



UNIWERSYTET
Andrzeja Frycza Modrzewskiego
w Krakowie

<https://doi.org/10.48269/2451-0610-ksm-2024-003>

Michał M. Kosman

PhD, DSc, Associate Professor, Kazimierz Wielki University in Bydgoszcz

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1966-9658>

m.kosman@ukw.edu.pl

Germany and the conflict in Ukraine (2014–2022) from the Polish perspective

Introduction

The Russian invasion of Ukraine, which took place on February 24, 2022, became a catalyst for changing the way of thinking about the shape of international relations after the end of the Cold War. The Russian-Ukrainian war and its consequences for the international order, also in the context of power rivalry in other parts of the world (especially East Asia), economic order, *etc.*, made us realize that the stable international order, which most of Europe enjoyed after the end of the Cold War, has come to an end. A feature of this order was the belief in the observance of the norms of international law, the peaceful settlement of disputes and the inviolability of borders. The war in Eastern Europe restored and strengthened thinking typical of the realistic paradigm with its main determinants – above all, restoring the importance of power in international relations. Of course, it would be naive to think that this paradigm reversal happened suddenly. Thinking about international relations as relatively stable was characteristic of the wealthy countries of the broadly understood West, especially the societies of the European Union, which had not known war since

1945. In Western Europe, one of the most important components of this sense of stability was the belief in peaceful relations with the Russian Federation. They were built inter alia by consolidating and strengthening economic ties. This way of drawing Russia into cooperation with the Western world, especially the European Union, was a permanent vector of policy of many Western European countries, especially Germany, for many years after the end of the Cold War. An important asset from Berlin's perspective was the durability of supplies of relatively cheap energy resources from Russia, which served two main purposes: it stabilized relations with Russia (binding it with common interests) and provided the German economy with the necessary energy resources.

The beginnings of this image change of the international order in Europe can be located around 2008, after the short Russian-Georgian war in August. It shook the image of Russia as a relatively predictable partner of Europe in solving the main security problems on the Old Continent and its outskirts.

In attempting to discuss Germany's position on the Russian-Ukrainian conflict in this article, it can be assumed, to simplify somewhat, that the three main actors in these relations are: Germany, Russia and Ukraine. In the following part, therefore, the attitude of Germany towards Russia after the end of the Cold War and its evolution will be outlined, especially in the context of crucial political events in Ukraine, starting with the Orange Revolution. Then, the relevant issues will be described, i.e. Germany's position on the annexation of Crimea and the conflict in eastern Ukraine. The last part of the article concerns Germany's reaction to the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 and the announcement of a breakthrough in German foreign and security policy (*Zeitenwende*).

Outline of German-Russian relations after the end of the Cold War – from declarative partnership to cold pragmatism

A look at the history of German-Russian relations usually brings to mind confrontational associations, such as the World Wars I and II. In both conflicts, Germany and Russia stood on opposite sides. A component of this memory is primarily the enormity of crimes committed by the Nazis against the population of the Soviet Union, but also the resettlement of Russian Germans deep into Russia or the USSR at the beginning of both conflicts and after the end of the World War II. However, the cooperative traditions in German-Russian relations cannot be forgotten. For example, one can mention such processes and events as: large scale of German emigration to Russia, especially since the times of Catherine the Great; so-called the miracle of the House of Brandenburg during

the Seven Years' War, the joint struggle against Napoleonic France, the alliance of the three emperors in the 1870s, the Treaty of Rapallo and others.

The reunification of Germany in October 1990 and the dissolution of the Soviet Union in December 1991 at the end of the Cold War created a new configuration in German-Russian relations. So far, they have been shaped in the relationship between the USSR (with the dominant role of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic) and the two German states. From then on, the entities shaping them became, on the one hand, Russia, which – if we treat the USSR as its enlarged version – suffered significant territorial and demographic losses, on the other hand, united Germany, i.e. from the formal point of view the Federal Republic of Germany, enlarged by the area of the former German Democratic Republic. However, despite the above mentioned losses, Russia remained the largest country in the world in terms of territory, and still had other attributes of great power – a large population, a strong army, nuclear weapons and economic potential, primarily in terms of energy resources. The Federal Republic, on the other hand, took over the entire baggage of economic problems of the GDR, but thanks to the unification of the state it undoubtedly became one of the main winners of the Cold War.

The most important issues in relations with Russia, especially in the 1990s, from the German perspective included the following: 1. the withdrawal of the former Soviet Army from the territories of the eastern federal states of Germany; 2. supporting political and economic transformation in Russia, including massive financial assistance; 3. economic cooperation, especially in the field of supplies of Russian energy resources to Germany; 4. immigration from Russia (and other post-Soviet countries) of people of German descent; 5. strengthening international security with the participation of Russia¹.

From the very beginning, the Federal Republic attached high importance to relations with Russia, as evidenced by the fact that they were often described by some political elites, (especially those from social democratic circles) as a partnership, or even a strategic partnership. This term gained particular popularity in the first decade of the 21st century, appearing in many statements of leading German politicians and in program documents, such as the coalition agreement of 2005. Interestingly, in the next coalition agreement of 2009, the Christian Democrats and Liberals did not decide to repeat this wording, although they emphasized the importance of relations with Russia for the international security architecture, while emphasizing the importance of respecting

¹ See more: M.M. Kosman, *Polityka RFN wobec ZSRR/Rosji w latach 1989–2009*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Kazimierza Wielkiego, Bydgoszcz 2013.

human rights². However, it should be borne in mind that just over a year earlier, in August 2008, a short Russian-Georgian war took place, which undermined the relatively positive image of Russia in Germany. In earlier years, there were also disturbances and mistrust in Russia's relations with the West, including Germany, such as the NATO enlargement in 1999, or NATO air raids on Yugoslavia, Russia's ally, in the same year. In turn, the American war with Iraq in 2003 brought Germany and Russia closer together, which in a common bloc with France created a strong front of protest against the policy of the United States. It was only after Angela Merkel took power in 2005 that the correct relations with Washington were gradually restored, which caused a decrease in the temperature of German-Russian relations. Merkel, to a greater extent than her predecessor, Gerhard Schröder, emphasized the importance of values in international politics, criticizing Russia due to the deficit in respecting human rights. She also distanced herself from the previously confidential nature of the relationship between the leaders, President Vladimir Putin and Chancellor Gerhard Schröder. At the same time, however, during her rule, Germany maintained a pragmatic attitude towards Russia, fostering and developing above all the energy partnership, the clear confirmation of which was the ties between the energy companies of the two countries and the construction of the Nord Stream gas pipeline, initiated by an agreement concluded at the end of Gerhard Schröder's rule. Another example of Germany's involvement in stabilizing relations with Russia was the Partnership for Modernization project, which was eventually included in the EU framework.

The pragmatism of relations was slightly disturbed in the aftermath of Vladimir Putin's famous half-hour speech at the Munich security conference on February 10, 2007. The president sharply criticized the unilateral actions of the United States in international politics. The main allegations included Washington's tendency to forcefully resolve international disputes, the American plans to build an anti-missile shield, and the expansion of NATO and the alliance's approach to Russia's borders³. From today's perspective, it can be

² *Wachstum, Bildung, Zusammenhalt. Koalitionsvertrag zwischen CDU, CSU und FDP*, 2009, pp. 119–120, www.kas.de/documents/252038/253252/Koalitionsvertrag2009.pdf/83dbb842-b2f7-bf99-6180-e65b2de7b4d4 [accessed: 5.01.2022].

³ Speech available on the website: *Putin's famous Munich Speech 2007*, YouTube, 20.11.2015, www.youtube.com/watch?v=hQ58Yv6kP44 [accessed: 5.01.2022]. The text of the speech (and other speeches at the conference) is available in English: *A speech delivered at the MSC 2007 by the President Vladimir Putin*, Informační systém Masarykovy univerzity, https://is.muni.cz/th/xlghl/DP_Fillinger_Speeches.pdf [accessed: 5.01.2022].

said that this was a harbinger of a clear deterioration in Russia's relations with the West, although a careful observer would have noticed that the sharp edge of Russian criticism was directed primarily at the US. A dozen or so months later, the negative trends accelerated. From Moscow's perspective, two events seemed to confirm the expansionist US policy: the declaration of Kosovo's independence in February 2008, followed by the resolutions of the NATO summit in Bucharest in April 2008. The first event marked a kind of closure of the 1999 NATO intervention against Yugoslavia, formalizing depleting the territory of allied Serbia⁴. In turn, the final declaration of the NATO summit included the following gentry: „NATO welcomes Ukraine's and Georgia's Euro-Atlantic aspirations for membership in NATO. We agreed today that these countries will become members of NATO”⁵.

The above provisions seemingly opened the possibility of applying for membership in the alliance, but at that moment they were only a rhetorical formula masking discrepancies between the members of the alliance. It was no secret that Germany and France were against granting Ukraine and Georgia a Membership Action Plan, a practical step towards membership in the alliance. Nevertheless, the Bucharest Declaration created a certain framework for applying for NATO membership in the indefinite future. It is worth noting that the Russian military action against Georgia, in response to the military action against South Ossetia, a breakaway Georgian province under Russian tutelage, received very unfavourable opinions in Germany. On the one hand, Chancellor Merkel was critical of President Mikheil Saakashvili's decision to launch a military operation against South Ossetia, but on the other hand, Russia's response was ultimately deemed disproportionate and exaggerated⁶.

It can be assumed that the two events cited above (independence of Kosovo and the NATO summit) mobilized Moscow to act. The feeling of ignoring Russia's interests (not going into detail here, to what extent it was justified) pushed it to take tough steps on the international arena. The above mentioned Russian-Georgian war of August 2008 seemed to be – at least from the perspective of Western and German public opinion – the first serious signal that Russia would not necessarily play a constructive role in building international security,

⁴ See more: R.D. Asmus, *Mała wojna, która wstrząsnęła światem. Gruzja, Rosja i przyszłość Zachodu*, tłum. J. Tokarski, wstęp R. Sikorski, S. Talbott, Res Publica, Warszawa 2010, p. 175.

⁵ Bucarest Summit Declaration, NATO, 3.04.2008, www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_8443.htm [accessed: 5.01.2022].

⁶ See e.g.: *Merkel fordert Abzug*, Deutsche Welle, 15.08.2008, www.dw.com/de/merkel-fordert-russischen-truppenabzug-aus-georgien/a-3566017 [accessed: 4.01.2024].

moreover, that it could become his destabilizer. However, the process of changing Russia's image in Germany and the West in general was very slow, but it accelerated with the annexation of Crimea in 2014.

The annexation of Crimea and the conflict in Donbas

It can be assumed that after the end of the Cold War, Russia was the focus of German foreign policy towards the post-Soviet space. Ukraine was in its shadow. The turning point was the Orange Revolution of 2004. The wave of protests after the presidential election, the results of which were generally perceived to have been rigged in favor of the pro-Russian Viktor Yanukovich, caused an impression in Germany and other European countries. According to Moscow, the protests were inspired by the West, or even by the American secret services⁷. The German political elites, both government and opposition, were basically unanimous in their belief that the best solution would be to repeat the second round of elections with the participation of pro-Russian Viktor Yanukovich and pro-Western Viktor Yushchenko⁸. It is worth noting that both Chancellor Schröder and Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer used their foreign contacts and undertook behind-the-scenes mediation activities for a constructive solution to the problem⁹.

The consequence of the Orange Revolution and Yushchenko's victory in the repeated second round of the elections was, it seems, an increase in interest in Ukraine on the part of the German public¹⁰. The respect for President Yushchenko was confirmed, among others, by his invitation to the NATO summit in February 2005¹¹ or his visit to Germany in March 2005¹². However, pro-Ukrainian sympathies in Germany have not transformed into

⁷ A. Rahr, *Russland gibt Gas. Die Rückkehr einer Weltmacht*, Carl Hanser Verlag, München 2008, pp. 119–122.

⁸ *Bundestag zur Ukraine. Schröder und Merkel fordern Neuwahlen*, Spiegel, 1.12.2004, www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/bundestag-zur-ukraine-schroeder-und-merkel-fordern-neuwahlen-a-330519.html [accessed: 18.12.2024].

⁹ H. Timmermann, *Die deutsch-russischen Beziehungen im europäischen Kontext*, "Internationale Politik und Gesellschaft" 2007, Nr. 1, p. 108.

¹⁰ See more: B. Koszel, *Polska i Niemcy a europejskie aspiracje Ukrainy*, "Przegląd Zachodni" 2008, nr 1, pp. 131–149.

¹¹ B. Riegert, *Bush bekräftigt Wunsch nach starkem Europa*, Deutsche Welle, 22.02.2005, www.dw.com/de/bush-bekr%C3%A4ftigt-wunsch-nach-starkem-europa/a-1497225 [accessed: 18.12.2024].

¹² *Juschtschenko besucht Berlin*, Die Welt, 8.03.2005, www.welt.de/politik/article556853/Juschtschenko-besucht-Berlin.html [accessed: 18.12.2024].

support for Kyiv's aspirations to join the EU or NATO. This was due to two factors. The first was the fear of a deterioration in relations with Russia, and the second was Ukraine's not very good reputation at that time regarding the weakness of reforms, conflicting political elites and corruption. The maximum program that could be proposed at that time would be come something like and deep partnership.

Ukraine again caught the attention of the European public in late 2013, when then-president Viktor Yanukovich resigned from signing the already negotiated association agreement with the European Union. Judging the diplomatic struggle for the future of Ukraine between Russia and the EU purely through the prism of money, Russian promises of economic assistance clearly were more generous than what the EU was offering at the time¹³. However, the Ukrainians who took to the streets, protesting against President Yanukovich's decision, were concerned about the future of their country in a broader perspective – about tightening ties with the European civilizational space. The protests culminated in gunfire and dozens of deaths on the streets of Kiev in February 2014. The mediation of the foreign ministers of Germany (Frank-Walter Steinmeier), Poland (Radosław Sikorski) and France (Laurent Fabius) paved the way for a truce on February 21, 2014, and for the end of clashes in the capital. Then, President Yanukovich fled to Russia and his opponents seized power.

This is where the interpretations of Russia and the broadly understood West diverge. From Russia's point of view, the above events were a coup inspired by the West, which overthrew the legal president, while in the opinion of the West, it was a justified social protest against the president acting against this society, who *de facto* resigned of power when leaving the country, and the new authorities became legal representative office of Ukraine. As is known, Russia reacted by blood less takeover and annexation of Crimea and began to support the two separatist republics of Donetsk and Luhansk, soon to be proclaimed in the Donbass. Starting from March 2014, sanctions were imposed on Russia, mainly covering economic, financial and visa restrictions. Russia's image suffered greatly after the separatists shot down a Malaysian passenger plane over Donbass on July 17, 2014. In Germany, views on sanctions clashed. In general, it can be assumed that Chancellor Merkel was supporter of sanctions in the coalition, while the Social Democrats opted for a more lenient course, as did some

¹³ President Vladimir Putin was to offer support in the amount of EUR 11 billion, while the EU was to offer around EUR 600 million, see: K. Böttger, *Auf dem sicherheitspolitischen Auge blind: die UE-Außenpolitikangesichts der Ukraine-Krise: Zustand und Entwicklungsoptionen*, "Integration" 2014, Nr. 2, p. 99.

economic circles¹⁴. The critical trend towards Russia was confirmed by CDU documents¹⁵. In turn, statements made by SPD politicians and documents also resulted in condemnation of the annexation of Crimea as a violation of international law, but one could get the impression that the belief in Russia as an important and indispensable element of the international security architecture was emphasized more strongly¹⁶. In terms of form, the positions of the FDP¹⁷ or the Alliance '90s/Greens¹⁸ were much stricter. It was no surprise, however, that the opposition to the sanctions was expressed by the Left¹⁹ and Alternative for Germany, traditionally lenient towards Russia, in numerous statements by their representatives. At the same time, it is worth noting that another important dividing line in the stance on anti-Russian sanctions ran between the old and new federal states, and it basically ran across party lines. The eastern federal states, which were severely affected by the decline in trade with the Russian Federation, were much more eager to end the sanctions, as exemplified by their joint statement in January 2018. In it, the sanctions were considered ineffective and harmful to companies in eastern Germany²⁰.

¹⁴ See more: J. Kiwerska, *Partnerstwo w przywództwie? Stany Zjednoczone i Niemcy (1989–2016). Perspektywa polska*, Instytut Zachodni, Poznań 2017, pp. 302–320.

¹⁵ See: CDU resolution of November 2015: *Umgang mit Russland – Zehn Handlungsempfehlungen. Beschluss des CDU-Bundesfachausschusses Außen-, Sicherheits-, Entwicklungs- und Menschenrechtspolitik unter der Leitung von Roderich Kiesewetter MdB sowie des CDU-Bundesfachausschusses Europapolitik unter der Leitung von Elmar Brok MdEP vom 16. November 2015*, CDU, https://archiv.cdu.de/system/tdf/media/dokumente/151116-eu-russland-beziehungen.pdf?file=1&type=field_collection_item&cid=3365 [accessed: 5.01.2022].

¹⁶ See: SPD position: *Zeit für mehr Gerechtigkeit. Unser Regierungsprogramm für Deutschland*, SPD, 2017, p. 107, www.spd.de/fileadmin/Dokumente/Regierungsprogramm/SPD_Regierungsprogramm_BTW_2017_A5_RZ_WEB.pdf [accessed: 5.01.2022].

¹⁷ *Beschluss des 69. Ord. Bundesparteitags der FDP, Berlin, 12 bis 13. Mai 2018*, FDP, www.fdp.de/sites/default/files/import/2018-05/6196-2018-05-13-bpt-recht-wahren-werte-verteidigen-dialog-fuehren-zehn-vorschlaege-fuer-die.pdf [accessed: 18.12.2024].

¹⁸ *Wir stehen ein für Frieden und Menschenrechte*, www.gruene.de/themen/gruene-themen-von-a-bis-z/wir-stehen-ein-fuer-frieden-und-menschenrechte.html [accessed: 5.01.2022, non-active].

¹⁹ See the Left's motion to lift sanctions on Russia, submitted by a group of party deputies: *Entspannung mit Russland – Keine Verlängerung der Sanktionen gegen Russland*, Deutscher Bundestag, 19. Wahlperiode, Drucksache 19/95, 22.11.2017, <https://dserver.bundestag.de/brd/19/000/1900095.pdf> [accessed: 18.12.2024].

²⁰ *Abbau von Russland-Sanktionen gefordert*, Die Welt, 30.01.2018, www.welt.de/wirtschaft/article172990746/Ostdeutsche-Regierungschefs-Abbau-von-Russland-Sanktionen-gefordert.html [accessed: 5.01.2022].

At the same time, it is worth noting the active presence of Germany in the Normandy format (Germany, France, Russia, Ukraine) as a forum for talks on a peaceful solution. Their result was the Minsk Agreement of February 12, 2015, preceded by intense diplomatic activity and numerous trips by Chancellor Merkel²¹. It can be said that the Minsk Armistice Agreement limited the conflict and, with all its shortcomings, reduced the territorial scope of the conflict for seven years, and probably also the number of casualties. Interpretations favorable to Angela Merkel also assume that it gave Kiev time to prepare for a more serious conflict with Russia, which occurred with its invasion of Ukraine in 2022. Closing this thread, however, we cannot escape the fact that even the annexation of Crimea did not shake the faith of the German political elites in establishing stable relations with Russia based on the energy partnership – after all, a year and a half after the annexation, a decision was made to build the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline with the participation of Gazprom (51% of shares), German E.ON and BASF (10% of shares each) as well as OMV, Shell (also 10% each) and ENGIE (9%)²².

The outbreak of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict in 2022 and the German *Zeitenwende*

The annexation of Crimea and the fighting in the Donbas, which has been going on since 2014, have become permanent factors that maintain tension in Russian-Ukrainian relations. Meanwhile, the build-up of Russian troops on the border with Ukraine in early 2022 has been met with various interpretations. However, while some political circles expressed hope that this could only be an element of a negotiation tactic and an attempt to put pressure on Ukraine and the West to obtain political concessions, in the first days of February military experts left no doubt that the nature of the Russian actions was preparation to the invasion.

At this point, let us try to outline the Russian point of view on the evolution of its security environment in recent years. Successive enlargements of NATO and the alliance's approach to Russia's borders, interpreted by the West as expanding the zone of stability in Europe, were treated by Russia as a threat.

²¹ B. Koszel, *Rola Niemiec w procesach decyzyjnych Unii Europejskiej w XXI wieku*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Wydziału Nauk Politycznych i Dziennikarstwa Uniwersytetu Adama Mickiewicza, Poznań 2019, p. 341.

²² *Gazprom, BASF, E.ON, ENGIE, OMV and Shell Sign Shareholders' Agreement on the Nord Stream 2 Project*, BASF, 4.09.2015, www.basf.com/global/en/media/news-releases/2015/09/p-15-334.html [accessed: 5.01.2022].

Reversing this line of reasoning, it can be assumed that from a geopolitical point of view, Russia's expansion of its territory (or at least its sphere of influence) over the last few hundred years was a strategy aimed at strengthening its security by separating itself from external threats with a security buffer. From the outside, however – especially in the immediate neighbourhood – such a strategy was perceived as pure imperialism. Moving on to the level of Russia's specific claims, Moscow has accused the US of excessive activity in Ukraine, or even the presence of NATO there in the form of advice and training for the Ukrainian army. Russia was determined to prevent Ukraine's membership of NATO at all costs. This determination grew after the aforementioned Bucharest summit of the alliance in 2008, at which a very imprecise announcement of the future admission of Ukraine and Georgia to NATO was made. The potential presence of both countries in NATO would give the alliance a definite supremacy in the Black Sea and would call into question the status of the Black Sea Fleet. However, it should be clearly emphasized that the promise of NATO enlargement to include both countries was very vague, without deciding on concrete actions leading to membership (mainly due to France and Germany, which did not want to antagonize Russia) and in practice left in limbo. Therefore, it is hard to believe that experienced Russian diplomacy did not realize the low probability of accession of Ukraine and Georgia to the NATO. Therefore, when analyzing the reasons for the Russian invasion in 2022, it seems that the cause was not so much the fear of Ukraine's formal membership in NATO, but rather the conviction that Ukraine's presence in the Russian sphere of influence is necessary to maintain Russia's superpower status. Ukrainian territorial, demographic and energy resources (probably including rare metals in Donbas) were a huge temptation. Longing for the empire was combined here with a belief about the historical and ethnic closeness of Russians and Ukrainians²³.

When on February 24, 2022, artillery and rocket fire began and Russian troops entered Ukraine, the prevailing belief was that the conquest of the state by the attackers was a matter of days. Just three days later, on Sunday, February 27, 2022, Chancellor Olaf Scholz announced a breakthrough in German foreign policy. Let us quote excerpts from the Chancellor's statement: "February 24 marks a turning point (*Zeitenwende*) in the history of our continent. With the invasion of Ukraine, Russian President Putin cold-bloodedly launched a war of aggression for one reason: his oppressive regime calls into question

²³ See: *Article by Vladimir Putin "On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians"*, Kremlin, 12.06.2021, www.en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/66181 [accessed: 5.01.2022].

the freedom of Ukrainian women and men”²⁴. From the content of the Chancellor’s speech, several points defining Germany’s goals can be identified:

- support for Ukraine, including a general announcement of arms deliveries;
- getting Russia to end the invasion through sanctions;
- preventing the conflict from spreading to other countries;
- confirmation of allied guarantees within NATO;
- the announcement of a significant increase in expenditures on armament of the Bundeswehr (creation of extraordinary resources in the amount of EUR 100 billion for the coming years);
- strengthening the coherence of the EU’s external actions, which should be the main collective platform for relations with Russia²⁵.

The attack on Ukraine in 2022 and the announcement of the *Zeitenwende* also became the reason for the acceleration of work on Germany’s security strategy (announced in the coalition agreement). Initiating work on the strategy in spring 2022, the federal government decided to include primarily the Bundestag, the scientific circles and representatives of civil society. On the website of the Ministry of Defense one could read that – and this was no surprise – Germany’s security will continue to be based on NATO and the EU. Defence Minister Christine Lambrecht joined the debate on Germany’s planned security strategy. Her speech of September 12, 2022, delivered at the German Council of Foreign Relations (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Auswärtige Politik), was received with great interest. She confirmed the need to support NATO’s eastern flank in the face of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, as well as Germany’s plans to allocate EUR 100 billion to defence. She also emphasized – what is particularly important – that the strategic situation requires taking into account a potential scenario in which the United States will be less involved in defending Europe, thus postulating strengthening the European pillar of NATO²⁶.

Economic issues were also included in the debate on the national security strategy, and more precisely, economic resilience. The Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock, pointed this out during consultations with German business circles on September 6, 2022, rightly noted that Germany is dependent on countries ‘that do not offer credibility’. She cited data showing that after the outbreak of

²⁴ *Regierungserklärung von Bundeskanzler Olaf Scholz am 27. Februar 2022*, www.bundesregierung.de/breg-de/suche/regierungserklaerung-von-bundeskanzler-olaf-scholz-am-27-februar-2022-2008356 [accessed: 18.12.2024].

²⁵ *Ibidem*.

²⁶ *Grundsatzrede zur Sicherheitsstrategie: Streitkräfte wieder in den Focus rücken*, Bundesministerium der Verteidigung, 13.09.2022, www.bmvg.de/de/aktuelles/grundsatzrede-zur-sicherheitsstrategie-5494864 [accessed: 5.01.2022].

war, about 600 German companies withdrew from Russia, including Siemens, boasting a tradition of 170 years of cooperation. At the same time, she defended Germany's position on the gradual, not violent, embargo on Russian resources, arguing that Germany could not afford to give up Russian resources overnight²⁷.

At one of the expert workshops in October 2022, a significant message was delivered, defining the *Zeitenwende* as a paradigm shift in thinking about Germany's security, according to which security can no longer be reduced only to limiting international crises and conflicts, but to realizing that Europe itself is currently endangered. Among the numerous proposals, the need to strengthen the German armed forces in terms of their effectiveness, interoperability and ability to react quickly was noticed. It was emphasized that the importance and responsibility of Germany in NATO and the EU as the most important logistic center of the allied forces has increased. The need for appropriate strategic communication towards partners and allies was emphasized to strengthen Germany's leading role in Europe in the context of the *Zeitenwende*²⁸.

At the beginning of 2023, talks on the National Security Strategy were continued. Press comments emphasized the allies' expectations, especially of the United States, on the matter of a clear definition and vision of the announced *Zeitenwende* – not only in relation to Europe, but also in the context of China, perceived by the ally from across the Atlantic as an increasingly serious rival. The differences between the coalition partners in the assessment of Chinese investments in Germany and the fact that the Chancellor allowed (in a limited form compared to the original plans) the purchase by the Chinese company Cosco of shares in the transshipment terminal in the port of Hamburg, against the reservations of the coalition partners, came to the fore. Other contentious issues concerned the possible inclusion of the NATO defence spending target of 2% of GDP in the National Security Strategy, or facilitation of arms exports by Germany, which was allegedly supported by Defence Minister Christine Lambrecht of the SPD against the Greens²⁹. Disputes over the shape of the Strategy,

²⁷ *Rede der Bundesministerin des Auswärtigen, Annalena Baerbock, beim Wirtschaftstag der Konferenz der Leitungendeutscher Auslandsvertretungen am 6. September 2022 in Berlin*, "Bulletin der Bundesregierung" 110-4, 10.09.2022, www.bundesregierung.de/resource/blob/975954/2125016/d2b49865f575c1f4e25832f47dd5729c/110-4-wirtschaftstag-data.pdf?download=1 [accessed: 18.12.2022].

²⁸ *Nationale Sicherheitsstrategie: Gesellschaftliche Resilienz im Fokus*, Bundesministerium der Verteidigung, 26.10.2022, www.bmvg.de/de/aktuelles/nationale-sicherheitsstrategie-gesellschaftliche-resilienz-fokus-5514816 [accessed: 18.12.2024].

²⁹ P.A. Krüger, N. Richter, H. Roßbach, *Die Verbündeten werden langsam ungeduldig*, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 3.01.2023, www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/deutschland-nationale-sicherheitsstrategie-usa-ampelkoalition-1.5726333 [accessed: 18.12.2024].

which was originally supposed to be prepared in the first year of the coalition's rule, especially between Auswärtiges Amt and the Chancellery, resulted in the postponement of its announcement until the end of the first quarter of 2023³⁰.

In the broad perception, *Zeitenwende* began to be associated primarily with the sphere of defence and – in a narrower interpretation – German military resources and capabilities. In the course of deliberations on the quality of the Bundeswehr, analyzes indicating its main shortcomings were published. The previous diagnoses of the underfunding of the Bundeswehr were confirmed, as defence spending had been declining since the end of the Cold War, as was the case in many other Western European countries. An important problem was the in appropriate distribution of defence spending, where too little was spent on armaments, while most of the expenditure was consumed by personnel costs and the current functioning of the Bundeswehr. The announced extraordinary defence financing (*Sondervermögen*) in the amount of EUR 100 billion, on the other hand, seemed to open up an opportunity to strengthen the armaments sector and at least partially fill the financial gap missing from the NATO level of 2% of GDP. In addition, the level of inflation, which also strongly affects the defence sector, should be taken into account. Experts also noted that when making decisions on the purchase of armaments abroad, as in the case of missile defence systems or F-35 aircraft, one should take into account areas in which the domestic defence industry could participate. Among the most important recommendations, there was a constant increase in defence spending, primarily as part of annual budgets, regardless of the announced additional EUR 100 billion. Announced extraordinary funds should be allocated to long-term projects, while others (short and medium-term) should be covered by annual budgets³¹.

The announcement of extraordinary expenditures for the Bundeswehr soon took the form of legislative measures, which entered the final stage in June 2022 and were crowned with the adoption of the Act dated July 1, 2022 on the financing of the Bundeswehr and the creation of 'extraordinary Bundeswehr funds' and amending the federal budget law. The act established

³⁰ D. Vates, *Wie die Bundesregierung über die nationale Sicherheitsstrategie streitet*, Redaktions Netzwerk Deutschland, 10.02.2023, www.rnd.de/politik/nationale-sicherheitsstrategie-bundesregierung-streitet-um-verteidigung-und-katastrophenschutz-OQ6MT5RY5EJFC5QJOUZSC5JA.html [accessed: 18.12.2024].

³¹ Ch. Mölling, T. Schütz, *Zeitenwende in der Verteidigungspolitik. Bundeswehr-Sondervermögen effektiv und nachhaltig ausgeben*, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Auswärtige Politik, Mai 2022, <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-80045-9> [accessed: 18.12.2024].

the aforementioned resources (*Sondervermögen*) to support defence spending in order to meet the NATO aim of 2% of GDP³². In turn, in December 2022, the federal budget for 2023 was adopted (published on December 19, 2022 in the Federal Law Gazette). Expenses of EUR 476,290 billion were therefore foreseen for 2023. Within the Ministry of Defence, EUR 50,117 billion, i.e. 10.52% of the budget, was foreseen. Taking into account the division of expenditure into individual ministries, Defence came second, behind the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (EUR 166,229 billion, i.e. almost 39% of the budget). Interestingly, this meant a reduction in expenditure compared to 2022 by EUR 287 million, which should, however, be compensated by expenditure under *Sondervermögen*.

At the end of 2022, assessments of the condition of the Bundeswehr were still sceptical. The prevailing belief was that, similarly to the previously cited report, a one-off amount of EUR 100 billion would only partially make up for the many years of neglect in arming the armed forces. This concerned in particular protective equipment, radio communications, heavy transport helicopters and fighters, and ships. A significant shortage of ammunition was also emphasized, estimating its stocks for several days instead of thirty days recommended by NATO standards. Opposition MPs also complained about being denied access to information on these issues and the Ministry of Defence's secrecy. Experts had no doubts that spending on the armed forces must increase without undue delay. At the same time, it was necessary to take into account the limited capabilities of the defence sector in the context of the pace of order fulfilment³³.

Conclusions

Zeitenwende seems to be a concept that has been difficult to define unambiguously so far. Depending on the point of view, it may have different meanings, or rather the emphasis may be different. It can therefore be generally assumed that the *Zeitenwende* encompasses a watershed change in German foreign and security policy. Therefore, it covers issues concerning foreign policy, reform

³² Gesetz zur Finanzierung der Bundeswehr und zur Errichtung eines 'Sondervermögens Bundeswehr' und zur Änderung der Bundeshaltsordnung, Bundesgesetzblatt, Teil I, Nr. 23, 6.07.2022.

³³ N. Metzger, *Bundeswehr bei Ausrüstung weiter blank*, ZDF Heute, 23.11.2022, www.zdf.de/nachrichten/politik/bundeswehr-zeitenwende-sondervermoegen-munition-ukraine-krieg-100.html [accessed: 5.01.2022, non-active].

of the security and defence sector, as well as economic policy, in particular energy policy.

We can assume that in the political sphere, *Zeitenwende* probably means a tendency towards taking on more responsibility for international security matters. In a narrower sense, a definitive break (progressing from around 2008) with the perception of Russia as a partner in solving international security problems and treating it as an element destabilizing the international system. However, it is a slow, gradual process and its final result is difficult to predict. Germany's attitude towards the conflict in Ukraine and the issue of supporting Ukraine with military equipment can be treated as his touchstone. The observations of the German political scene so far indicate that among the parties in the then coalition, the supporters of such a solution were mainly two smaller ones – the FDP and the Greens. In turn, among the opposition parties, pro-Ukrainian attitudes dominated among the Christian Democrats, while the AfD and the Left – although in the official narrative (with some exceptions and reservations, especially in the case of the AfD) – partially criticized Russia, they were opposed to arms supplies to Ukraine. In German geopolitical thinking, however, there still seems to be a conviction that someday there must be a peaceful settlement of relations with Russia – and it is difficult to deny the logic of such a thesis. Such calculations probably became the reason for the moderation in support for Ukraine in the first months of the war, according to the assumption that Ukraine can not lose, but neither can Russia be excessively weakened. This could trigger destabilization processes, and perhaps even the disintegration of the Russian Federation, which would be a very dangerous scenario in the case of a country with a huge number of nuclear warheads.

In the strictly military sphere, *Zeitenwende* seems to be the easiest to define. It means, first of all, the modernization of the neglected armed forces, using both annual budgets and emergency measures (*Sondervermögen*), i.e. the announced EUR 100 billion. The easiest to define – this does not mean that it is an easy area to implement. On the contrary, it will require not only huge financial outlays, but also sensible planning, improved administration, *etc.* If this process is successful, Germany can – of course, provided that it maintains the transatlantic vector of its foreign policy (and there is no indication that this will change) – become an important power supporting the stabilization of the European security area. How difficult these processes are, however, is evidenced by the numerous critical voices of experts at the turn of 2022/2023, pointing to negligence and a lack of momentum in the conceptualization of strengthening the Bundeswehr. This explains, among other the

resignation of Minister Christine Lambrecht in January 2023 and the taking of the position of Minister of Defence by Boris Pistorius.

Undoubtedly, an important step in breaking the existing culture of restraint was the decision announced on January 25, 2023 to send fourteen Leopard-2 tanks to Ukraine. This followed strong allies pressure and disputes within the coalition. While the two smaller coalition partners, the Greens and the FDP, had been in favour of sending tanks for a long time, there were reservations in the SPD against it. The decision of the German government was probably accelerated by the American announcement of support for Ukraine with thirty-one Abrams tanks. This made it easier for Scholz's government to justify its decision as a joint allied action. As expected, the decision to send the Leopards won the applause of the opposition Christian Democrats, but was criticized by the Left and the AfD³⁴.

It seems that changes in economic policy are taking place the fastest. *Zeitenwende* manifests itself here in reducing economic and financial relations with the Russian Federation. The central element of this process is related to the relatively quick interruption of supplies of energy resources from Russia and thus dependence on one supplier, which turned out to be an unreliable partner, contesting the peaceful international order. Germany made an effort to diversify supplies of energy resources, looking for other exporters, and relatively quickly put into operation the LNG terminal in Wilhelmshaven³⁵.

Finally, let us try to compare German and Polish attitudes towards the conflict in Ukraine. Research shows significant differences in the perception of the conflict in Ukraine by Polish and German public opinion. One survey conducted in December 2022 revealed the following results (answers 'don't know' were omitted): When asked whether NATO and EU countries should support Ukraine politically and militarily in such a way that it wins a war with Russia, even if it takes several years, as many as 82% of Polish respondents answered 'yes', while in Germany it was 42%. In Poland, only 12% of respondents

³⁴ *Tino Chrupalla: Der Kanzler muss Farbe für den Frieden bekennen*, AfD, 24.01.2023, www.afd.de/tino-chrupalla-der-kanzler-muss-farbe-fuer-den-frieden-bekennen [accessed: 18.12.2024]; *Alice Weidel: Keine deutschen Kampfjets für die Ukraine*, AfD, 25.01.2023, www.afd.de/alice-weidel-keine-deutschen-kampfjets-fuer-die-ukraine [accessed: 18.12.2024]; *Panzerlieferungen sind weiterer Tabubruch. Pressemitteilung von Amira Mohamed Ali, Dietmar Bartsch*, Die Linke, 25.01.2023, www.linksfraktion.de/presse/pressemitteilungen/detail/panzerlieferungen-sind-weiterer-tabubruch [accessed: 18.12.2024].

³⁵ V. Eckert, *Germany completes Wilhelmshaven floating LNG terminal, more to come*, Reuters, 15.11.2022, www.reuters.com/business/energy/germany-completes-construction-wilhelmshaven-floating-lng-terminal-2022-11-15 [accessed: 18.12.2024].

said that NATO and EU countries should seek an agreement with Russia at all costs, even at the cost of Ukraine's territorial losses, in Germany this percentage was as much as 39%. Another study asked whether Ukraine should be admitted to NATO and the EU as soon as possible. It gave the following answers: to join both the EU and NATO – 61% in Poland and 27% in Germany, to join the EU and not to join NATO – 8% in Poland and 15% in Germany, to join NATO and not to join the EU – 12% in Poland and 9% in Germany, neither EU nor NATO – 13% in Poland and 31% in Germany, I don't know/hard to say – 6% in Poland and 17% in Germany³⁶.

On both sides of the Oder, there are differences in the stance on the conflict in Ukraine. In Poland, the dominant feeling is the fear of a powerful and dangerous neighbour and the resulting threat – often presented in public debates – that if Ukraine fails, Russia's appetite will increase and it may threaten other neighbours in Central and Eastern Europe. The quite cautious stance in Germany is dictated by the fear of antagonizing Russia, the escalation and spread of the conflict, former close energy cooperation and a higher level of acceptance for Russian geopolitical arguments. An important role is played by the awareness that Russia will still be present in the Eurasian space and relations with Moscow will have to be arranged somehow. It is difficult to deny the logic of such a position, but at the same time one cannot deny Ukraine's right to independently shape its own future. Reconciling these perspectives is an extremely difficult task. In conclusion, it should be emphasized that a comprehensive analysis of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict would require a broader context (for which there is no space in this article) – taking into account the role of China and the dispute over Taiwan (and thus potential Chinese-Russian cooperation), personal factors (such as health or temperament of the most important political leaders) or the specificity of political systems. The pace and scope of Germany's *Zeitenwende* is also an open question, but Berlin appears to have taken a major step towards assuming greater responsibility for international security matters.

³⁶ M. Danielewski, *Czy Polacy naprawdę odwracają się od Ukrainy i Ukraińców? Sprawdzamy głośne badania*, OKO.press, 31.01.2023, <https://oko.press/czy-polacy-naprawde-odwracaja-sie-od-ukrainy-i-ukraincow-sprawdzamy> [accessed: 18.12.2024].

References

- A speech delivered at the MSC 2007 by the President Vladimir Putin*, Informační systém Masarykovy univerzity, https://is.muni.cz/th/xlghl/DP_Fillinger_Speeches.pdf [accessed: 5.01.2022].
- Abbau von Russland-Sanktionen gefordert*, Die Welt, 30.01.2018, www.welt.de/wirtschaft/article172990746/Ostdeutsche-Regierungschefs-Abbau-von-Russland-Sanktionen-gefordert.html [accessed: 5.01.2022].
- Alice Weidel: Keine deutschen Kampfjets für die Ukraine*, AfD, 25.01.2023, www.afd.de/alice-weidel-keine-deutschen-kampfjets-fuer-die-ukraine [accessed: 18.12.2024].
- Article by Vladimir Putin "On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians"*, Kremlin, 12.06.2021, www.en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/66181 [accessed: 5.01.2022].
- Asmus R.D., *Mala wojna, która ustrząsnęła światem. Gruzja, Rosja i przyszłość Zachodu*, tłum. J. Tokarski, wstęp R. Sikorski, S. Talbott, Res Publica, Warszawa 2010.
- Beschluss des 69. Ord. Bundesparteitags der FDP, Berlin, 12 bis 13. Mai 2018*, FDP, www.fdp.de/sites/default/files/import/2018-05/6196-2018-05-13-bpt-recht-wahren-werte-verteidigen-dialog-fuehren-zehn-vorschlaege-fuer-die.pdf [accessed: 18.12.2024].
- Böttger K., *Auf dem sicherheitspolitischen Auge blind: die UE-Außenpolitik angesichts der Ukraine-Krise: Zustand und Entwicklungsoptionen*, "Integration" 2014, Nr. 2, pp. 95–108.
- Bucarest Summit Declaration, NATO, 3.04.2008, www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_8443.htm [accessed: 5.01.2022].
- Bundestag zur Ukraine. Schröder und Merkel fordern Neuwahlen*, Spiegel, 1.12.2004, www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/bundestag-zur-ukraine-schroeder-und-merkel-fordern-neuwahlen-a-330519.html [accessed: 18.12.2024].
- Danielewski M., *Czy Polacy naprawdę odwracają się od Ukrainy i Ukraińców? Sprawdzamy głosne badania*, OKO.press, 31.01.2023, <https://oko.press/czy-polacy-naprawde-odwracaja-sie-od-ukrainy-i-ukraincow-sprawdzamy> [accessed: 5.01.2022].
- Eckert V., *Germany completes Wilhelmshaven floating LNG terminal, more to come*, Reuters, 15.11.2022, www.reuters.com/business/energy/germany-completes-construction-wilhelmshaven-floating-lng-terminal-2022-11-15 [accessed: 18.12.2024].
- Entspannung mit Russland – Keine Verlängerung der Sanktionen gegen Russland*, Deutscher Bundestag, 19. Wahlperiode, Drucksache 19/95, 22.11.2017, <https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/19/000/1900095.pdf> [accessed: 18.12.2024].
- Gazprom, BASF, E.ON, ENGIE, OMV and Shell Sign Shareholders' Agreement on the Nord Stream 2 Project*, BASF, 4.09.2015, www.basf.com/global/en/media/news-releases/2015/09/p-15-334.html [accessed: 5.01.2022].
- Gesetz zur Finanzierung der Bundeswehr und zur Errichtung eines 'Sondervermögens Bundeswehr' und zur Änderung der Bundeshaushaltsordnung, 1.07.2022, Bundesgesetzblatt, Teil I, Nr. 23, 6.07.2022.
- Grundsatzrede zur Sicherheitsstrategie: Streitkräfte wieder in den Focus rücken*, Bundesministerium der Verteidigung, 13.09.2022, www.bmvg.de/de/aktuelles/grundsatzrede-zur-sicherheitsstrategie-5494864 [accessed: 18.12.2024].
- Juschtschenko besucht Berlin*, Die Welt, 8.03.2005, www.welt.de/politik/article556853/Juschtschenko-besucht-Berlin.html [accessed: 18.12.2024].

- Kiwerska J., *Partnerstwo w przywództwie? Stany Zjednoczone i Niemcy (1989–2016). Perspektywa polska*, Instytut Zachodni, Poznań 2017.
- Kosman M.M., *Polityka RFN wobec ZSRR/Rosji w latach 1989–2009*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Kazimierza Wielkiego, Bydgoszcz 2013.
- Koszel B., *Polska i Niemcy a europejskie aspiracje Ukrainy*, "Przegląd Zachodni" 2008, nr 1, pp. 131–149.
- Koszel B., *Rola Niemiec w procesach decyzyjnych Unii Europejskiej w XXI wieku*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Wydziału Nauk Politycznych i Dziennikarstwa Uniwersytetu Adama Mickiewicza, Poznań 2019.
- Krüger P.A., Richter N., Roßbach H., *Die Verbündeten warden langsam ungeduldig*, Süddeutsche Zeitung, 3.01.2023, www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/deutschland-nationale-sicherheitsstrategie-usa-ampelkoalition-1.5726333 [accessed: 18.12.2024].
- Merkel fordert Abzug*, Deutsche Welle, 15.08.2008, www.dw.com/de/merkel-fordert-russischen-truppenabzug-aus-georgien/a-3566017 [accessed: 4.01.2024].
- Metzger N., *Bundeswehr bei Ausrüstung weiter blank*, ZDF Heute, 23.11.2022, www.zdf.de/nachrichten/politik/bundeswehr-zeitenwende-sondervermoegen-munition-ukraine-krieg-100.html [accessed: 18.12.2024, non-active].
- Mölling Ch., Schütz T., *Zeitenwende in der Verteidigungspolitik. Bundeswehr-Sondervermögen effektiv und nachhaltig ausgeben*, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Auswärtige Politik, Mai 2022, <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-80045-9> [accessed: 18.12.2024].
- Nationale Sicherheitsstrategie: Gesellschaftliche Resilienz im Fokus*, Bundesministerium der Verteidigung, 26.10.2022, www.bmvg.de/de/aktuelles/nationale-sicherheitsstrategie-gesellschaftliche-resilienz-fokus-5514816 [accessed: 18.12.2024].
- Panzerlieferungen sind weiterer Tabubruch. Pressemitteilung von Amira Mohamed Ali, Dietmar Bartsch*, Die Linke, 25.01.2023, www.linksfraktion.de/presse/pressemitteilungen/detail/panzerlieferungen-sind-weiterer-tabubruch [accessed: 18.12.2024].
- Putin's famous Munich Speech 2007*, YouTube, 20.11.2015, www.youtube.com/watch?v=HQ58Yv6kP44 [accessed: 5.01.2022].
- Rahr A., *Russland gibt Gas. Die Rückkehr einer Weltmacht*, Carl Hanser Verlag, München 2008.
- Rede der Bundesministerin des Auswärtigen, Annalena Baerbock, beim Wirtschaftstag der Konferenz der Leitungendeutscher Auslandsvertretungen am 6. September 2022 in Berlin*, "Bulletin der Bundesregierung" 110-4, 10.09.2022, www.bundesregierung.de/resource/blob/975954/2125016/d2b49865f575c1f4e25832f47dd5729c/110-4-wirtschaftstag-data.pdf?download=1 [accessed: 18.12.2024].
- Regierungserklärung von Bundeskanzler Olaf Scholz am 27. Februar 2022*, www.bundesregierung.de/breg-de/suche/regierungserklaerung-von-bundeskanzler-olaf-scholz-am-27-februar-2022-2008356 [accessed: 18.12.2024].
- Riegert B., *Bush bekräftigt Wunsch nach starkem Europa*, Deutsche Welle, 22.02.2005, www.dw.com/de/bush-bekr%C3%A4ftigt-wunsch-nach-starkem-europa/a-1497225 [accessed: 18.12.2024].
- Timmermann H., *Die deutsch-russischen Beziehungen im europäischen Kontext*, "Internationale Politik und Gesellschaft" 2007, Nr. 1, pp. 101–122.

- Tino Chrupalla: Der Kanzler muss Farbe für den Frieden bekennen*, AfD, 24.01.2023, www.afd.de/tino-chrupalla-der-kanzler-muss-farbe-fuer-den-frieden-bekennen [accessed: 18.12.2024].
- Umgang mit Russland – Zehn Handlungsempfehlungen. Beschluss des CDU-Bundesfachausschusses Außen-, Sicherheits-, Entwicklungs- und Menschenrechtspolitik unter der Leitung von Roderich Kiesewetter MdB sowie des CDU-Bundesfachausschusses Europapolitik unter der Leitung von Elmar Brok MdEP vom 16. November 2015*, CDU, https://archiv.cdu.de/system/tdf/media/dokumente/151116-eu-russland-beziehungen.pdf?file=1&type=field_collection_item&id=3365 [accessed: 5.01.2022].
- Vates D., *Wie die Bundesregierung über die nationale Sicherheitsstrategie streitet*, Redaktions Netzwerk Deutschland, 10.02.2023, www.rnd.de/politik/nationale-sicherheitsstrategie-bundesregierung-streitet-um-verteidigung-und-katastrophenschutz-OQ6M-T5RYY5EJFC5QJOUNZSC5JA.html [accessed: 18.12.2024].
- Wachstum, Bildung, Zusammenhalt. Koalitionsvertrag zwischen CDU, CSU und FDP*, 2009, www.kas.de/documents/252038/253252/Koalitionsvertrag2009.pdf/83dbb842-b2f7-bf99-6180-e65b2de7b4d4 [accessed: 5.01.2022].
- Wir stehen ein für Frieden und Menschenrechte*, www.gruene.de/themen/gruene-themen-von-a-bis-z/wir-stehen-ein-fuer-frieden-und-menschenrechte.html [accessed: 5.01.2022, non-active].
- Zeit für mehr Gerechtigkeit. Unser Regierungsprogramm für Deutschland*, SPD, 2017, www.spd.de/fileadmin/Dokumente/Regierungsprogramm/SPD_Regierungsprogramm_BTW_2017_A5_RZ_WEB.pdf [accessed: 5.01.2022].

Abstract

The aim of the article is to discuss Germany's position on the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, starting from the annexation of Crimea in 2014 to the outbreak of a full-scale conflict in 2022. After the introductory remarks, the attitude of Germany towards Russia after the end of the Cold War and its evolution are outlined. The author focused in particular on groundbreaking events in the context of the security of Central and Eastern Europe, such as the Orange Revolution in 2004, the NATO summit in Bucharest, and the Russian-Georgian war in 2008. Further on, the German position on the annexation of Crimea in 2014 – both by the federal government and the main political parties, followed by German reactions to the entry of Russian troops into Ukraine in February 2022 and the announcement of a breakthrough in German foreign and security policy (*Zeitenwende*). An attempt was made to analyze the meaning of the term *Zeitenwende* on the military, economic and political level. In the final conclusions, an attempt was made to compare German and Polish public opinion towards the Russian-Ukrainian conflict.

Key words: Russian-Ukrainian conflict, annexation of Crimea, Germany, *Zeitenwende*