

# The principle and practice of 'reconciliation' in German foreign policy: relations with France, Israel, Poland and the Czech Republic

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History intruded yet again into contemporary German politics in autumn 1998, with the eruption of public debates about normalcy, anti-Semitism, ritualization of Holocaust commemoration, and the motives and instruments of remembrance. These heated exchanges revealed significant political and societal divisions, but they also reaffirmed the German effort, pursued over five decades through education, public policy and citizen activism, to draw lessons from the evils of the Third Reich.

The debates focused almost exclusively on internal developments, yet the varieties and complexities of Germany's grappling with the past are also reflected in the Federal Republic's foreign policy. In its specific commitment to 'good neighbourliness and historic responsibility' and its general belief that 'German foreign policy is peace policy', the Social Democratic–Green coalition has retained the priority accorded the principle of 'reconciliation' in Germany's external relations since 1949.<sup>1</sup> Even though German officials have not articulated a coherent and comprehensive policy (*Gesamtkonzept*), their public statements and actions over time provide the elements of a conceptual framework for reconciliation as a centrepiece of German foreign policy.

The purposes of this article are to propose a model for an ideal type of reconciliation, based on discernible patterns in German foreign policy; and to measure the relative success of Germany's foreign policy of reconciliation in four bilateral cases: with France, Israel, Poland and the Czech Republic.<sup>2</sup> I will consider the four cases as two chronological pairs, as they have been considered by German foreign policy-makers: partnership with France and Israel constituted the

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<sup>1</sup> See e.g. the coalition agreement between the Greens and the Social Democratic Party; and Margarete Limberg, 'Was nun Herr Schröder?', *Jüdische Wochenzeitung* 53: 1, 15 Oct. 1998.

<sup>2</sup> In the last decade 'reconciliation' has emerged globally as a policy goal and academic preoccupation, from South Africa to the Middle East, from Northern Ireland to Bosnia, from large powers (American initiatives towards Vietnam and Iran) to small groups (Turkish and Greek Cypriots in Cyprus).

principal vehicle for Germany's pursuit of rehabilitation in the postwar period; relations with Poland and the Czech Republic represent an extension of that strategy to the east in the post-Cold War era, as well as the completion of Ostpolitik.<sup>3</sup> Notwithstanding unification after 1989, patterns set by the old Federal Republic have persisted, and there are consequently more similarities across time periods than within them: ties to Poland echo Franco-German reconciliation, while relations with the Czech Republic resemble more nearly the German-Israeli model.

### **A model of reconciliation: morality and pragmatism**

The English term 'reconciliation' has two German equivalents: *Versöhnung* and *Aussöhnung*, conveying respectively a philosophical/emotional aspect and a practical/material element.<sup>4</sup> Germany's pursuit of reconciliation has consistently reflected both meanings, melding moral imperative with pragmatic interest. Relationships of reconciliation are marked by additional dualities, for they involve cooperation and confrontation; governments and societies; long-term vision and short-term strategy; political support and opposition. In reconciliation, the mix of pragmatism and morality differs depending on history, institutions, leadership and international context, or what we could call the political dynamics of the process.<sup>5</sup> These four variables define the character of each bilateral relationship, and provide measures for the relative success of German foreign policy.

### *History*

Assuming that reconciliation as a genuine alternative to war is a long-term process, and that memories are deep, then the notion of a living past seems important. The literature on reconciliation does not embrace such a broad historical

<sup>3</sup> Wolfgang Ischinger and Rudolf Adam, 'Alte Bekenntnisse verlangen nach neuer Begründung', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 17 March 1998. For analysis of other German cases, namely relations with the Netherlands and the United States, as 'peace communities', see Michael Zielinski, *Friedensursachen. Genese und konstituierende Bedingungen von Friedensgemeinschaften am Beispiel der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und der Entwicklung ihrer Beziehungen zu den USA, Frankreich und den Niederlanden* (Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, 1995). On Germany's relations with Hungary, Poland, and the Czech Republic, employing an alternative approach of bilateral treaties, see Ann Phillips, 'The politics of reconciliation: Germany in central-east Europe', *German Politics* 27: 2, Aug. 1998.

<sup>4</sup> On the distinction, see Artur Hajnicz, *Polens Wende und Deutschlands Vereinigung. Die Öffnung zur Normalität* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1995), pp. 142–61.

<sup>5</sup> For discussion of the two emerging analytical approaches to reconciliation, the theologically based 'forgiveness school' and the interest-based 'rapprochement school', see Lily Gardner Feldman, 'Reconciliation and legitimacy: foreign relations and enlargement of the European Union', in Thomas Banchoff and Mitchell P. Smith, eds, *Legitimacy and the European Union: the contested polity* (London: Routledge, 1999). The most comprehensive examples of the two schools are, respectively, John Paul Lederach, *Building peace: sustainable reconciliation in divided societies* (Washington DC: US Institute of Peace Press, 1997); and Stephen Rock, *Why peace breaks out: great power rapprochement in historical perspective* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1989). As two approaches that straddle the two schools, see George E. Irani, 'Rituals of reconciliation: Arab-Islamic perspectives', paper prepared for the US Institute of Peace, Washington, DC, 1998; and Louis Kriesberg, 'Reconciliation: conceptual and empirical issues', paper delivered to the International Studies Association, Minneapolis, 1998.

perspective, attempting rather to overcome the past through forgetting or relegating; in some cases it has a limited sense of the future. However, a continuing, dynamic confrontation with the past, an historical consciousness, or what Eva Kolinsky has called the 'restitution of individuality', appears necessary to achieve reconciliation.<sup>6</sup>

The effort to vivify history, rather than to bury it, to put a face to human suffering, to highlight remembrance at the collective and individual levels, is important initially, and for the maintenance of a fundamentally revised structure of interaction thereafter, whether in the form of education, memorials, or written and verbal dialogues about the past. Telling stories and relating history are not efforts to equalize or homogenize views when different interpretations of history exist, but rather attempts to provide an equal opportunity to recount and to recognize the different narratives, so that divergence forms the focus of interaction, with history as a constructive irritant.

The initial weaving of history into the fabric of international relations is significant symbolically and practically. Apology for historical wrongs, or some variant thereof through the recognition of past injurious behaviour, is a prerequisite for fundamental departure, with the injured party often providing the impulse.<sup>7</sup> Apology does not have to elicit a statement of forgiveness, which is an extreme and perhaps paralysing demand at the outset, but does call for a deliberate response, in terms of magnanimity, understanding or resonance of the gesture in formal terms. Dialogue does not have to evolve around the concept of guilt, but does require the acceptance of responsibility and a commitment to the pursuit of justice and truth. While inspired by moral imperative, such statements and demonstrations of change are often related to pragmatic material needs.

### *Institutions*

Some of the literature on reconciliation recognizes the importance of institutions, but not centrally.<sup>8</sup> Where institutions constitute a focus, it is in respect of their initial creation and not their long-term maintenance. Moreover, the references are either to international institutions devised by others, such as war crimes

<sup>6</sup> These assumptions are derived from substantial historical analysis. See Jeffrey Herf, *Divided memory: the Nazi past in the two Germanies* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997); Andrei S. Markovits and Simon Reich, *The German predicament: memory and power in the new Europe* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997); and Thomas Banchoff, 'German policy towards the European Union: the effects of historical memory,' *German Politics* 6: 1, 1997; Eva Kolinsky, 'Remembering Auschwitz: a survey of recent textbooks for the teaching of history in German schools', *Yad Vashem Studies*, vol. 22, 1992 pp. 288–9.

<sup>7</sup> The apology approach is a variant of the 'forgiveness school'. See e.g. Raymond Cohen, 'The role of apology in conflict resolution: the Israeli-Palestinian case', paper presented to the international conference on 'The Peace Process and Future Visions of the Middle East', Lund University, Sweden, 19–21 Sept. 1997.

<sup>8</sup> Recent literature on institutions usefully reminds us of the importance of ideas, values and norms, but neglects both the goals of peace and reconciliation and bilateral arrangements. Particularly stimulating is Martha Finnemore, 'Norms, culture, and world politics: insights from sociology's institutionalism', *International Organization* 50: 2, Spring 1996. See also Paul J. DiMaggio and Walter W. Powell, eds, *The new institutionalism in organizational analysis* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

tribunals, or to intrastate institutions.<sup>9</sup> The literature sporadically refers to transformation at the personal level, but deals with neither aggregation of individual and group change nor institutions for enforcement or maintenance of a new condition.

A key element of reconciliation is the notion of institutionalized transformation. Bilateral governmental institutions between states and institutionalized transnational networks between societies afford new attitudes, new bureaucratic and personal relationships, and a new framework within which the parties can confront one another as equals in a recalibrated power relationship. Continuous institutional interaction also can facilitate the development of joint interests, and of linked strategies to third parties.

### *Leadership*

One stream of the reconciliation literature elevates the role of leadership, but restricts its ambit to religious figures.<sup>10</sup> While visionary societal actors are crucial facilitators of international reconciliation, and frequently inspire or goad the political class into initial action, their activities are often quiet and unheralded. The visible leadership necessary to set a tone and project a message to public opinion comes more naturally from the political arena. Reconciliation must find broad support among publics and politicians, but willingness to steer a new course is by no means unanimous, and skilful, informed political leadership can navigate difficult waters, especially in the inevitable times of crisis that punctuate dyads of reconciliation. As with institutions, leadership provides opportunities for both individual and collective reconciliation.

### *International context*

Reflections on reconciliation highlight the role of third parties, but centre on individuals, groups or governments from other nation-states. A robust multilateral framework advances the cause of reconciliation by guaranteeing that the parties cannot avoid one another, thereby locking in the relationship, and by proffering an environment for the development of joint interests. The configuration of the broader international system is also significant, either stimulating or deterring reconciliation.

The four variables—history, institutions, leadership, and international context—structure reconciliation as a dynamic, open-ended process. This concept does

<sup>9</sup> In its structural and temporally limited emphasis, the literature on international legal solutions is a variant of the *rapprochement* school, even though it shares with the forgiveness school a commitment to justice. See Neil J. Kritz, ed., *Transitional Justice: how emerging democracies reckon with former enemies*, vols 1 and 2 (Washington DC: US Institute of Peace, 1995).

<sup>10</sup> Cynthia Sampson and John Paul Lederach, eds, *From the ground up: Mennonite contributions to international peacebuilding* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1998).

not infuse peace with a vision of harmony and tension-free coexistence, but rather integrates differences. Productive contention in a shared and cooperative framework for identifying and softening (but not eliminating) divergence is a more realistic goal than perfect peace. Authentication of reconciliation thus emerges from challenge.

### **The practice of reconciliation in German foreign policy**

By 1997 the principle of reconciliation had been applied freely by Germany to relations with Israel, France, Poland and the Czech Republic, both individually, and increasingly as a group.<sup>11</sup> For example, in a June 1997 speech in Chicago, Chancellor Helmut Kohl drew on other reconciliation experiences to set the objective in German–Polish relations:

We want to realize the aims that Adenauer declared as the principal objectives of German foreign policy in 1949: understanding and reconciliation, particularly with France, Israel and Poland. We want to create with our eastern neighbour Poland what was possible with ... France. This is all the more important as German–Polish history and the German–Polish border are linked on both sides with bitter experiences ... [We] must draw a decisive lesson ... that there will never again be border problems in Europe ... We must make borders porous, as between Germany and France ... For this reason we want Poland ... to become a part of the European Union.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> For references to reconciliation in the Franco–German case, see Willy Brandt, *People and politics: the years 1960–1975* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1978), p. 120; Chancellor Kohl's statement in Aspen Institute Berlin, 'Franco–German relations and the future of Europe', Report from Aspen Institute Berlin, no. 8/88; address by Hans-Dietrich Genscher, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Federal Republic of Germany, to the Foreign Relations Committee of the French National Assembly, Paris, 19 Nov. 1991, *Statements and Speeches*, vol. 14, no. 12 (New York: German Information Centre), p. 1.

On German–Jewish and German–Israeli reconciliation see Press and Information Office of the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany, *Remembrance, sorrow and reconciliation: speeches and declarations in connection with the 40th anniversary of the end of the Second World War in Europe* (Bonn: Press and Information Office of the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany, 1985); Otto R. Romberg and Georg Schwinghammer, eds, *Twenty years of diplomatic relations between the Federal Republic of Germany and Israel* (Frankfurt am Main: Tribüne Books, 1985), pp. 8–9; Klaus Kinkel, at the opening of an exhibition, 'Thirty years of German–Israeli diplomatic relations', Bonn, 11 May 1995, *Statements and Speeches*, vol. 18, no. 11 (New York: German Information Centre), pp. 2–3.

For the Polish case, see Brandt, *People and politics*, p. 181; the speeches by Chancellor Kohl and CDU/CSU politicians in CDU/CSU Fraktion im Deutschen Bundestag, 'Botschafter der Aussöhnung. Union würdigt im Bundestag Beitrag der deutschen Heimatvertriebenen zum Wiederaufbau in Deutschland und zum Frieden in Europa', *Dokumente*, Aug. 1995, pp. 13–14.

Regarding the Czech Republic, see President Herzog's speech at a September 1996 German–Czech youth meeting in Policka in *Bulletin*, Presse- und Informationsamt der Bundesregierung, no. 72, 16 Sept. 1996, pp. 776–7, and his 29 April 1997 speech in Prague in *Bulletin*, Presse- und Informationsamt der Bundesregierung, no. 35, 7 May 1997, p. 371; Günter Verheugen's article for a Czech newspaper (Beitrag für die *Prager Zeitung*), office of Günter Verheugen, dated 3 Feb. 1997; Antje Vollmer, 'Ende der Zweideutigkeiten. Offene Antworten auf offene Fragen im tschechisch–deutsche Verhältnis', in *Gespräche mit dem Nachbarn. Tschechisch–deutsche, Redenreihe 1995 im Prager Karolinum* (Praha: Univerzita Karlova, 1997), p. 160.

<sup>12</sup> 'Das transatlantische Netzwerk ausbauen und verstärken', speech by the Federal Chancellor to the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations, Chicago, 19 June 1997, *Bulletin*, Presse- und Informationsamt der Bundesregierung, no. 63, 30 July 1997, p. 751.

A year later, in an interview with *Die Welt* on the achievements in German–Czech relations, Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel lamented the slowness of developments. He anticipated in German–Czech ties a ‘relationship of genuine normality’ akin to the successes of Germany’s relations with France, Israel and Poland. Given those successes, Kinkel was puzzled by German–Czech tensions: ‘It cannot be right that we succeeded in restoring friendly relations with these countries and peoples, but the efforts for good neighbourly relations with the Czech Republic continue to meet with obstacles. It must be possible to make progress here.’<sup>13</sup>

Kinkel’s approach was logical and efficient from a perspective of policy strategy, but lumping the four cases together hides their distinctions and diminishes their comparative and predictive value. Had he dissected the complex and vacillating history of German–Israeli friendship, he would not have been startled by the barriers in German–Czech relations. Assuming that the Czech Republic would follow exactly the same pattern as Poland was to ignore the variety of east European historical and political experience involving Germany. And to envision that Czech–German relations could approximate in a few years what took decades to craft in Franco–German relations was highly unrealistic. The comparisons below are an attempt to place these relations under one conceptual lens, but also to see both different varieties of reconciliation and different stages of development. While all relations of reconciliation involve moral and pragmatic dimensions, historical consciousness and institutionalization, forceful leadership and a larger structural environment, the cases are distinguished by the particular mix of the variables.

### **Relations with France and Israel**

The comparison of Franco–German and German–Israeli relations involves consideration of similarities and differences concerning the place of history, institutions, leadership and context in relations of reconciliation.

#### *History*

*The past as stimulus* In both Franco–German and German–Israeli relations, a clear moral imperative emerged for societal and political leaders to confront the past. On the Franco–German side, religious leaders played a primary role in unfreezing relations, not only in the well-known Roman Catholic interaction linking Robert Schuman and Konrad Adenauer but also through equally influential though less heralded Protestant voices and actions, for example the French Protestant church’s November 1946 participation in the Speyer synod, the church’s theological institute in Montpellier for German prisoners of war,

<sup>13</sup> *Die Welt*, 16 April 1998.

and the activities of Marcel Sturm, the French military chaplain in Germany.<sup>14</sup> Moral Rearmament's centre in Caux was an important venue for confrontation between French and German spiritual and political leaders, as recorded by Irène Laure, a wartime resistance fighter.<sup>15</sup> The Sign of the Atonement movement (Aktion Sühnezeichen), founded in 1958 by the evangelical church to encourage young Germans, regardless of religious affiliation, to volunteer in countries that had suffered under Nazism, became an active moral force embodying a new spiritual basis for relations between France and Germany.<sup>16</sup> A cross-section of French society—journalists, intellectuals, politicians—came together in 1948 in the French Committee for Exchanges with the New Germany.<sup>17</sup>

Religious leadership was not central at the beginning of German–Israeli relations. However, following the development of official (not diplomatic) links via the Luxembourg Reparations Agreement of 1952, both the Societies for Christian–Jewish Cooperation (Gesellschaften für christlich-jüdische Zusammenarbeit) and the Sign of the Atonement movement devoted themselves to building new relations.<sup>18</sup>

In the German–Israeli case, moral inspiration came early on from political figures such as Kurt Schumacher and Carlo Schmid (also an architect of Franco–German reconciliation); then from the Peace with Israel movement founded in summer 1951 by two journalists, Erich Lüth and Rudolf Küstermeier (himself a political victim of National Socialism), who decried the lack of governmental initiative; and finally in September 1951 from Konrad Adenauer. Moral arguments spurred Israeli leaders, particularly David Ben Gurion and Felix Shinnar (his chief negotiator in the 1952 reparations agreement) towards encounter with Germany, although moral arguments also motivated opponents of relations, such as Menachem Begin.

*Acknowledging grievances* Moral impulses were the lubricant for initial contacts, but pragmatic and material needs converted the affective component into formal political commitment. German pragmatism towards Israel, then and thereafter, embraced both objective calculation of interest and conscious philo-Semitism, involving a cynical attitude towards Jews. Needs were both internal and related to the international system.

In both the Franco–German and the German–Israeli cases, the process com-

<sup>14</sup> On relations between French and German Protestants, see Frédéric Hartweg, 'Introduction. Quelques réflexions sur les protestantismes allemand et français et leurs relations', and Daniela Heimerl, 'Les églises évangéliques et le rapprochement franco-allemand dans l'après-guerre: le conseil fraternel franco-allemand', *Revue d'Allemagne* 21: 4, Oct.–Dec. 1989; and M. Greschat and F. Hartweg, 'Protestantisme et réconciliation franco-allemande', *Documents*, 1988, no. 1.

<sup>15</sup> See Jacqueline Piguet, *For the love of tomorrow: the story of Irène Laure* (London: Grosvenor, 1985), pp. 9, 13.

<sup>16</sup> Aktion Sühnezeichen Friedensdienste e.V., '6 Juin 1944. 50 Jahre danach. Über 30 Jahre Aktion Sühnezeichen Friedensdienste in Frankreich', *Zeichen*, no. 2, Sept. 1994.

<sup>17</sup> On the origins of relations, see Alice Ackermann, 'Reconciliation as a peace-building process in postwar Europe: the Franco–German case', *Peace and Change* 19: 3, July 1994; Joseph Rován, 'France–Allemagne, 1948–1998', in Jacques Delors, *France–Allemagne: le bond en avant* (Paris: Odile Jacob, 1998).

<sup>18</sup> For the origins of German–Israeli relations, and subsequent evolution, see Lily Gardner Feldman, *The special relationship between West Germany and Israel* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1984).



menced with a formal statement spelling out key historical issues. In the German–Israeli case, Adenauer’s September 1951 statement to the Bundestag recognized the suffering of the Jewish people, the unspeakable nature of the crimes committed against them, and the need for moral and material compensation; but, despite Jewish entreaties, it avoided the issue of collective guilt. The statement was motivated by the necessity of political rehabilitation, for the western allies, particularly the United States, had made it clear that the return of sovereignty to Germany hinged on its taking an initiative towards the Jews. After bitter internal wrangling, Israel accepted the offer of direct negotiations, in large part as a result of the urgency and extent of its economic needs. Following difficult negotiations (largely as a result of German back-peddling), the Luxembourg Reparations Agreement was concluded in September 1952, despite opposition in Adenauer’s cabinet and in the Bundestag. Israel wanted to contain the relationship, and refused Germany’s offer of diplomatic relations at that time.

If postwar Europe was to be revived, France and Germany each needed the other, as Adenauer, Schuman and de Gaulle readily recognized.<sup>19</sup> The Schuman Plan of May 1950 (for the Coal and Steel Community) and the Pleven Plan of October 1950 (for the European Defence Community) signalled that relations could be transformed. Both plans were French initiatives, but Adenauer also played a critical role. Opposition in Germany, deriving both from the pragmatic fear of cementing Germany’s division and from the moral fear of rearmament, was significant but not decisive. The more fundamental French opposition to EDC resulted in Germany’s membership of NATO, which together with the Paris Treaties of 1954 and the signing of the Saar Treaty in 1956, officially demonstrated a new relationship.<sup>20</sup>

The weight of history as a backdrop to relations has been enormous in both Franco–German and German–Israeli relations, yet the cases diverge. Whereas the two relationships exhibit motives of both morality and pragmatism, the balance differs. A far greater emphasis on morality is present in the German–Israeli case, and the Holocaust, while sometimes relegated and relativized by Germans, has stood as the overarching background to relations between the German and the Jewish states.

*The past as present* As a direct focus of understanding and learning, history is also much more visible in German–Israeli than in Franco–German relations. While it is sometimes addressed with insensitivity and lack of foresight (for

<sup>19</sup> See the first volume of Konrad Adenauer’s memoirs, *Erinnerungen 1945–1953* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Bücherei, 1967), chs 13, 14 and 17. On the centrality of reconciliation for Schuman, see his ‘Foreword’ in Frank Buchman, *Remaking the world* (London: Blandford, 1961), pp. 346–7. On de Gaulle’s attitudes, see Merry and Serge Bromberger, *Jean Monnet and the United States of Europe* (New York: Coward-McCann, 1969), ch. 14. See also F. Roy Willis, *France, Germany, and the new Europe* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1968).

<sup>20</sup> See the joint Franco–German declaration on the Saar Treaty, in *Auswärtiges Amt, 40 Jahre Aussenpolitik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland. Eine Dokumentation* (Stuttgart: Bonn Aktuell, 1989), pp. 98–9.



example, the 1971 opening of the first German Culture Week in Israel on the anniversary of Kristallnacht, the 10 November 1988 speech by Bundestag President Philipp Jenninger, deemed by some an apologia for Nazi behaviour), and on occasion with neglect and contention (for example, Kohl's visit to the Bitburg cemetery with President Ronald Reagan, the *Historikerstreit*, the Berlin memorial to Europe's murdered Jews), nonetheless the Holocaust has been woven into the fabric of relations. Through various educational initiatives such as joint schoolbook commissions to strive for accuracy of historical interpretation, and visits of schoolchildren to the sites of concentration camps, as well as through scholarship, film and literature, there is a general historical consciousness in Germany concerning Jews.<sup>21</sup>

The moral clarity of German–Israeli relations is absent from Franco–German relations. The French were victims of the Second World War, but they were also important collaborators—a topic broached publicly and politically only recently in a series of French apologies for wartime behaviour towards Jewish victims. Pre-1933 history and the issue of *Erbfeindschaft* (hereditary enmity) have been subjected to systematic common examination, but the Nazi period has been largely repressed.<sup>22</sup> The pressure of common contemporary interests seems far greater in the Franco–German case than in the German–Israeli, although distant history can still complicate relations, as witnessed in Chancellor Schröder's rejection of President Chirac's invitation to the French commemorations to mark the 80th anniversary of the end of the First World War.

The different shades in which the past colours the present in Franco–German and German–Israeli relations are evident in their characterization of the ties that exist. Israeli leaders do not employ the term 'reconciliation' on the assumption that it connotes a religious element of forgiveness which, they believe, only the murdered victims of the Holocaust, or G-d (on Yom Kippur) can pronounce. Moreover, the English and German terms carry Christian overtones; there is, in fact, no exact Hebrew equivalent for 'reconciliation'. Remembrance is, however, a powerful element in Judaism (as manifested in the Yizkor prayers), as President von Weizsäcker recognized in his speech on 8 May 1985 at the time of Bitburg.

In dealing with Germany, then, Israelis prefer the terms *rapprochement*, cooperation and 'special relationship', in which the Holocaust is indelible.<sup>23</sup> They prefer the term *shilumim* to the German usage for restitution and reparations, namely *Wiedergutmachung*, 'making good'. Israelis also privilege Adorno's construction of *Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit* (working through or confronting

<sup>21</sup> See e.g. Eva Kolinsky and Martin Kolinsky, 'The treatment of the Holocaust in West German textbooks', in Livia Rothkirchen, ed., *Yad Vashem studies on the European Jewish catastrophe and resistance* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1974); Walter Renn, 'Federal Republic of Germany: Germans, Jews, and genocide', in Randolph L. Braham, ed., *The treatment of the Holocaust in textbooks: the Federal Republic of Germany, Israel, the United States* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987).

<sup>22</sup> Exceptions are noted in Jürg Altwegg, 'Von der Erbfeindschaft zur historischen Freundschaft. Zum Zustand der deutsch–französischen Beziehungen', *Dokumente* 52: 1, Feb. 1996.

<sup>23</sup> See Shimon Peres' speech of 25 Jan. 1996 in Munich, in *Statements and Speeches*, vol. 19, no. 2 (New York: German Information Centre).

the past) over the pervasive German term *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* (mastering the past). Israelis resist the German reference to normalization of relations, suggesting that while official relations at the formal level are routine, the larger societal relationship can never be normal.

The French, by contrast, appear to display no allergy or neuralgia concerning 'normalization', nor any resistance to the term 'reconciliation', in part because it conforms to the Christian notion of forgiving and forgetting.

### *Institutions*

The formal imprimatur of new ties in the 1950s was followed over the next four decades by remarkable friendships in the Franco-German and the German-Israeli context alike.

In both cases extensive institutionalization of ties occurred at both the governmental and societal levels in a panoply of special and preferential arrangements. Almost no area of public policy or private interaction has escaped bilateralization. The agreement on reparations (through goods in kind over a twelve-year period) between Germany and Israel linked the two economies, as did restitution to Jewish individuals, approximately 40 per cent of whom have resided in Israel.<sup>24</sup> German development aid to Israel has been significant.

Relations in science and technology bridge the private and public spheres, and represent a deliberate effort, starting at the end of the 1950s, to resuscitate the legacy of a common German-Jewish scientific tradition. Funding and research collaboration is monumental, and virtually peerless in its institutionalization and regularity, including the creation of a joint German-Israeli Commission on Research and Development.<sup>25</sup> The private Israeli-German Chamber of Commerce has vigorously complemented official efforts in the commercial field. Relations in the defence area began in the 1950s, and though they ceased officially with the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1965 security ties have persisted, in for example the areas of training, intelligence, weapons trade and German military aid, especially after the Gulf War.

At the non-governmental level, extensive links exist between German and Israeli institutions of higher learning; there is a strong focus on German and European studies in the programmes offered at the Hebrew University, Tel Aviv University and the Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, and numerous Jewish Studies programmes in Germany.<sup>26</sup> In youth exchange, the private contact of

<sup>24</sup> See Shmuel Bahagon, ed., *Recht und Wahrheit bringen Frieden* (Gerlingen: Bleicher, 1994); Ralph Giordano, ed., *Deutschland und Israel: Solidarität in der Bewährung* (Gerlingen: Bleicher, 1992); Otto R. Romberg and Heiner Lichtenstein, eds, *Thirty years of diplomatic relations between the Federal Republic of Germany and Israel* (Frankfurt am Main: Tribüne Books, 1995).

<sup>25</sup> Details are in Dietmar Nickel, *It began in Rehovot: the start of scientific cooperation between Israel and the Federal Republic of Germany* (Zurich: European Committee of the Weizmann Institute of Science, 1993).

<sup>26</sup> For an overview, see Sekretariat der Ständigen Konferenz der Kultusminister der Länder in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, *Wissenschaftsbeziehungen zwischen der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und dem Staat Israel* (Bonn, 1995).

the 1950s was followed in the 1960s by German government involvement, with priority assigned to Israel, after France.<sup>27</sup> Twinning of cities has been equally active, as have trade union, political party and political foundation contacts. Although cultural relations evolved much more slowly than other areas, they have become pervasive in all fields of the arts and now include joint German–Israeli writers' conferences, with common volumes in Hebrew and German, and contentious discussions.<sup>28</sup>

The Franco–German institutional relationship parallels the German–Israeli in many ways, but is much more extensive. Its magnitude, indeed, has put it almost beyond description; but the French ambassador to the United States, François Bujon de l'Estang, admirably etched the contours at Harvard University in April 1997:

On the bilateral side, the Franco–German relationship has reached an unmatched level of intensity. The institutional mechanisms provided for by the Elysée treaty and supplemented in 1988 have created a structure of constant dialogue through semestrial meetings of Heads of State, foreign and technical ministers' consultations as well as joint councils in a number of fields from defense and security to education to economy and finance. This rapprochement is not however limited to the government. Polls show that Germany is considered to be France's 'best friend' by the population. The societies of both countries also partake to a constant flux of exchange: over 1800 towns are concerned by twin-cities programs, more than five million youth have been involved in various student programs. The existence of a jointly operated TV network—called ARTE—is but another example. In the trade field, each country is the other's most important partner.<sup>29</sup>

Equally intensive links have flourished in intellectual circles, often suffused with contention; in cultural affairs (a joint High Council for Culture was created in 1988); in ecology and in science and technology; and in the broad field of education and public affairs (as witness the Deutsch–Französisches Institut in Ludwigsburg and its French counterpart in Paris; the Deutsches Historisches

<sup>27</sup> For details see Hermann Sieben, *Jugend und Jugendarbeit in Israel. Eine Handreichung für den deutsch–israelischen Jugendaustausch* (Bonn: Internationaler Jugendaustausch- und Besucherdienst der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, 1995).

<sup>28</sup> On cultural relations, see Hilmar Hoffman, 'Building trust: the Goethe Institutes in Israel', in Romberg and Lichtenstein, eds, *Thirty years of diplomatic relations*; Lily Eylon, 'Ein Weg zum gegenseitigen Verständnis. Kulturelle Beziehungen zwischen Deutschland und Israel', in Giordano, ed., *Deutschland und Israel*; Efrat Gal-Ed and Christoph Meckel, eds, *Der Vogel fährt empor als kleiner Rauch* (Göttingen: Steidl Verlag, 1995).

<sup>29</sup> The text of the ambassador's speech is available at: <<http://www.info-france-usa.org/news/statmnts/germany/frstat.html>> (visited on 13 Feb. 1998), p. 2.

<sup>30</sup> See the joint publication of the German and French coordinators: *Wege zur Freundschaft. Chemins de l'Amitié. Adressbuch der deutsch–französische Zusammenarbeit. Répertoire de la coopération franco–allemande*, 5th edn, Paris/Bonn, Nov. 1996; Rainer Barzel, '25 Jahre deutsch–französische Zusammenarbeit', Bericht des Koordinators für die deutsch–französische Zusammenarbeit (Bonn: Presse- und Informationsamt der Bundesregierung, Nov. 1988); 'Vingt-cinq ans de coopération franco–allemande', *Regards sur l'actualité*, no. 139, March 1988; 'Chronologie. Quarante ans de rapport franco–allemands', *Documents*, 1985, no. 4; Jürg Altwegg, 'Von der Erbfeindschaft zur historischen Freundschaft. Zum Stand der deutsch–französischen Beziehungen', *Dokumente* 52: 1, Feb. 1996; Christoph Stein, 'Ökologie und Demokratie. Zum deutsch–französischen Ökologiediskurs', *Dokumente* 51: 3, June 1995; Georges Ponsot, 'L'aménagement du Rhin franco–allemand', *Revue de l'énergie*, no. 410, March–April 1989.

Institut in Paris; and the planned Franco-German university in Saarbrücken).<sup>30</sup> The extensiveness of links prompted the creation in the two foreign ministries of coordinators for Franco-German relations.

The French ambassador spoke at Harvard University in a joint appearance with his German colleague: a first, but also a continuation of bureaucratic and diplomatic efforts aimed at developing and manifesting joint interests, as also expressed in the Franco-German brigade, an effort to stimulate practical bilateral military cooperation that later evolved into the Eurocorps. German ambassador Jürgen Chrobog noted that 'it is also easily possible today that, when attending an international conference, you might find a Frenchman speaking from the German chair.' Indeed, since the 1980s the two foreign ministries have enjoyed an exchange of foreign service officers.

While the level of institutionalization is very high in both cases, it is more extensive and also more formal between France and Germany. The bilateral councils and regularized meetings of leaders and ministers prescribed by the Franco-German Elysée Treaty of 1963, and fully implemented after 1988, have no counterpart in German-Israeli relations.

At a pragmatic level associated with German national interest and the Hallstein Doctrine, which obligated West Germany to curtail or refuse diplomatic ties to governments that formally acknowledged the East German regime, the Federal Republic did not wish to publicize the intensity and preferential nature of the relationship with Israel for fear of provoking Arab states into recognition of the German Democratic Republic. Israel also shied away from formalizing relations, especially, for moral reasons, in the cultural arena so deeply imbued with history; there is still no formal cultural treaty, and it took until 1989 to conclude the first official agreements on cultural exchange (for language, education, information exchange, performing arts, sport and youth). By contrast, Franco-German cultural relations have been relatively unfettered (beyond the sometimes cantankerous, but relatively normal intellectual disagreements), and the first cultural agreement was signed in 1954. Israel's hesitation about formalization is also attributable in part to an element of pragmatism in areas like defence, where quiet and unobtrusive contact guaranteed weapons from Germany.

### *International context*

Much of the institutional character of Franco-German relations is enmeshed in the duo's role in the European Union, a domain that clearly differentiates the Franco-German case from the German-Israeli. France and Germany together have continued to propel European integration, despite significant differences in the recent past over enlargement, institutional reform, the EMU stability pact and an employment chapter for the Amsterdam Treaty.

The EU is a central focus for Israel in economic terms, and increasingly also in the political realm. In the early 1950s Ben Gurion predicted both the growth

of the European Community and Germany's role in it, adding these factors to his reasons for fostering ties with Germany. Germany has been Israel's main interlocutor and benefactor within the EU: promoting Israel's 1960s membership application (which foundered on French opposition); limiting the language of the 1980 Venice Initiative (calling for the PLO to be 'associated' with the Middle East peace process); sponsoring Israel's economic agreements with the EU, including the 1975 free trade agreement, the 1995 association agreement, and the 1996 scientific and technical cooperation agreement; and pushing for a special Israeli status on the heels of the 1994 European Council in Essen. Nonetheless, Israel's non-membership of the EU imposes limits on its relationship with Germany. Since the early 1970s, the profound disagreements between France and Israel over the way to achieve peace in the Middle East have rendered the EU a major site of tension in Germany's relations with the two countries.

In both the French and Israeli cases, the role of the United States was significant in urging the initial changes of relations in the 1950s, but it continued thereafter more strongly for the German–Israeli connection, for example in the military arena. The Cold War, too, made it necessary to seek reliable partnerships such as those France and Israel could help build; but it also limited the German–Israeli relationship, for Germany's pursuit of the Hallstein Doctrine precluded diplomatic relations with Israel until 1965.

### *Leadership*

At critical junctures in Franco–German and German–Israeli relations, political leaders have skilfully guided the enterprises through substantial domestic or bilateral challenges. The positive influence of guidance has been greatest when political leaders on both sides have operated in harmony, for example with Robert Schuman and Konrad Adenauer, Charles de Gaulle and Konrad Adenauer, Helmut Schmidt and Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, Helmut Kohl and François Mitterrand; and with Konrad Adenauer and David Ben Gurion, Shimon Peres and Franz-Josef Strauss, Willy Brandt and Golda Meir, Shimon Peres and Helmut Kohl. Conversely, difficulties in relationships have been exacerbated when leaders exhibit personal antipathy, for example between Willy Brandt and Georges Pompidou, or between Menachem Begin and Helmut Schmidt. Political leadership has probably worked most consistently in the Franco–German case, where regular encounters of top officials are built into the relationship via the Elysée Treaty.

### *Authentication of reconciliation*

Germany's relations with France and with Israel have hardly been uniformly harmonious. The strength of the relationship was tested on a variety of occasions before 1989; but survived. In the Franco–German case, there were often 'crises':

over the 'open chair' in the EEC in the mid-1960s, over European monetary policy in the 1970s, and over the US and NATO in the 1980s. For Germany and Israel, crisis has been just as regular: German scientists working in Egypt in the 1960s, EEC 'evenhandedness' over the Yom Kippur War in the 1970s, the aborted proposal to sell Leopard tanks to Saudi Arabia in the 1980s. German unification presented a major challenge for France, as it did for Israel, and in both cases there was official wavering (Mitterrand's visit to East Germany; Shamir's remarks about a 'fourth Reich'). Nonetheless, by the summer of 1990 both France and Israel had come to support German unification, in part responding to the way Germany and its partners handled the process.<sup>31</sup> For Israel, a greater, but related, test was the Gulf War; and again, tensions in relations gradually eased.

Public opinion concerning Germany in France and Israel has revealed both sympathy and antipathy. In October 1990, only 37 per cent of those surveyed in a SOFRES poll in France rejoiced about unification, although the figure reached 55 per cent in the 18–25 age bracket.<sup>32</sup> In Israel, a survey conducted in 1991—at the time of the Gulf War—by the Centre for German History at the Hebrew University revealed that only 55 per cent subscribed to the view that contemporary Germany is different from the Germany of the past (the figure had been 63 per cent in 1990 and 64 per cent in 1982).<sup>33</sup> These snapshots provide some indication of attitudes, but a more accurate gauge of feelings is the public's involvement in the kinds of bilateral institutions indicated above, where affinity is translated into commitment. At the end of the 1990s, those institutions continue to thrive, and to attract younger generations.

Germany's reconciliation with France and with Israel has been shaped by history, institutions, leadership and context, but in different forms and to different degrees. Reconciliation with France is more pragmatic and straightforward; easier, but perhaps less deep in the quality of societal and governmental interaction than in the German–Israeli example where the moral, psychological and political hurdles are higher.

### **Relations with Poland and the Czech Republic**

The Cold War propelled Germany's ties with France and Israel (although at different rates); it impeded Germany's relations with Poland and Czechoslovakia (although not uniformly). Before 1989, societal actors and political leaders were able to puncture German–Polish barriers in a manner unimaginable in the German–Czech case, thereby providing a platform for the rapid institutionalization of German–Polish relations with the end of the Cold War. Different interpretations of history galvanized political opposition to the bilateral relationship in

<sup>31</sup> See Amnon Neustadt, 'Israelische Reaktionen auf die Entwicklung in Deutschland', *Europa-Archiv*, series 11, 1990. For French reactions see the special articles in *Le Monde*, 3, 4 Oct. 1990.

<sup>32</sup> SOFRES, *L'état de l'opinion 1991* (Paris: Seuil, 1991).

<sup>33</sup> Moshe Zimmermann, 'Die Folgen des Holocaust für die israelische Gesellschaft', *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, B 1–2/92, 3 Jan. 1992.

Germany and the Czech Republic after 1989, rendering institutionalization more difficult; but it was nevertheless made possible by courageous political and societal initiatives for change.<sup>34</sup>

### *History*

*The past as stimulus* As with France and Israel, the motives for Germany's pursuit of reconciliation in the East have been both moral and pragmatic, a duality existing before 1989 in the Polish case, but eluding integration.<sup>35</sup> There is a German moral objective of engendering trust in the East, and a feeling of belonging with the West. In a speech delivered in Poland on 9 November 1989, Kohl remarked that the past should not be repressed, but should provide lessons in order to shape a peaceful European future.<sup>36</sup> And on the occasion of the 50th anniversary in 1994 of the Warsaw uprising, President Herzog expressed eternal shame, and requested forgiveness. Regarding the Czech Republic, President Herzog recognized in his April 1997 speech in Prague: '[The war] is a bitter legacy but it cannot be evaded. Today we Germans accept the consequent historical responsibility [which] involves ensuring that such a policy as the Munich Agreement and the...occupation of Czechoslovakia never recurs.'<sup>37</sup>

Czech and Polish leaders like Havel and Bartoszewski have called on Germany's moral obligation emanating from the past, but have also registered regret at the fate of Germans expelled from Poland and Czechoslovakia after the war.<sup>38</sup> As Czech President, Vaclav Havel played a key moral role in opening up relations, for example, in his responses to the Sudeten German leadership on issues of compensation and restitution, right of return, and minority rights; in his visits to Germany starting in January 1990; and in his interaction with President

<sup>34</sup> On German–Czech relations, see Robert Streibel, ed., *Flucht und Vertreibung. Zwischen Aufrechnung und Verdrängung* (Vienna: Picus, 1994); Detlef Brandes et al., *Tschechen, Slowaken und Deutsche. Nachbarn in Europa* (Niedersächsische Landeszentrale für politische Bildung, 1995); Vladimir Handl, 'Germany in central Europe: Czech perceptions' (Prague: Institute of International Relations, Feb. 1995); Steve Kettle, 'Czechs and Germans still at odds', *Transition*, 2: 3, 9 Feb. 1996; Deutsche Welle, 'Die Kunst des Möglichen' —Deutsch-tschechische Deklaration lässt viele Fragen offen', *Dokumentation*, March 1997; Lubos Palata, 'Unsettled scores: the Sudeten issue continues to play a role in German–Czech relations', *Transition* 5: 11, Nov. 1998; 'Deutsche und Tschechen. Widersprüchliche Versöhnung', *WeltTrends*, no. 19, summer 1998; 'Deutschland und Tschechien. Für eine gemeinsame Zukunft in Europa', *Eichholz Brief*, 35: 4, 1998.

On German–Polish relations, see Hajnicz, *Polens Wende*; Friedbert Pflüger and Winfried Lipscher, *Feinde werden Freunde* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1993); Deutsche Gesellschaft für Auswärtige Politik, 'VII. Deutsch–Polnisches Forum: Deutschland und Polen im veränderten Europa', *Arbeitspapiere zur internationalen Politik*, 75, 1993; Horst Teltschik, 'The Federal Republic and Poland: a difficult partnership in the heart of Europe', *Aussenpolitik*, 41: 1, 1990; Elizabeth Pond, 'A historic reconciliation with Poland', *Transition* 2: 3, 9 Feb. 1996; Dieter Bingen, 'Helmut Kohls Polenpolitik', *Die Politische Meinung*, no. 349, Dec. 1998.

<sup>35</sup> Dieter Bingen, 'Bilanz deutscher Politik gegenüber Polen 1949 bis 1997', *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, B53/97, 26 Dec. 1997, pp. 8–9.

<sup>36</sup> Helmut Kohl, address at a dinner given at the Palais des Ministerrates, Warsaw, 9 Nov. 1989, *Bulletin*, Presse- und Informationsamt der Bundesregierung, no. 128, 16 Nov. 1989, pp. 1085–8.

<sup>37</sup> Roman Herzog, 'Versöhnung und Verständigung, Vertrauen und gute Nachbarschaft', address by the Federal Chancellor in Warsaw, *Bulletin*, Presse- und Informationsamt der Bundesregierung, no. 72, 3 Aug. 1994, p. 677; for the Prague speech, see *Bulletin*, no. 35, 7 May 1997, p. 371.

<sup>38</sup> See the speeches by President Havel, Charles University Prague, 17 Feb. 1995, and Foreign Minister Bartoszewski, Bundestag, 28 April 1995, reprinted in 'Botschafter der Aussöhnung'.



von Weizsäcker, who also advanced moral arguments.

Again as in the French and Israeli cases, official statements matched societal pressure. The churches in Germany, Poland and the Czech Republic have played an active role in urging reconciliation, with the Polish church distinguishing itself from its Czech counterpart in taking early action during the Cold War, and a prominent role in society before and after 1989. As early as 1965, Polish bishops attempted to unlock relations by asking forgiveness for acts during the expulsion, and the Evangelical Church in Germany issued a memorandum on the border question; by 1968 the Bensberg circle of Catholic intellectuals were employing the language of reconciliation.<sup>39</sup> In December 1995, Polish Primate Jozef Glemp and Karl Lehman, the head of the German bishops' conference, jointly reiterated the 1965 positions.

Cardinal Tomasek's characterization in January 1990 of Czech behaviour during the expulsion as a 'stain on our national honour' and call for friendship prompted a declaration of the German bishops' conference two months later on moral obligation and forgiveness.<sup>40</sup> The Catholic Ackermann Community (Ackermann-Gemeinde) of Sudeten Germans, founded in the late 1940s, was committed to reconciliation early on, but could not mount full-scale representative discussions with Czech religious leaders and intellectuals until after 1989, when such contacts were undertaken together with the Czech Bernard Bolzano Society. On the Protestant side there was an important exchange of letters which began with the November 1995 Czech missive on 'Reflections on the Problem of Sudeten German Migration', followed by the German Evangelical Church's November 1996 'Reconciliation between Czechs and Germans'.

Early initiatives in Poland and Germany went well beyond religious leaders. The German efforts of Ernst Majonica, Carlo Schmid, Karl Dedecius and Berthold Beitz were undertaken outside the church, as was the work of Leopold Tyrmand, Stanislaw Stomma, Andrzej Szypiorski, and most notably, Wladyslaw Bartoszewski and Jan Jozef Lipski, both opponents of the Third Reich and of communism in Poland. In both countries, however, ideology and the Cold War prevailed, and it was only a decade after the signing of the 1970 German-Polish treaty as part of Ostpolitik, and Willy Brandt's symbolic gesture of atonement at the Warsaw ghetto memorial, that societal contacts took shape. Nonetheless, the contacts were broader and more intensive than those between the Czech Republic and Germany, in part due to the limited appeal of Charta 77 in Czechoslovakia compared with Solidarity in Poland, and the hard-line position of Czechoslovakia in the Soviet bloc after the Prague Spring compared to the more porous Poland. The coolness of German-Czechoslovak relations did not prevent the 1973 treaty, but it did keep societal contact to a minimum. Thus,

<sup>39</sup> For the texts of these initiatives, see Hans-Adolf Jacobsen and Mieczyslaw Tomala, *Bonn-Warschau, 1945-1991* (Cologne: Verlag Wissenschaft und Politik, 1992).

<sup>40</sup> For the texts, see 'Worte der Versöhnung', Sekretariat der Deutschen Bischofskonferenz, Bonn, September 1990.

when Havel and Jiri Dienstbier repeated after 1989 the positive arguments concerning Germany from their Charta 77 days, the appeals resonated far less than the moral arguments of Foreign Minister Wladyslaw Bartoszewski.<sup>41</sup>

*Acknowledging grievances* Both the Czech and the Polish cases highlight the issues of expulsion/movement of population after the Second World War; responsibility; material claims; the long-neglected question of compensation for victims of Nazism; and minority rights. A major difference is the early attempt to confront one aspect of the issue in the Polish case: the 1975 agreement permitting 120,000 ethnic Germans to migrate in exchange for DM1 billion in credits and DM1.3 billion to compensate for Polish social security payments during the Nazi occupation.

The process has been easier in the German–Polish than in the German–Czech case, though not without false steps. The 1991 German–Polish Treaty on Good Neighbourship and Friendly Cooperation recognized the suffering through history, but also retrieved positive, cooperative elements as a way to fashion a new future of reconciliation and understanding in a redesigned Europe, including Polish membership of the EU. Leaning on the Franco-German model, the treaty provided for institutional connections and fora in fields ranging from economics to security, culture, the environment, parliaments, education, cross-border activities, science and technology, and youth exchange. The creation in October 1991, with a German government contribution of DM500 million, of a foundation—named ‘reconciliation’ (Aussöhnung)—to aid victims of Nazism helped ease Polish frustration over compensation, but disputed issues have remained for Jewish and non-Jewish victims alike. The February 1999 announcement by Chancellor Schröder of a ‘Remembrance, Responsibility and the Future’ fund, financed by German industry and motivated apparently by moral remorse, promises progress on compensation to victims of slave and forced labour in Poland (as well as in Israel and the Czech Republic). However, Schröder’s emphasis on the highly pragmatic rationale of countering American class-action suits and stopping ‘the campaign against German industry and our country’ raised new concerns on the part of the victims.<sup>42</sup>

Polish Foreign Minister Skubiszewski’s articulation in 1991 of a mutual ‘community of interest’ (*Interessengemeinschaft*), with EU membership as its centrepiece,

<sup>41</sup> On German–Polish contacts before 1989, see Waldemar Kuwaczka, *Entspannung von Unten. Möglichkeiten und Grenzen des deutsch–polnischen Dialogs* (Stuttgart: Burg, 1988); Bingen, ‘Bilanz deutscher Politik gegenüber Polen’, p. 5; Włodzimierz Borodziej, ‘Polen und Deutschland seit 1945’, *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, B53/97, 26 Dec. 1997, pp. 14–15. For the Havel and Dienstbier positions before 1989, see Andreas Götze, ‘Verständnisprobleme auf dem Weg zur Partnerschaft nach 1989’, in Brandes, *et al.*, *Tschechen, Slowaken und Deutsche*, p. 89.

<sup>42</sup> See Hajnicz, *Polens Wende*, pp. 185–9. On the issue of compensation to Jewish victims in Central Europe, see Andrew Baker, ‘Unfinished business: compensation and restitution for Holocaust survivors’, The American Jewish Committee, New York, 1997. On forced and slave labour, see Edmund L. Andrews and Barry Meier, ‘Germans plan to avoid suits over Nazi-era labor’, *New York Times*, international edn, 14 Dec. 1998. On the new fund, see Roger Cohen, ‘Citing “campaign” against Germany, Chancellor announces fund for victims of Nazis’, *New York Times*, 17 Feb. 1999.

struck a chord in Germany, and illuminated the pragmatic motives of Bonn and Warsaw.<sup>43</sup> Both Poles and Czechs have a pragmatic desire for security, economic prosperity and modernization, as well as a psychological need to be ensconced in the West and compensated for historical exclusion; but Czech pragmatism evolved no formula, and was pierced by moral claims.<sup>44</sup> Germany hopes that a strategy of democracy and markets, linked to its championship of Polish and Czech membership of the EU and NATO, will bring stability in the East.<sup>45</sup>

The Czech perception of a need to cloak relations with Germany in history has been reinforced by a widespread German attitude that Czechs suffered less than Poles at German hands during the Third Reich. Connected to this perspective was the historical relegation of Czechs to the category of ethnic minority rather than nation, a status acknowledged, albeit grudgingly, in the case of the Poles. The sense of being second-class in German eyes was reconfirmed for Czechs when the Sudeten German Expellee Association (Sudetendeutsche Landsmannschaft) linked Czech EU membership to the resolution of outstanding claims, and found voice within the CSU.<sup>46</sup> The Sudeten Germans are geographically more concentrated than the Silesians, East Prussians and Pomeranians, and enjoy a well-focused relationship with the CSU. Moreover, the German minority in Poland has been sizeable, stimulating societal contact with Germany long before 1989, whereas the German minority is numerically small in the Czech case.

The formal German–Czech minuet towards understanding has been more clumsy and painful than the relatively accomplished German–Polish sequence of movements. The February 1992 German–Czechoslovak ‘Treaty on Good Neighbourship and Friendly Cooperation’ did not equal the Polish equivalent in positive impact. Crafting a German–Czech Declaration on Mutual Relations and Future Developments to address the shortcomings of the 1992 accord took five years, as a result of Chancellor Kohl’s sporadic interest, pressure from the Sudeten Germans, including the equation of German and Czech victims, and bitter debate in the Czech Republic. The resulting declaration gingerly addressed the topic of reconciliation, and offered a statement of regret on both sides for historical wrongs, with an additional German acknowledgement that its actions initiated an historical process culminating in expulsion and forced movement.

The declaration reconfirmed Germany’s commitment to Czech EU and

<sup>43</sup> See Roland Freudenstein, *International Affairs* 74:1, 1998, p. 53; Hans-Werner Rautenberg, ‘Die Wahrnehmung von Flucht und Vertreibung in der deutschen Nachkriegsgeschichte bis heute’, *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, B53/97, 26 Dec. 1997, p. 35.

<sup>44</sup> Vladimir Handl, ‘The Czech Republic in search of a home’, *WIRE* 3: 2, June 1995 (Foreign Policy Research Institute, Philadelphia); Bingen, ‘Bilanz deutscher Politik gegenüber Polen’, p. 49.

<sup>45</sup> See Hans-Friedrich von Plötz, ‘Überlegungen zur Osterweiterung der Europäischen Union, July 9, 1997’, *Bulletin*, no. 64, Bonn, 31 July 1997; Klaus Kinkel, ‘Vorbereitung der Europäischen Union auf die Osterweiterung, 28 August 1996’, *Bulletin*, no. 68, Bonn, 3 Sept. 1996; Helmut Kohl, speech at a reception for the diplomatic corps, Bonn, 4 Dec. 1996, *Statements and Speeches*, vol. 19, no. 15 (New York: German Information Centre).

<sup>46</sup> The linkage was made in Bavaria and in the European Parliament. See Kettle, ‘Czechs and Germans still at odds’, p. 24.

NATO membership, referred to minority rights, and created a jointly financed German–Czech Future Fund for care of the elderly, youth exchange, renovation of memorials and cemeteries, public fora, scientific research, ecological projects and cross-border activities. Sudeten German demands for rescission of the Benes Decrees (exonerating those involved in expulsion and confiscation of property), and Czech hopes that the German government would annul German property and restitution claims against the Czech Republic, were dashed. Sudeten German opposition to the declaration has run high, although younger leaders, like Hartmut Koschyk, favour a more constructive approach.<sup>47</sup>

History clearly matters to Poles, as reflected in the ill-natured exchange between the Bundestag and the Sejm in 1998 over the right of resettlement of German expellees, the negotiations over looted cultural possessions, and the Polish government's support of forced labour claims. However, the legal resolution of the Oder–Neisse border and the pull of contemporary material interests in the new Europe act as powerful barriers to the relationship with Germany becoming mired in the past. For the Czechs, history may be more indelible, especially given the identification of the Czech Republic until the 1997 declaration as the only country whose victims of Nazism had never received any payment from Germany. The SPD's foreign policy spokesman has signalled the new government's willingness to remove the open historical questions between the two governments, but the Czech sense of vulnerability will not dissipate quickly.

*The past as present* Both Poland and the Czech Republic have concerned themselves together with Germany over the writing and interpretation of history. For Poland, this initiative dates from the 1970s, its most prominent element being the joint schoolbook commission, and has had plentiful results. Differences in perception have narrowed, according to German and Polish historians. The German–Czech equivalent has operated systematically only since 1989, and schoolbooks on both sides still suffer from fragmented and selective accounts of history.<sup>48</sup> The joint German–Czech Historians' Commission, created by Foreign Ministers Dienstbier and Genscher in 1990, is a serious attempt at objective historical interpretation: it does not force convergence of views, but nor does it eschew common positions. For example, the Commission

<sup>47</sup> For details of the Sudeten German opposition, including votes in the Bundestag debate on the declaration, see *Deutscher Ostdienst. Informationsdienst des Bundes der Vertriebenen-Vereinigte Landsmannschaften und Landesverbände*, a newsletter of the federation of expellee associations, issues for December 1996 and January and February 1997.

<sup>48</sup> Borodziej, 'Polen und Deutschland seit 1945', p. 17. For details of the German–Polish and German–Czech joint treatment of history, see the contributions of Vaclav Kural, Miroslav Kunstat and Włodzimierz Borodziej to the conference 'Coming to terms with the past, opening up to the future' held at the Institute for German Studies, University of Birmingham, 11–13 Sept. 1998. For the products of the Polish–German effort, see the various publications of the Georg-Eckert-Institut für internationale Schulbuchforschung in Braunschweig. A list of publications from the Joint German–Czech and German–Slovak Commission of Historians is in one of their major works: Institute of International Relations, *A conflictual community, catastrophe, detente: an outline of the portrayal of German–Czech history since the nineteenth century* (Prague, 1996), pp. 43–4.

downgraded significantly the official numbers of German victims from the expulsion. The commission's results and constructive approach of mixing divergence, confrontation and understanding in a common enterprise, however, have not yet filtered through the wider relationship between the two countries.

As was clear in the passage of the German–Czech declaration, and from the limits and opposition to it, history can be powerfully present in the German–Czech case as impediment rather than as incentive. Whereas Polish leaders and public are for the most part unconstrained in using the terms 'reconciliation' and 'normalcy', or hearing them from Germans, Czechs are much less eager.<sup>49</sup> Czech political leaders and scholars tend to avoid the terms because they could imply a symmetry of injustices, and have opted instead for 'good neighbourliness' or 'straightening' (*narovnaní*) of relations.<sup>50</sup> In a May 1995 poll in Poland, 60 per cent of those surveyed thought reconciliation was possible, with 39 per cent disagreeing. In a survey in the same year, only 4 per cent of Czechs surveyed deemed relations with Germany 'very good,' but 56 per cent did want good relations in the future.<sup>51</sup>

Echoing the earlier examples of France and Israel, differences over history have not precluded the institutionalization of relations, but they have shaped the nature, pace and depth of ties at the societal and governmental levels.

### *Institutions*

German–Polish ties, fostered from an earlier date and less dominated by history, are more highly institutionalized than in the Czech case. Building on the 1991 treaty, German–Polish connections cover every conceivable area: the Fund for German–Polish Cooperation, Help for Self-Help (for the German minority in Poland), the German–Polish Economic Promotion Agency (with contact offices in various German and Polish locations), the Committee for Cross-Border Collaboration and the Committee for Interregional Collaboration (with joint projects ranging from renovation of border crossings and of former military installations to land use and sewage plants), the German–Polish Youth Programme, the German–Polish Forum (dating from 1977), the German–Polish Society (with more than 40 regional affiliates), parliamentary groups, German political foundations, research institutes on both sides devoted to the study of the other country or to joint projects, academic exchange (the German Academic Exchange Service opened its Warsaw office in June 1998), school projects and

<sup>49</sup> See e.g. the remarks of Polish Prime Minister Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz, in Centre for Strategic and International Studies, 'America and Europe: a time for unity, a time for vision', proceedings of conference held at Palais d'Egmont, Brussels, 21–2 Feb. 1997, p. 111.

<sup>50</sup> President Vaclav Havel is an exception, for example in his speech at Charles University in Prague on 17 Feb. 1995, where he referred to 'reconciliation' as well as 'good neighbourship'. For a more typical view, see then Prime Minister Klaus's response of 1 April 1995, in *Lidove Noviny*, to the German and Czech bishops' call for reconciliation.

<sup>51</sup> See Ivan Gabal, 'Changing Czech attitudes towards Germany', and Jakub Karpinski, 'In the new Europe, Poland is better as a partner than an enemy', *Transition* 2: 3, 9 Feb. 1996.

language programmes, and an early cultural agreement in July 1997.

For Germany and the Czech Republic, movement has proceeded—for example, in church dialogue, youth exchange, language education, the clean-up of the River Elbe, other cross-border initiatives on the environment with Saxony and Bavaria, a Saxony research centre in Prague, border-crossing improvement, German political foundation activity—but both sides were initially disappointed, especially in the implementation of the Fund for the Future and the composition of the German–Czech Forum for Dialogue. Just as with the historians' commission before it, the forum's membership has been contested, although this time from the Czech side, which did not participate in the first meeting in July 1998 because of the preponderance of Sudeten Germans in the German delegation. Significant progress has been made since autumn 1998, however, as there was full participation in the second dialogue meeting in December 1998; and money has been earmarked by the fund to aid Czech victims of Nazism. Additionally, Jewish victims will receive some compensation as a result of a January 1998 agreement between the German government and the American-based Claims Conference on Material Claims against Germany.<sup>52</sup> In this area, a difference in public approach exists. Czech leaders include in Czech history the Jewish dimension, and refer to a cultural symbiosis that should be recognized or revived in the new relationship with Germany. The Polish leadership has a much more fettered response to its Jewish citizens, either of neglect or indifference or negativism.

### *International context*

The Cold War structure affected German–Polish and German–Czech relations differently; so have its end and aftermath. In a manner reminiscent of the Franco–German experience in the early 1950s, German final acceptance of the Polish border was registered within the multilateral context of the 1990 'Two Plus Four' Agreement, which significantly sets Poland apart from the Czech case. Although recognition of the Oder–Neisse line was a closely argued point, with Kohl appearing to waver in the face of domestic pressure, it did not become a stumbling block to a new relationship. Czechoslovakia did not insist on participation in the 'Two Plus Four' framework because it believed bilateral resolution of outstanding issues was imminent and four-power reluctance was firm, conclusions some Czech officials came to regret.<sup>53</sup>

The multilateral EU framework is also perceived differently in the two cases. While Germany has demonstrated commitment to Czech membership of the EU, the Czech media and some politicians have discerned a rhetorical priority given to Poland's accession.<sup>54</sup> The fear points up the issue of size: as a larger east European country, Poland feels less overwhelmed physically than the smaller

<sup>52</sup> On the 'forgotten victims', see Jiri Sitler, 'The forgotten victims', *Transition* 5: 11, 1998.

<sup>53</sup> See Götze, 'Verständnisprobleme auf dem Weg zur Partnerschaft', p. 90; Palata, 'Unsettled scores'.

<sup>54</sup> Handl, 'Germany in central Europe', pp. 4, 18.

Czech Republic (already reduced by the departure of Slovakia).

The EU has supported cross-border efforts in both cases, including the Europa University in Viadrina; the Euregio Neisse linking Germany, Poland and the Czech Republic; and the Euregios Eger, Elbe and Böhmerwald. However, EU links are reinforced in another multilateral structure unique to German–Polish relations: the Weimar Triangle, created in 1991 among Germany, France and Poland, which connects policy and political leaders.<sup>55</sup>

### *Leadership*

In both the Polish and the Czech cases, political leadership has stepped forward to push relations on to new levels, as noted above; yet there has been greater consistency of leadership initiatives on each side in the Polish example (from the November 1989 reconciliation gesture of Kohl and Mazowiecki in Kreisau/Krzyzowa to Buzek's October 1998 award to Kohl of Poland's highest honour), more connection between leaders (crossing party lines), and less political opposition to relations. Neither Kohl nor Klaus steered the relationship when confronted by an impasse, as in January 1996. Despite the political opposition from various quarters in the Czech Republic and from the CSU in Germany, party links did make a positive difference, both those between the German and Czech Social Democrats (such as Günter Verheugen and Milos Zeman), and between Liberals (such as Kinkel and Dienstbier). Green representatives also played a major role, both publicly by Antje Vollmer, and privately by Milan Horacek (a Czech dissident who had become a Green Bundestag deputy in Germany, and later returned to Prague, first as an adviser to Havel, then as director of the Heinrich-Böll Foundation).

As in the Franco-German case, the regularity of German–Polish meetings may account for the familiarity of the country's leaders. Poland is one of seven countries, and the only one in central and eastern Europe, with which Germany meets at the highest political level annually (France is the eighth country, with biannual meetings).<sup>56</sup> Moreover, since February 1998 the Weimar Triangle has expanded from meetings of ministers and parliamentarians to heads of state and government.

### *The test of reconciliation*

The German–Polish and German–Czech relationships inevitably will grow on the heels of Czech and Polish membership in NATO. However, the real test of

<sup>55</sup> For details, see Patricia Davis, 'Marbled diplomacy against a checkered past: constructing bridges between Germany and Poland', in Carl Lankowski and Michael Kreile, eds, *Germany in the shaping of the new Europe: architect, model, bridge* (New York: Berghahn, forthcoming 1999); and Davis, 'The need for reconciliation and the desire for community', *Periphery: Journal of Polish Affairs* 3: 1–2, 1997.

<sup>56</sup> Lisette Andreae and Karl Kaiser, 'Die "Aussenpolitik" der Fachministerien', in Wolf-Dieter Eberwein and Karl Kaiser, eds, *Deutschlands neue Aussenpolitik*, vol. 4: *Institutionen und Ressourcen* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1998), p. 44.



the mutual commitment by Germany, Poland, and the Czech Republic to a new framework of relations will be the EU's eastern enlargement project. The multilateral framework holds the potential for competitive relations of reconciliation (as between Germany's relations with France and with Israel over Middle East peace), yet the larger, formal context can force the parties to address one another and act as partners.

## **Conclusion**

The preceding analysis has sought to illuminate different types of reconciliation. It has shown that relations of reconciliation are marked by the imprint of history, by the fact of new bilateral institutions reflecting a cooperative framework, by the presence of visionary leadership, and by the form of international setting in which they emerge. Yet the four cases reveal different admixtures of past and present, of morality and pragmatism.

Although Germany's relations with France and with Israel developed simultaneously in the shadow of the Cold War, and in the context of a primary German need for international rehabilitation, they took different paths. Cocooned within the EU, the Franco-German case is more visible and more formally institutionalized. Historical consciousness has been much more rooted in the German-Israeli relationship than in the morally clouded Franco-German partnership. Political opposition, connected to history in Israel and divorced from the past in Germany, has been more prevalent and vocal than in the Franco-German relationship, but visionary leadership combined with vigorous societal overtures has stunted its effect.

Similarly, the official rhetoric of German commitment to reconciliation with Poland and the Czech Republic has occurred simultaneously in the post-Cold War period. Yet the two post-1989 examples display marked differences in reality, with the German-Polish case being more pragmatic, public and institutionalized, and less fettered by history, in part due to its earlier start in defiance of Cold War strictures.

In the German-Israeli case, the absence of fanfare in relations was connected historically to perceived international pressure, namely the Arab threat of recognizing the GDR, and more recently to the desire to maintain good relations with the Arab world. In the German-Czech case, the obstacle to showcasing the reconciliation framework has been the perceived domestic influence of the Sudeten Germans. As in the French case, institutionalized reconciliation between Germany and Poland has proceeded consciously in the multilateral EU framework, whose presence is not as robust in German-Czech relations, and is more diluted for the non-member Israel.

The pressure of opposition to the relationship in the German-Israeli and German-Czech cases has made the German task of championing and heralding relations more difficult, yet the quality of initiatives may be more fundamental as a result. In the German-Polish and Franco-German pairs, overtures by leaders

have been more straightforward and less contested. Unilateral and bilateral leadership initiatives have been oiled in the French and Polish cases through the establishment of regular meetings.

Given German perceptions of a hierarchy of victims and suffering at the hands of the Third Reich in which Jews and Poles were on the highest rung, one might have predicted that Israel and Poland would fall into the same category of reconciliation. However, the interactive and reciprocal nature of reconciliation places them in different locations, for Poles have been more sanguine about the past than Israelis, and thus belong in the same pragmatic category as the French. History is not absent from Franco–German and German–Polish relations, but it presses less heavily and less obtrusively than in the other two cases. From the perspective of Israelis and Czechs, their relations with Germany are deeply marked by history and by issues of moral obligation.

The Social Democratic–Green government has accorded priority to all four reconciliations, with France, Israel, Poland and the Czech Republic. In order to maintain the vitality of these central bilateral partnerships, it must recognize the different types of reconciliation, and the long-term, non-linear nature of the process. This will require moral leadership, as well as a clear identification of interests, and a belief in history and institutions.

Essentially, history has not interfered with the conduct of relations with France and with Poland, but it would be myopic to neglect its potential for emerging and complicating bilateral ties. And even if history is painful and demanding in relations with Israel and the Czech Republic, particularly between societal actors, this should not be read as a sign of limited progress, but rather as a window on to a more profound and lasting encounter with the past and a guide to the future.

Institutions at some point take on a life of their own, yet domestic and international pressure will continue to affect their visibility. Care must be taken that institutions continue to reflect the new ideas and values of reconciliation, that they provide a cooperative forum, yet facilitate the identification and management of diversity, for as Willy Brandt noted decades ago: ‘Friendship does not connote a neglect of one’s own interests or a lack of candour with others.’<sup>57</sup>

The multilateral EU framework will grow in importance, so Germany will need to balance its relations of reconciliation with France, Poland and the Czech Republic in that arena, and be mindful of the built-in tension between its commitment to European integration and its obligation to Israel. Recognition of variety and complexity in the Federal Republic’s own relations of reconciliation could constitute a German contribution to the larger international puzzle of how to initiate and sustain structured peace.

<sup>57</sup> Brant, *People and politics*, p. 129.