

# DEUTSCH-BRITISCHE GESELLSCHAFT

67<sup>TH</sup> KÖNIGSWINTER CONFERENCE

SCHLOSS NEUHARDENBERG  
30<sup>TH</sup> MARCH – 1<sup>ST</sup> APRIL 2017



THE END OF TRANQUILITY –  
WHAT NOW FOR EUROPE?



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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**The Deutsch-Britische Gesellschaft would like to thank its friends and supporters:**

- ▶ Königswinter Stiftung
- ▶ Rolls-Royce Group
- ▶ Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer LLP





THE END OF TRANQUILITY –  
WHAT NOW FOR EUROPE?

- 4** 67<sup>TH</sup> KÖNIGSWINTER CONFERENCE – PROGRAMME
- 7** CONFERENCE REPORT
- 23** GERMAN PARTICIPANTS
- 27** BRITISH PARTICIPANTS
- 31** OBSERVERS
- 33** THE KÖNIGSWINTER CONFERENCE
- 34** THE DEUTSCH-BRITISCHE GESELLSCHAFT
- 35** ADMINISTRATION DEUTSCH-BRITISCHE GESELLSCHAFT  
ADMINISTRATION UK KOENIGSWINTER

THE END OF TRANQUILITY –  
WHAT NOW FOR EUROPE?

THURSDAY, 30<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2017

14:30 – 15:30

Registration

15:45

Opening of the Conference

by *Hans-Henning Horstmann*, Chairman, Deutsch-Britische Gesellschaft, Berlin and *Sir Michael Arthur KCMG*, Chairman Königswinter, President of Boeing UK and Ireland

16:00

Opening Speeches

*Dr Peter Altmaier MdB*, Head of the Federal Chancellery and Federal Minister for Special Tasks  
*The Rt Hon Philip Hammond MP*, Chancellor of the Exchequer followed by a **Panel Discussion** moderated by *Dr Sylke Tempel*, Editor-in-Chief, Internationale Politik, German Council on Foreign Relations

17:30 – 18:30

Introduction to the three working groups by their Chairs

18:45

Guided tour of the Schinkel Church

19:30

Dinner hosted by the British Ambassador

*Sir Sebastian Wood KCMG*

Speaker: *The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP*, Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs

FRIDAY, 1<sup>ST</sup> APRIL 2017

9:00 – 10:45

The Conference will divide into three groups

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**Group 1:** What is the future of the EU post Brexit and the US elections?

**Group 2:** The challenge to established politics – rebalancing our societies and economies

**Group 3:** Security in times of growing anxiety

**10:45 – 11:15**

Break for coffee and tea

**11:15 – 12:45**

Continuation of group discussions

**13:00 – 14:30**

Lunch

**15:00 – 16:30**

Continuation of group discussions

**16:30 – 17:00**

Break for coffee and tea

**17:00 – 18:30**

**Plenary**

Reports from the study groups moderated by *Sir Nigel Broomfield KCMG*, Former Ambassador to the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic

**18:30 – 18:45**

Winding-up address by *Jesse Norman* MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Minister for Industry and Energy

**19:30**

**Dinner** hosted by Federal Foreign Office

Speaker: *Thomas Matussek*, Ambassador ret.

Senior Advisor, Flint Global

**22:30**

End of conference

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### **Group 1**

#### **What is the future of the EU post Brexit and the US elections?**

Chair: *Dr Markus Kerber*

Rapporteur: *Rt Hon Gisela Stuart MP*

- ▶ Is the spirit of Rome '57 over?
- ▶ What balance of nation-state, intergovernmental, communautaire and regional Europe?
- ▶ Must Europe grow up and stand on its own feet?
- ▶ Project Europe: What is in, what is out? Who is in, who is out? Who leads? How much flexibility?

### **Group 2**

#### **The challenge to established politics – rebalancing our societies and economies**

Chair: *Lord David Willetts*

Rapporteur: *Dr Rupert Graf Strachwitz*

- ▶ Open markets or not? Open borders or not?
- ▶ Can democratic parties manage the politics of discontent?
- ▶ Are the politics of fear closing European societies?
- ▶ European answers or national ones?

### **Group 3**

#### **Security in times of growing anxiety**

Chair: *Dr Sylke Tempel*

Rapporteur: *Dr Robin Niblett CMG*

- ▶ How do we prioritise our response to threats?  
How similar are they for Germany and UK;  
has the age of cyber war already started?
- ▶ Can containment work? Should we ever intervene?
- ▶ What balance of collective vs national response to terrorist threats? How does that impact integration?
- ▶ Will Europe have to take more responsibilities and have to act more on its own?



## INTRODUCTION

The background to this year's Königswinter needs no introduction. The result of the referendum on the 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2016 was not predicted by pollsters, the betting markets or the financial markets and sent shockwaves through Britain, Germany and the wider world. Its true impact will only be properly understood in decades to come. The UK and the EU now face two years of complex negotiations on top of dealing with numerous economic, political and security challenges. After nine months of careful preparation, Britain's Ambassador to the EU delivered the Article 50 letter which formally set in train Britain's departure from the EU. Fortuitously, the attendees of Königswinter 2017 were assembling merely 24 hours later in Neuhardenberg to discuss what this would mean for their respective countries and for Europe's future. This is what Königswinter was designed for. There was no time to waste.



## OPENING OF THE CONFERENCE

In their opening remarks, the Conference Chairmen and former Ambassadors Hans-Henning Horstmann and Sir Michael Arthur welcomed this year's participants and highlighted that Königswinter had facilitated 67 years of bridge-building between the UK and Germany. This was needed now, more than ever. The opening speakers, Philip Hammond, Chancellor of the Exchequer and Peter Altmaier, Head of the Federal Chancellery and Federal Minister for Special Tasks, paid tribute to the role Königswinter had played over past decades and underlined the growing necessity for it in the future. This was echoed by Boris Johnson, Foreign Secretary, over dinner later that evening. It was 27 years ago almost to the day that Helmut Kohl and Margaret Thatcher had met at this conference to deepen the bonds of mutual trust and there

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were calls from both the British and German Ministers to expand the conference, with the British quipping that additional funding should be allocated proportionately according to the budget surpluses of both countries! Both sides were however sincere in their hope that the Königswinter format would be strengthened and extended - the "crucible in which new relationships would flourish".

The remarks of the three Ministers were made under the Chatham House rule but there were three key themes which tied together the British and German contributions. Firstly, the unique history of the UK which had led to the referendum result last year. Britain had enjoyed a long history as a sovereign state, "a millennium since it was last invaded, four centuries since the last civil war, the last pitched battle in 1746". It was this continuity in its national institutions and their idiosyncratic nature with a constitution that was not written down in one place that made it as "profoundly unnatural" for it to join a federal structure as it was organic and natural for Germany. This was not to say that British institutions were superior to German ones. "We still have a house of Lords". Rather, the Article 50 letter was the logical conclusion to the opt out to monetary union secured 25 years ago under John Major. To British eyes, it was no surprise to see that Germany with its history was able to align itself emotionally



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with the EU. This commitment to the EU was viewed admirably by the British delegates. It had never been wrong or misguided for Germany to pursue ever closer union. The British speakers made it clear that if any other country were to seek to exit the EU, they would not receive the slightest encouragement from the UK. This chimed with the German government priority of maintaining the unity of the 27. Brexit was therefore “not a dissolution of the profound psychological and emotional ties between [our countries] but rather the resolution”.



The second theme was the need to forge a deeper relationship between the UK and Germany as a pre-requisite to a “deep and special partnership” with the EU. This would be essential to deal with wider challenges both countries faced: a resurgent Russia, the migration crisis, Islamist inspired terrorism and a rising populist tide against free trade. As had been made clear in the Article 50 letter delivered hours earlier, the UK wanted a strong EU but it also wanted to take back control of its borders, not to stop immigration but to control it. It would respect the four freedoms and therefore neither be a member of the single market nor a full member of the customs union. Instead, it would negotiate a free trade deal that would “minimise frictions”. The UK was prepared to settle the issue of expatriates straight away and wanted to discuss the future relationship early on after the principles of withdrawal were agreed thereby avoiding uncertainty and any cliff-edges for businesses.

With charm and good grace the British delegates asked the German participants to understand the British decision. The UK had never signed up to deep political integration, but there was “more uniting us than dividing us”. Ours was

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a "like-minded friendship" and the aim was to build the strongest possible relationship based on our shared values. The UK would be leaving the EU but would not be leaving Europe. Germany and the UK were partners in NATO, fellow victors in the Cold War and the strongest proponents of free trade. It was hoped that this could be the beginning of a "strong EU buttressed and supported by a strong UK".



Naturally, the negotiations would not all be plain sailing. A "certain amount of plaster was going to come off the ceiling" during technical talks. But there was the sense from both sides that this was resolvable if we avoided megaphone diplomacy. There was also a reminder from the speakers that our collective behaviour was being watched around the world. No greater discouragement could be given to those who wished us harm than to approach the negotiations with "magnanimity and goodwill" so that Europe as a whole was strengthened as a result". Unavoidably, there was a sense of hurt among Germans, but that was why it was all the more vital to redouble and intensify the bi-lateral relationship with Germany, the "indispensable partner of the UK".

The final theme was security cooperation. The UK's and Germany's security services were working closer together as never before. From the British speakers came the very

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clear message, “Europe’s security is our security”. There was a need for a framework to ensure future cooperation. Security was an important element of future cooperation and the language in the Article 50 letter had not been intended as a threat. Looking forward, the key was to build on our common European heritage to organise cooperation between the UK and Germany for the benefit of our children and grandchildren. As one speaker put it, “we don’t know whether there is life on Mars, but there is life outside the EU”.

### **WHAT IS THE FUTURE OF THE EU POST BREXIT AND THE US ELECTIONS?**

Group 1 first looked back at the history of the EU and tackled the question, is the spirit of Rome '57 over? This year marked the 60<sup>th</sup> birthday of the EU but the scene was best illustrated by that perennial German favourite clip aired on TV on New Year’s Eve, ‘dinner for one’. Featuring Miss Sophie’s 90<sup>th</sup> birthday party, the hostess has outlived all of her friends and her aged butler James has to fill in for the missing guests. The Brits had become Miss Sophie in Europe but it was no longer the “same procedure as every year”. The imperative of 1957 was gone. Some participants suggested that if we had stayed true to what had been agreed in Rome that year the project may have fared better. Turning back towards the present, after Brexit and the US elections there was a broadly held view that Brexit may have less of an impact than the Trump election.



The group then got into a heated debate about how the EU should proceed with some participants viewing Brexit as a necessary but insufficient condition for progress on the continent. Should intergovernmentalism or the community method be the order of the day? One British partici-

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pant summarised the prognosis for the EU, “reform or die”. This caused some bewilderment among German participants coming as it did from someone whose country had just initiated Brexit.

There was consensus among British participants that they would like to strive for something that delivered something akin to the same benefits as now. But there was very little consensus on how to get there as the rules of the game would change. A future framework would need an arbitrator and a body to set the rules. The EU27 had been clear that the UK could not get a better deal outside the EU and this raised the prospect of the UK crashing out of the EU on WTO rules with serious ramifications. The matter of how the UK fitted into the European picture post-Brexit brought a sharp riposte from one German participant, “you Brits have to define yourselves, don’t come and ask us to do it”.



There was a realisation that the UK had just initiated something that had never been done before. This was not the political equivalent of a heart attack which doctors know how to treat even though it might not work. It was much closer to the 2008 financial crisis when the patient arrives at hospital and the doctors need to completely reconfigure the patient but are not sure how. Brexit also represented a parting of ways of

significant players. The question became, how could both countries reach a place where they were not harming each other’s interests? There was the danger that one country would move without realising the effect on the other. The interrelationship was becoming more important and this demanded investment in the bi-lateral relationship.



Many British participants were pre-occupied by the worst-case scenario: a car crash Brexit. The debate turned to how such a scenario could be avoided. At the core of the negotiations was the looming row over money which was more a political problem in terms of presentation. The Article 50 letter had already struck a reasonable tone. It was agreed by both sides that a focus on four key areas was crucial: market access, access to labour markets, the regulatory & judicial regimes and future financial relations. It was hoped that concentrating efforts here with a large dose of goodwill would allow both sides to come to an agreement. British and German delegates agreed that there were always going to be “wreckers” on both sides but felt that they must not be given the upper hand. One German participant pointed out that sometimes one had to do things which were counterintuitive but which gave a better outcome. In 1948, Ludwig Erhard lifted currency restrictions and price controls. General Clay, military governor of the US zone told Erhard that all of his advisers had told him that what he had done was a terrible mistake, to which Erhard answered, “Herr General, pay no attention to them. My advisers tell me the same thing.” This was not about “having enough of experts” but that it was always easier to make the gloomy rather than the liberating case.

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The group came to the conclusion that for the deal to succeed it would need “something old, something new, something borrowed, something blue”. In other words, both sides would have to be seen to be giving and taking. There would also have to be some new ideas on the table so those who wanted change could be assured that this was the right way forward.



### **THE CHALLENGE TO ESTABLISHED POLITICS – REBALANCING OUR SOCIETIES AND ECONOMIES**

Unlike other groups that had to tackle the problems arising from the UK’s departure from the EU, group 2 looked into the future and concentrated on common and overarching issues. Starting from a general analysis of basic challenges to our political system and society, the discussion turned to two specific questions:

What does this mean for traditional politics?  
And what about our elites?

While it was agreed that traditional politics were under pressure from global business, civil society and the people at large, the erosion of trust in political leaders and systems was seen as the heart of the matter. Populism in Britain, Germany, the US and elsewhere was identified as the result of many people feeling excluded from prosperity,



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while others seemed unhappy with the changes taking place and feared the future. They saw an "oligarchy of elites", an alliance between business and government, noted an increasing delivery deficit on the part of the state, resented the arrogance of politicians and public servants and realised they had been overpromising. While civil society was traditionally restless and critical, unrest had now spread to an ever widening sector of the citizens who were looking where to find an attractive community to get one's voice heard. A search for identity was on, and the national state was not in a position to satisfy the demand. As one participant put it, "something has gone badly wrong with the ancien régime!"

With a digitally enabled future and the development of a global village, citizens saw their governors as "sleep-walkers", unwilling to criticise themselves and unfit to cope with the challenges. Rebuilding trust should be seen as a top priority, but isn't. Governments relied on controls and security and did not realise this would not suffice.

For traditional politics, this verdict was truly devastating. Furthermore, loyalties and identity had become volatile and multiple. Traditional collectives, be they parties, organisations, or nations were not seen as attractive, nor did people want to profess a sustainable allegiance to any collective, preferring to switch allegiances as new topics and situations arose. Political parties in particular were seen as disconnected to the people and as part of the problem. There was little wonder that party careers were now made against the establishment, and political leaders were chosen for their opposition to traditional structures, their main asset being different and pretending to listen to what people wanted.



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Nowhere did there seem to be any sign of traditional parties living up to this challenge. Movements rather than parties were becoming increasingly popular. It was often overlooked that movements, too, needed campaigns to succeed, and that these campaigns were often manipulated – and developed and framed by elites too, rather than by the demos at large.

The question then was how to give people confidence that elites were necessary and would not run them down? Could “self-cleansing mechanisms” be introduced that would cope with deficiencies in accountability, democratisation, and ethos?

The group agreed that improving the mechanics of the system would not be enough. Neither would citizens revert to long-term identities and loyalties. Any solution to the problems facing European societies had to bear this in mind and position itself accordingly. The issue was defined as “recalibrating human software”, reintroducing common European values like courage and humility, and thus changing cultures, mind-sets and behaviour rather than just rules and regulations. All in all, self-cleansing, new watchdogs, and a new mindset would have to come together. Civil society had a prime role in this process of renewal that would hopefully result in a new elite emerging, equipped and determined to regain trust.



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## SECURITY IN TIMES OF GROWING ANXIETY

Group 3 kicked off the discussion by listing the numerous threats that the UK and Germany faced: terrorism, migration, the western Balkans, the war in Ukraine, failure in the middle East, an increasingly autocratic Turkey, nervousness in the Baltic states, cyber warfare and an unpredictable US President. In the words of one senior British attendee this group was dealing with “serious shit”.

The group dived in at the start discussing “the Trump effect”. There was some concern among German participants that the UK would be drawn into the US orbit as a junior partner and attempt to “ride the tiger”. This would cause the loss of goodwill from the European side necessary for a Brexit deal. Some British participants feared that



the UK-US intelligence relationship might be negatively affected, although there was a hope that this would be mitigated by the presence of very experienced security officials in the US. British participants were also taken back by the scale of shock in Germany at Trump’s election with some German columnists having suggested that Germany’s renunciation of nuclear weapons would have to be reconsidered. Both sides took comfort in the knowledge that the checks and balances in the US system of government were kicking in and that on a variety of issues including NATO, Russia, Turkey and Daesh, Trump was demonstrating a degree of continuity with the Obama administration.

There was broad agreement that the UK and Germany now shared the same list of concerns. The recent move by Germany to station 1,000 troops in Lithuania as part of NATO deterrence efforts underlined this. But there was the thorny question of how ongoing cooperation between both



countries would function after Brexit. One positive side-effect of Brexit was that instead of trying to block Europe's integrationist tendencies, the UK could now become a constructive and deeper partner in fields such as security, bringing to bear its leading military

and intelligence assets. Cooperation would continue through NATO, but the fear was bilateral cooperation and particularly cooperation through EU structures could get caught in the Brexit web. There was some debate about whether Germany and France would really push for greater security cooperation to demonstrate that integration was not dead in the water. Some British participants felt this would raise barriers for the UK to participate in precisely the area where it added most value to the EU.

Both sides agreed that Germany and the EU would lose the benefit of British strategic thinking and discussion turned to how to avoid a situation that the UK would become a "sullen consumer of EU security structures" rather than a partner in doing things. "How do we shift from accusations of cherry picking to contributing to burden sharing?" The group divided this up into three areas.

The first of these was crime, justice and counter-terrorism. Here the problem was stark. Collaboration in this field was about sharing data which was a highly legal process. The UK would no longer be able to participate in the European Arrest Warrant once it was out of the EU. The irony was not lost on participants that having been reluctant for the EU to develop in fields such as justice and home affairs, the UK would now try and preserve the benefits of this cooperation. One of the more juridically talented participants highlighted the impact of a recent ECJ judge-

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ment which in effect prohibited security services from collecting and storing internet data for counterterrorism and policing purposes. The blanket prohibition made sharing data with foreign counterparts almost impossible. Solving this problem was going to be very difficult indeed.

The second area was crisis management and the provision of stability such as peace-keeping missions. Here there was a positive outlook for the future based on an ad hoc system e.g. EU27+1. Some participants questioned why the UK could not have a seat at the table, not just as an observer but without the ability to block and being bound by decisions. One German participant thought the UK could be a full member while the EU could continue to facilitate cooperation between France and Germany and help in fields such as joint procurement and R&D.

The third area was deterrence. Here there were some serious concerns that we had lost the “psychological credibility” of our deterrence. NATO was belatedly turning back to territorial defence with German troops in Lithuania and British troops in Estonia. But there were concerns whether Europe and the UK had enough “rungs on the escalatory ladder” to be credible. Did we really trust the US nuclear umbrella under Trump? One German participant questioned whether the UK nuclear deterrent was truly credible given its dependence on US technology but British participants rejected this out of hand. Germany too was



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under pressure to meet its 2% defence spending obligation, but the question was raised: was this politically credible or even desirable? One British participant pointed out that spending 2% of its GDP on defence would make Germany the "preponderant provider of defence in the region". In response, a German participant pointed to a reframing of the debate around a 3% target, adding in the spending directed towards aid and humanitarian issues which would make it far harder for the parties of the left in Germany to reject.



The group agreed that both countries should look for asymmetric counterpoints to Russian strength. If Russia engaged in tactical nuclear exercises, Europe should do tactical financial exercises to build resilience in the system. Overall, it was felt that the UK's and Germany's

commitment to each other's security should be based on their shared values. Some in the group questioned whether Trump shared those values, but most of the group thought the UK and Germany should play a role in upholding them. As the UK left the EU it would not leave the space of European security and it was hoped that a flexible "continental partnership" could serve as the basis for ongoing cooperation.

### **FINAL ADDRESS**

In the final address, Thomas Matussek, former Ambassador and Senior Adviser at Flint Global took a look at the numerous crises that the world faced and asked whether there was something systemic behind it all. Firstly, the geopolitical landscape had changed. The traditional great powers were more withdrawn and focused internally, cleaning up the after-effects of the financial crisis, while newer powers flexed their muscles e.g. Turkey and the EU

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remained unwilling to adopt a larger role. Secondly, the system of global governance was under pressure so that there was an increasing gap in the demand for global governance and the ability to supply it. This had negative ramifications on a whole host of issues including climate change, cyber, migration, multilateral trade and cross-border financial systems. Thirdly, the nature of conflict was changing. State to state conflict was rare and had been replaced by inner-state conflicts, conflicts across borders, by failed states and non-state actors. This was complicated by technology changing the nature of conflict. Fourthly, regional governance was breaking down. The Paris Charter and territorial integrity was being infringed, and all the bad habits were re-emerging with violation of arms control and wars of succession. Finally, the capability to predict crises was decreasing. In 2014, Ukraine had caught the West unaware. ISIS had occupied Fallujah but it was not foreseen that they would overrun large parts of northern Iraq and Syria. This lack of predictive power was not due to an information deficit but rather a surplus in real time, providing a form of background noise which blurred the picture in complex situations.



The thread which connected Trump, Le Pen and AfD was the erosion of trust. In Germany the financial and migration crisis had left people feeling insecure and threatened in areas in which they had no influence. Voters were looking for help and answers and did not get them from the commercial world or the political world. This lack of trust in leaders and institutions was both a national and European problem. As Hans-Dietrich Genscher used to say, "you need to keep your options open, but if you keep your options open too long, you might end up only with bad options left."

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Sir Michael Arthur and Hans-Henning Horstmann closed the conference by thanking participants, organisers, chairs, rapporteurs and the generous sponsors of the conference who no doubt would be called on at this momentous time to continue their support in furthering Anglo-German relations.



## CONCLUSION

Lord Grimond, the former leader of the Liberal Party said of Königswinter, 'The British and the Germans needed to be brought together. The conferences discussed policy, but their chief contribution was to introduce and educate...[Königswinter] was a triumph of imagination and tact from which a great many people have gained what they could have got in no other way.' Bringing together Brits and Germans this year at the start of the Article 50 process was like an annual health check before a marathon race. The doctor has given the Anglo-German relationship a thorough examination, found it to be in good health but suggested taking up yoga to improve core strength and flexibility. The doctor has dispelled some myths and pre-conceptions about the years ahead, and most importantly has listened to hurt feelings and frustrations on both sides. After 67 years of Königswinter we all know that prevention is better than cure.



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## THE KÖNIGSWINTER CONFERENCE

The Königswinter Conference was established in 1950 with the aim of improving the troubled relationship between Germany and Great Britain. It takes its name from the Rhineside town opposite Bonn where the Conference took place initially. Since then the Conference has convened once a year bringing together German and British politicians, high-ranking government officials, business managers, academics and journalists for a profound and stimulating exchange of views. Königswinter has created bonds and friendships helping to improve the understanding of policy differences on topical issues and challenges and to work towards common approaches.

The issues discussed over the years have ranked from security policy, the Atlantic alliance, a desirable degree of European integration, societal changes and upheavals in an increasingly globalised world to the future of the welfare state, education policy, the integration of ethnic minorities and international economic policy. The Conference is held alternately in Germany and Great Britain. The 68<sup>th</sup> Königswinter Conference will take place in Oxford in April 2018.

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## THE DEUTSCH-BRITISCHE GESELLSCHAFT

The Deutsch-Britische Gesellschaft wants to contribute to an ever closer relationship between Germany and Great Britain and to improve the mutual understanding of its people.

The Gesellschaft aims to

- ▶ initiate and support debate on political, economic, cultural and social issues of concern to both countries
- ▶ help overcome mutual prejudices and encourage British-German friendship
- ▶ strengthen and promote European co-operation and the transatlantic relationship in co-operation with its British partners.

The Deutsch-Britische Gesellschaft is a Berlin-based, non-profit, non-governmental, non-party, independent organisation which has been organizing lectures and conferences since 1949. Its Königswinter Conference enjoys a high reputation and has served as a model for many other bilateral conferences.

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