

DEUTSCH-BRITISCHE GESELLSCHAFT

71ST KÖNIGSWINTER CONFERENCE

ONLINE
17TH – 18TH JUNE 2021



A NEW WORLD, COVID & THE CLIMATE AGENDA
– HOW DO THE UK AND GERMANY NAVIGATE?

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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ADMINISTRATION UK KOENIGSWINTER

A NEW WORLD, COVID & THE CLIMATE AGENDA – HOW DO THE UK AND GERMANY NAVIGATE?

THURSDAY, 17TH June 2021

14:00 GMT+2

Opening of the Conference

Hans-Henning Horstmann,

Ambassador ret., Deutsch-Britische Gesellschaft, Berlin

Sir Michael Arthur KCMG,

Chairman Königswinter, President of Boeing UK and Ireland

14:30 – 16:00

Opening Speeches

Ambassador Andreas Michaelis

The Rt Hon Lord Frost of Allenton

Followed by a Q&A

approx. 16.00

Break for coffee and tea

16.15 – 17.30

Session 1: Politics & Society

- With Covid disruption, how might our society change?
- Shaping the post-Covid world
- What is Königswinter's role in developing the new political relationship?
- How should our economies adapt to the new global reality?

Chair: *David McAllister MEP*

Co-Chair: *Stephanie Flanders*

FRIDAY, 18TH June 2021

9:30-10:15 GMT+2

Session 2: Global strategic challenges

- What is our role in the US~China strategic competition?

What is our position on Indo-Pacific?

- What is the future of strategic stability?
- What is the way forward with Russia, China and emerging and disruptive technologies? What are NATO's current challenges?
- The US and China now compete to be dominant in technology and AI. Where are we? Can we team up in regulatory diplomacy?

Chair: *Ambassador Wolfgang Ischinger*

Co-Chair: *Dr Karin von Hippel*

10.15 – 10.30

Short Break

10.30 – 11.45

Session 3: Climate – The path to 2050 zero carbon

- *How can we partner best in achieving climate neutrality?*

What can both countries learn from each other?

- *Are our economies adapting fast enough?*
- *How do we best finance the green revolution? Where can Government funding be most effective? Which market incentives and regulations are most promising?*
- *How far can our universities and research institutes play a cross-border role?*

Chair: *Ambassador Hinrich Thielken*

Co-Chair: *The Rt Hon Claire Perry*

11:45 – 12:00

Short break

12:00 – 13:00

Plenary

Outlook from a British and a German Politician

Anneliese Dodds MP

Terry Reintke, MEP

moderated by

Susanne Biedenkopf-Kürten

13:00 – 13:15

Winding-up address (*Rt Hon Sir David Lidington*)

Closing of conference

Thomas Matussek,

Ambassador ret., Deutsch-Britische Gesellschaft, Berlin

Sir Michael Arthur KCMG,

Chairman Königswinter, President of Boeing UK and Ireland



INTRODUCTION

The 71st Königswinter Conference was held online, with participants joining from Berlin, London and other parts of the world.

The tackling of the pandemic and its possible consequences was an obvious topic that was discussed frequently, but so was the future relationship between the UK and Germany and whether the former would prefer exclusively bilateral communication henceforth. Future challenges facing both countries were discussed, including the lack of skilled labourers and the pressing issue of climate change. A mixture of uncertainty and worry about the future of UK-German relations, intertwined with more hopeful visions of what lays ahead was present in all conversations. This was accompanied by a mutual understanding that there is still a lot to be done and that a strong future relationship will not be achieved without effort from both sides.



OPENING OF THE CONFERENCE

Ambassador Hans-Henning Horstmann opened the conference by stressing the younger generation's ability to connect online in ways that are very similar to meeting in person, a skill that has become particularly important over the course of the Covid-19 pandemic. He stated that this expertise was useful to everyone and should encourage the older generations to do the same. Furthermore, Ambassador Horstmann, who was presiding as the chairman of the Deutsch-Britische Gesellschaft for the last time at this year's Königswinter Conference, stressed that he wanted the conference to promote honest and open discussions. He mentioned the importance of focusing on the future relationship between Germany and the UK and also stated that the conference was timed well, as President Biden had very recently, at the G7 summit in Cornwall, offered both countries the opportunity to work together towards a new Westernness.

Co-Chairman of Königswinter, Sir Michael Arthur, welcomed the conference participants by acknowledging that the online format did not allow for the usual evening conversations over dinner. However, he also stressed that this meant a wider range of people were able to join and participate. Pointing towards the pandemic, he mentioned that the conference was held at a crucial moment in time, with both Germany and the UK slowly emerging out of lockdowns and after a week of multiple summits in Brussels, the UK and Switzerland, working towards the setting of a new agenda for the Western world. Acknowledging that this would be his last Königswinter Conference as co-chairman, Sir Michael Arthur stressed its importance in the building of a new relationship between the UK and Germany now that the former had officially left the EU.

In his opening remarks, Ambassador Andreas Michaelis identified three major points of focus, namely Covid-19 and the geopolitical shifts it caused, the climate crisis and the post-Brexit reality. He explained that the global vaccination programme is a perfect illustration of why global cooperation is necessary and that the G7 summit has made it apparent that fundamental shifts in said cooperation lie ahead of us. While the US might be back, it remains to be seen what this actually means, and with China's international role becoming ever more important, he argued that the next few years would be decisive. Ambassador Michaelis also related this to the threat of climate change, which is often underestimated, as its effects only become apparent over time. He stressed that this problem could only be solved with China. Regarding life in a post-Brexit reality, he stated that a new way of cooperation between the UK and Germany has to be



found. There is an urge to define the principles and structures on which such a cooperation would be based, as well as a need for pragmatic solutions to avoid high levels of frustration on both sides. He also underlined the importance of exchanges between young people, which need to be maintained. Finally, turning towards the question of what a deep alliance between Germany and the UK could look like post-Brexit, the Ambassador referred to the shared values uniting the countries, as well as their established relationship. He pointed out the Königswinter Conference's ability and responsibility to help the two country's civil societies remain in touch.

Lord Frost's opening speech focused on the future relationship between the UK and Germany, stating that the two countries were united by a connection on many levels, one of which was Young Königswinter, which he hoped would continue in the future. However, he also admitted to a lack of trust between the EU and Britain and stated that he had been surprised at how readily the EU had resorted to threats, for example in the case of vaccines. Lord Frost also stressed the delicacy of the Northern Ireland question and the crucial role the EU now plays in it. He advocated for a careful use of language and for all sides to be considerate.



More generally, he stated that Brexit was only a first step in the journey of repositioning Britain on the global stage, a plan that had been made more difficult by the pandemic. He stressed that Britain is now free to make its own decisions, including mistakes, but that it still values its relationships with Germany and other European countries.

The Königswinter Conference is a good example of Britain's commitment to bilateral relationships, and he and his government are optimistic that the British people are able to recover from obstacles such as the pandemic. Lord Frost concluded his speech by stressing that Britain would be seeking collaborations along the way and that he was confident they would be successful in establishing a positive relationship with Germany. The importance of such a relationship for both countries was a common theme in all opening remarks, pointing towards the uncertainty caused by Britain leaving the EU and the need for a new way of working together in the future.

SESSION I: POLITICS & SOCIETY

Covid-19 has made apparent and worsened some tendencies that have existed before, as well as posing new challenges which we will have to be tackled in the following years. The negative economic consequences of the pandemic, both in Europe as well as worldwide, and the need to show solidarity with Southern Europe were both stressed. Covid-19 is forcing the EU to reconsider its autonomy and sovereignty with the effect of some industries now returning to Europe. This should be an opportunity for the EU to assess its goal of becoming a geopolitical international player, as global leadership will become vital in the following years. This necessity had become apparent just days earlier during the G7 summit in Cornwall, where no concrete commitments to distributing the Covid-19 vaccines to third-world countries had been made, as a British participant pointed out. Another British person added to this by highlighting the supportive and emphatic words voiced at the very beginning of the pandemic and how quickly they had disappeared, leaving those most vulnerable exposed to the virus. This attitude would also pose future problems for the UK and Germany, as new variants would likely spread, making both country's reluctance to share intellectual property, which would help with the vaccination process, problematic.

Similarities and differences between the UK and Germany were a common theme in this first session, with one German participant pointing out that the UK, unlike Germany, has a shortage of technicians and proposed a cooperation between both countries. If the cultural differences did not turn out to be too big, it could be useful to exchange not just university students, but also skilled labourers between the countries. It was underlined that the differences between the UK and Germany with regards to skilled labour are grounded in the country's different cultural histories. This meant that Germany developed strong local economies, an achievement that is less prevalent in the UK. Another aspect feeding into this phenomenon is that in Germany, non-academic professions

tend to be held in higher esteem than in the UK and that the class system is less prevalent in German society. A German participant emphasized that the situation in Germany was not quite as good though, as the lack of experienced technicians is increasing. There now even is the danger of Germany following the UK in the wrong direction and sending too many young people to university when this is not what the economy requires. It was also pointed out that the differences between the countries with regard to skilled labour are partly due to Germany's federalist structure, which led to the development of big clusters such as commerce in Frankfurt and industry in North Rhine-Westphalia. This is very different to devolution in the UK, since in Germany the Länder existed prior to the Bund and were thus in a strong position from the start. It has become apparent in recent years that in the UK, there are no equal opportunities geographically and that what is needed are resources, but also a change in local government to increase its responsibility as well as accountability. This also means that cities should be included in the process to create the necessary changes.



Adding to the previous suggestion of exchanging skilled labourers between the two countries, a German participant remarked that what is truly necessary is a shared



Königswinter agenda. It is not enough to simply compare differences in certain areas, but Brexit has made it necessary for both countries to find new solutions. This includes the Erasmus scheme, and Königswinter offers the opportunity to find new

suggestions for the future bilateral relationship. This was a common theme throughout the whole Königswinter Conference, with several participants stressing the crucial role of the conference for determining the future cooperation between Germany and the UK. Such a partnership is needed to fight the pandemic, address the climate crisis, and prepare both countries for the challenges of the future. Königswinter therefore has to produce tangible results, as a British participant suggested. One thing the pandemic has proven is that productive exchange is also possible in an online format and that it has the potential to build the basis for more cooperation and exchange to take place in the future.

The intricate problems caused by climate change were also debated in this session, with one participant voicing the opinion that it could be difficult to avoid populist responses to the problem. There is a very fine line between those demanding decisive action from their governments and those believing the proposed measures to be too expensive. It is crucial that government is open about this issue and makes transparent that this can only be a long transition. Another British participant said there is a lack of policy for fair decarbonization, and that all the proposed measures fall disproportionately on those who

cannot afford them. Neither Germany nor the UK have a policy to deliver the net zero pledge, although with the elections coming up in Germany it remains to be seen what a possible strong result for the Green Party would lead to. It was also stressed that there is no good in attempting to outdo each other by declaring increasingly ambitious goals, but that it is necessary to remain realistic. In the end, the party that connects affordability with decisive action will likely win the upcoming election in Germany.

SESSION II: GLOBAL STRATEGIC CHALLENGES

A German official pointed out that Europe was not in good shape concerning the global challenges ahead. The US' future role is still somewhat uncertain, despite the successful G7 summit, and the EU is lacking a clear China strategy, which will become vital in the following years. Both the UK and the EU need an institutional mechanism to deal with transatlantic difficulties, a thought that is particularly unpleasant to Germany, as it has hardly ever embraced change with open arms since its reunification. The relationship between the UK and Germany could help solve those future challenges, though.

A German participant voiced worry whether the relationship between the two countries would actually be enough to solve any pressing issues, as so far there is no clear path or a shared basis to begin with. The global challenges ahead, particularly China's increasing rise to power, are delicate issues for any government, which makes it necessary to create a European plan independent from the help of the US. Given Germany's economic ties to China, the former will be crucial for a future European stance towards the latter.



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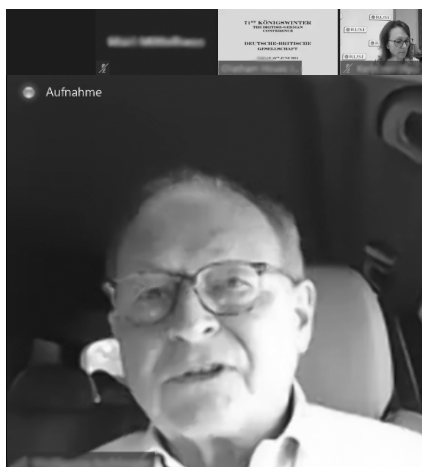
This poses the question which aspects one could truthfully expect to change in a German-China policy. China's future on the global stage and Europe's attitude towards it were the central topic of the session, highlighting its importance for both the UK's and Germany's international agenda. It

was pointed out that the upcoming elections in Germany create uncertainty about the new government's global strategic policy, although there have been no signs of dramatic shifts in German foreign policy so far.

Concern was voiced about the European's potential lack of consideration that China has its own agenda and how it might react to a new European foreign policy. The situation in East Asia and Europe is more closely connected than most

Europeans are aware of, particularly with regard to the EU being much more intertwined with the Chinese system than we would like to admit.

A British participant stated that it is necessary for the Königswinter Conference to develop a clear theme concerning the relationship between the two countries, to ensure all discussions about future foreign policies will not end up coming to nothing. This need for a more precise agenda for the conference was a common theme throughout most of the sessions, highlighting the importance of concrete results or goals to counterbalance the uncertainty caused by the new post-Brexit reality.



SESSION III: CLIMATE – THE PATH TO 2050 ZERO CARBON

A British participant stated that both the UK and Germany are striving towards zero emissions and are among the most ambitious nations with regard to that on a global stage. This will impact everyone's lives, but nevertheless we still are not doing enough to acknowledge the urgency of the matter. Even if the UK and Germany are ambitious and racing ahead, on a global scale their impact is rather small, especially in comparison to that of the USA, Russia and China. While there is a need for global cooperation on the issue of climate change, the past has taught us that the existing multilateral cooperation is not working and there is no time to waste. We no longer can afford to have ideological debates but will have to make use of every option to reach zero carbon emissions as quickly as possible.

A German official remarked that this was a decisive year for international climate protection and the necessity for a global strategy to combat the climate crisis. Although it often does not reach the headlines, progress is being made and regular meetings between countries are happening to exchange information. The G7 summit in Cornwall has been an important step in the right direction as the political commitment the nations had shown is necessary to make further progress in the following years. Now, the focus should be to ensure that after the UN Climate Change Conference in Glasgow later this year, the 1.5-degree goal will remain realistic. There is the opportunity to serve as an example for future cooperation if the EU and the UK manage to link their climate change agendas and sign an agreement. A German official stressed that as of now, neither the UK nor Germany are



doing enough to stop climate change and that they have to be more open to innovation and invest more in education and communication.

A British participant stressed the need for global governance addressing a wide range of climate issues and that it is about much more than simply reducing greenhouse gas emissions. China would have to be part of such an international strategy and there would likely be an end to climate summits being held by the powers of the global north exclusively. Due to the time pressure, it would likely be best to focus on coalitions of the willing, both on national government as well as corporate levels. The established formats, such as G20, could be one possible frame for such cooperation. New formats do not always work, especially as complex issues such as climate change often demand compromises.

So far, Europe is lagging behind in terms of economic growth post-Covid, as one participant stated. It is crucial that if the West wants to set an example of how to use the pandemic to make further progress towards a zero-emission economy, they will have to ensure that such progress includes economic policy. Some participants said there was evidence of the private sector getting ahead of politics, with the aviation sector being named as an example where



a lot of work was currently being put into making the business more sustainable. At the same time, this progress is not all-encompassing, with the majority of companies not investing in sustainability voluntarily. A British participant mentioned the possibility of the Königswinter Conference to help people get started with sustainability, as many are interested and willing, but unsure of how to do it. What has to be conveyed is a sense of urgency, not panic.

The gap between what is necessary and what governments would be willing to do due to them wanting to be re-elected was also stressed. Often, parties in power are reluctant to make unpopular short-term decisions that would be necessary to combat climate change. A British participant added that it would either take a structural mechanism to solve this issue, or legislation that is also agreed on by opposition parties as a basis for the next years. It was also mentioned that cities have the ability to serve as role models for sustainability, with Hamburg being a prime example. The city has very ambitious climate goals and is collaborating with other cities across Europe to meet their targets. This way, it is possible for action on the local level to lead the way, particularly if it is organized across borders. Following up on this, a British participant then asked how global governance for the climate crisis could be found, given that the pandemic had revealed how little multilateral empathy exists. It was stressed that the Paris agreement had been achieved through an enormous act of compromising and cooperation, and now that the US are back on the global stage, there is reason to hope for more progress soon.

The role of governments in the fight against climate change was a central theme of this session, with some participants arguing they are avoiding their responsibilities, while others stated that they are limited by their desire to be re-elected. It was agreed that there are no easy answers to this problem, that it is complex and that many aspects have to be considered. The G20 likely

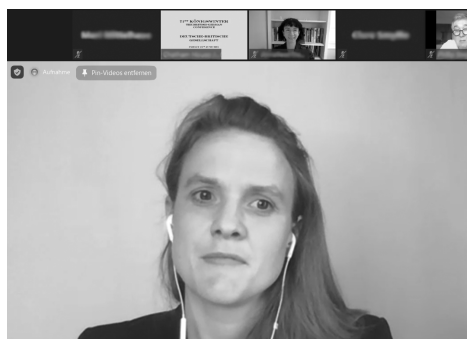
provide the best frame to tackle the issue globally, although discussion would be difficult due to the multitude of ambitions and goals of the states involved.

PLENARY: OUTLOOK FROM A BRITISH AND A GERMAN POLITICIAN

A British politician identified six challenges for the future, namely the job market, the health services, climate change, international safety, the role of the family and future international relations. They pointed towards the importance of engaging citizens in politics and of working together to solve the problems ahead. It is crucial to foster mobility between Germany and the UK, to ensure the respective societies remain in touch and to keep working together on issues such as common food standards, vaccinations, and the preservation of the Good Friday Agreement.



A German politician said that due to Brexit, a lot of the ways of exchange between the UK and Germany have been lost and that as of now, the two countries are further apart than they have been for decades. They underlined the different political moods in the countries, stating that there is a much more pro-European sentiment in Germany than in the UK. It is necessary to rebuild a lot of trust between the countries, and to do so it is vital to include the communities that have lost their platforms for exchange and debate due to Brexit.



Honesty is necessary to achieve this goal, and a shared vision has to be built. This includes addressing the hateful sentiments prevailing in both societies and resisting the urge to try and make short-term political gains that do not contribute to a meaningful debate. Finally, the importance of exchange schemes such as Erasmus was highlighted, as personal experiences build the basis for future relationships.

WINDING-UP ADDRESS BY THE RIGHT HONOURABLE SIR DAVID LIDINGTON

The Right Honourable Sir David Lidington, who is set to become the new Chairman of the UK Königswinter Steering Committee, began his address by outlining his vision for how Königswinter should move forward. He admitted that, as



had been highlighted several times throughout the conference, the relationship between Germany and the UK had become rather strained in recent years. He articulated his belief that new frameworks for future cooperation have to be found. Upon reflecting on this year's Königswinter Conference, he stated that while Brexit had understandably been a frequent point of discussion, it had not been so dominating an issue that other topics could not come to the forefront.

Sir David highlighted the fascinating discussions on the impact of the pandemic and the economic and societal challenges it poses. Concerning the future of the conference, he stressed that Königswinter has to reflect the diversity existing in both countries, including those in the UK who voted to leave the European Union in 2016. On the same issue, he stated that Königswinter should aim to provide a platform for people from rural areas and city leaders of both countries, to ensure the conference does not become exclusive for those inside the respective

capitals' bubbles. He would also like to incorporate more young people, going beyond Young Königswinter, to provide new ideas and benefit from their internationalistic attitudes.

He concluded by voicing his excitement for the future of Königswinter, while thanking the two retiring chairmen, Sir Michael Arthur and Hans- Henning Horstmann, for all their work over the years and this specific Königswinter Conference.

Ambassador Thomas Matussek, the new Chairman of the Deutsch-Britische Gesellschaft, joined Sir David in thanking the two previous chairmen and pointed out that the conference has always been particularly necessary and beneficial in difficult times, during which the discussions continued to be conducted with empathy and mutual understanding.

Sir Michael Arthur closed the conference by thanking both previous speakers, as well as Chatham House and the sponsors. He congratulated everyone on the success of the

conference despite the challenges due to the pandemic.



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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 72nd Königswinter Conference will take place in the UK in 2022.

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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