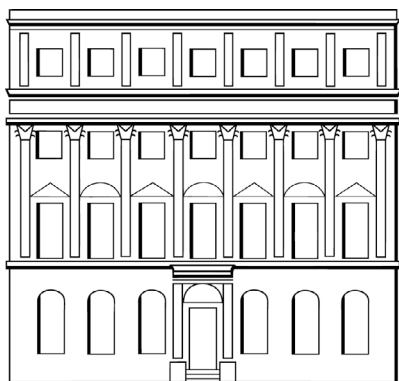


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THE 1988 ANNUAL LECTURE

**Britain and Germany since 1945
Two Societies and Two Foreign Policies
by
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My subject is one of contemporary history, and I ought to define it as precisely as possible.* I want to examine two main themes: on the one hand, the story of two states, the United Kingdom and the Federal Republic (as so often, the word 'Germany' in my title means 'West Germany'), and their changing positions in the international political system in the last forty years or so; and, on the other hand, certain aspects of the development of the United Kingdom and West Germany as societies during the same period. Under this second heading I shall focus in particular on the questions of how far the political élites and other leaders of each of these two societies felt interested in, or impressed by, the other, and of why these feelings have waxed and waned with the passage of time. In conclusion, I shall offer some views about the possible connections between these two processes – on the one hand the changing relationships between two states making their respective ways in the world, experiencing sometimes harmony and sometimes discord between their respective foreign policies; and on the other hand the relationships between two societies and the changes in their prevailing views of each other, in terms of one national society judging another. One of the questions I shall try to answer – to borrow concepts that I take from a quite different context – is whether Anglo-West German relations since 1945 have been marked by a *Primat der Außenpolitik* (a primacy of foreign policy) or by a *Primat der Innenpolitik* (a primacy of domestic policy) or whether the two dimensions, as may well be the case, have co-existed without much mutual influence, let alone any consistent primacy of one over the other.

I start my tale of two cities – Bonn and London – with a sketch of the main directions of their foreign policies in

the last forty years, aimed above all at identifying the degree of common purpose which has prevailed between them, and the reasons why this common purpose was sometimes disturbed by policy intentions, real or perceived, on the part of one ally or the other.

One obvious difference between the external policies of Bonn and of London in the last forty years has been that Britain in 1945 still enjoyed an unbroken tradition of many centuries as a world (as well as a European) power, whereas Germany, or what was left of the Reich, had to start literally from nothing after the collapse of 1945. The Federal Republic began life in 1949 not so much as a state which could define its foreign policy, as a foreign policy (a Western foreign policy in a divided world) which needed a West German state to carry it out, just as in the other part of Germany a state was created to carry out a corresponding policy in the Eastern part of a now divided Europe.¹ The Federal Republic started with a limited agenda of foreign policy concerns (many of them concerning *Deutschlandpolitik* rather than *Außenpolitik*) and has seen that agenda steadily increase, even though the central question of *Deutschlandpolitik* has never been forgotten. The United Kingdom in 1945, in great contrast, had an almost unlimited agenda of foreign policy concerns – the concerns of a world-wide imperial power now in decline, though outwardly victorious – and has in the last forty years been forced to become more selective about how and where it can use its influence.²

Another obvious and permanent feature of the relationship in foreign policy between London and Bonn is that like any other bilateral relationship in international politics, it has developed, in the real world, in large part as a

function of the relationships of the two states with a number of others, notably the United States and the Soviet Union.³ The East-West dimension has been of crucial importance for the London-Bonn relationship. The occasional inclination, or temptation, of either London or Bonn, at different times, to venture into a closer relationship with the Soviet Union, has been the biggest single factor creating trouble in Anglo-German relations. Although British motives for seeking East-West *détente* on certain occasions in the last forty years have been different from West German motives, and less pressing (the British are not in the front line; their ex-capital is not cut off; their nation was not divided by the Cold War), there are some elements of symmetry. British leaders, at least from Churchill in the 1950s to Wilson in the 1970s, aroused occasional moments of fear in Bonn, a fear that East-West *détente* would be sought by London at the expense of German interests; while German aspirations for *détente*, from Brandt's concept of a 'European peace order' to Mr Genscher's admonition to NATO that we should 'take Mr Gorbachev at his word', have aroused *some* concern in London that the Federal Republic might be seeking to come to terms with Moscow at the expense of the West. The British are less aware than the French of the significance of the word 'Rapallo', but the thought is similar.

With these underlying patterns in mind, let me trace the main stages in the Anglo-West German relationship, as it has developed in diplomatic terms, since the war. For some sections of British public opinion, the alliance with the Federal Republic in the early 1950s meant that the Germans were becoming Britain's allies very soon after a different Germany, the Third Reich, had been defeated. In

other words, the power-political calculations of the British Foreign Office between 1947 and 1949, which indicated that the creation of a West German ally was a necessary counterweight to the threatening power of the Soviet Union, came before the British public as a whole was ready to forget the image of 'Germany' as represented by Hitler.⁴ Even though the experience of the Berlin blockade of 1948-49 gave the British public a new sense of solidarity with the Germans, there were some powerful currents of opinion in Britain which found it difficult to understand the *raison d'être* of a new German state in 1949, and still more its rearmament in the early 1950s. How, they asked, had the deadly enemy of yesterday become the friendly ally of today – indeed, an ally against the Soviet ally of yesterday?

The fundamental (though unexpressed) answer to this and to similar questions, from the viewpoint of Britain's national interest, was that the Soviet Union under Stalin now represented the same kind of threat, approximately at least, to Britain's interest in Europe's balance as the Third Reich some years earlier, and that the creation of a strong pro-Western Federal Republic at the end of the 1940s was not totally different, in British official eyes, from Churchill's alliance with the Soviet Union against the Third Reich in 1941, at the start of the same decade.

In the world of the 1950s, naturally, Britain saw itself as linked with the Federal Republic not only by such power-political calculations, but also by a shared commitment to the Western liberal understanding of democracy, which the Federal Republic fully represented. Despite this, however, Britain's diplomatic commitment to the Federal Republic was to a certain degree a variable element which depended on the state of the West's relations with the Soviet Union.

So long as the Russians behaved in a way which was difficult, impossible, or seen as posing a real though limited threat to European peace (as in Korea in the early 1950s or in the Soviet repression of the East German rising in June 1953), the British regarded solidarity with the Federal Republic as an essential element of their policy. In contrast, when the Cold War with the Soviet Union seemed to the British to be either susceptible to solution by negotiation (as when the 'spirit of Geneva' reigned in 1955), or potentially dangerous for the whole international system (as, for instance, during the Berlin crisis that was unleashed by Khrushchev's ultimatum of November 1958), then London's commitment to the views of Bonn became a little less certain. In these situations, and in some others during the period of Konrad Adenauer's chancellorship, some circles in London saw the 'intransigence' of Bonn as a block on real possibilities for East-West understanding. Even though the small group of diplomatic and other experts responsible for London's relations with Bonn always understood, for instance, the reasons for the so-called 'Hallstein Doctrine' and Bonn's claim to sole representation of Germany (*Alleinvertretungsanspruch*), there were still voices, both within the Conservative governments of the 1950s and still more within the Labour opposition, which saw the Federal Republic under Adenauer as an obstacle to East-West *détente*, and which were prepared to relativize London's commitment to Bonn's view of the situation accordingly. Was it acceptable, they asked, that Germany's claim to reunification – the re-creation of a united Reich which had brought such conflicts to Europe – should have priority over the ending of the Cold War between the West and the Soviet Union, a

Cold War which represented an acute threat to peace in the present and the future? This attitude was reflected to some degree by the Labour government in 1964, which pressed Bonn in a very insistent and insensitive way to accept the Non-Proliferation Treaty, despite West German concerns about the way in which the proposed treaty would upgrade the status of the GDR, and thereby compromise the chances of reunification.

By the 1960s, however, the world had changed, and so had the international positions of the United Kingdom and the Federal Republic. From London's point of view, British foreign policy had experienced some setbacks: the failure to impose Britain's will on Egypt in the attack on Suez in 1956, the failure to dilute the European Economic Community in the Free Trade Area which Britain proposed in 1958, the failure to enter the European Community itself owing to President de Gaulle's first veto on a British application in 1963, and also the failure to maintain the unity of the Commonwealth in the crises over South Africa and Rhodesia. On the other hand, by this time the Federal Republic was seen from London as a state which was very successful in the more modest aims which it had set for itself: a state which was by now an essential partner of the United States in NATO and of France in the European Community, and a state which used its growing economic weight and internal political stability in a well-calculated way, balancing between Paris and Washington with a success which British policy found difficult to achieve.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s the main question about Bonn, from London's point of view, was perhaps this: how far is the Federal Republic interested in developing the European Community in a way which includes a

European role for the United Kingdom? A further question was: how far, on the contrary, is the Federal Republic now interested in a quite different kind of Europe, one which involves Eastern Europe as well, a new Europe made possible by the breakthrough achieved by Willy Brandt's new *Ostpolitik*? As events actually developed, it became clear in London that Brandt's policy towards Europe gave great importance to the enlargement and consolidation of the European Community, as well as to the important new developments to the East; and the 'Brandt-Heath' period, the first part of the 1970s, was to be one of the most fruitful and harmonious in the post-war history of German-British relations.

The speed and dynamism of Brandt's *Ostpolitik* probably surprised some officials responsible for foreign policy in London, who had been very careful to adhere to the premiss that Bonn would move only slowly and cautiously in its relations with the East, and that London's relations with the Communist world must always remain 'one step behind Bonn', in order to avoid any risk of compromising Britain's important relationship with its West German ally; but the slight difference in tempo, caused by Bonn's fairly sudden acceleration under Brandt, was not a serious problem.⁵ By the mid-1970s, London and Bonn were fairly closely aligned with each other in the framework of the all-European Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe and the follow-up of the Helsinki Final Act; and any serious British fear of a West German *Alleingang* had been removed by the balanced policy actually pursued by the Brandt and Schmidt governments.

Britain was by this time inside the European Community, though Anglo-German relations in the Community

context never worked as harmoniously as they had always done, and continued to do, in NATO. It was in fact a source of irritation to some people in London (and this theme was to continue into the 1980s) that the Federal Republic should so loudly proclaim and celebrate its co-operation in military defence with France, a country which had demonstratively walked out of the NATO structure under the nationalistic leadership of de Gaulle. However, most British experts understood the need for Bonn's 'special relationship' with Paris, and, on the whole, they welcomed this relationship as a way of bringing France back within the general framework of the North Atlantic Alliance.

The Federal Republic thus became, from London's point of view, a stable and important partner in the Western alliance. NATO's Eurogroup, an important contribution to the expression of a collective West European view in the alliance, had been established at the end of the 1960s under the leadership of the British and West German defence ministers of the time, Denis Healey and Helmut Schmidt, and was a further sign that Bonn and London were close together in their views on the future course of development for Europe and for the Western alliance.⁶

Anglo-German diplomatic relations in the late 1970s were to some extent soured by conflicts over the European Community, which will be discussed later, and the 1980s have produced several examples of the obvious point I mentioned earlier, that harmony between London and Bonn depends to a high degree on how the two capitals judge the significance of events occurring elsewhere in the international system, notably in the Soviet bloc. Since 1979 East-West relations have been marked by events in Afghanistan, Poland, Guadeloupe (the site of the 'two-

track decision' on INF stationing), Reykjavik, and not least the Soviet Union itself.

Here the biggest question has been: how should the Western world react to Mr Gorbachev and what he stands for? On this question it has appeared that Bonn and London have been almost at opposite ends of the spectrum of NATO countries: Mr Genscher (and increasingly Mr Kohl) urging NATO to believe that Mr Gorbachev means what he says, while Mrs Thatcher and Sir Geoffrey Howe have appeared to approach the Soviet Union with the slogan once used by President Richard von Weizsäcker at a Königswinter Conference in the 1970s: 'the maximum of contact, combined with the minimum of illusions.'

Thus we can see that the process of interaction between the Federal Republic and the United Kingdom, as two states each conducting its own foreign policy, has to be placed within its multilateral context: a context made up of the actions and reactions of other states, and also of the network of economic, military, and ecological interdependence which to some extent constrains the sovereignty of every state in the world.

The interactions between Britain and West Germany as societies, in contrast, have to be plotted and assessed within a rather different framework. To be sure, the record of the last forty years is that our two societies do in many ways form part of a transnational culture ('culture' in the broadest, anthropological, sense), which embraces the whole of the Western world. It could be said that the manifestations of this transnational culture include the replacement of traditional industries by modern ones; the impact of the mass media and information technology; generally rising levels of permissiveness in social behav-

our; the changing fashions of pop music and young people's clothing; currently, a growing confidence in market forces and in deregulation; high levels of scepticism about official bureaucracy; a stress on 'civil society' against the state; and so forth. However, despite the ubiquitous nature of some of these transnational social and political phenomena, we can still identify many specific features of the United Kingdom and West Germany as 'national' societies (the United Kingdom of course embraces several other nationalities alongside the English, and the Federal Republic clearly does *not* embrace the whole of the German nation). I have in mind features of society, or social institutions, which each of the two nations more or less regards as aspects of its own 'national identity', and which each of them includes, more or less consciously, in whatever mental image it may have of the other.

When we try to analyse the relation between the two societies of Britain and West Germany we find, along with everything else, an identifiable trend of direct bilateral communication. Quite apart from the dimension of foreign policy interaction between the two states, and quite apart from the awareness in both countries of their membership of the transnational culture which I have mentioned, we can identify an Anglo-German relationship at this level: the terms in which influential groups in each of the two societies think of the specific features which each of these two societies possesses. To narrow the question down still further, when I speak here of 'influential groups' in each society, I am not thinking of the intimate and very significant Anglo-German links which exist between, for instance, bankers, or artists, or language teachers, or those

engaged in the important work of town-twinning; or indeed football hooligans. Each of these dimensions of Anglo-German relations has its own very real significance, and each of them has often, of course, been of concern to those parts of the foreign policy machinery responsible for finance, cultural relations, or international co-operation in the preservation of law and order. What I wish to isolate at the moment, by contrast, is the question of what the leading political forces in the United Kingdom and the Federal Republic (the 'élites' or what in Italy is called 'the political class') have found important for *them*, in the public life of the *other* country. It is to this level of the relations between the two societies that we should look, so it seems to me, for evidence of how the interaction between the two societies may impinge significantly on the relations between the two states at the level of foreign policy – or, indeed, vice versa.

We might expect, for instance, to find that the periods of closest harmony between the foreign policies pursued by London and Bonn, in the course of the forty-year period we are surveying, were also periods when the political leaders of each country regarded the state of affairs within the other one as being on the whole sympathetic to themselves, or successful, or in some other way impressive. Conversely, we might well expect the moments of diplomatic tensions between London and Bonn to be correlated in time with periods when the sense of compatibility between the two societies was lower: when the leaders of one country felt out of sympathy with the trend of public affairs in the other, or lacked confidence in the quality or direction of its management of its own national affairs. How, historically, can these rather elusive concepts – of 'sympa-

thy', 'compatibility', or 'confidence' between the political élites of the two societies – be charted, over the forty and more years in question?

One persistent trend – not surprising between recent enemies now become allies – is a continuing current of criticism and residual mistrust, which has declined only slowly (but I think surely) with the passage of time. Another very noticeable phenomenon, during the same period of history, is that opposition parties in the two countries, at least when they were of the same political persuasion, have tended to find a degree of Anglo-German unity in criticizing their respective governments on the basis of their shared views or values. First, for instance, the British Labour Party and the Social Democratic Party of Germany, during the Labour Party's long period of opposition after 1951, found a certain amount of common ground (the SPD, of course, had been in opposition ever since the Federal Republic began), even though by the end of the 1950s they diverged again when the SPD adopted its Godesberg Programme, and the Labour Party rejected the plan of its leader Gaitskell that it should do something similar. The British Conservative Party and the German Christian Democratic Union, during *their* period of shared opposition in the second half of the 1970s, also found themselves in some degree of harmony, expressed for instance in their co-operation in the European Democratic Union, which they and other parties established in 1978, though again this harmony did not fully survive their return to office in 1979 and in 1982 respectively.

It is striking how often the political élites of each nation turned to the other to find important aspects of public life and public policy they regarded as missing in their own

country, as well as criticizing, naturally, some of what they saw there – again sometimes for party-political purposes. This is indeed a recurrent feature of our story.

What have been the main good and bad aspects of each society, as perceived by leading circles in the other? I shall try first to summarize the West German view of British society. On the positive side, pride of place must be given to the German view of British parliamentary democracy. Not surprisingly, after the total breakdown of democratic institutions in Germany in 1933, the founding fathers of the Federal Republic adopted several important measures to prevent such a disaster from occurring again. Many of these were totally original (and some, indeed, were to inspire admiration and imitation in Britain, as we shall see), but, for instance, the fundamental importance of governmental answerability to parliamentary control was a concept in which the Federal Republic's founding fathers particularly wished to follow the example of Westminster, as they understood it. The Bundestag, as the 1950s and 1960s went by, continued to discuss means of making its sessions livelier, and at least one important reform, the institution of a question time, was inspired by the Westminster model.⁷ The records of the annual Anglo-German discussions held at Königswinter from the early 1950s onwards are full of indications of the Germans' picture of their need to live up to Westminster's parliamentary standards;⁸ and the German debate about Britain's expected contribution to the European continent, at the time of the Macmillan government's application to join the European Community in 1961, was influenced by such perceived and reassuring British qualities as pragmatism, lack of emotion, reliability, 'wisdom and statesmanship', and a

‘common-sense outlook’. As the Bonn correspondent of *The Times* reported, Germany expected the British to bring to the European Community ‘an invaluable element of stability and democracy’.⁹

In 1951, ten years before Britain first applied to join the European Community, Konrad Adenauer made his first visit to London. Addressing the British group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, he made some comments on the British and the British Commonwealth which reflect the views of many thinking Germans at that time:

All the countries united in the Commonwealth have contributed to the reconstruction of the House of Commons. In the years when the rulers of the Third Reich left me plenty of time for such thoughts, I sometimes wondered why the Commonwealth had survived so many storms. It seems to me it is because it is not based on power but on the moral values of Anglo-Saxon law and the common conviction of the basic values of personal, social and political life; above all, though, because a basic mental attitude is characteristic of the Anglo-Saxons: a sense of moderation and aversion to theoretical speculations. The natural inclination of the British to the mental attitudes described by me has been furthered by the insular character of the country. It has forced the people to adapt to each other and to gain a degree of homogeneity which has been of extreme benefit to all.¹⁰

Even though these sentiments might be discounted as diplomatic flattery for the ears of Adenauer’s British hosts, there is no reason to doubt his basic sincerity, or the fact that he spoke for many Germans of that period.¹¹

This positive German image of British public institutions and habits, I think, remained quite strong until the 1970s, when the United Kingdom finally joined the European Community, and the Germans were faced with the

experience of working at closer quarters than before with an unexpectedly difficult and even querulous partner. Germans were not impressed, for instance, with the way that the Heath government argued its case for a substantial European Regional Development Fund in 1973-74; a fund from which the UK stood to benefit considerably, and into which the Federal Republic was certain to be a net contributor. The British case, as critics observed at the time, failed to stress the proposition that the development of a European Economic and Monetary Union (to which all Community governments had committed themselves) would automatically tend to draw economic activities towards the centrally located regions of the Community, and that the peripheral regions had a reasonable claim for adequate investment from the centre to allow them to remain competitive; instead, the British government's case appeared to centre on the argument that Britain's Gross National Product was falling behind that of the Federal Republic and that therefore a financial grant from the 'haves' was morally due, to reduce the gap between themselves and the 'have nots'. A natural German response to this was to say that if the British economy was falling behind, this was because Britain had neither joined the European Community at the beginning, nor taken adequate steps to modernize its antiquated industrial equipment and social structures, so that there was no *prima-facie* case for German support.

In the difficult years after the oil shock in 1973, Britain's image in the minds of the German élite continued to decline. Many still praised the stability and fairness of Britain's political institutions – Ralph Dahrendorf, for instance, argued that Britain's social cohesion and the

public legitimacy of political institutions would allow the country to survive massive unemployment without any risk to British democracy (in contrast to the view that might be held of other countries). But this was becoming a minority view. A more representative German opinion was probably that of Chancellor Helmut Schmidt, who is reported to have said during a visit to Britain in 1975: 'As long as you maintain that damned class-ridden society of yours you will never get out of your mess.'¹²

The year 1975 was, of course, that of the Wilson government's referendum on whether Britain should or should not leave the European Community – two years after joining – and from this time on, a new negative note was added to the German élite's view of Britain: the picture of a country which was not committed to 'constructing Europe' in the sense that the Federal Republic and perhaps France were committed. This German picture of Britain's policy towards the European Community has remained unchanged. Although Mrs Thatcher's forthright opposition to supranational institutions (expressed in her speech in Bruges in September 1988) led to a very understanding article in *Die Zeit* under the heading 'Seid fair zu Lady De Gaulle', a more characteristic note was struck by the headline in the same journal, at the time of the Falklands War in 1982: 'Sind die Briten wirklich Europäer?' Thus my brief and personal sketch of German views of Britain suggests, in some ways, a declining trend. To balance this, however, it should be added that there has been considerable evidence of German approval and even admiration for Britain's economic recovery in the 1980s.

It is somewhat easier for an observer from the British side of the Channel to describe the changes in British

attitudes to Germany, and to relate them to changes in Britain's own social patterns and political orientation, which have themselves of course changed Britain's public leaders' perceptions of Germany. British attitudes towards Germany in the early post-war years, after a *second* world war, fought against the uniquely abominable regime of the Third Reich, were inevitably negative. The Berlin blockade of 1948-49, the immediate prelude to the creation of the Federal Republic, was, as I have noted, the first event which gave the majority of British people a strong sense of solidarity with the West Germans. From that moment of shared danger, British opinions of Germany slowly but surely became more favourable. Not surprisingly, this improvement in the British image of Germany did not go forward without interruptions: some observers have pointed out that generally favourable views of Germany in the 1950s became less so in the 1960s, as a result of British frustration with Britain's poor economic performance.¹³

The 'economic miracle' of the 1950s in itself aroused mixed feelings in Britain. The more positive feelings naturally included a straightforward admiration for the hard work and efficiency of the Germans. This was combined with the argument, expressed by British industrialists and by Conservative politicians, that Ludwig Erhard's market-orientated policy showed the advantages of setting the economy free from the political controls and the tax burdens which the Labour government had imposed on post-war Britain. British experts on fiscal policy also admired the German tax system, which made it easier than in Britain to set off the cost of new investment against tax, thus stimulating technological innovation. Observers of the German trade union movement admired the simple

and efficient structure of the newly created Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund (DGB), based on the principle of one large union for each branch of the economy; some remarked on the irony of the fact that the DGB's structure was in part the work of British advisers who had worked with Hans Böckler in the British zone of occupation, and who had been able to achieve in Germany what they could never have done with the highly traditional, anarchic, and conflict-ridden trade union movement of the United Kingdom. Other British observers of the 'economic miracle' commented rather sourly that the Federal Republic by the mid 1950s had received more economic aid than Britain (which was not true), or that the West German economic revival was not handicapped by the burden of military spending which was so heavy in Britain (this indeed was true, and helps to explain the strong support for West German rearmament within the British trade union movement).

Most representatives of the political Left in Britain, in the 1950s, did not regard the Federal Republic with great natural sympathy. They tended to see it as a materialistic, capitalistic, and even reactionary society, dominated by the United States and ruled by the patriarchal and unsympathetic figure of Konrad Adenauer, who seemed to them, while clearly not totalitarian, at least authoritarian in his manner of governing. For the intellectuals, the readers of the *New Statesman*, *Tribune*, or other left-wing journals, there was an unpleasant contrast between Adenauer's employment of ex-Nazis such as Hans Globke on his personal staff on the one hand, and the Federal Republic's legal ban on the German Communist Party (to be followed later by the so-called *Berufsverbot*) on the other. Even the

SPD was regarded with some suspicion by the 'pure' socialist representatives of the Labour Party, especially after the Godesberg Programme of 1959 modernized the SPD's philosophy and committed it to the mixed economy. As I have already noted, the British Labour Party at this time refused to take any step of this kind, despite the strenuous efforts of its leader Hugh Gaitskell.

It was not only to the British Left, however, that some aspects of German politics seemed a little strange. The British Conservatives, also, found it hard to understand the nature of a party that called itself 'Christian Democratic'. Even though the Conservatives themselves were still at that time closely connected with the Church of England (especially in the rural areas, where the Anglican church was sometimes described as 'the Tory Party at prayer'), the idea of a political party claiming to bring Christian values directly into its programme was slightly shocking to some of the British. One might add that a further effect inhibiting collaboration between British Conservatives and German Christian Democrats was the difference between the meaning of the word 'conservative' in the two languages: in German it has, or at least had in the 1950s, more the connotation of the English word 'reactionary'.

During the 1950s and the 1960s, some of these misunderstandings were reduced by the passage of time, and by closer contacts between British and German politicians, not least through the annual Königswinter discussions organized originally by the Deutsch-Englische Gesellschaft. Contacts between British and German politicians of the Right and Centre were particularly developed by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, which established an office in London in the late 1970s.

Even by the 1960s, British opinion was much more favourable to the Federal Republic and to what it represented, and since this time the Federal Republic has regularly appeared as 'Britain's best friend in Europe' in almost all the opinion polls.¹⁴ This was partly due to Bonn's support for Britain's first two attempts, in 1963 and 1967 respectively, to obtain President de Gaulle's permission to join the European Community (it was not seen as Germany's fault that both attempts were unsuccessful); partly to the fact that Erhard, Kiesinger, and, above all, Brandt, were more sympathetic in British eyes than Adenauer; and partly to a growing awareness among the British that all was not fully in order with the British economy and British society, and that the Federal Republic might have some useful lessons to offer. West Germany had by now overtaken the United Kingdom in economic strength and personal prosperity: how, people asked in Britain, had this been done?

In the 1960s and 1970s the more moderate elements in British public life – the Conservative leader Edward Heath, the Labour Party leaders Harold Wilson and James Callaghan, the Liberal Party, commentators in the 'quality' media, some 'captains of industry' and some trade union leaders – looked with interest and often with admiration at the social and political institutions of the Federal Republic. Among those institutions which some of them admired, and thought could be imitated in Britain, were the following:

(1) a co-operative relationship between what the Germans call 'the social partners' and the British (significantly) 'the two sides of industry', taking the form of useful dialogue from the lower level of *Mitbestimmung* or

co-determination in individual industrial plants right up to commitment to the 'concerted action' at the corporatist summit;¹⁵

(2) the German system of vocational training in industry and commerce, which produced a better trained work force than the outmoded British system of apprenticeship. As a Labour MP expressed it in a lecture some years later, 'the whole of the debate in Britain about training, and vocational education is overshadowed by the German model';¹⁶

(3) the federal political system, which appeared to contribute to greater social and economic dynamism in all regions of West Germany than was to be observed in the over-centralized United Kingdom. In some British minds, indeed, interest in constitutional reform went as far as support for a Bill of Rights or a written constitution;¹⁷

(4) the German system of subsidizing political parties out of public financial resources, which appeared to make the German parties less dependent than their British counterparts on economic interest groups such as trade unions and large business firms;¹⁸

(5) the German electoral system, which was seen to combine proportional representation with a strong element of constituency representation, and was advocated by some in Britain as a means of overcoming the violent 'pendulum-swings' produced by the unrepresentative British voting system;¹⁹

(6) the German parliamentary system of specialist committees. The British reforms of 1979, by which the House of Commons at last acquired a specialized committee for each major department of state, were inspired partly by the example of the Bundestag;

(7) the Federal Republic's strong commitment to the European Community, which many saw as a framework conducive to economic growth and social modernization.

It could be said that the interest of Britain's political and economic élites in exchanging ideas on such matters with their German counterparts was demonstrated by the very cordial reception given to Federal President Heinemann on his state visit in 1972, in sharp contrast to the cool British reception for President Heuss in 1958. There was a specially warm welcome in some British circles for President Heinemann's proposal for the establishment of an Anglo-German Foundation for the Study of Industrial Society, to promote co-operative research on problems of public policy, and the publication of its results. The same spirit of public interest in German matters was perhaps also expressed, and was certainly further stimulated, by the appointment in 1974 of an eminent German social scientist, Professor Ralf Dahrendorf, as Director of the London School of Economics and Political Science.

But the 1980s in Britain have seen a *Zeitgeist* very different from that of the 1970s. After Mrs Thatcher's election victory of May 1979, which happened to fall almost on the thirtieth anniversary of the founding of the Federal Republic, such measures of pragmatic 'social engineering' as industrial co-determination or electoral law reform no longer appealed to the dominant currents in British public life. True, such ideas were still fervently supported by the centre forces in British politics, the 'alliance' which united the revived Liberal Party and the new Social Democratic Party, itself inspired in some ways by the SPD of Helmut Schmidt and Willy Brandt; but even though the alliance parties won between 20 and 25 per cent

of the votes in the British parliamentary elections of 1983 and 1987, this striking but inadequate popularity stemmed largely from the reaction of many voters against the trends which were dominant in the early 1980s in Britain. On the Left, there was now a Labour Party committed to taking Britain out of the European Community, reducing its links with NATO to a minimum, and pursuing a strongly socialistic economic policy. Such a party was not likely to be interested in taking lessons from the SPD of Helmut Schmidt, or even from that of his successor Hans-Jochen Vogel.

Much more important, however, were developments on the Right, where power very decisively lay after Mrs Thatcher's successive electoral triumphs of 1979, 1983, and 1987. Britain's Prime Minister in the 1980s was a radical innovator, who broke with the political customs of her predecessors, both in internal politics and in her dealings with Britain's foreign partners, as part of her passionate crusade to end Britain's economic decline. Mrs Thatcher's policy of breaking up, if necessary, all the comfortable 'concerted' relationships – between the state and the trade unions, between the managers of the welfare services and their clients, between the members of the European Community or those of the Commonwealth – in the name of a creative entrepreneurial dynamism, is the hallmark of a kind of conservatism which has little in common with the views of Chancellor Helmut Kohl. Indeed, his apparently indecisive and openly 'consensual' style of leadership failed to impress the 'iron lady' of London. As a leading German journalist, Dieter Schroeder, editor-in-chief of the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, put it in a BBC radio broadcast in July 1988: 'One thing Mrs Thatcher dislikes

about Herr Kohl is that he is such an expert at the traditional British habit of muddling through.'

Summarizing this part of my argument, I suggest that German admiration for British institutions was fairly high in the 1950s, reached a peak in the 1960s, when British membership of the EEC first became a concrete issue, and has declined since the mid-1970s, partly because of Britain's continuing economic problems and partly because of Britain's apparent recalcitrance on the question of the future direction of the European Community. An exception should, however, be made for Mrs Thatcher's economic policy, which appears to be admired by many in Germany.

Reciprocally, British appreciation for German social institutions rose steadily from a low level in the 1950s to a considerable height in the mid-1970s: ironically, just at the moment when German approbation of things British was declining. It can also be said that active enthusiasm for German social institutions has declined during the 1980s, at least among those British circles in a position to legislate.

What, in conclusion, is the connection between the two processes I have sketched in this lecture: on the one hand the process by which foreign policy decision-makers in Bonn and in London have determined what initiatives they should launch, what their response should be to the initiatives of other powers, and what degree of attention they should pay to each other's policies and interests; and, on the other hand, the quite distinct process by which the 'political class' in each of these countries formed its prevailing view of the state of affairs in the other, and formed its view of whether the other's social institutions

and the habits of its public life should be admired as models or disregarded as failures?

One answer is that there may have been very little connection at all between these two processes, or at least no discernible causal pattern in their interactions over the years. Probably, indeed, at the working levels of diplomacy and military planning, the British and German officials whose job it was at a given moment to consider the latest Soviet move on Berlin, or the lessons of the most recent NATO manoeuvres in the North German plain, were very little influenced by the different pictures of British and German society which prevailed in the two countries. There are indeed many attributes of a state which must have been more obviously and more directly present in the minds of these diplomatic, military or economic policy operators. For instance, we might mention the following:

(1) the economic weight of a given national society obviously contributes greatly to its international standing, and, judged by this indicator, the influence of the Federal Republic in world affairs has risen, while that of the UK has tended to fall;

(2) the type and quantity of military strength available to a state, for instance, the Federal Republic's very large conventional forces, or the British nuclear force, have obviously come into play, sometimes in ways hard to define precisely, in the making of Western decisions on defence, arms control, and other security affairs;

(3) there must be some correlation between the international influence of the state and the length of time for which its principal office-holders have been in power. When a head of government has held this post for as long as Chancellor Adenauer, or Mrs Thatcher, this seniority must

tend to move his or her country at least somewhat further up the pecking order at any 'top table' at which they and their colleagues may be seated. Or, moving down the order of precedence from the level of heads of government, if a foreign minister has held this office continuously for as long as fifteen years, as Herr Genscher now has, this must tend to give his opinions more weight in the European or international 'college' of foreign ministers, than is accorded to views from a country which has been represented by as many as six (by 1989, seven) foreign ministers during Herr Genscher's term of office.

But, to return to my central question: what can be said about the influence upon foreign policy of the picture held by each political élite of the society, as distinct from the state, with which they are dealing? Ultimately, it is hard to establish any direct correlation between the two. If we look at the period since 1949 as a whole, the phase of greatest compatibility between the foreign policy perspectives of London and Bonn was almost certainly that between 1970 and 1974: the period of Brandt and Heath. Despite British questions about the speed of the Federal Republic's *Ostpolitik* under Brandt, and German questions about the degree of commitment of Britain's *Europapolitik* under Heath, the two governments appear to have maintained a high degree of common purpose in their intentions towards East and West, towards NATO and the process of East-West relations, and above all towards the construction of an integrated European Community; a sense of common purpose which was not present in the previous twenty years, from the creation of the Federal Republic to Brandt's accession to the office of Chancellor, and which has not been maintained with the same degree of intensity

in the period since 1974. And yet the economic and social philosophies of Brandt and Heath were very far apart, at least at the start of their respective terms of office. It is true that the prevailing German view of what Britain could contribute to the EEC in terms of tolerance, parliamentary democracy and so forth was still very high in this period; but it seems to me, by contrast, that the high point of general British enthusiasm for Germany's social and political institutions came distinctly later, in the mid and even the later 1970s, when the degree of Anglo-German consensus in foreign policy was declining.

Perhaps, then, the two worlds, that of the calculations of diplomacy and that of the esteem of societies, do not relate to each other in any systematic way. Perhaps the world of 'high politics' lives in its own enclosed sphere – the decision-makers in Bonn and in London constantly calculating how their state should relate to Moscow, to Washington, to Paris, and to each other – without any regard to how the British and German élites, or the thinking publics in the two countries, assess and judge each other.

Perhaps indeed this is how things have been between our two societies; but I believe that the question of the links between these two worlds is worth exploring further. One kind of exploration, of course, can only come with the opening of the public archives, which are beginning to give us new insights into the nature of Anglo-German relations in the 1950s. We all know, however, that documents alone are not enough, and in the meantime, much research and reflection on this subject can be fruitfully pursued by other means.

References

*This lecture was given on an occasion linked with the celebration of birthdays by two outstanding figures in the world of Anglo-German historical scholarship: Professor Paul Kluge, the first Director of the German Historical Institute London, was celebrating his 80th birthday, and Professor James Joll, who has been a friend of the Institute since its foundation, his 70th.

- 1 See K. Kaiser, *German Foreign Policy in Transition* (Oxford, 1968).
- 2 See K. Kaiser and R. Morgan (eds), *Britain and West Germany: Changing Societies and the Future of Foreign Policy* (Oxford, 1971), esp. pp. 13-15.
- 3 On the question of external influences on a bilateral relationship see R. Morgan, *The United States and West Germany, 1945-73: A Study in Alliance Politics* (Oxford, 1974).
- 4 For British official assessments, see the Foreign Office documents in R. Steininger, *Deutsche Geschichte 1945-1961*, 2 vols (Frankfurt/M., 1983).
- 5 For a fuller discussion see the author's contribution in D. Calleo, R. Morgan, R. Poidevin, M. Voslensky, *Geteiltes Land – Halbes Land?* (Frankfurt/M. and Berlin, 1986), esp. pp. 113-5.
- 6 See K. Kaiser and J. Roper (eds), *German-British Defence Cooperation: Partners within the Alliance* (London, 1988); also published in German under the significant title *Die Stille Allianz* (Bonn, 1987).
- 7 R. Dahrendorf, *On Britain* (London, 1982), p. 91.
- 8 For the Königswinter discussions, see the annual reports, and the survey in R. Uhlig, *Die Deutsch-Englische Gesellschaft 1949-1983. Der Beitrag ihrer "Königswinter-Konferenzen" zur britisch-deutschen Verständigung* (Göttingen, 1986).
- 9 *The Times*, 9 August 1963.
- 10 Quoted by K.-G. von Hase in *Adenauer at Oxford. The Konrad Adenauer Memorial Lectures, 1978-1982* (Oxford and London, n.d.), pp. 7-8.
- 11 R. Morgan, 'The New Germany: Implications for British Policy', *The Round Table*, June 1970.
- 12 Quoted by Dahrendorf, *On Britain*, p. 51.
- 13 I owe this point to Professor Richard Löwenthal.
- 14 See C. Bray, 'National Images, the Media and Public Opinion', in R. Morgan and C. Bray (eds), *Partners and Rivals in Western Europe: Britain, France & Germany* (Aldershot, 1986), esp. pp. 69-70.

- 15 See the report of the Royal Commission on *Industrial Democracy*, Chairman: Lord Bullock (London, 1976).
- 16 George Robertson, M.P., 'West Germany's industrial performance as an example for Britain?', in Adolf M. Birke and Lothar Kettenacker (eds), *The Race for Modernization. Britain and Germany since the Industrial Revolution*, Prince Albert Studies, 6 (Munich etc., 1988), p. 137.
- 17 See, for instance, Lord Scarman's Hamlyn Lectures of 1974, *English Law – the New Dimension* (London, 1974).
- 18 Report of the Royal Commission on *The Financing of Political Parties*, Chairman: Lord Houghton (London, 1974).
- 19 Report of the Hansard Society Commission on *Electoral Reform* (London, 1976).