

## The Role of German Public Opinion in Shaping Foreign Policy Towards Russia After 2022

Научный руководитель – Коньков Александр Евгеньевич

*Shumakov Sofiya Vladislavovna*

*Student (bachelor)*

Финансовый университет, Факультет социальных наук и массовых коммуникаций,  
Москва, Россия

*E-mail: sofiyashumakov@gmail.com*

The relationship between Russia and Germany is a complex issue: “*As Europe’s reluctant ‘indispensable power’, Germany finds itself increasingly responsible for shaping western policy towards Russia as America reduces its role in European affairs in a world in which the West has lost considerable moral authority over the past two decades*” [1]. The research examines the evolution of Russian-German relations in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, with a particular focus on the influence of momentous political events on international dynamics. With an examination of the ascension of Vladimir Putin in 2000 and his indispensable speeches in Berlin and Munich, bilateral relationship between the two nations is considered. The economic partnership, primarily through energy projects like Nord Stream, played a pivotal role in fostering cooperation. Still, this relationship faced significant strain following the accession of Crimea in 2014. The report assesses the shift in public and political perceptions in Germany, with emphasis to key speeches by Angela Merkel and the growing influence of far-right parties such as the Alternative for Germany (AfD) party. Furthermore, it contrasts Germany’s current position in the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) with Russia’s growing role in the BRICS alliance. By investigating both countries’ media perspectives on multipolarity, the research reveals differing narratives around global power dynamics and the future of international relations. The main goal of the work is to highlight the underlying factors contributing to the current political climate and explore potential scenarios and solutions that would facilitate the regeneration of trade linkages within a self-imposed constrained economic milieu. As Sahra Wagenknecht noted, we need a “*Rückkehr der Vernunft in die Politik*” [4] (return of reason to politics) and recognize the absurdity of maintaining a conflict with Russia, emphasizing that Germany and Russia have no need for conflict in any shared space. The methods encompass a harmonious synthesis of economic and political data, statistical analyses, and qualitative methods including surveys, interviews, official documents, legal frameworks, and social media discourse, especially official reports from the IEA and the European Commission that underpin the study. The integration of empirical data with a thorough evaluation of political and social behaviour aims to yield a logically substantiated and objective conclusion. The analysis was conducted in four languages: German, English, Russian and French, ensuring a multilingual approach to the assessment of the subject matter.

As a result, the following conclusions and recommendations have been made. Germany’s current dependence on external factors in the ongoing conflict is way higher than that of the Russian Federation. The complexities of this situation highlight contradictions that go beyond typical political disputes. It is crucial for German politicians to take proactive steps in fostering transparent partnerships and enhancing security measures in response to the policy tendencies of the Russian Federation. German politicians who express even the slightest positive sentiment towards Russia are swiftly categorised as “Putin sympathisers”. This phenomenon reflects a broader societal apprehension towards Russia, particularly in the wake of its “aggressive” foreign policy actions. However, a portion of the electorate remains unaware, largely due to

pervasive propaganda, that the fundamental distinction between the Russian president and the current German chancellor centers on the issue of sovereignty. Germany's integration into the European Union has profound implications for its national sovereignty, as it necessitates adherence to collective decision-making processes and compromises with other member states. This integration complicates Germany's ability to independently navigate its foreign policy, particularly in relation to Russia. In contrast, the Russian president operates within a centralised political framework that prioritises national interests and sovereignty without the constraints of multilateral agreements. The Alternative for Germany party has officially advocated for Germany's exit from the EU, drawing parallels to Great Britain's successful departure following years of deliberation and uncertainty [5]. Such a move would not only signify a shift in Germany's political landscape but also send *a clear signal* to the Russian elite regarding the German populace's willingness to re-engage in cooperative relations. The AfD's support for the reconstruction of the Nord Stream pipeline underscores this desire for renewed economic ties [2]. Vladimir Putin has articulated that the West's actions could be perceived as an attempt to sever the last remaining economic connections between Europe and Russia. Gazprom would support this undertaking. The revival of Nord Stream would be a strategic initiative to strengthen these ties. The suggestion of Germany potentially joining BRICS, proposed by Ralph Niemeyer in November 2024, introduces a new dimension to the discussion [3]. This development could enhance the BRICS bloc by leveraging Germany's substantial economic expertise. Such a transition has the potential to alter global economic power dynamics and foster increased cooperation within BRICS. Consequently, Russia would fully endorse this move, indicating that it is not inclined to collaborate with European countries unless they align with Western tendencies of homogeneity. Evidently, it can be stated that today German-Russian relations have reached the most critical point. Germany's integration into the emerging multipolar world and its prospects hinge upon the transfer of power to a nationally inclusive elite in collaboration with a reformed Russian Federation.

## References

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- 5) ZDF: <https://www.zdf.de/politik/frontal/ukraine-krieg-putin-versteher-in-deutschland-100.html>