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DOI : 10.14746/ps.2025.1.13

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GERMANY TOWARDS RUSSIA'S WAR IN CHECHNYA IN 1999–2009²

INTRODUCTION

The topic of Chechnya breaking away into independence after the collapse of the Soviet Union at the end of 1991 gave way in German politics to far more important issues related to the shaping of Russia's new place and role in post-Cold War Europe and the world. In Germany, the drive to subjugate Chechnya to Russia sparked a debate as to whether Russian intervention reflected classical imperial policy or it was carried out to protect Moscow against the growing pressure from the periphery. Did Moscow want to keep Chechnya within the Russian Federation because of its own specific political and economic interests, or did it fear instability and insecurity for the Russian south and the Caucasus as a result of its withdrawal from Chechnya?

Taking all these conditions into account, the main hypothesis is that Germany, especially during the Social Democratic-Green coalition government (1998–2005), prioritised the defence of human rights and the observance of international law as its main ideological stance. However, they tolerated the brutal and inhumane aggression of Russian troops in Chechnya raising the following arguments: 1. Economic cooperation was developing well for Germany. 2. A network of many links was influencing the democratisation and liberalisation processes of the Russian Federation. 3. Attracting Russia to cooperate with NATO and appreciating its role in building European and global security. 4. Linking Russia to the European Union on the basis of various treaties and agreements.

The research methods of source analysis, historical, comparison, decision-making, and institutional-legal methods were helpful in the development of the article. Firstly, governmental source materials (*Bundesregierung; Bundestag, Auswärtiges Amt*) were

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² The research was funded in whole by National Science Centre, Poland. Grant number: 2022/45/B/HS5/00193/. For the purpose of Open Access, the author has applied a CC-BY public copyright licence to any Author Accepted Manuscript (AAN) version arising from this submission.

used, and a press search involving the most important German dailies and weeklies was performed.

GERMANY'S TOLERANCE OF RUSSIA'S REPRESSIVE ACTIONS IN CHECHNYA

In 1996–1999, Chechnya, admittedly unstable and characterised by internal political, economic, and religious tensions, was not a significant object of interest for German politicians. From their perspective, following the re-election of President B. Yeltsin in 1996, the focus was on the continuation of a liberal and democratic Russia and the deepening of German-Russian interdependence.

The changing of the guard on the Rhine and Spree as a result of the elections on 27 September 1998 and the subsequent rise to power by the SPD-90/Green Alliance coalition did not initially bring about any major changes in German policy towards Russia and the conflict in Chechnya. The coalition agreement of 23 October 1998 mentioned the Russian Federation only briefly, in only two places. The hope was to partner with Russia within the framework of the NATO-Russia Council to broaden and strengthen European security and develop good relations with Russia and Ukraine (*Aufbruch...*, 1998).

Initially, the new Chancellor Gerhard Schröder was critical of the introduction of Russian troops into Chechnya in 1999. When President Yeltsin's rival and former Russian Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov visited Germany in October, his calls for support for a hard line against Chechen separatists found no resonance in talks with Schröder, Joschka Fischer and Wolfgang Schäuble (Kosman, 2013: 341).

The anti-war political profile of the Green and Social Democratic parties initially influenced their leaders' efforts to distance themselves from the radical and violent actions of the Russians in the conflict with the Chechens. As late as December 1999, Chancellor Schröder sent an appeal to Yeltsin and Putin for a political resolution to the conflict in Chechnya. However, the situation changed after March 2000, when Vladimir Putin became Russian president. At the SPD congress on 7–9 December 1999 in Berlin, documents were adopted expressing Germany's willingness to cooperate with Russia to support its democratic and liberal dimensions, expand economic cooperation, and strengthen European security. A separate resolution expressed concern about developments in Chechnya, including the de facto expulsion of residents from Grozny and the brutal treatment of the civilian population. It was critical of the Kremlin's interpretation of the fight against terrorism and called for an end to the fight against "its own people." The resolution demanded a commitment to the restoration of the peace process by the OSCE, the introduction of international observers into the conflict area, and the provision of humanitarian aid (*SPD-Parteitag, Berlin...*, 1999).

The construction of the new Kremlin administration linked to Putin's camp coincided with the consolidation of the SPD-Green government coalition and the attempt to find new understanding with Moscow. Although the Russian president made his first visit to Berlin in June 2000 only after trips to the UK, Italy and Spain, he managed to win over the German leader and forge a personal friendship with him. He declared

a “strategic partnership,” claiming much with conviction that he wanted to “Europeanise” Russia and counted on Germany’s involvement (Schröder, 2006: 76–77).

Chancellor G. Schröder quickly found common ground with the new president, and cooperation between the two countries strengthened, taking on the character of a “strategic” and even “cordial” partnership. Germany’s policy towards Russia was based on the assumption that this country needs to be brought closer to European and NATO structures and, at the same time, that Russia needs support for democratic transition.

When the supreme commander of the Russian army in the North Caucasus, General Gennady Troshev, announced the end of his army’s “extensive operations,” the German government expressed sympathy for the difficulties faced by the perpetrators of the brutal war in Chechnya. On 29 February 2000, Defence Minister Rudolf Scharping agreed to 33 military and military-technical cooperation projects with the Russian army for the year 2000. As reported by *Der Spiegel* weekly, cooperation between the Russian intelligence services and the German Federal Intelligence Service (BND) in Chechnya was closer than previously thought and involved exchanging information with Russia on developments in the conflict. It was discussed whether the Chechens were getting money and weapons to fight the Russians through Muslim networks or whether they were funding their efforts through drug trafficking. In mid-March, BND head August Hanning visited the war zone for two days. He was accompanied by senior FSB officials and a small delegation from Pullach. Hanning was escorted through the war-torn Gudermes, located near the Chechen capital of Grozny. The intelligence service justified this cooperation as fight against terrorism. Unlike the Germans, the Russians consistently regarded the Chechens as terrorists, but the BND suspected that a new bastion of radical Islamism might be emerging in the Caucasus. It recommended that this development should also be monitored in the interests of Germany (*Engedeutsch-russische...*, 2000).

In the following months of 2001, Chancellor Schröder’s increasing commitment to building friendly relations with President Putin could be observed. At the German-Russian Summit in April 2001, he did not condemn Russia’s brutal war in Chechnya and consistently avoided the subject. Due to ideological principles of the Greens, the burden of criticising Russia’s brutal conduct in Chechnya fell on the shoulders of Minister Joschka Fischer. Although the head of German diplomacy recognised Russia’s right to protect its territorial integrity, he repeatedly publicly criticised human rights violation in the Caucasian republic. For this, the Russia-friendly German press called him the “gravedigger of German-Russian relations.” In general, it can also be seen in his memoirs of German foreign policy between 1999 and 2001 that Fischer was not particularly interested in relations with the Russian Federation, which were the responsibility of the Chancellor (Fischer, 2007).

During the discussions in the Bundestag following Fischer’s visit to Moscow in January 2000, German political groups began to formulate assessments of Russian actions in Chechnya and the brutality of their army. Even then, there was affirm conviction that using terror against Chechen society was unacceptable, and this stance was expected to remain unchanged until after the Russian presidential elections. On 28 January, Minister Fischer announced in the Bundestag a policy of “strategic patience and firmness of principles” towards Moscow. “While we emphasise Russia’s

right and even its duty to defend its borders – since no one can have a vested interest in a Russia that is even partially falling apart – we also stress that the fight against terrorism, which we support, must be conducted with proportionate and constitutional means. War against an entire nation is not a proportionate measure in the fight against terrorism.” In response, the government argued that it was actively pursuing a peaceful solution to the conflict in Chechnya through diplomatic meetings and political declarations. The preparation of humanitarian aid for this Caucasian republic, totalling DM 7 million, was announced, with employees of the Auswärtiges Amt playing an active role (Kosman, 2013: 344).

The breakthrough came with the terrorist attacks by Islamic radicals in the USA on 11 September 2001. In the eyes of Western public opinion, the previously positively perceived Chechen fighters were equated with terrorists, and as a result, Russia was given almost free rein in the republic. Russian propaganda was able to act appropriately to the circumstances and largely contributed to changing the perception of Chechen fighters. Putin’s most valuable success was convincing Russian citizens and the international community that the Chechens were the aggressors in this dispute, ideologically and monetarily linked to the global headquarters of Islamic terrorism. The thesis that the conflict with Chechen radicals was merely a fragment of the international armed conflict with Islamic terrorism was confirmed without hindrance. Opinions emerged that the Russian Federation was the first country on the global front line of the conflict with extremist Islamic organisations, additionally bearing the brunt of the threat of a civil war instigated by Islamic followers from this part of the Caucasus (Kadykalo, 2017: 79–101).

Thus, President Putin utilised the slogan of the “war on terror” for his own purposes, using it as a pretext for the pacification of Chechnya. Similarly, huge layers of solidarity against international terrorism emerged in the relationship between Germany and the United States. There was a significant rapprochement between Berlin and Washington, with Chancellor G. Schröder proclaiming “*unlimited solidarity*” (*uneingeschränkte Solidarität*) with the attacked ally. Gernot Erler, vice-chairman of the SPD parliamentary group responsible for foreign, security, development policy, and human rights, asserted that there were links between al-Qaida and terrorists in Chechnya, which placed the region in the spotlight of international politics (*Hat Deutschland...*, 2002).

Aiming to capitalise on the favourable international atmosphere, Putin made a swift visit to Germany and delivered a speech largely in German to the Bundestag on 25 September 2001. Speaking extensively about Chechnya, he advocated for the need to “punish evil” and “brazen” terrorist attacks and the concept of creating a caliphate (*Wortprotokoll...*, 2001).

Putin’s visit and speech were perceived in Germany as a demonstration of his desire to establish a “strategic partnership” in Berlin to support his policies in Chechnya. His well-crafted speech, prepared in consultation with former Chancellor Kohl’s advisor Horst Teltschik and Klaus Mangold, responsible for Western economic affairs, was highly commended as a sign of Russia’s readiness to embrace European cooperation, especially with Germany (Bartoleit, 2001; Lebioda, 2019). The conviction and arguments presented that the war in Chechnya was solely an anti-terrorist operation rein-

forced Chancellor Schröder's belief in Putin's sincere intentions. While still in Berlin, the German chancellor had already begun advocating that the West should approach the Chechen conflict in a more "nuanced way," anticipating a similar "nuanced assessment by the international community" (Bingerer, Wehner, 2023: 80).

The 2002 Bundestag election campaign of the German Social Democrats clearly delineated the course of German politics. Notably, in contrast to the 1998 elections, the SPD focused mainly on foreign issues, shifting public attention away from the deepening economic crisis, rising unemployment, and the absence of an effective programme to reform public finances. Russia's repressive actions in Chechnya were absent from the German media, which instead focused on the looming prospect of war with Iraq, gradually becoming the main topic of commentary. Schröder's use of anti-American rhetoric in the final phase of the election campaign resulted in a loss of close contacts with Washington and cooling relations with the UK. To counterbalance the weakening of Germany's position, relations with Moscow were given high priority, despite Russia's apparent shift towards authoritarian rule (Malinowski, 2004: 10).

Relations with the Russian Federation (RF) were significantly deepened by the end of 2002 when Germany had already openly positioned itself at the forefront of nations seeking to obstruct US efforts to establish a broad international coalition against Iraq. Together with France and Russia, Germany engaged in consultations in the UN Security Council to thwart any military action. Pro-Russian German expert Alexander Rahr observed that Schröder's policy towards Russia "has won over the sceptics. Far from the critical portrayal of Russia in the mass media, a security partnership has emerged between Berlin and Moscow in recent months that surpasses any similar alliance any other Western state has with Russia" (Rahr, 2004: 91–94).

Due to the brutal pacification of the Caucasus republic, the Chechens escalated controversial terror attacks to draw international attention to the abuses of Russian forces. Formally, although armed skirmishes occurred into 2002, Russia officially announced the cessation of hostilities and declared the phased implementation of a plan to normalise the situation in Chechnya through political action. This strategy included the simultaneous marginalisation of the recognised, legitimate separatist president, Aslan Maskhadov (Krech, 2002).

In November 2002, another meeting took place between Chancellor Schröder and Russian President Putin, this time in Oslo. Despite the serious Russian military offensive and ongoing human rights violations in Chechnya, Chancellor Schröder viewed Putin's Caucasus policy as having "good approaches" (*gute Ansätze*). He considered the Kremlin chief's proposals to hold a constitutional referendum in Chechnya and the potential convening of an "Assembly of the Chechen People" as valuable and worthwhile initiatives. Putin argued that he intended to bring peace to Chechnya through a combination of "targeted anti-terrorist operations" and political solutions. He advocated for the elimination of radical resistance fighters, while Chechens willing to cooperate with Moscow were encouraged to participate in the political reconstruction of the Caucasus republic. Putin explicitly dismissed Chechen President A. Maskhadov and clarified in Oslo that he rejected any mediation by the UN, the Council of Europe, or the OSCE, asserting that this was "an internal matter of the Russian Federation" (Hartmann, 2001).

Germany did not protest when, during the Second Chechen War, the Russian government dismissed any political involvement by the OSCE, arguing that the conflict was not international but a domestic Russian affair. The OSCE Support Group's mandate expired on 31 December 2002 due to lack of consensus. Consequently, the OSCE office in Chechnya was closed at the end of 2002, primarily because of the Kremlin's refusal to extend the mission's mandate. Soon after, the Council of Europe delegation also ceased its operations in Chechnya. As a result, the last international organisations withdrew from Chechnya (Inki, 2003: 203).

The German public had reservations about Chancellor Schröder's reserved stance and twisted policy regarding Chechen affairs. In a November 2002 poll, 68% of respondents expressed the opinion that the German leader should react more sharply to Russia's policy in Chechnya, while 24% were of a different opinion. Despite this, Schröder saw no incentive to change the existing course towards Russia, which he viewed as a state playing a major role in global politics (Kosman, 2013: 344).

The draft constitution for the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria was submitted by Akhmad Kadyrov, formerly the Grand Mufti of Chechnya and a field commander who switched to the side of the federal forces. In 2000, he was appointed the head of the republic's pro-Russian administration. The constitution was adopted in a referendum on March 23, 2003, and came into force on April 2, 2003. More than 95% of voters supported the Basic Law, which defined Chechnya as an integral part of the Russian Federation. Kadyrov won the presidential election on October 5, 2003. Over the following years, Russia sought to gain support and legitimacy for the newly elected government of Akhmad Kadyrov, while refusing to negotiate with the separatists (Falkowski, 2004: 8).

The response of Chechen radicals to the actions aimed at "normalizing" the situation in Chechnya was a terrorist attack that took place on October 23, 2002, in a theatre in Moscow's Dubrovka estate. The terrorists were well-armed and had many explosives, which they used to mine the entire theatre. Due to the high risk, Russian forces delayed the rescue operation. The hostages were held for nearly 57 hours. Anti-terrorist forces used untested sleeping gas to incapacitate the attackers. In the end, 133 hostages and all the terrorists were killed (Patlewicz, 2005).

The terrorist attack in Moscow received a critical reception worldwide, with significant condemnation directed at the uncompromising attitude of the secret service in their efforts to save the hostages. In Germany, pressure was mounting on politicians for Russia to find a political solution to the conflict in Chechnya. In a government statement, Chancellor Schröder reaffirmed German solidarity with the Russian people but stressed that Germany was committed to a "political solution to the conflicts in Chechnya and the entire Caucasus region." However, Schröder saw this as a necessity within the framework of a common European foreign and security policy. Foreign Minister Fischer also urgently appealed to the Russian government to respect human rights in Chechnya and to "finally" bring about a political solution to the conflict. He pointed out in the Bundestag that Moscow must apply the principles of democratic rule of law in the breakaway Caucasian republic. At the same time, he reiterated that the territorial integrity of the Russian Federation must be guaranteed (*Deutschland drängt...*, 2002).

In November 2003, these issues sparked intense emotion during a discussion in the Bundestag, where human rights in Russia and the arrest of Mikhail Khodorkovsky, chairman of the Yukos oil company, were debated. While SPD MPs sought a subdued justification for Russia's policies and its place in the world, the Christian Democrats, Liberals, and some Greens did not hide their disapproval of the state of the rule of law in Russia. Green co-chair Claudia Roth upheld the need to stigmatize Russian actions in Chechnya, while also condemning the vicious terrorism by separatists. Christian Democrat MP Melanie Oßwald believed that it was a disgrace for Russia, as well as for Germany and the world, not to allow international organizations into Chechnya. She argued that, accused of being a hotbed of terrorism, the country had no opportunities for its own development (*Deutscher Bundestag...*, 2003: 6447).

The next spectacular terrorist attacks by separatists targeted symbols of the pro-Russian authorities. The Moscow administration headquarters in Grozny and the government complex in Znamenskoye were blown up. On May 9, 2004, Akhmad Kadyrov was killed in an attack at the Grozny stadium during the Victory Day celebrations, due to an explosive charge planted under the stand of honour. A week later, Chechen field commander Shamil Basayev confessed to organizing the attack, explaining that he had acted in the name of "sacred Islamic law" and that the targets of the attack were "traitors to the Chechen nation" (*Przywódca promoskiewskich władz*, 2004).

In the snap presidential election on August 29, 2004, Alu Alkhanov, a victorious militia general and former head of the Interior Ministry in the pro-Moscow government of Chechnya, received 73.48% of the vote according to official results, with a turnout of almost 85%. Chechen separatists cast doubt on the fairness of the election, questioned the level of the officially stated turnout, and challenged the veracity of the election results. Independent observers described the election as a complete farce and a travesty of democracy. Alkhanov, who was officially supported by President Putin, was from the outset the favourite for the election, which the Kremlin was widely believed to have treated as a mere formality (Wehner, 2004).

On August 31, 2004, Schröder met with President Putin and French President Jacques Chirac in Sochi. Referring to the conflict in Chechnya, the Russian President expressed his willingness to negotiate a solution, provided that Russia's territorial integrity was not challenged. Chirac and Schröder insisted on a swift political solution in Chechnya. The Chancellor stressed that he had no doubt that the presidential elections in Chechnya would run smoothly and contribute to peace in the region. The basis for a political solution must be the fulfilment of Putin's demand to preserve Russia's territorial integrity (*Dreier-Gipfel in Sotschi...*, 2004).

After the tripartite meeting, Chancellor Schröder declared that there had been "no serious disturbances" in the Chechen elections. Government spokesman Béla Anda made accusations that Schröder's position was isolated and "incomprehensible" internationally. Although the Greens and the CDU/CSU criticized the Chancellor's cautious statements on the elections in the Caucasian republic, there was a dispute within the red-green coalition over the assessment of the elections in Chechnya. The federal government's human rights commissioner, Green Party politician Claudia Roth, was unusually outspoken in her denial of the Chancellor's statement, asserting that the vote had not taken place properly. "This was not a democratic election and the winner

of the election, Moscow's favourite candidate Alu Alkhanov, had already been determined," Roth said at a Green Party meeting in Bad Saarow, Brandenburg. Even after returning from his meeting with Putin, Schröder stressed that he considered the US assessment of the undemocratic conduct of the presidential election in Chechnya to be wrong. Schröder went on to say that "perhaps it would also be appropriate to talk about the fact that the Russian people have just been the victims of two terrorist attacks on civilian aircraft." "We must also be careful not to apply different standards: Russia is also often the victim of terrorist attacks." Ralf Fücks, Green Party expert and head of the party-linked Heinrich Böll Foundation, also voiced harsh criticism: "The Greens' objections to Schröder's close relationship with Putin are justified. It is a matter of concern for the Greens because Schröder ignores human rights with such certainty," he said in an interview with the daily newspaper *Die Welt* (*Schröders Tschetschenien...*, 2004).

A landmark act of terror was the massacre on September 1, 2004, in Beslan, on the first day of the school year, by a group of armed terrorists belonging to the forces of Chechen field commander Shamil Basayev. The situation was brought under control only on September 3 after a frontal attack and heavy losses. According to official figures, 31 hijackers were killed. In total, 334 people were killed, including 156 children, and 700 people, mostly children, were injured (Wichura, 2010: 99–100).

Impressed by the Beslan tragedy, a fierce discussion took place in the Bundestag a few days later. During a debate on Russia's policy towards Chechnya, CDU leader Angela Merkel accused Chancellor Schröder of being too reticent towards President Putin. Foreign Minister Fischer dismissed Merkel's statements as "deeply unfair and simply wrong on this issue." FDP leader Guido Westerwelle conveyed the Liberal position and accused Schröder of "appalling one-sidedness," pointing out that the federal government criticizes everything about Washington but remains silent regarding Moscow. He believed that one cannot fight terrorism while remaining silent about human rights violations, such as those in Chechnya. This stance was echoed during a meeting of the FDP parliamentary faction in Wiesbaden, where he accused Minister Fischer of sacrificing the cause of human rights. Schröder reiterated that a political solution to the Chechnya issue should be sought. However, he emphasized that no negotiations could take place with the parties responsible for the hostage-taking in Beslan (*Merkel wirft...*, 2004).

A signal of the negative stance towards the democratic deficit in Russia and the brutal behaviour towards Chechnya was the invitation in January 2004 to Berlin of Akhmed Zakayev, envoy of Chechen President Aslan Maskhadov. The initiative came from SPD MPs Markus Meckel and Gert Weisskirchen, who were reticent in their positive assessments of Schröder's policy towards Russia. It is worth mentioning that the University of Hamburg reversed its decision in August 2004 to award an honorary doctorate to President Putin. Additionally, the arrival of the pro-Russian deputy prime minister of Chechnya, the young Ramzan Kadyrov, to the international trade fair in Hanover was blocked due to suspicions of committing crimes. In contrast, there were no protests when Prime Minister Alu Alkhanov accompanied President Putin on a visit to Germany in April 2005. During this visit, Alkhanov asked Chancellor Schröder for humanitarian and financial support in Chechnya, as well as German investment to help rebuild the devastated country (Kosman, 2013: 346–347).

In September 2004, the government coordinator for German-Russian relations, Gernot Erler, proposed the assumptions for a stability pact for the Caucasus, similar to the previously established pact for southeastern Europe after the devastating war in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Under this pact, Russia would take the main burden of rebuilding the entire region in close cooperation with the European Union and neighbouring states, especially Georgia, to avoid the conflict in Chechnya spreading to the entire North Caucasus and to prevent a repetition of the Beslan situation. In mid-November, during a visit to the Kremlin, he presented Putin with a “dialogue project” aimed at fostering communication and cooperation (*Stenographischer Bericht*, 2004).

The Russian assumption was that such actions by Germany and the other EU states were primarily aimed at supporting Russian policy towards Chechnya. Thus, the aim was not to establish a dialogue with the separatists but to create political and economic conditions to strengthen the structures of local power and support the Kremlin's appointed leader, Ramzan Kadyrov, who had been deputy prime minister and de facto head of government in Chechnya since 10 May 2004. Germany was expected to assist and advise in the reconstruction of local self-government.

The Germans were certainly keen to ensure that the fight against terrorism did not involve unnecessary casualties and was kept to a minimum. These issues were to be discussed at the St. Petersburg Dialogue. In Germany, it was realized that there was no room in Russia for any civic initiatives related to the Chechen situation and that the media were effectively gagged by the authorities. Those raising uncomfortable questions were clearly identified with support for Chechen terrorism.

In November 2004, at the EU-Russia summit in The Hague, EU leaders expressed concern about developments in the North Caucasus but indicated their readiness to participate in its reconstruction. However, they were aware that providing any form of assistance would be hampered by the prevailing chaos and destabilization of local administrative structures. Quite unexpectedly, during his visit to Germany on December 20–21, 2004 (Hamburg and Schloss Gottorf in Schleswig), President Putin declared for the first time his readiness to cooperate with the European Union in solving the Caucasus problems. He promised that German proposals for stabilizing the region would be studied carefully by the Russian authorities. According to information from German government circles, this was to be a “forum for dialogue” on democracy, parliamentarism, and civil society, with the aim of contributing to the economic development of the Caucasus region. Overall, Schröder gave a positive assessment of the meeting and was pleased that German-Russian relations had reached a “depth like never before” in history. Putin dismissed the demonstrators' protests against his policy towards Chechnya, arguing that there had been no war in the country for three years. He suggested that there was no need to demonstrate and that people could go home and enjoy the Christmas holidays (*Putin macht...*, 2004).

On 16 February 2005, the parliamentary faction of the SPD and the Greens proposed the adoption of a declaration by the Bundestag on the policy of stabilizing the Caucasus and the future of Chechnya. On the one hand, they approved close cooperation with Russia in the fight against international terrorism, including in Chechnya, influenced by the terrorist act in Beslan. On the other hand, this was not to imply silence on the issues concerning the significant losses suffered by the Chechen population and

devastation of national assets. Germany and the European Union welcomed President Putin's initiative to collaborate with them in seeking a solution to stabilise the Caucasus in general and Chechnya in particular. The demands addressed to the Chechen government emphasised:

- dialogue with Russia to seek a political solution;
- enabling the activity of OSCE representatives, journalists and aid organisations;
- prepare the upcoming elections in Chechnya according to democratic standards, ensuring the presence of foreign observers;
- supporting the Russian government in the establishment and activity of the Commission for the Coordination of the Federal Executive Bodies in the Southern Federal District, which will collaborate with Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia to stabilise the Caucasus;
- collaboratively engage with the Russian government and society to foster intensive dialogue and exchange of experiences. This approach should address new challenges related to violence and terror from legal, political, and security perspectives (*Antrag der Fraktion...*, 2005).

On 8 March 2005, Russian forces managed to capture the unrecognized rebel President Aslan Maskhadov near Tolstoy-Yurt during a special operation, killing him in the process. Although there were warnings in the West about the potential radicalisation of the Chechen resistance, many Russian observers, who viewed Maskhadov as the originator and co-organizer of numerous attacks, assumed that his death would reduce terrorist acts and stabilise the situation. In reality, the few remaining rebels were gradually backing away from the idea of war with Russia. After Maskhadov's assassination, the Russians concluded that Chechnya was no longer a significant problem and that the reconstruction of the republic could now be seriously addressed in cooperation with the EU (Jagielski, 2008: 256).

In the spring of 2005, the EU sent a mission to the Caucasus countries to assess needs and the possibility for providing necessary aid. Since the outbreak of the second Chechen war, €170 million had already been allocated from the EU, mainly for refugees. The intention now was to focus on specific measures in such areas as education, health care, and job creation. Local experts recommended small loans and financial support for start-ups and small economic initiatives (Halbach, 2005).

CONTINUATION OF CHANCELLOR A. MERKEL'S PRO-RUSSIAN POLICY

To Putin's disappointment, in September 2005, the CDU, led by Angela Merkel, together with the CSU, narrowly won the German parliamentary elections. After prolonged negotiations with the SPD, the formation of a grand coalition government of CDU/CSU-SPD parties was agreed upon on 9 October 2005.

In her view, a strategic partnership with Russia could not develop without building it on a foundation of shared democratic values. In the coalition agreement, signed on 11 November 2005 between the CDU, CSU and SPD, the introduction stated that *the European unity and the Atlantic partnership are the foundations of German foreign*

policy and form the basis for our relations with Russia. It was declared that Germany would strive, together with the EU, to better build a framework project for a political solution to the Chechen conflict. Relations with Moscow were to be underpinned by the slogan: *continuity and new expressive accents (Gemeinsam für Deutschland..., 2005).*

During Chancellor Merkel's first visit to Moscow in January 2006, she reaffirmed the importance for Germany of continuing its strategic partnership with Russia. However, she did not hesitate to criticize Russian policy in Chechnya and, to Putin's displeasure, suggested that the European Union should be involved in negotiations on the issue. Additionally, she saw fit to meet with representatives of opposition local government and human rights organizations at the German embassy just before her departure. At her request, representatives of German foundations operating in Russia and supporting the democratic transition had already received assurances that there would be no state interference in their statutory activities and that they would not have to be registered under the restrictive Russian law (*Merkel und Putin..., 2006*).

The assumption of the office of Chancellor by Angela Merkel marked a "depersonalization" of the Moscow–Berlin relationship, which had previously been characterized by the "male friendship" (*Männerfreundschaft*) of Schröder and Putin. The CDU/CSU-SPD coalition government signalled from the outset that economic cooperation with Russia would be interdependent with Russia's adherence to common democratic values and the rule of law. In practice, however, under pressure from influential economic circles, priority was given to trade. Questions of human rights, the rule of law, and the democratization of the system were not persistently pursued. The focus was on achieving a rapid and wide opening of Russian markets for German products, creating a favourable climate for the activities of German companies in Russia, and ensuring a stable and reliable supply of energy resources to Germany.

On 27 November 2005, parliamentary elections were held in Chechnya. Only parties that recognised Chechnya as part of the Russian Federation were allowed to run for both houses of the republic's parliament. The elections were won by the United Russia party, ahead of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation and the Union of Right Forces. In February 2006, Ramzan Kadyrov was elected chairman of the Republican branch of the United Russia party, which had by then become the most dominant force on the political scene in Chechnya. Putin announced that the emergence of a legitimate, representative organ of power marked the completion of the formal and legal procedures for the reconstruction of the constitutional system in the republic. The elections to the local parliament, according to the Kremlin's intentions, were evidence of the progressive normalisation of life in this beleaguered republic in the Caucasus. Moscow's establishment of an obedient government led to a slow stabilisation in Chechnya. A network of informants was expanded throughout the country, allowing the Russians to reduce their own military presence. This resulted in a significant drop in civilian casualties from the conflict.

On 8 March 2005, as a result of a Russian military operation, Aslan Maskhadov, still head of the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria, was killed. He was succeeded by Abdul-Halim Sadulayev, who was killed a year later during a combat operation by pro-Russian Chechen militia and the FSB. Sadulayev was succeeded by Doku Umarov,

who appointed Shamil Basayev as vice-president of Ichkeria. On July 10, 2006, Basayev was killed in Ingushetia while carrying a large quantity of explosives. Following Basayev's death on 15 July 2006, the federal authorities announced an amnesty lasting until January 15, 2007. As a result, several hundred separatists – participants in the First and Second Chechen Wars and those who provided them with assistance – came forward and revealed themselves (Kuleba, 2007). Later, internal dissent emerged among supporters of independence due to the radicalization of views held by some politicians. A few years ago, the conflict in Chechnya could be characterized as a war between Chechen separatists and the Russian Federation authorities. However, over the past four years, the nature of this conflict has changed significantly. It was no longer just a Russian-Chechen conflict but also an intra-Chechen conflict, involving militants and Chechens cooperating with Moscow. Additionally, it had an increasingly visible social basis. Moreover, the ideology of the fighters changed markedly, as they began to fight not under national liberation slogans but under Islamic slogans (Szukalski, 2008).

In 2006, Ramzan Kadyrov became the new head of government of Chechnya. His rule was characterized by ruthlessness, cruelty, but also great efficiency. The result was an undoubted stabilization of the situation. Although the intensity of fighting in Chechnya itself has decreased in recent years, the conflict has largely spread to the territories of other republics such as Ingushetia, Dagestan, and Kabardino-Balkaria. The goal of the Islamists became the “liberation” of the entire North Caucasus and the introduction of Sharia law there. The main objective shifted from the independence of Chechnya itself to the creation of an Islamic emirate in the Caucasus. On October 31, 2007, the leader of the Ichkerian Islamists, Doku Umarov, announced the liquidation of the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria and the creation of the Caucasus Emirate – an Islamic state encompassing the entire North Caucasus. This decision caused a new conflict among supporters of the country's independence. Part of the Chechen independence emigration also did not recognize the emirate, with Akhmed Zakayev remaining the leader of this independence wing (Falkowski, 2007).

In the following months, there were regular meetings between Putin and Chancellor Angela Merkel. However, the Russian president's visit to Dresden on October 10, 2006, was overshadowed by the murder of the well-known Kremlin opposition journalist Anna Politkovskaya, which triggered anti-Putin demonstrations in the streets of the Saxon capital. In January 2007, in Sochi, Merkel, now acting as head of the government of the country holding the six-month presidency of the Council of the European Union, discussed a number of economic issues with the Russian president. Merkel's concern, however, was the Kremlin's growing reluctance to become institutionally linked to the West. She was unpleasantly surprised and even shocked by President Putin's aggressive speech at the 43rd Munich Security Conference in February 2007, where he ruthlessly attacked the US and NATO, accusing them of an arms race and lecturing Russia on democratic standards. Germany, while striving to maintain correct relations with Washington, was confronted with a new burdensome issue (Singhofen, 2007). In this situation, the European Union-Russia summit held on 18 May 2007, in Samara could not have had much effect. A gradual change of mood was evident in the Federal Republic. Merkel was mindful of public opinion in her own

country, which was increasingly critical of Russia and Putin's authoritarian rule. The unceremonious withholding of oil supplies via the Druzhba pipeline in January 2007, intended to force Belarus into submission, prompted critical comments from the Chancellor. After the death of Anna Politkovskaya, the daily newspaper *Die Welt* referred to Putin as a murderer for the first time. The death of former KGB military counterintelligence agent Alexander Litvinenko, whose murder was unequivocally attributed to the Russian secret services, and the ban on a trip to Samara for Garry Kasparov, a critic of Kremlin policy and renowned chess player, caused widespread shock in Germany (Koszel, 2018: 127–136).

In connection with the deteriorating atmosphere towards Russia, the issue of Chechnya, which had been ignored during the German EU presidency due to German plans for EU-wide reforms in EU-Russia relations, resurfaced. In October 2006, the Russian authorities closed down the Russian-Chechen Friendship Society (TPRCz), founded by Chechen sympathisers and critics of the current Russian government. Since 2000, when it was officially registered, there had been several cases of torture and ill-treatment, "disappearances," and alleged extrajudicial executions of Society members in the North Caucasus. In 2005, the actions against the Society expanded to include criminal investigations into alleged articles published by the organisation, increased inspections by the tax authorities, and efforts by the Ministry of Justice to close down the Society (*Towarzystwo Przyjaźni...*, 2005).

In a discussion in the Bundestag in November 2006, Green MEP Marieluise Beck demanded that the government participate in the St. Petersburg Dialogue meetings with representatives of human rights defenders, accusing them of lacking the courage to raise issues related to Politkovskaya's murder, the closure of the TPRCz, and human rights violations in Chechnya. In response, Gernot Erler evasively stated that legal proceedings were underway and that the German government did not yet have a clear position (*Bewertung...*, 2006: 3). In May 2007, the German Presidency of the EU Council, in the European Parliament, merely expressed its concern about the closure of the TPRCz, promised to monitor developments, and left the resolution of this problem to cooperation with the Russian Federation (*Parlamentarische Anfrage*, 2007).

During the reign of the new Kremlin administration, a meeting between President Dmitry Medvedev and Federal Security Service Director Aleksandr Bortnikov took place on March 27, 2009. On April 16, 2009, following Medvedev's instructions, Chechnya's status as a "zone for conducting anti-terrorist operations" was revoked. Since the withdrawal of some 20,000 Russian troops, governmental power has increasingly been in the hands of Chechen President Ramzan Kadyrov, who was sworn into office in 2007. His dictatorial administration has been characterized by serious human rights violations, corruption, and the cult of personality. The situation in Chechnya has stabilized as a result of heavy investment by the Russian Federation in rebuilding the destroyed infrastructure. However, calculations by the Russian human rights organization Memorial, using projections based on regional casualty figures, reported that 75,000 civilians and 14,000 soldiers were killed in the two Chechen wars. On the other hand, the chairman of the Chechen State Council, Taus Jabrailov, accepted without distinction that a total of 160,000 people had died (Hartmann, 2005).

CONCLUSION

Russia's illegal operation in Chechnya, brutal in the first Chechen war and even more dramatic in the second, posed a huge challenge to Germany's Auswärtiges Amt diplomacy. This impacted their activities in international organizations and involved Berlin's authority in seeking a peaceful, bloodless solution to the conflict. Human rights violations and the pacification of Chechnya by Russian armed forces were justified by the Schröder/Fischer government in the context of attacks by terrorist separatists and Islamists. The fascination with close cooperation with Russia within the framework of a "cordial partnership" with the Putin administration had the potential to create enormous economic benefits and link Russia to the European security structure for Germany. In this situation, Chancellor Merkel continued her current policy, aware that there were sensitive issues in German-Russian relations: the Chechen and Georgian wars, authoritarian tendencies in Russian politics, the suppression of the media, politically motivated murders, and Russia's support for Iran's nuclear programme. In the face of fears and questions from her own citizens, Merkel, among other things, through symbolic gestures such as an apparently valuable meeting with Kremlin critics, did nothing that could threaten the core of German-Russian relations. She realised that Russia's ruthless attacks on Chechen society and the successes achieved were influencing the consciousness of Russian elites and society, as well as the attitude of the authorities towards citizens, human rights, and political pluralism. The scope of influence of the power ministries in the state has increased, leading to a rise in authoritarianism and a restriction of freedom of speech under President Putin. Additionally, there has been an increase in Caucasophobia and Islamophobia in Russian society.

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ABSTRACT

Russia's inhumane and brutal war against Chechnya (1994–1996; 1999–2009) was intended to destroy the republic's independence and bring it under Moscow's authority. The German governments of Chancellor H. Kohl, G. Schröder, and A. Merkel tolerated the repressive actions of the Russian army, which raised questions about reasons for the lack of effective action by German diplomacy to stop the pacification of Chechnya. This was in contradiction with the flagship slogans of the German foreign policy which highlighted the need to mediate and seek a peaceful resolution of conflicts. Since 2001, terrorist attacks by Chechen Islamic radicals largely served Berlin as arguments for V. Putin's understanding of the solution to the Russia's "internal affair." The research methods of source analysis, historical, comparison, decision-making, and institutional-legal methods were helpful in the development of the article.

Keywords: Germany, Russia, Chechen wars, 21st century

NIEMCY WOBEC ROSYJSKIEJ WOJNY W CZECZENII 1999-2009**STRESZCZENIE**

Nieludzka i brutalna wojna Rosji z Czeczenią (1994–1996; 1999–2009) miała na celu zniszczenie niepodległości republiki i podporządkowanie jej Moskwie. Niemieckie rządy kanclerza H. Kohla, G. Schrödera i A. Merkel tolerowały represyjne działania rosyjskiej armii, co rodziło pytania o przyczyny braku skutecznych działań niemieckiej dyplomacji na rzecz powstrzymania pacyfikacji Czeczenii. Stało to w sprzeczności ze sztandarowymi hasłami niemieckiej polityki zagranicznej, które podkreślały konieczność mediacji i dążenia do pokojowego rozwiązywania konfliktów. Od 2001 r. ataki terrorystyczne dokonywane przez czeczeńskich radykałów islamskich w dużej mierze służyły Berlinowi jako argumenty na rzecz rozumienia przez W. Putina rozwiązania "wewnętrznej sprawy" Rosji. W opracowaniu artykułu pomocne okazały się metody badawcze analizy źródeł, metody historyczne, porównawcze, decyzyjne i metody instytucjonalno-prawne.

Słowa kluczowe: Niemcy, Rosja, wojny czeczeńskie, XXI wiek

