prime Minister's declarations cautiously, pragmatically and treated them primarily as an element of internal political fighting (increasing influence of the anti-EU United Kingdom Independence Party and anti-EU sentiments of part of the Tories) and an instrument of pressure on Brussels. Germany was aware that the UK had a separate position in the EU, and that the EU had always had to be ready to offer London substitute, interim solutions in the past. Germany shared a number of British reservations pertaining to the excessive omnipotence of EU institutions, competitiveness and the need to strengthen the subsidiarity principle. Chancellor Merkel believed that a compromise was conceivable and changes to the treaties were not ruled out. After a meeting with Cameron in Berlin on May 29, 2015, it was agreed that negotiations on changes to the treaties were possible, yet Germany made it clear that it would not agree to solutions that would undermine the rationale

of the backbone of the EU, namely the Single Market. Germany fully agreed with PM Cameron that workers in rich EU countries abused social benefits, immigration policy had to be reformed and new regulations in the labor market were necessary (Merkel, 2015).

Germany came to accept the idea of the referendum in the British Isles, but it also tried to do its best to prevent the risk of defeat and meet Cameron's expectations. After many hours of difficult discussions, on February 18–19, 2016 an agreement was negotiated which, according to the Prime Minister, was beneficial for all parties. Among other things, it provided for limited access of immigrants from EU countries to social benefits, the Bank of England was to stay in charge of the UK financial sector, the euro would not be the only official EU currency, and the UK would be excluded from a further deepening of European integration. Chancellor Merkel was satisfied with this agreement, since she believed that the United Kingdom did not gain too much and the EU did not make any exceptional concessions, either; the most important thing was that it became possible to keep the UK in the EU (EU-Gipfel, 2016).

The results of the British referendum of June 23, 2016 (51.9% : 48.1%) came as a shock to the United Kingdom and the European Union alike. Cameron's strategy failed and he was forced to step down. He was replaced by Theresa May, who had earlier skillfully maneuvered between the supporters and opponents of Brexit. From the very beginning of her office she took a firm stance that the UK's exit from the EU was irreversible and would be executed in conformity with EU procedures in 2019.

The victory of Brexit supporters triggered a strong reaction in Germany, which extensively discussed the reasons for this victory, exit procedures and the long-term outcomes of this development for European integration. Merkel openly admitted that it was "a blow to Europe." In contrast to her coalition partner from the Social Democrats, who demanded the Brexit procedure to start urgently, Merkel opted for substantive and calm talks with London. At the same time, both Germany and France came to a conclusion that this blow to the prestige of European integration might lay the foundations for a new beginning and accelerate the EU's development in the future. This was the topic of the German-Italian-French summit, held on Ventotene Island in the Tyrrhenian Sea on August 22, 2016. Francois Hollande and Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi continued consultations with the leaders of Portugal, Spain and Greece, while Chancellor Merkel talked to the leaders of other EU member states, especially those from Central and Eastern Europe. Further decisions were made at the summit held in Bratislava on September 16, 2016; at an informal meeting of EU leaders in Malta on February 3, 2017; and during the meeting to celebrate the 60th anniversary of signing the Treaties of Rome, held in March 2017 (Morozowski, 2016).

On March 29, 2017, the Brexit procedure was launched, which was expected to lead to a formal parting between London and Brussels within two years. From the very beginning, Germany was of the opinion that this process would impair the EU in terms of politics, economy and security. Additionally, the UK was the third most important German trade partner after the US and France. 2,500 German businesses operated in the Isles (compared to 3,000 British companies in Germany) giving employment to 370,000 workers whose future was now uncertain (*Die wichtigsten Antworten*, 2017).

Germany agreed to the experienced commissioner and former French Minister of Foreign Affairs, Michel Barnier to represent the European Commission in negotiations with the UK. On April 29, 2017, at an informal EU summit in Brussels, in concordance with Article 50 of the TUE, representatives of 27 member states unanimously supported the guidelines for Brexit negotiations. Chancellor Merkel emphasized that the negotiations would firm but fair (*fest und fair*) (*Rada Europejska*, 2017; *Brexit-Gipfel*, 2017).

On June 19, 2017, the first round of talks began. From the beginning, it was Germany's intention to minimize EU losses and persuade London to make greater concessions. The financial obligations of the UK (ca. EUR 60 billion) have remained a bone of contention, alongside the rights of over three million EU citizens in the Isles (including ca. one million Poles), the jurisdiction of the EU Court of Justice regarding the enforcement of these rights and the future of the Ireland-Northern Ireland border.

It is beyond doubt that the greatest challenge for German European policy in the second decade of the 21st century concerns the refugee crisis following the Arab revolutions and the civil wars in Libya and Syria. In 2015, thousands of refugees, coming mainly from Syria and accompanied by an emigration wave from Afghanistan, Iraq, Eritrea, Somalia and the Balkans (Kosovo, Albania, Serbia and Macedonia) tried to enter prosperous EU countries – mainly Germany, Sweden and Benelux countries, seeking shelter and asylum. In August 2015, German Minister of Internal Affairs, Thomas de Maizière said that Germany should expect 800,000 refugees in that year, due to the dramatic exacerbation of the situation in Syria, North Iraq and Afghanistan. On August 25, the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) announced that EU regulations on asylum and immigration would not apply to Syrian citizens. This followed from an agreement concluded by Chancellor Merkel and Austrian Chancellor Werner Faymann to temporarily suspend the Dublin Convention and accept asylum seekers abandoning routine bureaucratic procedures. This was also a response to thousands of immigrants walking towards Austria, after many days of camping out at the Keleti railway station in Budapest. This was to be a single action caused by an extraordinary situation and dictated by humanitarian concerns, but it was interpreted abroad as an incentive for mass migration to Germany (Hildebrandt, Ulrich, 2015).

At a press conference in Berlin on August 31, Chancellor Merkel was highly optimistic when she tried to convince the journalists that Germany would handle the refugee problem (*wir schaffen das!*), being a strong state which was able to overcome the difficulties it was facing. After additional consultations with Hungarian Prime Minister, Victor Orban, on September 4, Chancellor Merkel announced that refugees would not be sent back and that she was united in this matter with her coalition partner, the SPD.

It could be easily seen that the optimistic announcements by the German Chancellor divided German society. She enjoyed strong parliamentary support, since combating xenophobia and openness to foreigners were in the manifestoes of the Left, the Greens and the SPD. Her own political team generated greater problems. Prime Minister and CSU leader, Horst Seehofer spoke on behalf of Bavaria, which was unable to handle the high concentration of refugees and attacked the liberal policy of the government, and demanded that drastic steps be taken in order to curb the uncontrollable influx of people.

Taking such a spectacular approach to refugees, the Federal Republic of Germany was clearly improving its global image as a country that was free of racial hatred and ethnic prejudices. A majority of the German population opted for a new ‘hospitality culture’ (*Willkommenskultur*), although numerous opinion media and experts were of the opinion that the excessive influx of refugees exceeded the absorption capacity of Germany. The counterargument was that Germany was increasingly challenged by demographic issues (ageing society) and a shortfall of labor force amounting to one million people at the time.

Subjected to internal pressure, the German government reinstated border controls on September 13, which was, however, in line with the regulations in the Schengen border traffic agreement. The asylum law was tightened. On October 15, 2015, the Bundestag adopted a new legislative package (*Asylverfahrensbeschleunigungsgesetz*) in a landslide vote, which considerably limited refugee rights to obtain social benefits, and accelerated deportation procedures (*Asylverfahrensbeschleunigungsgesetz*, 2015).

The more people reached Germany and Austria, the more Germany insisted on a fair relocation of people seeking shelter in the EU across all member states. Following a meeting of EU ministers of foreign affairs, on the grounds of two decisions by the Council of September 14 and 22, respectively, the 40,000 and 120,000 immigrants residing in Greece, Italy and other countries suffering from the immigration crisis were assigned for relocation. Taking into account special relocation ratios calculated by the European Commission, over 40,000 refugees were agreed to be relocated to Germany.

The most pessimistic expectations were confirmed when the influx of refugees to Germany exceeded the wildest estimates, amounting to 1.1 million people at the turn of 2015. This went beyond the capacity of local authorities and agencies in charge of incomers. It came as no surprise that such a liberal attitude to the issue of refugees triggered enormous criticism from European capitals, from Athens to Warsaw and London, especially after Germany firmly started to demand respecting the decisions of September 14 and 22, 2015, on the allocation of refugees to individual EU countries.

As the refugee crisis mounted, from summer 2015, Germany started running negotiations with France. The French experience made President Hollande well aware of how explosive an issue an uncontrolled immigrant wave could become, and what problems it might raise. The terrorist attacks in France on November 13 evidenced how difficult it is to monitor suspected individuals. Nevertheless, he did not let it show that German ‘overzealousness’ boded hard times for the EU. He opted for EU institutions taking rapid steps while it was still possible to control the situation. Facing the presidential elections scheduled for 2017, he did not want Marine le Pen and her National Front to benefit from this issue. It was his idea, for which he should be credited, to pressure Chancellor Merkel to use Turkey to halt the refugee wave. The German government agreed to this solution with the utmost reluctance, since it knew that the price for an agreement concluded with the authoritarian Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan would be steep.

On March 18, 2016, a reconciliation on the issue of refugees was reached at a session of the European Council. The costs of the Turkish blockade, sustenance and re-

location of refugees by 2018 were estimated at EUR 6 billion (*Konkluzje Rady Europejskiej (17–18 marca 2016)*). Yet Chancellor Merkel and her political supporters sustained serious political losses. For intransigent German advocates of human rights, the cooperation with President Erdoğan meant a betrayal of ideals and cynical trade in values. On the other hand, the pressure from right-wing extremists rose. The formerly moderate Alternative for Germany (AfG) party that focused on economic matters was becoming increasingly radical, demagogical and xenophobic. In the elections to the parliaments of Rhineland-Palatinate, Saxony-Anhalt and Baden-Württemberg on March 13, 2016 the AfG won impressive two-digit results, raising concerns before the 2017 elections to the Bundestag.

Pushing for a comprehensive, European solution, Chancellor Merkel managed to defend her vision of how to manage the migration crisis and Europeanize it. Yet her style was interpreted as ‘moral blackmail by Germany.’ It did not matter much that Germany was actually right, and the ethical and moral arguments were on its side, if Germany was not able to persuade its European allies of its rightness, thereby winning their support. It offered little comfort that the Chancellor repeatedly and firmly promised in 2016 and 2017 that this would not happen again in the future (Koszel, 2016).

* * *

It can generally be concluded that the period of Chancellor Merkel’s rule was a time when the role and position of Germany in the European Union and internationally was strengthened. Although Germany failed with respect to the Constitution for Europe and gave up the idea of a political union, it was still able to impose key solutions to resolve the crisis in the eurozone and played the leading role in freezing the conflict in Eastern Ukraine. Germany was less successful in solving the refugee problem, as the scale of this phenomenon exceeded wildest expectations and – to a large extent – it was Berlin that embroiled the EU in this serious problem.

Speaking about the details, Germany looked after the European Neighbourhood Policy and its implementation, but on account of the Arab revolutions, the developments in Ukraine and situation in Russia it can hardly be considered a success. Particularly painful for Germany was the failure of the Partnership for Modernisation with Russia that Germany doted on. Although it managed to force the entire EU to promote and finance this project, the offer was rejected by President Putin, who had no intention of modernizing Russia and linking it with the EU as Germany expected.

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Summary

During the three administrations of Chancellor Angela Merkel, Germany has become an unquestioned leader of the European Union. Owing to its enormous economic capacity and the weaknesses of its main partners – France and the United Kingdom – Germany managed to enforce its own solutions to the financial crisis in the eurozone and resolving the conflict in Ukraine. It was highly problematic, however, to Europeanize the problem of immigrants, and the Euroconstitution and the implementation of the European Neighbourhood Policy should be viewed as failures.

Key words: Merkel, Germany, European policy, European Union

Bilans polityki europejskiej Niemiec pod rządami Angeli Merkel (2005–2017)

Streszczenie

W okresie rządów trzech gabinetów kanclerz A. Merkel Niemcy stały się niekwestionowanym liderem Unii Europejskiej. Dzięki olbrzymiemu potencjałowi gospodarczemu i słabości najważniejszych partnerów – Francji i Wielkiej Brytanii udało się im narzucić swoje rozwiązania w kwestii wyjścia z kryzysu strefy euro i rozwiązania konfliktu na Ukrainie. Z dużą trudnością przyszło im jednak doprowadzenie do europeizacji problemu uchodźców. Raczej o porażkach można było mówić w kwestii Eurokonstytucji i realizacji Europejskiej Polityki Sąsiedztwa.

Słowa kluczowe: Merkel, Niemcy, polityka europejska, Unia Europejska

