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THE EASTERN AND SOUTHEASTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES IN THE PRE-ELECTION PROGRAMS OF THE KEY GERMAN PARTIES 2017

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The article considers the positions of six main political parties of Germany: CDU/CSU, SPD, FDP, Alliance 90 / The Greens, Left Party, AfD concerning German policy in Eastern and Southeastern Europe declared in their pre-election programs before the German Bundestag elections on 24 September 2017. A special attention is paid to their vision of Germany's further relations with Russia and Turkey, as well as perspectives for a new EU enlargement in the East and Southeast directions. Based on a comparison of the contents of the pre-election programs in 2013 and 2017 the most important changes in the positions of all six parties regarding German interests and foreign policy priorities in the region are identified and characterized.

Key words: German main political parties; pre-election programs; German foreign policy; Eastern and Southeastern Europe; Russia; Turkey; Enlargement of the European Union; Ukraine; Western Balkans countries; migration and visa policy.

ГОСУДАРСТВА ВОСТОЧНОЙ И ЮГО-ВОСТОЧНОЙ ЕВРОПЫ В ПРЕДВЫБОРНЫХ ПРОГРАММАХ ВЕДУЩИХ ПАРТИЙ ФРГ 2017 г.

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Рассмотрены позиции шести основных политических партий Германии – ХДС/ХСС, СДПГ, СвДП, «Союз-90 – Зеленые», партия левых, «Альтернатива для Германии» – в отношении германской политики в Восточной и Юго-Восточной Европе, изложенные в предвыборных программах накануне выборов в бундестаг 24 сентября 2017 г. Особое внимание уделено их видению дальнейших отношений Германии с Россией и Турцией, а также перспектив нового расширения ЕС в восточном и юго-восточном направлениях. На основе сопоставления содержания предвыборных программ 2013 и 2017 гг. выявлены и охарактеризованы наиболее важные изменения в позициях всех шести партий относительно германских интересов и внешнеполитических приоритетов в регионе.

Ключевые слова: ведущие политические партии ФРГ; предвыборные программы; внешняя политика Германии; Восточная и Юго-Восточная Европа; Россия; Турция; расширение Европейского союза; Украина; западнобалканские государства; миграционная и визовая политика.

The pre-election programs of six main political parties of Germany in 2017 are the most important documents, which study makes it possible to identify some key changes in evaluation of the geopolitical si-

tuation in the world by the representatives of the German political elite occurred during four years after the previous elections to the Bundestag in 2013. Based on this it is especially important to reveal these changes

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in their vision of policy towards such important political-geographical region for Germany and the entire EU as the Eastern and Southeastern Europe.

The results of such study will allow not only determining some permanent ideas and stereotypes, which were formed among the German political leadership after the geopolitical shifts in the region after 2014, but also predicting a configuration of the "Eastern Policy" of the next German government. After the EU enlargements in 2004, 2007 and 2013 its focus shifted to Eastern Europe and on the Balkans, where the eastern and southern borders of the union are currently passing. It was there that the Germany's foreign policy activity intersected with the interests of Russia and Turkey, each of them seeks to strengthen its influence in this region.

The most important is a detailed study of the content of the foreign policy chapters in the programs of the Christian Democratic Union / Christian Social Union (CDU/CSU) and the Social Democratic Party (SPD), which are forming a ruling coalition since 2009 and are able to continue a mutual government of Germany after the elections on 24 September 2017.

It is also interesting to analyse changes in the programs of the Free Democratic Party (FDP) and the Alliance 90 / The Greens, which are able to enter the ruling coalition as junior partners of two main parties under some certain conditions. In addition, a vision of the modern world and a place of Germany in the global economy and politics by the voters of Liberals and Greens, who are generally well educated, socially active, enough young and living in large or university cities, could not be ignored by the representatives of the current German political elite.

Approaches presented by the Left Party and the Alternative for Germany (AfD) suggest left (pacifist) and right (isolationist) alternatives to the German foreign policy tradition formed during the early "Bonn Republic", and namely in the first decades after formation of the FRG. Their study seems also expedient concerning that extreme left and extreme right appeals could attract 15–17 % of German voters, who are fully untrusted the federal government and its methods in national and foreign policies. In the poorer eastern part of Germany an aggregate level of support for these two "protest" parties reaches 30 % or more, and it indicates that many serious social problems have not been solved in the eastern lands even 27 years after the German unification.

The governmental program of the ruling **CDU/CSU** chaired by Chancellor Angela Merkel "For Germany, where we live well and happily" for 2017–2021 contained the most detailed chapter on foreign policy. This part of the key document of the Christian Democrats was opened with a paragraph, which called "A territorial integrity of Ukraine put under question as a result of Russian aggression" directly next to Germany itself

among other challenges and threats to the security of the world. Given all these risks as well as an uncertainty in the further actions of the US-President Donald Trump's administration, the Europeans were appealed to take responsibility for their fate in their own hands, to feel a geostrategic responsibility for peace and freedom, and to help resolve conflicts in neighbouring regions. As an example of this approach, the EU's involvement into solution of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict was named [1, p. 55–56].

About Russia in the new CDU/CSU program was said again in the context of its conflict with Ukraine. The paragraph on Germany's role in ensuring international security called on Russia to adhere to the 2015 Minsk Agreements and continue the dialogue [1, p. 64]. Another more formal mention was concerned German immigrants from Russia and other countries who merged into a modern, diverse German society [1, p. 69].

So insignificant presence of Russia has become one of the most important features of the new program document of the Christian Democrats, who since Chancellor Helmut Kohl's government viewed the German-Russian strategic partnership as an obvious success of its flexible and pragmatic policy towards Russia. In the 2013 program, a separate paragraph "Good neighbourly relations with Russia" was devoted to relations with this country. The Chancellor Angela Merkel's party declared then a readiness to develop bilateral cooperation, although made a reservation that its depth and intensity would be determined by adherence of the Russian government to international standards in the sphere of building a rule-of-law state and maintaining democracy. The Christian Democrats intended to support a new Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between Russia and the EU, which has to replace the PCA, 1994. They promised to strengthen cooperation with Russia in foreign and security policy, including the Baltic Sea region, and also to deepen cooperation with civic associations and continue liberalizing visa laws for Russian entrepreneurs, scientists and students [2, p. 74–75].

An exclusion of Russia from Germany's foreign policy priorities in the new CDU/CSU program was a result of substantial deterioration in bilateral relations after the crisis in Ukraine in late 2013 and early 2014. Nevertheless, the ruling party refrained from mentioning Russia as a potential enemy of Germany declaring only a negative assessment of its actions against Ukraine and appealing to continue a dialogue within the framework of the Minsk agreements. Such balanced approach enabled the next Angela Merkel's government to solve several important foreign policy tasks. Firstly, to retain a role of a key "constructive" speaker in relations with Russia, especially against the background of the new American sanctions. Secondly, to support the Minsk process initiated by Germany and France for a peaceful solution in Ukraine. Thirdly, to

avoid a further curtailment of trade and economic relations with Russia threatened some German companies with the final loss of one of the important markets. Russia's share in the total volume of German exports decreased almost twice – from 3.29 % in 2013 to 1.79 % in 2016, when this country took only 16th place among buyers of German goods and services [3, p. 32; 4, p. 2].

The program stressed once again that a Turkey's membership in the EU is impossible, since this country did not fulfill the conditions necessary for admission. At the same time, the Christian Democrats refrained also from direct criticizing of the President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's policy expressing only a great concern about development of the situation with human rights in this country, and in particular with freedom of speech. The main ruling party could not do without close interaction with Turkey in the sphere of security [1, p. 58]. This is concerned particularly a settlement of the refugees problem, and this circumstance determined an obvious striving of the CDU/CSU not to aggravate a conflict with the Turkish government.

The migration crisis in Europe and inside Germany in 2015–2016, which led almost the Chancellor Angela Merkel's party to defeat in these elections, predetermined a denial of Christian Democrats even from those obligations regarding a possible membership in the EU that they gave themselves to some countries four years back. The party program of 2013 contained a mention on prospect of including the Western Balkans countries into the EU after fulfilling of all necessary requirements [2, p. 73]. However, in 2017, the ruling party pointed only that Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia were declared as "safe countries of origin", and it would reduce significantly a number of asylum-seekers. It was also stated the same principle should be applied to Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia [1, p. 62]. Thus, the CDU/CSU indicated clearly, where the EU's secure borders pass, as well as that the Union needs currently to address internal problems, rather than accept new members. A possible expansion to the East, as well as the EU Eastern Partnership program were not mentioned either in 2013, or in 2017.

In the governmental program of the ruling **SPD** "It's time for greater justice: to secure the future, to strengthen Europe", which could safe a position of foreign minister retained by the SPD since 2013 according to the party quota if the present great coalition continued. This circumstance determined not only more moderate and balanced party's rhetoric towards Russia, but also its considerable attention to all challenges for Germany's foreign policy, including a region of Eastern and Southeastern Europe.

The preamble of the program said Europe, the United States, Russia and China share a common responsibility for peace in the world and for fighting against international terrorism [5, p. 4]. However, it was said

further about a need to support the Council of Europe realized very important work towards Russia and Turkey, as well as about an importance of joint efforts with the United States, regardless of their leadership, concerning an uncertainty in the world and topical challenges. Among them were named situations in Syria, Iraq, Libya, Ukraine, relations with Russia, fighting against international terrorism, formation of the future global economic and trade order. At the same time, like their partners in the ruling coalition – the Christian Democrats, the Social Democrats called for understanding that security and peace will depend more on Europeans themselves [5, p. 83–84].

Relations with Russia were considered at the beginning of the paragraph "The policy of detente, dialogue and clear principles as a sign of strength". It was stated that Germany's relations with Russia were burdened by the actions of the Russian government in the east of Ukraine as well as by the violation of international law because of the Crimea annexation, which led to violation of the basic principles of the European order and security. At the same time, the Social Democrats declared that peace and security in Europe are possible only with the participation of Russia. It requires de-escalation, returning to political dialogue and a differentiated application of the sanctions mechanism. The Social Democrats admitted that a process of political settlement regarding Eastern Ukraine realized by their leaders, and namely foreign ministers Frank-Walter Steinmeier (2013–2017) and Sigmar Gabriel (since 2017) could successfully prevent an outbreak of the hot war, but stalled, however the SPD continues to support it. The program stressed that a significant progress in the implementation of the Minsk Agreements would lead to a gradual lifting of sanctions against Russia, and a policy of detente, which is capable to provide a long-term security architecture for entire Europe, should be strengthened further [5, p. 84].

It is characteristic, that the Social Democrats did not repeat in the new program a point from 2013 about "partnership for modernization" in the framework of cooperation with Russia, which provided for not only strengthening of economic ties, but for a political and public dialogue, that could be considered by the present Russian government as an interference in internal affairs. In view of the Donald Trump's presidency, a German mediation within the dialogue between Russia and the USA, promised by the SPD in 2013, became also impossible [6, p. 112–113].

Despite a migration crisis, the Social Democrats declared again the Western Balkans countries could eventually become members of the EU and supported their rapprochement with the union stressing a special attention would be paid to development of democracy and the rule of law in these countries. The SPD condemned strongly massive human rights violations in

Turkey, which contradicted fundamentally a system of European values, and it meant that neither Turkey nor the EU were ready for membership in the near future. The Social Democrats called for support of the democratic forces in Turkey, and also promised to stop negotiations on its accession to the union in case of a death penalty restoration abolished in this country in 2002 within a preparation for the EU membership. The SPD was going to prevent any agitation and voting in Germany on the death penalty return in Turkey in event of a referendum initiated by the Turkish government [5, p. 77–78]. In the 2013 program, this party was ready to support the EU membership not only for the Western Balkans countries, but also for Turkey [6, p. 110]. This change indicated first a growing mistrust of the main SPD voters, who are residents of large industrial cities, to all Middle East countries as a potential source of problems. The German Social Democrats took into account an example of the left parties from neighbouring France, who lost a significant part of the traditional workers' voters due to speculation by the ultra-rights on this problematic topic. The SPD leaders also considered a split among the German voters of Turkish origin, who leaned towards the Social Democrats. Their significant part rejected categorically the President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's policy.

The pre-election program "Think New Way" of the **FDP**, which could be a participant of the ruling coalition in case of a significant weakening of the SPD, contained a very detailed foreign policy agenda. It was explained by the fact, that in the coalition governments with participation of the FDP in 1969–1998 and 2009–2013 this party received traditionally a position of the Minister of Foreign Affairs and therefore considered a foreign policy as a sphere of its responsibility.

The paragraph "A clear position towards Russia" contained a demand to the Russian government to put immediately an end to the illegal occupation of the Crimea and the war in Eastern Ukraine. A growing suppression of the opposition and civil society in Russia was also perceived with a great anxiety and condemned. In case of new military escalation, the Free Democrats promised to tighten the sanctions against Russia. They could be also mitigated or canceled in event of significant changes in the Russian government, which could mean, first, a rejection of the policy of President Vladimir Putin, called as interventionist one. At the same time, the Free Democrats did not refuse a dialogue with Russia within the framework of the OSCE, the Russia – NATO Council, and between civil societies of both countries, and in the future, it should lead to resumption of a reliable partnership with Russia. The FDP demanded also a greater cooperation with the EU's eastern neighbours, and namely Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia, signed association agreements within the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy, aiming to support democratic

development and economic transformations in these countries. The Free Democrats endorsed an expansion of the military presence at the forefront of the NATO, and namely in Poland and the Baltic region in the framework of strengthening of the Germany's responsibility for regional security as a European power ("europäische Mittelmacht") [7, p. 54–56].

The party proposed also to stop negotiations on the Turkey's accession to the EU because of the President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's policy, which did not correspond to the Copenhagen criteria regarding a functioning of the rule of law. However, the Free Democrats called for a continued cooperation with Turkey within the NATO and in those spheres, where both countries had joint interests. It was stressed the EU is in a process of searching for a model with different levels of integration, and it would offer new forms of inclusion into the pan-European structures in the future [7, p. 56]. This approach was of interest not only for Turkey, but also for the Eastern European countries, aspiring into the EU, primarily Ukraine.

In this regard, it is very characteristic, that in comparison with the 2013 program, the Free Democrats did not speak out in 2017 about perspectives for the EU membership both Ukraine and the Western Balkans countries even in the long term, if they fulfill all requirements [8, p. 81]. Against the background of the Brexit and difficult discussions about a future of the union, any promises to include new countries within could alienate a main group of party's voters, which included a middle class with relatively high incomes. For the same reason, the party abandoned its previous commitment to seek an abolition of visas for citizens of Russia, Turkey and other EU neighbours in the east and south in case if all necessary requirements are met. A disappearance of mention on Belarus from the program of 2017 is also very important. Four years ago, the FDP supported the EU sanctions and stated a need to strengthen cooperation with the civil society of Belarus [8, p. 88]. This change was primarily due to significant and internationally recognized efforts of the Belarusian government to resolve the conflict in Ukraine and ensure peace and stability in the whole Eastern Europe. In addition, Minister of Foreign Affairs Guido Westerwelle (2009–2013), who was responsible for the foreign policy party's agenda and evaluated critically the Belarusian policy, left the federal government and leadership of the FDP after its defeat in the 2013 elections.

The pre-election program of *the Alliance 90 / The Greens* "The future is made of courage" contained the harshest criticism of the changes, which have occurred in political development of Russia and Turkey after 2013. It is very typical for this party, which has paid traditionally the most attention to observance of human rights and civil liberties in the world. Describing a current situation the Greens pointed that many

states share responsibility for emergence of crises and conflicts. First among them was named Russia, which contributed to a significant increase in international tension because of its illegal annexation of the Crimea, military operations in Eastern Ukraine and brutal military intervention into the Syrian conflict on the side of Bashar al-Assad [9, p. 66].

The Russia's policy under President Vladimir Putin characterized as aggressive and great power was named again the first among international challenges, which changed fundamentally framework conditions for ensuring of the EU security, just in the first paragraph of the chapter devoted to the union as a capable actor of world politics. The Greens took new problems for security of the Eastern Europe countries very seriously and declared that the solution of the conflict in Ukraine could be only political and diplomatic. Therefore, the party supported the Minsk process, but also the targeted EU sanctions against Russia, which were assessed as an effective means of foreign policy [9, p. 75].

The Greens stated mass violations of human rights in Russia, China, Egypt, Turkey, and proposed to introduce a position of referent in all German embassies abroad in this sphere, which should be a permanent topic for bilateral governmental negotiations [9, p. 80]. In addition, it was proposed to create a pan-European news and educational channel with broadcasting in all European languages, especially in Russian and Turkish [9, p. 71]. In the context of increasing NATO effectiveness, the Greens recognized also an importance of dialogue within the framework of the Russia – NATO Council [9, p. 79–80].

The party promised again to integrate all Western Balkans countries into the EU without changing their borders, and to intensify cooperation with public organizations in this region as many as possible. The Greens declared a support to the democratic forces in Turkey and condemned both the national and foreign policies of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, speaking at the same time for a peaceful and political decision on the future of the Kurds, stopping an export of German weapons to Turkey, reception of political repression victims, abolishing visas for the Turkish citizens. In the opinion of the Greens, the future of the EU – Turkey customs union, like a membership negotiations, should depend directly on situation with democracy and the rule of law in this country [9, p. 75–77].

The tough criticism towards Russia and Turkey before the 2017 elections contrasted markedly with position of this party in 2013, which included criticism, but promises. Four years ago, the Greens expressed a solidarity with the Russian feminist punk group "Pussy Riot", which was named among human rights activists in China, Iran and Arabian countries. The party declared also a Russian and Chinese support for Bashar al-Assad due to blocking by these two countries all resolutions with strict requirements to the Syrian

government in the UN Security Council [10, p. 259–260, 315–316]. However, in 2013 the Greens called to create a new multilateral security architecture with the NATO members, Russia and all Eastern European countries, and promised to achieve a revision of the EU visa policy in order to abolish visas for the citizens of Russia, Turkey, Kosovo and participants of the Eastern Partnership. The support for the EU membership was promised in 2013 not only to the Western Balkans countries, but also to Turkey, if the situation with democracy and human rights would be improved [10, p. 284–285, 314]. Based on this, it could be stated the values of the Greens' leadership and voters have contrasted increasingly with political and ideological shifts not only in Russia and Turkey, but also in many European countries, as well as in the United States, where isolationist and even xenophobic sentiments have intensified.

The pre-election program of *the Left Party* "Social. Fair. Peaceful. For all. The future for which we fight" contained traditionally the most radical criticism to all actions of the federal government and called for a complete reconsideration of the Germany's foreign policy priorities. Speaking for a dissolution of the NATO and the EU reform on socialist principles, the Lefts condemned a movement of troops from the EU and NATO to the Russia's borders, the federal government's policy of rearmament, confrontation and sanctions against Russia, admission of the new NATO members, deployment of the German soldiers in Eastern Europe. The party opposed also military maneuvers and plans to deploy weapons systems on the western borders of Russia. The Lefts called a growing confrontation between the NATO members, and namely the US and Russia, expansion of the NATO's sphere of influence to its western borders, including of new countries like Georgia, Ukraine or Macedonia into the alliance, which will strengthen further tension in relations with Russia, as a threat to peace in Europe. Among other menaces, the party called a "hot war" in the center of Europe, and namely in Ukraine, which replaced the "cold war", exchange of sanctions and counter-sanctions between Russia and the EU, verbal and military escalation on both sides. The Lefts advocated also an elimination of whole US and NATO infrastructure in Germany, which is used to deploy against Russia and realize a destructive policy of regime change in general as well as for military interventions [11, p. 8, 12, 93, 100–101].

Like in 2013, the party supported a creation of collective security system with participation of Russia, which goal should be a disarmament [11, p. 101; 12, p. 56]. The radical anti-war position of the Lefts determined their denial of the "war on terror" which Russia leads in Syria, together with the wars of the US and the NATO with participation of Germany in Afghanistan and Iraq [11, p. 94].

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan was described as a despot. The Lefts opposed an intensifi-

cation of membership negotiations with the authoritarian regime of Turkey, supported democracy in this country, and demanded an immediate stopping of arms exports and deployment of military factories. They proposed to make every effort for impact on President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, for example, in framework of discussion about customs union expansion between the EU and Turkey. The Lefts supported also a rejection of assistance for Turkey in resolving of the problem of refugees fleeing to Europe [11, p. 8, 12, 100, 107, 116].

The AfD presented the shortest pre-election program outlining an isolationist vision of the German foreign policy. The party created four years ago called again for abandoning of the euro and stopping assistance to banks of other EU members [13, p. 14–15; 14]. Detente in relations with Russia was called a prerequisite for lasting peace in Europe. The AfD believed that it is in the German interests to include Russia into a common security structure without neglecting the interests of Germany and its allies. The party advocated a termination of the sanctions policy and deepening of economic cooperation with Russia. At the same time, the AfD was the only German party supported the US demand voiced during many years and re-voiced by the Donald Trump's administration about a fair distribution of expenses within the NATO. The party supported also a strengthening of European influence in the alliance and a significant reinforcement of the Bundeswehr including a restoration of compulsory military service. The program stated Turkey does not belong to Europe in cultural terms, and the latest political events in this country showed that Turkey has moved away from Europe and the Western community of values even further. The party rejected a Turkey's accession to the EU and called for an immediate cessation of all membership negotiations. The AfD proposed also to stop the Turkey's membership in the NATO, to withdraw the Bundeswehr units from Incirlik and stop immediately all direct and indirect payments to Turkey under international, multilateral and bilateral agreements. In the chapter on migration, the party opposed the Turkey's membership in the EU once again as well as any easing of visa policies and privileges for its citizens in Germany including related to health insurance. The AfD proposed to break the associated agreement signed between the EEC and Turkey in 1963, as well as the German – Turkish agreement on social insurance signed in 1964 [13, p. 18–19, 29, 62]. All these appeals are intended for the part of the German voters, which do not represent any features of the current Turkey's policy, but are dissatisfied with the Turkish community in Germany having more than 3 million people and quite noticeable in all major German cities.

In conclusion, it is necessary to highlight the following most important aspects and characteristics of the key German parties' positions towards the eastern

and southern neighbours of the EU, which are reflected in their pre-election programs:

1. None of them mentioned Belarus in 2017, and it is rather a positive circumstance, because unlike Russia, Turkey or Ukraine, an internal political situation as well as the Belarusian foreign policy does not create for Germany any acute and relevant issues, which need prompt responses or decisions. In the future, it will strengthen a key role of Belarus as a donor of stability in Eastern Europe and a reliable partner for Germany in ensuring stability on the eastern borders of the EU.

2. All four parties: CDU/CSU, SPD, FDP, Alliance 90/The Greens, which are able to join a next governmental coalition, advocated a continuation of the deterrence strategy against Russia, which policy was characterized as interventionist and violating the international law. An improvement of the German – Russian relations was tied with a fulfillment of the EU requirements by the Russian government, and it would allow a resumption of the bilateral dialogue, which necessity and importance were declared by all these parties. Positions of the Left Party and the AfD towards Russia were distinguished by greater restraint and tolerance. However this approach was caused primarily by their own ideological principles, pacifist and isolationist respectively, which were oriented on specific groups of the German voters, but not by their compliance to recognize some Russia's special geopolitical interests in Eastern and Southeastern Europe.

3. Perspectives of inclusion of the countries from the region into the EU as well as an evaluation of the Eastern Partnership effectiveness were not mentioned by any of the parties. They took into account an untimeliness of discussion on this topic in the context of heated disputes in Germany and other EU members about efficiency of the political and legal mechanism, and economic and migration policy of the union on the background of the Brexit and mobilization of the Eurosceptic parties in all countries. For the same reason, the CDU/CSU and the FDP preferred not to return to their 2013 statement on a possible inclusion of the Western Balkans countries into the EU, while the SPD and the Greens pointed to a need for these countries to fulfill a number of important political conditions.

4. A concentration of power in the hands of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan after a military coup attempt in Turkey in July 2016 allowed all German parties to deny a right of this country to apply for the EU membership in the near future reflecting a negative attitude of the German voters' majority to such prospect. Nevertheless, an interest of the Chancellor Angela Merkel's party in further cooperation with the Turkish government in the security sphere led to a more restrained position of the CDU/CSU concerning the Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's policy. The Christian Democrats preferred to apply the same flexible situational approach to Turkey as an important international

partner, which Germany used in the 1990s and early 2000s for building relations with Russia.

5. The military and political conflicts on the EU eastern borders, like the migration crisis on the southern borders of the union, renewed a question of the Germany's further policy towards the Eastern and Southeastern European countries. On the eve of the 2013 elections, this direction of the German foreign policy was mentioned only in the most general terms in election programs, but in 2017, each party offered its own vision of the German foreign policy priorities in this region. Such interest was also very characteristic for the first half of the 1990s, when a dangerous and unpredictable situation on the territory of the former USSR and Yugoslavia increased an importance of East-

ern and Southeastern Europe for the German foreign policy.

In general, a content of the key German parties' pre-election programs 2017 reflects fully some important changes, which have occurred after 2013 in the strategic vision of the Germany's interests and foreign policy objectives in the region by the German political elite. These renewed priorities will be enshrined in a new coalition agreement, which together with "The White Paper 2016 on the Security Policy and the Bundeswehr Future" ("Weissbuch 2016 zur Sicherheitspolitik und zur Zukunft der Bundeswehr") approved on 13 July 2016 will determine a German foreign policy line in Eastern and Southeastern Europe for the next four years.

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