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MERKEL 4.0 IS REALITY!

Angela Merkel succeeded again! On Sunday, 4th March 2018, the results of the voting in the SPD became known. The ordinary members of the party (and there are more than 463,000 people) voted for an alliance with the CDU / CSU headed by Angela Merkel, i.e. for the formation of the government with the CDU / CSU-SPD. Thus, Germany still has a ‘big coalition’ for another four years. There are no other options. In any case, for now. According to the coalition agreement, the CDU and SPD will receive six ministerial portfolios. Another three ministries were ‘won’ by the CSU representatives. One can congratulate Angela Merkel: she went a long way towards surpassing the mark of Konrad Adenauer’s tenure in office (14 years) and is aiming for the record of Helmut Kohl (16 years).

When Angela Merkel had just come to power, and I was asked as a specialist about my impressions of the new German chancellor, I tried to avoid giving any straightforward characteristics, which obviously gravitated towards negative for both objective reasons and subjective perceptions. And, in fact, what did I know about the rival Gerhard Schröder in the early parliamentary elections in 2005, except for what the press wrote, and for my observation of the CDU candidate at a small pre-election rally in the center of Hamburg, where I happened to attend and listen to her frankly boring speech? The comparison with another candidate – the ‘Green’ politician Joschka Fisher and even more with the media favorite, the social democrat Gerhard Schroeder, was clearly not in favor of ‘Angie’, as Merkel is fondly called in Germany.

But the time went by, many things have changed, however only Merkel remained in power: the second chancellery, then the third, and I had to radically reconsider my attitude to this, no doubt, phenomenon of German post-war politics.

Angela Dorothea Merkel (nee Kasner) made an amazing career in the united Germany. She was born on 17th July 1954 in Hamburg and was the third child in the family. Shortly after her birth, she moved with her mother to the east, to Brandenburg (town of Templin) to live with her father, who, as a Protestant parish priest later headed the seminary. Throughout her conscious experience, the girl grew up and received her education in the GDR. She can speak Russian. At the age of 14, whilst still a schoolgirl, she visited Moscow in 1968. Having won the Olympiad in Russian, as a prize, she got the opportunity to go to the USSR with the 'Friendship Train'. Receiving the chairman of the CDU in the Kremlin in February 2002 (two years earlier Merkel led the party), Vladimir Putin happily remarked that Angela Merkel was one of the few German politicians with whom one could foster dialogue in Russian. Merkel expressed her readiness to win the language Olympiad at any time again. At the press conference after the meeting, answering journalists' questions, she expressed her conviction that among all the political forces represented in the Bundestag there was consensus on the need for partnership with Russia.

After graduation in 1973, she entered the University of Leipzig, where she studied Physics, then from 1978 to 1990 she worked at the Central Institute of Physical Chemistry, Academy of Sciences of the GDR. In 1986, the PhD thesis defense on quantum chemistry took place.

Whilst studying at university, she married her classmate Ulrich Merkel, and they lived for five years together. After the reunification of Germany, on 30th December 1998, she married Joachim Sauer, a professor of Chemistry at Humboldt University of Berlin. She does not have any children.

Merkel got interested in politics during the collapse of the GDR in 1989, becoming a member of the strongly pronounced Protestant opposition organization 'Democratic Awakening', which later merged with the CDU. In 1990, she joined the CDU and was the official representative (deputy spokesperson) of the Lothar de Maiziere Government Program. She was a rapid career climber. She was spotted by Chancellor Kohl at the first all-German election in 1990, when Merkel was sent to the Bundestag. The Chancellor appointed her the Federal Minister for Women and Youth. In many ways, this was the reason why the 'social climber from the former GDR' began to be called "Kohl's girl (protégée)". After the parliamentary elections in 1994, Merkel received a new appointment, becoming Federal Minister for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety. In 1991–98, she was Deputy Chairman of the

CDU. Since 1993, she was appointed Chairman of the CDU in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania.

After losing the elections by CDU / CSU in 1998 and the scandalous departure of Helmut Kohl from politics, Merkel became the CDU's secretary general. Even in 2000, she was Chairman of the party, and in 2002 she headed the CDU / CSU fraction in the Bundestag. After the defeat of Bavaria's premier and CSU chairman Edmund Stoiber in the 2002 parliamentary elections, Merkel managed to restore the shaken authority of the Christian democrats and became a real candidate in the next parliamentary elections. She had no rivals.

One should agree that in 2005, Angela Merkel was obviously inferior to Schröder. Most voters did not doubt the "seriousness of her character", but firstly, she was a WOMAN (!), down to earth in appearance, and in addition a representative of the CDU / CSU bloc, where the processes of emancipation began relatively recently in comparison with the left party wing. Moreover, she was as a 'pupil' fostered in the former socialist GDR (I recall her membership in the pioneer organization and the union of Free German Youth) and now the so-called "new eastern lands", still strikingly different from the Western states, primarily in routines, habits and mentality. I think that many voters did not imagine the future leader of their nation being like that, although one must admit that appearance does not play a decisive role for the Germans.

Secondly, Merkel did not possess oratory skills, which are either a raw talent or are acquired by persistent training during public warfare with the opponents. And in general, it should be noted here that 'Angie' was the only candidate for chancellor who did not have humanitarian (primarily legal) education. Unlike the lawyer Konrad Adenauer, economist Ludwig Erhard, lawyer Kurt Georg Kiesinger, historian and journalist Willy Brandt, political scientist and economist Helmut Schmidt, historian and political scientist Helmut Kohl, lawyer Gerhard Schröder, Angela Merkel was in our understanding a pure 'technician' who needed to grow and thrive in the eyes of many people before thorough understanding of the socio-political and state-national tasks.

Thirdly, she did not develop the same charisma as the 'media chancellor' Schröder. In the television confrontation Schröder-Merkel, which gathered 21 million viewers, according to the voters, the candidate from the CDU won, no contest.

Fourthly, during the election campaign, Merkel made an unpopular slogan of the income tax equation for everyone and raising the rate to 25%. Nevertheless, the CDU / CSU won 'by a close shave', and on 22nd November 2005, 50-year-old A. Merkel

was elected chancellor, becoming the youngest head of government in the history of the FRG.

Having obtained an appointment as head of the coalition government in the CDU / CSU and the SPD and having received such coveted power, Angela Merkel proved that she wanted, but most importantly, could successfully learn to be a leader not only on the national but also on the global scale. The composition of the new cabinet and the first steps of the chancellor testified to the continuity of the domestic and foreign policy of the 'big coalition', which was finally approved by the population. The surveys conducted on 30th November 2005, showed that 35 % of the citizens of the Federal Republic of Germany approved the activity of the CDU / CSU bloc and 41 % approved the activity of the chancellor. 6 % of respondents rated Angela Merkel's policy as 'excellent', 35 % as 'good' and 39 % as 'satisfactory'. Thus, the line of development for the Federal Republic of Germany was determined. It was necessary to strive for a breakthrough in the economy (unemployment under Schröder exceeded the limit of five million people) and stabilize the situation inside the country. The economic success was to secure a higher place for Germany among other developed countries of the world so that the slogan 'Model-Germany' once again sounded proudly in the world politics. This was the beginning of Merkel 1.0, still 'Kohl's girl'.

During four years in government, Merkel managed to achieve several positive changes in the country's economy. The labor market reforms started in 2003, a high level of external demand, especially for machinery, automotive, chemical and electrical products, led to the gradual recovery of economic growth, significant reduction in unemployment (if in March 2005 the rate stood at five million people, then in October 2008, the number of unemployed reached its minimum – three million 178 thousand people), increase in tax revenues and reduction in the deficit of the consolidated budget.

The chancellor was an undoubted success on the international arena. Here, one could observe the expected strengthening of the Atlantic vector and the 'post-Schröder thaw' in the German-American relations. Angela Merkel established a trusting relationship with George W. Bush, who spoke of the German woman as a 'charming person'. The positive changes in the bilateral relations, including at the top level (I note that for three years, Merkel and Bush met 13 times, including five times in Germany), had an impact on improving the mutual perception. According to the sociological surveys conducted in America in April 2007, 39 % of respondents spoke positively about Germany, whereas in April 2003 the figure was only 17 %.

As part of the 'big coalition', Germany successfully chaired the 'Group of Eight', initiating the 'Heiligendamm Process', the essence of which was to attract the rapidly growing countries of the 'Third World' to the work of the G8. Thanks to Angela Merkel's personal efforts, diligence and perseverance, the idea of creating the 'Group of Twenty' was put into effect under the conditions of the crisis outbreak in the world finances and economics crisis by that moment. When Germany assumed the presidency of the Council of the EU, they made efforts to overcome the constitutional and structural crisis in the European Union. Paying tribute to the professional tact, diligence and endurance of Angel Merkel, who whilst playing the 'European poker', placed unusual stakes in the sphere of domestic policy, where the analysts noted that the German presidency at least paved the way for the necessary institutional reforms in the EU – the elaboration on interpretation and ratification of the Lisbon Treaty. Indeed, Germany could easily and quickly solve its financial problems.

Despite the forecasts of the international expert community, the dialogue between Russia and Germany was not forgotten and did not lose its relevance; on the contrary, it was stable and was characterized by upward trends. Surprisingly, Angela Merkel continued the course taken by Schröder, however, supplemented it with the topics regarding the human rights. She agreed to the construction of 'Nord Stream', despite the objections of Poland. In the US, Merkel defended the notion that without the participation of Moscow, the Iranian problem would not be resolved, and the Middle East issue would not be settled. In Berlin, they were convinced that without cooperation with Russia, it was impossible to warrant the security of Europe and Germany accordingly. Not least of all owing to the position of the FRG, it was possible to solve the issue of providing grants by the Monetary Award Program (MAP) to Georgia and Ukraine at the meeting of NATO foreign ministers in December 2008, as well as to resume the activities of the NATO-Russia Council (NRC) suspended by the Americans after the Russo-Georgian War in the South Caucasus.

The 'big coalition' of the new millennium has proved itself in the eyes of the world community as a guarantor of the continuity, stable and reliable foreign policy of the united Germany. In the Merkel-Steinmeier tandem, the two leaders of the conflicting but co-operating major parties of the country successfully complement each other, showing political correctness and playing by the rules of a complex coalition game. There were inter-party differences between Merkel and Steinmeier, but nevertheless they were united in terms of their foreign policy, where it was necessary not to lose the authority that their homeland, be it east, as the chancellor fancied, or the west, as her vice did, developed in the bipolar world and stayed on in the post-bipolar one.

The German people appreciated the success of the 'big coalition', at least much higher than the activities of the 'red-green' alliance and even more than the bond between the CDU / CSU-FDP that followed in 2009. A year before the expiry of the term of her office, the activity of Chancellor Merkel's foreign policy was positively assessed by 76 % of Germans, 84 % of French, 53 % of Englishmen, 51 % of Spaniards and even 45 % of Poles.

2009 was the appearance in Germany of Merkel 2.0, who changed both internally and externally, got wiser, more experienced politically and trying on the role of the 'mother of the nation'. Not without reason that she had a portrait of Catherine II on her desk in the executive office of the German Chancellery, and her favorite expression was "I would like to become a federal chancellor for all Germans ..."

The convincing victory of the Free Democratic Party in the parliamentary elections (14.6 %) made it possible to terminate the 'marriage of convenience' with the Social Democrats and create the accustomed Christian-liberal coalition. On 28th October, Merkel was elected Chancellor of Germany again. The chairman of the FDP, Guido Westerwelle, was appointed Vice-Chancellor and Foreign Minister, which was a forced, but obviously unsuccessful choice of the leader of the CDU.

The influential German edition of 'The Financial Times Deutschland' wrote in this regard: "Merkel II is 'terribly' like Merkel I. If someone thought that with the change of the coalition partner, the chancellor would change the style or content, or both, then observing the coalition they realized that they were obviously mistaken. Patience, caution and unhurriedness, characteristic to Merkel's previous chancellery, were not related to the peculiarities of the 'big coalition'. They are Merkel's essence. "Success in the elections," the newspaper went on, "further strengthened her system of cautious insurance against any danger. It was this system that sent her to the powerful Olympus. And the Chancellor defends this power, putting weak ministers around her with a rare exception. However, power in a democratic environment should not be an end in itself"¹.

The psychological portrait of Merkel, which some American diplomats provided, is quite interesting. It became known after publishing of a secret document of the US State Department by WikiLeaks: "Merkel is methodical, rational and pragmatic. In complex situations, she acts decisively, but on the whole, seeks not to risk and is rarely creative. She is known for her reluctance to participate in high-profile political debates and prefers to keep in the background until the balance of power becomes

¹ For more details see: Pavlov N.V. Politicheskoe liderstvo v usloviakh kantslerskoi demokratii [Political leadership under the conditions of Chancellery democracy]. *Mirovaia ekonomika i mezhdunarodnye otnosheniia* [World Economy and International Relations], 2011, no. 11, pp. 25–38.

known, so that later she could channel the debate into the necessary route"². Merkel sees her participation in the international affairs through the prism of advantages that she can gain for herself in the internal affairs. Among the American diplomats, Merkel has enjoyed the image of the 'Teflon Chancellor'. It is understood that this would be given to a politician who knows how 'to get off with a whole skin'.

It is known that having received the long-awaited power, it is very difficult to part with it. Most German politicians fought for the Chancellor's office to the end, defending their rights primarily within their own party, except for Konrad Adenauer, who had an indisputable authority among the Christian democrats and concentrated all the levers of power in his hands. In this respect, 'Angie' was influenced, apparently, by the example of Adenauer, deeply revered by the current chancellor, and the observations gleaned from the former 'showcase of socialism', where career growth was largely secured by the 'elimination'³ of rivals. In any case, the 'man of power' Angela Merkel did everything at the party level to protect herself from competition with potentially promising politicians. She is regularly re-elected at the party congresses as chairman, and the governing bodies include her trustees and protégés, thus strengthening her positions. As a result, the party is under her complete personal control. In Germany, they even started talking about the final 'Merkelisation' of the CDU. Allegedly, nothing remained from the old "West German conservative men's party".

This result is natural. Within 18 years of chairmanship in the CDU, 'Angie' skillfully cleared the inner-party space, one way or another and step by step getting rid of their opponents. Thus, the former chairman of the CDU / CSU faction in the Bundestag, Friedrich Merz was squeezed out from the leading positions in the party. One of the main Merkel's inner-party competitors, now the former Prime Minister of Hessen and deputy chairman of the CDU, Roland Koch in May 2010 announced his resignation from politics and retired from all responsibilities. At the same time, the CDU lost North Rhine-Westphalia during the parliamentary elections. This fact marked the end of the political career of another charismatic Christian democrat, the Prime Minister of Germany's most densely-populated state and deputy chairman of the party Jürgen Rüttgers. The fourth 'heavyweight' Christian Wulff left the ranks of the CDU after he had been elected President of the Federal Republic of Germany in June 2010 because of the non-party status of the head of the state. Experts suggested that even during the

² Seliverstova N. 'Teflonovaia' Angela Merkel' ['Teflon' Angela Merkel]. *Upravlenie personalom* [Human Resource Management]. Available at: <http://www.top-personal.ru/issue.html?3991> (Date of access: 15.01.2018)

³ In this case, the term 'elimination' is used in a figurative sense.

discussion of the candidates, Angel Merkel put Wulff in the presidency to neutralize a serious political opponent represented by him. His political career also ended quickly, although for other reasons.

In 2009-13, Angela Merkel's government managed to cope with internal and external challenges overall. The situation on the labor market continued to improve, an active policy was implemented to protect the nature and climate, improve energy efficiency, which was affected by the accident at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant. The foreign policy did not change fundamentally. The scale of its priorities remained unchanged. But in the German-Russian relations, new tendencies emerged. Saying goodbye to the prospects of modernization associated with Dmitry Medvedev's presidency in Russia, German politicians did the same with the 'strategic partnership' between Germany and Russia. In the coalition agreement between the CDU / CSU and the FDP, its 'strategic' nature was accordingly forgotten, and Moscow began to occupy the position of a merely 'important partner' in solving regional and global problems. At the same time, special emphasis was placed on the existing 'deficiencies' in Russia around human rights, statehood and democracy. In fact, the German-Russian relations moved into a phase of cold pragmatics. In Germany, it was considered that there was no point in building a 'special relationship' with Russia, rather the policy of sanctions would bring greater benefits, as by doing so Russia would finally be forced out of Europe. At the same time, the government of Merkel does not refuse to receive imports of hydrocarbon fuel from Russia, although open to the idea of finding a replacement.

At the third election in 2013, the 'Mother' (as Angela Merkel began to be called in the mass media) went without having a worthy opponent, and therefore was destined to succeed ahead of the game. The German citizens credited her for the fact that she led Germany through the crisis better than all the other European leaders did. The country documented record-low unemployment. During the debt crisis recovery, Merkel showed sound national egoism. Whilst keeping solidarity with the EU, she opposed the 'communalization' of the debts of the struggling economies. Finally, people in Germany evaluated their own economic situation as good in general, especially in comparison with their neighbors in the eurozone. It is noteworthy that even most of economically disadvantaged Germans with incomes not exceeding one and a half thousand euros a month per family believed that they were living better rather than badly. "The Germans love Merkel for being the same as we are," the newspaper commentators emphasized. They are not seeking to leave well enough alone, they do not change horses in the midstream – this was the essence of the pre-election tactic of the virtually single option candidate from the ruling party. If the German Chancellor

were elected by popular choice, then the chairman of the CDU and the leader of the nation would be supported by 54 % of voters, whilst the candidate from the SPD, former Minister of Finance (2005–09) and the deputy chairman of the party Peer Steinbrück enjoyed only 26 %. These elections were those of Angela Merkel personally. It was the desire for stability that played into the hands of the Chancellor.

“After eight years as Chancellor,” the online edition of *Spiegel-online* noted, “she remains an amazingly strong politician. Merkel gradually deprived her political opponents of their most important topics: more social justice, less tax burden for families, end conscription campaign, a policy of non-interference in the Conflicts in Libya and Syria, transition to renewable energy sources. On paper, the coalition that ruled Germany in the last four years is conservative-liberal. In practice, she often embedded the ideas of the Social Democrats, and sometimes – those of ‘The Greens’. Pure pragmatism – this is the principle of Merkel. And it is popular!

For Merkel, and, obviously for her supporters, it would not have been a problem if she continued her political course in the ‘big coalition’, that is, in alliance with the Social Democrats. Moreover, with the help of such a partner as the SPD, she would be able to resist the Bundesrat – the representation of the federal states, the majority in which was obtained by the Social Democrats and the Greens. Because of this, the adoption of many important government decisions was blocked. And the ‘big coalition 2.0’ in the united Germany became a reality because of the failure of the Free Democrats to enter the Bundestag. And again, as before, record numbers were achieved for the value of export-import commodity transactions and a positive foreign trade balance, which turned out to be the highest in the world. Employment improved, unemployment dropped and the flow of labor from other countries increased (especially from Bulgaria, Poland, Romania and Croatia). The average annual number of people out of work was less than two million, for the first time since the reunification of Germany. In 2015, Germany’s GDP grew by another 1.7 %, in 2016 – by 1.9 %, and in 2017 – by another 2.2 %. From 2014 to 2016, inflation did not exceed 1 %.

According to *Forbes* magazine, Angela Merkel was on the list of ‘100 most influential women in the world’ 12 times (data suggestive of 2017) and 11 times took the lead in the Forbes list. The determining factors in this case would be the influence in financial and economic circles and the media community, as well as career achievements.

The ‘strength test’ of Merkel’s government turned out to be the problem with refugees. The migration wave that rolled into Europe in 2015, provoking a ‘solidarity crisis’ within the EU, had an important impact on the economic and political

processes in the FRG. The country, in which the share of the population 'with a migration background' (origin) is 20.5 % (16.5 million people), was forced to accept within one year of 2015 alone 1.1 million refugees, of which about half a million people were seeking asylum (this was twice more than in 2014). The main influx came from Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan. Angela Merkel, assessing the situation, came out with the slogan "We can do it!", however it had only short-term effect. In the country, there was a strong psychological pressure on the population, among which the right-wing radical sentiments were quite evident. The number of skeptics who believed that Germany would not manage with the challenges of integration and would not be able to favor the assimilation of refugees amounted to 54%. As a result, on 28th January 2016, the government adopted the National Integration Plan, which was intended to reduce the number of arriving immigrants; to integrate effectively into the German society for those people who would have the right to stay in Germany by creating special programs for different refugee groups and enforcement of such programs. It was also planned to create a rigid mechanism for monitoring these conditions and, in case of their non-fulfillment, to deport the perpetrators. Since 2016, there has been a drop in the number of illegal migrants from 890,000 in 2015 to 280,000 in 2016. However, in general, the problem remained unresolved.

It was Merkel's migration policy that became the main reason for the CDU / CSU and SPD loss in the parliamentary elections in 2017 and getting into the Bundestag of the populist 'Alternative for Germany' party. After the hard-bitten declared decision of the Social Democrats to go into opposition, it might seem that the question arose regarding formation of a multi-party government of the so-called 'Jamaica coalition' (due to the colors of the national flag), which would significantly complicate the development and adoption of decisions regarding the key issues of domestic and foreign policy of the country. During the preliminary consultations, it was possible to remove a significant part of the contradictions between the natural antagonists – Alliance 90 / The Greens and the Christian Social Union in Bavaria. But then, the historically preferred partner of the Christian democrats, the Free Democratic Party, led by the new young and ambitious chairman Christian Lindner, with the image of macho and playboy, 'gave a kick'. The Jamaica alliance disintegrated. A fundamental question was placed on the agenda: would Merkel' political career come to an end or whether there is hope for Merkel 4.0.

It seemed that there were extraordinary elections around the corner, but the president, formerly one of the leaders of the SPD, intervened, and insisted that the Social Democrats headed by Martin Schultz withdrew their decisive 'no' and sit down at the negotiating table for the continuation of the 'big coalition'. The negotiations resulted

in the coordination of the coalition agreement and the allocation of seats in the future government. At the end of February, i.e. in fact within five months after the elections to the Bundestag, the CDU party congress voted to sign an agreement with the Social Democrats on the formation of a new coalition government. It was still for the SPD to decide, and their leadership put the question to a vote of the ordinary Social Democrats.

Finally, the matter was resolved. The Social Democrats made a positive decision. A 'yes' was voted in favor of the 'big coalition'. And now it does not matter whether she will rule full term or whether the coalition will disintegrate in two years due to inconsistencies in its stands. The main thing is that Angela Merkel remains Chancellor of Germany and Chairman of the Christian Democratic Union. It is true, they are not entirely satisfied with the distribution of individual cabinet positions in the CSU, however the 'fraternal' party can wait. Now Angela Merkel has a 'pause in the fighting' to demonstrate pragmatism and decide on her successor as head of the government and the party leader. There is little time left, but there will be no other chance. Merkel 5.0 is a pure fiction!

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