

The “Russian Direction” of the German Foreign-Political Strategy

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Summary: Germany’s policy is the key for understanding the complicated relations between Russia and the European Union. Its ties with Russia are characterized by a long tradition of rivalry and cooperation, based on complementary economies, exchanging high-tech good and know-how against raw material and fuels.

After the unification in 1990 Germany begins gradually to widening so its zone of influence in Eastern Europe. The coinciding interests with Russia, mostly in the energetics, form the foundations of the “New Eastern policy”, already equal to the privileged after 1945 “Western policy”.

Key words: Russia, Germany, EU, complementary economies, strategic partnership, energy supplies, “New Eastern policy”.

JEL: F01, F59.

After the USSR collapse, Eastern Europe is the main direction, where an active common foreign policy of the European Union is possible, in cases, where the interests of the Member States coincide, allowing formulation and implementation of such a policy.

After the stage of EU expansion to the East that ended in 2007, Russia remains its main foreign policy challenge. Germany on its part is the key country in the EU (for 2009 it has 31 % of the entire export of the Union for Russia amounting to € 20.5 billion and 17 % of the import amounting to € 23.6 billion)¹, which is capable of formulating and implementing a kind of strategy in its relationships with the big neighbor, including on its behalf and to its expense, where there is disagreement on this matter among the Member States of the Union.

Russia is an important factor from the international environment of the European Union. Traditional commercial relationships between it and the union states exist, which are based on the geographical and cultural proximity and on the international specialization of labor. Russia is presently the third largest trade partner of the EU after the USA and China with 6 % of the import and 10 % of the export, and EU had 52.3 % of Russian foreign trade in 2008. The total volume of the exchange of goods for 2009 amounted to € 180.6 billion (with € 166.2 billion in 2005 and € 85 billion in 2003), € 65.6 billion of which were the EU export for Russia. In the base of this increase and the large deficit of the Union (€ -41 037 billion for 2000, € -49 748 billion for 2010) is the import of energy carriers with their sometimes currently high prices – 77.3 % of the import. EU export for Russia includes machines

¹ <http://ec.europa.eu/trade/creating-opportunities/bilateral-relations/countries/russia/>

and vehicles (42.9 %), chemicals (14 %), other industrial goods (11 %), foodstuffs and live animals (7 %). The exchange of services, mainly transport services, is less significant (a total of € 29 billion), but with steady growth of 6-7 % between 1995 and 2009. The review of the exchange structure shows a great extent of mutual complementation between the two big neighboring markets.

Foreign direct investments from the EU in Russia (75 % of the total volume) are comparatively low, but with a trend for abrupt increase: from € 2.2 billion in 2001, € 6.4 billion in 2004 to € 25 billion in 2008 (about 60 % of them in energy and extraction sector), while the drain of capital in the opposite direction (far not always with production purpose) amounts to € 2 billion for 2008². (after the peaks at the given moment of speculative capital of € 20 billion annually during the government of B. Yeltsin.) The impact of Russia on the EU is even larger than the suggested by the indicated data. Firstly, the energy carriers imported from Russia satisfy such a large part of the needs of the Union, that there is dependency of EU outlined in the energy sector. Russian supplies cover 57 % of the entire import amounting to € 48.5 billion, including 50 % of the entire EU import of gas (25 % of the entire consumption), as well as 30 % of the entire import (25 % of the entire consumption) of petroleum³. Almost all 6 billion petroleum barrels, which Russia produces per day, are exported to the EU. It is expected that up to 2030 the import of energy carriers from Russia to reach 60 % of the total import, which will cover 80 % of the demand.

Secondly, Russia has its geopolitical ambitions (and capabilities) and is inclined to use energy supplies in order to achieve large geopolitical

objectives. Relations between the EU and Russia are complex not only in energy sector. Some of the new EU Member States have encumbered relations with Russia for historical reasons, which sometimes burden the politically unsettled commercial matters. The support, which Warsaw gave for the political changes in Ukraine in 2004 for example, gave a reason for Russia to ban the import of Polish meat and other foodstuffs and to threaten with embargo on the import of animal products from the entire EU. As a consequence from this collision, the signing of a new agreement settling the commercial relationships between the Union and Russia was delayed and the agreement from 1997 remains in effect, although it is old in many aspects. As with supplies of energy carriers, Russia prefers signing of bilateral agreements to the contrary with the Common Commercial Policy of the Union. The case is indicative for the Russia's inclination to use disagreements among the EU partners, including for political purposes. The main problem with the EU-Russia relationships is that with the high extent of mutual complementation and even dependence in economic aspect, the political systems are not compatible enough. The presently monitored development in Russia reminds of the Chinese model: state monopolistic capitalism under the conditions of "educated dictatorship", suggesting political and financial stability, and control on production and supplies of strategic raw materials. Russian foreign policy adheres to the formulations of the realistic foreign policy school, while the EU states keep foreign policies, distinguishing with a mixture of pragmatic and idealistic considerations in different extent, which makes it impossible to have a unified approach towards Russia on many matters, and moreover it also contributes to disagreements with Russian partners on the grounds of differences in value systems.

² all data are from <http://ec.europa.eu/trade/creating-opportunities/bilateral-relations/countries/russia/>

³ data from <http://europa.eu.int/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/05/1238&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

Germany is a leading world trade force with the largest European economy. The export focus of its economy makes it strongly dependent on the course of the economic integration (20 % of the jobs in the country depend directly on the export). The country is strongly bound to the West and, along with this it has a strong cultural and economic influence in Central and Eastern Europe⁴, which grows even more after 1990.

Germany's attitude to the matters of European alliance is determined during the government of K. Adenauer and L. Erhard. German politicians are mainly federalists by conviction. By force of habit that remained from the cold war, the country strives for political union of Europe even after 1990 and is inclined to concessions in the economic sphere – where its largest resource is. The problem with the politics of mutual concessions is that they are not always balanced. Most of the time Germany pays around a fourth of all the payments to the budget of the EU (19.6 % for 2010⁵) and is by tradition a net payer. After the unification of the country, however, a smooth emancipation towards the partners is seen, which is verified by the fact that the changes in the size and the way of German contribution to the general funds are among the constant problems that need to be solved after 1999. After 1990, new opportunities open for Germany in the vacuum, which Russia left behind itself in the Balkans, in Ukraine and the Baltic Sea region, where the German influence is traditionally strong. In its pursuit of overcoming this vacuum, political fluctuation is detected in the German policy. By tradition, inherited from Willy Brandt (the author of *Eastern Policy*), German social democrats are more prone to pragmatic cooperation with Russia and are more often inclined to make compromises with values and allied duties for the national interests. Their

ideological opponents from the right political sector even after 1990 are less prone to risking their relations with the partners from NATO and EU and to yield the western democracy values in favor of the new opportunities, emerging after the end of the cold war. These differences, however, are not that great to stand in the way of good enough succession in the German foreign policy.

For better understanding of the complex relationship between Russia and the EU, the peculiarities in the relations between Russia and Germany, which continue to set the speed in the economic, and even the political development of the Union, should be inspected. The relations between the two countries have long traditions and were essential for Europe's development over long periods of time. The progress of Prussia and the Russian empire at the beginning of the 18th century may be considered the beginning of this tradition, as for the German-Russian relations some almost unchanging features are true:

- For the past 300 years the relations between Russia and Germany (or the German states before the unification of the country in Bismarck's time) are characterized by mutual mistrust and rivalry (as a consequence multiple wars broke between them), as well as by periods of coincidence of interests and mutual trust, when the Russian-German alliances (whose visible expression sometimes is the common Russian-German frontier) determine the destiny of Central and Eastern Europe in whole;

Most of the time during this period, there is mutual economic complementation: for Russia, Germany is a source of high-tech goods, knowledge and skills, while Russia supplies Germany with raw materials, energy sources and

⁴ During the Cold War, Germany is the largest trading partner (outside CMEA) of the countries in the region

⁵ http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/public/focus_page/034-31028-161-06-24-905-20080605FCS31027-09-06-2008-2008/default_p001c005_bg.htm

agricultural goods. The most important and the longest time used trade route in Europe (with more than 1000-year history), the one from Santiago de Compostela to Novgorod (along with the sea route through North and Baltic Sea) in fact opens the access from Western Europe to the big natural resources in Russia through Germany, which often takes the part of main jobber.

- The stated above mutual complementation between Russia and Germany is a source of permanent fear (described for instance in the geopolitical analyses of Zb. Bzhezinski⁶) in the countries in Western Europe: the combination of the large resources of Russia with the technological and organizational achievements in Germany in certain moments (mostly during 19 and 20 century) make possible the appearance of super power, able to establish some predominance over the Eurasia continent and from there over the whole world. That is why, the above mentioned tension between Russia and Germany, beside all, are incited also by West-European and even not European forces (the USA), interested not to allow any such hegemony.

History of the relations between Russia and Germany

At the review of the current economic relations between Russia and Germany, including the energy field, the current competitive peculiarities should be the starting point: the commitment of Germany in EU and the retreat of Russia from historically won during this 300-year-period positions as a result of losing the Cold War.

Even so, the above indicated particulars, which are still valid, cannot be ignored.

The first German settlers appear in Russia during XVI century, attracted with various privileges, so to stimulate the local crafts and trade with their knowledge and skills, a policy continues by Peter the Great (a reformer grown among aristocratic and economic elite of German origin). Although in 1871 Aleksander II withdraws the privileges (economic, cultural and political) of the German settlers and puts an end to the policy for attracting immigrants from Germany, up to the revolution from 1917 there are too many Germans among the Russian aristocracy, nobility, large landowners and senior military officials, but also among scientists, the engineers, the art-creative intellectuals and the accenting bourgeoisie as a whole.

It may be noted that the Germans have the highest contribution for the modernization of Russia, carried out in several phases during this period. The relations among the aristocracy, the economic and cultural relationships, facilitated by the establishment of common frontier after the third division of Poland in 1793, besides everything else, contribute for the greater political closeness between the governing elites: The Sacred Union from 1815 (including Austria) nearly 80 year supports the order established after the end of the Napoleon's wars and is based in its bigger part on the trust between Prussia (Germany) and Russia. The entering into the First World War as enemies requires some tormenting change in the attitude of the governors in both countries: especially the Russians consider the union with the French "killers of king" against the kindred German Imperators' Court as unnatural. It should be added that as of 1913 the share of Germany in the Russian import comes up to 44 % and this indicator is among the highest for the entire reviewed period (42 % in 1875, 49 % in 1880, 39 % in 1885, 33 % in 1889)⁷.

⁶ Бжежински, Збизнев, "Голямата шахматна дъска", Обсидиан, София, 1997, с. 10-11, 52.

⁷ <http://www.diploweb.com/p5thorner1.htm>

The development of the bipartite relations after the war is interesting. Placed into a diplomatic and economic insulation by the winner in the war through the signed in Rapalo treaty (16. April 1922), Germany and the USSR establish some valuable political and economic relationships. As a result from the already indicated mutual complementation of the economies of the two countries, Germany immediately becomes the main trade partner of the USSR. In confirmation of the above mentioned apprehensions of the countries from Western Europe for a possible Russian and German hegemony are also the reactions of unpleasant surprise from the signing of the Treaty, among the participants in the Economic Conference in Genoa, taking part at the same time. It should be added that this outcome is reached after no mechanism was found during the conference (no attempt to find any), which to offer an alternative of the closeness between Germany and the USSR. Thus, in 1931 Germany accounted for 46 percent of all Soviet imports.⁸

The highest interest is provoked by the cooperation in the military area between both countries: besides the agreement for joint action against Poland (which in the end lead to its forth division according to the pact Molotov – Ribentrop in 1939), both countries, through exchange of technologies and resources, try to find a way to reinforce their military forces in expectation of the unavoidable new war on a large scale. The volume and the structure of this exchange are impressive: Germany receives from the USSR grain crops, wheat, alimentary fats, soya, cotton, petrol, phosphates, latex, wood, iron ore and rare metals. In the military 1940, the supplies for fighting Germany are in sufficient amounts so to neutralize entirely the British blockade by sea. During this year, the import from the USSR exceeds half of the entire import of Germany.

(It is interesting that the Russian train compositions with cargo for Germany are traveling literally up to 22 June 1941 – with the loyal execution of the trade contracts Stalin tries not to provide Hitler with any formal reason for attack). Besides this, the USSR provides Germany with opportunities for manufacturing and testing of weapon samples (particularly airplanes) on its territory, outside the restrictions of the Versailles Treaty and under this scheme Germany helps for the commencing the manufacturing of tanks in the USSR (Leningrad and Harkov). On its part, during the pre-military period Germany provides the USSR with high technologies: electric equipment, locomotives, turbines generators, diesel engines, ships, and model tanks, artillery (including ship), explosives, and chemical warfare. In the list of the signed in 1940 agreement, there are 30 pcs of the latest German military airplanes, including fighters Messerschmitt 109 and 110, bombers Junkers 88 and even the cruiser Lützow and the plans for the linear vessel Bismark. From the point of view of the followings events, this cooperation (especially the deliveries of the latest military technologies and developments) seems inexplicable, but in other way it follows entirely the tradition and corresponds to the capacities and economic structure of both countries.

After the end of World War II, the relations between the USSR and Germany, which was divided into two parts, become even more complex. The GDR is the largest economic partner of the USSR among the allies in the Warsaw Treaty and The Council for Mutual Economic Assistance. After the launch of Willy Brand's eastern orientated political course in 1970, the FRG becomes the biggest trade partner of the USSR among the NATO oppo-

⁸ Thörner, Klaus, "Das deutsche Spiel mit Rußland von der Reichsgründung bis in die Gegenwart" <http://www.diploweb.com/p5thorner1.htm>

nents and also the biggest creditor. At certain moments, the stock exchange with the FRG exceeds in amount the stock exchange with GDR, and if the total of the two stock exchanges is to be calculated, Germany remains, by the tradition, the biggest economic partner of the USSR (and Russia which the core of the Union). The plan socialist economy, however, places serious restrictions in front of the exchange on the part of the USSR. According to the political course of self isolation in The Council for Mutual Economic Assistance and the course of self – sufficiency (autarky), the share of the foreign trade in GDP of the USSR hardly reaches 4 %. The uncompetitive production restricts the export of the USSR mainly to energy sources and raw materials. 80 % of the flow of the necessary convertible currency comes from the export of petrol (60 %) and gas, as the FRG is the main user of Russian gas: 40 % out of the total consumption in the country in 1990, as Ruhrgas AG holds nearly a complete monopoly over this trade branch.

The Cold War period is important also from another point of view of the significant geopolitical change, whose consequences still define the relations between modern Germany and Russia. Putting FRG under control, during this period, through its membership in NATO and EC, for a long time gives the German economic relations the one-sided direction desired by the western rivals (and allies): although the FRG is the biggest economic partner of the socialist countries from Central and Eastern Europe outside the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance, its binding to Western Europe reaches the highest rates from historic point of view: in 1973 – 50.8 % of the export and 54.7 % of the import of the country are with the countries from the EC. (In 1990 the values are respectively 54.6 % and 52.1 %).⁹

The Russian German relations and the German trade expansion to the East after 1990.

After 1990 the vacuum remaining from the destroying of the Warsaw Treaty and the USSR gives opportunities to recover the previous traditional influence of Germany in the Baltic region, Ukraine, on the Balkans and in Russia itself. In order to prevent the undesired economic and political (even partial) reorientation of United Germany to the East, the Western European partners from EC bind the political support for the union of the country with tightening the control over its opportunities to lead a more independent policy through adding more federal elements in the legal system of EC, already EU, including the Inner Market Program that came into force in 1993, the introduction of the common currency, and the efforts to force an economic union. To some extent, these efforts have proved to be successful. As of the year 2007 (the end of the EU extension to the East), 63 % of German trade is completed inside the EU¹⁰. At the same time, Russia drops out of the top ten list of German most important trade partners (for 2009 it is number 7 in the list of suppliers), as its share in German trade varies between 2 and 4 %. The big variations in the value amounts (thus the ranking) are mostly due to the present at this point variation in the price of the Russian export goods: 80 % of them is petrol, gas, metals and wood. The German export directed to Russia comprises machinery, vehicles, chemical goods, equipment for production of electricity, medicines and agricultural goods. Stock structure which corresponds to the tradition and which Russian professionals determine with concern as “colonial”. The impression is built that in the modern times Russia is an insignificant trade partner of Germany, whose policy remains under the control of the allies in the EU and NATO as in the past.

⁹ ОИСР, http://www.oecd.org/topicstatsportal/0,2647,en_2825_495663

¹⁰ http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_OFFPUB/KS-CV-08-001/EN/KS-CV-08-001-EN.PDF

It is true only to a certain degree, as indeed the changes in the orientation and the velocity with which they are implemented, depend mostly on the dynamics in the German policy rather than in the Russian policy. The Union of Germany in 1990 is the beginning of a continuous process of gradual emancipation of Germany from its partners and the breakage of the status quo of the country which lost the World War II (accompanied by the stubbornly supported by outside complex of guiltiness of the German people, which complex has its concrete political and even economic scope). The German strategy, in this respect, does not seek an open denial of the outer restrictions in front of the national sovereignty, but rather seeks more effective ways to protect the German national interests within the membership in the Euro-Atlantic structures. Germany's political course, followed during the wars in former Yugoslavia, Afghanistan and Iraq, at some moments differs from the course led by the key partners like the USA and Great Britain. The French-German strategic union is sometimes used as a counterbalance of the USA influence on the European policy, and at certain moments, there are tensions, most often with economic character.

The circumstance that the country has not yet managed to get out of the role of a main net payer and main creditor in the union shows that the process of emancipation of Germany is not completed. Here, it has to be mentioned the unsuccessful efforts of the Chancellor Schroeder, even during his first mandate, to change the scheme of Germany's installments in the common EU budget (one fourth of all the incomes in total), as well as the reached after the strong pressure on side of the French president Sarkozy consent given by the Chancellor Merkel, Germany to participate (with the biggest share) in the financial package for supporting Greece

and saving the country from insolvency. (This consent cost the governing coalition in Germany the direct political loss at the local elections in North Rhine – Westphalia on 10 May 2010).

However, it is not logical to expect that the process of emancipation of Germany will cease somewhere in the middle. The union of the country in 1990 (for many people it seemed impossible then) comes as a result of a decades-long patiently pursued strategy. In the core of the political culture of contemporary German political elite, the morals of the two failed efforts of Germany to implement its large geopolitical and economic potential through fast radical actions (two World Wars) lie. After the drop out of the restrictions of the Cold War, Germany patiently and without rushing follows up a strategy with which, without sacrificing the economic and political relations with Western Europe, the German influence zone in Eastern Europe broadens to the limit of possibilities, so that the country shall be able to use its middle – location on the continent to the maximum, without taking the risks it brings after itself.

France continues to be not only a chief political, but also a main trade partner of Germany – for 2009 the mutual trade exchange amounts to € 132.5 billion or about 9 % of Germany's whole exchange with foreign countries¹¹. At the same time German trade for 2009 only with the counties of the Visegrad Four reaches € 162 billion¹², despite the difference in the economic capabilities. According to the method of calculation of GDP, the GDP of France is 7 (nominal value) or 1.5 (purchase capacity) times bigger than the GDP of the mentioned countries. Together the EU member states from CEE are in fact the biggest trade partner of Germany even in 2000. For each of these countries Germany is the biggest trade partner, as its share varies

¹¹ <http://www.destatis.de/jetspeed>

¹² <http://www.destatis.de/jetspeed>

between 20 % (Slovakia) and 38 % (The Czech Republic). In fact, in competition with France and the USA, Germany has already managed to dominate as a center of one differentiated central European economic space (including Austria and Northern Italy).

An outer formal expression of German strategy of development of relations with Eastern Europe is the concept "Approach through mutual binding" in the context of a larger scope "New Eastern policy" prepared in 2006-2007. This wording for the first time appears in a document "The German EU Presidency: Russia, European Neighborhood Policy and Central Asia" prepared by the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2007¹³. Officially, the document aims at offering an action program during the German chairmanship of the EU in the same year, i. e. to take advantage of the chance to engage the whole Union (including to its interest) in a long lasting German foreign affairs project.

Russia is given a central position in this "New Eastern policy" Although the larger part of the results of the application of the strategy are still to be reported, it is already possible to point out that the economic vacuum that existed after the disintegration of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance and the USSR in Eastern Europe seems to be filled in a way that partly reminds of the period between the two World Wars and which proves the fears of the German partners from Western Europe, pronounced in the eve of its union:..."United Germany is now too big and strong to be only a player in-between many others in Europe. Besides, Germany has always directed its look both to West and to the East..."¹⁴ Through its weight of influence in Central and Eastern Europe on one hand Germany restricts Russian influence in

the region, and on the other hand, enhances its negotiation positions with the Russian party on political and economic matters.

After the economic assimilation of the neighboring territories (new member states from Central and Eastern Europe), in the last few years the German capital has been directed more seriously to the opportunities on both the Russian and Ukrainian market. The main streamline of the German business activities is still in the sphere of energy.

Collaboration in the field of energy

In September 2007 the EC directs another proposal for regulation of the energy market so that the possibility of a Russian monopoly in the energy networks is eliminated. The idea is that foreign companies are not able to acquire a control package in the European distribution company, unless the third party has concluded an agreement with the EU. As a third party, EC regards Russia although it has not been stated directly. The problem, however, is that both France and Germany support Russia because of the interest of the leading energy companies

"Ruhrgas", "Wintershall", "E.ON", "RWE", "GDF" and "EDF", as in doing so they sabotage EC efforts to liberalize the market. Big energy corporations are the main subjects interested in Russian energy supplies and even without using direct lobby instruments to a large extent they determine the direction of German foreign policy. (Most often "Ost Ausschuss der deutschen Wirtschaft", in loose translation "Eastern European Economic Relations Committee" is the speaker of their claims). Although the Chancellor Merkel makes statements in support of the

¹³ Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2006b; Steinmeier 2007; Kempe 2007a, <http://www.assr.nl/workingpapers/documents/ASSR-WP0904.pdf>

¹⁴ Тачър, Маргарет, Годините на Даунинг стрийт, т. 2, изг. "Слънце", С., 1995, с. 460.

common energy policy of the EU with same rules for everyone, she does not question the privileges which the German energy monopolists have negotiated with "Gasprom", for example to take prices on the German market as a base.

Thanks to the efforts of the previous Chancellor G. Schroeder "Ruhrgas" has special relations with "Gasprom" and even possesses a share of the capital of the company after an exchange of assets between the two companies. "BASF" has joint ventures with "Gasprom" though its subsidiary "Wintershall". As a result of this collaboration the construction of a pipeline through the Baltic Sea is implemented ("North Stream"). This pipeline is indented to provide direct supplies of gas to Germany and in this way to make it a main re-distributor of supplies. Later G. Schroeder becomes a chairman of the managing board of the company that is to build the pipeline, and the following Chancellor Merkel, who is otherwise more reserved to Russian political authorities, does not doubt the meaning of the enterprise at all. The governments of Poland and also the Baltic counties are not able to hinder the project which deprives their countries of the transitory taxes and encourages Russia in the policy of negotiations held with each country separately. The project gives "Gasprom" access to 3 % of the French retail market, as supplies shall be delivered namely through the Baltic pipeline through Germany, which allows for lower prices after part of the transitory taxes drop out. The Italian energy supplier "ENI" has also granted "Gasprom" participation in its distribution networks to the end users.

Various comments can be found that "North Stream" is a „divide and conquer" instrument of the Russian policy regarding Central and Eastern Europe. Comments often miss the fact that this policy is possible only with the condition of German political support. The political support

on its part is determined to some extent by the structure of energy production and consumption in Germany. After the elections in 1998 which were successful for the Party of the Green, the Party of the Green somehow manages to cease and even put backward the development of nuclear energy in the country. (As of 2007 the share of nuclear power plants in the total production of electricity is 22 % compared to 86.6 % in France).¹⁵ As a consequence due to ecological and economic reasons, the gas has a very important role in the energy consumption, as 20 % of the consumed amounts are used for heating. The direct access to the supplier is of importance to Germany instead of the mediators undesired from economic point of view and hazardous from political point of view (because of the burden in the relations with Russia). It is also important that the German diplomats manage to engage with the project official representatives of the supranational organs of management of the Union. The European Commission and the European Parliament support "North Stream" as a means of improvement in the collective energy security of the EU still in 2000 and confirm their commitment in 2006. The abovementioned efforts of the Commission to subordinate the activities of "Gasprom" to the rules valid for the Inner Market do not change anything in the scheme already outlined as a strategic German – Russian collaboration. During the German chairmanship in the first half of 2007, directed by functioners of GSDP, the foreign ministry makes serious efforts to assure the partners of EU that Russia is treated as a strategy partner, not as a rival of the union in the framework of the not-clearly stated concept "European Policy of Neighborhood".

To the strategic cooperation between Germany and Russia (for now manly economic), the cautious proposals for creation of united North-European corpus for quick reaction for control

¹⁵ <http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kernenergie>

of crises with the participation of Russian armed forces as well, allowing some break off the military dependence of Germany from the NATO allies, may be referred.¹⁶ If any such plans look feasible in the very far future, still the cooperation (institualized through annual meetings in high level) in the fields of health protection and demographic issues, education, transport and infrastructure and logistics remains.

Without underestimating or overestimating the trends in the development of the relations between Germany and Russia, one might make a conclusion that the coinciding economic interests are the traditional base allowing the implementation of the "New East Policy" of Germany as equal to the prioritized after 1945 "West Policy". With the use of the opportunities in both geographic directions, Germany indeed returns its "special status of the most important country in Europe".¹⁷ Currently, Bulgaria tries to

keep balance, exposed to the strong influence of the USA, of key countries (Germany) and the supranational government authorities (EC) in EU, of Russia and of Turkey, who are pursuing different, sometimes mutually excluding objectives, in the region. The recovering of the strategic cooperation between Germany and Russia (even not institualized) provides some ground for ratiocination to what extent it can be used as a reference point in the search of measures for protection of the Bulgarian national interests.

The convenient for the Bulgarian foreign policy formula "Always with Germany, never against Russia" failed during the first half of 20th century, but it is possible to check it once again. That is why the Russian direction in the Germany foreign economic strategy should take important place in Bulgarian scientific research dedicated to the foreign policy issues. **VIA**

¹⁶ Thörner, Klaus, Das deutsche Spiel mit Rußland von der Reichsgründung bis in die Gegenwart <http://www.diploweb.com/p5thorner1.htm>

¹⁷ Бжежински, Збигнев, Голямата шахматна дъска, Обсцидан, С., 1997, с. 52.