

GERMANY IN MULTIPOLAR WORLD AND SERBIA'S STRATEGIC OPTIONS

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Starting from the assumption that the process of global restructuring of power is underway, Serbia is facing a period of intense reflection on its place and strategic possibilities. One of the most important actors in the organization of new international order is the Federal Republic of Germany. The first part of the paper presents the position of official Berlin in complex circumstances, concluding with the latest war operations in Ukraine. The policy of firm relations with the European and North Atlantic group has brought many benefits, and also inconvenience. Germany, as a regional and middle power, has been trying to find its place among the most powerful countries in the world for three decades, and the recent events in Eastern Europe open up opportunities for its new international profiling, especially in the field of security. Therefore, the first objective of the paper is to shed light on several decades-long contradictions in the foreign policy of official Berlin, while in the second part, both the position and potential opportunities of Serbia in positioning itself on the international stage have been analysed, in comparison with the strategic interests of Germany in Europe and the world. The existing problems in the relations between Serbia and Germany represent challenges in further cooperation. At the same time, various forms of partnership with Germany, as well as its importance in the EU, have the potential to strengthen bilateral and multilateral relations, which Serbia should not give up easily.

Key words: Germany, multipolarity, Serbia, strategy, cooperation

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Introduction

The German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, addressing members of the Bundestag at the special session held a few days after the beginning of the conflict in Ukraine, stated: "February 24, 2022 marks a turning point in the history of our continent".¹ The current crisis, which goes beyond Eastern Europe, has reopened the old debate about the position of the great powers in international relations. On the one hand, the public is questioning whether the Russian Federation is capable of withstanding the pressure of the United States and its allies. On the other hand, there is an increasing number of thinkers who believe that the People's Republic of China will become the most important world power in the coming decades, primarily due to its rapid economic and technological rise.² Since the collapse of communism in 1989/1990 and the period of bipolarity the world entered the unipolar dominance of the United States. The spread of democratic ideas and international institutions, as well as military and economic alliances under the US mentorship, have contributed to Washington becoming the main factor in international relations. Many military interventions in the immediate surroundings and distant countries, from 1991 to 2011, were the confirmation of the power of this country. The rise of China, Russia, Brazil and India, the internal crisis in the US and the inability of the European Union to find the optimal *modus operandi* after Brexit have awakened old fears about the collapse of the West.³ However, the possibilities of BRICS seem limited, primarily due to the fact that the interests of the countries within this bloc are either unrelated or opposed.⁴ Theories about the world regionalization assume that the planet could be divided into several large areas that would be governed by some countries.⁵ Nevertheless, the conflicts of the world strongest countries over dominance in Africa, the Middle East and the Pacific region show that it is difficult to predict which country will benefit the most. Therefore, despite the current dilemmas, there is no doubt that a process of global power restructuring with a very uncertain

¹ „Regierungserklärung von Bundeskanzler Olaf Scholz am 27. Februar 2022“, Rede von Bundeskanzler Olaf Scholz am 27. Februar 2022, <https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-de/aktuelles/regierungserklaerung-von-bundeskanzler-olaf-scholz-am-27-februar-2022-2008356>, 15/4/2022.

² Mark O Yeisley, „Bipolarity, Proxy Wars, and the Rise of China“, *Strategic Studies Quarterly*, vol. 5, no. 4, 2011, pp. 75–91; Richard, Rosecrance, „The Partial Diffusion of Power“, *International Studies Review*, vol. 16, no. 2, 2014, pp. 199–205.

³ Scott Lawless, „American Grand Strategy for an Emerging World Order“, *Strategic Studies Quarterly*, vol. 14, no. 2, 2020, pp. 127–147.

⁴ Andrew Hurrell, „Hegemony, Liberalism and Global Order: What Space for Would-Be Great Powers?“ *International Affairs* (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-) vol. 82, no. 1 (2006), pp. 1–19; Sinem Ünaldirar Kocamaz, „The Rise of New Powers in World Politics: Russia, China and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization“, *Uluslararası İlişkiler*, Vol. 16, No. 61, 2019, pp. 127–141.

⁵ Fabio Petito, „Dialogue of Civilizations in a Multipolar World: Toward a Multicivilizational-Multiplex World Order.“ *International Studies Review*, vol. 18, no. 1, 2016, pp. 78–91; Amitav Acharya, „The Emerging Regional Architecture of World Politics“, *World Politics*, vol. 59, no. 4, 2007, pp. 629–652.

outcome is underway. The goal of this paper is to define the international position of Berlin based on the relevant literature and key political documents of the Federal Republic of Germany and, based on such an analysis, to offer possible strategic options for Serbia.

Germany in multipolarized world

Table 1 – *The position of the FR of Germany according to key foreign policy factors*

Key topics	The position of Berlin
European Union	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – advocacy for the strong union and a unified security and foreign policy – cooperation with France – a necessary condition – stable finances are required from the members of the eurozone – support to expansion
US	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – cooperation through NATO – US military presence in Germany since 1945 – common political values – a unique position regarding the war in Ukraine
Russia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – economic cooperation – from the 1990s political partnership to confrontation today – value disagreements
China	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – system/value rivalry – economic partnership and competition – disputed policy towards Taiwan and Hong Kong
The rest of the world	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – “Marshall Plan for Africa” – India, Israel, Japan, South Korea as partners

On the basis of many indicators, the FR of Germany cannot be considered a superpower such as the United States, the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China today, since it does not have the right of veto in the UN Security Council, it does not have either necessary nuclear weapons or the appropriate resources to raise the level of its self-sufficiency, as the oil and gas supply crisis has clearly demonstrated. However, strong export-oriented economy and a central demographic and political position in the structures of the European Union have shown that Berlin is an important factor in international politics.⁶ The orientation

⁶ Kenneth N. Waltz, „Structural Realism after the Cold War”, *International Security*, Vol. 25, No. 1, 2000, pp. 5–41; Milomir Stepić, „Geopolitička perspektiva rekonfiguracije postjugoslovenskog prostora”, *Nacionalni interes*, year XVII, vol. 40, number 1, 2021, pp. 183–229; Adam Chapnik, „The Middle Power”, *Canadian Foreign Policy*, Vol. 7, No. 2, 1999, pp. 73–82; Gene Gerzhoy, „Alliance Coercion and Nuclear Restraint: How the United States Thwarted West Germany's Nuclear Ambitions”, *International Security*, vol. 39, no. 4, 2015, pp. 91–129; Julian Germann, „German 'Grand Strategy' and the Rise of Neoliberalism”, *International Studies Quarterly*, vol. 58, no. 4, 2014, pp. 706–716. Simon Bulmer, William E. Paterson, „Germany and the European Union: From 'tamed Power' to Normalized Power?” *International Affairs*, vol. 86, no. 5, 2010, pp. 1051–1073.

towards the European integration processes has brought many benefits to Germany, which began to look for its chance to return to the world stage in a unified policy. As the German Chancellor Olaf Scholz noted in his speech on February 27: "Europe is the German framework" and since 1991, no government has given up on stronger integration, especially in monetary, security and foreign policy. For decades, it has been the policy of official Berlin to establish the EU in which it will be possible to make external decisions by overvoting, and not by consensus of all member states, which would suit the centres of power the most. Although Germans have advocated a policy of strong integration and fiscal discipline, especially since the Greek debt crisis, the wave of borrowing caused by the SARS-CoV19 virus has forced Berlin to relent.⁷ Not only exceeding the debt limit of 60% of GDP was a constitutional precedent, but also in foreign policy Germany had to firstly give in to over-indebted France, which it has an ambivalent relationship with due to leadership issue, especially after Britain's exit from the European Union. Berlin and Paris, despite their declarative closeness, have many opposing views, which is particularly visible in the EU enlargement policy.⁸ It seems, nevertheless, that Germany and France have been unsuccessfully trying for decades to establish an axis to rival Washington and NATO in a matter. All German governments persist in striving to strengthen the European security forces. At the end of the 1990s there were attempts to affirm the Western European Defence Union, at the beginning of the new millennium EUROPOL was the result of joint efforts, and recently the idea of PESCO and a greater role of the OSCE failed due to the impossibility of peacefully solving the Ukrainian problem. Along with these tendencies, the Bundeswehr is occasionally active in foreign military missions, which has led to harsh criticism in the German public.⁹ Doubts are increasing that the Scholz government's great allocations to the

⁷ Jerotijević, Dušan, Spalević, Žaklina, Jerotijević, Zoran, „Nato na početku XXI veka" Vojno delo 70, no. 3 (2018): 75-88; „Koalitionsvereinbarung für die 12. Wahlperiode des Deutschen Bundestages", Koalitionsvereinbarung für die 12. Wahlperiode des Deutschen Bundestages zwischen CDU und FDP 1991, <https://www.kas.de/documents/291599/291648/Koalitionsvertrag-UiD-1991-2.pdf/b29a7151-03c2-e6fd-122d-6b95287c4269?t=1563195813522>, 28/2/2022. „Erneuerung – Gerechtigkeit – Nachhaltigkeit. Für ein wirtschaftlich starkes, soziales und ökologisches Deutschland. Für eine lebendige Demokratie", Koalitionsvereinbarung zwischen der Sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands und Bündnis 90/Die Grünen 2002, http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bibliothek/downl/2002_koalitionsvertrag.pdf, 28/2/2022. Slobodan Đurović, Milan Đurović, Jelena Đurović, „Strategija Evropske unije u rešavanju dužničke krize u zemljama evrozone", Vojno delo, vol. 64, no. 3, 2012, pp. 60-74

⁸ Ozdemir Cagatay, „The Franco-German Rivalry in the Post-Brexit European Union", Uluslararası İlişkiler, 2021, pp. 1-21.

⁹ „Koalitionsvereinbarung für die 13. Wahlperiode des Deutschen Bundestages", Koalitionsvereinbarung für die 13. Wahlperiode des Deutschen Bundestages zwischen CDU und FDP 1994, https://www.kas.de/c/document_library/get_file?uuid=6ca3896a-da76-f841-a1c8-bfd9ae53f648&groupId=-252038, 28/2/2022; „Ein neuer Aufbruch für Europa. Eine neue Dynamik für Deutschland. Ein neuer Zusammenhalt für unser Land", Koalitionsvertrag zwischen CDU, CSU und SPD 19. Legislaturperiode 2018, https://archiv.cdu.de/system/tdf/media/dokumente/koalitionsvertrag_2018.pdf?file=1, 28/2/2022; Timo Noetzel, Benjamin Schreer, „Does a Multi-Tier NATO Matter? The Atlantic Alliance and the Process of Strategic Change." International Affairs, vol. 85, no. 2, 2009, pp. 211–226.

military could disrupt the military balance of power on the European continent, since due to the war in Ukraine, other countries are also extensively implementing armament policy.¹⁰

Although the EU is a rather developed area in an economic sense, with Germany at its centre, it can be said that in recent decades there has been a general trend of pushing Europe out of the world political, financial and economic centre. Firstly, the United States took the lead, and then China emerged as a much greater, more competitive and ready competitor.¹¹ Recent events indicate that it will be difficult for Berlin to emancipate itself from the alliance with the United States, and the insistence on human rights, democracy and freedoms has brought the official authorities of Germany into conflict with Russia, China, Turkey, Egypt, Ethiopia and other countries with different world views.¹² In addition to ideological conflicts, there are many opportunities for cooperation, especially economic ones. The rapid rise of China and trade with Russia and Turkey required German authorities to show greater flexibility. Until the beginning of the conflict in Ukraine, Berlin tried to include Moscow in various frameworks of the European security, which ended unsuccessfully. The sanctions implemented by Germany and the EU against Russia, as well as the Scholz government's support to arming Kiev, have led to an increasing confrontation between the two countries. Similar problems arise in the policy towards Georgia, Moldova and Belarus, which Moscow traditionally considers a part of its sphere of influence.¹³

¹⁰ Tim Oliver, Michael John Williams, „Special Relationships in Flux: Brexit and the Future of the US–EU and US–UK Relationships.” *International Affairs*, vol. 92, no. 3, 2016, pp. 547–567; Timo, Noetzel, Benjamin Schreer, „All the Way? The Evolution of German Military Power.” *International Affairs*, vol. 84, no. 2, 2008, pp. 211–21; Alister Miskimmon, „Falling into Line? Kosovo and the Course of German Foreign Policy.” *International Affairs*, vol. 85, no. 3, 2009, pp. 561–73; See about the constitutional position of the Bundeswehr: Mladen Tišma, „Ustavnopravno regulisanje sistema odbrane u Saveznoj Republici Nemačkoj”, *Vojno delo*, vol. 62, no. 4, 2010, pp. 119–131; Timo Noetzel, „The German Politics of War: Kunduz and the War in Afghanistan.” *International Affairs* (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-), vol. 87, no. 2, Wiley, 2011, pp. 397–417; James D. Bindenagel, „Afghanistan: The German Factor”, *Prism*, vol. 1, no. 4, 2010, pp. 95–112; „Deutschlands Zukunft gestalten”, *Koalitionsvertrag zwischen CDU, CSU und SPD 2013*, https://www.kas.de/c/document_library/get_file?uuid=2f9f5a98-5d12-0987-7f12-aca250c6ea92&groupId=252038, 19/3/2022

¹¹ Simon Bulmer, William E. Paterson, „Germany and the European Union: From ‘tamed Power’ to Normalized Power?”, *International Affairs*, vol. 86, no. 5, 2010, pp. 1051–1073.

¹² „Erneuerung – Gerechtigkeit – Nachhaltigkeit. Für ein wirtschaftlich starkes, soziales und ökologisches Deutschland. Für eine lebendige Demokratie”, *Koalitionsvereinbarung zwischen der Sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands und Bündnis 90/Die Grünen 2002*, http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bibliothek/downl/2002_koalitionsvertrag.pdf, 28/2/2022.; „Aufbruch und Erneuerung - Deutschlands Weg ins 21. Jahrhundert”, *Koalitionsvereinbarung zwischen der Sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands und Bündnis 90/Die Grünen 1998*, <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bibliothek/downl/koalitionsvertrag1998.pdf>, 28/2/2022.; Muhamad Takiyuddin Ismail, Abdul Muein Abadi, „Stiftungen and Political Education in Malaysia: The Role of Germany's Democracy Assistance”, *Asian Survey*, vol. 57, no. 3, 2017, pp. 548–570.

¹³ Tuomas Forsberg, „From ‘Ostpolitik’ to ‘Frostpolitik’? Merkel, Putin and German Foreign Policy towards Russia.”, *International Affairs*, vol. 92, no. 1, 2016, pp. 21–42. Compare: Bojan Marić,

Out of Europe, Berlin's policy often follows the positions of official Washington, especially with regard to Syria, Afghanistan, Palestine and Israel.¹⁴ German troops in Syria supported the anti-Assad and anti-Islamist opposition, but such a policy failed with the withdrawal from that country at the beginning of 2022.¹⁵ The control of the migrant crisis, which is of exceptional importance not only for demographic, but also for security reasons, is of special importance for Germany and the European Union.¹⁶ Berlin and Brussels share similar concern with regard to Africa, trying to dampen the influence of the United States and China with great investment programmes, as well as to increase the level of security in these rather vulnerable and densely populated areas.¹⁷

The policy towards the People's Republic of China remains contradictory and in the shadow of growing conflicts between Washington and Beijing. Following the US position, Germany has attacked China in recent years for human rights abuse, and has supported Hong Kong's movement for greater autonomy and defended the rights of the Uyghur minority in Xinjiang.¹⁸ In contrast to political relations, economic relations show a greater degree of cooperation. Additionally, relations between Beijing and Berlin have been strengthened by the desire to effectively control the northern route that would connect Europe and China. However, official London does not hide its dissatisfaction with the relationship between Germany and Denmark, Norway, the Netherlands, Greenland and Iceland, which opens up new possibilities for political tensions.¹⁹

„Nemačko-ruski odnosi u periodu od 2000. do 2017. godine“, Megatrend revija, vol. 17, no. 1, 2020, pp. 63-88. „Mehr Fortschritt wagen. Bündnis für Freiheit, Gerechtigkeit und Nachhaltigkeit“, Koalitionsvertrag 2021— 2025 zwischen der Sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands (SPD), Bündnis 90 / Die Grünen und den Freien Demokraten (FDP) 2021, https://www.spd.de/fileadmin/Dokumente/Koalitionsvertrag/Koalitionsvertrag_2021-2025.pdf, 28/2/2022.

¹⁴ „Wachstum, Bildung, Zusammenhalt“, Der Koalitionsvertrag zwischen CDU, CSU und FDP 2009, https://www.kas.de/c/document_library/get_file?uuid=83dbb842-b2f7-bf99-6180-e65b2de7b4d4&groupId=252038, 28/2/2022.

¹⁵ Deutsche Welle. „Germany extends Bundeswehr mission in Iraq“, Deutsche Welle, 12/1/2022, <https://www.dw.com/en/germany-extends-bundeswehr-mission-in-iraq/a-60400784>, 20/3/2022.

¹⁶ Çiğdem Nas, „The EU's Approach to the Syrian Crisis: Turkey as a Partner?“, Uluslararası İlişkiler, Vol. 16, No. 62, 2019, pp. 45-64.

¹⁷ „Ein neuer Aufbruch für Europa. Eine neue Dynamik für Deutschland. Ein neuer Zusammenhalt für unser Land“, Koalitionsvertrag zwischen CDU, CSU und SPD 19. Legislaturperiode 2018, https://archiv.cdu.de/system/tdf/media/dokumente/koalitionsvertrag_2018.pdf?file=1, 28/2/2022

¹⁸ „Gemeinsam für Deutschland – mit Mut und Menschlichkeit.“, Koalitionsvertrag zwischen CDU, CSU und SPD 2005, https://www.kas.de/c/document_library/get_file?uuid=16f196dd-0298-d416-0acb-954d2a6a9d8d&groupId=252038, 28/2/2022; „Mehr Fortschritt wagen. Bündnis für Freiheit, Gerechtigkeit und Nachhaltigkeit“, Koalitionsvertrag 2021— 2025 zwischen der Sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands (SPD), Bündnis 90 / Die Grünen und den Freien Demokraten (FDP) 2021, https://www.spd.de/fileadmin/Dokumente/Koalitionsvertrag/Koalitionsvertrag_2021-2025.pdf, 28/2/2022.

¹⁹ Margaret Blunden, „Geopolitics and the Northern Sea Route“, International Affairs, vol. 88, no. 1, 2012, 115-129.

Serbia's strategic options

In complex political circumstances, the question arises as to how Serbia can preserve its internal and external security and improve its position, taking into account political, normative, ethical, social and many other factors. The preservation of territorial integrity, military neutrality and orientation towards European integration represent the continuities of foreign policy, and the specific position of Serbia and the Serbian nation implies that the state has to lead a careful and balanced regional policy.²⁰

In the strategic documents of the Republic of Serbia, the United States, Russia, China and NATO are mentioned as important international factors. There is no mention of Germany. However, Berlin's role in the Yugoslav crisis, political influence in the post-Yugoslav territory, the military presence of the Bundeswehr in Kosovo and Metohija, the participation of the German Navy in the Mediterranean and the Aegean, the activities of the Luftwaffe in Romania and Iraq and economic cooperation, represent clear signals that this is the important engagement of this country in the wider environment.²¹

In addition to open disagreements, as is the case with the status of Kosovo and Metohija and the Republic of Srpska, there are also opportunities for joint cooperation, which should be used and deepened to the maximum. Both countries have recognized the fight against illegal migration, crime, terrorism and cyber threats as key security challenges, so joint partnership can have a very positive effect on bilateral relations.²²

²⁰ Radoslav Gaćinović, "Strategija nacionalne bezbednosti strateški dokument države", Nacionalni interes vol. VI, no. 3, 2009, pp. 195-210; Aleksandar Saša Gajić, "Mogućnost geopolitičke preorijentacije Srbije u savremenim međunarodnim prilikama", Nacionalni interes, vol. 19, no. 1, 2014, pp. 191-212; Dragan Đukanović, Ivona Lađevac, „Prioriteti spoljnopolitičke strategije Republike Srbije”, Međunarodni problemi, year 61, no. 3, 2009, pp. 343-364; Ana Paraušić, Filip Stojanović, „Geopolitički elementi u strateškim dokumentima u oblasti bezbednosti i odbrane Republike Srbije”, Vojno delo 69, no. 7, 2017, pp. 87-99; Ivan Rančić, Olga Zorić, Hatidža Beriša, "Neutralnost i Srbija", Vojno delo, vol. 71, no. 2, 2019, pp. 9-25; "Strategija nacionalne bezbednosti Republike Srbije, oktobar 2009", Narodna skupština Republike Srbije, 26/10/2009, https://www.mod.gov.rs/multimedia/file/staticki_sadržaj/dokumenta/strategije/Strategija%20nacionalne%20bezbednosti%20Republike%20Serbia.pdf 3/25/2022.; "Strategija nacionalne bezbednosti Republike Srbije, 2009", Narodna skupština Republike Srbije, 27/12/2019, <https://www.pravno-informacionisistem.rs/SlGlasnikPortal/eli/rep/sgrs/skupstina/strategija/2019/94/2,23/3/2022>.

²¹ Milovan Vuković, "Posledice ujedinjenja Nemačke po budućnost Evrope", Vojno delo, vol. 45, no. 3-4, 1993, pp. 198-209;

²² Dragan Jovašević, „Computer crimes in Serbia”, Vojno delo, vol. 71, no. 5, 2019, pp. 85-92; Iris Bjelica-Vlajić, „Vojska Srbije kao činilac međunarodne saradnje i evrointegracija”, Vojno delo, vol. 73, no. 3, 2021, pp. 48-59; Veljko Blagojević, Igor Pejić, „Ključne reperkusije migracione krize u jugoistočnoj Evropi”, Vojno delo, vol. 70, no. 2, 2018, 51-70; Spasoje M. Vulević, „Migrantska kriza kao izazov socijalnoj bezbednosti u Evropskoj uniji”, Vojno delo, vol. 70, no. 3, 2018, pp. 55-74. Dejan V. Vuletić, Miloš R. Milenković, Anđelija R. Đukić, „Sajber prostor kao područje sukobljavanja – slučaj SAD – Iran i Severna Koreja”, Vojno delo, vol. 73, no. 1, 2021, pp. 1-14. Mijomir Perović, „Sajber kriminal kao globalna prijetnja u svijetu”, Vojno delo, vol. 70, no. 3, 2018, pp. 157-163.

The deficit in foreign trade represents the continuity of the Serbian economy. Due to its proximity to great economies, such as German and Italian, as well as the lack of raw materials and technology, Serbia has great inconvenience in trade with the world. Germany and Austria are countries that have exerted a considerable influence in economy for several centuries. The only alternative to the import of finished goods comes from the People's Republic of China, which has been continuously increasing the volume of trade with Europe for the past several decades. In regard to the export of raw materials, the war in Ukraine and the sanctions against Russia are extremely unfavourable, especially for Serbian agriculture. In this regard, the countries of the region represent an important destination for the whole Serbian export. Due to the positive balance with the Western Balkan countries, as well as the fact that Serbs live in all surrounding countries in a large number, great opportunities are opening up for Serbia from regional integration. Through the Berlin process, Germany is trying not only to offer a perspective, but also to assert itself as a leading partner. The statement by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Annalena Baerbock, shows that even the Scholz government will not give up on the Berlin process. However, with the Open Balkans project, the United States is trying to offer an alternative to the Berlin process, proposing the establishment of a new group of countries following the model of the Visegrád Group.²³

Due to the Ukrainian crisis, the issue of the Western Balkan integration will remain on the back burner. There is no doubt that the further development of the war in Ukraine will contribute to the modification of Serbia's various strategies. In case of de-escalation, it is possible to expect that there will be: 1) a new division of spheres of interest, 2) maintenance of the current status and 3) relocation of the conflict to other areas. On the contrary, maintaining the *status quo* will lead to the regional pacification, but there is no doubt that in the following months the pressure from the West and Russia on all neutral countries will be greater. Minister Baerbock's recent appeal to Serbia to introduce sanctions against Russia speaks in favour of this.²⁴ Belgrade should lead a constructive regional policy and support the Western Balkan integration, as well as consistently insist on the implementation of international law. Strengthening military capacities can be a very important tool in deterrence at regional level, but of limited scope having in mind the presence of the NATO forces. The pressures will undoubtedly increase in the field of energy industry, as well. The potential introduction of sanctions against Russia would lead to a great increase in the prices of raw materials, which would not only further burden the already negative foreign trade balance, but would also affect the lives of citizens in many aspects.

²³ Ministarstvo spoljnih poslova. „Starović: Open Balkans is a leading initiative in terms of regional cooperation”, Izjava zamenika ministra spoljnih poslova Republike Srbije, 29/9/2021, <https://www.mfa.gov.rs/en/press-service/news/starovic-open-balkans-leading-initiative-terms-regional-cooperation>, 20/4/2022.

²⁴ Spiegel. „Forderung an EU-Beitrittskandidaten Baerbock drängt Serbien, Russlandsanktionen mitzutragen”, Spiegel, 11/4/2022, <https://www.spiegel.de/ausland/serbien-annalena-baerbock-draengt-serbien-russlandsanktionen-mitzutragen-a-dd524ab5-a850-4094-b9c1-c5d7f3eebf48>, 20/4/2022.

Admittedly, the great debate in Germany regarding the embargo on the import of Russian energy products can serve Serbia in future pressure relief. If one takes into account the fact that a recent analysis by several German organizations has shown that the ban on the import of gas and oil from Russia would lead to the reduction of German GDP between 0.5 and 3%, as well as the dismissal of 418,000 people and an increase in inflation, then it is clear why the much smaller Serbia refrains from measures towards Russia.²⁵ The further escalation of the conflict and the NATO intervention in Ukraine would lead not only to destruction on a huge scale, but would also force Serbia to renounce its policy of neutrality by quickly joining the North Atlantic Alliance.

Conclusion

The international position of the Federal Republic of Germany is defined by the past and the present. The Ukrainian crisis has immense consequences for Berlin, and only the following months will show how uncertain Europe is. The global restructuring of power does not bring a new world order under the control of a country, but the process of forming several blocs is taking place. Europe, that is, the European Union, is still firmly related to the alliance with the United States in its centre, which is a reflection of continuity since 1945. The implementation of the Western policy of sanctions against Russia was consensually supported by the majority of parties in Germany. However, the dilemmas about the introduction of energy embargo and sending heavy weapons to Ukraine indicate that Berlin shows very limited reservations towards the NATO policy, primarily due to its economic and political interests.

Bearing in mind the mentioned international factors, Serbia has several possibilities. The further confrontation with the Western Alliance countries would put not only the Serbian economy in a precarious position, but also Serbs in the surrounding countries. Overcoming problems in open issues, especially regarding Kosovo and Metohija and the Republic of Srpska, is possible only in the search for common regional solutions within the European framework. Serbia should work intensively on migration control, strengthening legal institutions, and also contribute by constructive policy to make the area of the Western Balkans, which is otherwise very unstable, safer and more prosperous. Without any doubt, the simultaneous strengthening of military and economic capacities and raising the level of cooperation between neighbours will only contribute to the increase in the strength of official Belgrade. In such a policy, Serbia will almost certainly get the support of Germany and the European Union.

²⁵ Jan Mallien, Julian Olk, „Rezession und hohe Inflation: Bundesbank erwartet drastische Folgen bei einem Energieembargo“, Handelsblatt, 22/4/2022. <https://www.handelsblatt.com/politik/konjunktur/nachrichten/ukraine-krieg-rezession-und-hohe-inflation-bundesbank-erwartet-drastische-folgen-bei-einem-energieembargo/28270982.html>, 24/4/2022.

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[1] Acharya Amitav, „The Emerging Regional Architecture of World Politics”, *World Politics*, vol. 59, no. 4, 2007, pp. 629–652.

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Summary

The paper analyzes the position of the Federal Republic of Germany in international relations today and based on that policy, possible guidelines for the Republic of Serbia in its strategic actions in the upcoming period are given. The first goal of the research was to consider the relationship of official Berlin to the European Union, the United States, Russia, China and the rest of the world. Berlin's tendency to further strengthen the institutions, monetary, foreign and defense policy of the European Union has been present for decades. However, since 2008, that

policy has been going through constant challenges. The Greek debt crisis, Brexit, the migrant crisis, the recession, a new wave of debts by European countries due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine have put the authorities in Berlin in a difficult position. The failure of Germany and France to establish a unified EU security policy, the impossibility of peace initiatives around Ukraine and the consistent monitoring of Washington's policy have limited the EU ability to project power in other parts of the world. In addition to Russia, it is also obvious that the growing antagonism towards the People's Republic of China has been noticed recently, which threatens to affect very good economic relations

The second goal of the paper is to offer Serbia's strategic options based on global trends, and in the context of German policy towards the Western Balkans. The Serbian focus on the European integration and the proclaimed policy of neutrality with a strong commitment to the European peace can be an incentive for joint affairs of the two countries. Particularly problematic is Berlin's attitude towards the self-proclaimed independence of the interim institutions in Prishtina. The opposing positions of Germany and Serbia, however, can be attributed to various regional initiatives such as the Berlin Process and particularly the Open Balkans. The attempts to further escalate the conflict or confrontation of Serbia towards the environment would adversely affect the position of Serbs in the surrounding countries and would also weaken economic exchange, which is traditionally oriented towards the European countries. However, official Belgrade should also work on strengthening internal capacities, primarily defensive, economic, administrative and demographic, so that it can have a high level of readiness in case of possible challenges.

Key words: *Germany, multipolarity, Serbia, strategy, cooperation*

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