

## **Panel 1, AICGS Reconciliation conference, Berlin, Oct 22, 2013**

### **INTRO**

1. When scholars and practitioners in Northeast Asia look to the German case of international reconciliation for potential lessons, they bring with them an idealized image of the German example that assumes a problem-free, relatively harmonious process.
2. The reality of the German case is much more complicated, with each of these four relationships – with France, Israel, Poland, Czechoslovakia/Czech Republic – involving domestic opposition on both sides and crises in relations.
3. The vicissitudes in these relations required strong political leadership in all countries to move reconciliation forward.
4. In my remarks, I'd like to do 2 things:
  - Identify the leadership qualities that characterized certain political figures;
  - Offer some key examples in each of the four cases for how a sense of leadership worked out in practice. With these 2 emphases I hope to address the questions posed to this panel in the agenda.

### **LEADERSHIP QUALITIES**

I'd like to suggest 5 that I've found in all 4 cases over time:

1. A clear long-term goal and vision for the relationship based on one's own pragmatic interests and an appreciation of the pragmatic interests of the other side
2. A moral commitment to reconciliation based on the acceptance of historical misdeeds and crimes and a desire to see a new relationship structured as an antidote to the past
3. The ability to focus on and prioritize reconciliation during times of domestic tension
4. An ability to deal directly with domestic opposition
5. The capacity to forge personal relations with leaders in the other country; this involved the luck of a positive personal chemistry, but also the willingness to engage the counterpart in the other country outside the normal bureaucratic setting, for example using one's home as a venue and including family members in discussions
6. The willingness to demonstrate in public, symbolic acts the importance of the reconciliation, recognizing historical culpability and affirming new ties.

## EXAMPLES

### A. Israel, one extended e.g before and 1 short reference after 1989

1. **Early on**, there was major domestic opposition in both countries to the Reparations Agreement between Germany and Israel in the 1950s.
2. Chancellor Konrad Adenauer deemed the agreement essential for Germany's return to the "family of nations" and to improve Germany's image in the world. Prime Minister David Ben Gurion recognized that Germany was one of the very few places Israel could go to gain material help for Israel's fledgling, challenged economy, and predicted the development of an integrated Europe in which Germany would be key.
3. Both made moral arguments related to the past and the responsibility to honor victims in their efforts to gain domestic support for the victims. Both made major parliamentary statements (Adenauer September 1951; Ben-Gurion January 1952) on the need to negotiate for moral reasons.
4. Ben Gurion stood up to the opposition by demonstrating through the world tour of his Dir general of the Finance Ministry that no other source of economic infusion was available and by pushing for direct negotiations with Germany.
5. Adenauer also sent an emissary – the state secretary in the Ministry of Economics - to the Arab world to counter German opposition, particularly from the Free Democratic Party, that the Reparations Agreement would cost Germany the loss of Arab markets. Adenauer also enlisted the support of the Social Democratic political opposition, whose votes he needed to ratify the reparations Agreement, and was open to the ideas of civil society groups like Friede mit Israel.
6. The ratified agreement became the first public step in the new relationship between Germany and Israel and the basis for a personal friendship that was solidified when the 2 men met at the Waldorf Astoria in March 1960 to negotiate

another important economic agreement, with an iconic photo of the two elderly men smiling at each other and Ben Gurion gently touching Adenauer's arm.

7. The personal relationship outlasted their time in office and was manifested in Adenauer's personal visit to Israel in 1966, including to Ben Gurion's retreat in Sde Boker.

8. A **later** example of a similar constellation of pragmatic, moral and personal forces was the unlikely relationship (in generational and ideological terms) between Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer and Prime Minister Ariel Sharon that made possible the German Foreign Minister's mediation between Sharon and Yasser Arafat after the June 2001 suicide bombing of a Tel Aviv night club.

### **B. Poland, one extended e.g before and 1 short reference after 1989**

1. A defining feature of German foreign policy under Foreign Minister and subsequent Chancellor Willy Brandt was Ostpolitik, particularly relations with Poland. Opposition in Germany was fierce, particularly from the CDU/CSU and the organizations of those expelled from the so-called "eastern territories".
2. Pragmatically, Brandt wanted to complement Adenauer's Westpolitik with a policy toward the East that recognized the reality that Germany would never be able to retrieve land ceded to Poland by the Potsdam Agreement for practical reasons, but also because this was the necessary moral cost of German wartime aggression and the basis of reconciliation.
3. Strategically, in terms of rhetoric and belief, Brandt didn't deny or play down the feelings of the expellees, but argued for the necessity of accepting history. He also worked with the more moderate members of the CDU who understood this necessity. He recognized too the central role that the churches, both protestant and catholic, in both countries in smoothing the psychological path for reconciliation through their various bilateral contacts.

4. Brandt wrote in his memoirs that seeing the human face behind communist leaders through his personal encounters eased his December 1970 Warsaw discussions that led to the path-breaking German-Polish normalization treaty.
5. Arguably the most well-known gesture of German reconciliation was Brandt's kneeling at the Warsaw Ghetto memorial
6. A **later** e.g. of connecting the political and personal so reconciliation would not be derailed was chancellor Angela Merkel's handling of the Kaczynski twins, Prime Minister and president in Poland, between 2005 and 2007 when history issues resurfaced between Germany and Poland in the bilateral relationship and in the EU. Political compromise became possible in both arenas. Close observers have identified a good personal chemistry between Merkel and both Polish leaders, and both spouses were included in the private portion of Merkel's trip to the Polish president's vacation home. Her openness was based in part on her significant familiarity with Poland from her collaboration with Polish scientists during the communist era.

**C. Czechoslovakia/Czech Republic, one extended e.g before and 1 short reference after 1989**

1. Here I would like to focus on Václav Havel, to reemphasize that active political leadership is necessary in both partners to reconciliation, on the part of both victim and perpetrator countries.
2. Already as a dissident in communist Czechoslovakia, Vaclav Havel had advocated German reunification within a broader, pan-European unity. His first foreign trip as Czech president was to Germany in January 1990, and he firmly supported German unification, with the reiterated sense of its practical urgency to make Europe "whole and free," and long-term benefit of healing the wounds of World War II and the Cold War.
3. His moral perspective was based around the universal concept of self-determination, but also was expressed in his public apology, already in November

- 1989 and repeated again when president, for the excesses (not the fact of, because it was permitted by the Potsdam Agreement) of the Czech expulsion of Sudeten Germans from the Sudetenland at war's end. His position on expulsion and general improvement in German-Czech was unpopular in significant parts of the Czech political spectrum, and fell flat in Germany, but he persevered.
4. Havel was aided in the priority and persistence he invoked by his close personal relationship with German president Richard von Weizsaecker. Their joint efforts and open communication helped build the necessary larger dialogue between Germans and Czechs in the first half of the 1990s. Those personal ties were also essential in lubricating the stalled negotiations between Germany and the Czech Republic over a mutual declaration, finally realized in January 1997, where both sides recognized the historical issues separating the 2 sides and committed to a future of cooperation. Other personal relations between German and Czech political figures also eased this process.
  5. A **later** e.g. of the importance of personal relations for managing or resolving political issues was the capacity of Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder and Czech Prime Minister Vladimir Špidla, who were on a first name basis, to use their friendship to re-stabilize relations following the 2002 tensions over the expulsion issue (German expellees' proposal to build a Center against Expulsion in Berlin, highlighting their plight; Prime Minister Zeman's reference to Sudeten Germans as a pro-Nazi fifth column)

**D. France, one extended e.g before and 1 short reference after 1989**

1. Perhaps the best-known personal relationship was between Adenauer and President Charles de Gaulle.
2. They shared a practical and moral vision of a united Europe (although some important differences regarding the form), the core of which was the Franco-German tandem. Franco-German reconciliation was simply seen as a stark institutional alternative to the history of war between the 2 countries.
3. Their shared faith of Roman Catholicism and experience of opposition to their governments during World War II helped surmount the critical responses in both

- Germany and France. A significant public demonstration of their commitment came in a July 1962 joint mass during Adenauer's visit to France.
4. The important September 1958 meeting between the 2 men at de Gaulle's family home was a crucial step on the path to the 1963 Franco-German Elysee treaty that cemented reconciliation psychologically and institutionally. De Gaulle has written: "From then until mid-1962, Konrad Adenauer and I were to write each other on some 40 occasions. We saw each other fifteen times. We spent more than 100 hours in conversation."
  5. A **later** e.g is the personal connection between Schroeder and President Chirac. They were not initially warm but eventually displayed a high degree of trust, the very basis for friendship. For example, in October 2003, when the German chancellor's presence was required in the Bundestag for a crucial vote, Schroeder delegated Chirac to represent him at a EU summit in Brussels. Schroeder, recognized as did past and future leaders that differences are woven into the fabric of relations and do not invalidate amity. Rather friendship provided "a very firm foundation" on which to negotiate clashing perspectives.

## **CONCLUSION**

1. There is a consistency to the significance of political leadership across time periods, generations, ideology.
2. Often, there are differences in relations, including over history issues, and there is always domestic opposition.
3. Domestic opposition and bilateral policy differences could/can be addressed - at best overcome and at least managed - through the willingness to compromise that was based on pragmatic recognition of interests, moral commitment to the relationship, and emotional attachment between leaders.
4. The opposite was/is also true: bad personal chemistry can affect relations negatively.