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BELARUS – GERMANY: MAIN TRENDS AND STAGES OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS IN THE 1990s – FIRST HALF OF THE 2010s

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The present paper analyzes the intergovernmental relations of Belarus and Germany in the 1990s – 1st half of the 2010s, characterizes their main stages, considers the achievements and problems of interaction, and defines the place of the German vector in Belarus's foreign-policy strategy. The author draws the conclusion that in the period under investigation Germany was Belarus's chief political and economic partner among the developed countries and that a significant amount of progress was achieved in different areas of cooperation. The difficulties in the countries' intergovernmental relations reflected the contradictions of the functioning of the modern global system and resulted from different historical and civilizational trajectories and levels of political, economic, and cultural development.

Key words: foreign policy; Belarus – Germany relations; economic cooperation; political dialogue; Nazi victim compensation; humanitarian cooperation; investments; external trade.

БЕЛАРУСЬ – ГЕРМАНИЯ: ОСНОВНЫЕ ТЕНДЕНЦИИ И ЭТАПЫ РАЗВИТИЯ МЕЖГОСУДАРСТВЕННЫХ ОТНОШЕНИЙ В 1990-х – ПЕРВОЙ ПОЛОВИНЕ 2010-х гг.

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Проанализированы межгосударственные отношения Беларуси и Германии в 1990-х – первой половине 2010-х гг., охарактеризованы их основные этапы, рассмотрены достижения и проблемы взаимодействия, определено место германского вектора во внешнеполитической стратегии Беларуси. Сделан вывод о том, что Германия в рассматриваемый период являлась основным политическим и экономическим партнером Беларуси среди развитых стран, стороны достигли прогресса в различных сферах сотрудничества. Сложности в межгосударственных отношениях отражали противоречия функционирования современной мировой системы и являлись следствием различного исторического и цивилизационного опыта, уровня политического, экономического, культурного развития.

Ключевые слова: внешняя политика; белорусско-германские отношения; экономическое сотрудничество; политический диалог; компенсации жертвам нацизма; гуманитарное сотрудничество; инвестиции; внешняя торговля.

In the 1990s – 1st half of the 2010s, the Federative Republic of Germany remained Belarus's main partner in the West. The partnership of the two countries

in the period under consideration had a multifaceted, complicated, and controversial character. In Belarusian and foreign studies the topic of Belarus – Germa-

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ny relations was dealt with in a wide range of publications [1–12]. The investigation of this problem makes it possible to answer many vital questions regarding the participation of Belarus in international relations at the turn of the millennium, detect the distinctive features of the process of foreign-policy priorities formation, analyze the development of relations with the developed countries and regional organizations, and consider the achievements and difficulties of international cooperation.

Belarus formed its foreign policy course towards Germany on the basis of its national interests and taking into account the pan-European context of cooperation. In establishing the principles and directions of partnership with Germany, the Belarusian leadership regarded this cooperation as a top priority in relations with the West and acted on the premise that both republics shared common interests in maintaining peace and stability in the European region and were aware of the necessity of building a fair and democratic world order, integrating Belarus in the global political, economic, scientific, cultural, and information space, and creating beneficial conditions for the development of the Belarusian economy. The unique character of Germany – Belarus cooperation was due to the historic peculiarities of the two countries' relations and primarily their confrontation in both world wars as well as to Germany's economic influence in the region. A number of other factors also contributed favorably: the countries were not involved in territorial or ethnic disputes and had previously amassed a certain amount of experience in the field of cooperation. Belarus's capabilities as a partner were conditioned by the republic's economic, political, and cultural potential. Politically, Belarus counted on Germany's assistance in the formation of steadfast bonds with European and Euro-Atlantic organizations.

Germany's policy towards Belarus was elaborated and conducted in the mainstream of the EU's common policy towards the post-Soviet space. The main constituents of Germany's foreign-policy course towards the CIS are as follows: creation of a sustainable security system in Europe, endorsement of democratic reforms and transformation to functional market economies, assistance in the development of cooperation with international organizations, settlement of regional and national conflicts, reinforcement of Germany's economic and political positions, and development of relations in the cultural and humanitarian fields. The Republic of Belarus was considered a significant participant of the pan-European system of relations and an important partner in the region. Germany assisted Belarus in the process of formation of its cooperation with the European Union and other international organizations. Belarus was of prime importance to Germany as a link to other CIS states and a major transit country between the EU and Russia. A special place in Germany's foreign policy was assigned to European

values: promoting democracy, fostering the rule of law and human rights. Of sensitive character to the German party was the issue of historic responsibility for Nazi crimes in WWII. This factor led to Germany's carrying out humanitarian and cultural projects in Belarus, including payments to victims of Nazi persecution and assistance in the minimization of the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster.

The period of the establishment and progressive development of Germany – Belarus intergovernmental relations covers the time interval from mid-1990 to the end of 1996. The Declaration of State Sovereignty of the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic, adopted in July 1990, allowed the Belarusian leadership to enter into contact with the German government. This process took place in the context of the collapse of the bipolar world and the USSR, the end of the cold war, and the formation of a new system of international relations and transformation processes in the post-Soviet space. One of the most important steps of the Belarusian leadership aimed at establishing relations with Germany was the working visit of the Chairman of the Supreme Soviet Stanislav Shushkevich to Berlin in late September 1991.

After the collapse of the USSR, Germany was among the first to recognize the Republic of Belarus as an independent nation (30 December 1991). On 13 March 1991 Hans-Dietrich Genscher, German Vice-Chancellor and Minister of Foreign Affairs, came to Minsk with an official visit to hold negotiations with the Belarusian leadership. As a result of that visit, an agreement establishing diplomatic relations between Belarus and Germany was concluded. The phrase *resumption of diplomatic relations*, employed in the document on the initiative of the Belarusian party, reflected the historic continuity of interaction. During the March 1992 negotiations Belarus and Germany came up with a common approach to the development of intergovernmental cooperation and aligned their positions towards a range of international problems [13; 14].

In 1992–1996, the two countries rapidly intensified political dialogue, held a number of meetings at the highest level, signed agreements on cooperation in various fields, and opened their respective embassies. Along with the development of relations with the German federal structures, Belarus paid much attention to German states: North Rhine-Westphalia, Brandenburg, Lower Saxony, Schleswig-Holstein, Saxony-Anhalt, etc.

After the 1994 presidential election, a new period began for the country's foreign policy. Germany's response to the changes happening in Belarus was reasonable and realistic. The German media, politicians, and experts unequivocally underscored the free character of the election.

A major positive role for the establishment of contacts between the new Belarusian leadership and the German government, continuation of political dialogue, and discussion of topical issues of bilateral relations

was played by the talks between the Belarusian Minister of Foreign Affairs Vladimir Senko and his German counterpart Klaus Kinkel, held in Oldenburg on 24–26 August, 1994. During the visit, the ministers signed a Joint Declaration on the Foundations of Relations between the Republic of Belarus and the Federative Republic of Germany, which defined the chief directions of intergovernmental cooperation in the political, economic, humanitarian, and cultural fields [15].

In late 1994 – early 1995, the main topic of Belarus – Germany relations was the necessity to form a legal and treaty basis for interaction. 1995 made it clear that Belarus and the West had different approaches to a number of international problems. First of all, that concerned the sensitive issue of NATO's enlargement. In late February 1995 President Lukashenko suspended the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE). The issue of Belarus's commitment to the CFE, the development of the political situation in the country, the prospects of bilateral relations, the problems linked with the forthcoming allocation of credit by the IMF, and the development of relations with the EU were discussed in Minsk in August 1995 by the German Vice-Chancellor and Minister of Foreign Affairs Klaus Kinkel, President Alexander Lukashenko, and the Belarusian Minister of Foreign Affairs Vladimir Senko [16, S. 40340, 40399].

President Lukashenko's working visit to Germany in April 1996 proved to be an important step for the broadening of economic cooperation. During it Alexander Lukashenko met with his German counterpart Roman Herzog, the leaders of the German states North Rhine-Westphalia, Lower Saxony, and Berlin, and businessmen to discuss the directions of cooperation. The Belarusian Head of state said that Belarus had to use Germany's example if it wanted to achieve economic power [17].

The results of the constitutional referendum of 24 November 1996 drastically changed the stance of Germany and the EU towards the republic. In September 1997, the Council of the EU agreed on a set of restrictive measures against Belarus. Germany took an active part in elaborating the EU policy towards Belarus in the wake of the 1996 referendum. The Belarusian leadership saw in the EU's decision its unreadiness for the objective analysis of the situation and a manifestation of the policy of double standards. The aggravation of intergovernmental relations after the 1996 referendum led to a new period in Belarus – Germany interaction, spanning from late 1996 to late 2001. This period is characterized by Belarus's building its foreign policy towards Germany in the context of integration with Russia and the EU sanctions.

Bearing in mind the difficulties of the country's political and economic development, the Belarusian leadership sought to preserve the attained level of political and economic relations with Germany. In early 1997, President Lukashenko, interviewed for the Ger-

man magazine *Wostok*, noted that the level of Belarus – Germany relations depended more on Germany's stance than on the Belarusian leadership and voiced his hopes that Germany would pursue a more independent policy towards Belarus [18].

A huge role for the sustention of intergovernmental relations was played by President Lukashenko's working visit to Germany in late April 1998, during which focus was on the practical side of the establishment of economic cooperation between the two countries. Summing up the negotiations, President Lukashenko said the German business had a great interest in cooperation with Belarus and emphasized that Russia and Germany were Belarus's main foreign-trade priorities [19].

In the late 1990s, the Belarusian diplomacy concentrated its efforts in relations with the EU on realizing the OSCE's decision to inaugurate a consultative and monitoring group in Minsk. In 1998 Germany-Belarus relations were put to a test as a result of the conflict concerning ambassadorial residences in Drozdy, settled only by the end of that year.

In the early 2000s, Belarus progressed into a new phase, characterized by a strengthened statehood and a full-fledged model of social and economic development. In this period, the Belarusian leadership aimed at pragmatic cooperation under conditions of the EU's eastward enlargement and the ensuing confrontation with Russia. The European Union continued its policy of sanctions against Belarus. Nevertheless, the Belarusian leadership regarded its relations with Germany as a top priority. After the 2001 presidential election, Germany and the EU came up with a step-by-step strategy, the realization of which obviously contributed to the process of further discussion of the format of EU – Belarus cooperation and the amelioration of bilateral relations. Having the biggest experience in cooperation and widest opportunities for influence, Germany was maximally involved in this process, and its position contributed to the settlement of some controversies between Belarus and the EU.

A remarkable role in contacts at the political, expert, and public levels was played by the Minsk Forums, organized by the German-Belarusian Society since 1997. These meetings were dedicated to topical issues of Belarus's economic and political development and the development of Belarus – Germany and Belarus – EU relations.

The EU's and NATO's 2004 enlargement proved to be an important factor in European politics and had a tremendous impact on the geopolitical position of Belarus and its relations with the West. At the same time, a number of reasons emerged for the amplification of contacts between Belarus and the EU, which led to brand new approaches to the development of relations between the parties. As a result of the EU's 2004 enlargement, Germany strengthened its position in the region and proceeded to a new quality of relations with the CIS states, including Belarus.

At a July 2004 meeting with the heads of Belarusian embassies abroad, President Lukashenko noted the role of Germany in Europe and the importance of Belarus – Germany cooperation. For instance, he emphasized the necessity of using Germany's experience in creating small and medium businesses and alternative sources of power. Under conditions of the common economic space of Belarus and Russia being built, the Belarusian President suggested that the role of Germany as the closest trade partner be assessed anew and stressed the unity of Russia's and Germany's interests in the transit of energy resources through Belarus [20].

In 2007–2010, a certain amount of progress was achieved in Belarus – Germany relations, and the parties started to overcome the negative consequences of the restriction of political contacts of the preceding decade. In the 1st half of 2007, Germany presided over the European Union. During the German presidency in the Council of the EU, the negotiations on the conditions of the further development of relations between Belarus and the EU were activated. In July 2007, while accepting the credentials of the new German ambassador Gebhardt Weiss, President Lukashenko again pointed out the special place of Germany in Belarus's political and economic interests [21].

Taking into account the actions of the Belarusian leadership and the results of the parliamentary election, the Council of the EU decided to resume political dialogue with Belarus in October 2008. Germany was instrumental in the amelioration of Belarus – EU relations and supported the republic in its cooperation with other international organizations. In 2009–2010, Belarus and Germany held a number of negotiations at the high level. Belarus's Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergei Martynov's visit to Germany in February 2009 was seminal. During the meeting, the parties elaborated an Agreement on the rehabilitation of Belarusian underage citizens in Germany [22].

Launched in 2009, the Eastern Partnership initiative was a far-reaching project within the framework of the European Neighborhood Policy, aimed at the expansion of cooperation with Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan. Belarus's entry in the Eastern Partnership opened new horizons for cooperation with the EU members, including Germany.

Belarus's presidential election of 19 December 2010 was a turning point for the country's political history and had a tremendous impact on Belarus's relations with the West. The Western nations sharply criticized the actions of the Belarusian leadership concerning the calculation of the results and the brutal crackdown on the demonstrations of protest. Being one of the most experienced and influential EU power in the post-Soviet space, Germany paid much attention to the Belarusian issue and initiated a new EU policy towards Belarus. On 31 January 2011, the Council of the EU decided to resume the regime of restrictive measures against Belarus.

The period between 2013 and 2017 was one of the most difficult in the history of Belarus's foreign policy. During it the following geopolitical changes happened: realization of Russia's approaches towards the regional system of relations; Ukraine's political crisis of 2013–2014 and the birth of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict; deepening confrontation between Russian and the West; the inauguration of the Eurasian Economic Union; Georgia's, Moldova's, and Ukraine's Association Agreements with the European Union.

Nevertheless, Belarus managed to strengthen its international position, becoming an important ground for the discussion and solution of the whole range of issues related to the Donbass conflict and normalizing its relations with the West.

The most important event in Germany – Belarus relations in this period was the German Chancellor Angela Merkel's visit to Minsk on 11–12 February 2015 to participate in the four-sided negotiations on Ukraine. The coming of the leaders of Germany, Russia, France, and Ukraine acknowledged Belarus's contribution in the stabilization of the situation in the region. As a result of the difficult negotiations, the parties agreed on the terms of a ceasefire in the Donbass and a complex of measures designed to altogether settle the crisis. It should be noted that Angela Merkel was the first German Chancellor to visit Belarus, and her meeting with President Lukashenko in the course of the negotiations opened new opportunities for the normalization and development of bilateral relations [23].

Germany's approach to the Eastern Partnership evolved too. In particular, the German government started to take into account the interests of Belarus as a member of the Eurasian integration project. In 2015, Germany assisted Belarus in joining the European Higher Education Area (Bologna Process). In February 2016, the EU Foreign Affairs Council decided to lift the majority of sanctions against Belarus. This led to the intensification of cooperation with Germany at all levels. Thus, in 2016–2017, there were multiple meetings of Belarus's and Germany's Ministers of Foreign Affairs, the official delegation of the German Parliament visited Belarus, the Belarusian-German Working Group on Trade and Investments gathered, and a number of other bilateral events in the economic, cultural, and humanitarian fields were organized. On the whole, in 2014–2016, Belarus – Germany political relations reached a major turning point, which is due to the increasing role of Belarus in the settlement of the Donbass crisis and its détente with the EU. In sum, Germany – Belarus cooperation gradually enters a new stage corresponding to a greater extent to the potential and interests of both countries.

In Belarus – Germany relations, the economic constituent has always been one of the chief areas of cooperation. The fundamental principles, directions, and forms of economic cooperation were formulated in a number of agreements between the Republic of

Belarus and the Federative Republic of Germany. In early April 1993, when the Belarusian delegation, headed by the Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus Mikhail Miasnikov, visited Germany, the parties signed a treaty on the development of full-scale cooperation in the fields of economy, industry, and science and a treaty on promoting and protecting investments.

In order to facilitate and coordinate economic contacts, a Belarusian-German Council of Economic Cooperation was inaugurated in mid-1992. The meetings of the Council were dedicated to the results of cooperation, discussion of future projects and the possibility of credit allocation, and analysis of economic reforms in Belarus. In 1992–1996, there were four meetings of the Council. After the introduction of EU sanctions against Belarus, the Council was dissolved in September 1997, and in 1999 a bilateral working group on trade and investments was created. On the whole, in the middle of the 1990s, the infrastructure of economic cooperation, adapted to the political realities of Belarus – Germany relations, was fully built. In 2009–2010, the Belarusian-German Council of Economic Cooperation resumed its work.

Germany and Belarus assigned a vital role in the process of reforming Belarus's economy to the Federal Government's program of consultative assistance *Transform*, covering different areas of economy, science, and education and acting in 1992–2000. In 2001 Germany supplemented *Transform* with a Support Program for Belarus. It was elaborated in view of the common EU approach, in particular, much emphasis was placed on the development of civil society in Belarus, support of public initiatives, development of bilateral cooperation in different fields, and integration into the European structures.

In the early 1990s, a lot of German foundations and programs began to work in Belarus, first of all, those aimed at training specialists in the areas of economy, science, and education: the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), the Alexander-Humboldt, Friedrich-Ebert, Konrad-Adenauer, Robert-Bosch Foundations, the Max-Planck Institute, etc.

In the 2000s, among the new forms of cooperation in the economic field were the activity of the Belarusian-German Working Group on Trade and Investments and the launch of the Days of German Economy in Belarus.

In a number of areas of cooperation (technical assistance, investments, foreign trade), Germany was Belarus's leading partner in the EU. For example, in 2001–2015, the volumes of trade tended to increase: bilateral trade between Belarus and Germany rose fivefold and Germany's share in Belarus's foreign trade stabilized at 5–6 %. Germany was the major trade partner for Belarus in Europe: in 2009 Germany's share in Belarus's trade with the EU was 20.2 % (23.8 % in imports, 15 % in exports) [24, p. 671]. According to Belar-

ussian data, as of January 2015, in terms of accumulated foreign capital, Germany was the fifth among the countries-investors, having 3.5 %, or 350.5 million US dollars [25, p. 16–17]. In early 2015, 333 enterprises in Belarus had German capital (the 6th place among other countries) [25, p. 8–9]. Both sides repeatedly stressed the significance of Belarus as a transit country for Germany and the EU. New prospects for bilateral economic relations were opened by the formation of the Eurasian Economic Union.

A special place in bilateral relations in the first half of the 1990s was devoted to the political issues of the German reunification. In this context, the problem of reconciliation and mutual understanding gained much importance. In late March 1993, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Belarus, Russia, Ukraine, and Germany signed an Agreement on the financial compensation to the victims of the Nazi regime during WWII. Within this agreement, more than 125 thousand Belarusian citizens received 100 million euro [8, S. 17].

In July 2000, Germany decreed the creation of the Foundation *Memory, Responsibility, Future*, the funds of which were to be paid to over 1.5 million forced workers from the Nazi-occupied countries during WWII, including 170 thousand Belarusian citizens. Within this program, more than 130 thousand Belarusian citizens received around 354 million euro [8, S. 17].

In May 2015, the German Parliament decided to pay a symbolic sum of 2500 euro to former Soviet prisoners of war during WWII. Germany kept its promise to carry out the residential construction program for the former Soviet troops that were withdrawn from Germany to the territory of the Republic of Belarus. According to German data, in 1991–1995, Germany spent 600 million euro in the residential construction and troop retraining programs in Belarus [8, S. 17]. This was the biggest program of financial assistance to Belarus on the German part.

In June 1996, the Belarusian and German Governments signed a War Graves Agreement. According to it, the parties took the responsibility to ensure the protection of war graves and the eternal peace of the dead from both sides. The realization of the agreement was entrusted to the German People's Union for the Care of War Graves and the Belarusian Ministry of Defense. Despite the fact that the Agreement never came into force, the governments of both countries continued to implement its provisions.

Germany was one of the first nations to offer assistance to the people of Belarus suffering from the Chernobyl disaster. Cooperation in this area began in the late 1980s as part of Germany – USSR relations. A huge positive role for the organization of cooperation between Belarus and Germany in minimizing the effect of Chernobyl was played by the Memorandum on assistance to victims of the Chernobyl disaster, signed by the Belarusian and German Governments in March 1994. In this memorandum, both parties stipulated

their wish to maintain effective cooperation in the field of smoothing out the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster. The Belarusian and German Governments created benign conditions for public initiatives and humanitarian organizations and endorsed a number of projects aimed at eliminating the effects of the nuclear catastrophe [1–5]. A significant role in the realization of cooperation in this area was played by the activity of the Otto-Hugo Institute of Radiology (Munich University), headed by professor H. Lengfelder. In the middle of the 1990s, Germany and Belarus started to cooperate on rehabilitation activities for Chernobyl victims on the territory of Belarus. A major joint initiative was the 1994 opening of the rehabilitation center *Nadezhda (Hope) XXI century* for children affected by the Chernobyl disaster. All in all, Germany spent 340 million euros in humanitarian aid from 1986 to the early 2000s [8, S. 17].

In May 2000, President Lukashenko met with the representatives of German charitable organizations. The Belarusian leader highly valued the German humanitarian aid and the country's role in dealing with the effects of Chernobyl.

The cooperation of Belarusian and German governmental and public organizations, initiatives, and private persons was a considerable contribution to the process of reconciliation and building mutual understanding between Belarus and Germany. The realization of Germany's humanitarian programs greatly helped to solve practical issues connected with the consequences of Chernobyl.

Belarus – Germany cultural cooperation was also an important part of bilateral relations. It was based on a March 1994 Agreement on cultural cooperation, signed by the German and Belarusian Governments. The Goethe-Institute was instrumental in establishing and strengthening links between the two nations and developing meaningful cultural dialogue. It began to work in Belarus in July 1993 and focused on the following tasks: organization of the library, popularization of the German language in Belarus, and realization of cultural projects. The opening of the Minsk International Education Center in September 1994 was a major event in Belarus's cultural and public life. The Center sought to bring together the two nations, ensure their cooperation, reconciliation, and mutual understanding, conduct joint projects in the areas of economy, wildlife preservation, cultural exchange, minimization of the effects of Chernobyl, development of the youths and women movement, dialogue between the churches, etc. As part of the Center, a German Economic Club, uniting the interests of German enterprises in Belarus, was inaugurated in 1994.

Drawing the conclusion, one can say that Germany-Belarus relations were formed on the basis of partnership and mutual benefit and that the parties achieved considerable progress in different fields of cooperation. The political dialogue mechanism favored

the elaboration of the principles of bilateral relations and the definition of the main directions of cooperation. The two countries built a solid treaty and legislative basis for interaction and effective institutions of cooperation. Belarus's stance towards the solution of the Donbass crisis led to the adoption, within the framework of the OSCE and the Normandy format, of a series of agreements aimed at the settlement of the conflict. Belarus-Germany economic cooperation promoted the development of the Belarusian economy and increased its competitiveness and integration into the global economic system. Belarus and Germany achieved progress in the area of historical reconciliation and realized the international agreements of 1993 and 2000 on financial compensation to victims of Nazi persecution. In the field of the minimization of the effects of Chernobyl, Germany was Belarus's main partner among foreign nations. Both countries assigned much importance to the development of cultural relations and the expansion of cooperation in the areas of science and education. In the period under investigation, Germany remained Belarus's chief political and economic partner in the West.

The difficulties of Belarus – Germany relations reflected the contradictions of the functioning of the present-day global system and resulted from different historical and civilizational backgrounds and levels of political, economic, and cultural development. In the course of cooperation, several groups of contradictions emerged. First, a range of contradictions concerned the German assessment of the direction and pace of political and economic reforms in Belarus. The peculiarities of Belarus's domestic policy after the 1996 referendum were sharply criticized by Germany and the EU on the whole and led to the lasting policy of restrictive measure against Belarus, which held back the further development of cooperation. Belarus, on its part, was firm in promoting the principles of equal rights, sovereignty, and non-interference in its relations with the EU. The second group of contradictions concerned a number of bilateral relations issues, in particular, the War Graves Agreement and the conditions of the realization of humanitarian aid programs. In the economic field, there were both objective and subjective obstacles due to the capabilities of the Belarusian market, distinctive features of the Belarusian economic model, the State's dominance in economic affairs, and legal conditions for the activity of foreign investors. The third group of contradictions formed on the basis on non-aligned approaches to the problems of regional and international scales: the security architecture in Europe, NATO's enlargement, the West's export of democracy and its methods, integration projects in the post-Soviet space, and the growing opposition of Eurasian and European integration. The difficulties in bilateral relations limited the possibilities of Belarus – Germany cooperation.

Belarus-Germany relations were to a great extent influenced by the European integration process. Bela-

rus and Germany participated in different integration projects, which became competitors in political and economic terms. The German leadership effectively employed the capabilities of the EU and other European organizations to reach its political goals regarding Belarus. Germany's stance was defining in the formation and realization of the EU's Belarusian policy. In the 1990s – early 2010s, Belarus took an active part in regional organizations in the post-Soviet space, but within the CIS, the Union State of Belarus and Russia, the Collective Security treaty Organization, and the

Eurasian Economic Community, there were no efficient mechanism to elaborate and conduct the common principles of relations towards other countries and regional organizations. The inauguration of the Eurasian Economic Union created new opportunities to coordinate the political and economic activity of its members on the international arena. Belarus's initiatives to form a mechanism of interaction between the Eurasian Economic Union and the EU contribute to creating benign conditions for further cooperation between Belarus and Germany.

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