

THE ROLE OF GERMANY IN THE UKRAINE CRISIS: ANGELA MERKEL'S MEDIATION DIPLOMACY AND EUROPEAN SECURITY (2014–2016)

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ABSTRACT

The Russia-Ukraine conflict that broke out in 2014 was a very important event for both Germany's relations with Russia within the framework of its Eastern policy and Germany's leadership role in ensuring security in Europe. The conflict between Russia and Ukraine, which began in 2014, has caused a major problem for many experts. This conflict has affected both the EU and Russia, and Germany and Russia. In particular, it has changed Germany's responsibility for European security. Thus, for the first time, Germany took the lead on behalf of the European Union in ensuring security in Europe and took the lead in managing a crisis involving Russia on the EU's direct border for the first time, and acted as the Union's leader. The EU's response to the Ukrainian crisis, led by Germany, proved to be more robust and unified than the approach taken during the 2008 Russo-Georgian war, led by France. This article examines Germany's activities and role in the signing of the Minsk agreements within the framework of the “Normandy format” towards resolving the Ukrainian crisis. At the same time, the article examines the “2016 White Paper on Security Policy”, which contains the conceptual foundations of Germany's Eastern policy framework, “the 2016 position paper on Russia” adopted by the Christian Democratic and Christian Socialist Parties, and the 2018 Coalition Agreement, which clearly express the attitude towards Russia and the Ukrainian crisis within the framework of European security. As a result, under Angela Merkel, Germany took on a leadership role in resolving the Ukraine crisis, but was unable to overcome the deepening strategic conflict with Russia.

Keywords: Germany, Ostpolitik, Ukrainian crisis, Angela Merkel, European security, Minsk agreements, 2016 White Paper, defensive realism. Normandy Format

1. INTRODUCTION

Germany's historical and strategic relations with Russia have created the basis for Germany to play a decisive role in the management of modern international crises, especially those related to the Ukrainian issue. Although the “Ostpolitik” (Eastern Policy) doctrine, which has been in place since the late 1960s, is based on dialogue and economic interdependence with Russia, the Ukraine-Russia crisis that began in 2014 severely tested this traditional course. Under the leadership of Chancellor Angela Merkel, the German government has, on the one hand, developed a sanctions mechanism against Russia's violation of international law, and on the other hand, has sought to preserve the European security architecture through diplomatic initiatives such as the “Normandy Format” and the “Minsk-2” agreement.

2. GERMANY'S POSITION ON THE UKRAINIAN CRISIS IN OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS

The “Position Paper on Russia” adopted by the CDU-CSU faction in 2016 marked a significant shift in Germany's Eastern policy, including its relations with Russia. The document states that “Russia, by annexing Crimea and militarily intervening in Donbas, has violated international law and changed the borders that are considered inviolable. It has violated the Charter of the United Nations, “the Paris Charter”, “the NATO-Russia Founding Act” and the “Budapest Memorandum”, and thereby fundamentally undermined the jointly created European security rules.

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The sovereignty and territorial integrity of states, the inviolability of borders, and the peaceful resolution of disputes are essential elements of the European security rules. In the 1994 Budapest Memorandum, in which Ukraine committed to giving up all nuclear weapons, Russia, as a guarantor power, guaranteed the inviolability of Ukraine's borders in return. The principle of inviolability is also enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. Unilateral declarations of independence or secession are illegal under international law if they involve the unilateral use of force. This is clearly the case in Ukraine, as the Russian president has already acknowledged Russia's military presence. In addition, Russia has committed numerous serious human rights violations in Crimea and the Donbas. Russia's actions in Ukraine are ideologically supported, among other things, by the so-called "Ruski Mir" ideology, which claims jurisdiction and security for all Russians living outside Russian territory. This ideology instills fear of Russian aggression in neighboring countries, and in their historical memory, the decades of totalitarian Soviet rule still have a strong place. Such justifications for Russian aggression call into question many borders in Europe and thus peace and security on our continent. In the end, the CDU-CSU believes that Europe cannot be stable while Moscow keeps trying to create trouble. However, they still hope for a long-term goal of a cooperative security system that stretches from "Lisbon to Vladivostok." The CDU-CSU's policy from 2016 expresses doubt about Moscow's involvement in regional conflicts, criticizing it not just in Ukraine but also in the South Caucasus and Transnistria. By clearly mentioning Nagorno-Karabakh along with Donbas, South Ossetia, and Abkhazia, the document highlights Berlin's view that Russia uses these ongoing conflicts as tools to create unstable areas between the European Union and its borders. The position paper argues that Moscow's main goal is not to solve these crises, even though it claims to support the Minsk agreements. Instead, it aims to keep the region unstable in order to weaken the independence of Eastern Partnership countries. As a result, the paper describes Russia's influence in these areas as a serious danger to Germany's important security interests, clearly stating that Russia should not be seen as an unbiased mediator in these ongoing geopolitical conflicts. The "White Paper on German Security Policy", adopted in 2016 by the CDU/CSU parties under the leadership of Angela Merkel, "marks a radical transformation of post-Cold War cooperation and clearly presents Russia as a strategic adversary rather than a partner. By violating the territorial integrity of Ukraine, Russia has effectively dismantled the pillars of the European peace and security order. (Bundesministerium der Verteidigung, 2016).

3. GERMANY'S ROLE IN RESOLVING THE UKRAINIAN CRISIS

Prior to the Ukraine crisis, Germany's stance toward the Eastern Partnership was marked by broad approval but a distinct hesitation to assume a leading role. Initially, the initiative fell under the wider European Neighbourhood Policy, which encompassed both southern and eastern nations. Notably, in 2006, the German Foreign Ministry suggested a "European Neighbourhood Policy Plus" strategy to concentrate more attention on its eastern neighbors. Yet, when Poland and Sweden first introduced the concept of an Eastern Partnership in May 2008, Germany preferred to stay behind the scenes instead of actively implementing it alongside them. The European Council subsequently gave formal approval to the policy in March 2009. Although Germany generally backed the framework, it firmly resisted providing any of these nations with a clear route to EU accession. Furthermore, Germany aimed to offset the EU's increasing emphasis on its eastern frontiers by initiating fresh diplomatic engagements with Russia. The primary objective here was to craft a regional strategy that engaged with Russia rather than excluding it (Fix, 2021, p. 121). Following Ukraine's decision not to sign an EU Association Agreement before the November 2013 Vilnius summit, the subsequent Euromaidan demonstrations, and Russia's actions in Crimea and eastern Ukraine, Germany has taken a proactive part in shaping the EU's relationship with Ukraine. Talks regarding an Association Agreement with Ukraine wrapped up in December 2011, only to restart in March 2012. Nevertheless, the formal signing was delayed because of worries concerning Ukraine's adherence to the rule of law and its human rights record. Conversely, Kyiv insisted that the potential for EU accession be explicitly stated within the pact. Berlin, alongside Paris, firmly resisted Ukraine's push for such membership guarantees. The European Union and Germany condemned the trial of ex-Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko as selective

justice, deeming her freedom a prerequisite for finalizing the deal. Then-German Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle held multiple meetings with Tymoshenko's daughter, proposing medical care in Germany as a way for the Ukrainian leadership to save face. By demanding Tymoshenko's symbolic release to enable the agreement's signing while underestimating Russia's resolve to obstruct it, the EU effectively halted its Ukraine strategy prior to the Vilnius summit in November 2013. Simultaneously, Moscow intensified its pressure on Kyiv, culminating in a late September proposal of a €750 million loan alongside a one-off reduction in Russian gas prices. By October, new customs rules and trade sanctions were applied to specific Ukrainian exports.

Ten days prior to the Association Agreement's signing, Chancellor Angela Merkel cautioned Russia against meddling in the Eastern Partnership nations' internal affairs, pledging solidarity with Ukraine via expanded market access for its goods and energy support if Moscow retaliated. She stated that if Ukraine fulfilled expectations and the pact was signed, the EU could back Kyiv against any adverse moves or coercion from Russia by broadly provisionally applying the deal. (Bundesregierung-2013). A week prior to the unsuccessful parliamentary vote and the scheduled ratification, Ukrainian President Yanukovich declared during the Vilnius summit on November 28 that Kyiv would decline the Association Agreement and Yulia Tymoshenko would not be released from prison. Rather than finalizing the pact, he advocated for the trilateral commission involving Ukraine, Russia, and the European Union to enhance ties. Despite many indicators that things were going badly, Kyiv's sudden withdrawal, along with the immediate outbreak of nationwide protests, caught both the EU and Germany by surprise. (The Wall Street Journal, 2013). Initially, the German leadership took a cautious stance regarding the Euromaidan demonstrations. On December 17, Germany's new Foreign Minister, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, stopped trying to mediate in Ukraine and gave that responsibility to the EU. In his speech, he said Russia was pushing Ukraine too hard, and he also pointed out that the EU wasn't paying enough attention to Ukraine's reliance on Russia. (Die Welt, 2013). Berlin's position and critique of Moscow grew increasingly overt. In a declaration to the Bundestag five days prior to Crimea's formal annexation, Chancellor Angela Merkel sharply rebuked Russia's conduct and proposed a three-pronged crisis strategy: imposing economic penalties on Russia, mediating talks between Ukraine and Russia, and bolstering Ukraine's statehood. This approach was intended to align with the EU and the USA. (Bundesregierung, 2014).

The Ukrainian crisis led to a foreign policy shift in Germany, which assumed a greater responsibility for ensuring security in Europe. During F.W. Steinmeier's tenure as German Foreign Minister, the country's foreign policy agenda was reshaped. In his speech at the 50th Munich Security Conference, German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier clearly stated the urgent need for a peaceful resolution of the Ukrainian crisis and explicitly rejected military force as a possible option. Referring to the volatile situation in Ukraine, he called on President V. Yanukovich to fulfill his commitments to the opposition. Steinmeier also expressed his vision for a pragmatic diplomatic framework with Russia, arguing that peace, security and stability in Europe were impossible without Russia's participation. He stressed the need for close cooperation with Russia in addressing global security challenges such as the nuclear negotiations with Iran and the neutralization of Syria's chemical weapons arsenal. He rejected the idea of a European security architecture designed against Russia and advocated a security architecture that included Russia. However, Steinmeier argued that diplomatic relations with Russia should be reciprocal and that Russia had a fundamental responsibility to identify and pursue mutually beneficial interests with the West (Steinmeier, 2014). In addition, Germany has been a strong advocate for the OSCE from the beginning and, together with the Swiss OSCE Chairmanship, led the efforts to deploy a Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine in March 2014, which later took over the task of monitoring the implementation of the Minsk agreements. Germany was also closely involved in the Swiss OSCE Chairmanship's shuttle diplomacy to establish a trilateral contact group under the leadership of Swiss Ambassador Heidi Tagliavini in early June 2014, which led to the conclusion of the first Minsk agreements between Moscow, Kyiv and the pro-Russian separatists on 5 September 2014 (Nünlist, 2014).

4. GERMANY'S ROLE IN THE UKRAINE CRISIS

George Friedman, in his article "Germany Emerges," claims that the Germans played an important role in the downfall of Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich's government. Germany played a key role in attempting to reach a deal between Ukraine and the European Union, but Yanukovich turned it down. The Germans backed the demonstrators who were against Yanukovich and had strong connections with one of the leaders of the protests, who is now the Mayor of Kyiv, Vitali Klitschko. He was trained in a program for future leaders that was supported by the Christian Democratic Union, which is Merkel's political party. The Germans criticized Russia for taking over Crimea and for backing the Ukrainian rebels in the east. Germany may not have been the main force behind these events, but it played an important role. As the Germans understood that this situation would not just involve politics but also have a military aspect, they started to step back from taking on a big role. But disengagement was difficult. The Germans adopted a complex stance. They were against the Russians, but they also didn't want to give direct military help to the Ukrainians. Instead, they took part in the sanctions against Russia while attempting to act in a friendly way. Merkel found it hard to take on this very conflicting role, but considering Germany's past, the role made sense. Germany sees itself as a liberal democracy, and this idea is very important to how it understands itself since the end of the war. That is what it must be. So, it was important to help the protesters in Kyiv. Since the end of the Cold War, Germany has felt uncomfortable about taking on a direct military role. It happened in Afghanistan, but not in Iraq. Getting involved in or backing a military conflict in Ukraine brings back memories of past events with Russia that Berlin would rather not face. Therefore, Germany adopted a contradictory policy. Even though it backed a movement that was mostly against Russia and supported sanctions against it, more than any other country involved, it does not want the political situation to turn into a military conflict. Germany will not take part in any military actions in Ukraine, and the last thing the country wants right now is a war on its eastern border. Since Germany was part of the early stages of the crisis and can't distance itself from it, the country also aims to help calm the situation (Friedman, 2015).

Stefan Fröhlich notes in his monograph that the Ukrainian crisis was a serious test for Germany's new geopolitical image in the system of international relations and its leadership potential. Russia's annexation of Crimea undermined the security order that had emerged in Europe after World War II. This event formed the opinion in traditional pro-Russian political circles in Berlin that it was impossible to curb Moscow's increasingly aggressive foreign policy with classical diplomatic maneuvers alone (Hamilton and Meister 2018). According to Stefan Fröhlich, in recent years, Russia has gained leverage over regional actors by rekindling frozen conflicts in the post-Soviet space. This has allowed them to reconsider their integration process into the Euro-Atlantic space. Since 2008, military support for the separatist tendencies of Abkhazia and South Ossetia has led to the Russia-Georgia war. This war showed that Moscow is using hybrid warfare methods in the region it calls its near abroad. The annexation of Crimea and the military intervention in eastern Ukraine were the culmination of this aggressive policy. The collective West was deprived of effective mechanisms of influence in the face of these geopolitical crises for a long time. The fact that Georgia and Ukraine were outside the framework of NATO made it legally impossible to apply Article 5 of the Washington Treaty. This security gap paved the way for Germany, with the consent of the US and France, to emerge as a political leader in the settlement of the Ukrainian crisis. The consensus that emerged within the alliance on the resolution of the conflict exclusively by non-military means accelerated Germany's assumption of a regional leadership role (Fröhlich S, 2019, s 51). Russia's military-political motives during this period were also clear: to maintain strategic superiority over the Black Sea Fleet through Crimea, to increase nationalist loyalty at home, and to block Ukraine's NATO-EU prospects by creating instability in the Donbas. Germany sought to avoid a direct military confrontation between Russia and the Western alliance, therefore believing that preventing the conflict and reducing tensions (de-escalation) was the most practical way to manage the crisis in the region (Mangasarian and Techau 2017). George Friedman argues that, from a geographical and geostrategic perspective, Germany's interest in the eastern border of the European Union appears to be greater than that of France. As Russia's central strategic partner within the Union and a potential adversary for Moscow in determining the future orientation of the Union's eastern neighbors, Germany already played a central role before the Ukrainian crisis, using the instruments of the

European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) and the Eastern Partnership (in which Berlin was the main player). However, for the first time, the country departed from its policy of reconciliation with Moscow, while clearly declaring its willingness to move closer to the EU in the direction of aid recipient countries and demonstrating its willingness to take a leading role within the EU in de-escalating the conflict in eastern Ukraine. In doing so, it also countered reservations and concerns about a German-Russian axis in Europe that have been voiced in recent years not only in the new member states but also in the United States (Friedman, G. 2012).

German political scientist Stefan Birling notes in his book that the Ukrainian crisis clearly demonstrated the strengths and weaknesses of German foreign policy under Merkel: It was a policy of restraint, multilateralism, and de-escalation. The Chancellor acted wisely, seeking compromises and, as in the past, proved to be an experienced mediator. However, Berlin's policy was more focused on process and symbolism than on content; words spoken rightly were not always followed by practical steps. Domestic and economic-political considerations dominated, while questions of strategic and alliance policy sometimes seemed secondary. For the federal government, "leading" meant simply "managing" the process, not giving impetus to projects and ideas in terms of content. S.Birling concludes that whether this approach would be enough to compensate for the declining role of the United States in the Old World (in Europe) and to make the European Union a serious actor in the struggle with Putin for the future

Eastern Europe remains an open question. (Bierling S, 2014. s. 263). The Russian annexation of Crimea in a fraudulent referendum and the violation of Ukraine's territorial integrity have come as a complete shock to German officials and decision-makers, even though experts at the German Institute for International and Security Affairs, which advises the German government, had previously warned that Crimea could become a new conflict zone, especially after the 2008 Russo-Georgian war. Unlike Georgia, which has had a long history of separatism and conflict management problems since the end of the Soviet era, Ukraine had never had a separatist or territorial conflict before Russia intervened in 2014, so there were no existing systems or processes for resolving such situations. This meant creating entirely new systems for crisis management and conflict management at the highest international level in the months ahead. After Russia formally annexed Crimea on March 18 and fighting broke out in eastern Ukraine, the OSCE became the main diplomatic vehicle through which efforts to resolve the conflict were being pursued, with strong German support (R. Lindern, p. 27–28). From the beginning, Germany strongly supported the OSCE and actively participated in the diplomatic efforts led by the Swiss OSCE Chairman-in-Office Didier Burkhalter to establish an international contact group (Nünlist, p. 44).

5. GERMANY'S MEDIATION ROLE UNDER ANGELA MERKEL'S LEADERSHIP

The political upheaval caused by the 2014 Ukraine crisis changed how Germany approaches diplomacy and its role in European politics. For the first time, Germany took the lead in how Europe responded to Russia's strong actions in the area they both share. Unlike France's brief efforts to mediate during the 2008 Russo-Georgian War, Berlin was able to create a surprisingly strong and united response, encouraging Brussels to move past just making gentle political statements to actually implementing lasting economic sanctions. It's true that Western organizations received a lot of criticism for not seeing that a regular trade deal with Kyiv would lead to a military response from Moscow regarding Ukraine's land rights. Liana Fix notes in her monograph that Germany has shown an unusual example of unity among European countries in managing the Ukrainian crisis. According to L. Fix, what made Germany's leadership during the crisis effective was that Germany, even though it did not hold the EU Presidency during the Ukrainian crisis, had great power in shaping agreements within the EU. This long disagreement occurred in three distinct periods: first, immediately after the Maidan protests, when tensions rose and initial diplomatic efforts were made in early 2014; then, in mid-2014, when separatists, with Russian support and patronage, began military operations in the Donbas and Luhansk regions of eastern Ukraine and imposed significant economic sanctions; and finally, when the Minsk Agreements were adopted as a standard for European policy. It's interesting to look at Germany's earlier position because it shows that their sudden strong approach wasn't just a follow-up to

an ongoing commitment to the Eastern Partnership. Instead, it was more of a response to stabilize the situation (Fix L, 2021, ss. 119-121).

The Russia–Ukraine dispute, which erupted in 2014, served as a pivotal moment not just for ties between the EU and Russia, but also for Germany–Russia relations and Berlin’s broader standing in Europe. For the first time, Germany took on a primary and mediating position for the European Union during a crisis within its immediate vicinity. Thanks to German leadership, the EU’s response to the Ukrainian turmoil was more robust and synchronous than the French-led resolution of the 2008 Russia-Georgia conflict. Throughout the escalation of the Ukrainian situation from 2014 to 2018, Germany’s senior officials played a key part in steering European diplomatic efforts. In early 2014, Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier, working with French and Polish counterparts, traveled to Kyiv to facilitate a deal aimed at stopping violence between government forces and Euromaidan demonstrators. After Crimea’s annexation, Chancellor Angela Merkel emerged as the chief designer of the EU’s cohesive strategy, which merged strong condemnation of legal breaches and economic penalties with a steadfast push for diplomatic dialogue. This strategy reached its peak in February 2015, when Merkel and French President François Hollande jointly negotiated the Minsk-2 agreements. (Siddi, 2020, p. 60–61).

Under the leadership of A. Merkel, the settlement of the Ukrainian conflict as a result of German mediation was mainly resolved by two ceasefire agreements. Liana Fix notes in her monograph that from the first Minsk agreement of September 5, 2014, to the second Minsk agreement of February 12, 2015, two different crisis mediation mechanisms were established. The Normandy format, which included Germany, France, Russia, and Ukraine, arose due to the practical needs of the time. In the Normandy format, Germany took a leading role in setting the agenda and got agreement from the EU and other member states to support its efforts in mediating the crisis. In July 2014, the European Council said that member states supported the diplomatic work happening in this format. Germany used this connection with the EU, which helped it by giving it more power and backing from the EU. Germany kept sharing updates with EU institutions and member countries through direct talks about how the negotiations were going. According to Michal Naturski and Karolina Pomorska, this frequent exchange of information helped build trust in the process, making member states feel confident that Germany was being honest and fair. This strengthened Germany's position as a leader in resolving crises, even though it didn't have an official mandate, unlike France did during the Russian-Georgian War when it was leading the Council. France was part of the Normandy format from the beginning, but it didn't have as big a role as Germany. A French official called this situation “leading from behind,” meaning Germany was the one that created the plans and set the main topics for discussion. Even though the Minsk agreement was signed in September, large-scale fighting in eastern Ukraine started again by January 2015. For the second Minsk agreement, the Normandy format played an even bigger role: Merkel, Hollande, Poroshenko, and Putin spent a long time in talks to create a "Package of Measures for the Implementation of the Minsk Agreements," which was finally approved by the representatives of the Trilateral Contact Group on February 11, 2015. The thirteen-point agreement required a more detailed and step-by-step plan to fully carry out a ceasefire and local elections, as well as steps toward decentralizing power. Additionally, the four heads of state and government issued a statement supporting these actions. However, soon after the agreement was signed, Russian forces took back a lot of territory during the Battle of Debaltseve and asked Ukrainian forces to surrender, which greatly weakened the second Minsk agreement. This agreement has not been completed to this day. In autumn 2016, Foreign Minister Steinmeier, who was then the OSCE Chairman, proposed a “Steinmeier formula” to figure out the order in which the thirteen points of the second Minsk agreement should be implemented. (L. Fix. 2021. p.128-131). At the 51st Munich Security Conference, Chancellor Angela Merkel highlighted how crucial it is for countries around the world to work together to tackle the problems we are facing. About the Ukrainian crisis, she stated, “We aim to create security in Europe together with Russia, not in against to Russia.” She pointed out that Russia had broken the peace agreement that was set up after World War II and emphasized how important this agreement is at the start of her speech. Russia has broken Ukraine's territorial integrity and disrespected the sovereignty of nations, which goes against international law. The Chancellor

emphasized that these actions clearly go against the Helsinki Final Act. "We in the EU and our partners across the Atlantic strongly state that any policies that try to violently change borders in Europe are not acceptable in the 21st century." Angela Merkel stated that no one should want to see Europe divided again, and definitely not to face a situation that could lead to uncontrolled conflict (Merkel, 2015). As a result, Germany began to be recognized as a leading power and its influence extended beyond the European Union to include global crisis management. In short, between 2014 and 2016, FRG took a leading role in shaping the discussions during the negotiations of agreements, and no other member states challenged this position. Unlike the situation during the Russian-Georgian War, no other country put forward different ideas or plans for managing the crisis, even though there were differing opinions among the member states (Forbrig, J. 2015). FRG was able to get agreement from other member states for its efforts to mediate the crisis, working closely with France as its partner. This helped Germany gain trust and recognition for its leadership in the situation. When the EU's policy towards its neighbors and its policy towards Russia came into conflict, Germany chose to support a united EU approach rather than focusing on its own relationship with Russia. (Natorski, M., & Pomorska, K. 2017, p 62).

6.CONCLUSION

The crisis in Ukraine forced Germany to change its approach to its Eastern policy to fit the new situation. Angela Merkel's skillful leadership in diplomacy was key to maintaining security in Europe, but in the end, it did not fix the deeper issues that existed. Between 2014 and 2016, Angela Merkel's efforts in mediation diplomacy were an important test for the security of Europe. The research shows that Germany's way of dealing with the crisis was based on two main strategies: encouraging the "Minsk" talks to stop military conflict while also trying to bring Russia into the European security system. The Ukrainian crisis became more of a German crisis management effort than a European crisis management effort. Germany chose its own partners, institutions, and instruments in the management of the crisis in Ukraine. Germany, under Chancellor Angela Merkel, shaped the EU's intergovernmental Common Foreign and Security Policy and sanctions policy; supported mediation efforts through the OSCE; strengthened crisis diplomacy with informal coalitions; used NATO to win over Eastern European states within the EU; and benefited from the United States as a military supporter in Ukraine. Germany's leadership was based not on economic interests but on the application of the principles of international law and European security rules. In order to uphold these norms and principles, Germany took on the risk of negative economic consequences that could arise from a conflict with Russia and its traditionally good relations with Russia. In this context, the Federal Republic of Germany increased its legitimacy and credibility in Europe and played an important role in ensuring European unity and security in Europe against Russia. During the Ukrainian crisis, all of Merkel's efforts were aimed at not only regulating the Ukrainian crisis but also ensuring security in Europe, being a strong and responsible and reliable partner in ensuring European security, and using all means to direct Russia to comply with international law and not isolate it from the European security system, but especially considering the important issue of reliance on Russian energy, it was clear that these methods were limited. Finally, we would like to note that Germany's mediation efforts managed to keep the conflict "frozen" but could not prevent Russia from moving away from the European security system. The Ukrainian crisis proved that the balance that Germany, under Merkel's leadership, tried to maintain between its economic and energy needs and security concerns was insufficient in comparison with Russia's changing policy. This situation opened the door for new geopolitical security realities in Europe and in Germany too.

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