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Military multiculturalism: Could the Russian colors fly alongside the flags of the NATO member states?

New challenges, new responses

Now is the time to open the door of NATO membership to Russia

By Volker Rühe and Ulrich Weisser

World history is about to open a window of opportunity for Russia, Europe and the United States to organize common security with an overarching new approach. In regions that are of vital importance for Europe, the United States and Russia clearly have common interests.

We are all challenged by the same problems: Jihad terrorism, the vulnerability of the global communication structures, a growing threat from nuclear-armed missiles, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and instability in the Middle East. Exploding crises and imploding states have to be brought under control. Global Jihad terrorism stands at the forefront of these clear and present threats.

Military intervention alone can not cope with such threats. The new forms of terror and conflict represent an attack on the world order. They require a broad and imaginative strategy that brings all means to bear: in the political, diplomatic, cultural and economic dimensions. Military intervention can only be the last resort. And since the new challenges are essentially transnational, they need to be countered with the most energetic mobilization of resources for international cooperation.

The Euro-Atlantic region needs peace and stability at home but it also needs protection against external threats. Ultimately, the emergence of a multi-polar world requires finding a way to accommodate and offset the political, economic and strategic dynamics of the emerging great powers in Asia.

Winston Churchill once said that "however beautiful the strategy seems to be, you should occasionally look at the result." NATO, the United States and Russia must look at their current policies. In the near future, fundamental questions must be adressed. Does NATO want Russia inside or outside the Euro-Atlantic security framework? In the same vein, the Russians must ask themselves – and answer the question – whether they truly want to join.

No Western strategy aiming at isolating Russia is going to pay off. On the contrary, it would soon harm Western interests. Nobody can isolate Russia, a great power with enormous economic resources, without paying a high price.

NATO and the EU are well advised to pay respect to legitimate Russian security interests and sensitivities. That does not mean losing the necessary critical distance. But once in a while one should consider whether Russian concerns do not deserve to be more seriously considered. Our own security interests do indeed require such an approach.

If the Atlantic alliance intends to be the primary forum for addressing all crises – because it is the only forum where North America, Europe and Russia sit at the same table – then it must redefine its strategic concept. And it must begin to manage relations with Russia in the NATO-Russia Council quite differently than in the past. Moscow should be invited to participate with all due dignity – and not for mutual fault finding, but for a permanent, frank dialogue on the relevant issues of our time. From that dialogue, common projects ought to emerge.

In the future, the alliance should see itself as a strategic framework for the three centers of power: North America, Europe and Russia. It should do so because peace and stability in and for Europe are possible only with Russia and not against Russia.

As NATO expanded eastward, Russia was not considered eligible for membership; it was seen merely as a strategic partner. Regrettably, though, the expectations concerning this partnership have not been fulfilled. Now is the time to open the door to NATO membership for Russia.

Of course, Russia should be aware that it is expected to accept the rights and obligations of a NATO member – as an equal among equals. But it's time to initiate the process leading to that ultimate objective.

A fundamental new security relationship is still a diffuse notion. It involves social attitudes and public perceptions as well as official policies, formal agreements, military deployment patterns and operational cooperation. The history of the European Union proves that distant goals can be reached step by step, if the objectives reflect mutual interests.

A necessary prerequisite is mutual reassurance. If such reassurance is to become a reality, the currently prevailing disparity in military capabilities cannot be the dominant yardstick. A mutual understanding of capabilities and intentions would have to be developed that is robust enough to override traditional antagonistic thinking as well as the traditional principles of contingency planning.

The Euro-Atlantic community needs America. But for many reasons it needs Russia, too. Energy security, disarmament and arms control, the prevention of proliferation, make cooperation imperative. Likewise, close collaboration would ease the task of facing a host of problems in Africa, in Iran, Afghanistan; of containing the potential for crisis and conflict in Central Asia; and of decision-making in the United Nations Security Council or within the framework of the G-8 and the G-20. Russia should be encouraged to become a partner sharing common interests, common strategic principles and joint responsibilities.

At stake is, first and foremost, the stability in Central Asia. The conflict-ridden region harbors the largest global energy reserves. Ethnic and religious disputes, Islamic fundamentalism and conflicting interests of the world powers compound the picture.

It is a necessity for NATO and Russia to figure out now how Moscow can find its way into the Euro-Atlantic community. Russian proposals for a European Security Treaty have received a lukewarm response for too long. They have, however, stirred a necessary debate.

The best way to overcome outdated structures of confrontational thinking may be to embark on as many concrete proposals as possible for an ever intensifying cooperation between East and West – be it in the field of arms control or common air defense. The chances for a joint missile defense system have never been better than today.

In the field of arms control both sides should embark on a forceful initiative dealing with the withdrawal of short-range nuclear weapons and also with the urgent replacement of the suspended conventional arms control regime in Europe.

NATO would be well advised to declare that there is an urgent need to reduce the roles and risks of nuclear weapons in security policies globally. A mutually agreed reduction of US and Russian non-strategic nuclear weapons in Europe would serve this purpose. In addition, the Alliance should declare that the fundamental role of nuclear weapons is to deter nuclear attack.

A multi-vector policy aimed at productive relations with Russia and the European Union without neglecting the United States in any way may provide a future-oriented foundation for a bridge towards a new pan-European structure of security and stability.

Mutual security guarantees, trust and everyday practical co-operation will ultimately remove the chronic and mutually weakening discords between Russia and the West.

■

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Ahead of the pack

The German economy is growing, consumer spending stirring | By Peter H. Koepf

Cut taxes, hike wages – that was what French Economics Minister Christine Lagarde and IMF head Dominique Strauss-Kahn called on the German government to do last spring. They urged Germany to stop relying so strongly on its exports and to put more money in people's pockets instead. If Germans bought more goods – French ones perhaps? – it would help reduce trade imbalances, ran the argument. Recently, Timothy Geithner, US Secretary of the Treasury, took the same line. In the run-up to the G-20 meeting in Korea, he proposed a limitation of export surpluses to four percent of GNP.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel's response to Lagarde can be summed up with the words: I'll do it my way. Germany will not abandon its strengths, she said, and would not orient itself toward the weakest economies. Berlin stuck to its principle of "first work, then play."

German Economics Minister Rainer Brüderle gave the same response to Geithner. He warned the Treasure Secretary not to introduce quasi-Socialist planning instruments. The Americans had better clean up their budget deficits.

In contrast with most of Europe's labor force, German workers have in recent years not seen their net incomes rise significantly, while spending on social benefits has fallen. German competitiveness jumped, and the quasi wage freeze meant that budgets, strapped because of the financial crisis, were not squeezed even further. An impressive growth in GDP was the result. Minister Brüderle, meanwhile, went against the tenet of his Free Democratic Party, saying in early October: "A booming economy also makes it possible to substantially increase wages."

In the fall, Germany's eight leading economic research institutes forecast a 3.5 percent growth in GDP for this year, with a further 2 percent expected for 2011 (with a range

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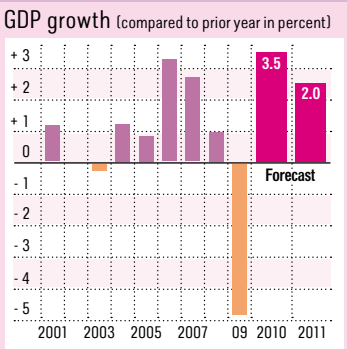
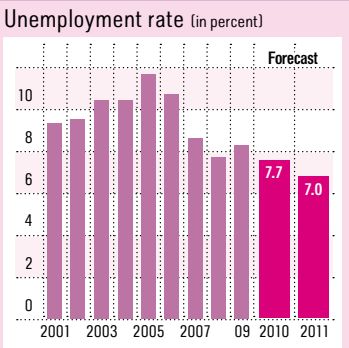
THE ECONOMIC OUTLOOK FOR GERMANY

GDP growth (compared to prior year in percent)



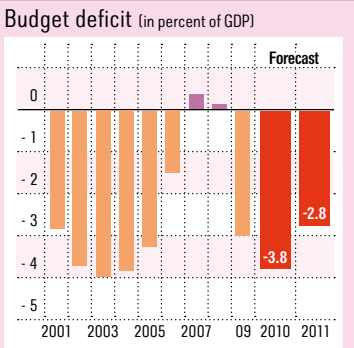
		Forecast	
EU-27	- 4.2	1.6	1.5
Germany	- 4.7	3.5	2.0
US	- 2.6	2.7	1.9
Japan	- 5.2	3.0	1.4
China	8.6	10.0	8.5
	2009	2010	2011

Unemployment rate (in percent)



		Forecast	
EU-27	8.9	9.7	9.6
Germany	7.4	6.9	6.3
US	9.3	9.8	9.5
Japan	5.1	5.1	4.9
China	n/a	n/a	n/a
	2009	2010	2011

Budget deficit (in percent of GDP)



		Forecast	
EU	- 6.2	- 6.6	- 5.2
Germany	- 3.0	- 3.8	- 2.7
US	- 9.9	- 9.3	- 8.6
Japan	- 7.2	- 7.6	- 8.1
China	n/a	n/a	n/a
	2009	2010	2011

Source: Projektgruppe Gemeinschaftsdiagnose, Statistisches Bundesamt, Bundesagentur für Arbeit