

## Germany against Kyiv's Westward push

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During the Cold War, NATO was often described as an international organization whose purpose was to keep the Americans in, the Germans down and the Russians out. NATO's Bucharest summit this week will show that only the first of these - keeping the Americans in - still holds 18 years after the Berlin Wall crumbled.

The Germans are no longer down and the Russians are no longer out. In fact it is because the Germans are no longer down that the Russians are back in.

The German nationalism that British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher chillingly predicted during the December 1989 European Community summit would return following Germany's unification is back. Germany's new assertiveness was openly evident for everybody to see during the mass outpouring of German nationalism at the 2006 World Cup.

Optimism that German Chancellor Angela Merkel would break from her predecessor Gerhard Schroeder's Russophile stance has been misplaced. Merkel's continuation of Schroeder's policies suggests that Germany's Russophilism has cross-party consensus that eerily recalls fears of a new Russo-German alliance that first emerged in the 1922 Rapallo Treaty.

In December 2005, Schroeder accepted a proposal to head a Russian gas project to build a pipeline from Russia to Germany under the Baltic Sea. The pipeline bypasses the new Baltic and Eastern European democracies while undermining the EU's energy security and December 2003 Security Strategy.

In 2003, Germany rallied "Old Europe" against the Iraqi invasion, pushing trans-Atlantic relations to their lowest level since World War II. Five years later, it is Germany that is again mobilizing opposition in Old Europe to giving invitations to Ukraine and Georgia into NATO Membership Action Plans (MAP).

These trans-Atlantic disputes are not an aberration but signify a break in the post-World War II grand bargain. The outcome will be to reduce NATO's effectiveness by transforming it into a two-tier organization.

Although Germany is a member of NATO's military arm, it has contributed less to NATO military action than France, which left NATO's military arm in 1966. As President Bush said in Kyiv, Ukraine has participated in every NATO and recent US-led military exercise.

Germany is also in the vanguard lobbying against the EU offering Ukraine any membership prospects. Of the three regions still seeking EU membership (western Balkans, Turkey, Ukraine), only Ukraine has no membership prospects. Yet of these five countries, only two are democracies, Croatia and Ukraine.

NATO's unwillingness to invite Ukraine into a MAP is the first time in its 60-year history that it has rebuffed a democracy.

While Germany is no longer down, Russia is no longer out. US President George W. Bush and NATO Secretary General Jaap De Hoop Scheffer have stated their objection to any non-NATO member possessing a veto over NATO policy.

This is not the case for Germany and its Old Europe allies who have undermined the very foundations of NATO policy towards Russia since the formation of the NATO–Russia Council (NRC) in 2002. The NRC gave Russia a “voice” but not a “veto” over NATO policy.

Germany has undermined this core principle by de facto giving Russia a veto over inviting Ukraine and Georgia into the MAP process. Following Merkel’s March 8 visit to Moscow, Germany has broken diplomatic protocol and silence by using arguments such as “Russia has no veto, but Russia’s views must be taken into account.” Heinrich Kreft, a leading member of Merkel’s foreign policy team in her Christian Democratic Party warned, “NATO for Ukraine would be a public humiliation for Russia that would last generations.”

No other NATO member, other than Germany, has gone out on a limb to so openly support Russian opposition to NATO MAPs for Ukraine and Georgia. Other Old European members may have similar reservations, but they have maintained diplomatic silence.

Another argument commonly used by Germany and Old Europe is that Russia’s new president should be given a chance to show his alleged “reform credentials” and his desire to improve relations between the West and Russia. Such Western wishful thinking of Russia has a long pedigree stretching back over many decades.

Since Soviet leader Yuriy Andropov came to power in 1982, Western sentiment has shifted from rosy optimism at the beginning of Soviet and Russian leaders’ careers to pessimism after their many years in power. Old Europe should take note: every Soviet reformer was bald while Russian leaders Vladimir Putin and Dmitriy Medvedev have full flocks of hair. That should cause us to doubt their alleged “reform credentials.”

NATO cannot escape the diplomatic cul de sac Germany has taken it into. As a Baltic diplomat said, the argument that “Ukraine and Georgia won’t join NATO because of Russia, but Vladimir Putin doesn’t have a veto over NATO?” is diplomatic gibberish.

Merkel argued against extending a MAP to Georgia because she claimed it would introduce a potential conflict into NATO with Russia over two frozen conflicts. This argument ignores Germany's own history as Western Germany (BRD) was brought into NATO when Eastern Germany (DDR) was a frozen conflict under Soviet occupation.

Using the frozen conflict arguments undermines NATO's long-standing objection to any non-NATO member country possessing a veto over its policies and enlargement. Merkel's new position retreats from German Foreign Ministry statements made only last year that ruled out Russia using the frozen conflicts as a veto.

Merkel manipulates opinion polls to suit Germany's arguments. Low support in Europe for Turkey's EU membership is used as an argument by Germany to only offer Turkey an Enhanced Agreement. Meanwhile, above 50 percent support in Europe for Ukraine's EU membership is not drawn on by Germany to offer Ukraine any membership prospects. All Old Europe members have higher than 50 percent support for Ukraine's EU membership. The exception is Germany.

Ukraine's support for NATO membership has fluctuated between a third and a quarter. All budding NATO members — bar Poland and Romania — had similar levels of support for NATO membership prior to government campaigns to increase public awareness.

In not supporting Ukraine's membership in either NATO or the EU, German nationalism has shown itself to be disinterested in the promotion of democracy beyond its immediate neighbors. It is not coincidental that Germany has led the way in reviving the EU's relations with Uzbekistan after their deterioration three years ago following the Andijon massacre.

In a perceptive new book, *Journal of Democracy* co-editor Larry Diamond wrote that, "The most urgent task of the next decade is to shore up democracy in these countries" of the former USSR. Germany's actions up to Bucharest, and in Brussels, show it to be no friend of emerging democracies Ukraine and Georgia.

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