



NEW PERSPECTIVES IN  
GERMAN POLITICAL STUDIES



# Germany's Role in European Russia Policy

A New German Power?

Liana Fix



palgrave  
macmillan

# New Perspectives in German Political Studies

Series Editors

William E. Paterson  
Aston University  
Birmingham, UK

Thomas Saalfeld  
Universität Bamberg  
Bamberg, Bayern, Germany

Far reaching changes are now taking place in Germany. Stability lay at the core of the German model and much of the writing from Peter Katzenstein and Manfred Schmidt onwards sought to explain this enviable stability. Changes in the external environment have created a number of fundamental challenges which pose a threat to that stability. Germany is now Europe's central power but this has generated controversy about how it is to exercise this new power. Although attention is often centred on German power the migration crisis demonstrates its limits. *New Perspectives in German Political Studies* aims to engage with these new challenges and to cater for the heightened interest in Germany. The Editors would welcome proposals for single-authored monographs, edited collections and Pivots, from junior as well as well-established scholars working on contemporary German Politics.

More information about this series at  
<http://www.palgrave.com/gp/series/14735>

Liana Fix

# Germany's Role in European Russia Policy

A New German Power?

palgrave  
macmillan

Liana Fix  
Gießener Dissertation im Fachbereich Sozial- und Kulturwissenschaften  
Justus Liebig University  
Giessen, Germany

New Perspectives in German Political Studies  
ISBN 978-3-030-68225-5      ISBN 978-3-030-68226-2 (eBook)  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-68226-2>

© The Editor(s) (if applicable) and The Author(s), under exclusive licence to Springer Nature Switzerland AG 2021

This work is subject to copyright. All rights are solely and exclusively licensed by the Publisher, whether the whole or part of the material is concerned, specifically the rights of translation, reprinting, reuse of illustrations, recitation, broadcasting, reproduction on microfilms or in any other physical way, and transmission or information storage and retrieval, electronic adaptation, computer software, or by similar or dissimilar methodology now known or hereafter developed.

The use of general descriptive names, registered names, trademarks, service marks, etc. in this publication does not imply, even in the absence of a specific statement, that such names are exempt from the relevant protective laws and regulations and therefore free for general use. The publisher, the authors and the editors are safe to assume that the advice and information in this book are believed to be true and accurate at the date of publication. Neither the publisher nor the authors or the editors give a warranty, expressed or implied, with respect to the material contained herein or for any errors or omissions that may have been made. The publisher remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.

Cover credit © mbbirdy, gettyimages

This Palgrave Macmillan imprint is published by the registered company Springer Nature Switzerland AG.

The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

*To my grandparents*

## FOREWORD

When Germany was reunified three decades ago, there was both confidence and concern about what role it might play both in Europe and globally going forward. Would it persist as an “economic giant and political dwarf”, would it aspire to recreate a great power role, would the new, larger Germany remain as committed to the European Union? Thirty years later these questions have been answered. Germany remains committed to the European Union, it has become both an economic and political leader in Europe, and it persists as a resolute civilian power.

Germany has also become, as Liana Fix shows in this informative study, the key country in fashioning the EU’s Ostpolitik and seeking to reconcile the divergent attitudes toward Russia that have emerged since the EU enlargement in 2004. Germany has for the past century had a complex and fluctuating relationship with the Soviet Union and post-Soviet Russia, and has been Russia’s most important European interlocutor since Chancellor Willy Brandt’s Ostpolitik and the Moscow Treaty of 1970. Germany’s current policies toward Russia are shaped by the legacy of gratitude for permitting Germany to unify peacefully, a longstanding mutually beneficial economic and energy relationship, and a belief that engagement with Vladimir Putin’s Russia is necessary, however challenging it is to deal with the Kremlin.

While much of Europe shares the German commitment to engagement with Russia, new EU members Poland and the Baltic states are far more wary of dealing with Moscow, given their own negative historical experiences with Russia. Since 2004, it has been challenging to forge an EU

consensus on how to deal with Russia on a number of different levels. This book explains clearly how and why Germany has gradually emerged as the leader of the EU's Ostpolitik by examining four case studies.

The first case study is the Russia-Georgia War of 2008. Dmitry Medvedev had become president just prior to the outbreak of hostilities, yet Putin was driving the negotiations that led to a ceasefire. This time, French president Nicolas Sarkozy led the talks, because France had the presidency of the European Council, and Germany was supportive of the mediation efforts.

Germany did, however, take the lead in conceptualising the 2010 EU-Russia Partnership for Modernisation, which began as a bilateral German-Russian Partnership for Modernisation, the brainchild of then Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier. The idea was to pursue programs that would encourage Russia to modernise its economy and promote the Rule of Law. In 2008, Medvedev had proposed a new Euro-Atlantic security architecture at a speech in Berlin, but little was done to follow up his ideas.

Chancellor Merkel was determined to engage Medvedev on issues which directly affected Europe's security, and in 2010 she initiated the Meseberg process with him, designed to resolve the conflict in Moldova's breakaway statelet of Transnistria, in return for which the EU would establish a joint Security Committee with Russia, thereby giving it a greater stake in the established Euro-Atlantic security architecture. This was largely a German, as opposed to an EU, project, but it was ultimately unsuccessful. The same can be said for the Partnership for Modernisation. Both initiatives were based on the premise that President Medvedev was empowered to deliver a more cooperative policy toward the EU, which, in retrospect, was misplaced.

Liana Fix explains how Germany came to dominate and fashion the EU's Ostpolitik through Berlin's actions following Russia's 2014 annexation of Crimea and launch of a war in Southeastern Ukraine. Chancellor Merkel's government took the lead in crafting EU sanctions against Russian individuals and also the financial sanctions following the downing of the MH17 plane in July 2014. Germany has ensured that sanctions are renewed every six months, as Russia has failed to honour the commitments it made in the February 2015 Minsk agreements designed to end the war in Ukraine. Although some EU members are ready to end the sanctions despite Russian non-compliance, Germany has managed to impose discipline and unity on the EU so far.

Since 2014, Europe's relations with Russia have sharply deteriorated and Germany's role in guiding the EU's relations with Russia has become more challenging. Merkel understands Putin better than any other world leader because she and Putin literally speak the same language and her GDR background has given her insights into the mindset of the former Soviet KGB agent who leads Russia. As she reportedly told President Obama after a conversation with the Russian leader following the outbreak of the Ukraine war, Putin "lives in his own world". Events since then, including the hacking by Russian state agents of the Bundestag's computers, the assassination of a Chechen dissident in Berlin's Tiergarten by agents of the Russian state, and the poisoning of opposition leader Alexei Navalny who was diagnosed and treated in Berlin, have further strained the relationship. Nevertheless, Merkel continues to argue for the need for the EU to engage Russia.

Liana Fix's analysis leaves the reader wondering how both German-Russian and EU-Russia relations will evolve after Chancellor Merkel has left the political scene. Will France take over leading Europe's Ostpolitik, as President Macron has signaled he would like to? Will other EU countries agree to this? Will a future European leader continue to be able to reconcile the contrasting views of Russia that persist in different parts of Europe? *Germany's Role in European Russia Policy—A New German Power?* illuminates the background to these important questions and provides an innovative framework for analysing how EU-Russia relations might develop well into the twenty-first century.

Washington, DC, USA

Angela E. Stent

(Author of *Putin's World: Russia Against the West and with the Rest*)

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book has travelled a long way from Berlin, Moscow and Tbilisi to Brussels, Paris, Warsaw, Washington, DC, and back to Berlin. The first idea emerged during my time as Mercator Fellow on International Affairs at the German Federal Foreign Office in discussions with German diplomats working on Russia. The following stays at the Carnegie Moscow Office and the European Union Delegation in Georgia were a further inspiration. This was still before the outbreak of the Ukraine conflict in 2014, which has changed the parameters not only of Germany's role in Europe, but also of our understanding of relations with Russia.

The publication of this book would not have been possible without the support of numerous individuals and institutions that have accompanied me professionally and personally in the last years. First and foremost, I would like to thank Professor Andrea Gawrich for the continuous support, generous advice and enduring patience throughout this endeavour, as well as Professor Simon Bulmer for inspiring some of the main ideas of this book. I am grateful to the following institutions for having hosted me as associate and doctoral fellow during my research: The German Council on Foreign Relations (DGAP), the German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP), in particular Sabine Fischer and the Eastern Europe/Eurasia Division, as well as the SWP Brussels office, the Institute for German Studies at the University of Birmingham and the American Institute for Contemporary German Studies (AICGS) in Washington, DC.

I am indebted to the Friedrich Ebert Foundation for having funded not only my research at the University of Giessen, but also my master and

bachelor studies at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) as well as the Ruhr-University Bochum and the Université François Rabelais in Tours. A warm thank you goes to the colleagues and fellow researchers at these institutions for the inspiration and burden-sharing. I would also like to thank Körber-Stiftung, in particular my colleagues at the Berlin office and Nora Müller, for the support in concluding this book while working as Programme Director in the International Affairs department.

Furthermore, my most profound thank you goes to all interlocutors in different capitals, including numerous officials and experts, that have taken the time to share their insights and discuss the ideas of this book. I have benefitted immensely from the feedback of colleagues at conferences and workshops in Bilbao, Cambridge, Helsinki, Bremen, Leipzig and Tartu, and I would like to thank Nicu Popescu, Stefan Meister, and Susan Stewart for giving feedback on chapters of this book, as well as Patricia Daehnhardt and Vladimír Handl for the opportunity to contribute to a Special Issue of *German Politics*. My heartfelt thank you goes to Fabian Schöppner for improving my English and to my friends Jan Steinbach for diligently and patiently editing the references and Sarah Schmid for reading the first draft. I assume responsibility for any remaining errors and shortcomings of this book.

Along the way, I had the privilege to count on the support of many friends from near and far. My dearest thanks belongs to Christina Denhard for being there from the start, Marcia Schenck for the constant inspiration and long evenings in co-working mode, Lis Wey for her wisdom, David Maier for keeping up spirits during difficult times, Laura Söllner for the companionship, my Mercator friends and all those I could not mention for lending an ear whenever necessary. Thank you, Tobias Martens, for bringing joy. Most importantly, I would like to thank my family—my parents Eugen Fix and Nadja Fix as well as my sister Xenia Fix—for their continuous support throughout these years. This book is dedicated to my grandparents, who experienced German-Russian relations in a very different time and under different circumstances.

# CONTENTS

<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>The Russian-Georgian War 2008: Germany as a Junior Partner</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>The EU-Russia Partnership for Modernisation 2010: Germany as Agenda-Setter</b>	<b>67</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>The Meseberg Initiative 2010: Germany as a Deal-Maker</b>	<b>91</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>The Russia-Ukraine Conflict 2014: Germany as a Leading Power</b>	<b>119</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>157</b>
	<b>List of Interviews</b>	<b>177</b>
	<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>179</b>
	<b>Index</b>	<b>225</b>

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Liana Fix** is a historian and political scientist. In her work, she focuses on European security, Russia and Eastern Europe, as well as German foreign policy. She has commented and published widely on these topics in academia, think tanks and national and international media. She works as Programme Director for International Affairs at Körber-Stiftung's Berlin Office and was an associate and doctoral fellow at the German Council on Foreign Relations (DGAP) as well as the German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP). Liana Fix holds a PhD degree from the Justus Liebig University of Giessen and a master's degree in Theory and History of International Relations from the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE). She has also studied at the Ruhr-University Bochum and the Université François Rabelais in Tours. In 2015, she held a DAAD/AICGS Fellowship in Washington, DC, and in 2012/2013, a Mercator Fellowship with postings at the German Foreign Office, the Carnegie Moscow Center and the EU Delegation in Georgia. She also was a fellow of the Global Governance Futures—Robert Bosch Foundation Multilateral Dialogue. Liana Fix is member of the extended board of Women in International Security Germany.

## ABBREVIATIONS

AA	Association Agreement
CFSP	Common Foreign and Security Policy
CSDP	Common Security and Defence Policy
EaP	Eastern Partnership
EC	European Commission
EU	European Union
EUMM	European Union Monitoring Mission
MAP	Membership Action Plan
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NRC	NATO-Russia Council
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PCA	Partnership and Cooperation Agreement
P4M	Partnership for Modernisation
SMM	Special Monitoring Mission
TACIS	Technical Assistance to the Commonwealth of Independent States
UN	United Nations

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.1	Main EU policy initiatives towards/on Russia, 1994–2019	6
Table 1.2	Main EU crisis situations with Russia, 1994–2019	7
Table 1.3	Fourfold taxonomy of power	20
Table 1.4	Operationalisation of instruments	22
Table 1.5	Case studies design	30
Table 2.1	Instruments of power in the Russian-Georgian War	60
Table 3.1	Instruments of power in the EU-Russia partnership for modernisation	86
Table 4.1	Instruments of power in the Meseberg initiative	114
Table 5.1	Overview of sanctions policy towards Russia (2014–2015)	135
Table 5.2	Instruments of power in the Russia–Ukraine conflict	150
Table 6.1	Summary of cases and instruments	167



## Introduction

In 1985, historian Hans-Peter Schwarz observed that Germany has developed from a country obsessed with power, in terms of a Wilhelminian craving for status, to forgetfulness of power in the West German Federal Republic, which felt comfortable in its own perceived impotence. Schwarz recommended the German public develop more self-confidence, which it seemed to have forgotten along with power politics. Almost thirty-five years later, Schwarz' observation deserves to be restated, yet in reverse order: Is Germany at the beginning of a change from “Machtvergessenheit” to “Machtbesessenheit”, meaning a return from forgetfulness of power to power politics—not in a Wilhelminian sense, but rather understood as greater assertiveness?<sup>1</sup> Has Germany relearned only too well how to exercise power and therefore become too dominant an actor in Europe?

Especially since reunification, Germany has been under continuous scrutiny and suspicion of harbouring hegemonic impulses.<sup>2</sup> As one of the

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Simon Bulmer and William E. Paterson, ‘Germany and the European Union: From ‘Tamed Power’ to Normalized Power?’, *International Affairs*, 86.5 (2010), 1051–73, 1052.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Arnulf Baring (ed.), *Germany's New Position in Europe: Problems and Perspectives*, German Historical Perspectives Series, 8 (Oxford, Providence, RI: Berg, 1994); Christian Hacke, *Weltmacht wider Willen: Die Aussenpolitik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1988); Kenneth N. Waltz, ‘The Emerging Structure of International Politics’, *International Security* 18.2 (1993); John J. Mearsheimer, ‘Back to the Future: Instability in Europe after the Cold War’, *International Security* 15.1 (1990),

most important member states keenly aware of its burdened past, Germany's enlarged role in Europe has become a topic of ardent debate in academia and politics. Even before the "Munich Consensus" of 2014, when the German Federal President as well as the German foreign and defence ministers advocated for a stronger role in international relations, Germany's increased engagement in the EU has raised questions about a new German power in Europe.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, Germany's prominent leadership in the handling of numerous crises in Europe has reignited concerns about German hegemony. For instance, former German diplomat Wolfgang Ischinger argued Germany will be caught in a "hegemony trap"<sup>4</sup> if it does not give way to a more powerful European foreign policy. The historian Anne Applebaum warned against "putting Germany front and center in Europe's crises".<sup>5</sup> At the same time, leadership expectations towards Germany have increased inversely proportional to fears about Germany's role. After the election of US President Donald Trump, and against the backdrop of a deteriorating transatlantic relationship, German Chancellor Angela Merkel was praised as the new "leader of the free world". During the Eurozone crisis, Former Polish Foreign Minister Sikorski famously warned that he fears German power less than he is beginning to fear German inactivity.<sup>6</sup> Most recently, during the COVID-19 crisis, Germany together with France paved the way for an unprecedented EU economic recovery fund through collectively issued debt. According to *The Economist*, Germany is "doomed to lead Europe".<sup>7</sup>

While Germany has become significantly more influential within the EU, the conceptual terms to explain Germany's new role are still under debate. Is Germany a hegemon, an embedded hegemon or just a semi-hegemon? A geo-economic power or a tamed power? A reflective, reluctant or civilian power? This book seeks to contribute to the "puzzle of

5–56; Hans-Peter Schwarz, *Die Zentralmacht Europas: Deutschlands Rückkehr auf die Weltbühne*, 1st edn (Berlin: Siedler, 1994).

<sup>3</sup>Bastian Giegerich and Maximilian Terhalle, 'The Munich Consensus and the Purpose of German Power', *Survival*, 58.2 (2016), 155–66. Beverly Crawford, *Power and German Foreign Policy: Embedded Hegemony in Europe*, New Perspectives in German Studies (Basingstoke, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

<sup>4</sup>Wolfgang Ischinger, 'Deutschland in der Hegemonie-Falle by Wolfgang Ischinger', *Project Syndicate*, 14 September 2015.

<sup>5</sup>Cf. Anne Applebaum, 'The Risks of Putting Germany Front and Center in Europe's Crises', *The Washington Post*, 20 February 2015.

<sup>6</sup>Cf. Radoslaw Sikorski, 'I Fear Germany's Power Less than Her Inactivity', *Financial Times*, 28 November 2008.

<sup>7</sup>'Germany is doomed to lead Europe', *The Economist*, 25 June 2020.

German power”<sup>8</sup> through an analysis of Germany’s role in European Russia policy.

Russia policy is an ideal test case for assessing Germany’s role in Europe. Russia ranks for many reasons—historical, geopolitical, economic, energy-related and cultural—among Germany’s top foreign policy priorities.<sup>9</sup> Both countries had long been key geostrategic actors in the European political landscape.<sup>10</sup> A change in Germany’s role in Europe can likely be observed in this area of special importance: Russia policy touches upon core German interests, which suggests that if Germany is heading towards greater assertiveness in European policy, this should leave traces in this important policy field. Furthermore, since the EU’s Eastern enlargement in 2004, Russia policy has become a contentious policy field in EU foreign policy, with competition between member states as well as EU institutions and representatives for control over policy outcomes.<sup>11</sup> How has Germany influenced Russia policy since the EU’s Eastern enlargement in 2004—along or against the preferences of the new Eastern member states? What does it tell us about the way Germany exerts power in the European Union? With Russia policy as a test case, this book aims to contribute to the broader debate about Germany’s power in Europe. Furthermore, it provides a comprehensive account of Germany’s “Ostpolitik” and detailed analyses of how Germany addressed major crisis situations in the EU-Russia relationship, such as the Ukraine conflict and the Russian-Georgian War, and how it introduced policy initiatives, such as the EU-Russia Partnership for Modernisation and the Meseberg initiative. The analysis draws upon detailed document analysis and over forty interviews with senior officials and experts in Berlin, Brussels, Paris, Warsaw and Washington. Does Germany’s influence on the EU’s Russia policy provide evidence for

<sup>8</sup>Hanns W. Maull, ‘Reflective, Hegemonic, Geo-Economic, Civilian...?: The Puzzle of German Power’, *German Politics*, 27.4 (2018), 1–19.

<sup>9</sup>Christopher S. Chivvis and Thomas Rid, ‘The Roots of Germany’s Russia Policy’, *Survival*, 51.2 (2009), 105–22.

<sup>10</sup>Cf. Angela Stent, *Russia and Germany Reborn: Unification, the Soviet Collapse, and the New Europe* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001).

<sup>11</sup>Cf. Tuomas Forsberg and Hiski Haukkala, *The European Union and Russia*, The European Union Series, 1st edn (London, New York, NY: Macmillan Education; Palgrave, 2016), 44–75; Anke Schmidt-Felzmann, ‘All for One?: EU Member States and the Union’s Common Policy Towards the Russian Federation’, *Journal of Contemporary European Studies*, 16.2 (2008), 169–87; Jackie Gower, ‘The European Union’s Policy on Russia: Rhetoric or Reality?’, *Russia and Europe in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. by Gower and Timmins (2009), pp. 111–32.

German embeddedness in Europe (a European Germany) or, to the contrary, for its dominance within the EU (a German Europe):<sup>12</sup>

The empirical analysis of Russia policy is combined with a theory-based perspective on Germany's exercise of power in the EU. By applying a comprehensive taxonomy of power, this book aims to bring back power as a category into the analysis of member states' influence within the EU and to untangle the different "shades" and conceptualisations of power underlying Germany's policy. The results demonstrate that German "Machtpolitik" (power politics) is much more nuanced and complex than previous conceptualisations and theoretical schools would suggest. By combining and applying different instruments of power, Germany engaged to become the central axis of policy making between the EU and Russia, decisively shaping the paradigm and outcome of EU policy towards Russia. The book argues that instead of hegemony, Germany's influence on Russia policy can be more adequately described by the term "policy dominance", designating a continuous engagement over a longer period of time in a certain policy field with the aim to set policies (or oppose others) and to shape the policy paradigm. This term is situated between leadership and hegemony as an "in-between" mode of long-term power exertion within the EU. The book concludes that despite Germany's central role in the EU's Russia policy, the exercise of power within the EU is crucially dependent on legitimacy and followership by other member states. Overall, the synthesis of theoretical and policy analysis in this book adds to our understanding of the nature of German power in the EU and how it is exercised in policy towards Russia.

Despite its relevance, Russia policy has rarely been systematically analysed to reveal how Germany exerts power within the EU.<sup>13</sup> This is surprising, given that the case of Russia policy promises useful insights into changes or continuities in Germany's European policy. On the one hand, many general contributions on EU-Russia relations only touch upon the specific role and influence that Germany has played and exercised. On the other hand, analyses on Germany's role in Europe often focus on select cases of Russia policy, such as the Ukraine conflict, to prove the thesis of

<sup>12</sup>Cf. Ulrich Beck, *Das deutsche Europa: Neue Machtlandschaften im Zeichen der Krise*, Edition Suhrkamp digital, 1st edn (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2012).

<sup>13</sup>A notable exception is Stephen Szabo's geo-economic interpretation of Russia policy. Cf. Stephen F. Szabo, *Germany, Russia and the Rise of Geo-Economics*, 1st edn (London: Bloomsbury, 2015). Furthermore, Marco Siddi analysed German leadership in EU relations with Russia through the lenses of hegemony literature. Cf. Marco Siddi, 'A Contested Hegemon?: Germany's Leadership in EU Relations with Russia', *German Politics*, 94 (2018), 1–18.

German hegemony in Europe or a new German responsibility in Europe. The aim of this book is to bring these two perspectives together to understand the full picture of how Germany exerts influence in EU Russia policy. While there are certainly other cases that are similarly relevant to the debate about Germany's role in Europe, such as European economic and financial policy, Russia policy is an important piece in the puzzle of German power with much potential for generalisation. Therefore, it is all the more important to get this piece right.

Furthermore, there are important lessons to be learned by looking back at the period of EU-Russia relations after the EU's Eastern enlargement in 2004. After the "romantic" era of the 1990s, this era of EU-Russia relations was more sober, yet there was still enough room for manoeuvre and opportunities to shape policy—in contrast to the stalled relations after 2014. At the same time, Russia policy was more disputed among member states after the accession of Eastern European countries than before. In this new, more competitive and diverse playing field of actors, how was Germany able to retain its influence? How were coalitions built, initiatives advanced and crises managed? This decade after the EU's Eastern enlargement—marked by tensions, but with plenty of "oxygen" in the relationship—provides important lessons in order to avoid the same mistakes for a time when EU-Russia relations might return to more flexibility and room for manoeuvre: Why have some attempts, often driven by Germany, to improve relations with Russia during this period succeeded, and others failed?

### FRAMING THE CONTEXT

Since the signing of the EU-Russia Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) in 1994, Germany assumed a preeminent role in shaping the EU's policy towards Russia. Germany was not only more active than other member states in proposing initiatives, but in many cases saw a successful implementation of its proposals at the EU level. Of the six major EU policy initiatives towards and on Russia since 1994, Germany was involved as primary actor in four proposals—at times in collaboration with other partners, particularly France and the European Commission (EC). Three of the four policy proposals were accepted and implemented by the EU, with the sole exception of the Meseberg initiative from 2010, which was neither implemented by the EU nor by Russia. On the other hand, Germany implemented only on one occasion a policy proposal initiated by another member state: The Finnish Northern Dimension, a policy framework for the EU, Russia, Norway and Iceland.

**Table 1.1** Main EU policy initiatives towards/on Russia, 1994–2019

<i>Initiative</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Primary actors</i>	<i>Outcome</i>
EU-Russia Partnership and Cooperation Agreement	1994	European Commission	Implemented by EU and Russia
EU Common Strategy on Russia	1999	Germany/France	Implemented by EU (internal document)
Northern Dimension	1999/ renewed 2006	Finland	Implemented by EU, Russia, Norway and Iceland
EU-Russia Four Common Spaces	2003	Germany/France	Implemented by EU and Russia
EU-Russia Partnership for Modernisation	2010	European Commission/ Germany	Implemented by EU and Russia
Meseberg initiative	2010	Germany	Not implemented by EU and Russia

Source: Author's table, based on literature overview: Jackie Gower and Graham Timmins (eds), *Russia and Europe in the Twenty-First Century: An Uneasy Partnership* (London, New York, NY: Anthem Press, 2009); Hiski Haukkala, *The EU-Russia Strategic Partnership: The Limits of Post-Sovereignty in International Relations*, Routledge Advances in International Relations and Global Politics, 85 (London, New York, NY: Routledge, 2010); Maxine David, Jackie Gower and Hiski Haukkala (eds), *National Perspectives on Russia: European Foreign Policy in the Making?*, Routledge Advances in European Politics, 94 (London, New York, NY: Routledge, 2013); Tuomas Forsberg and Hiski Haukkala, *The European Union and Russia*, The European Union Series, 1st edn (London, New York, NY: Macmillan Education; Palgrave, 2016); Katrin Bastian, *Die Europäische Union und Russland*, 1st edn (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2006); Reinhard Krumm, Sergei Medvedev and Hans-Henning Schröder (eds), *Constructing Identities in Europe: German and Russian Perspectives*, Internationale Politik und Sicherheit, 66, 1st edn (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2012); Hans-Joachim Spanger, 'Die deutsche Russlandpolitik', in *Deutsche Außenpolitik: Sicherheit, Wohlfahrt, Institutionen und Normen*, ed. by Thomas Jäger, Alexander Höse and Kai Oppermann, 2nd edn (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2011), pp. 648–72; Maxine David and Tatiana Romanova, 'Modernisation in EU–Russian Relations: Past, Present, and Future', *European Politics and Society*, 16.1 (2015), 1–10; Stefan Meister, *A New Start for Russian-EU Security Policy?: The Weimar Triangle, Russia and the EU's Eastern Neighbourhood*, Genshagener Papiere 7 (2011) <<https://www.robert-schuman.eu/en/doc/actualites/genshagener-papiere-2011-7-eng.pdf>> [accessed 27 September 2017]; Hiski Haukkala, 'Russian Reactions to the European Neighborhood Policy', *Problems of Post-Communism*, 55.5 (2014), 40–48.

A similar picture emerges when taking a look at the main EU crisis situations with Russia. Here, it is Germany and France that were most often involved as primary actors (Table 1.2). For instance, during the Second Chechen War in 1999/2000, both countries took a critical stance towards the human rights situation in Chechnya and supported six months of

**Table 1.2** Main EU crisis situations with Russia, 1994–2019

<i>Crisis situation</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Primary actors</i>	<i>Outcome</i>
1st Chechen War	1994	European Commission	Postponement of Partnership and Cooperation Agreement ratification
2nd Chechen War	1999/2000	France/ Germany	Limited sanctions on TACIS funding (January–June 2000)
Russian-Georgian War	2008	France/ Germany	Temporary suspension of new Partnership and Cooperation Agreement negotiations
Russia-Ukraine Conflict	2014	Germany/ France	Political and economic sanctions

Source: Author's table, based on literature overview: Raimo Lintonen, 'Understanding EU Crisis Decision-Making: The Case of Chechnya and the Finnish Presidency', *Journal of Contingencies and Crisis Management*, 12.1 (2004), 29–38; Tuomas Forsberg and Graeme P. Herd, 'The EU, Human Rights, and the Russo-Chechen Conflict', *Political Science Quarterly*, 120.3 (2005), 455–78; Richard G. Whitman and Stefan Wolff, *The European Neighbourhood Policy in Perspective: Context, Implementation and Impact*, Palgrave Studies in European Union Politics (Basingstoke, New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); Richard G. Whitman and Stefan Wolff, 'The EU as a Conflict Manager?: The Case of Georgia and Its Implications', *International Affairs*, 86.1 (2010), 87–107; Teemu Sinkkonen, 'A Security Dilemma on the Boundary Line: An EU Perspective to Georgian–Russian Confrontation after the 2008 War', *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, 11.3 (2011), 265–78; Hans Mouritzen and Anders Wivel, *Explaining Foreign Policy: International Diplomacy and the Russo-Georgian War* (Boulder: L. Rienner, 2012); Svante E. Cornell and S. F. Starr (eds), *The Guns of August 2008: Russia's War in Georgia*, Studies of Central Asia and the Caucasus (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2015); Thomas de Waal, *The Caucasus: An Introduction* (Oxford, New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2010); Richard Sakwa, *Frontline Ukraine* (London, New York, NY: I. B. Tauris, 2016); Anders Åslund, *Ukraine: What Went Wrong and How to Fix It* (Washington DC: Peterson Institute for International Economics, 2015); Andrew Wilson, *Ukraine Crisis: What it Means for the West* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014).

limited sanctions on Technical Assistance to the Commonwealth of Independent States (TACIS) funding. During the Russian-Georgian War in August 2008, France took a leadership role in crisis management, supported by Germany. In reverse, during the Russia-Ukraine Conflict in 2014, Germany was primarily involved in crisis management and economic sanctions.

Germany's preeminent role in the EU's Russia policy, in particular after the EU's enlargement in 2004, seems puzzling. After all, the EU's policy towards Russia has become an ever more contentious policy field since the EU's Eastern enlargement in 2004. With the accession of the traditionally Russia-sceptic Poland and Baltic states, the power balance in the EU's

foreign policy has shifted.<sup>14</sup> Germany has more than once been reproached for undermining EU policy and pursuing German economic interests without regard for Russia's democratic and human rights record.<sup>15</sup> Against this backdrop, one would expect a strong bilateral German-Russian relationship, but less avenues for Germany to influence the EU's policy towards Russia. Yet, a prominent German role is observable in shaping both policy initiatives and crisis situations.

### STATE OF RESEARCH

How can Germany's influence in EU Russia policy be explained? This question is situated within a broader debate on Germany's evolving role and power in Europe. The state of research on Germany's European policy notes a more self-confident German approach since reunification towards the EU and more generally in foreign policy, with a stronger willingness to influence European policy in the pursuit of its national interests.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>14</sup>Cf. Bartosz Cichoki, 'Poland', in *National Perspectives on Russia*, ed. by David, Gower and Haukkala, pp. 89–100; Ainius Lašas and D. J. Galbreath, 'Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania: Baltic-Russian Relations in the Post-Enlargement Era', in *National Perspectives on Russia*, ed. by David, Gower and Haukkala, pp. 149–68.

<sup>15</sup>Cf. Anke Schmidt-Felzmann, 'All for One?: EU Member States and the Union's Common Policy Towards the Russian Federation', *Journal of Contemporary European Studies*, 16.2 (2008), 169–87; Jackie Gower, 'The European Union's Policy on Russia: Rhetoric or Reality?', in *Russia and Europe in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. by Gower and Timmins, pp. 111–32; Winfried Schneider-Deters, P. W. Schulze and H. Timmermann (eds), *Die Europäische Union, Russland und Eurasien: Die Rückkehr der Geopolitik* (Berlin, 2008).

<sup>16</sup>For an overview of recent literature on Germany's European policy, compare: Simon Bulmer and William E. Paterson (eds), *Germany and the European Union: Europe's Reluctant Hegemon?*, The European Union Series, 1st edn (Oxford: Macmillan Education, 2019); Katrin Böttger and Mathias Jopp, 'Grundlinien deutscher Europapolitik', in *Handbuch zur deutschen Europapolitik*, ed. by Katrin Böttger and Mathias Jopp, 1st edn (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2016), pp. 13–28; Patricia Daehnhardt, 'Germany in the European Union', in *National and European Foreign Policies: Towards Europeanization*, ed. by Reuben Y.-P. Wong and Christopher Hill, Routledge Advances in European Politics, 74 (Abingdon, New York, NY: Routledge, 2011), pp. 35–56; Timm Beichelt, 'Germany: In Search of a New Balance', in *The Member States of the European Union*, ed. by Simon Bulmer and Christian Lequesne, The New European Union Series, 2nd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 85–107; Sebastian Harnisch, *Germany and EU Foreign Policy: Preliminary Chapter for Oxford Handbook of German Politics*, Universität Heidelberg (Heidelberg, 2018) [https://www.uni-heidelberg.de/md/politik/harnisch/person/publikationen/harnisch\\_2018\\_germany\\_and\\_eu\\_foreign\\_policy\\_8.1.2018.pdf](https://www.uni-heidelberg.de/md/politik/harnisch/person/publikationen/harnisch_2018_germany_and_eu_foreign_policy_8.1.2018.pdf) [accessed 13 March 2019]; Gunther Hellmann

After German reunification in 1990, the age-old discussion about the “German Question” has seen a revival in public debate.<sup>17</sup> Following the Cold War, Germany’s neighbours feared its territorial gains would prompt Germany to once again become a destabilising factor in Europe. Traditional power centres grew anxious about Germany reclaiming a hegemonic position and even acquiring nuclear weapons.<sup>18</sup> German “Ostpolitik” and its long-standing close relationship with the Soviet Union/Russia further nurtured these fears. This political debate was mirrored by an academic dispute revolving around the theoretical approach most suited to explaining German foreign policy after reunification.<sup>19</sup> According to Gunther Hellmann, German reunification was used as a test case by International Relations theorists to validate their respective arguments:<sup>20</sup> Realist scholars predicted Germany would inevitably rise again as a great power, becoming more assertive and re-nationalised at the expense of multilateralism and European integration.<sup>21</sup> In contrast, constructivist

(ed.), *Germany’s EU Policy on Asylum and Defence: De-Europeanization by Default?*, New Perspectives in German Studies (Basingstoke, New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Rolf Steininger, ‘The German Question, 1945–95’, in *Germany since Unification: The Development of the Berlin Republic*, ed. by Klaus Larres, 2nd edn (Basingstoke, New York, NY: Palgrave, 2001), pp. 9–32.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. John J. Mearsheimer, ‘Back to the Future: Instability in Europe after the Cold War’, *International Security*, 15.1 (1990), 5–56 [accessed 24 February 2019]; Arnulf Baring (ed.), *Germany’s New Position in Europe: Problems and Perspectives*, German Historical Perspectives Series, 8 (Oxford, Providence, RI: Berg, 1994); Christian Hacke, *Weltmacht wider Willen: Die Aussenpolitik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1988); Hans-Peter Schwarz, *Die Zentralmacht Europas: Deutschlands Rückkehr auf die Weltbühne*, 1st edn (Berlin: Siedler, 1994).

<sup>19</sup> Volker Rittberger, ‘Deutschlands Außenpolitik nach der Vereinigung: Zur Anwendbarkeit theoretischer Modelle der Außenpolitik: Machtstaat, Handelsstaat oder Zivilstaat?’, in *Friedenspolitik in und für Europa: Festschrift für Gerda Zellentin zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. by Wolfgang Bergem, Volker Ronge and Georg Weiseno (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 1999), pp. 83–108; Volker Rittberger (ed.), *German Foreign Policy since Unification: Theories and Case Studies*, Issues in German Politics (Manchester, New York, NY: Manchester University Press, 2001); Helga Haftendorn, *Deutsche Außenpolitik zwischen Selbstbeschränkung und Selbstbehauptung: 1945–2000* (Stuttgart, Munich: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 2001).

<sup>20</sup> Gunther Hellmann, ‘Fatal Attraction?: German Foreign Policy and IR/Foreign Policy Theory’, *Journal of International Relations and Development*, 12.3 (2009), 257–92 (p. 258).

<sup>21</sup> These arguments were put forward most prominently by Kenneth N. Waltz, ‘The Emerging Structure of International Politics’, *International Security*, 18.2 (1993), 44; Mearsheimer, ‘Back to the Future’, 1990.