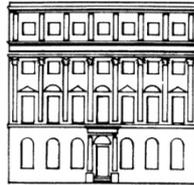


# German Historical Institute London



## BULLETIN

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*The Divided Nation: German-German History 1945-1990.*

Conference Report

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*The Divided Nation: German–German History 1945–1990.* Workshop organized by the London School of Economics and Political Science, the German Historical Institute London, and the Gerda Henkel Foundation, and held at the GHIL, 1–2 June 2017. Conveners: Dominik Geppert (GHIL/University of Bonn), Stefan Kreuzberger (University of Rostock), and Dierk Hoffmann (Institute of Contemporary History, Munich–Berlin).

Since the 1990s there have been repeated calls for research on contemporary German history to look at asymmetrically entangled and parallel developments in the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic together. Nonetheless, studies that take both blocs into account and present a differentiated argument while remaining comprehensible to a wider reading public remain rare.

A publication series conceived by Stefan Kreuzberger, Dominik Geppert, and Dierk Hoffmann, to be published from 2019 by be.bra-Verlag in Berlin, is intended to close this gap and to develop current research trends further. In the early stages of the project, the editors organized a workshop at the German Historical Institute in London to bring together the historians involved and to provide a platform for a dialogue about questions, reflections, concepts, patterns of interpretation, and developments in German–German history. At this workshop, nine of the seventeen historians involved in the project presented their research projects and outlines.

In his introduction Dominik Geppert (London/Bonn) emphasized that researchers often continue to treat the FRG and the GDR separately. In his opinion, one reason for this is the normative interpretative framework which has been used by various generations of historians. The history of the FRG has long been presented as a success story, while that of the GDR is held up as a negative contrast. In the meantime, a younger generation of historians is increasingly looking at transnational and global aspects, providing new perspectives for research on the two German states, including the old FRG's and the GDR's post-national view of themselves. According to

Trans. Angela Davies (GHIL)

The full programme can be found under 'Events and Conferences' on the GHIL's website <[www.ghil.ac.uk](http://www.ghil.ac.uk)>.

Geppert, while the concepts and theoretical considerations of what Christoph Kleßmann has called an 'asymmetrically entangled parallel history' ('asymmetrisch verflochtene Parallelgeschichte') and Konrad Jarausch's notion of a 'plural sequential perspective' ('plurale Sequenzperspektive') are generally accepted as providing an integrating perspective, we still lack empirical studies and illustrations that could put 'flesh on the theoretical skeleton'. One aim of the planned series is to remedy this shortcoming.

Franz-Josef Meiers (Münster) looked at the behavioural patterns of delimitation and system competition, parallelism and co-operation, and entanglement of German-German foreign policy (or policies) during three periods (1955-1968, 1969-1984, and 1985-1990/91). His questions concerned the German-German room for manoeuvre within the European security system, arms control, and the different vested interests in crisis situations on both sides of the Iron Curtain. He paid special attention to structural similarities between the USA and the Soviet Union, despite system competition and dependencies. Meier's working hypothesis is that despite all the differences in the social and political structures of East and West Germany, similar solutions could have been found for a German-German security policy.

Jörg Echternkamp (Potsdam) examined relations between the military and society, and between militarism and pacifism in Germany after 1945. An observation of the military in both blocs, caught between autonomy and heteronomy, could reflect delimitation, mutual perceptions and influences, and provide information about real and alleged threats. A German-German view of ideas of war and peace could also indirectly point to the issue of belonging to a German nation, however this is defined. Another aspect that occupied Echternkamp was how the two German states dealt with their common militaristic past, veering between delimitation and continuing lines of tradition. The paradigm shift in security policy and its impact on the newly formed Bundeswehr after reunification was the end point of Echternkamp's deliberations.

Tim Geiger (Berlin) turned to diplomatic history, in particular, the symbolic and representational content of German-German summits and state visits. These had produced images, he said, that have become an integral part of the collective memory. Geiger outlined five encounters, from the conference of prime ministers in June 1947, to the 1970 meetings between Willy Brandt and Willi Stoph in Erfurt

and Kassel, Erich Honecker's visit to Bonn in 1987, and the meetings between Helmut Kohl and Hans Modrow in Dresden and Bonn in 1989–90. Geiger's main emphasis was on the 1970s and 1980s because there were no official meetings between top East German and West German politicians between 1947 and 1970.

Frieder Günther (Potsdam) presented a comparative investigation of the administrative structures and cultures of the two German states in a diachronic perspective, whose aim was to elucidate the systemic specificities of each state and to clarify the differences. As he took special note of cultural characteristics in East and West, his focus was on the everyday work of administration, the processes of decision-making, and the structures of communication between authorities and staff.

Henning Türk (Potsdam) analysed the challenges facing energy policy (including raw materials shortages after the Second World War, the oil price crisis, and the difficulties of securing the energy supply in general) in both the FRG and GDR. He also looked at what options were open to each state within its political and economic system. In addition to parallels in the German–German energy supply, he also discussed entanglements and co-operation in order to identify the actors and institutions involved in this field, and to see what impact external factors had.

A narrative history of German media after 1945, Christoph Classen's (Potsdam) subject, focused on the contrasting understanding of democracy in the two German states and their different political motives in using media as an instrument of political propaganda in the Cold War. Entanglements and parallels have not been the subject of much research in this area so far. Classen therefore illuminated the developments that spanned the divide, and looked at processes of medialization. These transformed the culture of entertainment and information in East and West German society, with unintended consequences for politics. Because of their social and cultural impact, Classen argued, the media can be seen to have had a share in the decline of socialism and the global spread of consumer-oriented societies.

Andrea Brait (Vienna) dealt with German–German competitive thinking about the dominance of history from the first years after the Second World War. Among other things, she focused on the processing of the Nazi past in museums, monuments, and public discourse.

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In this context, she looked at the ups and downs in historical consciousness, for example, the widespread disaffection with history during the 1960s and 1970s, the re-emerging interest in it from the 1980s, and attempts to influence this re-awakened interest through social policy and policy for history.

Christoph Neumaier (Potsdam) presented a comparative analysis of the role of women in East and West German society. On the basis of their roles as housewives, mothers, and workers, he discussed the development of the social policy framework and influential factors in the form of legislation and reforms from the post-war period to reunification. He also examined the relationship between women who worked outside the home and the emancipation movement.

In her project outline, Jutta Braun (Potsdam) compared organized sport in the two countries, contrasting the sports clubs of the FRG with the workplace-based sporting associations in the GDR. She focused on the relationship between sporting culture and regional profile, and asked what mechanisms made it possible to identify with elite sportsmen and sportswomen in East and West. The influence of the Stasi on sport and the GDR's record of doping were contextualized in the bigger picture of German-German system competition through sport.

From the perspective of an eyewitness and political scientist, Anthony Glees (Buckingham) asked, in the closing discussion, to what extent German-German history, with its specific entanglements, parallelism, and mutual demarcations, was continuing the interpretative pattern of a German *Sonderweg*. What other subjects might be suitable for a history of German-German entanglement, parallelism, and demarcation was also discussed. Mention was made of the confrontation with the Nazi past, consumption, and a social history and history of mentalities of daily contacts across the inner-German border. These constructive suggestions were gladly adopted by the series editors.

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