

Germany Supports a Return to Nuclear Power

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Changing attitudes toward nuclear energy indicate the Continent may soon experience a nuclear renaissance.

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erman Chancellor [Angela Merkel](#) firmly supports a return to German nuclear power. Merkel voiced her views during a top-level meeting in the Bavarian town of Erding on Monday. During the meeting between Christian Democratic Union and Christian Social Union officials, Merkel openly advocated reversing official government policy that stipulates a phase-out of nuclear power by 2021.

The decision to phase out nuclear power in Germany was signed into law under the leadership of Merkel's predecessor, Gerhard Schröder. During the Erding meeting, Merkel claimed that this decision was "absolutely wrong."

With gasoline prices in Germany surpassing \$9 a gallon, and with natural gas prices heading toward a possible 40 percent hike this autumn, increasing reliance on nuclear power would be a way for Germans to reduce their reliance on fossil fuels—and on Russian energy. Germany imported one third of its oil and natural gas from Russia in 2007.

French President [Nicolas Sarkozy](#) has already said that he wants to work with Germany to produce nuclear energy. It appears Europe may be on the cusp of a nuclear renaissance.

Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi announced last month that Italy will be returning as a nuclear power, reversing a 1987 nuclear phase-out decision.

The mindset in Europe regarding nuclear energy is changing. This change has the potential to transform the relatively oil-deficient Continent into an energy powerhouse.

However, as Germany and other major European nations produce fissile materials, they simultaneously increase their ability to manufacture nuclear weapons. Back in 2006, former German Defense Minister **Rupert Scholz** claimed that Germany needed to develop its own nuclear weapons in order to counter the threat posed by terrorist states. In 2007, President Sarkozy offered Germany access to France's **nuclear defense systems**.