

Doi: 10.30520/tjsosci.1138650

Post-Cold War Russian-German Relations: The New Balance of Powers in Europe?

Halit HAMZAOĞLU¹

Abstract

Post-Cold War Russian-German relations have been hesitant. The two countries have established various cooperation mechanisms in economic terms. On the other hand, they acted with different perspectives on political issues. This situation has significantly affected the course of relations. In general terms, it is possible to define post-Cold War Russian-German relations as a strategic partnership. The Ukrainian question has significantly affected the course of relations. In particular, energy projects such as Nord Stream-2 have been laid aside in this process, thus replacing economic cooperation with strategic competition. In the name of Western solidarity, Germany risked abandoning the pragmatic cooperation it had built with Russia after the Cold War. However, it is possible to say that this situation will not hold a long-term and sustainable nature. Interdependence and the new balance of powers emerging in Europe directly affect the course of this process. In this context, the interdependence and strategic equations present in the relations should be underlined. The article discusses post-Cold War Russian-German relations. The article also goes into the general structure of relations between Russia and Germany within the framework of the European balance of powers perspective.

Keywords: Flexible alliances, Germany, Russia, the European balance of powers, Ukrainian conflict

Introduction

It is possible to define the general course of Russian-German relations after the Cold War as a strategic partnership. The geographical proximity between the two countries increases the possibilities of cooperation. On the other hand, geographical proximity also causes competition conditions to occur. Both Russia and Germany have influential political, economic and cultural instruments in Eastern and Central Europe. This situation paves the way for the simultaneous development of competition and cooperation environments.

The “non-polar” nature of modern international relations largely drives the behavior of many actors with varying influences on the course of the world. In the process of transitioning to a multipolar system, these effects bring with them a series of challenges and strategic opportunities. In this context, the bilateral, regional and international relations of Russia and Germany, which are important actors of the European balance of power, have a transformative,

¹ Asst. Prof. Dr. Kars Kafkas University, Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, Department of Political Science and International Relations, halithamzaoglu85@gmail.com ORCID: 0000-0001-5249-1911

guiding and decisive effect. One of the most important mechanisms brought about by multipolarity is this; actors who appear to be competitors on one issue have the desire to make a strategic partnership on another. Therefore, alliances and partnerships hold flexibility. This reduces the predictability of actors' behavior.

Russian-German relations are key to the European balance of power. For this reason, the relations between the two countries are carefully followed by other actors. Moreover, the existing economic dependence between Russia and Germany shows the fact that the relations are of a strategic nature.

In the study, Russian-German relations after the Cold War are approached in various aspects. In this context, the impact of Russian-German relations on the European balance of powers was specifically mentioned. The strategic dimensions of the relations between the two countries were examined in detail. The study consists of four main sections, apart from the introduction and conclusion. The first part focuses on the development of post-Cold War Russian-German relations. In the second part, the direction of development of relations after Russia's annexation of Crimea is emphasized in detail. In the third part, Germany's position and attitude within the framework of the Russia-United States (USA) competition axis in the European continent is mentioned. In the last part, the possible effects of the Ukrainian conflict on the European balance of power and the international system are examined. In the conclusion section, a general evaluation and analysis was made on the subject.

1. The Development of Post-Cold War Russian-German Relations

Russian-German relations have been one of the main axes of European politics for three centuries. The two countries have had an alliance relationship several times in history. But they faced off in two major wars that left a lasting impression on the world (Trenin, 2018: 1). The victory of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) over Nazi Germany in the World War II initiated a new process in Europe. Within this framework, the USSR ensured its hegemony in divided Europe and raised its international status. The victory of the USSR in the Second World War has become one of the most important components of modern Russian identity. Germany, on the other hand, was disarmed, which paved the way for the emergence of a new German identity (Trenin, 2018).

During the Cold War, the relations between the USSR and the Federal Republic of Germany followed an up-and-down course. In the mid-1960s, the *Ostpolitik* approach implemented by Willy Brandt, who first served as Minister of Foreign Affairs (1966-1969) and then as Federal Chancellor, was the beginning of a new political process. Brandt's approach was also welcomed by the rulers of the USSR (Filitov, 2017: 123). *Ostpolitik* was a new foreign policy doctrine that characterized the eastern policies of the Federal Republic of Germany. Brandt not only developed an eastward approach, but also adopted a strategy of balancing the US hegemony that was so much felt on the continent. Moreover, the peaceful and relatively painless realization of German reunification in 1989-1990 was a result of the dynamics that emerged within the framework of *Ostpolitik* (Filitov, 2017: 136). Moscow's acquiescence to German unification has become a symbol of historic reconciliation 45 years after the bloodiest war in the history of the two countries (Trenin, 2018).

With the end of the Cold War, Russian-German relations have gained a new dimension. On December 6, 1991, Germany recognized the Russian Federation as the legal successor to the USSR. The legal basis for Russian-German relations was established by the Treaty of Good

Neighborliness, Partnership and Cooperation signed between the USSR and Germany on November 9, 1990, and by the joint statement of Russian President Boris Yeltsin (1991-1999) and German Chancellor Helmut Kohl. These two points have determined the basic principles of political relations between Russia and Germany (TASS, 2021). Since the early 1990s, contacts between the leaders of Russia and Germany have become regular. During this period, Yeltsin and Kohl conducted more than 20 interviews (TASS, 2021).

In this process, the German leadership sought to play the role of Moscow's guide in its attempts to integrate with Western societies and create a "Greater Europe" from the Atlantic to the Pacific. Germany has become Russia's most important trade and economic partner in the world. More than 6000 German companies entered the Russian market and gained a significant place. Cultural and human relations have reached unprecedented levels. The vast majority of the population of German origin living in Russia moved to Germany, thus creating a diaspora of millions of Russian-speaking people in the center of Europe. In this process, Russia ceased to be a threat in the eyes of the Germans. At the same time, in the eyes of most Russians, Germany became one of Russia's closest and most loyal friends. In a speech to the German Bundestag in September 2001, Russian President Vladimir Putin declared Russia's "European choice" (Trenin, 2018). Germany thus played a key role in determining this "European choice". The fact that Germany is the leading country of the European Union (EU) was important at this point. Germany was beginning to develop into a center of political gravity, not only in Europe but also internationally. Germany's post-Cold War gains changed Russia's view of the country.

After Gerhard Schröder (1998-2005) came to power in Germany, Russian-German relations began to experience their "golden period". During this period, certain changes in general German foreign policy were noticeable. Under Schröder, the *Bundeswehr* (German Armed Forces) has significantly expanded the numerical and geographical scope of its military deployments outside Germany. For the first time since 1945, Germany actively participated in a joint combat operation with its North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) allies in Kosovo. It also sent troops to the Balkans, Afghanistan, the Horn of Africa, Kuwait and sub-Saharan Africa (Overhaus, 2005: 28).

The relationship between Putin and Schröder turned into a personal friendship, thus creating a unique mechanism for the formation of Russian-German relations (Zagorskiy, 2005: 5). The relations between the two countries have brought about a series of interactions. First of all, the versatile structure of economic cooperation has been established. The "Petersburg Dialogue" platform, established on the initiative of Putin and Schröder, paved the way for the rapid development of trade, economic and political relations between the two countries. In addition, this platform has significantly affected the contacts of non-governmental organizations of the two countries. In April 2001, for the first time in history, the President of Russia and the Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany laid a joint wreath at the Piskarevsky memorial cemetery in St. Petersburg and at the Soviet military monument in the Tiergarten district of Berlin in September (Bagay, 2019: 360). These developments pointed to the transformation in relations and had a symbolic meaning. In his speech in German to the *Bundestag* (German Parliament) in September 2001, Russian President Putin stressed that "Germany is the most important economic partner of his country, one of its main investors and a key partner of the foreign policy dialogue" (Goncharenko, 2010).

The pace and dynamic of the development of Russian-German relations began to manifest itself in the international political atmosphere. In the process of the US invasion of Iraq, a temporary

“Paris-Berlin-Moscow axis” was formed. The support of France under Jacques Chirac and Russia under Putin was crucial in showing Schröder that Germany was not alone in rejecting the US policy of regime change towards Iraq (Brummer and Oppermann, 2016: 10). Through the “Paris-Berlin-Moscow axis”, multipolar discourse in international politics has opened up a space for itself and gained a conceptual content.

Since the early 2000s, energy cooperation between Russia and Germany has begun to acquire a strategic character. With the political support of Schröder and Putin, an agreement was reached to build a natural gas pipeline (Nord Stream) through the Baltic Sea. This project, which bypassed traditional transit countries, directly connected Russia and Germany. This agreement between the two major powers was causing great concern in many Eastern European countries, especially in Poland (Brummer and Oppermann, 2016).

With the inauguration of Angela Merkel (2005-2021), a new stage in Russian-German relations has begun. Initially, Merkel tried to keep her distance from Russia. Unlike her predecessor Schröder, Merkel did not hesitate to utter the shortcomings of Russian democracy (Goncharenko, 2010).

However, with the outbreak of the global economic and financial crisis, Merkel's attitude towards Russia has become more friendly. After Russia's attack on Georgia in 2008, Germany opposed the sanctions request of some EU countries. The then German Foreign Minister and current President Frank-Walter Steinmeier was involved in the settlement of the dispute as a mediator and established close contact with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov (TASS, 2021).

On the eve of his July 2010 meeting with Russian President Dmitry Medvedev (2008-2012) in Yekaterinburg, the Chancellor underlined that Russian-German relations “have been put on a new basis after the Cold War and today Germany has very close cooperation with Russia” (Goncharenko, 2010).

Post-Cold War Russian-German relations developed with a rising trend. In the development of relations, economy and energy cooperation have assumed the main catalytic function. In this context, mutual dependence has occurred between the two countries. This trend, which directly affects the European balance of power, entered a period of stagnation with Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014.

2. The Direction of Development of Relations After Russia's Annexation of Crimea

The Ukrainian question is of great importance for all sides of the modern European balance of power. The Ukrainian question is also one of the most difficult and painful problems in the history of Russia's self-realization. In this framework, it has an important historical background. Ukraine remained one of the most important security challenges in post-Cold War Europe.

In the context of the annexation of the strategic Crimean peninsula by Russia in 2014 and the aggravation of the Ukrainian conflict in this framework, relations between Russia and Germany have gotten worse. Merkel accused Russia of destabilizing the situation in Ukraine and spoke of the possibility of sanctions being imposed by the EU. Merkel also advocated the distancing of Russia from the G-8 platform (TASS, 2021). Germany has also cancelled planned bilateral events, including the 15th Round of interstate consultations and the 14th Meeting of the “Petersburg Dialogue” platform (TASS, 2021). After the EU sanctions against Russia, the

economic relations between Russia and Germany have undergone a fundamental change. For example, in 2014, the German economy's direct investments in Russia amounted to 713 million euros. In 2015, direct investments decreased by 2.8 times (Zaritskiy, 2016: 4). The German business community has generally displayed a negative attitude towards sanctions. However, Germany's political leadership was largely in favor of sanctions (Zaritskiy, 2016: 5). The German leadership "considered that Russia's actions in Ukraine undermined the European peace order that had existed since 1945 and violated the basic documents of the security system" (Trenin, 2018: 3).

However, Germany has strived to take an active part in political formats and processes aimed at resolving the Ukrainian crisis. During the celebrations of the 70th Anniversary of the World War II Allied landings in the Normandy region of France, a meeting of the leaders of Germany, France, Russia and Ukraine took place on 6 June 2014. At this meeting, the "Normandy format" was formed for the solution of the Ukrainian conflict. On September 5, 2014, in Minsk, the capital of Belarus, the Minsk protocol was signed between Russia, Ukraine and representatives of the separatist Donbas region with the aim of ending the conflict in eastern Ukraine with the mediation of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Germany played an active role in the signing of this protocol.

After 17 hours of negotiations in Minsk by the leaders of the countries participating in the Normandy format on 11-12 February 2015, the Package of Measures for the Implementation of the Minsk Agreements was adopted. As a result of the negotiations, a ceasefire was reached in the east of Ukraine (Kommersant, 2015). Germany, together with France, played an important role in the Minsk process to end the violence in eastern Ukraine and resolve the conflict. The Minsk Agreements theoretically served as a basis for resolving the situation in Donbas. These agreements largely reflected Russia's interests. In practice, Ukraine had little intention or opportunity to implement these agreements. The Ukrainian leadership was more confident in the support of the United States and in this context, it was not inclined to give a positive response to the attempts of Germany and France to solve the problem (Trenin, 2018: 3). Russia, on the other hand, found the suspension of the conflict more appropriate for its own interests. Moscow did not want the United States to be involved in the process. In this context, it leaned forward the initiatives of Germany and France.

With the launch of the Minsk process, political contacts between Russia and Germany have increased again. On 10 May 2015, Merkel paid an official visit to Moscow. During the meeting in Moscow, Putin and Merkel took a common stance on efforts to solve important international problems and improve bilateral relations. The parties agreed to intensify contacts within the framework of the Normandy format for the settlement of the Donbas conflict in eastern Ukraine (Ria, 2015). It was clear that Russia's bargaining attempts with the United States would be doomed to failure. Moscow should therefore have adopted a strategy of constructive cooperation with Germany within the framework of the Normandy format (Trenin, 2018: 8).

At the Putin-Merkel meeting held in Sochi on 18 May 2018, the parties negotiated the restoration of bilateral relations to the level of strategic partnership. However, in the light of the transformations in the international system, it was possible to observe that Russian-German relations developed on the axis of competition rather than partnership (Belov, 2018: 128). The German internal political order was witnessing new developments, and the components of this order differed in their view of Russia. The Greens have been calling for the continuation of sanctions on Russia. Liberals, on the other hand, were relatively timid. In this context, they

advocated the gradual easing of sanctions if the Minsk agreements were implemented. The pro-Russian Left Party, as well as the Alternative for Germany (AFD) Party, called for the sanctions to be lifted directly. In particular, the ultra-nationalist party AFD openly called for the recognition of Crimea as part of Russia (Belov, 2018). Russia was trying to play a role in German domestic politics through these parties.

In general terms, the process of restoration of Russian-German relations after 2018 has begun. In fact, Germany's prominence in the European balance of power was a decisive factor in this process. The election of Donald Trump as President of the United States greatly weakened the Trans-Atlantic relations. Russia did not hesitate to use this situation to its advantage and aimed to create a new strategic cooperation with Germany. Joint events that could not be held due to the Ukrainian crisis have been revived. The platform of the Petersburg Dialogue has once again begun to bring together the civil society organizations, the business world, bureaucrats and politicians of the two countries. The uncertainty in economic relations has been partially eliminated. In 2021, the construction of the Nord Stream -2 pipeline, which connects Russian natural gas directly to Germany, was completed. This pipeline basically had an economic framework. However, the United States was treating this project as a geopolitical challenge.

Germany's power and influence within the EU was not limited to the application of classical neo-realist instruments of power or structured means of power. By combining different power options, Germany has become the central axis of the policy-making process between the EU and Russia during the Ukraine conflict. It has thus shaped the discourse and content of the EU's policy towards Russia. The character of the EU's reaction reflected the general trend and character of German foreign policy. That is, Germany's approach represented a much more complex and nuanced *Machtpolitik*, representing different types of conceptual powers (Daehnhardt and Handl, 2018: 452).

3. Russia-United States Competition Axis in Europe and Germany's Position

With the end of the Cold War, many elements of the multipolar system began to manifest themselves in Europe. According to Mearsheimer, "The absence of war in Europe since 1945 has been the result of three factors: the bipolar distribution of military power in continental Europe, military equality between the United States and the USSR, and the reality of nuclear equilibrium." (Mearsheimer, 2013: 568-569). These factors have defined the limits of the balance-of-power system in Europe. The new conditions that emerged after the Cold War clearly changed the balance of power in Europe in Germany's favor. In this context, the reunification of Germany after the Cold War and the dominant position it has achieved within the EU have turned this country into the decisive actor of the multipolar international system.

During the Cold War, Germany set securing national security as its primary goal. In the context of the rivalry between the United States and the USSR, Germany was playing the role of the front line. Germany was aware of the situation it had fallen into after the World War II. Its main objective was to ensure its national security under conditions of limited sovereignty. Despite the end of the Cold War, the United States military presence in Germany has not ended. In 1994, the process of withdrawal of Russian troops from the territory of the former East Germany was completed. The United States, on the other hand, continued its military presence on German territory. Despite the American military presence, serious reservations from Germany's neighbors and allies have begun to arise. It was during this period that the concern that the geopolitical gap created by the collapse of the USSR, the Warsaw Pact and the Council for

Mutual Economic Assistance (COMECON) would be filled by the rising Germany emerged during this period (Sokolov, 2019: 45). With the power it had acquired and a host of opportunities, Germany had the potential to return to great power politics. This could make it especially difficult for the US and Britain to control Europe. For this reason, United States policymakers did not want German nationalism and a common European identity to come to the fore. In this context, the “United States and Britain prioritized the preservation of the balance of power in Europe and the stabilization of Germany.” (Mearsheimer, 2013: 614-615).

The Russian-German strategic cooperation that emerged towards the end of the 1990s was carefully monitored by the United States and Britain. The prestige and self-confidence that Germany had gained in Eastern and Central Europe paralleled the resurgence of Russia. The German-French-Russian axis that emerged in the 2003 Iraq War was a direct threat to American interests. In this process, the United States has made it its primary policy to ally with Central and Eastern European countries that see Germany and Russia as threats in the historical context. The inclusion of the former Eastern Bloc countries in NATO was not only about the Russian threat. It was also aimed at restricting Germany's geopolitical space. Undoubtedly, Germany determined its foreign policy towards the region with economic assumptions. But it was also clear that in the long run, this policy would produce a projection beyond economic expansion. Therefore, as for the United States, the position of Poland, which claims to be a regional power, was more special. Associations with Poland's historical memory began to form the basis of United States policy in Europe during this period. With the “Orange Revolution” carried out in Ukraine in 2004, it is possible to say that the United States, through NATO, has strengthened its position in the European balance of powers. Through these policies, the United States has tried to limit the expanse of both Russia and Germany.

Although the United States and Germany have very different views on bilateral relations, they were inclined to agree with other European allies on issues such as cooperation and support for NATO (Poushter and Castillo, 2019: 2). United States-German relations in the XXI century are generally described as a “fragile friendship” (Larres and Wittlinger, 2018: 152). Beginning under Schröder, Germany saw relations with the United States as part of its trans-Atlantic cooperation. With the transformation of threat perceptions about Russia, this has emerged as a concrete reality. The personal closeness between Putin and Schröder paved the way for the transformation of Russian-German relations into a strategic partnership. Of course, this strategic partnership was not just a reflection of personal desires. As already emphasized, Russian-German relations have undergone an economic, political and cultural transformation. Therefore, there was a suitable environment for a broad cooperation mechanism.

While Germany saw Russia as a counterweight to US hegemony, it also cared about Moscow as an important part of the European balance of powers. Russia, on the other hand, regarded the economic and political gains it achieved through Germany as an important output of its global-scale strategies. Merkel's inauguration has not changed this trend in practice. In fact, Merkel's Germany has begun to play the leadership of the “Trans-Atlantic world” not only in the European balance of powers, but also in international politics. Trump's “approach to making the United States a great power again” has led to the rationalization of this leadership process. In the process, Russia has sought to support Germany's leadership efforts in one way or another. Merkel, who saw the Ukrainian issue as a European issue, believed that it would not be beneficial to distance Russia from the continent. In this context, the German foreign policy elite did not want the United States and Britain to be engaged in the Ukrainian question in any way. With Britain's departure from the EU, Germany has sought to prove itself as the continent's

most powerful country. All these developments revealed that the allied relations between Germany and the United States were not at the same level as in the Cold War years. Different approaches between Trump and Merkel have exposed problems in the old Atlantic relationship (Dassu, 2017: 2).

Post-Cold War reunified Germany was “surrounded by weaker states that would have difficulty counterbalancing itself.” (Mearsheimer, 2013: 593). Therefore, it felt more confident and secure. In this context, since the beginning of the 2000s, peripheral countries such as Poland have become increasingly important in the European policy of the United States. The United States aimed to narrow the economic, cultural and political expansion of not only Russia but also Germany. The Ukrainian question has allowed this policy to be implemented. From 2019, the United States, through its key European allies (Britain and Poland), aimed to play a decisive role again in the balance of European powers over the Ukrainian issue.

4. The European Balance of Power in the Context of the Ukrainian Question

The development of international relations in Europe often involves a process of systemic change that is genetically linked, rather than structural. These successive processes of change reveal the content and conditions of the international system. In the background of the history of international relations, such systems of balance of power have manifested themselves, each of which is qualitatively different from the previous one and at the same time is a special version of the world order, such as Westphalian, Vienna, Versailles-Washington and Yalta-Potsdam. The distinctive features of these systems characterize a distinct order and environment.

The concept of balance of power basically encompasses preventing any state within the system from becoming stronger in a way that threatens the independence and security of others. The prevention mechanism in question is implemented through the creation of a counterbalance. All functional balance-of-power systems in the history of modern international relations have emerged mainly with the developments on the European continent. The development of the concept of balance of power was based on political theories formulated by European thought in the XVI-XVII centuries. Thinkers such as Nicolo Machiavelli and Thomas Hobbes contributed greatly to the formation of the concept of balance of power with their views on the nature of states. Later, the balance of power theory “became the widely accepted explanation for the conflicts and stability that arose in the international order, although subject only to empirical scrutiny” (Kim, 2013: 457).

With the collapse of the post-Cold War bipolar system, discussions of the system have once again become the central topic of international relations. Bipolarity “demonstrated an excellent correlation in this period with the equality of military power and deterrent nuclear weapons” (Mearsheimer, 2013: 583). After the Cold War, the number of actors with the potential to become great powers increased in the European balance of powers. In this context, Russia, Germany, France and Britain have been involved in great power politics on the continent. The United States, on the other hand, as an extra-continental great power, has come to the fore as the primary actor in this process. At the beginning of the XXI century, it is possible to say that China, another extra-continental power, took a proportionate place in European great power policies. The momentum of Russian-German relations towards the end of the 90s constituted the most prominent point of the new European balance of powers.

The territory of Ukraine has an importance in terms of both historical and current developments, which carries geopolitical elements in the formation of the European balance of powers. For

this reason, since 2014, it has been taking its place in the systemic transformation as a direct European issue. The dynamics and trends that occurred after Russia's attack on Ukraine on February 24, 2022 reveal the extent of this transformation. This also partially reveals the tendencies and realities of the multipolar international system. Russia's offensive and occupation is "a clear challenge to the global police role of the United States" (Winck, 2022). With this attitude, Russia shows that it is ready to break with the European balance of power system. Undoubtedly, this breakaway can be seen as a step that will accelerate the erosion of the European security architecture. This paves the way for China's participation in the European balance of powers over Russia. Moreover, China's existing economic ties with Russia inherently erode the power of Western sanctions (Winck, 2022).

Russia tested the international order when it annexed Crimea in 2014, but its attack on Ukraine is triggering the process of forming a new de facto border in Europe. Russia's invasion of Ukraine has had major implications outside Eastern Europe, from galloping inflation to the refugee crisis. But as the conflict continues, the existing world order is being shaken through new alliances and divisions (Winck, 2022). It is clear that Germany has a different perspective on relations with Russia than the United States and Britain. There are important reasons for this. First, there are strong challenges to the European security architecture. France largely shares the same concern. Second, there is economic interdependence between Germany and Russia. Germany is clearly dependent on Russian energy. The Russian economy, on the other hand, needs German investments and especially technological cooperation. In this context, Germany's attitude will significantly affect the course of the Ukrainian war. It will also shape the basic mechanisms, scope and direction of the European balance of power.

Conclusion

The end of the Cold War led to a gradual change in the status quo that existed in Europe. It is possible to say that the dynamics that make up the European balance of powers develop in a versatile perspective. With the gains it has achieved, Germany has taken a decisive position in the European balance of power. The development of post-Cold War Russian-German relations is a reflection of these new conditions. Russian President Yeltsin, taking the current realities carefully, evaluated the international policy processes with a largely American-centered perspective and tried to establish bilateral mechanisms within this framework. Unlike Yeltsin, Putin has prioritized a more Eurocentric political mechanism with the influence of the Russian established state order. The arguments, approaches, and strategies advanced in the Primakov doctrine have been used in the Kremlin's foreign policy steps. In this context, the Paris-Berlin-Moscow axis has formed the basis of a Eurocentric foreign policy strategy. Germany has become perhaps the most important actor in the implementation of this foreign policy.

For Germany, the situation is no different. The strategic, economic and cultural self-confidence it gained after the Cold War encouraged the German political elite to implement new models. Germany has turned the EU into an important tool and mechanism for the implementation of these models. In the post-Cold War era, NATO has become an effective tool for American foreign policy. Germany, on the other hand, considered the EU as an effective mechanism and tool. Thus, Germany was included in the economic and cultural framework of great power politics.

In the early 2000s, Russian-German relations developed into a comprehensive strategic partnership. Russia has tried to make maximum use of the opportunities created by the

multipolar transition period. In this context, relations with Germany have become increasingly important. Germany, on the other hand, saw Russia as a counterweight to reduce the influence of US hegemony. Under Merkel, Germany has taken strategic steps to consolidate its European leadership more openly.

The new challenges posed by the Ukrainian war directly affect the European balance of power. The Ukrainian conflict, which is a European issue, is turning into a global problem with the policies of the USA and Britain. In the name of trans-Atlantic solidarity, Germany is acting jointly with the United States. However, there are serious concerns about how long this solidarity will last. The interdependence that exists in Russian-German relations plays an important role in this process. Fundamental changes in the international system reveal the flexibility of alliances. In this context, it is inevitable that there will be divisions within the alliance.

References

Bagay, A. (2019). Rossiysko-germanskiye otnosheniya “posle Krima”: ot “Partnerstva dlya modernizatsiya” do degradatsiyi dialogovih formatov. *Vestnik SPbGU Mejdunarodniye Otnosheniya*, 12 (3), 357-376.

Belov, V. (2018). Aktualniye vizovi dlya Rossiysko-Germanskih otnosheniy. *Sovremennaya Evropa*, 3, 125-132.

Brummer, K. & Oppermann, K. (2016). Germany’s Foreign Policy after the End of the Cold War: “Becoming Normal?”. *Oxford Handbooks*, 1-27.

Daehnhardt, P. & Handl, V. (2018). Germany’s Eastern Challenge and the Russia-Ukraine Crisis: A New Ostpolitik in the Making?. *German Politics*, 27 (4), 445-459.

Dassu, M. (2017). Merkel and Trump: The Dangers Besetting a Weak Atlantic. *Aspen Initiative for Europe*, Accessed on 10.05.2022 from <https://aspenforeurope.org/2017/06/13/international-mission-to-the-us/>

Filitov, A. (2017). SSSR i “Novaya Vostochnaya Politika” FRG. *Vestnik MGIMO Universiteta*, 3 (54), 123-140.

Goncharenko, R. (2010). 20 let osoboy drujbi: Rossiya i Germaniya jmut na gaz. *Deutsche Welle*, accessed on 14.05.2022 from <https://www.dw.com/ru/a-6006313>

Kak menyalis rossiysko-germanskiye politicheskiye otnosheniya. (2021). TASS, accessed on 10.05.2022 from https://tass.ru/info/12170543?utm_source=google.ru&utm_medium=organic&utm_campaign=google.ru&utm_referrer=google.ru

Kim, W. (2013). Power Exchanges and Great Power War from Westphalia to Waterloo. Translated by Esra Diri, Ed. Esra Diri. *Key Texts in International Relations* (457-469), İstanbul: Röle Academic Publishing.

Larres. K & Wittlinger, R. (2018). A Fragile Friendship: German-American Relations in the Twenty-First Century. *German Politics*, 27 (2), 152-157.

Mearsheimer, J. (2013). Back to the Future: Instability in Europe After the Cold War. Translated by M. Polat Kalafatoğlu & Muhammet Aydın, Ed. Esra Diri. *Key Texts in International Relations* (567-619), İstanbul: Röle Academic Publishing.

Overhaus, M. (2005). German Foreign Policy and the Shadow of the Past. *The SAIS Review of International Affairs*, 25 (2), 27-41.

Putin i Merkel obsudili ukrajinskiy krizis i otnosheniya Rossiyii i FRG. (2015). *RIA*, accessed on 10.05.2022 from <https://ria.ru/20150510/1063757221.html>

Sokolov, A. (2019). Bezopasnosty Germaniyii i voennoye prisutstviye SSA v FRG: “Komfortnaya” okkupatsiya ili soyuznicheskaya solidarnosty?. *Mejdunarodnaya Analitika*, 1, 41-51.

Trenin, D. (2018). *Rossiya i Germaniya: ot Otchujdeniya k Novomu Sosedstvu*. Moskova: Moskovskiy Chentr Karnegi.

V Minske dogovorilis o prekrasheniyii ognya na Ukraine. (2015). *Kommersant*, accessed on 06.05.2022 from <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/2665174>

Winck, B. (2022). The Russian-Ukraine conflict could shake up the global balance of power in 3 big ways. *Business Insider*, accessed on 10.05.2022 from <https://www.businessinsider.com/russia-ukraine-global-power-balance-shakeup-economist-intelligence-unit-outlook-2022-3>

Zagorskiy, A. (2005). Rossiya i Germaniya: preemstvennosty i peremeni. *Russie.Cei.Visions*, 6, 2-17.

Zaritskiy, B. (2016). Sovremenniye problemi otnosheniy mejdu Rossiyey i Germaniyey. *Mirovoye i Natsiyonalnoye Hozaystvo*, 3 (38), 1-6.