
ИСТОРИЯ МЕЖДУНАРОДНЫХ ОТНОШЕНИЙ И ВНЕШНЯЯ ПОЛИТИКА

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RUSSIA, UKRAINE, BELARUS IN THE PROGRAM DOCUMENTS OF THE THREE GOVERNMENTS OF ANGELA MERKEL (2005–2017)

V. V. FROLTSOV^a

^a*Belarusian State University, 4 Niezaliežnasci Avenue, Minsk 220030, Belarus*

The article traces the evolution of assessments of the role of Russia, Ukraine and Belarus as the most important partners of Germany in Eastern Europe in the system of the regional priorities of the German foreign policy basing on the content of the program documents of the three Angela Merkel's governments: 2005, 2009 and 2013 Coalition Agreements and 2006 and 2016 "White Papers on German security policy and the future of the Bundeswehr". As a result, the most significant changes in the vision of the German interests in Eastern Europe, which occurred during Angela Merkel's chancellorship and can exert a decisive influence on the future German foreign policy, were revealed.

Key words: Angela Merkel's governments; German foreign policy; Coalition Agreements; White Papers on German security policy and the future of the Bundeswehr; Eastern Europe; Russia; Ukraine; Belarus; Enlargement of the European Union.

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Автор:

Владислав Валерьевич Фрольцов – доктор исторических наук, доцент; профессор кафедры международных отношений факультета международных отношений.

Author:

Vladislav V. Froltsov, doctor of science (history), docent; professor at the department of international relations, faculty of international relations.
vlad_froltsov@rambler.ru

РОССИЯ, УКРАИНА, БЕЛАРУСЬ В ПРОГРАММНЫХ ДОКУМЕНТАХ ТРЕХ ПРАВИТЕЛЬСТВ А. МЕРКЕЛЬ (2005–2017)

В. В. ФРОЛЬЦОВ¹⁾

¹⁾Белорусский государственный университет, пр. Независимости, 4, 220030, г. Минск, Беларусь

Прослежена эволюция оценок роли России, Украины и Беларуси как важнейших партнеров Германии в Восточной Европе в системе региональных приоритетов внешней политики ФРГ исходя из содержания программных документов трех правительств А. Меркель: коалиционных соглашений (2005, 2009 и 2013 гг.), а также белых книг о политике безопасности и будущем бундесвера (2006 и 2016 гг.). В результате выявлены наиболее значимые изменения в видении германских интересов в Восточной Европе, которые произошли в период нахождения у власти канцлера А. Меркель и способны оказать определяющее влияние на дальнейшую внешнюю политику ФРГ.

Ключевые слова: правительства А. Меркель; внешняя политика Германии; коалиционные соглашения; белые книги о политике безопасности и будущем бундесвера; Восточная Европа; Россия; Украина; Беларусь; расширение Европейского союза.

The changes in assessments of the role of Russia, Ukraine and Belarus in Germany's foreign policy, which occurred in 2005–2017 and are reflected in the contents of the most important program documents of the three governments of Chancellor Angela Merkel, allow us to trace the evolution of the vision of Eastern Europe in the system of priorities in the German foreign policy. The analysis and systematization of these changes provide an opportunity to identify the strategic objectives of the German foreign policy towards this important region, as well as specific tasks in the building of bilateral relations with Russia, Ukraine and Belarus. The results of such study would be of interest to forecast the policy of the next German government regarding these three states, taking into account the fundamental geopolitical transformations in the region after the power shift in Ukraine and the annexation of Crimea by Russia in February – March 2014. They strengthened the importance of Eastern Europe for the foreign policy of Germany as an informal leader of the European Union.

It is necessary to mention the program documents, on which this research is based. These are the three Coalition Agreements 2005, 2009 and 2013, which contained the main principles and objectives of Germany's foreign policy, as well as two editions of the "White Papers on the German security policy and the future of the Bundeswehr" 2006 and 2016, which specified its tasks in various spheres of national security and military development. The content of these government documents also correlated closely with the provisions for the foreign policy of the Party Manifesto of the Christian-Democratic Union 2007, which is still a basic document that defines the ideological and political goals of the ruling Christian democrats as the most influential party of the present-day Germany.

The first German government, led by their leader Angela Merkel, which began to work in late November 2005, inherited from her predecessors, and namely the governments of Helmut Kohl (1991–1998) and

Gerhard Schroeder (1998–2005), a holistic vision of the Post-Soviet area as a united political-geographical region with Russia in its center. The Russian Federation as a geopolitical successor of the Soviet Union was seen as Germany's strategic partner for ensuring security and stability in Eastern Europe. The German policy towards all other Post-Soviet countries, including Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, corresponded to the German interests in Russia, the growing economy and the reviving domestic market of which were of obvious interest for Germany's companies in the early XXI century. Thus, Germany's consent to approve the membership of the three Baltic countries in NATO was given only after President Vladimir Putin said in September 2001 that Russia admitted such expansion to the East to be a mistake, but was not intended to hinder it.

However, the geopolitical changes in the region forced the new German government to make some adjustments to its previous holistic vision. The EU and NATO expansion in 2004 made the border with Belarus, Russia and Ukraine an external frontier of the "Greater Europe" as a geopolitical unity and shaped the present-day understanding of Eastern Europe as a region beyond the new EU eastern borders. It required that Angela Merkel's government formulate new principles for the future relations with the eastern neighbors, which were to ensure stability in the region, to expand economic and trade cooperation with all Eastern European countries, which was beneficial for German producers of high-tech goods and services, and to take into account their increasingly diverging interests. In this regard, an obvious challenge for the German foreign policy was President Victor Yushchenko's rise to power in Ukraine. He declared his readiness to strengthen the course towards Europe, including the future membership in the EU and NATO. The German-Belarusian relations did not require such revision and developed steadily, especially in the economic sphere, but were complicated by critical assessment of some aspects of the political development of Belarus

by the German government. Generally, it was in 2005 when the German government presented a program document that contained the most detailed and expanded vision of the future German policy towards all these three countries.

The first Coalition Agreement "Together for Germany – with Courage and Humanity" ("Gemeinsam für Deutschland – mit Mut und Menschlichkeit") was signed on 11 November 2005 and became a basis for the formation of the first government of Angela Merkel, which consisted of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) / the Christian Social Union (CSU) and the Social Democratic Party (SPD) representatives. The tasks of the German policy towards Russia, Ukraine and Belarus were mentioned in the paragraph "Stability, Security and Cooperation in Europe and the World", which was devoted to foreign policy issues. The partners within the ruling coalition stressed a need to maintain a strategic partnership with Russia in the framework of bilateral relations and in the process of its cooperation with the European Union, and promised also to strengthen a support for the process of Russia's modernization in the political, economic and public spheres. The authors of the document noted a special interest of Germany for a success of the complex process of building a stable democracy in Russia, development of bilateral trade and long-term cooperation in the energy area. At the same time, the new government of Germany stressed that it should not lead to unilateral dependence from supply of hydrocarbon raw materials from Russia [1, p. 134]. It reflected a desire of all ruling parties' leaders to distance themselves from the policy of former Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder. On the eve of the Bundestag elections on 18 September 2005, he was accused of lobbying a German-Russian project of offshore natural gas pipeline construction from Vyborg in Russia and to Greifswald in Germany along the Baltic Sea bottom, operated by the Nord Stream AG (the North European Gas Pipeline Company in 2005–2006). The former Chancellor has been elected Chair of its Shareholders' Committee after leaving the German policy and retains this position until now [2, p. 11, 285].

Russia was also considered to be an important partner in the fighting against regional and global risks and threats, including international terrorism, as well as in cooperation with its immediate neighbors. Such approach testified to Germany's desire to take into account the Russian interests in the entire Post-Soviet area, and the first Angela Merkel's government emphasized this explicitly in this program document. It also promised to work together with other EU members to find the best political solution to the conflict in Chechnya. With that, the development of relations with Russia should not contradict a spirit of friendship and trust in cooperation with mutual neighbors of both countries. Germany made a promise to build relations with the states of Eastern Europe, as well as South Caucasus

and Central Asia, based on common values. A special attention in the document was paid to relations with Ukraine and Belarus. The goal of the Germany's policy towards the former was a further full support for the process of political and economic reforms. The government of Angela Merkel supported implementation of the EU decision on 21 February 2005 on deepening and strengthening relations with Ukraine, which should find its own place in Europe. Any prospects of its EU membership were not mentioned. Together with the European partners, Germany expressed its adherence to strengthening democracy, rule of law and human rights in the Republic of Belarus [1, p. 134].

The next program document, which was promulgated by the government of Angela Merkel on 25 October 2006, was *White Paper 2006 on German security policy and the future of the Bundeswehr* ("Weißbuch 2006 zur Sicherheitspolitik Deutschlands und zur Zukunft der Bundeswehr"). It replaced the 1994 White Paper, presented by the government of Helmut Kohl, against the backdrop of the large-scale geopolitical consequences after the collapse of the USSR and disappearance of the Soviet sphere of influence in Eastern Europe. In 2006, it became obvious that Vladimir Putin's government was able to stabilize the political situation, ensure economic growth and make Russia an important partner for Germany in the sphere of international security. The new "White Paper" mentioned a need to develop and deepen long-term and sustainable bilateral partnerships in this area, including the activity of the Russia – NATO Council. Its participation in the international forces led by NATO in Kosovo (KFOR) in 1999–2003 was indicated as an outstanding example of successful cooperation, as well as the joint fighting against international terrorism. Germany expressed a special interest for successful modernization of Russia, given its potential and influence on the World and European politics and economy, including such important and unstable regions as the South Caucasus and Central Asia. The government of Angela Merkel was ready to provide a necessary support to this process and promote a closer cooperation between Russia and the EU and NATO. The document noted that this country was an important supplier of energy resources and a trading partner for many European countries, among which there certainly was Germany itself. Ukraine, which was on the way of policy transformation after the "Orange revolution" 2004, was promised further support from Germany in the process of political and economic reforms as well as was proposed to continue the "intensified dialogue" with NATO members on issues of membership and participation in operations of the Alliance opened in 2005. The White Paper welcomed the active European Neighborhood Policy towards the countries of Eastern Europe, the South Caucasus and Central Asia, which was designed to strengthen the European security area [3, p. 23, 31, 55–56].

An aspiration for a strategic partnership between the EU and Russia, based on the universal values of the Council of Europe and taking into account the interests of the Central and Eastern European states, was also mentioned in a special paragraph of the CDU Party Manifesto “Freedom and security. Principles for Germany” (“Freiheit und Sicherheit. Grundsätze für Deutschland”), which was adopted at the party congress on 3–4 December 2007 in Hannover. It was only the third party manifesto during the previous fifty years of the CDU existence, and could be assessed as the evidence of the Christian Democrats’ new leadership and Chancellor Angela Merkel’s personal striving to present a systemic vision of the party values and principles in the new century. It was declared that Germany, like Europe and the West as a whole, were very interested in good relations with Russia, and the Christian Democrats expressed their readiness to intensify cooperation in the political, economic and public spheres and to support democratic development, rule of law, media pluralism and civil society of Russia by an open and inclusive dialogue. It is significant that relations with other countries of Eastern Europe, including Ukraine, were not mentioned in the CDU Manifesto 2007 [4, p. 108].

The second Coalition Agreement “Growth. Education. Cohesion” (“Wachstum. Bildung. Zusammenhalt”) was signed on 26 October 2009 and became a basis for a new ruling coalition led by Chancellor Angela Merkel, which was formed from the CDU / the CSU and the Free Democratic Party (FDP) representatives. By that time, a format of future relations between the EU and its eastern neighbors was already defined at the summit in Prague, where the Eastern Partnership as an initiative of the EU was inaugurated on 7 May 2009. Germany expressed its readiness to build cooperation with its participants (Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia) based on common values [5, p. 117].

A special attention was paid again to relations with Russia, which was called an important partner of Germany in resolving of actual regional and global problems, including the situation in Afghanistan and the Middle East, negotiations on the Iranian nuclear program, fighting against international terrorism, climate change and global epidemics. The ruling parties supported Russia’s course to modernization and improving of the situation with human rights, rule of law and democracy, and promised to promote the continuation of the bilateral public dialogue. In the framework of relations with Russia, the German government made a commitment to take into account the rightful interests of the neighboring states and to avoid unilateral dependence in the energy sphere. Germany also wanted to use more actively the Russia – NATO Council as a forum for discussing security issues to achieve close cooperation and even strategic partnership in accordance with the Founding Act Russia – NATO 1997. The

Coalition Agreement expressed a hope that the Russian government would return to compliance with the treaty regime to reduce the conventional weapons in Europe, and for this purpose, Germany declared its readiness to ratify the Adapted Conventional Armed Forces in Europe Treaty [5, p. 119–120].

This document was signed on 9 November 1999 at the OSCE summit in Istanbul, but was ratified only by Belarus, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and Russia. Due to growing contradictions with NATO members, President Vladimir Putin signed a decree on suspension of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe 1990 (CFE) and related international treaties by the Russian Federation on 13 July 2007 [6]. The next day, on 14 July 2007, Russia suspended its ratification of the Adapted Treaty 1999.

The authors of the new Coalition Agreement not only recognized some problems in relations with Russia, but also preferred not to mention Ukraine, which was within the 2005–2007 program documents focus. By the autumn of 2009, internal political contradictions in this country were aggravated again and former allies President Viktor Yushchenko and Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko turned into political rivals despite similar ideological positions. In these circumstances, the government of Angela Merkel limited itself to mention only the Eastern Partnership as a form of the EU cooperation with all eastern neighbors, including Ukraine, which was obviously entering a new period of political uncertainty.

The third Coalition Agreement “Shaping Germany’s future” (“Deutschlands Zukunft gestalten”) was signed on 27 November 2013 and allowed Chancellor Angela Merkel to form her third government with the participation of the representatives of the CDU / the CSU and the Social Democratic Party (SPD). Special attention in this document was paid to the ways of overcoming the financial crisis in the EU, which became a serious challenge for the European integration. The agreements on association, free trade and facilitation of the visa regime with the EU were called the best instruments for cooperation with the members of the Eastern Partnership [7, p. 116].

The content of the special paragraph “Open Dialogue and Broad Cooperation with Russia” differed substantially from the 2005 and 2009 versions. Speaking about Germany’s close historical connection with this country, which is the largest and the most important partner for the EU, the authors of the document promised to hold an open dialogue with the Russian government on various views on partnership for modernization in public, political and economic spheres of Russia. Any efforts to broaden and deepen bilateral relations at the level of state institutions and civil society, including the St. Petersburg Dialogue further development, which united representatives of the public sectors from both countries, were welcomed and

supported. Germany declared its intention to explore new forms of public dialogue and to intensify bilateral contacts with the representatives of the new Russian middle class and civil society [7, p. 118]. Exactly these social strata in big cities took the most active part in political protests in Russia in December 2011 – May 2012 directed against the consolidation of power around President Vladimir Putin, who was elected for the third term.

The new government of Angela Merkel called Russia to adhere to the standards of democracy and the rule of law in accordance with its international obligations, including the rules of the World Trade Organization. Germany stated its aspiration for further liberalization of the visa regime for Russian entrepreneurs, scientists, students and civil activists. The authors of the Agreement recognized a need to create a solid basis for the enhancement of the scientific and analytical examination of the Russian politics and the entire region of Eastern Europe, which indicated serious claims about the quality of the materials that had been submitted previously to the federal government. The Agreement also dwelled upon the elaboration of a more concerted EU policy towards Russia as well as a new partnership agreement, the expansion of cooperation in the Baltic Sea region and the enhancement of cooperation in the sphere of foreign policy and security. The key role of deepening of the trilateral dialogue between Germany, Poland and Russia in this process was underlined. The German government traditionally promised to take into account the reasonable interests of the neighboring countries in the framework of building relations with Russia. The authors of the document recognized that security in Europe is possible only with Russia's participation and called for joint efforts to promote settlement of conflicts in the region, and, in particular, expected progress in settling the Transnistrian issue [7, p. 118]. To accelerate this process, a special Memorandum of Cooperation between Russia and the EU was signed as a result of the meeting between President Dmitry Medvedev and Chancellor Angela Merkel in Schloss Meseberg on 4–5 June 2010 [8].

The ruling coalition of the CDU / CSU and the SPD promised to facilitate the start of the US-Russian disarmament negotiations, and called for a more effective use and the reinforcement of the strategic role of the Russia – NATO Council. Their mutually beneficial cooperation was manifested during the withdrawal of the NATO-led troops of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) from Afghanistan. Germany made a commitment to find such a joint solution with its NATO-partners regarding the ballistic missile defense system in Europe, which would not lead to new tensions and arms race [7, p. 117–118].

As a result, the 2013 Coalition Agreement was the first program document, which contained a reference to all major contradictions in bilateral relations. These

were the opposite assessments of the situation with human rights and civil liberties in Russia, various approaches to the settlement of regional conflicts, growing contradictions in Russia's relations with Poland and the Baltic States. Nevertheless, the government of Angela Merkel still evaluated the German-Russian relations as a partnership and therefore could offer its assistance in the organization of the US-Russian negotiations.

A fundamentally new period in the German-Russian relations began after the aggravation of the political crisis in Ukraine in November 2013 – February 2014, the annexation of Crimea by Russia in March 2014 and subsequent escalation of the armed conflict in the eastern part of Ukraine. All these events led to a systemic crisis in cooperation between Russia and all Western countries, including Germany. Relying on its economic, political and military potential accumulated at the beginning of this century, the Russian government was ready to defend resolutely and consistently its interests in Eastern Europe and did not intend to make concessions to Western countries, as it did in the 1990s and early 2000s.

Significant changes in strategic vision of the German-Russian relations were reflected in the new edition of the *White Paper 2016 on German security policy and the future of the Bundeswehr* ("Weißbuch 2016 zur Sicherheitspolitik und zur Zukunft der Bundeswehr") submitted by the German government on 13 July 2016. It was stated that Russia openly put in question the European peace by means of its readiness to realize its own interests with use of force and unilateral change of borders guaranteed by the international law, which was manifested in Crimea and the East of Ukraine. The authors of the White Paper stressed that this would entail far-reaching consequences for the security in Europe and therefore also for the security of Germany. The crisis in and around Ukraine was called an obvious reflection of the long-term development of Russia's domestic and foreign policies. Russia was turning away from a close partnership with the West and emphasized a strategic rivalry. Internationally, Russia presented itself as an independent center of power with global aspirations. The intensification of military activity on the external EU and NATO borders and the increasing use of hybrid instruments for a purposeful erosion of the border between war and peace, which created uncertainty about the Russian foreign policy goals, were cited as manifestations of such policy. It was also pointed out that in the process of comprehensive modernization of the armed forces Russia was ready to go beyond the existing international treaty obligations. All these actions required a response not only from the affected countries, but also from the EU and NATO. In this regard, it was stated that without a fundamental change of the political course Russia would present a challenge for security on the Euro-

pean continent in the near future. At the same time, the authors of the White Paper recognized that Europe still maintained a wide range of common interests and relations with Russia. As the largest neighbor of the EU and a permanent member of the UN Security Council, this country had a special responsibility at the regional and global levels to overcome common problems and international crises, therefore sustainable security and prosperity in Europe and for Europe could not be ensured in the future without reliable cooperation with Russia. Consequently, a right combination of collective defense and building of resilience with measures for ensuring cooperative security and sectoral cooperation was particularly important in dealing with this country [9, p. 31–32].

A new vision of Russia's role in the system of priorities and interests of Germany's foreign policy, contained in the White Paper 2016, triggered a tough response from the Russian Foreign Ministry. In a statement on 21 July 2016, the publication of the new White Paper edition was assessed as "Berlin's another anti-Russian insinuation", which "is cementing a confrontational component of its entire policy in regard to Russia in the long term". This is regrettable and will be taken into account in the process of further building of the bilateral relations [10].

The protracted negotiations about the formation of the new fourth ruling coalition headed again by Chancellor Angela Merkel after the Bundestag elections on 24 September 2017 marked significant contradictions on the acute problem of further migration policy among the main German parties, namely the CDU/CSU, the SPD, the FDP and the Greens, which participated in coalition negotiations. However, the points of view of these parties on the goals and tasks of the German policy concerning Eastern Europe almost coincide, which shows consensus in principle on this issue. Their four pre-election 2017 programs contained a more or less sharp criticism of the Russian policy in Ukraine [11, p. 55; 12, p. 84; 13, p. 54–55; 14, p. 75, 80]. At the same time, all parties, which are able to participate in the government formation ("regierungsfähig"), hoped that Russia will implement the 2015 Minsk Agreements and continue a comprehensive dialogue aimed at ensuring a long-term and sustainable security in Europe [11, p. 64; 12, p. 84; 13, p. 54–55; 14, p. 75, 79–80]. They also preferred not to mention the prospects of including Ukraine and other countries of the region in the EU, believing reasonably that, in the circumstances of growing crisis trends within the EU, the discussion of the terms and conditions of its expansion is inappropriate and inopportune.

Therefore, it may be assumed that such approaches will probably be reflected in the new Coalition Agreement and will form a basis for the foreign policy of the next government of Germany. It will aspire to retain the role of the main Western agent in negotiations

with Russia in the context of further deterioration of the US-Russian relations and, at the same time, to enhance its geopolitical position as an informal coordinator of the gradual convergence between the EU and its eastern neighbors, which are the Eastern Partnership members.

In conclusion, it should be emphasized that the evolution in the assessment of the role of Russia, Ukraine and Belarus in the system of regional priorities of the German foreign policy in 2005–2017 reflected in the content of the documents of Angela Merkel's governments and traced in this research, allows to highlight the following key features in relation to each of these three countries:

1. The consistent and purposeful policy of the Russian government directed to consolidating power within the country and restoring its geopolitical influence on the entire territory of the former Soviet Union increasingly contradicted Germany's aspirations as an informal leader of the united Europe to fix a geopolitical situation in Eastern Europe shaped after the collapse of the USSR in 1991. The governments of Angela Merkel were ready to interact with Russia as the guarantor of stability in the region and as the key economic partner without paying any particular attention to criticism of the situation with human rights and civil liberties, which was clearly reflected in the content of the 2005–2009 documents. Nevertheless, in 2013, it was no longer possible to ignore this problem, but the criticism of the Russian policy was very cautious and was compensated by the declaration of a wish to secure a partnership nature of bilateral relations. The content of 2016 White Paper reflected the fundamental changes in the assessment of Russia after 2014, the policy of which was viewed as a challenge to the security of Germany and the entire EU. The same approach will obviously be present in the new Coalition Agreement, which will allow to form the fourth government headed by Chancellor Angela Merkel in 2018.

2. None of the program documents contained any concrete promises regarding Ukraine, which aims to be involved in the European integration. Its participation in the Eastern Partnership and implementation of the association agreement were considered a satisfactory level of interaction between Ukraine and the EU. This reflected the unreadiness of Germany, as an informal leader of the European Union, to support its next large expansion in the near future in the context of significant contradictions within the EU and colossal expenditure on adaptation of potential new members.

3. Belarus was mentioned only in the 2005 Coalition Agreement in the context of a need to strengthen democracy, rule of law and human rights. At the same time, the consistent efforts of the Belarusian government to ensure stability and security in Eastern Europe and especially to achieve the settlement of the conflict in Ukraine led to a noticeable improvement in

relations with Germany and other European states in 2015–2017. It could be assumed that perspectives for the development of relations with Belarus as an im-

portant partner for Germany on the EU eastern borders will be given more attention in the new Coalition Agreement.

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