

DEUTSCH-BRITISCHE GESELLSCHAFT

61st Young Königswinter Conference

Wednesday 9th June – Monday 14th June 2021, online

Conference Report



A new beginning: the UK-German partnership in uncharted waters

1. Global Britain, the EU and Germany in a world of disorder
2. Climate change and post-Covid economic recovery
3. Disintegrating societies

Programme

Organiser

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Date

9 - 14 June 2021

TOPICS

1. Global Britain, the EU and Germany in a world of disorder
2. Climate and post-Covid economic recovery
3. Disintegrating societies

Wednesday, 9 June 2021

- 10:00 (GMT+2) **Opening of the conference**
by
HANS-HENNING HORSTMANN, Ambassador ret.
Deutsch-Britische Gesellschaft e.V.
- 10:05 – 11:00 Round of Introductions
- 11:00 – 12:00 **Keynote**
H.E. AMBASSADOR JILL GALLARD, CMG, British Embassy Berlin
- Q&A
- Lunch Break
- 14:00 – 15:30 **Lecture with regard to the topic of group I**
- Speakers:
THE RT HON SIR DAVID LIDINGTON, Royal United Services Institute
DR CLAUDIA MAJOR, German Institute for International and Security Affairs
- Q&A
- 15.30 – open end Possibility to discuss study group topics among the groups (Breakout rooms)

Thursday, 10 June 2021

- 10:00 – 11:30 (GMT+2) **Lecture with regard to the topic of group II**
- Speaker:
PHILIPP LITZ, Agora Energiewende
- Q&A
- 14:00 – 15:30 **The future of British/German Youth Exchange; a consultation on real options with real outcomes presented by British in Germany e.V board members:**
DANIEL TETLOW AND AMANDA DIEL
- Rest of day: free for group work (time to be determined by groups themselves)

Friday, 11 June 2021

10:00 – 11:30 (GMT+2) **Lecture with regard to the topic of group III**

Speakers:

PROF ANDREAS BUSCH, Universität Göttingen

BARONESS (KISHWER) FALKNER OF MARGRAVINE, Equality and Human Rights Commission

Q&A

Rest of day: free for group work (time to be determined by groups themselves)

Saturday, 12 June 2021 – Sunday 13 June 2021

Time for group work, allocation etc up to participants (no coordination by DBG, but we can provide support)

Monday, 14 June 2021

14:00 (GMT+2) Keynote
STATE SECRETARY MIGUEL BERGER, Federal Foreign Office
Q&A

15:00 – 18:00 Presentation of working group results
Plenary session with special guests

With breaks in between

18:00 Digital after hour
Presentation of the Young Königswinter Alumni e.V.

End of Conference

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GROUP



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Topics for the 61st Young Königswinter Conference 2021

Group 1: Global Britain, the EU and Germany in a world of disorder

A new beginning in the UK-German partnership – concrete projects to maintain and strengthen the bonds?

Future developments in German Federalism and the British Union

Germany and UK: Players or observers in the US-China-Russia competition and global politics?

Group 2: Climate and post-Covid economic recovery

Post-Covid recovery, green recovery – lessons for fighting climate change?

Future of work after the pandemic and in the battle against climate change

The role of international financial institutions, nation states, business and civil society in financing the fight against global hunger, pollution and the pandemic

Group 3: Disintegrating societies

Divisive drivers against integration and inclusion

How to tackle populism, political extremism and misinformation in Germany and the UK?

Means for the political and economic elites to regain credibility and trust in a new era of increasingly digitized communication

Report

Background

The 61st Young Königswinter Conference was held virtually from 9-14 June 2021 and was attended by 42 participants from diverse academic, professional, and personal backgrounds. It took place at a crucial point in time for global politics and the UK-German relationship: The Trade and Cooperation Agreement between the EU and the UK entered into force on 1 May 2021, providing a renewed framework for UK-EU relations, and indeed, the German-British relationship. Global leaders met at the G7 summit in Cornwall for the first time in almost two years, committed to build a fairer, more sustainable future as we recover from the Covid pandemic. The conference took all these aspects into account, focusing on three main topics: (1) Global Britain, the EU and Germany in a world of disorder; (2) climate and post-Covid economic recovery; and (3) disintegrating societies.

Over the course of the 6-day conference, participants split up into smaller groups to work on the three topics. When results were presented on the final day, it transpired that tackling the complex challenges of today's world require bilateral as well as multilateral collaboration. Despite the virtual format, discussions were lively and future-looking, making for a highly interactive and engaging conference.

Wednesday 9th June 2021

Opening of the conference

The conference commenced with opening remarks by the Chairman of the Deutsch-Britische Gesellschaft Hans-Henning Horstmann. He extended a warm welcome to all participants, strengthening that it was truly up to them to shape the conference. The DBG provides the programme and platform, yet the participants and their exchange of ideas are the spirit of Königswinter. He wished everyone fruitful discussions, encouraging participants to be open and frank and seize the opportunity to ask questions. After his welcome address, all delegates briefly introduced themselves.

Keynote

H. E. Ambassador Jill Gallard, CMG
British Embassy Berlin

Ambassador Gallard started out by noting that she had arrived as Ambassador to Berlin at a difficult time last year – at the start of the second Covid lockdown and seven weeks before the end of the Brexit transition period. She has been pleasantly reassured however that, despite those challenges, German partners have repeatedly demonstrated their willingness to continue the strong collaboration with the UK. In her keynote, she stressed the importance of moving on from Brexit and looking forward, as we open a new chapter of British-German relations. She outlined three priorities for the UK-German relationship in the coming years.

Firstly, UK-German collaboration is crucial to tackle global challenges such as the pandemic and global health, and to bring about a step-change in climate change policies. With Germany taking

over the G7 presidency from the UK in 2022, there are obvious benefits of working closely together. The UK's objective for the G7 is to "build back better" from the pandemic, paving the way for a green recovery and demonstrating that the international community can collaborate to safeguard our planet. The Ambassador acknowledged the interrelations between climate action and Covid recovery and welcomed the recent US commitment to play a role in advancing international efforts.

Secondly, she argued that the time is ripe for even more UK-German collaboration in foreign policy. Dominic Raab and Heiko Maas have pointed out shared challenges: Russia, China, defending human rights and acting as a force for good in the world. The Ambassador referred to the recently published Integrated Review, a review by the UK government of security, defence, development and foreign policy, which specifically namechecks the importance of Germany as a partner.

Thirdly, she spoke about the close civil society links between Germany and the UK, noting that many Germans and Britons live and work in the respective other country. In addition, there are more than 500 UK-German town twinning partnerships and strong ties in research and development. The UK and Germany are the second and third largest aid donors and contributors to the WHO as well as the second and third largest contributors to GAVI, which illustrates their shared commitment to support the international community. Finally, Germany had recently welcomed several senior Ministers from the UK – a further testament to close bilateral relations.

Lecture with regard to the topic of group I

The Rt Hon Sir David Lidington

Royal United Services Institute

Sir David Lidington began his lecture with a retrospective view. Looking back to the events in 1989 and 1990 marking the end of the Cold War, he recalled the optimism of the era that many commentators had described as the "end of history". Today however, democratic values and institutions are once again besieged by hostile state and non-state actors. Sir David Lidington argued that it is not an exaggeration to claim that the West and democracies elsewhere in the world are under threat. He identified a lack of strategic thinking, Brexit being one example. Among other factors, global competition creates a range of economic and social challenges. The digitisation of societies and economies shakes up white-collar jobs, overturning assumptions of the nature of careers. New technologies such as AI and machine learning instil a fear of losing out among many citizens. People are getting increasingly concerned, afraid of losing their jobs to either machines or workers in other places of the world. The resulting feeling of deracination is fertile ground for political populism. It drives support for extreme, insurgent parties while citizens lose trust in traditional parties.

Sir David Lidington outlined a set of global challenges, starting out with Russia. The Russian state has acted skilfully and ruthlessly in Syria to stand by its allies, as we have witnessed in Aleppo and elsewhere. In addition, it has managed to subvert nascent democracies in many Eastern countries, intimidating them with military exercises and hybrid warfare, exploiting social media and the cultural influence of the Russian Orthodox Church. However, while Russia is the immediate menace, China is the strategic threat. The country's ambition to achieve global technological dominance, from synthetic biology to autonomous vehicles, poses a major challenge

to the rest of the world. China has set specific milestones for its rise as a global power, most importantly this year's 100th anniversary of the Communist regime and 2049, the 100th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China. To implement its national strategic plan "Made in China 2025", it will harness state power as well as private resources. It has also demonstrated its influence vis-à-vis its neighbours like India. Ultimately, the question is whether the Western world will be able to embrace new technologies, respond to protectionism and avoid dependence from Chinese suppliers.

Lastly, Sir David Lidington offered a few remarks on the US and transatlantic bond. While the UK has been rather enthusiastic about the new US administration, Germany and the EU seem to be more cautious, concerned that it will just be an interlude: Donald Trump has spoken for many, and these feelings have not gone away. President Biden welcomes alliances with international institutions, including the EU, but he has clear expectations, such as for the EU to commit to the 2% NATO spending target and show greater leadership in Africa, the Western Balkans, and the Middle East – after all, these regions are at Europe's doorstep. Addressing the topic of Brexit, Sir David Lidington compared it to an earthquake, the aftershocks of which we are now experiencing. Expressing his optimism, he argued that the UK and the EU continue to share interests, for instance in the Balkans, Eastern Europe, and Africa and have similar views on e.g. Iran, Israel, the Sahel zone and climate change. The UK has focussed its efforts on strengthening bilateral relations as Prime Minister Johnson seems less interested in a strategic relationship with the EU. The E3 will be a helpful format, as well as working with the US on issues in Ukraine and Africa. Sir David Lidington argued that the UK is an effective European pillar of the transatlantic alliance, and that the EU and the UK need a strategic partnership, based on regular meetings and annual summits. Conferences like Young Königswinter contribute a great deal to nurturing this relationship and building trust and understanding.

Thursday 10th June 2021

Lecture with regard to the topic of group II

Philipp Litz

Agora Energiewende

Philipp Litz started out his presentation by contrasting the Covid pandemic with the climate crisis, arguing that while there are certain similarities, the nature of the climate crisis is inherently different. The strategy to fight Covid has been imposing lockdowns, introducing track and trace systems and getting through the situation as best as possible while waiting for efficacious vaccines. In contrast, the climate crisis is much more complex and fundamental. Most importantly, there is no silver bullet to solve it.

The presentation focused on the energy sector as one of the major sources of global emissions. Philipp Litz gave a brief overview of where we stand: The basis for the current climate discussion is the Paris agreement and the 1.5°C target. Alarmingly, we are already recording temperature rises of 1.1 to 1.2°C. To safeguard our planet, we need to effectively achieve net-zero by drastically reducing emissions and further developing technologies such as CCS. On the positive side, many countries have already made pledges to reduce emissions, including big emitters like China, the US and European states, that account for 70% of global CO₂ emissions and GDP.

According to the IEA's Net-Zero Emissions by 2050 Scenario (NZE), CO2 emissions will fall to net-zero in advanced economies around 2045 and globally by 2050. Philipp Litz stressed that there is no technological silver bullet to tackle the challenge. A mix of technological innovations and behavioural changes, for instance in mobility, is the way forward to drive effective transformation and bring the energy sector on a more sustainable path. Many technologies are already available, others are still in an early stadium and more investment is required to make them ready for the market. The electrification of industry and transport as well as developing wind and solar power are key drivers for emissions reduction. The UK and Germany set a good example as they are among the countries with the highest relative share of wind and solar in the G20. Power needs to decarbonise much quicker to reach net-zero targets. Hydrogen will be essential but it is more expensive than direct electrification. It will be of particular importance for shipping and aviation where electrification is much more difficult; thus switching to low-emission fuels is the preferred way to curb emissions. We must not forget that the total energy spending is expected to increase by 75% to 2050 according to the IEA, reflecting population growth. With regard to jobs, new opportunities will arise and create jobs in the clean energy sector. However, they will often require other skillsets than the jobs that will be lost as fossil fuels decline, which might be met with resistance from affected industries. For example, the coal phase-out in Germany was slowed down until a political compromise was reached. In the UK however, there were no strong trade unions striving against strategic decisions which helped speed up the process. For the green energy transition to be successful, investors should focus on renewables and innovative new technologies rather than continuing to pour money into fossil fuels.

At the end of his presentation, Philipp Litz referred to his initial comparison of the Covid pandemic and the climate crisis. He stressed that the crisis response and recovery plans can potentially support the transformation towards more sustainability in a three-stage process: At the relief stage, governments support businesses with cash injections to remedy the effects of the lockdown. In the recovery phase, in which we find ourselves now, they can lay the foundation for reform by encouraging green recovery programmes. The third and final step is achieving real transformation towards more sustainability. In terms of economic prosperity and green transition, there is a double chance and a double risk in recovery packages.

The future of British-German Youth Exchange; a consultation on real options with real outcomes presented by British in Germany e.V. board members Daniel Tetlow and Amanda Diel

Daniel Tetlow and Amanda Diel offered an interactive session on the future of British-German exchange, arguing that we are at critical point in time to make decisions for the future.

In his introductory remarks, Daniel briefly outlined the work of British in Germany. The voluntary organisation was founded in 2017 as a response to the Brexit referendum, representing British citizens living in Germany. British in Germany is now assessing its future role with possible ongoing issues such as life long voting rights, German-British dual citizenship identity and youth exchange. Daniel was co-author in 2020 of a highly reported study by Oxford in Berlin and the Berlin Social Science Center (WZB) entitled 'Brexit, Uncertainty and Migration Decisions'. Qualitative and quantitative research revealed that migration from the UK to EU countries increased by around 30% compared to pre-Brexit numbers. Between 2016 and 2019, UK citizens obtaining an EU member state passport increased by over 500% and by over 2000% in Germany,

meaning that around half of British citizens in Germany are now dual nationals. The study concludes that the "collective uncertainty" triggered by Brexit was and still remains powerful enough to alter migratory behaviour. Further developments include falling trends in language education and exchange programmes. In addition, UK university applications in 2021 show that undergraduate applications from the EU to the UK have significantly dropped. Furthermore, the UK decided to leave Erasmus, which had previously allowed around 16,000 UK students to study in mainland Europe and over 30,000 EU students to study in the UK each year. Against this backdrop, Amanda and Daniel showed an info graphic video by the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung in London ("Why British-German relations matter") to inspire thoughts on how to strengthen understanding between the UK and Germany. Participants were asked to discuss the following three questions in break-out groups:

- What's the biggest draw for British or German young people to participate in exchanges in 2021?
- How have the motivation factors changed in the last 5 years?
- What is required now to support exchange programmes for the next quarter of a century?

After 30 minutes, participants returned to the plenary session, with one spokesperson for each group reporting back. Regarding the first question, delegates agreed that pull factors for heading to the UK and Germany were different. While many Germans are drawn to the UK to hone their English skills and benefit from a top-class UK higher education, UK students choose Germany for a greater variety of reasons including education, Berlin's Tech start up sector and culture and to differentiate their CVs. Germany's high reputation in technical and engineering degrees attracts talent from around the world. Motivation factors it was concluded have indeed changed over the last 5 years, also due to additional preparation with regard to permissions and visa requirements, as well as funding opportunities in light of the pending loss of Erasmus for UK students (2023) and expensive tuition fees in the UK. To promote exchange programmes, participants suggested centrally organised schemes and support for early language education, including incentives to learn German for young Britons. In the labour market, reciprocity must be guaranteed: British and German authorities should work together to ensure educational degrees remain accepted in both countries. Establishing a one-stop shop with key information on exchange opportunities and legal requirements would help facilitate real exchange. One group came up with a concrete idea for a new programme: a work and travel gap year between the UK and Germany. Other suggestions included setting up thematic exchanges, e.g. bringing together activists and interested parties from both countries to rally support for climate topics. Sports diplomacy was also mentioned as an additional approach to support bilateral ties. Taking account of the pandemic situation, delegates noted that whilst Covid had put successful exchange programmes and events on hold, new opportunities have emerged. Although virtual events and meetings are not comparable to physical encounters, they can plant a seed and arouse interest in real-life exchange. Equally, social media is a helpful means to connect people across borders. Finally, one participant invited participants to the 10th British Weekend taking place near Hannover in early July, a cultural and political exchange initiative to foster further exchange and celebrate British-German friendship.

Daniel and Amanda thanked the groups for their discussions and ideas and encouraged everyone to get in touch with further suggestions. Responses from participants will be presented to key

stakeholders and champions of German-UK relations to motivate support and crucially funding for long-term German-UK-EU youth exchange programmes.

Friday 11th June 2021

Lecture with regard to the topic of group III

Professor Andreas Busch
University of Göttingen

Baroness (Kishwer) Falkner of Margravine
Equality and Human Rights Commission

Referring to the title of the session "disintegrating societies", Professor Busch confessed some unease and argued that we must and can prevent disintegration. Firstly, he examined drivers of heterogeneity as causes for disintegration: social change, economic change, and migration/supranational integration. Over the last decades, we have experienced attitudes shifting towards greater equality, as society as a whole has become more liberal. In addition, the economy has changed fundamentally since the days of industrialisation. While technological change has offered greater opportunities to some, it has also led to skills shortages in certain industries and created concerns among workers. The same holds true for the third driver. Migration and supranational integration had contributed to changing and more diverse populations, which also bear chances for some, while for others these trends result in increased insecurity.

The interplay of these drivers and developments affects political mechanisms and challenges modes of organisation and power. For instance, changes in voting habits, election results and party membership illustrate altered political behaviour. The re-distribution of power has led to a professionalisation of the political apparatus with increased detachment from participation among many citizens. Established political organisations like parties and associations become less capable of aggregating preferences, meaning that loud voices have an increased effect on politics, for instance on social media but also through resourceful interest groups. A cultural cleavage is added to the established socio-economic cleavage, as cosmopolitan positions increasingly challenge more traditional, communitarian attitudes. "Affective" polarisation describes the increased importance of social identity, and the mode of political debate is characterised by increased polarisation as well as fake news and hate speech. The perceived or expressed urgency of topics increases tensions further.

In response to the challenges outlined, Professor Busch presented possible solutions to overcome divisions. The welfare state can serve as a mechanism to bridge the socio-economic cleavage by solving distributive conflicts. Whilst democracy needs conflict, destructive conflict can threaten democracy. It is thus crucial to maintain the legitimacy of the system and address the role of ignorance and misinformation. Professor Busch closed his remarks with a powerful statement by the late Jo Cox MP: "We are far more united and have far more in common than that which divides us."

Similar to Professor Busch, Baroness Falkner commented on the title of the session, stating that she preferred “fragmenting societies”, as “disintegrating” sounded too bleak. She commended Professor Busch for his accurate analysis of drivers of heterogeneity. However, she stressed that we have experienced 70 years of growth, prosperity, peace and happiness. We are now becoming more aware of the price of that, taking into consideration the effects on the environment for instance, and realising that we cannot continue to bank on past achievements in the future. She cited Brexit as an example of fragmentation within the UK. The political system had been characterised by stability for many years, with Conservative and Labour being the only relevant parties, when in 2010 general elections had resulted in the first Hung Parliament since the 1970s and a Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition had been formed. Political change had been going on for some time, accelerated by social change. Picking up on Professor Busch’s point of cultural cleavages and affective polarisation, she stated that in her job, she had been trapped in cultural wars, describing the situation in the UK as less extreme than in the US but still palpable. She argued that borders of free speech have to be addressed as the tone of conversation has become increasingly harsh and disgraceful with elements of hate speech. Consequently, she advocated for stronger measures of disclosure and control on social media.

In her view, economic superintegration is the most important factor to consider. Higher levels of connectivity have enormously changed the economic domain and revealed stark contrasts in society. While the resourceful classes have benefitted greatly from the gig economy and the Covid situation, people from lower socio-economic backgrounds have drawn the short straw. During the pandemic, they had to put their lives at risk when going to work while others have enjoyed the benefits of working from home. Existing inequalities have exacerbated during the crisis. Globalisation of the labour market has affected workers in all parts of the world. Companies feel less pressured to attract workers in the country they are based in as back offices can be run from anywhere, possibly in a country with no or low labour standards. As a result, employers offshore jobs and undercut workers in high-wage western economies. Baroness Falkner stressed that transformation is happening on an international level with consequences we have not foreseen.

Monday 14th June 2021

Keynote

State Secretary Miguel Berger
Federal Foreign Office

State Secretary Berger started with two remarks: Firstly, the G7 are back. Secondly, the transatlantic relationship is back. He referred to important events of political significance coinciding with the Young Königswinter Conference: The G7 meeting in Cornwall had just ended and the NATO summit took place while we spoke. In his keynote, he touched upon a range of challenges for the international community.

The Covid pandemic, including discussions around vaccine production and distribution, was a key topic at the G7 meeting. We cannot control the pandemic as long as one country has no vaccine. The numbers in Africa are shocking and reveal the scope of the challenge: A mere 1.4% of Africans have received their first dose, only 0.6% have been fully vaccinated. The production capacity will increase but the announced 5-7 billion doses for 2022 will still not suffice nor will it be easy to distribute vaccines effectively. Many are concerned about new mutations such as the

Delta variant. In the UK, case numbers are on the rise again, despite the efforts in the vaccine rollout. While countries like the US have not exported a single dose, the EU has acted as the pharmacy of the world, exporting 240 million doses – more than used in its own member states.

A difficult balance to strike is the relationship with China. There are obvious differences in values and the West aims to maintain the technological edge to avoid dependence from China. However, we need China to tackle climate change and protect our planet's biodiversity. Closing the door is not an option but we cannot ignore the strategic rivalry for control in the South China Sea, vaccine diplomacy and values. China is a crucial foreign policy issue, not only for Europe but for the US administration, too. Both the EU-UK and the US-EU relationship will depend on collaboration with China and the balancing of political and economic interests. Additional trade problems remain to be resolved, such as the EU-US dispute over aircrafts and tariffs on steel and aluminium. With regard to Russia, Miguel Berger stressed that while we also need to collaborate with Russia to successfully fight climate change, the priority has been on addressing inner-Russian challenges like the Navalny case and repercussions on civil society and the opposition. Again, it is all about balance: The EU needs to signal readiness for a dialogue but must take a clear stance on the situation in Ukraine and Belarus. On the topic of economic recovery, State Secretary Berger outlined that all EU member states had presented their proposals and that money will be dispersed with the aim of generating economic growth and avoiding unemployment. The US has invested an unprecedented amount of money to rebuild infrastructure and strengthen the social system, creating the highest debt in peace time. The EU needs to keep pace with the developments in China and in the US and must invest in green technology and digitisation. Covid clearly showed that we need to do more in this regard. It has also caused social instability: countries in South America need international help through the World Bank and IMF. We need to strengthen values and fight against authoritarian systems in the region.

To conclude, Miguel Berger stressed that the EU is pleased to see the US engage with the EU and the UK. It is a positive sign that the US is back in the multilateral arena to tackle the challenges ahead.

Presentation of working group results

Group I: Global Britain, the EU and Germany in a world of disorder

Given the complexity of the topic, the first group split up into subgroups to study the array of subtopics: the UK-German partnership in uncharted waters, future developments in German Federalism and the British Union and Germany and the UK's position in global politics.

The first presenter started out by examining the UK-German partnership on various levels. As middle powers in the global political arena, both countries have benefitted from the rules-based international order; bilateral cooperation is a strategic necessity. In an EU-context, relations go beyond the recently adopted Trade and Cooperation Agreement. Structures for collaboration and joint budgets are required in areas like security and defence, intelligence cooperation and R&D (e.g. in cyber, space, AI, health). The UK and Germany cooperate in other regions of the world e.g. the Indo-Pacific and Africa, particularly in the Sahel region. In the realm of development cooperation, building up infrastructure and coordinating funding will be priority tasks. Additionally, both countries are involved in multilateral diplomatic initiatives and share the challenge of reckoning with Europe's colonial past. The debate revolved around tackling global

challenges like climate, promoting democratic values and countering authoritarian systems, fighting corruption, working on common scholarships/visa schemes for dissidents in authoritarian countries and providing safe havens, as well as ensuring the safety of technology and digital infrastructure. Formats of discussion should include cabinet consultations, UK-EU discussions and international fora like the E3, G7, G20, D10 (Alliance for Multilateralism), NATO, OSCE, the UN and the Council of Europe – the only European forum Germany and the UK are still in together after the UK's exit from the EU.

The second subgroup focused on independence movements in both the German and the British system. In the UK, independence efforts can mainly be observed in Scotland, to a lesser extent also in Northern Ireland and Wales. Brexit has amplified these tendencies with border management proving a challenge. The G7 summit has shown that these questions are not going away; instead, they might even continue to heat up. Would a new referendum on Scotland undermine provisions and democratic decisions? In addition to raising this question, the group debated whether the UK political system is indeed rather lopsided: Is Westminster addressing UK policies or English issues? Examining the scenario of a British Union without Scotland, delegates found that this would likely entail greater uncertainty in addition to the huge amount of uncertainty created by Brexit. If Scotland then were to re-join the EU, additional problems with border management between England and Scotland would emerge. The discussion ultimately turned to potential implications of Scottish independence with regard to the UK's permanent seat on the UN Security Council.

In contrast, there are no existential threats to the integrity of the federal system in Germany. Challenges revolve around efficiency and governability with the pandemic revealing limits of Länder cooperation. Some decentralised political areas such as public health, security and climate are in dire need of reform. The group mentioned the constitutional debate that had been raised by former government minister Thomas de Maizière who had advocated for a reform of the federalist system. Additional topics discussed include the persistent differences in the East and West of Germany, revealing deeper divisions. For instance, support for the AfD differs, as do perceptions of Russia, showing that the legacy of the German Democratic Republic still has an impact today.

The third subgroup looked at the distribution of political power in the world, ascertaining that if we are in a new Cold War, the situation is profoundly different from the previous one. Looking at the role of Germany and the UK and bilateral relations, the presenter outlined the common strengths and shared challenges. Firstly, both countries allow change when policies are not working, yet deliberative processes can be slow at times. Secondly, the size and scope of the UK and Germany's international presence and the importance of their economies make for global influence and longstanding partnerships. Both have a crucial role to play in the rules-based international system. They are united by a similar outlook and shared assessment of international issues and trade whilst also holding different views, for instance on Hong Kong. The challenge for both is that autonomy from bigger states can be costly when it is combined with interdependence. The parliamentary system in both countries creates strengths as well as challenges: Parliamentarians play key roles and have the power to push governments in potentially uncomfortable directions. The group concluded that Germany and the UK are both players and observers in the international arena. They exert autonomy but must also align with bigger powers.

Group II: Climate and post-Covid economic recovery

Although there were many overlaps across the three subtopics, members of group II had also decided to split up in smaller groups.

The first subgroup focused on green recovery, starting from the assumption that Germany and the UK had already been addressing climate change in almost all sectors prior to the pandemic. However, the Covid crisis revealed a vulnerability that further raised awareness to accelerate the climate response. The group presented a hydrogen case study to examine how economic recovery can incentivise the fight against climate change, noting that both Germany and the UK see hydrogen as a crucial energy source to decarbonise their economies. However, the UK and German recovery packages face a number of challenges, such as the industry cutting back on hydrogen research and innovation projects to save costs, and the delay of the Green Deal regulation for the emerging low carbon gas market. Numerous stakeholders including media, governments, industry, and society have a role to play to achieve effective environmental change. Governments need to ensure that the bureaucracy behind the recovery funds will not stifle innovation. Funds must be won by those with the best skills and ideas, not by the most resourceful. Technology neutrality will be critical to enabling states to reach net-zero. In order to ensure carbon neutrality of all colours of hydrogen, an EU-wide (even worldwide) system of standardisation and certification needs to be developed and implemented. Industry has to answer great challenges like decarbonising air travel and residential housing that recovery packages may not account for. UK and German media bodies must mediate between civil society and national governments to ensure the first is sufficiently informed on climate change mitigation and the latter is held accountable to the reduction goals it has committed to act on. In terms of socio-political and individual consequences, effective change from the hydrogen recovery funds could mean regional energy independence from the traditional hydrocarbon superpowers that differ from our values, such as human rights and democracy.

The second subgroup looked at the future of work. In the aftermath of Covid-19, governments must invest to create new jobs and 'build back better' while tackling the other major crisis facing governments: climate change. The group identified skills, flexible working patterns and the purpose economy as the main features of the future of work. While high-skilled green jobs are being created, they will not cover the potential shortfall in employment, nor be evenly distributed across the economy. Many workers may need to shift to new occupations and require different skills to remain employed. The group's recommendation is a life-long apprenticeship scheme. Reskilling will need to be led by business, with strong incentives to invest in and retain employees who are trained to perform new roles. In terms of flexible working, patterns encouraged by the pandemic can be preserved to the benefit of workers and the environment. The group mentioned the productivity benefits related to remote working, reductions in commuting and international travel as good examples of green behaviour, and the decrease in demand for office space that could make way for more urban green spaces. For many, however, greater flexibility also means less stability. Government and business should thus establish new models for employment that offer flexibility while laying out clear rights and obligations. Another trend is the increasing demand for jobs that prize social growth or environmental impact over profit. It raises fundamental questions about how work is valued and rewarded, and which jobs are deemed essential. The group concluded that we need to consider how to make our future workforce not only greener, more flexible and more skilful, but also more purposeful.

The final speaker identified three groups of stakeholders: nation states and their economies, financial institutions and civil society. Even though climate change is a challenge that affects us all, nation states play a particular role as they are the key rule-setters and can test solutions within their own jurisdiction that, if proven successful, can be scaled up. The group calls on Germany and the UK to align their efforts, identify common objectives and bring these to international gatherings such as G7 meetings. To do so, they can draw on their individual expertise areas (e.g. financial and professional services in the UK, manufacturing and heavy industry in Germany). Financial institutions provide investment to fund green projects and help all of society participate in wealth creation. They also need to help with adaption e.g. through insurance products, especially in regions that already feel the impact of climate change. The third stakeholder group, civil society, acts as a 'critical friend'. Whilst citizens do not have the legal means to drive change on their own, their crucial role is to press on governments and push for change, question measures and voice criticism where needed. The UK and Germany should ensure the participation of civil society across the globe and call out nation states or state leaders who violate human rights and hinder NGOs from doing their work. Likewise, the efforts of NGOs and international organisations need to be evaluated to prevent corruption and misuse of money. The group illustrated the interplay of all stakeholders adopting a case study approach and looking at vaccine development. When Covid hit, nation states as well as investors provided funding for health and biotech firms to quickly develop and produce vaccines. But despite initiatives such as COVAX, wealthy nations secured more vaccines than they needed to vaccinate their own populations, whereas countries in Africa, South America, and Asia only received a fraction of global supply. A global problem was tackled in a fragmented way. These mistakes must not be repeated when responding to climate change.

Group III: Disintegrating societies

The third study group kicked their presentation off with a quote from the European Commission's Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion (2021 - 2027) that stresses the importance of social cohesion for the resilience and welfare of communities: "The European way of life is an inclusive one. Integration and inclusion are key for people coming to Europe, for local communities, and for the long-term well-being of our societies and the stability of our economies. If we want to help our societies and economies thrive, we need to support everyone who is part of society, with integration being both a right and a duty for all." In their analysis, the group looked at current developments and changes in social dynamics.

Under the title "Brexit Britain", the group first examined trends in the UK, arguing that Brexit has been a major root cause for fragmentation in British society. The Brexit decision was a populist expression of nativism and anti-elitism and exemplified the role that social media and fake news play in creating inaccuracies and confusion in the political discourse. During the referendum campaign, Brexit had been presented as a fix to many grievances and false promises were made with regard to the future of the UK. The infamous NHS bus is a well-known example – the argument that the NHS would get an extra £350m a week turned out to be false. Looking at Germany, the rise of the AfD has revealed widening social divisions in the country. Whilst overall, Germany has experienced less polarisation compared to the UK, divisions have emerged under the

stable surface. The group mentioned a study conducted by the international initiative "More in Common" titled "Fault Lines – Germany's invisible divides". It suggests a division of German society into six segments, ranging from "The Open" who value individuality, open-mindedness and critical thinking to "The Angry", a group at the other end of the spectrum that is angry at the system and characterised by low levels of trust. While it is difficult to communicate across divides, the group highlighted the need to better integrate the people that feel disenfranchised into politics and society and counter increased polarisation.

The ensuing part of the presentation shed light on divisive drivers. In politics, a variety of factors can lead to division and populism, such as economic or cultural factors as well as change in general. Political and policy failures affect the population's perception of politics; consequently, failed expectations can lead to disappointment and division. Taking account of economic factors, the group highlighted that unequal distribution of wealth usually creates divisive tendencies in society. The main economic drivers are unequal participation in economic growth, discrimination in the job market and unequal educational opportunities. All can lead to a sense of disempowerment, which is greater and more common in globalised societies. As soon as people do not feel a sense of wealth creation, they feel left behind which can lead to fragmentation. Finally, the group outlined social drivers. The extreme exclusion of a single group, encouraged by fear mongering, can result in fragmentation or disintegration. Phenomena like increase in crime, ongoing debates and underlying beliefs around climate change and historical memories reveal conflicting views that lead to social conflict. Despite its positive effects, the increased visibility of diversity can also cause some to turn away from public debate. Additionally, divergent perceptions often reveal an urban-country divide due to different realities of life.

Lastly, the group analysed the role of traditional media and social media. As amplifiers of divisive drivers, they have the power to reinforce the economic, political and societal grievances within a society. Traditional media and gatekeepers are losing trust, notions of "fake news" and "Lügenpresse" have become common accusations. Some people perceive traditional media as being increasingly biased, accusing them of failing to deliver balanced reporting. While there have always been opinionated blogs and small news outlets, those voices are now becoming increasingly powerful and assertive, the Breitbart news network being an example. However, while social media can accelerate divisive voices, new formats also have positive societal impact and can create momentum: Social media played a pivotal role for movements like Black Lives Matter or Fridays for Future to promote their messaging and reach new target groups. Nevertheless, we should be mindful of how social media work: algorithms have significant power, topics and opinions quickly "go viral" and influence public opinion. Emotional subjects are likely to reach a wider audience. The group also highlighted the interdependencies between traditional and social media: Newspapers and TV programmes often pick up on social media, running the risk of helping divisive voices and conspirators like QAnon gain more attention. Not reporting about them at all, however, is not an option either. The group criticised that media often focuses too much on the extremist fringes while dismissing the majority that builds our society. In summary, societal and economic stability, political engagement, equal opportunities and participation are the cornerstones of combating disintegration. The group offered concrete ideas that could potentially change society for the better: grassroots activism leading to review and reform of political systems, enhancing social stability by combating misinformation, providing inclusive education, championing diversity, focusing on local challenges whilst recognising the benefits from

globalisation, levelling up the economy and understanding the root causes of exclusion and extremism.

Closing of the conference and digital after hour

Hans-Henning Horstmann brought the conference to a close, thanking all participants for their very active contributions. He was most impressed by the findings, the vitality and strength of the arguments as well as the liveliness of the discussion. He stressed that the past days had filled him with great confidence and optimism for the future of the UK-German relationship thanks to young leaders like Young Königswinter delegates.

The conference ended with a digital after hour. Participants had the opportunity to chat to fellow delegates and meet some Young Königswinter alumni to hear about activities of the alumni network and reflect on the conference experience.

