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Christian Democrat policy in the face of the influx of Syrian immigrants to the Federal Republic of Germany (2015–2017)¹

Abstract: The aim of this article is to present the most frequently discussed actions undertaken by Chancellor Angela Merkel in order to stop the increased immigration of Syrians to Germany. The solutions proposed by Merkel are shown in the context of the reactions they triggered in CDU and CSU members. The policy of the Chancellor, and both German Christian Democratic parties and their representatives, has been presented in the context of critical discussions regarding the political costs associated with the admission of so many foreigners. The article analyzes, among other things, the issues regarding the position of Angela Merkel on the German political scene and the influence of the Willkommenspolitik on the results of the Bundestag elections in 2017.

Key words: Merkel, CDU, CSU, immigration crisis, immigration policy

The wave of immigrants² from war-ridden Syria who in 2015 entered the European Union, triggering a migration crisis, has resulted in

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² The author deliberately uses the broader term ‘immigrant’ instead of ‘refugee’ because not all the immigrants who started arriving in Germany in 2015 are eligible for the status of refugee. There are four forms of protection in Germany: political asylum granted on the basis of German Basic Law, refugee status following from the provisions of the Geneva Convention of 1951, subsidiary protection as stipulated in the Law on Asylum, and *Duldung* (Tolerated Stay Permit that is issued for foreigners who are unable to travel, or to return to their country of destination due to the situation there; the permit remains valid until the return of a given person becomes feasible). According to Basic Law, persons persecuted on political grounds have the right to asylum (*Ustawa zasadnicza*, Art. 16(a)(1), 1997, p. 87). Pursuant to Art. 1 of the 1951 Geneva Convention, the term ‘refugee’ applies to any person who

divisions and tensions between both EU member states and politicians from different political parties within individual countries. The situation in Germany was similar, where the discussion between the advocates of the 'open-door' policy (Ger.: *Willkommenspolitik*) and the proponents of curbing the mass influx of migrants was held between different political parties, and inside these parties. It seems of particular interest to analyze the standpoints taken by the representatives of the German Christian Democrats – members of the Christian Democratic Union (Ger.: *Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands* – CDU) and the Christian Social Union (Ger.: *Christlich-Soziale Union* – CSU). There are several reasons for this. Firstly, the CDU is chaired by Angela Merkel, who is believed to be the main initiator and the biggest supporter of admitting immigrants and refugees from Syria. As German Chancellor, she determines and is responsible for the guidelines of Germany's policy. Her other tasks also involve conducting the proceedings of the federal government (*Ustawa zasadnicza*, Art. 65, p. 143).³ Secondly, over the period concerned, the Christian Democrats formed the federal government in Germany and held the majority of seats in the Bundestag – 311 seats after the 2013 elections, when they garnered 41.5% of the votes, and 246 seats (33% of votes) after the 2017 elections (*Bundestagswahl 2017...*, 2017); this was significant in view of Germany's immigration and refugee policy. Thirdly, Christian-

is outside the country of his nationality, citizenship, or habitual residence; who owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion or, owing to such fear is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country (*Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*, Art. 1, 1991, p. 2). Immigrants who have been refused the status of refugees can be granted subsidiary protection. Pursuant to Section 4 of the German Asylum Act, "(1) A foreigner shall be eligible for subsidiary protection if he has shown substantial grounds for believing that he would face a real risk of suffering serious harm in his country of origin. Serious harm consists of: (1) death penalty or execution, (2) torture or inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, or (3) serious and individual threat to a civilian's life or person by reason of indiscriminate violence in situations of international or internal armed conflict" (*Asylgesetz in der Fassung...*, *Unterabschnitt 2 Internationaler Schutz § 4 Subsidiärer Schutz*, 2017).

³ The strong legal and political position of the Chancellor is evidenced, among other things, by the fact that the political system of the Federal Republic of Germany is dubbed a Chancellor system or Chancellor democracy (*Kanzlerdemokratie*). Additionally, the Chancellor is a member of the European Council, directly participating in determining guidelines for the development and policy of the EU, which gives her a decisive vote on behalf of Germany (Görtemaker, 2008, p. 229; Bożyk, 2012, p. 135; Cziomer, 2013, p. 52).

Democratic politicians had extremely different attitudes to the immigration crisis and the solutions put forward by Angela Merkel.

This paper aims to present and analyze the steps the Chancellor has taken in order to suppress increased immigration of Syrians to Germany. The solutions proposed by Angela Merkel are presented in the context of the responses they triggered among members of the CDU and CSU. Another objective involves outlining the policy of the Chancellor, both Parties, and their representatives in the context of criticism of political costs related to admitting such large numbers of foreigners. Therefore, the issues of the ideological tenets and attitudes of the Christian Democrats on German political stage are discussed alongside the influence of Merkel's *Willkommenpolitik* on the results of the 2017 elections to the Bundestag.

Importantly, not all the proposals of Chancellor Merkel regarding Syrian immigrants have been discussed with the same frequency; the majority of responses, comments and criticism have been triggered by controversial elements, including those that are related to the security of the German state and society, thus arousing the greatest concerns among the public. Other topics, mainly those related to logistics, have been discussed only occasionally. That is why this paper addresses the six solutions proposed by the Chancellor which have been most frequently and extensively discussed by the Christian Democrats over the period concerned.

1. Limiting the number of refugees admitted

Considerable emotions and criticism among the ranks of the Christian Democrats were stirred by Merkel's refusal to limit the number of refugees admitted to Germany. This topic was addressed particularly often after the events of New Year's Eve, 2016, when women in Cologne, Düsseldorf, Hamburg and other German cities were attacked; after the December attack at the Christmas market in Berlin; and after the parliamentary elections in September 2017.

Taking urgent steps to limit the number of refugees and immigrants who continued to enter Germany was most encouraged by CSU politicians, who believed that it would be "the right solution [...] to establish a cap on the number of admitted refugees" (Pawlak, *Niemcy: SPD...*, 2016). The CSU Chairman, Horst Seehofer was exceptionally active in this discussion, repeatedly suggesting that the annual limit for Germany be set at 200,000 refugees and declaring that he would not abandon this

demand (Dobrowolska-Polak, 2016; *CSU-CHEF...*, 2015; Schuler, *CDU und CSU...*, 2016; Schuler, *Flüchtlingspolitik...*, 2016; Edmund Stoiber..., 2016).⁴ Markus Söder also repeatedly took a similar standpoint. This Bavarian Minister of Finance additionally demanded that such a limit be introduced to Germany's Basic Law (*Markus Söder...*, 2015; *Flüchtlinge: Söder...*, 2015).⁵ He was supported by Rupert Scholz from the CDU, who argued that "the fundamental law stipulated in Art. 16(a) of the Basic Law⁶ is not a kind of a superior or overarching law that would not permit such limitations as a cap." According to the former Minister of Defense, by setting such a limit "the federal government would recognize its obligation to protect German identity" (Scholz, *Flüchtlinge...*, 2016).

During the December 2015 Congress of the CDU held in Karlsruhe, Merkel reached out to her critics saying that the number of refugees would have to be visibly limited and that this would be in the interest of refugees themselves, of Germany (due to the costs related to their subsistence, the integration of refugees into society and labor market) and in the interest of Europe (due to the internal character of the European Union and the global role of the EU) (*Bericht der Vorsitzenden...*, 2015, pp. 30, 31).⁷ However, the Chancellor also opted to make asylum procedures stricter and to expand the list of safe countries of origin, in order to reduce the number of people eligible to apply for asylum in Germany. Soon after that, the CDU adopted the ten-point Mainz Declaration, that stressed that a considerable reduction in the number of refugees would make it possible to overcome this global challenge (*Mainzer Erklärung...*, 2016).

⁴ This number was calculated on the basis of the number of asylum applications submitted in 2014.

⁵ Horst Seehofer opposed this solution (Gräßler, 2016; *Ein verschärftes Asylrecht...*, 2015; *Seehofer schießt gegen...*, 2015; *Antrag-Nr. C 53, Masseneinwanderung in die EU...*, 2016, p. 215).

⁶ Art. 16(a) of Basic Law stipulates that "(1) Persons persecuted on political grounds shall have the right of asylum. (2) Paragraph (1) of this Article may not be invoked by a person who enters the federal territory from a member state of the European Communities or from another third state in which application of the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and of the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms is assured (*Ustawa Zasadnicza...*, 1997, p. 87).

⁷ In her February *exposé*, Merkel said that the limitation is a shared aim "to continue to help people who truly need our protection" (*Regierungserklärung von Bundeskanzlerin Dr. Angela Merkel zum Europäischen Rat am 18./19...*, 2016; Matzke, 2016). The Chancellor argued that the number of refugees could be reduced by combating the causes for refugeeism (*Lasten teilen, Ursachen bekämpfen*, 2015).

This wording was unsatisfactory for the conservative CDU members forming the Berlin Circle,⁸ who demanded “an unambiguous signal that Germany’s capacity to admit refugees is limited” (*Angela Merkel: CDU...*, 2016). Members of the CSU also remained unconvinced about Merkel’s concept of reducing the number of refugees admitted to Germany, and they stressed that while the number of asylum seekers had fallen in 2016 compared to the previous year, it would still exceed the limit of 130,000 they had proposed (Schuler, *CDU...*, 2016). Horst Seehofer argued that setting a cap on the number of refugees admitted was the “desire of society” and that demanding the cap was not directed against the sister Party. He added that “the CSU is an independent Party which needs an independent policy” (*Horst Seehofer...*, 2016). Thomas Kreuzer, the leader of the CSU in the Bavarian Landtag, noted that his Party lacked an internal agreement on whether the number of 200,000 should cover only asylum seekers or also members of their families who might want to enter Germany as part of family reunification (Schuler, *CDU...*, 2016).

The 81st Congress of the CSU held on November 4–5, 2016 also failed to resolve this issue. In one of the resolutions, with a view to the receiving capacity of Germany, Bavarian Christian Democrats stressed the fact that Germany was able to accept a maximum number of 200,000 new refugees annually. The Party also proposed that this limit be legally established. The CSU argued that Germany would be able to fulfill its “responsibility for local populations as well as for those refugees who are in dire need of protection provided that their inflow will be permanently limited.” According to a resolution adopted by the CSU, this was one of the three pillars of its refugee policy.⁹ Similar wording was included also in the Party’s basic policy. In this document, the CSU expressed its conviction that “immigration has to be monitored, controlled and limited.” Emphasis was also given to the requirement to prevent abuse and to granting the right to asylum only to persecuted persons. The Party was also firmly of the opinion that asylum and refugee protection should be

⁸ The Berlin Circle (Ger.: *Berliner Kreis*) originated in 2011. It was founded and chaired by Christian Wagner, the leader of the CDU in the Hesse Landtag. The Berlin Circle includes, among others, Jörg Schönbohm – former Minister of Justice in the government of Brandenburg, Wolfgang Bosbach – the head of the Committee for Internal Policy in the Bundestag, and Erika Steinbach – the leader of the Federation of Expellees (until she left the CSU) (*Berliner Kreis in der Union*, 2017).

⁹ The remaining two include restriction and integration (*Leitantrag „Linksrutsch verhindern...“*, 2016, pp. 56–57).

granted for a determined period, and if the reasons for such protection cease to exist or an abuse of the right to hospitality occurs, the asylum seeker would have to return to his country of origin (*Die Ordnung...*, 2016, pp. 14–15).

Julia Klöckner also joined this discussion and presented her own ideas of how to reduce the number of immigrants in the eight-point *Plan A2*. The Vice-Chairperson of the CSU argued that Germany could not make the reduction of the number of refugees dependent on the goodwill of other governments in Europe and recommended that other policies should be sought. She said that “calling for the number of refugees to be reduced does not help anyone” and therefore people, local leaders and neighbors have to be shown that “such a reduction is truly happening.” Klöckner believed that it was equally important to send an unambiguous signal to the countries of refugees’ origin, but she was against establishing a cap on the number of refugees (Klöckner, 2016). Klöckner’s plan was approved of by some and criticized by other Christian Democrats, who treated it as competitive to Angela Merkel’s concepts. Yet Klöckner argued that her plan was complementary to Chancellor’s proposals, as it concerned the measures Germany could take to reduce the number of immigrants (*Flüchtlingsdebatte...*, 2016; *SPD-Kritik...*, 2016).

Horst Seehofer tried to take advantage of the negative social sentiments towards immigrants triggered by the attack at the Christmas market in December 2016 and to force Chancellor Merkel to allow the introduction of a limit on the number of refugees in the joint CDU/CSU government policy (Kinkartz, 2016). He failed, and the document eventually stated that the Christian Democrats favored “the number of refugees coming to our country to remain low. Thanks to this, we will be able to meet our humanitarian obligations” (*Für ein Deutschland*, 2017, p. 55). Chancellor Merkel had also been pressed by the Freedom-Conservative Breakthrough Association (Ger.: *Freiheitlich-Konservativen Aufbruch* – FKA¹⁰) including conservative members of the CDU and CSU, but they failed, too (*CDU/CSU: Konservative...*, 2017; Pawlak, *Niemcy...*, 2017).

The CSU tried to make the cap on the number of refugees admitted one of the main themes of its campaign before the September elections to the Bundestag. Therefore, it was uncertain whether the CSU would sup-

¹⁰ The Association was established on March 25, 2017 in Schwetzingen, Baden-Württemberg. It was initiated by Alexander Mitsch who is its leader. The Association includes conservative members of the CDU and CSU (*WerteUnion – Freiheitlich-Konservativen Aufbruch*, 2017).

port Merkel if she decided to run for Chancellor again (Schuler, *Flüchtlingspolitik...*, 2016). The first indication was given during the Party's Congress in December 2016. In spite of a number of CSU members criticizing Merkel's refugee policy, and her refusal to limit the number of refugees admitted to Germany, the Party did not support Thomas Schmitt, who called for the Bavarian CSU to boycott Angela Merkel's re-election as Chancellor.¹¹ The doubts were completely dispelled in February 2017. During a joint press conference by Angela Merkel and Horst Seehofer in Munich, the Chairman of the CSU praised Merkel as an "excellent Chancellor" and stated that his proposal to join forces in the election campaign with the CDU was received with "great approval" by his Party members. Both politicians admitted that the issue of the cap on the number of refugees admitted had not been resolved. While Merkel diplomatically suggested that her focus was to win the elections, the Chairman of the CSU emphasized that a coalition agreement lacking this provision would not be signed by CSU representatives (Otto, 2017). Indeed, after the Bundestag elections, the CSU returned to this issue. In October, Markus Blume, Vice-Secretary General of the CSU, published a ten-point policy which he had consulted with Horst Seehofer, including the postulate of "a clear limitation of immigration" (Blume, 2017; *Zehn-Punkte-Plan...*, 2017).

At a press conference held on the following day, Merkel and Seehofer presented the *Migration Masterplan*. The document stated that it presented the joint standpoint of both Parties which "follows from the government policy as well as from the joint decisions made by the CDU and CSU."¹²

¹¹ Justifying his motion, the Vice-Chairman of the Bavarian CSU accused the Chancellor of "having defied awkward but ethically indispensable principles" thereby enabling the unprecedented, unmonitored entry to Germany of immigrants "from the most backwards, violent, anti-Christian and misogynistic regions in the world." He also argued that the Chancellor was being irresponsible and politically short-sighted, since she had repeatedly said in public that the right to asylum had no cap and concealed the fact that "immigrants arriving from safe third countries cannot apply for asylum in Germany under German asylum law." According to Schmitt, "Dr. Merkel's statement uttered on public television [...] had been irresponsible and marked a collapse of the authority of a sovereign state. In this way, Dr. Merkel has not risen to the vow she made to the German nation" (*Antrag-Nr. L 6. Keine CSU-Unterstützung...*, 2016, pp. 502–503).

¹² The joint government policy stressed the fact that, due to recognizing Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia as safe countries of origin, the number of persons applying for asylum had been considerably cut. Another reason for boasting was the fact that the personal details of all asylum applicants had been collected in a new data storage system and

[...] We continue our efforts to permanently reduce the number of people fleeing to Germany and Europe, so that a situation similar to that in 2015 does not recur and cannot be repeated [...]. We want to ensure that the total number of persons admitted for humanitarian reasons (refugees and asylum seekers, people who are additionally protected, as part of family reunification, relocation and resettlement, excluding returns and voluntary departures of future refugees) will not exceed 200,000 a year. [...] If, contrary to expectations, the abovementioned objective is not achieved due to an international or domestic situation, the federal government and the Bundestag will decide on the appropriate adjustment [of this number – A.B.] up or down” (*Regelwerk...*, 2017).

This solution can be deemed a compromise – the CSU succeeded in having the annual limit of admitted refugees established at 200,000 and gaining control over future decisions to be made by Merkel as regarded the admission of refugees (due to the inclusion of Bundestag deputies in the decision process), while Merkel obtained the possibility of changing the limit (Delhaes, 2017; *Zuwanderung: Grüne...*, 2017).

2. European quotas and fair burden sharing

Although initially skeptical about the concept of the Minister of Internal Affairs, Thomas de Maizière, to set annual European quotas,¹³ Angela Merkel gradually became more and more convinced. This change was caused by an increasing crisis among the Christian Democrats and a drop in voter support. Additionally, the proposal of introducing annual limits at the European level gave a chance to bring to an end the conflict dividing the Christian Democrats with respect to the methods of limiting the influx of refugees and immigrants to Germany (Ciechanowicz, 2015; Gwóźdź, 2016). The Chancellor herself stressed the fact that “the quotas agreed by European states are a way to legitimize illegality, and also to better order and manage the processes; combined with combating the causes of immigration this would also limit the number of refugees arriving here. [...] I believe that this is the path we have to take to resolve our problems

effective measures had been taken against those persons who were not eligible for protection (“*Für ein Deutschland, in dem wir gut und gerne leben*”..., 2017, p. 55).

¹³ The concept of annual European quotas first emerged in the government coalition on September 19, 2015. They were suggested by Thomas de Maizière from the CDU (Ciechanowicz, 2015).

because we will not solve them by merely isolating ourselves. We need the whole of the European Union for this purpose.”¹⁴

Chancellor Merkel combined the issue of European quotas with that of the negotiations with Turkey and the relocation of refugees who had entered EU member states. In both cases, this involved the transfer of part of refugees and their fair distribution among all of member states. Each of the 28 EU member states was expected to admit refugees according to a formula designed by the European Commission with reference to the economic capacity, population, unemployment rate and the number of refugees a given country had already sheltered (Schuler, *Flüchtlinge...*, 2015; Matzke, 2015). This was the context in which, during the meeting of the CDU Federal Board in January 2016, the Party agreed in the Mainz Declaration to achieve a fair European division of asylum seekers in need of protection (*Mainzer Erklärung...*, 2016).¹⁵

European quotas were supported by Minister of Finance, Wolfgang Schäuble, and by Vice-Chairperson of the CDU, Julia Klöckner (Schuler, *Wolfgang...*, 2016; Klöckner, 2016). This solution was also praised by Thomas Strobl, who hoped that it would be backed by the remaining EU states (*Flüchtlingsaufnahme...*, 2016). When this turned out not to be the case, the Chancellor suggested the establishment of a ‘coalition of willing’ (*Koalition der Willigen*), which failed to be welcome by all the Christian Democrats. It was particularly criticized by the Minister of Transportation, Alexander Dobrindt from the CSU (Fietz, *CSU...*, 2015). The Berlin Circle opted for the quotas, while stressing that they had to correspond to the capacity of Germany and other states to accept immigrants.¹⁶ CSU members forming the Conservative Breakthrough (Ger.: *Konservativer Aufbruch*¹⁷) were far more critical, arguing that the quotas would not have any impact on eradicating the causes of the refugee crisis or the adverse outcomes of the influx of illegal immigrants experienced

¹⁴ She also stressed the fact that thanks to the quotas, the refugees in Turkey would be ensured better living standards. Another element mentioned was financial aid for Turkey (*Lasten teilen, Ursachen bekämpfen*, 2015).

¹⁵ A similar wording featured in a resolution passed during the 28th Party Congress (*Beschluss. Karlsruher Erklärung zu Terror und Sicherheit...*, 2015).

¹⁶ In the opinion of the Berlin Circle, “the relocation of illegal immigrants in Europe can take place only in highly justified and absolutely exceptional cases” (*Asyl und Einwanderung...*, 2016).

¹⁷ The *Konservativer Aufbruch! CSU-Basisbewegung für Werte und Freiheit* was founded in 2014 by CSU members – Lars Bergen, Thomas Jahn and Konstanze Thiele (*Wer sind wir?*, 2014).

by different member states. They treated this solution as a “short-term response to a humanitarian catastrophe” (*Positionspapier...*, 2015).

In the basic policy adopted in November 2016 the CSU stated that “aid to refugees and those in need of protection may be provided through internationally established quotas,” and the Party continued its attempts to set the cap of refugees admitted to Germany while the Chancellor tried to avoid it. The CSU stressed that it supported Germany’s humanitarian responsibilities adding, however, that “we cannot admit everybody who wants to join us. Otherwise our aid efforts will fail” (*Die Ordnung...*, 2016, pp. 14–15, 41). Giving the unrelenting position of Chancellor Merkel as regarded setting a cap on refugees admitted, the CDU and CSU briefly declared in their joined policy that “Europe bears shared a responsibility for refugees, [people – A.B.] who are persecuted or in need,” which meant that “all European states have to fulfill their obligations” (*Für ein Deutschland...*, 2017, pp. 56–57, 70). By this token, the policy did not address the sensitive issue of the number of admitted refugees focusing on supporting European quotas instead.¹⁸

The issue of refugee relocation was returned to after the parliamentary elections; this time, however, not by the representatives of both Parties,¹⁹ but by the youth of the CDU/CSU (Ger.: *Junge Union Deutschlands* – JU). They published a Dresden Declaration in which they stated that “while the number of refugees has dropped significantly since summer 2015 and in spite of many legislative and procedural improvements, certain people’s trust in the EU’s immigration policy has been seriously undermined.” In spite of enormous problems that the relocation of refugees encountered in EU states, the young Party members opted for “a quotas-based solution for quick humanitarian admission of refugees and their families from crisis-ridden regions” (*Dresdner Erklärung...* 2017, p. 3; Balzer, 2017).

3. Deportation of persons who fail to meet the criteria for asylum or refugee protection

In response to the events of New Year’s Eve 2016, when women were attacked in Cologne, Düsseldorf, Hamburg and other German cities, the CSU Federal Board adopted the Mainz Declaration, in which it stressed

¹⁸ The quotas were supported by the Berlin Circle and the Freedom-Conservative Breakthrough (*Pressemitteilung*, 2017).

¹⁹ The *Migration Masterplan* agreed by both the Christian-Democratic Parties did not make any reference to the European quotas.

the need for the rapid deportation of persons who had been denied asylum. It was also noted that persons who had been granted asylum, refugees and asylum seekers should be denied protection in the future if they had been sentenced to prison (including probation). By this token, the CSU wanted to remove obstacles impeding the expulsion and deportation of criminals from abroad (*Mainzer Erklärung...*, 2016).²⁰ Christian Democrats, such as Peter Tauber, were in general agreement with the Chancellor that, due to the situation in Syria, Syrian refugees should not be deported to their country of origin (Alexander, Vitzthum, 2016).

The CDU made a statement on the issue of immigrant deportation shortly before, and during the 29th Party Congress held in Essen. CSU Vice-Chairman, who also held the office of the Minister of Internal Affairs in Baden-Württemberg, Thomas Strobl, called for the extension of custody to secure deportation and for the deportation of asylum seekers who were ill.²¹ His demands were considered at the meeting of the Party Board before the congress (Schuler, *CDU...*, 2016). In a declaration adopted then it was said that “the number of people who voluntarily left or were deported after they had been rejected asylum could be significantly increased” (*Orientierung...*, 2016, pp. 15–17). In this situation, Chancellor Merkel declared that all the immigrants who did not have the right to stay would have to leave Germany (*Bericht der Vorsitzenden...*, 2016, p. 20).

The demands for deportation and a stricter asylum law for refugees intensified especially after the attack at the Christmas market in Berlin. In response, Chancellor Merkel announced drafting a law that would allow better enforcement of the obligation to leave the country by refugees who were denied or had the right to stay withdrawn (*Pressekonferenz von Bundeskanzlerin Merkel*, 2017).²² Thomas de Maizière and Heiko Maas (SPD), the Minister of Justice, jointly designed a plan in which they demanded deportation of foreigners also after the expiry of the then-current three-month period, and the extension of detention before expulsion from four to ten days. In the opinion of these two politicians, foreigners who had to leave the country and who had been identified as threatening public

²⁰ The issue of quick deportation of persons whose asylum applications have been rejected or who have committed crimes also emerged during the 28th Congress of the Party (*Beschluss. Karlsruher Erklärung zu Terror...*, 2015, p. 14).

²¹ Peter Tauber spoke in a similar vein, saying that illness should not prevent deportation in every case (Alexander, Vitzthum, 2016).

²² The law came into force in the second half of 2017 (*Gesetz zur besseren Durchsetzung der Ausreisepflicht...*, 2017).

security should be monitored using electronic bracelets. Asylum seekers who did not provide their true identity were to be subject to more stringent residence requirements and to be punished for their violation (*Sicherheitspaket...*, 2017; Abdi-Herrle, Otto, 2017). These proposals were more moderate than the demands of conservative CSU members, who in 2015 demanded, for example, to punish immigrants for providing false details (*Positionspapier...*, 2015).

In the joint government policy, the Christian Democrats postulated intensification of the efforts to return and, if appropriate, deport those whose asylum applications had been legally rejected (*Für ein Deutschland...*, 2017, p. 55). Similar postulates emerged among the members of the Berlin Circle and the Freedom-Conservative Breakthrough, who demanded the quick and consistent deportation of people who had not received asylum, criminals and persons posing a potential threat, and extending federal supervision over deportations (*Pressemitteilung*, Berlin, 2017).

4. Borders and control over the flow of immigrants

The step most widely commented on, and criticized by the Christian Democrats was Chancellor Angela Merkel's opening of the state borders in September 2015 and permitting refugees in Budapest to enter Germany. Later on, she repeatedly had to explain the decision. During the CDU Congress on December 14–15, 2015, the Chancellor stressed that “this situation has put our European values to the test more than ever before. I state: it was nothing more and nothing less than a humanitarian imperative” (*Bericht der Vorsitzenden...*, 2015, p. 26).²³ One year later, at the next CSU Congress in Essen, she promised that the opening of the borders, like that in 2015, could not be repeated in the future (*Bericht der Vorsitzenden...*, 2016, p. 2; Ciechanowicz, *Zjazd federalny...*, 2016).²⁴ She also

²³ Her objective was to restore control over who, and how many people enter Germany. Only those who did not want to submit their asylum application in Germany could be sent back (Ciechanowicz, „*Uchodźcy*”..., 2015). Thus, the Chancellor spoke about cooperation between Lands and creating a uniform ID card for a refugee, which a refugee could present, for instance, in the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, in the courts and in the Federal Employment Agency – thanks to which he would not have to register multiple times (*Rede von Bundeskanzlerin Merkel zum Einzelplan 04*, 2015).

²⁴ She could be heard making a similar statement at the congress of the *Junge Union* (Pawlak, *Merkel o polityce...*, 2016).

did not rule out the reinstatement of border controls on the borders with all neighboring countries (Ciechanowicz, *Kontyngenty...*, 2015).

Again, on this point, the most severe criticism came from Horst Seehofer. According to the CSU Chairman, “this was a precedent that has led to an uncontrolled influx of immigrants to Germany.” In order to stop the influx, the politician supported the concept of the Prime Minister of Hungary, Viktor Orbán, to build a wall on the border with Serbia and Croatia; he also assured Hungary that “Bavaria was ready to help to protect the external border of the European Union” (Ciechanowicz, *“Uchodźcy”...*, 2015; *Premier Bawarii...*, 2017). Prime Minister of Bavaria went as far as setting an ultimatum to the Chancellor – if the influx of immigrants was not stopped, Bavarian authorities would file the case with the Federal Constitutional Tribunal (*Angela Merkel nieugięta...*, 2016). He also criticized Angela Merkel for failing to exert pressure on Austria to halt immigrants travelling across its territory thus helping them reach the German border. Foreign Minister Thomas de Maizière joined him in the criticism of the Austrian government (Ciechanowicz, *Niemcy...*, 2015).

The opening of borders for refugees was also heavily criticized by Erika Steinbach. According to the leader of the Union of Expellees, “everything that had changed in the CDU earlier, was overshadowed in 2015 [...] by the independent decision of the Chancellor, who not only admitted to Germany more than one million unverified immigrants who were not stopped for many months, but also transported them by buses and trains; although many came from a safe country of origin, and therefore, in accordance with EU law (the Dublin Agreement) they should have been turned back.” Steinbach argued that Merkel had considerably harmed both the CDU and Germany by taking independent decisions in key policy areas. In an act of rejecting such a policy, Steinbach decided to leave the party after more than forty years of membership of the CDU, dramatically emphasizing, “this is not my Party anymore!” (Lüdemann, 2017).

A group of CDU/CSU deputies to the Bundestag who were all members of the Middle Class (Ger.: *Parlamentskreis Mittelstand*)²⁵ parliamentary circle also tried to force the Chancellor to depart from the policy of open borders. To this end, the deputies called for a formal motion to close the borders of Germany against refugees to be drafted. Christian von Stetten, who chaired this circle, stressed that “the review of the matter of the

²⁵ The circle was established in 2011 and included 190 deputies (as of 2015) (*Parlamentskreis Mittelstand*, 2017).

proper protection of the borders and border strengthening should not be any taboo.” The idea of submitting a motion on this matter was supported by a CSU politician, Stephan Mayer, who expressed the hope that “the Chancellor will acknowledge the fact that the open borders policy cannot be continued” (Pawlak, *Merkel...*, 2015). Von Stetten, the main initiator of the motion, was criticized by Michael Hennrich and Armin Schuster, who believed that forcing the Party faction to vote was “counterproductive and dangerous” and “could only lead to a breakup” (Wallet, 2015). Julia Klöckner, CDU Vice-Chairperson, argued in her *Plan A2* that, being an exporter, Germany “cannot afford to close the borders in the double sense of the word. It is also not useful for practical reasons” (Klöckner, 2016).

The CDU and CSU stressed in their government policy that the European Union had to guarantee internal and external security to member states because “in an increasingly globalized world, no country in Europe can guard its own interests without the support of others.” The Christian Democrats believed that the EU “must effectively protect its external borders against illegal immigration, strengthen the Frontex border protection agency and conclude the construction of the European asylum system.” The Parties also stressed that “as long as the EU’s external borders are not protected, internal border controls will be maintained” (*Für ein Deutschland*, 2017, pp. 56–57, 70).

5. Compulsory integration

The discussion of CDU members on integration referred to the controversial concept of German as a ‘leading culture’ (*Leitkultur*), introduced into the public debate during the election campaign in 2002. The Christian Democrats associated it with the thesis that foreigners have to assimilate (including the ban on double citizenship) and with the ‘parallel societies’ slogan (*Parallelgesellschaften*), which illustrated the presence of social disintegration in Germany. Since one of the priorities in this period was to control the access of foreigners to the German labor market, attempts were made to persuade economic migrants to return to their respective countries of origin and to limit the number of immigrants admitted (including asylum seekers and displaced people of German origin).²⁶

²⁶ A comprehensive system of integration policies was introduced three years later by the Immigration Law (*Zuwanderungsgesetz*). Its coordination was entrusted to the

The integration of immigrants and refugees into German society was the subject of lively discussion during the CDU Congress in December 2015. In this context, it was stressed that people who wanted to stay in Germany ought to learn German (Thomas de Maizière), take up an apprenticeship/work (Thomas de Maizière), observe German values and traditions, that is, follow the German 'leading culture' (Angela Merkel, Karin Maag, Thomas de Maizière, Peter Tauber), recognize the priority of German law over Sharia (Thomas Strobl), and respect the equality of women and men (Julia Klöckner, Annette Widmann-Mauz) (*Protokoll. 28. Parteitag...*, 2015, pp. 40, 49–50, 52, 57, 62, 92–93, 95, 134).

The resolution adopted during the congress stressed that integration means "to support and to demand." According to the CDU, "integration depends on the readiness of those who come to us to respect our way of life and our culture and to learn our language. [...] We are guided by the Christian image of humans and by the system of law and values of our country. This foundation of values applies to everyone – those who have rights and obligations. Refugees need a hand to be stretched out to them. However, refugees also need a hand that will show them how our common life works." Therefore, each integration course was supposed to not only teach the language, but also "convey the basic principles of conduct and the main content of our 'leading culture.'" In order to avoid "mistakes from the past," it was postulated to prevent the emergence of "parallel societies" and to eliminate existing parallel structures. The *multi-kulti* (multiculturality) model was also rejected as an inappropriate "solution to integration issues" (*Beschluss. Karlsruher Erklärung...*, 2015, pp. 17–19). The Mainz Declaration adopted in January 2016 at the meeting of the CDU Federal Board featured similar words. In addition, the efforts to adopt a law at the federal and Land levels defining the mutual rights and obligations of the state and immigrants, were supported (*Integrationspflichtgesetz*). It was stressed that the integration process should involve both sides, and that for immigrants who do not want to integrate for a long period of time, penalties should be imposed, such as the severance of benefits. The Declaration also included the statement that

Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (*Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge – BAMF*) (Szaniawska-Schwabe, 2009, pp. 10–14, 22–23; *Integrationsgesetz vom 31. Juli 2016*, 2016, pp. 1939–1949). As part of integration, on April 22, 2016, the Chancellor and the heads of federal state governments agreed on *A joint concept of the federation and Lands regarding the successful integration of refugees* (*Meseberger Erklärung zur Integration*, 2016).

“to support and to demand has been and remains a Christian-Democratic principle of successful integration” (*Mainzer Erklärung...*, 2016).

The CSU perceived the integration of immigrants into German society in very similar terms. Therefore, the Party attached great importance to the integration of people who “have a prospect of staying” in Germany.²⁷ In return, they were required to be “ready to integrate on the basis of our ‘leading culture’” (*Leitantrag...*, 2016, pp. 56–57). The basic policy adopted by the CSU in 2016 stressed that “integration is necessary and its direction has been determined. Whoever stays with us has to integrate. There can be no areas excluded from integration” because they would become a foundation for radicalization. According to the Party, integration has to mean that “those who come to us, adjust. Integration cannot mean that we adjust.” By this token, the Party stressed that it wanted immigrants “to live according to our principles,” namely following “our ‘leading culture’ rather than multiculturalism.” The concept of *multi-kulti* was rejected as leading to intolerance, ghettos and violence. It was additionally stressed that German rules apply in Germany and not the rules of the country of origin, also in such matters as equality of rights for men and women, tolerance for different lifestyles and freedom of opinion, beliefs and religion. Among other things, this meant no consent to full body covering with a *burka* or *niqab* in public spaces, which in the opinion of the CSU “does not fit our cultural space and our understanding of the role of women” (*Die Ordnung*, 2016, pp. 14–15).

The CSU also propagated the opinion that successful integration is based on the ‘we support and demand’ principle. They stressed that “society, state and industry make considerable investments in teaching the language, training and ensuring access to the labor market. This cannot replace the readiness to integrate. Integration is a debt. Those who integrate, have better prospects for staying. We are in favor of an explicit expression of, and demand for the immigrants’ duty to integrate. If they cannot prove progress in integration, they have to leave. [...] Integration also means loyalty to the German people. Anyone who comes to us is expected to be associated with our state and its institutions. Acting against Germany is therefore reprehensible. We will not allow the ethnic, religious or political conflicts of foreign nationalities in our land” (*Die Ordnung*, 2016, pp. 14–15).

²⁷ CDU members, such as Merkel or Maizière, also spoke about this (*Integrationsgesetz setzt auf Fördern...*, 2016).

The German Minister of Internal Affairs tried to explain what the 'leading culture' that was being referred to by both Parties actually was. According to Thomas de Maizière, the term *Leitkultur* is made of two parts; the word 'culture' indicates that "this is not about legal regulations but about the unwritten rules of our coexistence;" while the word 'leadership' refers to "something different than ordering or requiring. This is more about what guides us, what is important to us, what we care about. [...] *Leitkultur* can and should be an example, first and foremost. Those who are sure of their 'leading culture' are strong. The strength and internal security of one's own culture results in tolerance towards others. Thus, the 'leading culture' is primarily something that distinguishes us. If it leads us, in the best sense of the word, it will exert its influence on others. Also on those who come to us and can stay. We are reaching out to them" (*Thomas de Maizière...*, 2017).

Discussing the *Leitkultur* and its aspects in the context of immigrant integration, Maizière stressed that people who have arrived in Germany and have prospects of staying but "don't know, maybe don't want to know, or even reject the 'leading culture'" stand a slim chance of integration "because they will not have a sense of belonging." The Minister pointedly indicated the differences between the above-mentioned culture, and the one he meaningfully described as "the culture of the *burka*." In his opinion, showing one's face is an expression of democratic coexistence and of an open society. He emphasized that "in everyday life it is important to us whether we are looking at the friendly or sad faces of our interlocutors." He also drew attention to the fact that respect and tolerance are valued in Germany. According to Maizière, Germany accepts "different forms of living," which means that those "who reject them put themselves outside of society." He added that "violence is not socially approved" and that German society "does not associate dignity with violence." He also argued that in Germany, churches "unite people not only in faith, but also in everyday life, in nurseries and schools, in nursing homes and in active social work. The binder of our society is created in the Christian church, in the synagogue and in the mosque." This is possible because Germany "has a specific state-church relationship. Our state is neutral ideologically but friendly towards churches and religious communities. The rhythm of our year is dictated by church holidays. Our landscape is characterized by church towers. Ours is a Christian country. We live in peace. Its basis is the unconditional primacy of law over all religious rules of state and social coexistence" (*Thomas de Maizière...*, 2017). This understanding of

the 'leading culture' won support from members of the Berlin Circle, the FKA and Konrad's Heirs (Ger.: *Konrads Erben*²⁸) (*Pressemitteilung. Der Berliner Kreis und...*, 2017; *Rhöndorfer Manifest*, 2016).

The issue of the integration of immigrants (including refugees) into the German state was only briefly addressed in the joint government policy for 2017–2021. The CDU and CSU stated there that "it is in the mutual interest for the integration to run smoothly" and promised that they would prevent the emergence of parallel societies and multiculturalism (*Für ein Deutschland*, 2017, pp. 56–57, 70).

6. Limiting the right to family reunification

The issue of the possibility of immigrants bringing their families in also stirred a lot of discussion. During the 80th CSU Congress, the Party adopted a motion put forward by its Board which demanded the suspension of the immigrant right to family reunification as far as possible. In the case of persons subject to subsidiary protection, the right should be completely suspended. According to this motion, "Germany should not give a signal that everyone can come to us, that everyone can stay permanently and that everyone can bring in family members" (*Leitantrag „Deutschland braucht...“*, 2015, p. 27). Later, the CSU mitigated its position by agreeing to let immigrants who are in work and able to support their relatives to bring in members of their immediate family, and by proposing the temporary suspension of the right to family reunification for persons with subsidiary protection (*Klarer Kurs bei der Zuwanderung...*, 2016, p. 5; *Leitantrag „Linksrutsch verhindern...“*, 2016, p. 52). CDU members spoke in a similar vein at the Karlsruhe Congress, postulating a two-year suspension period for the right to bring in family members by persons who had been granted temporary protection (*Beschluss. Karlsruher Erklärung...*, 2015, p. 17). Angela Merkel explained that due to the large number of immigrants coming to Germany, making a quick decision on this matter was not possible. This was supported by Wolfgang Schäuble, who argued that family reunification must be restricted so as not to lose control over the number of immigrants arriving in Germany (*60. Protokoll*, 2015, pp. 33, 87–88). This issue was also very briefly addressed by

²⁸ A group of former holders of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation's scholarships, bringing together conservative, socio-Christian and liberal members of both the Christian-Democratic Parties (*Wer wir sind*, 2017).

the CDU at the 29th Congress in Essen (*Sonstige Beschlüsse 29. Parteitag..., Beschluss C 92, C 143, C 146, Migration und Integration*, 2016, p. 39). These demands by the Christian Democrats were accommodated in the Asylum Package II (*Asylpaket II*) agreed at the end of January 2016, which, for the period proposed by the CDU, suspended the right to family reunification for immigrants who have not fulfilled the criteria for granting refugee status within the meaning of the Geneva Convention of 1951 (*Gesetz zur Einführung..., Artikel 2. Änderung des Aufenthaltsgesetzes*, 2016, p. 3; *Aufenthaltsgesetz..., § 104 Übergangsregelungen*, 2017, p. 112).

The debate on this subject intensified after the parliamentary elections in September, due to the approaching termination of the suspension of the right to family reunification for people with subsidiary protection, and the coalition negotiations under way. Just before the beginning of the talks between representatives of the CDU, CSU, Alliance 90/The Greens (Ger.: *Bündnis 90/Die Grünen*) and the Free Democratic Party (Ger.: *Freie Demokratische Partei – FDP*), or the Jamaican Coalition, members of the Freedom-Conservative Breakthrough, called for running such an asylum and immigration policy that would account for the interests of Germany and for the protection of European and Western values of German society. In the published document, they opted for the right to bring in members of the immediate family (i.e. the spouse and minor children) to be awarded to politically persecuted persons who were granted temporary asylum in Germany on the basis of the Geneva Convention. The right to bring in spouses and minor children was also given to foreigners who came to Germany in accordance with immigration law, if they could provide them with maintenance. They demanded, however, to refuse the right to family reunification to all other immigrants, also including those who had been granted subsidiary protection (*WerteUnion – Freiheitlich-Konservativen Aufbruch Einwanderung...*, 2017, p. 6). In the *Immigration Masterplan* which was agreed two days later, the CDU and CSU opted for the extension of the suspension of the right to bring in families for people under subsidiary protection (*Regelwerk zur Migration*, 2017).

During the coalition talks with the Alliance 90/The Greens and the FDP, the CSU firmly held to its position. Horst Seehofer explained that the CSU “does not want family reunification for people who can stay with us only temporarily.” On the other hand, the CDU tried to meet the expectations of potential coalition partners – Angela Merkel suggested

that a monthly cap of 500 persons be established on the number of people arriving in Germany under family reunification (*Angela Merkel: Kanzlerin...*, 2017). Differences in the approach to family reunification, however, turned out to be too large, becoming one of the reasons why the Jamaican Coalition could not be established.

Even before the possible coalition talks with the SPD commenced, Horst Seehofer objected to the plans of the Social Democrats to allow refugees with limited protection status to bring in their families starting in March 2018. The CSU Chairman explained that the lifting of the restrictions would trigger mass immigration, which would “completely overwhelm Germany’s ability to integrate” (*Regierungsbildung: Seehofer...*, 2017). The CDU Vice-Chairman called on the parties to seek a compromise. According to Armin Laschet, family reunification should be permitted in specific circumstances, and in the case of refugees who had accommodation and employment in Germany (*Regierungsbildung: Unionspolitiker...*, 2017).

At the beginning of 2018, the CDU/CSU parliamentary faction proposed a bill to extend the suspension on bringing the closest family members for persons with subsidiary protection until the new regulations were passed, which was assumed to have happened by July 31 (*Gesetzentwurf der Fraktion der CDU/CSU...*, 2018). The CSU hoped that by that time it would be able to push through or re-suspend the right to family reunification for immigrants with subsidiary protection, or to link the number of relatives brought in as part of family reunification with the cap on admitted refugees postulated by the Party (200,000 per year) (Otto, *CSU-Klausurtagung...*, 2018). Thomas de Maizière suggested finding a compromise on this point, stressing that “neither a long-term suspension nor a long-term permission is a solution.” At that time, he was in favor of “limited, controlled and gradual family reunions” (*Bundestag: Hitze...*, 2018).

On February 1, the Bundestag, in its second and third reading, passed a law extending the suspension of family reunification for persons granted subsidiary protection until July 31, 2018, and the regulations on family reunification for refugees covered by that protection. By virtue of these regulations, starting on August 1, for humanitarian reasons, permission to enter Germany was granted to 1,000 persons per month – the spouses of persons who had received subsidiary protection, minor children of persons with such protection or the parents of minors with such protection. Special cases (pursuant to Art. 22 of the Residence Law)

were not included in this quota (Deutscher Bundestag, *Stenografischer Bericht...*, 2018; *Aufenthaltsgesetz in der Fassung der Bekanntmachung vom...*, 2017, p. 36).

Conclusions

Merkel's policy towards Syrian refugees divided members of the CDU and CSU into devoted advocates on the one side and moderate and less moderate critics on the other. It also brought back questions about the ideological foundations and the future of her own Party, also in the context of the elections to local parliaments in 2016 and to the Bundestag in September 2017.

Thomas de Maizière and Wolfgang Schäuble were cautious when speaking about the refugee policy of Chancellor Merkel. Julia Klöckner expressed her implicit disapproval, as did the Prime Minister of Saxony-Anhalt – Rainer Haseloff, and the Prime Minister of Hesse – Volker Bouffier. Politicians who were more harsh in their criticism of Merkel's *Willkommenspolitik* included Alexander Mitsch, Thomas Strobl, Erika Steinbach and Mike Mohringa (CDU Chairman in Thuringia), speaking about the Party abandoning its conservative values. It was the 'marginalization' of this right-wing pillar of the CDU, and the immigration policy pursued by the German Chancellor, that led to Steinbach leaving the Party in January 2017 and to the emergence of conservative alliances, such as the Freedom-Conservative Breakthrough or Konrad's Heirs. Both Steinbach and Mitsch admitted that Merkel had started directing the party towards the center long before the first immigrants and refugees from Syria started to reach Germany; nevertheless the migration crisis and *Willkommenspolitik* were the main factors triggering the greater activity of conservatives, who decided to regain a prominent position and influence on the Party's policy, including immigration policy.

The criticism of the Chancellor from CDU members was connected with fears that Merkel's policy towards immigrants would result in the Party losing power in the Landtags and the Bundestag, including through the loss of conservative, dissatisfied voters in favor of the Alternative for Germany (AfD). The opposition to this policy came mainly from CDU members from former East Germany, who were most concerned about the influx of immigrants and the growing threat from the

anti-immigrant AfD, which was gaining increasing popularity (Kubiak, 2015). Still, the opponents of Merkel's refugee policy were in the minority, and their criticism was not intended to remove her from office as Chairperson of the Party. This is evidenced by at least two facts. Firstly, there was no explicit rebellion against her leadership of the CDU during 2015, which was certainly the most difficult year for Merkel since becoming Chancellor. Secondly, during the 2016 Congress in Essen, members of the CDU elected her for the ninth time as its Chairperson by a sweeping majority (89.5%) (Ciechanowicz, *Zjazd federalny...*, 2016). It was probably considered that, for the general good of the Party and because of the upcoming parliamentary elections, it was more advantageous to support Angela Merkel than to play out internal conflicts in public.²⁹ It should also be emphasized in this context that there was no competitor in the Party strong enough to threaten Merkel's leadership; for instance, Karl Theodor zu Guttenberg left politics after he had been found to have plagiarized his doctoral dissertation; Wolfgang Schäuble was not eager to run due to his age; Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer lacked political experience; Peter Altmeier and Ursula von der Leyen advocated the continuation of Merkel's policy and did not present different views; Thomas de Maizière and Armin Laschet were loyal to the Chancellor; and the support enjoyed by the CDU was strongly related to the social support for the Chancellor herself. This is evidenced by the fact that, despite the excesses of the refugees in Cologne and other cities on the 2016 New Year's Eve, and the Berlin attack in December 2016, which temporarily reversed the sympathy of public opinion, Germany still shared the point of view of its Chancellor. According to a Deutschlandtrend poll, which was carried out in March 2017 for channel one of the German public television ARD, Merkel's policy enjoyed the approval of as many as 60% of respondents. This was the highest number of positive responses that she had received since September 2015 (*ARD-DeutschlandTREND: März...*, 2017).³⁰ The high support was also revealed during the September elections to the Bundestag, when the CDU obtained 200 out of 709 seats (26.8% of votes).³¹

²⁹ A similar situation took place during the Congress in December 2015 (Bachmann, *CDU i kanclerz...*, 2015, p. 2).

³⁰ After the September Bundestag elections, support for Merkel increased to 63% (*ARD-DeutschlandTREND...*, 2017).

³¹ The CSU received 46 seats (6.2% of votes) (*Bundestagswahl 2017: Endgültiges Ergebnis*, 2017).

CSU members were much more skeptical and critical about Merkel's immigration policy (e.g. Marcus Söder or Alexander Dobrindt), who spoke about it ruthlessly during the Party's congresses (Scholz, Werkhaeuser, Matzke, 2016). The most ardent, leading opponent of the Chancellor's migration policy, famous for his controversial statements and actions, was Horst Seehofer. Among other things, he opposed Merkel and the federal government's position and supported the immigration policy of Hungarian Prime Minister Victor Orbán, demanding the closure of German borders for immigrants, and threatening that he would file a complaint with the Federal Constitutional Court should the 'open-door' policy continue. In connection with the upcoming parliamentary elections, he also spoke about the possibility of running for the post of Chancellor as the candidate of all the Christian Democrats. At the end of 2016, however, he changed his mind and supported Merkel's candidacy for this position. The Chairman of the CSU and, at the same time, the Prime Minister of Bavaria tried to use the immigration crisis to strengthen his own position in the region (admittedly, he remained the Party Chairman, but his position in the CSU and public support in Bavaria weakened, and he eventually resigned as Bavarian Prime Minister in March 2018³²) and in the coalition (at this he was successful, because he became the Minister of Internal Affairs in the new federal government) (*Kabinett...*, 2018).

Despite criticism from both CDU and CSU members, Angela Merkel managed to defend her vision of managing the immigration crisis. Without giving up the 'open-door' policy and forcing their own solutions, she convinced both the Christian Democrats and the majority of voters supporting the Christian Democrats that Germany *schaffen das* [does that].³³ Although the result in 2017 was worse than that in the elections four years earlier, the Christian Democrats still enjoyed the strongest support among German parties (39.4%) (*Bundestagswahl 2017...*, 2017), which meant that Merkel could be elected Chancellor for the fourth time and continue to exert a strong impact on Germany's immigration policy.

³² According to a poll conducted in February 2018 by the Civey Institute for the *Augsburger Allgemeine Zeitung*, 2/3 of the Bavarians surveyed wanted Seehofer to retire politically (*CSU-Chef: Mehrheit der Bayern...*, 2018). The office of Prime Minister of Bavaria (in March 2018) and of the Chairman of the CSU (in January 2019) was taken by the former Bavarian Minister of Finance, Marcus Söder.

³³ People who were dissatisfied with the Chancellor's policy towards refugees, mainly voted for the Alternative for Germany, which won 94 seats in the Bundestag (12.6% of votes), becoming the third force there.

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Polityka chadecji w obliczu napływu syryjskich imigrantów do Republiki Federalnej Niemiec (2015–2017)

Streszczenie

Celem artykułu było przybliżenie najczęściej omawianych działań podjętych przez kanclerz A. Merkel w celu powstrzymania wzmózonej imigracji Syryjczyków do RFN. Zaproponowane przez A. Merkel rozwiązania ukazane zostały w kontekście reakcji członków CDU oraz CSU na nie. Polityka kanclerz oraz obu niemieckich

partii chadeckich i ich przedstawicieli ukazana została na tle krytycznej dyskusji dotyczącej politycznych kosztów, jakie związane są z przyjęciem tak wielkiej liczby cudzoziemców. Poruszone zostały zatem m.in. kwestie dotyczące pozycji A. Merkel na niemieckiej scenie politycznej oraz wpływu „Willkommenspolitik” na wyniki wyborów do Bundestagu w 2017 r.

Słowa kluczowe: Merkel, CDU, CSU, kryzys imigracyjny, polityka imigracyjna