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**THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY'S ATTITUDE
TO THE EASTERN PARTNERSHIP MEMBER STATES
IN THE CONTEXT OF GERMANY'S EASTERN POLICY
IN THE 21ST CENTURY:
IMPLICATIONS FOR POLAND****

INTRODUCTION

The author aims to establish the position and role played by the Eastern Partnership (EaP) member states, i.e. Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, in Germany's eastern policy. The subject of the analysis is also the German state's attitude to the EaP project itself. The underlying thesis is a statement that the idea of the Eastern Partnership supported by Poland in the last years, although officially fully approved of by the German federal government, was not well received in Berlin. Since the EaP initiation, the German government has mainly feared that it might worsen its relations with Russia. Inter alia, because of that, it did not agree to incorporate the possibility of the programme members' future accession to the European Union into the common declaration adopted during the first EaP summit. Moreover, after the unlawful Russian annexation of Crimea in spring 2014 and the outbreak of the war in Eastern Ukraine, successive opinions confirming the former stand on the issue appeared among German politicians. Germany did not carry out a uniform policy toward all the EaP

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** Artykuł powstał w ramach projektu o nazwie „Niemcy i Polska w wielobiegowym ładzie międzynarodowym. Strategiczna wizja i potencjalne sojusze” (nr projektu 00340/2015/KJ) współfinansowanego przez Fundację Współpracy Polsko-Niemieckiej.

states, either. Focussing on bilateral relations with particular members of the EU programme, it achieved more advantages in the political and economic spheres.

1. GERMANY AND THE EASTERN PARTNERSHIP

The Eastern Partnership is a project that was a Polish initiative supported by Sweden. The idea appeared, inter alia, as a response to the 2008 French initiative to create the Union for the Mediterranean¹. In accordance with the declaration adopted during the first EaP summit in May 2009:

“the main aim of the Eastern Partnership is to create conditions necessary to accelerate the process of political association and further economic integration of the European Union and the partner states interested”².

The document also mentions “rapprochement” between the above-mentioned states and the EU³. Eventually, no mention was made of the possibility of these countries’ accession to the EU, even its remote perspective. Germany and France were against such a conception advocated by Poland at that time⁴. Later, the opinions on the matter were divided in Europe⁵. From the beginning, the EU representatives also argued that the project was not against Russia. Due to that, a big part of the EU states, including Germany, tried to treat the project in such a way that would not trigger negative consequences for their relations with Russia⁶. Despite that, Moscow gave the

¹ I. Kempe, *Ukraine, Belarus, Republik Moldau und der südliche Südkaukasus [Ukraine, Belarus, the Republic of Moldova and the South Caucasus]*, “Jahrbuch der Europäischen Integration” 2008, p. 296.

² *Wspólna deklaracja przyjęta podczas szczytu partnerstwa wschodniego w Pradze [Joint Declaration of the Prague Eastern Partnership Summit]* Com, Brussels 7 May 2009, Council of the European Union, 8435/09 (Presse 78), p. 6, <http://register.consilium.europa.eu/doc/srv?l=PL&f=ST%208435%202009%20INIT> (accessed: September 2016).

³ *Ibidem*.

⁴ Compare R. Romaniec, *Szczyt UE ws. Partnerstwa Wschodniego [EU summit on Eastern Partnership]*, “Deutsche Welle”, 7 May 2009, <http://www.dw.com/pl/szczyt-ue-ws-partnerstwa-wschodniego/a-4233250> (accessed: September 2016).

⁵ T. Beichelt, *Die Politik der Östlichen Partnerschaft – inkompatible Grundannahmen und antagonistische Herausforderung [Eastern Partnership policy – basic assumptions in conflict and contradictory challenges]*, “Integration” 2014, no. 4, p. 361.

⁶ Compare J. Cieślińska, *Partnerstwo Wschodnie – miejsce wymiaru wschodniego w Europejskiej Polityce Sąsiedztwa UE [Eastern Partnership: place of eastern dimension in the*

initiative a cool reception and it caused successive misunderstandings in the relations with the EU. The next EaP summits took place in Warsaw (2011), Vilnius (2013) and Riga (2015). Until now, the EU has signed association agreements with three EaP states: Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. During the summit in Latvia in 2015, the EaP states did not receive any signals from the EU that there was whatever chance of future accession to this organisation, which was in harmony with the German stand⁷.

2. GERMANY AND UKRAINE

Ukraine is the biggest and at the same the most important state for the EU, which joined the EaP project. However, from the Berlin's perspective, Kiev has never played an important role in eastern policy implemented by the federal government. Relations with the country have always been a derivative of the relations with Russia. Already during the so-called Orange Revolution (2004/2005), Germany's stand on the situation of Ukraine was equivocal. On the one hand, Berlin assured of its full support for the democratic choice made by the citizens of that country, on the other hand, attention was drawn to the necessity for respecting the rights of the citizens who speak Russian in full. Germany assessed Ukraine's activeness in the EaP programme with moderate optimism, inter alia, fearing that it will get involved in a geopolitical argument with Russia. This state of things resulted in Berlin's reserved attitude towards that country's aspirations to join the EU occurring again and again. West of the Oder, any discussions concerning the possible Ukraine's accession to NATO were also looked at with unwillingness.

Russian annexation of Crimea in March 2014 and the outbreak of the war in Eastern Ukraine made German diplomacy face a completely new situation. At the initial stage of the Ukrainian crisis, Germany – formerly believed to be one of the most important Russia's allies in the EU – on the diplomatic arena, decidedly condemned Russian action against Ukraine. However, inter alia unlike Poland, it was unwilling to impose economic sanctions on Russia. Only after the conflict escalated and in the face of relentless Russian attitude, it gave its consent to undertaking by the EU more decisive steps

EU European Neighbourhood Policy], "Rocznik Integracji Europejskiej" 2009, no. 3, p. 148.

⁷ Compare M. Szczygielski, *Ostrożność ponad wszystko. Partnerstwo Wschodnie po szczycie w Rydze* [*Cautiousness above everything: Eastern Partnership after the summit in Riga*], "Komentarz – Centrum Stosunków Międzynarodowych" 2015, no. 5, p. 2.

toward Moscow. The imposition of sanctions met with a lot of criticism from the German business circles as well as some politicians drawing attention to financial loss Germany may observe, which actually occurred after their imposition. Inter alia, the Committee on Eastern European Economic Relations (Ost-Ausschuss der deutschen Wirtschaft) presented a negative opinion on the matter many times and also opposed further extension of the sanctions by the EU⁸. Such an attitude provoked criticism from the Ukrainian politicians⁹. Despite intensive involvement of German diplomats in solving the Ukrainian crisis, the most important agreements reached in Minsk in 2015 were still not implemented at the end of 2016, which can be deemed to be Germany's defeat at the time when it held chairmanship of the OSCE.

3. GERMANY AND BELARUS

German-Belarusian relations have undergone a real evolution over the last two decades. In the early 1990s, the reciprocal relations were good but when Alexander Lukashenko came to power in 1994, they clearly cooled. The relations between Berlin and Minsk were put to the test at the end of 2010 after the extremely undemocratic conditions of the presidential election and the imprisonment of the leaders of Belarusian opposition by Lukashenko's regime. The actions were decidedly criticised by the German federal government. Still before the election, Foreign Ministers of Poland and Germany went to Minsk. They tried to convince the Belarusian President to conduct the election in compliance with basic principles of democracy. However, he acted in a different way. Guido Westerwelle, who was the first (after 15 years) German head of diplomacy to visit Belarus, criticised the situation in this country then, as well as later, and called the state under Lukashenko's rule "the last dictatorship in the heart of Europe"¹⁰. As a result,

⁸ *Ostauschuss kritisiert Verlängerung Russland-Sanktionen [Committee on the East criticises the sanctions prolongation]*, "De.Reuters.com", 17 December 2015, <http://de.reuters.com/article/eu-russland-sanktionen-ostauschuss-idDEKBN0U010A20151217> (accessed: September 2016).

⁹ M. Brüggmann, *Ukraine kritisiert Ostauschuss der deutschen Wirtschaft [Ukraine criticises the Committee on Eastern European Economic Relations]*, "Handelsblatt", 13 June 2016, <http://www.handelsblatt.com/politik/international/sanktionen-gegen-russland-ukraine-kritisiert-ostauschuss-der-deutschen-wirtschaft/13723844.html> (accessed: September 2016).

¹⁰ *Außenminister Westerwelle: Belarus die letzte Diktatur im Herzen Europas [Foreign Affairs Minister Westerwelle: Belarus, the last dictatorship in the heart of Europe]*, Ministry of

The EU imposed successive sanctions on Belarus and maintained them in the following years.

Germany's attitude toward Belarus started to change clearly after the escalation of the conflict in Ukraine. On the other hand, the situation was partially used by Lukashenko, who released the last political prisoners in August 2015. The next presidential election in this country in October 2015 was another signal. Despite another wave of criticism from international circles, it was conducted in a completely different atmosphere than five years before. As a result, the EU suspended sanctions on this country for four months, and most of them were lifted at the end of February 2016¹¹. It would not be possible to take such a decision without the consent of the German government, which noticed a chance of the relations with the country being further warmed, which was not unimportant in the context of the Ukrainian-Russian conflict still going on. The visit of the Belarusian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Vladimir Makei, in Berlin on 18 November 2015 to meet his German counterpart should be deemed to be symbolic. After many years, it was the first visit of a Belarusian minister in Germany. During the meeting, the Head of German diplomacy, Steinmeier, spoke about "a real prospect for gradual rapprochement between Belarus and the West"¹². Also after the parliamentary election in September 2016, the German party expressed a will to continue cooperation with Belarus although it did not give up expressing critical comments on the level of human rights observance in this country¹³.

Belarus also used its chance by organising two significant international meetings in Minsk aimed at finding solutions to the crisis in Ukraine. In September 2014, separatists and the representatives of the so-called Ukraine-Russia-OSCE contact group, formed to resolve the situation in Eastern Ukraine, met in the capital of Belarus and signed a memorandum concerning the conflict (the so-called Minsk 1). Then, in February 2015, the leaders of Germany, France, Ukraine and Russia entered negotiations in the same place

Foreign Affairs, 24 Sept. 2012, <http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/DE/Infoservice/Presse/Meldungen/2012/120924-Belarus.html> (accessed: September 2016).

¹¹ *Belarus – Beziehungen zu Deutschland [Belarus – relations with Germany]*, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Stand: October 2016, http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/DE/Aussenpolitik/Laender/Laenderinfos/Belarus/Bilateral_node.html (accessed: October 2016).

¹² *Steinmeier empfängt weißrussischen Amtskollegen Makej erstmals in Berlin [Steinmeier hosts the Belarusian counterpart Makei in Berlin for the first time]*, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 18 November 2015, https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/DE/Aussenpolitik/Laender/Aktuelle_Artikel/Belarus/171118_Steinmeier_Makei.html (accessed: September 2016)

¹³ *Belarus – Beziehungen zu Deutschland [Belarus – relations with Germany]...*

(the so-called Minsk 2)¹⁴. President Lukashenko also took part in this meeting. The ceasefire terms negotiated in the presence of the German Chancellor were not observed in the months to follow, either. However, they constituted a starting point for further talks about the issue in the next two years¹⁵.

4. GERMANY AND MOLDOVA

The issue of Transnistria is one of the most important matters for the German diplomacy as far as the relations with Moldova are concerned. Negotiations about the possibilities of solving the conflict have been conducted, with some breaks, since 1993. They are conducted in the so-called 5+2 format (Moldova, Transnistria, the OSCE, Russia, Ukraine, the EU, the United States). Since the very beginning, Germany has been interested in the resolution of the conflict as quickly as possible and actively joined in diplomatic efforts concerning Transnistria. The meeting of Chancellor Angela Merkel with the Russian President Dmitry Medvedev in Meseberg Castle near Berlin in June 2010 was an important event in this context. During the meeting both parties signed the so-called Meseberg Memorandum, expressing Germany and Russia's will to cooperate closely in order to solve security problems. The parties declared to undertake joined action to resolve the conflict in Transnistria¹⁶. As a result, in autumn 2011, after a five-year long

¹⁴ In June 2016 the German newspaper "Stuttgarter Zeitung" published information that Angela Merkel would like to organise the third meeting in Minsk and discuss the crisis with the leaders of Ukraine, Russia and France. See Ch. Ziedler, *Merkel plant neuen Gipfel mit Putin [Merkel is planning a new summit with Putin]*, "Stuttgarter Zeitung", 19 June 2016, <http://www.stuttgarter-zeitung.de/inhalt.minsker-friedensabkommen-merkel-plant-neuen-gipfel-mit-putin.a064149a-6cce-42f5-889b-94fffb0a56dd.html> (accessed: September 2016). The meeting took place in October 2016 in Berlin. The previous Normandy format meeting had been in Paris a year before. See M. Matzke, *Prezydent Putin w Berlinie. Mały szczyt w formacie normandzkim [President Putin in Berlin: little summit of the Normandy format]*, "Deutsche Welle", 19 October 2016, <http://www.dw.com/pl/prezydent-putin-w-berlinie-ma%C5%82y-szczyt-w-formacie-normandzkim/a-36093093> (accessed: October 2016).

¹⁵ For the full text of the document that was signed then, see: PAP, *Treść porozumienia mińskiego [dokumentacja] [Text of the Minsk agreement [document]]*, "Polskie Radio", 12 February 2015, <http://www.polskieradio.pl/5/3/Artykul/1376418,Treść-porozumienia-mińskiego-dokumentacja> (accessed: September 2016).

¹⁶ A.U. Gabanyi, *Der Konflikt in Transnistrien im Kontext der europäischen Sicherheitspolitik [Conflict in Transnistria in the context of the European security policy]*, "Strategie und Sicherheit" 2012, no. 1, p. 363.

break, a successive round of negotiations was organised in the 5+2 format. Next, in April 2012, the parties agreed on the course of further proceeding aimed at resolving the problem¹⁷. As Stefan Meister noticed, a successful resolution of the issue of Transnistria might have impact on the situation in the South Caucasus, where there are also serious ethnic conflicts. At the same time, there would be a proof that effective cooperation with Moscow in such areas is absolutely realistic. However, according to the German expert, the problem consisted in the fact that the above-mentioned proposal had not been formerly agreed upon with other EU states and the federal government in Berlin did not have any clear strategy in this matter¹⁸. As a result, the successive years did not mark a turning point awaited in Berlin. On 22 August 2012, Angela Merkel came to Moldova. It was the first visit of a German chancellor to the country in its short history. The occasion for paying the visit was the 20th anniversary of establishing diplomatic relations between the two countries. The issue of Moldova's participation in the EaP was one of the discussed matters. But the unsolved problem of Transnistria was the central element of the visit¹⁹.

Also after the Russian annexation of Crimea and the outbreak of the armed conflict in Eastern Ukraine in 2014, Germany undertook another attempt to resolve the problem of Transnistria in a diplomatic way, at the same time trying to respond to Kishinev's fears that the "Crimean scenario" might be repeated in that territory. At the beginning of June 2016, after an over two-year long break, there was a meeting of the 5+2 group. The basic aim of the meeting was to try to find a compromise consisting in defining a special status of Transnistria as a part of Moldova, maintaining all the principles of territorial integrity of that state²⁰. The parties signed the Berlin

¹⁷ H.M. Sieg, *Der Transnistrienkonflikt nach den Präsidentschaftswahlen in Russland, Moldau und Tiraspol. Politische Perspektiven und strategische Ansätze, Republik Moldau Länderbericht [Transnistrian conflict after the presidential election in Russia, Moldova and Tiraspol. Political prospects and strategic assumptions]*, Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, Chisinau 2012, p. 1.

¹⁸ S. Meister, *Entfremdete Partner [Alienated partner]*, "Osteuropa" 2012, no. 6–8, p. 482.

¹⁹ R. Goncharenko, *Politische Geste: Merkel besucht Moldau [Political gesture: Merkel visits Moldova]*, "Deutsche Welle", 22 August 2012, <http://www.dw.com/de/politische-geste-merkel-besucht-moldau/a-16182649> (accessed: September 2016).

²⁰ *Transnistrienkonflikt: Erstes offizielles Treffen im Verhandlungsformat nach zweijähriger Pause [Transnistrian conflict: First official negotiation meeting after two-year break]*, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 6 June 2016, https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/DE/Aussenpolitik/Laender/Aktuelle_Artikel/Moldau/160606_Transnistrien_Gespr%C3%A4ch.html (accessed: September 2016).

Protocol, in which they declared to implement a few proposals, which to a great extent would satisfy the Russian party. The government of Moldova agreed to a few concessions, inter alia, recognition of Transnistria's vehicle registration plates, university diplomas and telephone number prefixes. The German party was the one that exerted pressure on signing the agreement in this form²¹. Most probably, Berlin was intent upon reaching a breakthrough in the Transnistria's issue at the time when the country held chairmanship of the OSCE.

5. GERMANY AND ARMENIA

Armenia is the smallest state participating in the EU EaP programme. Especially in the last years, Armenia has played a rather specific role in the German foreign policy, mainly because of complicated relations between Berlin and the whole EU and Ankara, which has been in conflict with Yerevan for years. The best example of that was an emotional debate that took place between Germany and Turkey in June 2016 after the Bundestag adopted a resolution recognising mass murder of Armenians committed by the Turks in the period 1915–1916 as genocide. But in this case, Armenia, which unlike Turkey praised the decision of German politicians, became the object rather than the subject of the argument between Berlin and Ankara. Over the last years, Germany has tried to encourage Armenia and Turkey to continue talks to normalise the relations between Yerevan and Ankara.

To a moderate extent, Berlin has also supported the small Caucasus state in the process of rapprochement with the EU and NATO, however, taking into account mainly the relations with Russia – the country's most important ally in the region. In 2013, after a few years of uncertainty, as a result of Russian pressure, Armenia decided not to sign an association agreement with the EU and to further tighten relations with that country²². In the next year, Armenia joined the Eurasian Economic Union, which undoubtedly jeopardized any chance of integration with the EU structures. However,

²¹ K. Całus, *Dużo o nas bez nas [Much about us, without us]*, "Interia.pl", 20 September 2016, <http://fakty.interia.pl/swiat/news-duzo-o-nas-bez-nas,nId,2277462> (accessed: September 2016).

²² Sz. Ananicz, *Armenia odwraca się od UE [Armenia turns away from the EU]*, Ośrodek Studiów Wschodnich, 4 September 2013, <https://www.osw.waw.pl/pl/publikacje/analizy/2013-09-04/armenia-odwraca-sie-od-ue> (accessed: September 2016).

the step was not received by Germany with absolutely negative opinions. Taking into consideration the complicated geopolitical situation in the South Caucasus, including the role of Moscow in the relations with Yerevan in particular, as well as Armenia's insignificant political and economic potential, Berlin did not strive to deepen this country's cooperation with the EU at any price. The state was confirmed, inter alia, by Angela Merkel's statement during President Serzh Sargsyan's visit to Berlin in June 2016. The German Chancellor stated that Germany "respects the decision" to join the Eurasian Economic Union established by Russia. Angela Merkel assured Armenia's President that Germany does not want to make his country choose "the EU or Russia" (*Wir wollen kein Entweder-oder*). In her opinion, the maintenance of good relations between Armenia and the EU will be most important²³.

6. GERMANY AND AZERBAIJAN

Due to considerable oil and gas resources, Azerbaijan is at present Germany's most important economic partner in the South Caucasus region. In 2015, the German import of oil from this country reached the value of 1.2 billion dollars. This way, Azerbaijan became the seventh biggest supplier of oil to Germany. In the last years, Berlin made an effort to tighten economic cooperation with Baku. With the opening of the German-Azerbaijani Chamber of Commerce (*Deutsch-Aserbaidchanische Auslandshandelskammer*) in Baku in autumn 2012, economic cooperation between the two countries was also institutionally strengthened²⁴. Azerbaijan is also interested in further development of cooperation. Germany is the country's fourth biggest economic partner following Russia, Turkey and the United States. German companies are interested in participation in greater oil and gas exploitation. The fruitful cooperation between Germany and Azerbaijan would not be possible without the maintenance of political relations. Representatives of both governments meet regularly. Frank-Walter Steinmeier paid a visit to Baku in October 2014, and Ilham Aliyev came to Berlin in June 2016 and

²³ *Merkel mahnt Lösung für Berg-Karabach an [Merkel reminds a solution for Nagorno-Karabakh]*, Federal Government, 6 April 2016, <https://www.bundesregierung.de/Content/DE/Artikel/2016/04/2016-04-06-besuch-armenischer-staatspraesident.html> (accessed: September 2016).

²⁴ P. Shahbazov, *Aserbaidchan – Strategischer Partner Europas [Azerbaijan – Europe's strategic partner]*, "Zeitschrift für Außen- und Sicherheitspolitik" 2013, no. 1, p. 4.

met Angela Merkel²⁵. The leaders of the two states talked mainly about the Azeri-Armenian conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh. Apart from that, they discussed reciprocal economic relations²⁶.

As far as Azerbaijan is concerned, in the last years Germany has been observing the so-called Southern Gas Corridor initiative with interest. It is a project to build a 3,500-kilometre long gas pipeline from Azerbaijan through Georgia, Greece, Albania and Italy. The project, which was competitive with Russian gas resources, had been discussed in Europe for years. However, it assumed more importance after the outbreak of the war in Ukraine in 2014²⁷. After building such a pipeline, gas could be supplied to other European states such as Austria or to the territory of Southern Germany²⁸. During his visit to Berlin, Azerbaijan's President, Ilham Aliyev, said that the construction of the Southern Gas Corridor to the EU would be finished in 2019. Chancellor Merkel greeted the information with approval and emphasised that the project would contribute to greater diversification of energy sources in Europe and, at the same time, would strengthen the relations between the EU and Azerbaijan²⁹.

²⁵ *Aserbaidtschan – Beziehungen zu Deutschland [Azerbaijan – relations with Germany]*, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Stand: June 2016, http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/DE/Aussenpolitik/Laender/Laenderinfos/Aserbaidtschan/Bilateral_node.html (accessed: September 2016).

²⁶ *Nagorny-Karabach: Merkel mahnt Lösung an [Nagorno-Karabakh – Merkel remind the solution]*, Federal chancellor, 7 June 2016, <https://www.bundeskanzlerin.de/Content/DE/Artikel/2016/06/2016-06-07-deutschland-aserbaidtschan.html> (accessed: September 2016).

²⁷ M. Martens, *Hilfe aus Baku [Help from Baku]*, “Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung”, 17 May 2014, http://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/aserbaidtschans-gas-koennte-europa-unabhaengiger-machen-12941688.html?printPagedArticle=true#pageIndex_2 (accessed: September 2016).

²⁸ Compare S. Meister, M. Viëtor, *Südlicher Gaskorridor und Südkaukasus [Southern gas corridor and the South Caucasus]*, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Auswärtige Politik, 31 October 2011, <https://dgap.org/de/think-tank/publikationen/weitere-publikationen/s%C3%BCdlicher-gaskorridor-und-s%C3%BCdkaukasus> (accessed: September 2016).

²⁹ *Pressekonferenz von Bundeskanzlerin Merkel und dem Staatspräsidenten der Republik Aserbaidtschan Ilham Aliyev im Bundeskanzleramt [Press conference of Chancellor Merkel and the president of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev]*, Federal Government, 7 June 2016, <https://www.bundesregierung.de/Content/DE/Mitschrift/Pressekonferenzen/2016/06/2016-06-07-pk-merkel-aliyev.html> (accessed: September 2016).

7. GERMANY AND GEORGIA

When Georgia declared independence in the early 1990s, the country played an insignificant but symbolic role in Germany. The reunified German state was the first European Community member that officially recognised Georgia on 23 March 1992. Less than a month later, the two countries established diplomatic relations and Germany was the first state that opened its embassy in Georgia. West of the Oder, people remembered the role in the process of German reunification played by Eduard Shevardnadze as the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the USSR³⁰.

Germany took an interest in that country again in 2008, mainly because of the war between Georgia and Russia. The armed conflict, which broke out on 8 August 2008, surprised the German diplomatic services completely. The federal government led by Chancellor Angela Merkel decidedly supported Georgia. In spite of that, at the beginning some German politicians expressed criticism of Georgian action. Inter alia, Gernot Erler, the secretary of state in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, did it on 9 August when he accused Tbilisi of violating international law and the ceasefire of 1992. Only the next day he criticised Russian action. On 15 August, the German Chancellor paid a planned visit to Sochi. While talking to the then Russian President Dmitri Medvedev, Angela Merkel unambiguously criticised Russia's action in Georgia and, at the same time, mentioned that there were prospects for the country's accession to NATO in the future. Two days later, Chancellor Merkel went to Tbilisi, where she met the then President Mikheil Saakashvili. During the visit, the German Chancellor assured the Georgians that their state would be able to join NATO if it expressed such a will. Despite a decisive attitude, Germany did not want to give up further attempts to continue talks with the Russian party³¹. Moreover, declarations concerning the possibility of joining NATO by Georgia expressed by the German Chancellor in August 2008 did not find reflection in the later action undertaken by the German diplomatic services.

In the last years, Germany also declared it was for rapprochement between Georgia and the EU by strengthening economic contacts. It was also for Georgia's cooperation with NATO. However, when the conflict

³⁰ Eduard Shevardnadze was the President of Georgia in the period 1995–2003. He died in 2014.

³¹ S. Żerko, *Niemcy wobec konfliktu w Gruzji (sierpień 2008 r.)* [*Germany's attitude towards the conflict in Georgia (August 2008)*], "Biuletyn Instytutu Zachodniego" 2008, no. 1, pp. 1–6.

in Georgia was frozen, Berlin again presented a decidedly more moderate attitude towards the possibility that this country's accession to the North Atlantic Alliance. The same stand was presented in connection with Tbilisi's integration with the EU. As in case of other EaP states, Germany was not interested in Georgia's accession to the organisation. In June 2016, during Georgia's Prime Minister – Giorgi Kvirikashvili's visit to Berlin, Angela Merkel appreciated that Georgia had signed an association agreement with the EU. At the same time, she praised the country's "pragmatic attitude" toward Moscow. In the same way as in her former statements, having South Ossetia and Abkhazia in mind, the German Chancellor again assured that her state supported 'territorial integrity' of Georgia. Speaking about Georgia's aspirations to deepened cooperation with NATO, Merkel appreciated the country's activeness within the programme of Substantial NATO-Georgia Package, which was established based on the NATO decision adopted during the summit in Wales in September 2014³².

8. IMPLICATIONS FOR POLAND

Having joined the EU in 2014 and initiated the EaP project a few years later, Poland made efforts to overtake actual leadership of the eastern part of the European Neighbourhood Policy. However, since the beginning, it has been obvious that the programme will not be able to succeed without real involvement of the EU leader states, including Germany, in it. The Polish party strove to convince Germany that its vision of eastern policy was right, however, it has not succeeded. In spite of that, some joint initiatives deserve mentioning, e.g. the foreign affairs ministers' visit to Belarus at the end of 2010 or a trip to Kiev together with the French head of diplomacy and attempts to undertake negotiations with the then President of Ukraine and opposition leaders in February 2014. In the successive months, however, the Polish party was eliminated from negotiations concerning the resolution of the Ukrainian conflict. From June 2014 the negotiations were carried out within the so-called Normandy format without Warsaw's participation. Since the beginning of the EaP, despite declarations of full support for the idea, the

³² *Georgischer Ministerpräsident in Berlin. Merkel: Freund und guter Partner [Georgian Prime Mnister in Berlin. Merkel: a friend and good partner]*, Federal Government, 15 June 2016, <https://www.bundesregierung.de/Content/DE/Artikel/2016/06/2016-06-15-besuch-mp-georgien-kwirikashvili.html> (accessed: September 2016).

German federal government has treated the whole project with reservation, fearing that it would result in the worsening of the relations with Russia, which reacted negatively to any attempts to encourage rapprochement between the EaP states and the EU. Inter alia, this is why the German party did not agree to officially offer the EaP states a clear perspective of the EU membership, which Poland strove for. Germany also sought to procrastinate all discussions about Georgia or Ukraine's prospects for accession to NATO for as long as possible. Not incidentally, the German White Paper published in July 2016 does not contain any mention of the so-called Membership Action Plan (MAP) concerning NATO enlargement plan for the above-mentioned states, which had been discussed earlier³³. Despite the presented differences, which to a substantial extent continue to divide Poland and Germany in the field of eastern policy, after the escalation of the crisis in Ukraine, the German stand started to evolve in the direction closer to Warsaw's. It must be noticed that, despite the above-mentioned differences, both states also have common goals in the eastern policy, including democratisation of social and political systems in the post-Soviet states or the provision of broadly understood security in Eastern Europe, including the resolution of the Ukrainian conflict as soon as possible. They lie in both Poland and Germany's interest. However, in the last years, both states have quite often used different measures to achieve those goals, which was mainly seen in the relations with Russia before the outbreak of the war in Eastern Ukraine. The most important differences in this matter were evident in connection with the attitude of Berlin and Moscow toward permanent allocation of NATO troops in Eastern Europe and toward Nord Stream. As far as the latter is concerned, both states define the concept of energy security in a completely different way. As a result, today it is difficult to speak about Poland and Germany's common eastern policy both at the bilateral level and within the European Neighbourhood Policy. There are only some elements in common, which do not make a complete whole, however. As a result, Polish-German cooperation in the field of eastern policy leaves a lot to be desired. Without the participation of the German party, Poland will not be able to solve any major problems in the area of eastern policy. That is why convincing Berlin that Polish reasons in the field are right is the most important challenge to Poland's contemporary foreign policy.

³³ K. Szubart, *Prace nad niemiecką „Białą Księgą 2016”: definicja zagrożeń i przyszłość Bundeswehry* [Work on the German “White Paper 2016”: definition of threats and the future of the Bundeswehr], “Biuletyn Instytutu Zachodniego” 2016, no. 239, p. 4.

CONCLUSIONS

From the very beginning of the EaP project, Germany was mainly interested in deepening economic cooperation with the EaP states and supporting processes aimed at strengthening principles of democracy and lawfulness. It also demonstrated a positive attitude towards the possibility of signing association agreements between the EU and the EaP states interested. However, it excluded the possibility that any of the EaP states might join the EU, not to mention NATO. After the Russian annexation of Crimea and the outbreak of the war in Eastern Ukraine in 2014, also negative opinions about the EaP project occurred in Germany. Moreover, some German politicians indirectly blamed this initiative for the outbreak of the crisis and emphasised that the direct cause of the conflict was connected with the EaP, i.e. the decision of the then President of Ukraine, Viktor Yanukovich, to desist from signing the association agreement with the EU in autumn 2013. Then, there were critical opinions on making Ukraine choose “between the EU or Russia”. The situation that occurred in that country in recent years established a belief among the German diplomacy representatives that it was necessary to carry out a moderate policy towards other EaP states in order to avoid further negative reactions of Moscow. As a result, the German diplomatic activities demonstrated significant reservation in the relations with other states participating in the EU programme in the recent years. Inter alia, that is why in summer 2016 the German party convinced the involved parties to sign the so-called Berlin Protocol, concerning the Transnistria conflict, which to a considerable extent satisfied Russian party's expectations. Germany also had a clear understanding of Armenia's decision to desist from signing the association agreement with the EU and to join the Eurasian Economic Union formed by Russia in 2014.

The German government, like other EU states, recognised the annexation of Crimea by Russia invalid and unequivocally condemned the action undertaken by that country against Ukraine. From the beginning, the representatives of the German diplomatic services were emphasising the illegal character of the annexation, by which Russia undermined the international order in that part of Europe. Despite that, in practice Berlin relatively quickly accepted the situation in Crimea, focussing on attempts to resolve the armed conflict in Eastern Ukraine. Politicians in that country are aware that there is little chance of the conflict in Eastern Ukraine being solved in the nearest future, especially in the face of Russia's further confrontational attitude and a lack of progress in the implementation of

the main Minsk decisions. Over two years after the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, the freezing of this conflict and preventing its further escalation became the main German objectives. To that end, Germany was ready to accept the Russian idea of “federalisation” in Eastern Ukraine, but Berlin understood it differently than Russia. Despite many failures over the last two years, German diplomats made every effort to stop the war there. They wanted to act as active mediators and help to reach a compromise that the two parties to the conflict might accept. As a result, it was Germany that played a key role in the 2014–2016 talks in the so-called Normandy format, which did not produce any measurable effects at that time. At the same time, after the annexation of Crimea and the outbreak of the war in Eastern Ukraine in 2014, the situation in most other EaP states became complicated, which mostly resulted from the formerly unsolved conflicts in Transnistria, Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Nagorno-Karabakh³⁴. When in 2016 Germany held chairmanship of the OSCE, it set very ambitious aims to resolve or at least ease the tensions there. Unfortunately, despite active action, most of the plans have not been implemented until now.

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³⁴ S. Fischer, *Problemstellung und Empfehlungen [Description of a problem and recommendations]*, [in:] idem (ed.), *Nicht eingefroren! Die ungelösten Konflikte um Transnistrien, Abchasien, Südossetien und Berg-Karabach im Lichte der Krise um die Ukraine [Not frozen! Unsolved conflicts in Transnistria, Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Nagorno-Karabakh in the light of the crisis in Ukraine]*, Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, Deutsches Institut für Internationale Politik und Sicherheit, Berlin 2016, p. 5.

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THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY'S ATTITUDE
TO THE EASTERN PARTNERSHIP MEMBER STATES IN THE CONTEXT
OF GERMANY'S EASTERN POLICY IN THE 21ST CENTURY:
IMPLICATIONS FOR POLAND

Summary

The article presents the relations between the Federal Republic of Germany and six member states of the Eastern Partnership programme, i.e. Ukraine, Belarus, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. The analysis also covers the attitude of the German federal government towards the Eastern Partnership project as such, which was a Polish initiative supported by Sweden. The article also takes into consideration the implications of the German eastern policy carried out in the region for Poland.

RFN WOBEC PARTNERSTWA WSCHODNIEGO,
W KONTEKŚCIE NIEMIECKIEJ POLITYKI WSCHODNIEJ W XXI WIEKU.
IMPLIKACJE DLA POLSKI

Streszczenie

W artykule zostały przedstawione relacje Republiki Federalnej Niemiec z sześcioma państwami, które przystąpiły do programu Partnerstwa Wschodniego, czyli: Ukrainą, Białorusią, Mołdawią, Armenią, Azerbejdżanem oraz

Gruzją. Analizie poddano również stanowisko niemieckiego rządu federalnego wobec projektu Partnerstwa Wschodniego, który powstał z inicjatywy Polski przy wsparciu Szwecji. W niniejszym tekście zostały także uwzględnione implikacje dla Polski związane z prowadzoną przez Niemcy polityką wschodnią w tym obszarze.

ФРГ и её отношение к Восточному партнёрству в контексте немецкой восточной политики в XXI веке. Последствия для Польши

Резюме

В статье показаны взаимоотношения Германии с шестью государствами, присоединившимися к программе Восточного партнёрства – Украиной, Белоруссией, Молдавией, Арменией, Азербайджаном и Грузией. Кроме того, проанализирована позиция немецкого федерального правительства в отношении самого проекта Восточного партнёрства, образованного по инициативе Польши и при поддержке Швеции. В исследовании были также приняты во внимание последствия для Польши проводимой Германией восточной политикой в данном регионе.