



## THE GEOPOLITICAL DILEMMAS OF GERMANY THROUGH THE EYES OF ITS INTELLIGENCE AGENCIES IN THE LIGHT OF KISSINGER'S REFLECTIONS ON UKRAINE AND RUSSIA<sup>\*1</sup>

(extracts)

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### **Kissinger's Reflections on Ukraine and Russia<sup>[1]</sup>**

Public discussion on Ukraine is all about confrontation. But do we know where we are going? In my life, I have seen four wars begun with great enthusiasm and public support, all of which we did not know how to end and from three of which we withdrew unilaterally. The test of policy is how it ends, not how it begins.

Far too often the Ukrainian issue is posed as a showdown: whether Ukraine joins the East or the West. But if Ukraine is to survive and thrive, it must not be either side's outpost against the other — it should function as a bridge between them.

Russia must accept that to try to force Ukraine into a satellite status, and thereby move Russia's borders again, would doom Moscow to repeat its history of self-fulfilling cycles of reciprocal pressures with Europe and the United States.

The West must understand that, to Russia, Ukraine can never be just a foreign country. Russian history began in what was called Kievan-Rus. The Russian religion spread from there. Ukraine has been part of Russia for centuries, and their histories were intertwined before then. Some of the most important battles for Russian freedom, starting with the Battle of Poltava in 1709, were fought on Ukrainian soil. The Black Sea Fleet — Russia's means of projecting power in the Mediterranean —

is based by long-term lease in Sevastopol, in Crimea. Even such famed dissidents as Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn and Joseph Brodsky insisted that Ukraine was an integral part of Russian history and, indeed, of Russia.

The European Union must recognize that its bureaucratic dilatoriness and subordination of the strategic element to domestic politics in negotiating Ukraine's relationship to Europe contributed to turning a negotiation into a crisis. Foreign policy is the art of establishing priorities.

## **The geopolitical dilemmas of Germany through the eyes of its intelligence agencies (key points)**

BND: The Federal Intelligence Service of Germany  
BfV: Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution

BND was stigmatized by several scandals and controversies (Swiss Crypto Scandal, spying on foreign journalists etc.) mainly influenced by or being a by-product of its close association with CIA. On the other hand the German government, the Parliament and the Karlsruhe's Constitutional Court intervened effectively to put BND on the right, law-abiding, track.

The focal areas of BND operations are Turkey (mainly MIT operations inside Germany), Russia (mainly cyber attacks threat), China (mainly security concerns influenced and exaggerated by USA fears and policies regarding China its arch rival) and the Middle East (terrorism). We expect that Ukraine will be the main focal area of BND with the collection of intelligence regarding war crimes (on either side) being probably a hot issues that may offer Germany significant intervention capabilities regarding the future status of Ukraine. The controversial and risky visit of BND's chief in Ukraine, coinciding with the beginning of Russian invasion there, exhibits the enormous negative impact the Ukrainian War is exerting on Germany.

From the very beginning of his term BNP president exhibited a very positive attitude towards a smooth and productive cooperation with USA administration and the American intelligence agencies and an equally deep understanding for the geopolitical and security pursuits of USA. In this context he delivered, early in his term, a dramatic warning on Russia's growing power and threatening military pursuits and activities. With reference also to Turkey he was in line with USA attitudes on the issue of Fetullah Gulen movement resisting Turkish pressures to consider it a terrorist organization.

There are increasing intelligence concerns (of BND and BfV) on the relationship between Turkey and the Muslim Brotherhood that led to increasing opposition in the German parliament to Turkish

intelligence activities inside the country. An intelligence report issued by BfV warned of the growing security threat that the Muslim Brotherhood poses to Germany. Hans-Christian Strobele, a member of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Committee, called for the expulsion of Turkish intelligence agents, noting that he was sure some agents were working for Ankara on German soil. The European Centre for Counter-terrorism and Intelligence Studies recommended that Germany take stricter steps to deal with Turkish intelligence activities, provide protection to those targeted by them and build more awareness of such activities within the German parliament [2].

Following the indications of Russian interference with the recent American elections, Bruno Kahl said: "There were reasons to believe the cyberattacks were tolerated or even condoned by the state (Moscow). Europe is likely to become Russia's next target. Europe is now the focus of these interference attempts, and Germany in particular". BND president did not identify a particular party or candidate as the target of potential attacks but he added: "The perpetrators are mostly interested in delegitimizing the democratic process," he said. "No matter whom they help get ahead". Also, Chancellor Angela Merkel expressed similar concerns by saying that Russian misinformation efforts and online attacks had already become and constitute "a daily task" for her government [3].

The opening of Sino-German economic relations of the modern era took place in 1984 with the visit of chancellor Helmut Kohl to Beijing, thirteen years after the historic (secret) visit of Henry Kissinger to China. Kohl's strategic pursuit was to harness according to his government predictions, a 'century-long modernity' process. On his return back to Germany he announced to the parliament that he and the Chinese leaders succeeded in building a "stable, long-term partnership". Realizing that Kohl's opening to the Far East "Eldorado" will bring huge profits to their business world and long-term prosperity to Germany, both business and political elites exploited this unique opportunity to the maximum. In the following decades Germans surpassed the American pioneers in the depth and extent of economic penetration in China. The Sino-German economic relations exhibited an amazing progress with China becoming the most important import-export partner of Germany. Volkswagen and BASF were pioneers in this amazing investment rally. At the beginning of this economic crusade German strategic pursuits in China were more or less in line with USA ones established during the Kissinger era. During the last decade the economic competition and the quick, methodic and successful penetration of China in lucrative markets around the world (mainly in Europe and Africa), being historic bastions of American superiority, were felt/interpreted by USA as a serious strategic threat for their economic and political interests and their world hegemony. To encounter this threat the Americans acted in the same controversial way British did a century ago when they were facing strong competition from Germany and other emerging economic powers: instead of modernizing their economy and its technological edge they decided to encounter

the economic competition with political means and gunboat diplomacy. A drastic change of American policies towards China took place during Trump administration with Biden administration following more or less the same path. The old British gunboat diplomacy was replaced by the Americans with the AUKUS trilateral security pact between USA, UK and Australia, mainly targeting China. As a result of the above unprecedented geopolitical and geo-economic reshuffling, American pressures on Germany, to curb economic relations with China (at least in certain key sectors), were intensified. POLITICO expressed in a very characteristic way these American concerns with the title "How Germany opened the door to China — and threw away the key. Economic ties have caused Berlin to tread lightly on human rights" in an article published in 10/9/2020. On the other hand, if Germans succumbed unconditionally and indiscriminately to the American pressures and succeeded in finding the key to close again the door to China, this would almost amount to an act of economic suicide. After all China is currently the second most important export partner of Germany with \$106bil (expected to become the first in a couple of years) second only to USA (\$116bil), and its most important import partner (\$112bil) [4, 5].

Disengagement by the United States, as well as withdrawal by former colonial powers from regions like Africa, have presented China with the opportunity to use its impressive economic gains to expand its global influence. The scale of its growing global influence has now put China among a small group of great powers whose sway extends beyond their immediate region. Beijing has used trade and investments, in particular, to build strong linkages with a wide array of partners. Africa has been one of the regions of the world most affected by this strategy, with a substantial number of these states now having China as their primary partner. Other areas, such as Central Asia, also are becoming more dependent on China owing to Beijing's economic linkage strategy" [20].

To encounter the terrorism threat domestically BND pursues close cooperation among German security agencies by giving emphasis on fighting new threats in cyberspace and offering SIGINT support to cyber defense. To encounter the terrorism threat internationally BND pursues cooperation with international partners, in the Western hemisphere or in crisis areas and undertakes operations abroad. As it is stated in its official website BND supports Federal Government's policies to solve conflicts like those in Ukraine or Mali, contributing to the decision-making process on foreign and security policy matters.

BND president argued that IS still is very dangerous and is capable of causing much more damage in Afghanistan, Syria and Iraq adding that IS activities are extending in Libya, Sub-Saharan Africa (Boko Haram terrorist units) and Sinai Peninsula.

## Sources

[1] "Kissinger: to settle the Ukrainian crisis start from the end", The Washington Post (5/5/2022)

[2] <https://thearabweekly.com/berlin-suspects-turkish-intelligence-targeting-opposition-germany>

[3] <https://www.politico.eu/article/german-intelligence-chief-russian-hackers-targeting-us-bruno-kahl-vladimir-putin/>

[4] <https://www.politico.eu/article/merkel-looks-east-as-ties-fray-between-germany-and-us/>

[5] <https://www.politico.eu/article/germany-china-economy-business-technology-industry-trade-security/>