

Background

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The German Elections: False Dawn for the Obama–Merkel Era

Sally McNamara

Abstract: *While German–American relations have improved in tone from the thinly veiled hostility of Gerhard Schroeder’s chancellorship, all is not perfect between recently re-elected Chancellor Angela Merkel and President Obama. German troops in Afghanistan sit on the sidelines while American and British soldiers fight and die; Germany actively pursues trade with Iran, opposing tougher sanctions on the terror regime; Berlin and Moscow are becoming disconcertingly cozy; and Merkel supports a separate EU defense force at the expense of Germany’s NATO commitments. Heritage Foundation European-affairs expert Sally McNamara details crucial steps that the Obama Administration should pursue—not just for the sake of the transatlantic relationship, but also in the interest of U.S. security.*

Although Germany’s center-right Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and Christian Social Union (CSU) received just 33.8 percent of the national vote in the September elections, Chancellor Angela Merkel’s re-election was secured thanks to the near-collapse of the center-left Social Democratic Party (SPD) and the strong performance of the classical liberal Free Democratic Party (FDP).¹ The CDU and the FDP, Merkel’s declared coalition partner of preference, will now form a 332-seat majority in the 611-member Bundestag, following four years of the ineffective CDU–SPD “grand coalition.”

Following a nadir in U.S.–German relations under Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder (SPD), Merkel’s elec-

Talking Points

- Angela Merkel’s re-election as German chancellor is genuinely welcomed by the Obama Administration, keen to keep the chapter closed on the chancellorship of Gerhard Schroeder, which greatly damaged U.S.–German relations.
- A stable, center-right, pro-American government in Germany opens the door for the U.S. to pursue closer ties with Germany, but significant advances in the relationship should not be expected.
- Germany is likely to remain on the sidelines in Afghanistan, keeping its troops away from high-intensity combat areas and limiting its deployments to mainly civilian missions.
- Germany’s trade with Iran continues to grow despite unfettered belligerence by the brutal regime in Tehran.
- To revitalize U.S.–German relations, the Obama Administration must encourage the Merkel government to step up to the plate in Afghanistan, to disinvest itself from Iran, and to support NATO’s open door policy.

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tion as chancellor in November 2005 was welcomed by the Bush Administration, as was her reelection last month welcomed by the Obama White House.² The formation of a center-right pro-American government in Germany opens the door for the U.S. to pursue closer ties with Germany and to further U.S. interests. But, it will not be easy.

In Afghanistan, Germany has largely sat on the sidelines, restricting its troops to mainly non-combat roles while British and American troops shoulder a disproportionate share of the burden. With regard to Iran, Germany has repeatedly stated that Tehran should be prevented from acquiring a nuclear weapon, but Berlin has actively encouraged a growing trade relationship between Germany and Iran and has opposed tougher international sanctions. And Berlin's closeness to Moscow and its willingness to subject issues such as NATO enlargement to a Russian veto have opened a chasm of distrust between Germany and its Central and Eastern European neighbors.

The U.S. Congress and Obama Administration must push Germany on these issues over the next four years if the German-American relationship is to truly recover and flourish. The U.S. must persuade Berlin to recommit to NATO's "open door" expansion policy and actively pursue greater German commitments to the mission in Afghanistan. Washington must also make clear to Berlin that Tehran may no longer stave off "crippling sanctions" against its illicit pursuit of nuclear weapons.

The Next German Government

While forming a coalition government in Germany can often be a protracted process, there is widespread expectation that negotiations between the CDU and the FDP will be concluded expeditiously. November 9 marks the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall, which places an ambitious target before Chancellor Merkel and FDP

During the election campaign, both Chancellor Merkel and Foreign Minister Steinmeier were keen to downplay Afghanistan because of the war's huge unpopularity among the German public.

leader Guido Westerwelle. Further, on November 3, Merkel will address a joint session of the U.S. Congress, by which time she will want to have her negotiations with the FDP virtually completed in order to make the most of her meetings in Washington.

Customarily, the leader of the junior coalition party becomes the new foreign minister and vice chancellor. There is some speculation that Westerwelle's lack of foreign policy experience, along with his party's heavy emphasis on tax and economic reform policy, could see him bidding for the finance ministry instead. During the election campaign, the FDP did not focus heavily on any single foreign policy issue, and it has continued to concentrate its post-election firepower on tax cuts and economic reform. Although it would be highly unusual for Westerwelle not to take the foreign minister's brief, his command of the finance brief would allow the FDP greater leeway on the issues which it campaigned, and on which it won the highest share of the vote it has ever received.

If, as expected, Westerwelle succeeds the SPD's Frank-Walter Steinmeier as foreign minister, the FDP's finance spokesman Hermann Otto Solms will be Westerwelle's top candidate to replace outgoing SDP Finance Minister Peer Steinbrück. But Solms will face stiff competition from the CSU's popular Economy Minister Karl-Theodor zu Guttenberg and the CDU's Roland Koch, governor of the state of Hessen.³

As foreign minister, Westerwelle would likely prove a stable and cooperative partner to the CDU. On Germany's most important foreign policy ques-

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1. "Germany's Merkel Wins 2nd Term, New Coalition," MSNBC, September 27, 2009, at http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/33045353/ns/world_news-europe (October 13, 2009).
 2. Press release, "Readout of the President's Call with Chancellor Merkel," The White House, September 27, 2009, at http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Readout-of-the-Presidents-call-with-Chancellor-Merkel (September 28, 2009).
 3. "Jockeying for Finance Ministry Heats Up," *The Local*, October 4, 2009, at <http://www.thelocal.de/politics/20091004-22341.html#> (October 15, 2009).

tions, such as EU integration and transatlantic relations, Westerwelle and Merkel will work together easily. Some areas of divergence do exist, however, including two issues of critical importance to U.S.–German relations. FDP defense spokesman Juergen Koppelin called for an exit timeline for the Bundeswehr (the German army) from Afghanistan before the election,⁴ and Westerwelle has previously called for America's nuclear weapons to be removed from Germany.⁵

Afghanistan

Although Afghanistan is Germany's largest post-World War II military deployment, it was a non-issue in the recent election campaign. Both Chancellor Merkel and Foreign Minister Steinmeier were keen to downplay Afghanistan as a campaign issue because of the war's huge unpopularity among the German public. Even a German-ordered U.S. airstrike against Taliban militants suspected of hijacking two fuel trucks in Kunduz on September 4, where heavy civilian casualties were reported, did not raise the political prominence of the Afghanistan mission during the campaign.

The German parliament's mandate for the German contingent of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) runs until mid-December, whereupon the Bundestag will vote to extend, restrict, or end the deployment.⁶ It has been suggested that once the political machinations of electioneering have passed, Chancellor Merkel will

adopt a more aggressive approach toward Afghanistan. This is unlikely: There is no evidence to suggest that she will increase Germany's contribution to the ISAF mission. It is highly unlikely, for instance, that a CDU–FDP government will remove the geographical and operational caveats that have greatly handicapped the Bundeswehr's deployment thus far.⁷ Most likely, the CDU–FDP administration will vote to extend the deployment for another year, with the possibility of reducing troop numbers, which were slightly increased in advance of Afghanistan's presidential elections this past August.

The Merkel administration is likely to continue stressing that Germany's role in Afghanistan is primarily one of development, reconstruction, and protection of aid workers—not combat.

Further, the Merkel administration is likely to continue stressing that Germany's role in Afghanistan is primarily one of development, reconstruction, and protection of aid workers—not combat.⁸ While Germany's €1 billion (\$1.5 billion) financial commitment to Afghanistan's development through 2010 is to be welcomed, it represents just one element of the comprehensive civilian–military approach agreed to at NATO's Bucharest Summit in April 2008.⁹ In the absence of security and stability Germany's rebuilding of civil society and institutions cannot be successful in the long-term.

4. Deutsche Welle, "German Liberal Party Calls for Exit Timetable for Afghanistan Troops," August 19, 2009, at <http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,,4582559,00.html> (October 14, 2009).
5. Judy Dempsey, "Germany's No. 2 Looks to the Spotlight," *The New York Times*, September 30, 2009, at <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/01/world/europe/01iht-letter.html> (October 14, 2009).
6. "We Want the People to Feel, See and Experience Progress!" English-language Web site of Germany's Foreign Office, October 8, 2008, at <http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/diplo/en/Aussenpolitik/RegionaleSchwerpunkte/AfghanistanZentralasien/MilitaerischesEngagement.html> (October 14, 2009).
7. NATO and ISAF, "International Security Assistance Force and Afghan National Army Strength & Laydown," July 23, 2009, at http://www.nato.int/isaf/docu/epub/pdf/isaf_placemat.pdf (October 14, 2009).
8. Immediately prior to the elections, Defense Minister Franz Josef Jung publicly stated that Germans were not fighting a war in Afghanistan, but rather, were there to build schools and hospitals. "Not Calling Afghanistan a War Is a 'Semantic Farce,'" SpiegelOnline International, June 25, 2009, at <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/0,1518,632535,00.html> (October 14, 2009).
9. Bucharest Summit Declaration, April 3, 2008, at <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/news/2008/04/mil-080403-nato01.htm> (October 14, 2009).

Germany's contribution to military success in Afghanistan has been minimal overall. Since 2002, German troops have been geographically restricted to the relatively calm north of the country. Use of Germany's six multipurpose Tornado aircraft, which it delivered a year after NATO requested them, has been restricted to purely reconnaissance missions. And the German troops deployed in July 2009 to crew NATO AWACS (Airborne Warning and Control Systems), were deployed a full year after NATO requested them.¹⁰

Civilian Surge. Having failed to secure significant additional troop commitments from continental Europe at the NATO summit in Strasbourg–Kehl this past April, President Barack Obama has since sought a *civilian* surge from European nations.¹¹ Politically, this should appeal to Berlin, which has stressed the need for further economic and social development in Afghanistan. However, Germany's failure to adequately resource the training and equipping of Afghanistan's security forces is a prime example of Berlin's lack of real commitment to the mission in Afghanistan.

Both President George W. Bush and President Obama have emphasized the importance of transferring responsibility for Afghanistan's security to the Afghans; for Afghanistan to be a viable state in the long term, a functioning army and police are essential. Yet the Coalition Embedded Training Teams program, which embeds allied forces and commanders with the Afghan National Army

(ANA), has been consistently short-changed by Germany, and Europe more broadly. Germany has fared even worse with its training of the Afghan National Police (ANP). Germany took the lead for training the ANP in 2002 before handing off leadership to the European Union after complete failure in June 2007. The German mission was bedeviled by a lack of money, trainers, equipment, and planning.¹²

The EU Police Mission in Afghanistan (EUPOL Afghanistan) has continued to experience the same problems. In 2008, the NATO Parliamentary Assembly commented that EUPOL Afghanistan was too small, underfunded, slow to deploy, inflexible, and largely restricted to Kabul.¹³ At its maximum, EUPOL Afghanistan will number 195 police, law enforcement, and justice experts largely based in Kabul. This stands in stark comparison to the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX Kosovo) where the police component of EULEX will number 1,400, to be dispersed throughout the province.¹⁴ As of December 2008, only 105 police were dispatched under EUPOL to Afghanistan,¹⁵ far less than the 3,500 trainers whom U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates called for in testimony before the U.S. House of Representatives Armed Services Committee in December 2007.¹⁶ In that testimony, Secretary Gates singled out Europe's failure to adequately train the ANP as a source of particular frustration in Afghanistan.¹⁷

10. Defence Professionals, "Eye in the Skies of Afghanistan: Germany Approves Soldiers for AWACS Deployment to Afghanistan," July 3, 2009, at <http://www.defpro.com/daily/details/346> (October 14, 2009).

11. Sally McNamara, "NATO's 60th Anniversary Summit: Unfocused and Unsuccessful," Heritage Foundation *WebMemo* No. 2388, April 8, 2009, at http://www.heritage.org/Research/Europe/wm2388.cfm#_ftn9 (October 14, 2009).

12. Judy Dempsey, "Germany Criticized for Its Training of Afghan Police," *The New York Times*, October 15, 2006, at http://www.nytimes.com/2006/11/15/world/europe/15iht-germany.3551337.html?_r=2 (October 14, 2009).

13. "NATO Operations: Current Priorities and Lessons Learned," NATO Parliamentary Assembly 158 DSC 08 E bis, 2008 Annual Session, at <http://www.nato-pa.int/Default.asp?CAT2=1458&CAT1=16&CAT0=2&COM=1476&MOD=0&SMD=0&SSMD=0&STA=&ID=0&PAR=0&PRINT=1> (October 14, 2009).

14. Head of Police Rainer Kuehn, "EULEX Kosovo Police Component," EULEX Kosovo, 2008, at <http://www.eulex-kosovo.eu/?id=9> (October 14, 2009).

15. "European Union Police Mission in Afghanistan," EUPOL Afghanistan, December 16, 2008, at http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsUpload/POLICE%20_4_3.pdf (October 14, 2009).

16. "Gates Slams Germany over Afghanistan Role," SpiegelOnline International, December 12, 2007, at <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/0,1518,druck-522904,00.html> (October 14, 2009).

The U.K. House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee recently noted that as a result of German and EU failures to adequately train the Afghan police, the U.S. military has been forced to “step into the breach,” subtracting valuable military and financial resources from other areas of its mission.¹⁸ As an international player, Germany’s failings in Afghanistan expose it as a nation uncertain of its role in the world, uncommitted to NATO, and one that the United States cannot rely on as a consistent leading transatlantic partner.

Iran

With Iran’s threat to wipe Israel “off the face of the earth,” German–American cooperation in stopping Iran’s illicit nuclear-weapons program should be a hallmark of any supposed renaissance of German–American relations.¹⁹ Germany has long claimed to have a special obligation to Israel’s security. In 2008, Chancellor Merkel cemented growing German–Israeli ties with a three-day official visit to Israel to mark the 60th anniversary of Israel’s creation. Speaking before the Knesset, she stated:

Especially in this place, I emphasize: Every German government and every chancellor before me was committed to the special responsibility Germany has for Israel’s security.... This historic responsibility is part of my country’s fundamental policy. It means that for me, as a German chancellor, Israel’s security is non-negotiable.²⁰

Germany’s record in dealing with Iran chimes badly with this statement. Germany is a member of

The German government has consistently opposed stronger international sanctions on Iran.

the EU-3 (with France and the U.K.) which have led international negotiations to halt Iran’s nuclear weapons program since 2003. Yet, Berlin has consistently opposed stronger international sanctions on Iran.²¹ Despite continued failure, including an awkward announcement at the G-20 summit in Pittsburgh last month that Iran has built a secret uranium-enrichment plant near the city of Qom, Germany continues to support offering Tehran a range of economic and technological incentives to give up its nuclear-enrichment program.²² Further, Germany has stated that it will only adhere to sanctions which are agreed upon unanimously through the U.N. Security Council, effectively vetoing EU–U.S. sanctions.

Germany’s massive trading relationship with Tehran would certainly be hit hard by EU–U.S. sanctions. The German Chambers of Industry and Commerce has estimated that economic sanctions on Iran may result in up to 10,000 German job losses and lower economic growth. Germany is Iran’s largest trading partner in the EU.²³ In 2008, German exports to Iran increased by 10 percent, totaling €3.92 billion (\$5.84 billion). Iran continues to import vital engineering, chemical, and energy products from Germany.²⁴ And the German government continues to provide €133 million

17. *Ibid.*

18. House of Commons, “Global Security: Afghanistan and Pakistan,” Foreign Affairs Committee—Eight Report, p. 37, section 78, July 21, 2009, at <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200809/cmselect/cmfaaff/302/30202.htm> (October 14, 2009).

19. Ewan MacAskill and Chris McGreal, “Israel Should Be Wiped Off Map, Says Iran’s President,” *The Guardian*, October 27, 2005, at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/iran/story/0,12858,1601413,00.html> (October 14, 2009).

20. Shahar Ilan and Anshel Pfeffer, “Merkel to Knesset: Germany Will Always Stand by Israel,” *Haaretz*, March 19, 2008, at <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/965602.html> (October 14, 2009).

21. For a fuller explanation, see John Bolton, *Surrender Is Not an Option: Defending America at the United Nations* (New York: Simon & Shuster, 2007).

22. Julian Borger, “Iran and United States on Collision Course over Nuclear Plant,” *The Observer*, September 27, 2009, at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/sep/27/iran-nuclear-weapons-plant> (October 14, 2009).

23. “Europe and the Mullahs: How the EU Subsidizes Trade with Iran,” *The Wall Street Journal*, February 20, 2007, at <http://www.opinionjournal.com/editorial/feature.html?id=110009689> (October 14, 2009).

(\$198 million) worth of government-backed export guarantees for German companies doing business with Iran.²⁵

Germany's ties to Iran are as political as they are economic. Germany's previous foreign minister, the Green Party's Joschka Fischer, reportedly told Tehran that Europe should be considered a "protective shield" against the U.S. when President Bush included Iran in the "axis of evil" in his 2002 State of the Union Address.²⁶ Former Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder serves as honorary chairman of the German Near and Middle East Association (NUMOV), which actively promotes German-Iranian trade.²⁷ Further, Schroeder visited Tehran in February this year, meeting with Iran's Holocaust-denying President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.²⁸

Germany's relations with Iran run deep and wide. Yet since the creation of the EU-3 in 2003, with its policy of unfettered diplomatic engagement, Germany has failed to leverage its own relationship or repeated offers of generous incentive packages in exchange for greater cooperation from Tehran. In fact, Tehran's behavior has grown more belligerent:

- The U.S. Department of State continues to designate Iran as the leading state sponsor of terrorism;
- The Iranian presidential elections conducted in June 2009 saw the brutal suppression of Iran's citizenry including mass arrests, politically motivated beatings and murders, and systematic human rights abuses;

- Admiral Mike Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, recently stated that Tehran has already amassed sufficient uranium to build an atomic bomb;²⁹ and
- President Obama led world leaders last month in condemning a previously unreported second nuclear-enrichment facility near Qom, in violation of non-proliferation agreements.³⁰

If Germany's special commitment to Israel's defense is to be genuine, Berlin can no longer seriously argue that engagement with Tehran is likely to succeed in halting its nuclear ambitions. President Obama should seek Chancellor Merkel's support in opposing the Iranian regime, which in 2006, she compared to that of Hitler's Third Reich.³¹

Berlin and Washington should cooperate to impose targeted and heavy sanctions immediately—regardless of U.N. Security Council backing or the lack thereof. As the EU's primary exporter to Iran, Germany would set a powerful example for the rest of Europe, especially Italy and France, which also have significant economic ties to Tehran. It is time for Germany and Europe to put global stability and security before short-term economic gain.

The European Union

Germany's commitment to further EU integration has been steadfast under every chancellor regardless of party, and is no different under Merkel. The Obama Administration has been positive about

24. Kerstin Gehmlich, "UPDATE 2—Germany Cuts Iran Guarantees but Exports Rise," Reuters, February 24, 2009, at <http://www.reuters.com/article/companyNewsAndPR/idUSLO42511220090224> (October 14, 2009).

25. *Ibid.*

26. Rory Miller, "If the US Makes Peace with Iran, Europe Will Pay the Price," Al Arabiya, April 7, 2009, at <http://www.alarabiya.net/views/2009/04/07/70096.html> (October 14, 2009).

27. "Former German Envoy Blasts Schröder's Iran Lobby Work," *Turkish Weekly*, May 6, 2009.

28. Benjamin Weinthal, "Germany's Schröder promoting trade with Iran," *The Jerusalem Post*, April 29, 2009, at <http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?cid=1239710821258&pagename=JPost/JPostArticle/ShowFull> (October 14, 2009).

29. Alex Spillius, "Iran Has Enough Material to Bail [sic] Nuclear Bomb, Says Adm Mike Mullen," *The Daily Telegraph*, March 1, 2009, at <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/northamerica/usa/4904519/Iran-has-enough-material-to-bail-nuclear-bomb-says-Adm-Mike-Mullen.html> (October 14, 2009).

30. Jonathan Weisman, Siobhan Gorman, and Jay Solomon, "West Raps Iran Nuclear Site," *The Wall Street Journal*, September 26, 2009, at <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB125386629947940443.html> (October 14, 2009).

31. Peter Conradi, "Iran as Bad as Nazis: Merkel," *The Sunday Times*, February 5, 2006, at <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/article727156.ece> (October 14, 2009).

EU integration efforts, especially expansion of the Euro-Atlantic area. EU–U.S. cooperation in enlarging Euro-Atlantic membership has worked well previously, with EU membership generally following shortly after NATO membership.

Turkish accession to the EU remains highly contentious in Europe, and President Obama's attempt at forcing Turkish membership was not welcomed.

President Obama described EU enlargement as “history’s most successful democratization strategy.”³² But although Chancellor Merkel was an advocate of eastward enlargement in 2004, she has been less enthusiastic about further expansion since then. As part of its manifesto for the European Parliament election in June, the CDU promised to focus on “consolidating” the EU before admitting additional members.³³ Further, Merkel has said she will block all further EU enlargement until implementation of the Lisbon Treaty, a move that could potentially delay Croatia’s accession to the EU and which was criticized by EU Commissioner for Enlargement Olli Rehn.³⁴

During his European tour last April, President Obama made a strong statement of support for Turkish membership in the EU.³⁵ However, Turkish accession to the EU remains highly contentious in Europe, and President Obama’s attempt at forcing

Turkish membership was not welcomed in several capitals, especially not in Berlin. Polls have demonstrated public opposition in many parts of the EU to Turkish membership, including in France, Italy, the U.K., and Austria. If Chancellor Merkel vetoes Ankara’s membership in the EU, she is unlikely to be alone.³⁶ Chancellor Merkel has long advocated drawing the boundaries of Europe to the exclusion of Turkey, and it is widely expected that she will harden Berlin’s opposition to Turkish membership, instead pushing an earlier proposal for a privileged partnership between Ankara and Brussels.³⁷ Germany has yet to provide unrestricted market access to workers from the Central and Eastern European countries that acceded to the EU on May 1, 2004. It can safely be assumed that Berlin is unlikely to support further EU expansion to include Turkey and will resist pressure from Washington on this issue.

Russia

Upon taking office, President Obama quickly sought to recalibrate U.S.–Russian relations—to “press the reset button” as described by Vice President Joe Biden at the Munich Security Conference last February. President Obama has formally visited Moscow, has begun negotiations on a new arms control treaty, has withdrawn from deploying elements of America’s missile defense shield in Central and Eastern Europe, has backed off eastward NATO expansion, and has offered Moscow a basket of incentives to solidify U.S.–Russian relations.³⁸

32. “Barack Obama and Joe Biden: A Stronger Partnership with Europe for a Safer America,” BarackObama.com, at http://www.barackobama.com/pdf/Fact_Sheet_Europe_FINAL.pdf (October 14, 2009).

33. “France, Germany Bolt EU Doors to Western Balkans,” Deutsche Welle, March 28, 2009, at <http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,,4135774,00.html> (October 14, 2009).

34. Tony Barber, “Lisbon Treaty Rejection ‘No Excuse to Block Expansion,’” *The Financial Times*, September 19, 2008, at http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/fc32fd36-85e2-11dd-a1ac-0000779fd18c.html?nclick_check=1 (October 14, 2009).

35. “Obama Hits French and German Nerves over Turkey’s EU Bid,” Deutsche Welle, April 5, 2009, at <http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,,4154379,00.html> (October 14, 2009).

36. “Eurobarometer 69—5. The European Union Today and Tomorrow,” European Commission, November 2008, pp. 29–30, at http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb69/eb69_part3_en.pdf (October 14, 2009).

37. Damien McElroy, “Angela Merkel Win Ends Turkey’s EU Hopes,” *The Daily Telegraph*, September 29, 2009, at <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/turkey/6244276/Angela-Merkel-win-ends-Turkeys-EU-hopes.html> (October 14, 2009).

38. Craig Whitlock, “Reset’ Sought on Relations with Russia, Biden Says,” *The Washington Post*, February 8, 2009, at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/02/07/AR2009020700756.html> (October 14, 2009).

Despite the fact that she took a stronger line than Foreign Minister Steinmeier did against Russia's proposal to restructure Europe's security architecture, Chancellor Merkel is still likely to encourage the burgeoning closeness between Moscow and Washington. Germany is Russia's largest trading partner, and Merkel received a huge pre-election boost when the Russian state-owned bank Sber-

Berlin's economic relationship with Moscow encompasses a close energy relationship, with Germany heavily dependent on Russian oil and gas.

bank, backed Magna International's purchase of Opel. Magna immediately announced that all four Opel car plants in Germany would remain open, rescuing 25,000 jeopardized jobs.³⁹ Chancellor Merkel directly invested political capital in engineering the deal, putting it at the top of her agenda in a face-to-face summit with President Dmitry Medvedev in August.⁴⁰

Berlin's economic relationship with Moscow encompasses an equally close energy relationship, with Germany heavily dependent on Russian oil and gas. Gerhard Schroeder is chairman of Gazprom's Nord Stream project, which aims to bring Russian gas to Europe via the Baltic Sea. Nord Stream's goal is to bypass transit countries in Russia's near abroad, such as Ukraine and Belarus, and provide energy directly to Germany. Following Chancellor Merkel's plea to President Medvedev for Sberbank to support Magna's bid for Opel, she reaffirmed Germany's support for Nord Stream, much to the EU's dismay.⁴¹

President Obama must be careful not to take Germany's endorsement of America's newfound closeness to Russia as indicative of European endorsement as a whole. He has already alienated several of America's closest allies in the region. Poland has been especially critical of what it sees as Germany's extreme pro-Russia policies; Polish Foreign Minister Radek Sikorski has compared the Nord Stream deal to the devastating 1939 Molotov-Ribbentrop pact that severed Poland into German and Soviet spheres of influence.⁴² In an astonishing open letter to President Obama, 22 former political and opinion leaders from Central and Eastern Europe, including Polish Solidarity leader Lech Walesa and former Czech president and Soviet dissident Vaclav Havel, expressed their misgivings over America's simultaneous neglect of their region and growing Russian aggressiveness.⁴³ Combined with President Obama's abandonment of the Third Site missile-defense deal with Poland and the Czech Republic—announced on the 70th anniversary of the Soviet Union's invasion of Poland—America's President has given Central and Eastern Europe the impression that their interests can be discarded at will. In formulating America's Russia and Eurasia policy, Obama must take into account a range of European views on Russia and avoid giving the impression that his Administration cares only for the EU's large powers.

NATO

Germany's commitment to NATO continues to be a "cornerstone" of its foreign policy.⁴⁴ At the Munich Security Conference in February, Chancellor Merkel stated that, "NATO...will continue to be the central anchor of the transatlantic alliance...."

39. BBC News Online, "Opel and Vauxhall to Go to Magna," September 10, 2009, at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/business/8247971.stm> (October 14, 2009).

40. "Trade Dominates German-Russian Summit in Sochi," Deutsche Welle, August 14, 2009, at <http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,,4572359,00.html> (October 14, 2009).

41. *Ibid.*

42. Simon Taylor, "Why Russia's Nord Stream Is Winning the Pipeline Race," *European Voice*, January 29, 2009, at <http://www.europeanvoice.com/article/imported/why-russia-s-nord-stream-is-winning-the-pipeline-race/63780.aspx> (October 14, 2009).

43. Matthew Day, "Central Europe's Leaders Ask Barack Obama to Take Strong Line with Russia," *The Telegraph*, July 16, 2009, at <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/russia/5842535/Central-Europes-leaders-ask-Barack-Obama-to-take-strong-line-with-Russia.html> (October 14, 2009).

The transatlantic axis forms the foundation for our security architecture.”⁴⁵ However, Germany’s credibility as a willing and able NATO partner is challenged by its tentative and half-hearted investment in the alliance.

Inequitable Burden-Sharing. Germany’s equivocal performance in Afghanistan demonstrates its unwillingness to shoulder a fair share of NATO’s burden, especially in operational terms. Along with many other continental European nations, Germany’s restrictions on its troops have opened a chasm of distrust between NATO allies and created a two-tier alliance, where some nations’ soldiers fight and die, and some do not. The EU’s “big four” continental nations of France, Germany, Italy, and Spain *combined* have endured less than half the number of combat deaths than the U.K. alone.⁴⁶

This lack of political will is matched by a lack of military capability. Despite being a signatory to NATO’s 2002 Prague Capabilities Commitment, Germany’s defense spending has continued to decline, and current projections do not indicate that defense resources will increase in the near future. Germany’s long-awaited defense reform and transformation agenda is now scheduled for completion by 2010 (delayed from the original target date of 2006), although major procurement decisions could be delayed even further. In order for Germany to achieve its stated transformational goal of having the Bundeswehr “better equipped for and more capable in international missions with global reach,” it must commit to raising its defense spending to NATO’s benchmark floor of 2 percent of GDP.⁴⁷ Berlin must spend its freshly built political capital on an announcement that its NATO deployments will be freed from their restrictive caveats in the future. When it completes restructuring of Ger-

many’s armed forces, the Bundeswehr must be in a position to support quicker and more effective deployments in support of NATO missions.

Germany’s equivocal performance in Afghanistan demonstrates its unwillingness to shoulder a fair share of NATO’s burden, especially in operational terms.

The heart and soul of NATO is the deterrent value of its Article V commitment, in which an attack on one member constitutes an attack on the entire alliance. If Article V is to have value both as a deterrent and as a shared defense commitment, military ability and preparedness matter. Germany must shoulder its fair share of that burden.

Creating Competitors. In her speech before the Munich Security Conference this past February, Chancellor Merkel concentrated a large part of her remarks on advocating an EU-only defense identity.⁴⁸ Germany, in close cooperation with France, continues to drive the development of the EU’s European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP) and the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), which act as a brake on NATO and undercut the transatlantic security alliance. The ESDP and the CFSP draw scarce defense resources from NATO and undermine efforts within NATO to promote transatlantic interoperability. The development of the ESDP has duplicated NATO’s functions and created an outright competitor institution.

In its “European Military Capabilities” report the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) found that just 2.7 percent of the 2 million military personnel from Britain and Europe are capable of

44. “White Paper 2006 on German Security Policy and the Future of the Bundeswehr,” Federal Ministry of Defense, p. 24, at http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/materiales/docs/LibroBlanco2006_english.pdf (October 14, 2009).

45. “Speech by Federal Chancellor Angela Merkel at the 45th Munich Security Conference,” February 7, 2009, Munich, at <http://www.bundeskanzlerin.de/Content/EN/Reden/2009/2009-02-07-rede-merkel-sicherheitskonferenz-en.html> (October 14, 2009).

46. “Coalition Deaths by Nationality,” iCasualties.org, October 10, 2009, at <http://www.icasualties.org/OEF/Nationality.aspx?hndQry=US> (October 14, 2009).

47. “European Military Capabilities: Building Armed Forces for Modern Operations,” International Institute for Strategic Studies, July 9, 2008, p. 47.

48. “Speech by Federal Chancellor Angela Merkel at the 45th Munich Security Conference.”

sustained overseas deployment.⁴⁹ The IISS report also highlighted a number of critical shortcomings of Europe's military capabilities. With such scant resources, a sharper focus must be concentrated on a single defense arena.

President Obama must make clear to Germany that EU efforts to build a separate defense identity cannot come at the expense of members' obligations to NATO.

President Obama should work with Chancellor Merkel to clarify NATO–EU relations, and ensure that NATO's primacy remains supreme in transatlantic security discussions. He must reserve NATO resources for NATO missions—and make clear to Germany that EU efforts to formulate a separate defense identity cannot come at the expense of members' shared obligations to NATO.

Thwarting Further Expansion. Although Germany was a passionate supporter of including Central and Eastern Europe in NATO in the 1990s, it has since taken action to prevent further expansion of the alliance. Berlin was one of the most visible and vocal opponents of Georgia and Ukraine receiving NATO's Membership Action Plan (MAP) at the Bucharest Summit in 2008, which President Bush and then-Senator Barack Obama both supported. During his presidential election campaign, Candidate Obama restated his support for Georgia to receive MAP status and has even called for Georgia and Ukraine to be accelerated into NATO's MAP.⁵⁰

The Strasbourg–Kehl Summit in April was a lost opportunity for President Obama to advance the enlargement agenda, and has left candidate nations uncertain about his commitment to NATO's long-standing open door policy. A Russia-first tone overwhelmingly characterized the Strasbourg Summit's

final declaration, which has further undermined the prospects for Georgian and Ukrainian accession to NATO's Membership Action Plan.⁵¹

NATO enlargement has traditionally enjoyed strong bipartisan support in the United States, and the Obama Administration should champion enlargement. Working in concert with Congress, the Obama Administration should rebuild a consensus around NATO enlargement once again, and find a more definite footing for Georgian and Ukrainian accession to MAP. The President must make it clear to Berlin that abandoning NATO enlargement is not a price that the U.S. Administration will pay in exchange for resetting relations with Moscow and should challenge Chancellor Merkel to stand by her own words at the Munich Security Conference that “no third state has a right to decide who becomes a member and who doesn't.”⁵²

What's Next

In the coming weeks, Chancellor Merkel's CDU and Guido Westerwelle's FDP will engage in protracted negotiations to outline in specific detail their coalition government's plan of action for its four-year term. In order to advance a productive U.S.–German relationship, the Obama Administration should:

- **Ask Berlin to renew its mandate for its Afghanistan deployment with a commitment to provide extra military and civilian resources, including additional trainers for the Afghan National Police.** These actions should be complemented by a removal of national caveats on German troops and equipment;
- **Request an end to all remaining German export credit guarantees to Iran, as part of a concerted American–European effort to halt Iran's nuclear ambitions.** Washington should press Berlin to divest itself of key export ties to Tehran and work with Washington on targeted and crippling sanctions;

49. “European Military Capabilities: Building Armed Forces for Modern Operations.”

50. “Analysis: Crisis Shows Candidates' Foreign Policy Skills,” *USA Today*, August 12, 2008, at http://www.usatoday.com/news/politics/election2008/2008-08-12-candidates-georgia_N.htm (October 14, 2009).

51. Press release, “Strasbourg/Kehl Summit Declaration,” NATO, April 4, 2009, at http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/news_52837.htm?mode=pressrelease (October 14, 2009).

52. “Speech by Federal Chancellor Angela Merkel at the 45th Munich Security Conference.”

- **Join Berlin in opposing Moscow's efforts to restructure Europe's security architecture.** As part of the broader conversation, President Obama should re-engage Central and Eastern Europe in its discussions with Germany over Russia on key issues, such as energy and security;
- **Restate its support for NATO's open door policy, specifically for Georgia and Ukraine's accession to NATO's Membership Action Plan.** Washington should engage Berlin on the question of NATO enlargement and build consensus within the alliance for further expansion; and
- **Restate the primacy of NATO in Europe's security architecture as part of the negotiations for NATO's 2010 Strategic Concept.** Washington should use the negotiations for NATO's new Strategic Concept to reassert NATO's primacy in Europe's security discussions.

The re-election of Angela Merkel as Germany's chancellor was cheerfully predicted by President Obama when she visited the White House in July.⁵³ President Obama's high popularity ratings in Germany and his pursuit of issues of importance to Germany have endeared him to the Merkel administration. Chancellor Merkel's rejection of Gerhard Schroeder's virulent anti-Americanism has also enhanced the tone of German-American relations more generally. However, the German-American

relationship is unlikely to take a radical step forward in practical terms, despite a window of opportunity to do so.

In Afghanistan, Germany is unlikely to remove its caveats and move its troops into combat; with Iran, Berlin is likely to continue its long-failed policy of engagement; with regard to Russia, Chancellor Merkel is unlikely to take a more balanced approach and hold Moscow to account on human rights and press freedoms; and within NATO, Germany is likely to maintain its opposition to Georgian and Ukrainian accession to MAP.

While there will be opportunities for Merkel and Obama to work together successfully—the commemorations of the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall will provide a celebratory backdrop in the coming months—German-American relations will not advance significantly over the next four years. Although the U.S.–German relationship has cosmetically improved, in order for Merkel and Obama to take the relationship to the next level, Germany must decide what role it wants to play on the world stage and step up to the plate as a reliable and consistent partner to the United States.

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53. Ralf Beste and Gregor Peter Schmitz, "Obama Predicts Merkel Victory in Coming Election," SpiegelOnline International, July 13, 2009, at <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/0,1518,635822,00.html> (October 14, 2009).