



German-Polish relations in the wake of the Russian war against Ukraine

Four scenarios for 2040

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Dr. Thomas Mehlhausen (Leipzig University) & Adrian Wagstyl (University of Warsaw)



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Structure

1. Short introduction to the scenario technique
 2. Presentation of scenarios
 - Scenario 1: Silent strangers
 - Scenario 2: Disillusioned neighbours
 - Scenario 3: Pragmatic partners
 - Scenario 4: Forced allies
 3. Policy recommendations
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„Luck favours the
prepared mind“

Louis Pasteur

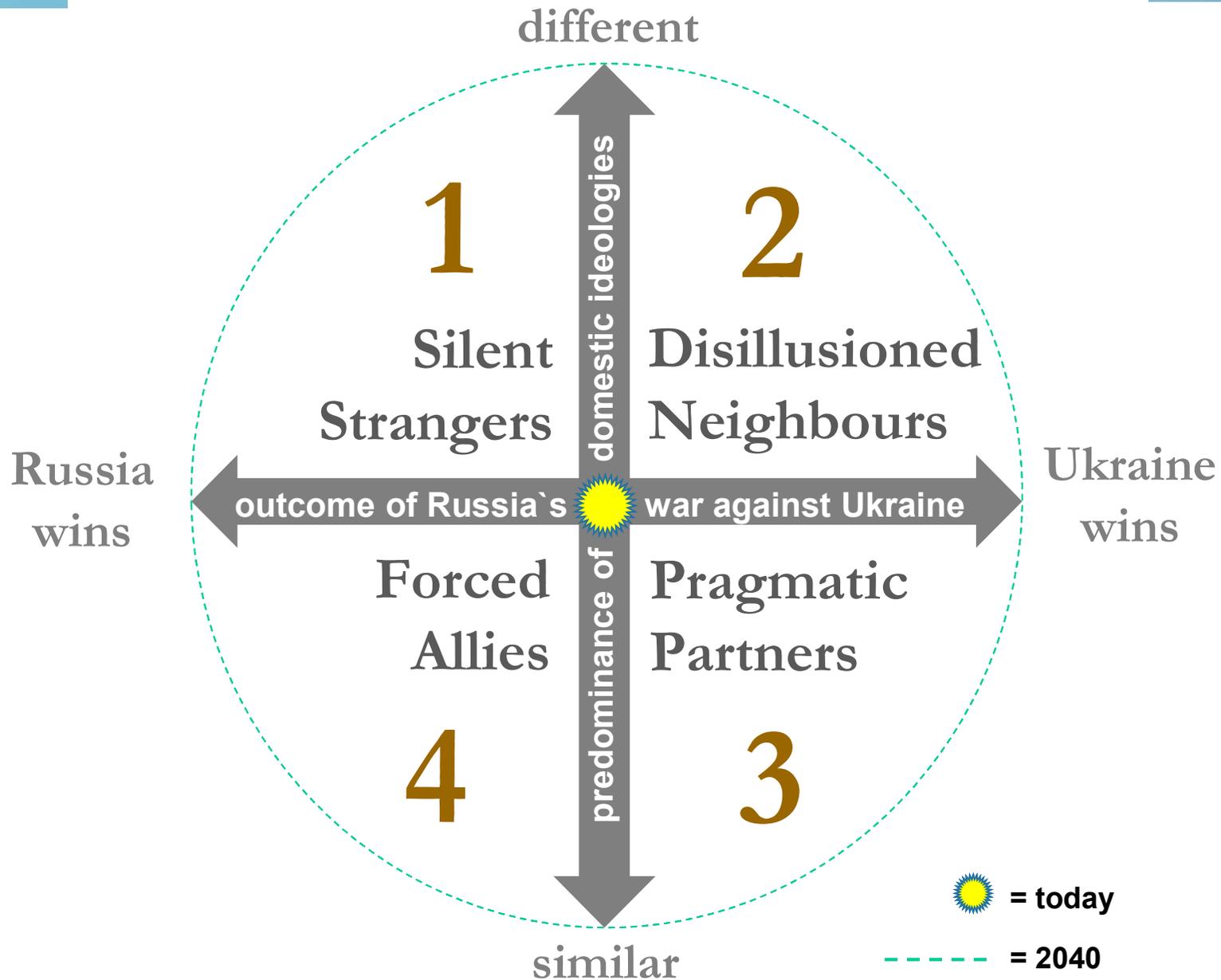
What are future scenarios?

- hypothetical narratives about possible “futures”
- no prognoses but what-if narratives

Why create future scenarios?

- to prepare for the uncertainties of an open future
 - to identify risks and opportunities of alternative developments
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Future Compass



Scenario 1: Silent Strangers

German-Polish relations in 2040

- Ukraine: accepted as just another East European country with a frozen conflict, while Russia seeks a reset with the West
- Germany: focused on maintaining its living standard in a divided world
- Poland: disillusioned with the West



Scenario 1: Silent Strangers



Dwindling solidarity with Ukraine in the EU (2023–2027)

- Ukraine: US withdrawal – Russian land gains
- Poland: Eastern Europe summit to establish a new initiative for Ukraine fails due to Hungarian veto
- Germany: supports Polish initiative through enhanced cooperation

Scenario 1: Silent Strangers

Gradual alienation (2028–2032)

- Germany: in gradual habituation process the war loses its horror, focus on public debt reduction
- Poland: concerned over new German austerity policy
- Ukraine: shifts out of focus of Western public debates



Scenario 1: Silent Strangers



Deep mistrust between two alienated neighbours (2033–2040)

- Ukraine: insists on territorial integrity while Russia proposes “Common European Home” and signals to accept Ukrainian Westernisation
 - Germany: willingness to normalise relations with Russia
 - Poland: Konfederacja-PiS government strives at maximizing Poland’s autonomy in Europe
- In bilateral relations decreasing mutual expectations avoid any further disillusionment.

Scenario 2: **Disillusioned Neighbours**

German-Polish relations in 2040

- Ukraine: EU and NATO membership (without Crimea)
- Germany: increasingly nationalist foreign policy
- Poland: concerns over a new potential alliance between Germany and Russia



Scenario 2: Disillusioned Neighbours



Political thaw thanks to a successful Eastern policy (2023-2026)

- Poland: KO-led government drops reparations demands and pledges to strengthen the rule of law
- Germany: Die Grünen-CDU/CSU coalition government pleads for rapid Ukrainian EU accession
- Ukraine: EU starts “exploratory negotiations” following a German-Polish initiative

Scenario 2: Disillusioned Neighbours



Spirit of optimism after UA-RU peace treaty (2027–2032)

- Ukraine: peace treaty – Russia retreats from Eastern Ukraine and tolerate Ukraine joining EU/NATO but insists on Crimea
- Poland: KO stays in Poland in 2027
- Germany: growing nationalism

Scenario 2: Disillusioned Neighbours



Crisis of confidence due to political divergences (2033–2040)

- Ukraine: migration wave following Ukraine's access to Schengen Area without transitional arrangements
 - Germany: rise of AfD, CDU/CSU-FDP minority government: reform of asylum policy and reset with Russia
 - Poland: concerns over new German power politics and German-Russian axis
- Germany and Poland increasingly feel misunderstood by each other.

Scenario 3: Pragmatic Partners

German-Polish relations in 2040

- Ukraine: restoration of full territorial integrity – graded NATO membership – protracted EU accession negotiations
- Germany: insistence of full application of Copenhagen criteria
- Poland: increasingly blaming Germany for stagnating transformation in Ukraine



Scenario 3: Pragmatic Partners



German-Polish discord in the post-war order (2023-2026)

- Ukraine: increased US-EU military support - Putin overthrown - Russia withdraws from Ukraine (including Crimea)
- Germany: slows down Ukrainian EU accession (Copenhagen criteria)
- Poland: old conflicts with Germany persist regarding Polish reparation demands from Germany despite the election of a liberal government in Poland - establishment of a new German-Polish cultural institution



Scenario 3: Pragmatic Partners



Unstable political thaw (2027-2035)

- Poland: reelected KO-led government sends signals of cooperation with Germany
- Germany: demands reduction of contributions to EU budget
- Ukraine: graded NATO membership

Scenario 3: Pragmatic Partners



Structural conflicts despite ideological proximity (2036-2040)

- Ukraine: vicious circle of disillusionment over deficient Western integration and radicalisation
 - Poland: PiS government blames Germany for slow progress in Ukraine
 - Germany: grudge against Poland for blocking full liberalisation of post-crisis EU economy
- Despite successes in their Eastern policy numerous conflicts overshadow bilateral relations.

Scenario 4: Forced Allies

German-Polish relations in 2040

- Ukraine: Russia seeks to “reunite” the former Soviet republics after invading Ukraine completely
- Germany: new Ostpolitik is discredited for good
- Poland: widely accepted as EU leading voice in its Eastern policy



Scenario 4: Forced Allies

Russia gains land due to waning support for Ukraine (2023-2026)

- Ukraine: Russia forces Kyiv into an armistice in 2026
- Germany: reluctance to provide Ukraine with fighter jets without US involvement
- Poland: disillusionment with the West



Scenario 4: Forced Allies



Mutual allegations following Russian aggression (2027-2031)

- Germany: new three-point Ostpolitik after Putin`s death
- Poland: PiS government blames Germany for Russian aggression - fears about PL sovereignty
- Ukraine: full subjugation by Russia

Scenario 4: Forced Allies



Shoulder to shoulder out of historical obligation (2032-2040)

- Germany: CDU/CSU-Grüne-FDP government ends the new Ostpolitik
 - Poland: PiS government becomes more pro-European – successful security summit in Warsaw
 - Ukraine: exile government in Warsaw - economic crisis in RU
- The common focus on security policy eclipses German-Polish discrepancies in other policy fields.



Policy recommendations for German and Polish decision-makers

1. Post-war cooperation with Russia should be based on solid evidence of its regime change.
 2. Germany and Poland should actively support democratic transition in Ukraine to accelerate its EU accession.
 3. To better deal with structural conflicts, Germany and Poland should cooperate constructively and pragmatically to solve common problems.
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Thank you!

