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### Mission

The American Council on Germany (ACG) is an independent, nonpartisan nonprofit organization that was founded in 1952 to strengthen German-American relations. Today, the ACG works across generations to provide a deeper understanding about Germany, Europe, and the importance of the transatlantic partnership. Through a range of programs and activities, the ACG addresses the most pressing economic, political, and social challenges of the day to ensure better mutual understanding. The ACG's initiatives are designed to reach a broad range of individuals to strengthen German-American relations and deepen the U.S.-European partnership. This is achieved through a combination of outreach and events designed to reach different audiences on both sides of the Atlantic to make sure they are better informed about transatlantic issues.

### Vision

The American Council on Germany is the leading U.S.-based forum for strengthening German-American relations. It delivers a nuanced understanding of why Germany matters, because the only way to understand contemporary Europe is to understand Germany's role within Europe and around the world. And, the only way to understand contemporary Germany is to put it in a European context.

#### The Council is committed to:

#### Forging Mutual Understanding to Meet Tomorrow's Challenges

Through a range of activities, the ACG provides opinion leaders and decision-makers in a variety of fields with ideas and perspectives on important political, economic, and social developments on both sides of the Atlantic and around the world. In 2021, online programming and a handful of in-person events engaged multipliers from government, business, nongovernmental organizations, academia, the military, and media on both sides of the Atlantic. As concerns over the spread of COVID-19 subside, we look forward to returning to immersive programs on issues such as environmental sustainability, trade relations, digitalization and the future of work, as well as urban development to examine challenges facing our societies and to develop possible strategies and collaborative solutions for the future.

### **Shaping Tomorrow's Leaders**

The ACG invests in the future of the transatlantic relationship by helping the next generation of leaders in Germany and the United States learn about this indispensable partnership, exchange best practices, and build networks across the Atlantic. In 2021, innovative virtual formats brought together youth from both countries. In 2022, we will resume the American-German Young Leaders Conference, fellowships, and leadership missions to bring together the next generation of German and American academics, journalists, and other professionals from diverse fields to deepen their understanding about transatlantic issues while forging lasting bonds with one another.

#### Addressing Global Issues Nationwide

The ACG recognizes the importance of presenting global issues not only to policymakers in Washington, DC, and business leaders in New York but also to decision-makers, practitioners, and the community at large at the local level. Through its online programming, the ACG has reached viewers in all 50 states and all 16 Bundesländer – and beyond - for discussions on the most pressing economic, political, and social issues on the transatlantic agenda and affecting their communities. The Council remains committed to national outreach through its network of Eric M. Warburg Chapters.

#### Informing Members and the Community at Large

The Council reaches across generations, sectors, and regional boundaries to inform the community at large. The ACG keeps its alumni, members, and friends informed about important issues shaping the transatlantic partnership through a range of programs and activities. Online programming and regular updates have made the ACG a valued resource for news and information about the transatlantic relationship. Members receive the ACG's news digest with opinion pieces and analysis twice a week.

# A Message from the President

2021 began much as 2020 ended – under the dark cloud of the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite the availability of vaccines and the hopes for an economic recovery, new variants caused ongoing concern. Already on January 6, the assault on the U.S. Capitol brought the fragility of democratic institutions and practices to center stage. While people all over the world tried to put the traumatic experiences of 2020 behind them, in many ways, fundamental public health, economic, and political challenges once again defined 2021 for citizens and political leaders in Europe and the United States.

Over the course of the year, COVID became endemic, even as more contagious variants emerged. While vaccines and better treatment options became more widely available, not everyone trusted their safety. Nevertheless, borders slowly reopened. Some travel restrictions were lifted, but other restrictions remained in place as governments tried to find the right balance between public safety and the freedom of movement.

In politics, when President Biden assumed office in January, he made many Americans optimistic that he would usher in a new era of hope and cooperation - at home and abroad. They believed that the new administration and the small Democratic majority would pave the way for sweeping new legislation - only to find lawmakers often at loggerheads with one another. And, in the international arena, although Biden proclaimed that "America is back!" allies wondered for how long. The withdrawal from Afghanistan and the AUKUS sub snub further called America's reliability as a partner into question.

In Germany, voters took to the polls in September to replace Chancellor Angela Merkel after 16 years in office. Opinion surveys in the months leading up to the election oscillated wildly. But following a victory by the Social Democrats, Olaf Scholz was able to build a coalition government with the Greens and the liberal Free Democrats just before the end of the year. Even after the careful negotiation of the coalition agreement, it was clear that one of the biggest challenges for the new Chancellor would be keeping the coalition partners together and avoiding rifts within his own party and among the Greens. The new government faced a steep learning curve made all the more complex due to the pandemic and the buildup of Russian troops along the border with Ukraine.

Against this backdrop, the ACG continued its robust schedule of online programming – with more than 155 virtual policy discussions on a host of timely topics – along with small in-person gatherings in New York and some of its Eric M. Warburg Chapters. Here are a few highlights of our work with partner organizations:

- The ACG continued its successful partnership with 1014 Inc. and held another nine virtual events as part of the joint Resilience and Adaptation Series. Expert speakers discussed topics like the use of public space, the future of work, digitalization and the digital economy, and "knowledge diplomacy" in times of disruption.
- Together with the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, the ACG hosted an online discussion in January about what Europe might expect from the Biden administration as well as a three-day virtual symposium on the first six months of the administration. In a range of panels, speakers focused on the state of the German-American relationship, security and defense policy, climate change, and global trade and investment.
- Between March and December, the ACG hosted eight online events with the Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung focusing on issues such as gender equity in national security, foreign policy priorities at the subnational level, the contours of a Green foreign policy, climate change, and Biden's Democracy Summit, and internal and external challenges to democracy.
- The ACG also partnered with the World Affairs Councils of America and Atlantik-Brücke to hold two online event series: In July, four events explored the challenges to democracy in Europe and the United States and how to strengthen democratic institutions and practices at home and abroad. And, in September – in the runup to and immediately following the German federal election – four events analyzed the election results, the leadership transition, and the legacy of Angela Merkel.

2021 was also a year for new initiatives.

- In March, we launched our weekly Kaffeepause series. Each Monday we have hosted an informal discussion with a Berlin-based journalist about the news behind the headlines, current developments impacting Germany, and the general political and social mood. Over the course of the year, we shared insights from over a dozen journalists. This series has developed a regular following among viewers.
- With support from the ZEIT-Stiftung Ebelin und Gerd Bucerius, in September the ACG launched the German-American Working Group on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility. Twenty-three young German and American professionals from government, media, nonprofits, and the private sector convened twice a month to identify and address the issues that stymie DEIA and to make policy recommendations.
- Under the auspices of Wunderbar Together 2021, in September the ACG also launched the German-American Sister Cities Youth Forum to bring together German and American civic leaders between the ages of 14 and 21 to discuss the issues facing their local communities - with each other and with local government officials. One of the goals of this initiative is to strengthen the ties between sister cities by providing access and opportunity to the next generation.

Despite concerns about the pandemic and travel restrictions, on October 13 the ACG was exceedingly fortunate to be able to hold its John J. McClov Awards Dinner. More than 320 people gathered to honor Oliver Bäte, Chairman of the Board of Management of Allianz SE, and Robert B. Zoellick, Lead U.S. Official for the Two-Plus-Four Negotiations on German Unification and former President of the World Bank.

Each year as I reflect on what the ACG accomplished the previous year, I am impressed – and extremely proud of the team. The number of events, their quality, timeliness, and relevance are remarkable. Throughout the pandemic, the ACG has been a valuable source of news and information about the issues shaping the German-American partnership.

2021 was a very active year for the American Council on Germany. We are lucky to have incredible partners in carrying out our mission. We look forward to continuing to work with you to strengthen the transatlantic partnership in the years to come.

Dr. Steven E. Sokol **ACG President** 

April 2022

"Throughout the pandemic, the ACG has been a valuable source of news and information about the issues shaping the German-American partnership."





## Kaffeepause Series



Sumi Somaskanda of Deutsche Welle

On March 1, 2021, the American Council on Germany launched a weekly online discussion series titled "Kaffeepause: What's Abuzz in Berlin?" In an effort to keep members and friends up to date on current political. economic, and social developments in Germany, every Monday the ACG hosts a discussion with a journalist based in Berlin on the topics behind the headlines and shaping political discourse in Germany.

Subjects of discussion have ranged from Germany's response to COVID-19 to the economic impact of the pandemic, from Germany's state and federal elections to polling and coalition negotiations, and from energy policy to migration to the state of transatlantic relations. Regular quests have included Matthias Deiss (2008 Young Leader) from ARD, Melissa Eddy from the New York Times, Sonja Gillert (2019 Young Leader and 2019 Kellen Fellow) from Die Welt, freelance journalist Miriam Hollstein (2008 McCloy Fellow in Journalism), Politico's Matthew Karnitschnig, Andreas Kluth from Bloomberg Opinion, Malte Lehming from Der Tagesspiegel, and Deutsche Welle's Sumi Somaskanda, among others.

# Resilience and **Adaptation Series**



Dr. Georg Schütte, Secretary General of the Volkswagen Foundation and former State Secretary at the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research, and Dr. Esther Brimmer, Executive Director and CEO of NAFSA: Association of International Educators and former Assistant Secretary of State for International Organization Affairs

In 2021, the American Council on Germany and 1014 Inc. continued their Resilience and Adaptation Series by exploring the simultaneous public health, economic, and social-justice crises and their impacts on society. Each online event featured German and American experts analyzing the impact of the pandemic on an array of topics, including civil society, social equity, the use of public space, the future of work, digitalization, and more.

#### **RESILIENCE AND ADAPTATION EVENTS**

February 9 | "International Relations after COVID" with Sharon Burke, Senior Advisor to the International Security Program and Resource Security Program at New America, and Dr. Stefan Mair, Director of the German Institute for International and Security Affairs (Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, SWP)

March 9 | "The Digital Economy and 'Flexwork': Stopgaps or Models for the Future?" with Thorben Albrecht, Policy Director of IG Metall and former Permanent State Secretary at the German Federal Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, and Jeff Schwartz, Principal and U.S. Leader for the Future of Work at Deloitte Consulting LLP and author of Work Disrupted: Opportunity, Resilience, and Growth in the Accelerated Future of Work

March 16 | "Economic Recovery, Trade Unions, and the Future of Work" with Reiner Hoffmann, Chairman of the German Trade Union Confederation (Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund, DGB), and John E. Shinn, International Secretary and Treasurer of the United Steelworkers

March 24 | "What Kind of Future Do We Want?" with Maria Bothwell, CEO of Toffler Associates, and Gerd Leonard, CEO of The Future Agency

May 4 | "Digitalization - Where Do We Stand?" with Dr. Gesche Joost, Professor for Design Research at the Berlin University of the Arts, and Dr. Mona Sloane of the Institute for Public Knowledge at New York University

May 11 | "Hotels, Restaurants, Cafes, and Bars: Innovative Approaches to Navigating Difficult Times in the Hospitality Industry" with Charlotta Janssen, Owner of Chez Oskar in Brooklyn, New York; Nadine and Tom Michelberger, Founders of the Hotel Michelberger in Berlin; and Rose Previte, Owner and Manager of Compass Rose and Maydan in Washington, DC

May 18 | "Vaccine Nationalism or Vaccine Diplomacy? The Global Quest for Vaccines" with Thomas J. Bollyky, Director of the Global Health Program and Senior Fellow for Global Health, Economics, and Development at the Council on Foreign Relations; Professor Dr. Anna Holzscheiter, Chair of Political Science at the Institute of Political Science at the Technical University Dresden and Head of the Governance for Global Health Research Group at the WZB Berlin Social Science Center; and Dr. Moritz Rudolf, Associate in the Asia Department of the German Institute for International and Security Affairs (Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, SWP)

June 15 | "The Use of Space and the Future of Architectural Design" with Jürgen Mayer H., Architect and Owner of J. MAYER H. und Partner, and Dr. Gideon Fink Shapiro, a critic and curator of architecture, landscape, and urbanism

July 22 | " 'Knowledge Diplomacy' in Times of Disruption and Beyond" with former ACG Board member Dr. Esther Brimmer, Executive Director and CEO of NAFSA: Association of International Educators and former Assistant Secretary of State for International Organization Affairs, and Dr. Georg Schütte, Secretary General of the Volkswagen Foundation and former State Secretary at the German Federal Ministry of **Education and Research** 

# German-American Working Group on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility

With support from the ZEIT-Stiftung Ebelin und Gerd Bucerius, the American Council on Germany convened a working group of young German and American professionals in the public and private sector from a variety of backgrounds to discuss and explore diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility issues in a transatlantic context. The working group explored the underrepresentation of minorities in transatlantic affairs and developed recommendations for promoting diversity and inclusion in the field.

From September of 2021 to March of 2022, the group convened virtually twice a month to parse the issues and develop policy recommendations to promote greater diversity. They also produced a policy paper on the critical importance of DEIA in transatlantic relations. The working group drew on the expertise of group members as well as external speakers from the United States and Germany on challenges facing Communities of Color and minority groups, including but not limited to LGBTQI+, individuals with disabilities, and migrants.

This initiative builds on the 2019 series "Social Disruption: How to Confront the Fraying Social Fabric and Social Inequality in Germany and the U.S.?" This collaboration between the Council and the ZEIT-Stiftung Ebelin und Gerd Bucerius consisted of events in five U.S. cities focused on political polarization, social fragmentation, and growing social inequity on both sides of the Atlantic. The series continued in early 2020 with events focused on the digital divide and inequities in access to technology, up until the COVID-19 pandemic prevented additional in-person meetings.

#### **DEIA WORKING GROUP MEETINGS**

**September 9 | Program Overview and Introductions** 

September 23 | "Diplomacy and Inclusivity" with Tiaji Zio, McCloy Fellow at the Harvard Kennedy School and founder of Diplomats of Color

October 21 | "Systemic Racism in the United States and Germany" with Chris Richardson, immigration lawyer and former U.S. diplomat, and Dr. Mischa **Thompson**, Director of Global Partnerships, Policy, and Innovation at the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe

**November 4 | "Gender Equity in Foreign Policy"** with Elmira Bayrasli, Co-founder of Foreign Policy Interrupted and Director of the Globalization and International Affairs Program at Bard College

**November 11 | "The Intersection of Diversity** and Data" with Varoon Bashyakarla (2019 McCloy Fellowship on Global Trends), Data Scientist, and Heather Dannyelle Thompson, Manager of Data and Research at enpact e.V.

November 18 | "LGBTQI+ Rights on Both Sides of the Atlantic" with Sarah Kohrt. LGBTI Platform Human Rights at the Hirschfeld-Eddy-Stiftung

**December 2 | "Protections for Religious Minorities** and Combating Xenophobia" with Amy Berger, Assistant Regional Director, Dallas, at the American Jewish Committee

December 16 | "Disabilities: Making German-American Relations Accessible to All" with Helle Deertz, Advisor on Disability Education at the Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit, and Bernd Schramm, Head of the Global Project "Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities" at the Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit



Robin Cammarota, ACG Program Director and Digital Strategist, and Dr. Steven E. Sokol, ACG President (top row), leading a meeting of the DEIA Working Group

#### MEMBERS OF THE WORKING GROUP ON DEIA

#### Natalia Aguirre

Director of Justice Programs Healing Justice Berlin, Germany

#### Dyria Sigrid Alloussi

Policy and Strategic Communication United Europe e.V. Berlin, Germany

#### Varoon Bashyakarla

(2019 McCloy Fellowship on Global Trends) Data Scientist Berlin, Germany

#### **Amy Berger**

Assistant Regional Director, Dallas American Jewish Committee Dallas, Texas

#### Johannes Boermann

Programme Manager -Financial and Programmes Unit European Commission -Directorate-General Justice and Consumers Brussels, Belgium

#### Erica J. Bolden

Head of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Engagement Mercedes-Benz Atlanta, Georgia

#### Courtney Bowe-Hanss

Global Lead, Communications & Change Management Merck KGaA, Darmstadt Darmstadt, Germany

Eve Bower (2010 Young Leader) Senior Editor, The Row CNN Atlanta, Georgia

#### Kimberley Davidson-Wiessler

Head of External Activation and Identity Management Bayer Berlin, Germany

#### Jacob Sebastian Eder

Professor of Modern and Contemporary History Barenboim-Said Akademie Berlin, Germany

#### Jamillia N. Kamara

Program Officer for Education Pittsburgh Foundation Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

#### Ilke Kiral

Desk Officer for Rwanda, Burundi, and EU Africa Working Party Foreign Office of the Federal Republic of Germany Berlin, Germany

#### LaSean Knox-Brown

Public Diplomacy Desk Officer for the West Balkans U.S. State Department Washington, DC

#### Tania Mancheno Moncada

Lecturer at the Institute of Geography Universität Hamburg Hamburg, Germany

#### Lea-Friederike Neubert

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Lead Diakonie Deutschland Berlin, Germany

#### Matt Ohm

Associate Arnall Golden Gregory LLP Mableton, Georgia

#### Roxanne Paisible

Senior Manager, Children and Youth Initiative InterAction Washington, DC

#### Tria Raimundo

Director, Global Development Programs Chicago Council on Global Affairs Chicago, Illinois

#### Rupert Rivera III

Technology Consultant Mannheim, Germany

#### Timothy A. Rivera

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Advisor to the CEO World Learning/School of International Training Washington, DC

#### Maryum Saifee

Senior Policy Advisor, Secretary's Office for Diversity and Inclusion U.S. State Department New York, New York

#### Albina Smajli

Diversity Liaison German-American Fulbright Commission Berlin, Germany

#### Paul J. Treadgold

Director, Corporate Policy and External Affairs EMD Serono Inc. Washington, DC

## German-American Sister Cities Youth Forum



Rob Fenstermacher, ACG Chief Content Officer (top left), leading a session of the German-American Sister Cities Youth Forum

From September to December of 2021, the American Council on Germany convened the German-American Sister Cities Youth Forum to bring together German and American civic leaders from the age of 14 to 21 to analyze issues confronting their communities, exchange concerns with government officials, share ideas, and propose policy prescriptions. The project was held under the auspices of Wunderbar Together USA 2021, a comprehensive and collaborative initiative funded by the German Federal Foreign Office and implemented by the Goethe-Institut.

Through a series of interactive virtual meetings, representatives from local youth councils and youth leadership programs in five pairs of U.S.-German sister cities met to discuss issues including climate change and sustainability; diversity, equity, and inclusion; and the importance of civic engagement and youth participation in their communities. This exchange provided an opportunity for the next generation of politically engaged youth to explore critical issues in an international context, to learn from their counterparts across the Atlantic, and to shape how they address these issues in the future.

The project was a direct result of the 2020 Transatlantic Town Halls with mayors as part of the Wunderbar Together initiative. One of its key goals is to strengthen the relationship and ties between German and American sister cities, specifically by focusing on the next generation of leaders in their communities. The program builds greater mutual understanding and collaboration among transatlantic counterparts while laying the groundwork for a long-term relationship between youth organizations in the sister cities for further exchange.

Read more or watch the sessions here

"My biggest takeaway from the project was the realization that humanity truly has so much in common. Despite the thousands of miles separating us, conversing with the German youth felt no different than talking to my friends at home. The common ground that we were able to find in our discussions was astounding."

- a participant in the German-American **Sister Cities Youth Forum** 

The sister cities and organizations engaged in the project included:

#### **Austin-Koblenz**

Austin Youth Council and Jugendrat Koblenz

#### **Buffalo-Dortmund**

Open Buffalo Youth Action Project and Jugendring Dortmund

#### Charlotte-Krefeld

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Youth Council and Jugendbeirat Krefeld

#### St. Louis-Stuttgart

Youth Leadership St. Louis and Stuttgarter Jugendhaus

#### San Antonio-Darmstadt

San Antonio Youth Commission and Jugendforum Darmstadt

#### YOUTH FORUM MEETINGS

September 25 | Meeting between Charlotte and Krefeld

September 27 | Meeting between St. Louis and Stuttgart

October 2 | Meeting between San Antonio and Darmstadt

October 3 | Meeting between Buffalo and Dortmund

October 3 | Meeting between Austin and Koblenz

October 7 I Plenary Session on climate change and sustainability with Silvia Assalini, Program Officer with ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability; Dr. Dale Medearis (1995 McCloy Fellow in Environmental Affairs), Senior Environmental Planner for the Northern Virginia Regional Commission (NVRC) and Director of the ACG's Eric M. Warburg Chapter in Greater Washington; and Katarina Roncevic with the education team of Greenpeace e.V. Deutschland

**November 10** I Plenary Session on youth civic engagement with **Samar Ali**, Founding President and CEO of Millions of Conversations; **Martin Kaiser**, Director of the Gustav Stresemann Institute in the German state of Lower Saxony; and **Dr. Jeremi Suri**, Mack Brown Distinguished Chair for Leadership in Global Affairs at the University of Texas at Austin

**November 17** I Plenary Session on diversity, equity, and inclusion with **Kiara Boone** (2019 Young Leader), Deputy Director of Community Education at the Equal Justice Initiative, and **Alice Hasters**, a German journalist, book author, and podcaster

**December 4** I A conversation between Charlotte and Krefeld with **Mayor Pro Tem Julie Eiselt** and **Oberbürgermeister Frank Meyer** 

**December 14** I Meeting between St. Louis and Stuttgart

**December 15** I A conversation between San Antonio and Darmstadt with **Mayor Ron Nirenberg** and **Oberbürgermeister Jochen Partsch** 

# **Fellowships**

As COVID-19 numbers began to wane in 2021, the American Council on Germany awarded three DZ BANK Fellowships on Transatlantic Business and Finance. This fellowship gives professionals, journalists, and subject experts the opportunity to conduct research on key issues influencing the transatlantic economy, including business, finance, trade, banking, fintech, innovation, and entrepreneurship.

Representative Ryan Mackenzie (2019 Young Leader), member of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives, was awarded a fellowship to examine the funding of infrastructure projects.

**Lily McElwee**, Doctoral Researcher at the School of Global and Area Studies at the University of Oxford, received a fellowship to conduct research on the EU-China Comprehensive Agreement on Investment.

**Dr. Michael Schwan**, Postdoctoral Researcher in International and Comparative Political Economy at the University of Cologne, was awarded a fellowship to explore the role of banks in shaping governmental responses to COVID-19.

The ACG's other fellowship programs will resume when the circumstances allow.

Read more

# State-to-State: German-American State Legislator Dialogue Series



Rob Fenstermacher, ACG Chief Content Officer, and Dr. Steven E. Sokol, ACG President (top row), leading a session of the German-American State Legislator Dialogue Series

The American Council on Germany and the Aspen Institute Germany launched a virtual event series to provide a forum for in-depth discussions between German and American state legislators on common transatlantic challenges. While global challenges are often addressed at the national level, political polarization and partisan gridlock have stymied many such efforts. Subnational actors such as states, communities, and cities have stepped up to take action and fill the void.

On March 10, Assemblyman Marc Berman (D) of the California State Assembly; Daniel Karrais (FDP), member of the State Parliament of Baden-Württemberg; and Katharina Schulze (The Greens), member of the State Parliament of Bavaria, discussed the opportunities and challenges that come with an increasingly digitalized democracy and shared their own experiences and visions for a digital future. Watch here

On April 21, Barbara Becker (CSU), member of the State Parliament of Bavaria; Joschka Knuth (The Greens), member of the State Parliament of Schleswig-Holstein; Representative Ryan Mackenzie (R) (2019 Young Leader and 2021 DZ BANK Fellow on Transatlantic Business and Finance) of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives; and Representative Mari Manoogian (D) of the Michigan House of Representatives focused on how states deal with climate change and energy policy.

On May 20, Juan Fernandez-Barquin (R) of the Florida House of Representatives and Christina Kampmann (SPD), member of the State Parliament of North Rhine-Westphalia, discussed structural change in the economy, the occupational landscape, and initiatives to enhance workforce preparedness. Watch here

On June 23, infrastructure and the differences in investment between rural and urban areas were the focus of a discussion with Philipp da Cunha (SPD), member of the State Parliament of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania; Ellen Demuth (CDU), member of the State Parliament of Rhineland-Palatinate; Senator M. Teresa Ruiz (D), President Pro Tempore of the New Jersey State Senate: and Senator Jerry Sonnenberg (R) of the Colorado State Senate.

# Symposium on "Six Months into the Biden Presidency: Transatlantic Trends and Aspirations"

As the Biden administration marked its first six months in office, and immediately following German Chancellor Angela Merkel's visit to Washington, the American Council on Germany and the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung USA convened a symposium from July 19 to 21, 2021, on the state of transatlantic relations. The series of five virtual events looked at the direction of the new U.S. administration in key areas such as climate policy, international security, and the post-COVID economic recovery, with an eye toward how Europe and the United States can better collaborate on these issues.

On July 19, the first session explored transatlantic relations since the start of the new administration and featured **Peter Beyer**, member of the German Bundestag (CDU) and Coordinator of Transatlantic Cooperation in the Federal Foreign Office; German Ambassador to the United States Dr. Emily Haber; and Molly Montgomery, Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs at the U.S. Department of State.

The following day, climate change and defense policy were on the agenda. Dr. Camilla Bausch, Scientific and Executive Director at Ecologic Institute, and Samantha Gross, Director of the Energy Security and Climate Initiative at the Brookings Institution, looked at whether the United States can be a credible leader on climate change. The event was moderated by Dr. Michael Mehling (2007 McCloy Fellow in Environmental Affairs). Turning to security and defense policy, panelists Dr. Jana Puglierin, Head of the Berlin Office and Senior Policy Fellow at the European Council on Foreign Relations, and Dr. Torrey Taussig, Research Director for the Project on Europe and the Transatlantic Relationship at the Harvard Kennedy School's Belfer Center and Nonresident Fellow at the Brookings Institution's Center on the United States and Europe, shared their perspectives. The session was moderated by Lauren M. Speranza, Director of Transatlantic Defense and Security at the Center for European Policy Analysis.

On July 21, the symposium looked at global trade and investment as well as the post-COVID economic recovery. Dr. Laura von Daniels. Head of the Research Division for the Americas at the German Institute for International and Security Affairs (Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, SWP), and Dr. Daniel S. Hamilton, Director of the Global Europe Program and Austrian Marshall Plan Foundation Distinguished Fellow at the Wilson Center, discussed the economic ties that bind Europe and the United States. The session was moderated by Julia Friedlander, Deputy Director of the GeoEconomics Center and C. Boyden Gray Senior Fellow at the Atlantic Council.







Lauren M. Speranza, Director of Transatlantic Defense and Security at the Center for European Policy Analysis; Dr. Jana Puglierin, Head of the Berlin Office and Senior Policy Fellow at the European Council on Foreign Relations; and Dr. Torrey Taussig, Research Director for the Project on Europe and the Transatlantic Relationship at the Harvard Kennedy School's Belfer Center

The economic recovery and the role of infrastructure were the focus of a session with Greg Lindsay, Director of Applied Research at NewCities and Non-Resident Senior Fellow with the Atlantic Council's Foresight, Strategy, and Risks Initiative; Brandie Lockett (2018 Sustainable Urban Development Exchange), City Designer with Houston Public Works for the City of Houston; and Thomas Puls, Senior Economist for Transportation and Infrastructure at the Institut der deutschen Wirtschaft.

Watch the symposium sessions ( Read the symposium report

# **Transatlantic** Sounding Board

The Transatlantic Sounding Board was initiated by the American Council on Germany and the Policy Planning Staff at the German Federal Foreign Office to provide representatives from various federal government ministries and staffers from the German Bundestag with a more nuanced understanding of the political climate in the United States. In 2021, the Transatlantic Sounding Board explored topics including U.S.-European relations, foreign and security policy, economic challenges, and innovation and technology.

The initiative was launched in June 2019 to look at the runup to the 2020 Presidential Election. The group met regularly in Berlin in 2019, and the ACG organized a fact-finding mission to Pittsburgh and Washington, DC, in November 2019 to look at structural change, social cohesion, and the overall political atmosphere. Transatlantic Sounding Board participants met in person in early 2020 until the COVID-19 pandemic hit, at which point they continued to convene virtually to look at topics including social cleavages and economic recovery, the Green New Deal, the state of transatlantic ties, relations with China, the U.S. Presidential Election, and later the implications of the election results.

#### VIRTUAL MEETINGS OF THE TRANSATLANTIC **SOUNDING BOARD IN 2021**

January 26 | "What Can Europe Expect from the Biden Administration?" with Tom Carothers, Vice President of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, and Cathryn Clüver Ashbrook, Executive Director of the Future of Diplomacy Project and Executive Director of the Project on Europe and the Transatlantic Relationship at the Harvard Kennedy School and Co-director of the ACG's Eric M. Warburg Chapter in Boston

March 2 | "The Economic Recovery in the U.S. and Institutional Reform at Home and Abroad" with Edward "Ted" Alden, Senior Fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations and former Head of the Washington Bureau of the Financial Times, and Meg Lundsager, Public Policy Fellow at the Wilson Center and former U.S. Executive Director at the International Monetary Fund (IMF)

March 23 | "Transatlantic Cooperation on China and the Role of Technology" with Robert D. Williams, Lecturer in Law, Senior Research Scholar in Law, and Executive Director of the Paul Tsai China Center at Yale Law School

April 27 | "Climate Change and Public Health: New U.S. Initiatives to Engage the World" with Katherine E. Bliss, Senior Fellow at the Global Health Policy Center at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, and Samantha Gross, Director of the Energy Security and Climate Initiative and Fellow in the Foreign Policy Program at the Brookings Institution

June 1 | "Security Politics and the Alliance: The USA before the NATO Summit and the Meeting with the EU and Russia" with Heather Conley (2007 Young Leader), Senior Vice President for Europe, Eurasia, and the Arctic and Director of the Europe, Russia, and Eurasia Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies

September 14 | Internal Discussion: "'America Is Back!' Really? And Now What?"

October 5 | "Innovation, Technology, and Digitalization -How Europe and the USA Can Work Together" with Dan Mullaney, Assistant U.S. Trade Representative for Europe and the Middle East at the Office of the United States Trade Representative

**December 14 | "Balancing Domestic Concerns and** Foreign Policy Priorities: Two Views" with Matan Chorev, Deputy Director of the Policy Planning Staff at the U.S. Department of State, and Sebastian Groth, Director for Policy Planning at the German Federal Foreign Office



# German-American Relations (on the Mend?):

### New Governments Take Office in the U.S. and Germany

When President Joe Biden took office in January of 2021, he voiced a commitment to multilateral approaches to global challenges, signaling a shift from his predecessor. The Biden administration worked from Day One to strengthen relations with allies, Germany chiefly among them. The United States returned to the Paris Climate Agreement and the World Health Organization. But on some key issues, including relations with China and trade, President Biden's policies were not so different from President Trump's – different mainly in style rather than substance.

Later in the year, Germans took to the polls to replace their longtime Chancellor, Angela Merkel of the Christian Democrats (CDU/CSU). Following the election in September, Olaf Scholz of the Social Democrats (SPD) became Chancellor of Germany in December, leading a so-called traffic-light coalition with the Greens and liberal Free Democrats (FDP). While they pledged to dare to make more progress - "mehr Fortschritt wagen" - the new government was largely expected to keep Germany on the same general policy trajectory. While this may have held true in the first few weeks of the administration, it changed dramatically in 2022 when Russia invaded Ukraine.

#### A NEW U.S. ADMINISTRATION

The Council held a virtual discussion on Inauguration Day, January 20, looking at what to expect under President Biden. The speakers were Knut Dethlefsen, Representative to the U.S. and Canada at the Friedrich Ebert Foundation: Markus Ferber. Chairman of the Hanns Seidel Foundation and member of the European Parliament (CSU); Bastian Hermisson, Executive Director for North America of the Heinrich Böll Foundation; Michael Link, a Board member of the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom and member of the German Bundestag (FDP); Mareike Ohlberg, Senior Fellow at the Asia Program of the German Marshall Fund of the United States; Anahita Thoms, Partner at Baker McKenzie and a Board member of Atlantik-Brücke; and Dr. Meike **Zwingenberger**, Executive Director of the Bavarian Center for Transatlantic Relations. The event was held as the culmination of the Road to Election Night & Beyond Series. which was organized and hosted by several transatlantic institutions and political foundations.

As part of the same series, on the same day a virtual discussion looked at the priorities and challenges of the Biden administration. The panelists were

Martin-Sebastian Abel (2019 DZ BANK Fellowship on Transatlantic Business and Finance), a Board member of the Freundeskreis Amerika Haus NRW e.V. and Director at MSL Germany; Daniel Benjamin, President of the American Academy in Berlin; Ambassador John B. Emerson, former U.S. Ambassador to Germany, Vice Chairman of Capital Group International, and Chairman of the American Council on Germany: Tina Hassel. Head and TV Editor-in-Chief of ARD-Hauptstadtstudio in Berlin; Christian Schmidt, President of the German Atlantic Association, who served as a member of the Bundestag (CDU/CSU); Warren Marine, Treasurer of the American Chamber of Commerce in Germany e.V. and Partner and Head of the U.S. Country Practice at KPMG Germany. Both panel discussions were moderated by Terry Martin of Deutsche Welle News.

A virtual discussion on January 29 looked at what Europe could expect from the Biden administration. The speakers were ACG Board member Dr. Charles Kupchan, Senior Fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations and Professor of International Affairs at Georgetown University; Professor Dr. Norbert Lammert, Chairman of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung and former President of the German Bundestag; and Robin Wright, columnist at the New Yorker, Distinguished Scholar at the Wilson Center, and Senior Fellow at the U.S. Institute of Peace. The event was held in partnership with the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung. Watch here (

#### **GERMANY'S SUPERWAHLJAHR**

As the new administration came into its own in the United States, Germany was looking ahead to an election season that would see longtime Chancellor Angela Merkel step down. A virtual discussion on March 15 looked at the state elections kicking off Germany's Superwahljahr featuring Florian Naumann, Team Leader and Editor in the Politics Department of Merkur.de, and Katharina Schuler, Editor in the Politics, Economics, and Society Department for ZEIT ONLINE. Germany's foreign policy priorities in the election year and beyond was the subject of a virtual discussion on May 3 with Bundestag members Metin Hakverdi (SPD), Gyde Jensen (FDP) (2018 Young Leader), and Omid Nouripour (The Greens). That event was held in partnership with Deutsches Haus at NYU and NYU's Center for European and Mediterranean Studies.

The Council held a bevy of events looking at the German federal election, both before and after Germans took to the polls. On September 20, Dr. Cornelius Hirsch, an intelligence analyst with Politico Europe and a Co-founder of pollofpolls.eu, gave a glimpse behind the polling numbers. On September 21, **Dr. Kai Arzheimer**, Professor of Political Science at the University of Mainz; **Professor** Marcel Lewandowsky, DAAD Visiting Assistant Professor at the Center for European Studies at the University of Florida; Dr. Jana Puglierin, Head of the Berlin Office and Senior Policy Fellow at the European Council on Foreign Relations; and **Dr. Jae-Jae Spoon**, Professor of Political Science and Director of the European Studies Center at the University of Pittsburgh, talked about what to expect on Election Day. The event was held in partnership with the University of Pittsburgh European Studies Center. The following day, **Dr. Christoph von Marschall** (1999) Kellen Fellow), Chief Diplomatic Correspondent of *Der* Tagesspiegel, shared his insights on the race to replace Angela Merkel, and on September 24, Wolfgang Schmidt, State Secretary in the Federal Ministry of Finance, shared his take on the rise of Olaf Scholz.

One day after the federal election, on September 27, the Council hosted a post-election analysis in cooperation with Atlantik-Brücke and the German Marshall Fund of the United States. The event featured Marieluise Beck, Director for East-Central and Eastern Europe at LibMod, a former member of the Bundestag (The Greens); Ambassador John B. Emerson, former U.S. Ambassador to Germany, Vice Chairman of Capital Group International, and Chairman of the American Council on Germany; Steven Erlanger, Chief Diplomatic Correspondent in Europe at the New York Times; Sigmar Gabriel, Chairman of Atlantik-Brücke and former member of the Bundestag (SPD), Vice Chancellor, and Foreign Minister; Janina Mütze, Co-founder and CEO of Civey; Ruprecht Polenz, President of the German Association for East European Studies and former member of the Bundestag (CDU); Julia Reuschenbach, Associate Lecturer and Political Scientist at Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn; and Anna Sauerbrey (2018 Kellen Fellow), Deputy Editor-in-Chief of Der Tagesspiegel.



Bundestag member Gyde Jensen (FDP) (2018 Young Leader)

In a virtual discussion on September 29, panelists Dr. Stefan Fröhlich, Professor of International Politics and Political Economy at the University of Erlangen-Nuremberg, and ACG Board member Dr. Charles Kupchan, Senior Fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations and Professor of International Affairs at Georgetown University, looked at what the world can expect from Berlin. The event was moderated by Sonja Gillert (2019 Young Leader and 2019 Kellen Fellow), Head of Audio for Welt, and co-hosted with the Freunde des American Council on Germany e.V.

Working together with the World Affairs Councils of America (WACA), Atlantik-Brücke, and local World Affairs Councils, in September the American Council on Germany organized four online events on the German election and the legacy of Angela Merkel. The series was held under the auspices of Wunderbar Together 2021, a collaborative initiative that is funded by the German Federal Foreign Office, implemented by the Goethe-Institut, and supported by the Federation of German Industries (BDI). On September 14, Stefan Kornelius, Foreign Editor of the Süddeutsche Zeitung, talked about Chancellor Merkel's legacy and the ensuing leadership transition in a virtual discussion hosted by the Cleveland Council on World Affairs. The following day, Kati Marton, author of The Chancellor, shared her insights on "The Remarkable Odyssey of Angela Merkel" and gave an outlook for the post-Merkel era. That event was hosted by the Los Angeles World Affairs Council and Town Hall. Several days after the federal election, on September 29, the next event in the series was a virtual discussion looking at the election results with Sophia Besch, a senior researcher with the Centre for European Reform, and Jeff Rathke, President of the American Institute for Contemporary German Studies (AICGS) at Johns Hopkins University. The event was hosted by the World Affairs Council of Maine. And on September 30, Dr. Constanze Stelzenmüller (1993 Young Leader), Senior Fellow for Foreign Policy at the Center on the United States and Europe and Fritz Stern Chair on Germany and Transatlantic Relations at the Brookings Institution, shared her analysis of the federal election. The event was hosted by the World Affairs Council of Atlanta.



Kati Marton, author of The Chancellor

As negotiations to form a new governing coalition took shape, the ACG held a virtual discussion on October 1 to look at Germany's role in the world and new priorities for foreign policy with Reinhard Bütikofer, member of the European Parliament (The Greens). He also discussed the future of Europe and relations with China. The event was supported by the Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung. The domestic and foreign policy priorities of an "Ampel" (traffic-light) coalition under Olaf Scholz were the topic of a virtual discussion on October 8 with journalist Martin Klingst, author of Trumps Amerika: Reise in ein weißes Land and Guido Goldman: *Transatlantic Bridge Builder.* With the traffic-light coalition officially in office, the ACG held a virtual discussion on December 17 with **Stefan Kornelius**, Political Editor of the Süddeutsche Zeitung, to look at what the government would do next. Watch here

Three in-person events were held in the weeks following the German federal election. Mr. Klingst shared his insights on Germany in the post-Merkel era on October 14 at a discussion and reception hosted by the Philadelphia Warburg Chapter and the German Society of Pennsylvania. Peter Beyer, member of the German Bundestag (CDU) and Coordinator of Transatlantic Cooperation in the Federal Foreign Office, shared a post-election recap on October 20 at an event hosted by the Los Angeles Warburg Chapter. Dr. Markus Ziener, Helmut Schmidt Fellow at the German Marshall Fund of the United States, delved into the nuances of the new government on November 1 at a discussion and reception held in New York City with support from 1014 Inc.



Dr. Constanze Stelzenmüller (1993 Young Leader), Senior Fellow for Foreign Policy at the Center on the United States and Europe and Fritz Stern Chair on Germany and Transatlantic Relations at the Brookings Institution



German Ambassador to the United States Dr. Emily Haber

#### THE TRANSATLANTIC PARTNERSHIP

The potential for a new era for German-American relations was explored in a virtual discussion on March 11 with Ricklef Beutin, Deputy Chief of Mission at the German Embassy in Washington, DC.

Around the 100-day mark of the Biden administration, the ACG held a virtual discussion in partnership with Atlantik-Brücke on April 27 looking at "Reaffirming and Reimagining the Transatlantic Alliance: Facing Shared Challenges Together," featuring Ambassador Philip T. Reeker, acting Assistant Secretary of State in the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs at the U.S. Department of State, and moderated by Dr. Anna Sauerbrey (2018 Kellen Fellow), member of the Editorial Board of *Der* Tagesspiegel. Watch here

On May 13, Nicholas Burns, Faculty Chair of the Project on Europe and the Transatlantic Relationship at the Harvard Kennedy School; Cathryn Clüver Ashbrook, Executive Director of the Project on Europe and the Transatlantic Relationship at the Harvard Kennedy School and Codirector of the ACG's Eric M. Warburg Chapter in Boston; and German Ambassador to the United States Dr. Emily Haber discussed the challenges and opportunities in German-American relations. The event was held in partnership with the Harvard Kennedy School's Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs. The future of the transatlantic partnership was also the subject of another virtual discussion with Ambassador Haber, on July 29. The event was moderated by former ACG Board member Lee Cullum, a journalist and Senior Fellow at the John Tower Center for Public Policy and International Affairs at Southern Methodist University. It was held in partnership with the World Affairs Council of Dallas/Fort Worth and the Missions of the Federal Republic of Germany in the United States as part of the German Embassy's "Meeting America" series.

In December, as the new governing coalition in Germany coalesced and Chancellor Scholz took office, the Council held a virtual discussion on December 9 on "Measuring the Pulse: German-American Relations on the Mend?" with Julia **Ganter**, Editor of the Körber-Stiftung's *Berlin Pulse*, and **Jacob** Poushter, Associate Director of Global Attitudes Research at Pew Research Center. The event was moderated by ACG Board member Dr. Charles Kupchan, Senior Fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations and Professor of International Affairs at Georgetown University. Watch here

# Foreign and Security Policy:

### A Return to Multilateralism amid Ongoing Challenges

Even in light of the Biden administration's efforts to open a new chapter of multilateral cooperation, relations with Europe remained strained in 2021. Europeans continued to be skeptical of the U.S. commitment to work multilaterally on wider challenges, including on trade. Among the sources of friction was the ongoing travel ban from Europe to the United States. While Europe eased travel restrictions for Americans over the summer, the U.S. did not lift the travel restrictions in the other direction until November, Another point of contention was the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan after a 20-year presence. President Biden had ordered a complete withdrawal of U.S. troops by the 20th anniversary of the September 11 terrorist attacks. Amid the withdrawal, the Afghanistan national army collapsed and the Taliban took over the country. A humanitarian crisis ensued. Allies called it a "debacle," and President Biden's approval ratings among Americans hit new lows. In October, Brookings' Trans-Atlantic Scorecard – a quarterly evaluation of U.S.-European relations – placed these relations at 5.3 out of 10, with 10 standing for excellent. Bilateral relations with Germany received slightly higher marks, at 6.4.

Foreshadowing a flashpoint in 2022, on May 6 the ACG held a virtual discussion on the threat posed by Russia with journalist and author Katja Gloger (1991 Young Leader) and Dr. Fiona Hill, Robert Bosch Senior Fellow in the Center on the United States and Europe in the Foreign Policy program at the Brookings Institution. The event was held in partnership with the Freunde des American Council on Germany e.V. Political persecution and state-sanctioned air piracy in Belarus were the subjects of a virtual discussion on May 27 with Dr. Jörg Forbria, Senior Fellow and Director for Central and Eastern Europe at the German Marshall Fund of the United States, and Katsiaryna Shmatsina, Fellow at the Belarusian Institute for Strategic Studies. Later in the year, on November 23, Dr. Forbrig and Ms. Shmatsina shared updates in a virtual discussion about migration and the evolving humanitarian crisis at Europe's external border.

Looking at multilateralism, partnerships, and strategic alliances – and obstacles to each – a virtual discussion on June 9 featured the insights of Ambassador John B. Emerson, former U.S. Ambassador to Germany, Vice Chairman of Capital Group International, and Chairman of the American Council on Germany, and Ambassador Christoph Heusgen, Permanent Representative of Germany to the United Nations. The event was held in partnership with the Konrad Adenauer Foundation. Ambassador Emerson also served as a moderator, together with Sigmar Gabriel, Chairman of Atlantik-Brücke







Ambassador Victoria Nuland, Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs; Atlantik-Brücke Chairman Sigmar Gabriel; and ACG Chairman Ambassador

and former member of the German Bundestag (SPD), Vice Chancellor, and Foreign Minister, in a fireside chat with Ambassador Victoria Nuland, Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs at the U.S. Department of State, on June 25. The event was held in partnership with Atlantik-Brücke. Watch here





Souad Mekhennet (Young Leaders Study Group on the Future of Europe), Correspondent for the Washington Post national security desk and author of I Was Told to Come Alone: My Journey Behind the Lines of Jihad, and Elmar Theveßen, Washington, DC, Bureau Chief for ZDF

Two in-person events looked at overarching security issues. The ACG's Los Angeles Warburg Chapter hosted a discussion and luncheon on the strategic importance of U.S. leadership in Europe with Lieutenant General (ret.) Ben Hodges, Pershing Chair in Strategic Studies at the Center for European Policy Analysis, on August 11. Geopolitics, cybersecurity, and internet governance were the focus of an in-person Breakfast Briefing on November 30 with **Dr. Regine Maria Grienberger**, Cyber Ambassador in the German Federal Foreign Office. The meeting was held at Deutsche Bank's Innovation Lab in New York City.

As the United States and the world commemorated the 20th anniversary of the terrorist attacks of September 11, the Council held a virtual discussion with Souad Mekhennet (Young Leaders Study Group on the Future of Europe), Correspondent for the Washington Post's national security desk and author of I Was Told to Come Alone: My Journey Behind the Lines of Jihad, and Elmar Theveßen, Washington, DC, Bureau Chief for ZDF, on September 10. Watch here

In the wake of the chaos of the U.S. troop withdrawal from Afghanistan, the Council held a series of events analyzing the situation on the ground and the implications for Western efforts to promote democracy around the world. On September 8, Judy Dempsey, Editor-in-Chief at Carnegie Europe; **Dr. Markus Kaim**, Senior Fellow at the German Institute for International and Security Affairs (Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, SWP); and Dr. Kori Schake (1999 Young Leader), Director of Foreign and Defense Policy at the American Enterprise Institute, considered whether this was the end of Western nationbuilding in a virtual discussion held in partnership with 1014 Inc. The following day, Bundestag member Omid **Nouripour**, who serves as the foreign affairs spokesperson for the Greens Parliamentary Group, gave his take on what to expect next in Afghanistan.

On October 22, the ACG held a virtual discussion on the situation in Afghanistan with **Professor Erik Jensen**, Professor of the Practice, Director of the Rule of Law Program at Stanford Law School, Affiliated Core Faculty at Stanford's Center on Democracy, Development and the Rule of Law, and Senior Advisor for Governance and Law at the Asia Foundation; German Ambassador to Afghanistan Markus Potzel; Professor Nathalie Tocci, Director of the Istituto Affari Internazionali, Honorary Professor at the University of Tübingen, Pierre Keller Visiting Professor at the Harvard Kennedy School, and Special Advisor to EU High Representative and Vice President of the Commission Josep Borrell; and Summia **Tora.** Founder of Dosti Network. The event was held as part of the Harvard German American Conference.

Climate change was addressed in discussions throughout the year. On November 18, the ACG held a virtual discussion on takeaways from COP26 with Bundestag member Lisa Badum (The Greens). The event was supported by the Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung.

Relations with China were a focus of various events, including a virtual discussion on the COVID-19 crisis as a catalyst for greater transatlantic cooperation on China with Bundestag member Nils Schmid, Foreign Policy Spokesperson for the SPD, on August 20, and another on December 3 on China's influence in Europe with journalist Melissa Chan and Janka Oertel, Director of the Asia Program at the European Council on Foreign Relations.

### The Economy and Ongoing Turmoil: Pushing for a Post-COVID Recovery

Global trade continued to experience the reverberations of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2021. Years of outsourcing meant that shortages and stoppages far away caused ripple effects in the West. Supply-chain issues caused ongoing severe disruptions – ultimately driving up inflationary pressures. Backups at ports around the world wreaked havoc, and to make things worse, a single container ship ran aground in the Suez Canal, blocking the major waterway for a week. The shortage of computer chips was deeply felt by consumers, particularly those shopping for a new car. Meanwhile, the new Biden administration took a close look at revamping the country's infrastructure. After the pandemic forced much of the world to work remotely, the future of work was also a main focus.

Looking at transatlantic relations through an economic lens, on March 26 the Council held a virtual discussion with Dr. Gerald Podobnik, Chief Financial Officer of the Corporate Bank division of Deutsche Bank. He discussed sustainable finance in Germany and the United States and particularly whether the two countries are partners or rivals in environmental, social, and governance criteria. With a focus on the partnership side of the equation, the ACG held a virtual discussion on how we are setting a new course for transatlantic economic relations, featuring Daniel Andrich, General Manager of AmCham Germany, on April 28.

The Council held a virtual discussion on May 12 on global financial stability with Ambassador John B. Emerson, former U.S. Ambassador to Germany, Vice Chairman of Capital Group International, and Chairman of the American Council on Germany, and Markus Ferber, Chairman of the Hanns-Seidel-Stiftung and member of the European Parliament (Christian Democrats). The event was moderated by Megan E. Greene, Senior Fellow at the Mossavar-Rahmani Center for Business and Government at the Harvard Kennedy School, and held in partnership with the Hanns Seidel Foundation.

Looking at technology and innovation, the ACG met with Burkhard Balz, member of the Executive Board of the Deutsche Bundesbank, for a virtual discussion on the potential for Central Bank digital currencies on February 10. The Council heard insights on the global semiconductor shortage from Dr. Reinhard Ploss, CEO of Infineon Technologies AG, on June 16.

The Council was privileged to have an in-person discussion and dinner with Peter Altmaier, German Federal Minister for Economic Affairs and Energy, on June 24 in Washington, DC. The event was hosted by the Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy.



Dr. Reinhard Ploss, CEO of Infineon Technologies AG



Megan E. Greene, Senior Fellow at the Mossavar-Rahmani Center for Business and Government at the Harvard Kennedy School

# **Democracy under Threat:**

### Fighting to Preserve the Institution Despite the Political Divide

A global erosion of democratic governance continued to rear its head in 2021. The insurrection on January 6 led the United States – long considered a champion and bedrock of democracy – to be named a "backsliding democracy." Authoritarian governments suppressed dissent on an ongoing basis. In December, President Biden hosted a virtual Democracy Summit to look at "challenges and opportunities facing democracies."

Taking a close look at the events that unfolded on January 6 in Washington, DC, Juliane Schäuble, U.S. Correspondent for the Berlin daily Der Tagesspiegel, and Rob Schmitz, NPR's Berlin Correspondent, shared their experiences reporting on the riot at the U.S. Capitol. The event was held on January 14 in partnership with the Freunde des American Council on Germany e.V. The following day, a panel looked at " 'We, the People ...' Reality or Illusion?" Sharing their insights were Pam Campos-Palma, a political strategist and consultant, and Alexander Sängerlaub, Director of futur eins, with moderator Dr. Nicholas Boston (2006 McCloy Fellow in Art), Associate Professor of Journalism and Media Studies at Lehman College of the City University of New York and Visiting Professor of Communications at John Cabot University in Rome, Italy. The event was held in partnership with 1014 Inc.

Democracy has faced new hurdles in the digital age, partly owing to misinformation. The Council held a virtual discussion on strengthening democracies in the digital age on June 24 with Ricklef Beutin, Deputy Chief of Mission at the German Embassy in Washington; Joel Kaplan, Vice President of Global Public Policy at Facebook; Chris Riley, Senior Fellow for Internet Governance at the R Street Institute; and Marietje Schaake, International Policy Director at Stanford University's Cyber Policy Center. The event was moderated by Nate Persily, Co-director of the Stanford Cyber Policy Center, and held in partnership with the German Embassy in Washington, the Stanford Cyber Policy Center, and the German Consulate General in San Francisco as part of the German Embassy's "Meeting America" series.

Under the auspices of Wunderbar Together 2021, the Council worked with the World Affairs Councils of America and Atlantik-Brücke to convene a series of virtual discussions on the challenges to democracy in Europe and the United States – and how to address them. Four virtual events under the heading "Democracy on the Brink? Challenges to Democracy in Germany, Europe, and the United States and How to Confront Them" analyzed the state of democracy, challenges to its underpinnings, and ways to strengthen the institution at home and abroad.

The series began with a virtual discussion on July 12 looking at how democracy can be preserved by reinventing institutions and practices for the 21st century, featuring **Dr. Jan-Werner Müller**, Professor of Politics at Princeton University and author of Democracy Rules. The following day saw two discussions on democracy - and the rise of illiberal politics - in Europe and the United States. Anne Applebaum, Staff Writer at the Atlantic, talked about democracies in distress in an event hosted by the World Affairs Council of Charlotte. And Dr. Daniel Ziblatt, Eaton Professor of Government at Harvard University and Director of the Transformations of Democracy Group at the WZB Berlin Social Science Center, talked about illiberal politics and how best to address the issue. That event was moderated by Paulina Fröhlich, Head of the Future of Democracy Programme at Das Progressive Zentrum, and hosted by the Savannah Council on World Affairs. Watch here

Defending democracy from misinformation and fake news was the subject of the final discussion of the series on July 14, featuring Nina Jankowicz, Global Fellow at the Wilson Center and author of How to Lose the Information War; Dr. Hanna Klimpe, Professor of Social Media and Commissioner for Equity at the Hamburg University of Applied Sciences; and Andrea Shalal, Senior Correspondent with Reuters.

Later in the year, on December 10, the Council held a virtual discussion on President Biden's Democracy Summit with Dr. Frances Brown, Co-director and Senior Fellow in the Democracy, Conflict, and Governance Program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, and Ralf Fücks, Managing Director of the Center for Liberal Modernity in Berlin. The event was held with support from the Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung.



Alexander Sängerlaub, Director of futur eins; Dr. Nicholas Boston (2006 McCloy Fellow in Art), Associate Professor of Journalism and Media Studies at Lehman College of the City University of New York and Visiting Professor of Communications at John Cabot University in Rome, Italy; and Pam Campos-Palma, a political strategist and consultant

### Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: Fighting for Equality in the Face of Social Unrest

At a time when social cleavages were exposed by the COVID-19 crisis, the American Council on Germany offered a wide range of events looking at diversity, equity, and inclusion - in addition to its newly launched German-American Working Group on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility. 2021 saw the conviction of Derek Chauvin in the murder of George Floyd, ongoing disparities in access to online learning, and an acceleration of women leaving the workforce.

The focus of the Heidelberg Lecture on January 27 was the COVID crisis, economic insecurity, and the impact on women in Germany and the United States, with insights from **Dr. Christiane Schwieren**, Professor of Economics at the Alfred Weber Institute at Heidelberg University; Julie Kashen, Senior Fellow and Director for Women's Economic Justice at The Century Foundation; and German television journalist Birte Meier (2009 Kellen Fellow). The Heidelberg Lecture series is held in partnership with the Heidelberg University Association. The socioeconomic impact of the pandemic was also in focus in a virtual discussion on March 23 with Dr. Jutta Allmendinger, President of the WZB Berlin Social Science Center, and Richard V. Reeves, Senior Fellow at the Brookings Institution, also moderated by Ms. Meier. That event was held in partnership with Thomas Mann House and the WZB Berlin Social Science Center.

A virtual discussion on April 6 looked at ongoing economic inequality after the pandemic, featuring the insights of Wolfgang Schmidt, State Secretary at the German Federal Ministry of Finance; Angella MacEwen, Senior Economist at the Canadian Union of Public Employees and Policy Fellow with the Broadbent Institute; and Branko Milanovic, Senior Scholar at the Stone Center on Socio-Economic Inequality at the CUNY Graduate Center. That event was held in partnership with the CUNY Graduate Center's European Union Studies Center, the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, the Stone Center on Socio-Economic Inequality, and the Colorado European Union Center of Excellence.

Feminist perspectives and gender equity were highlighted in three other virtual discussions. On March 8, Dr. Hannah Neumann, member of the European Parliament (The Greens); Dr. Armgard von Reden, Chairwoman of Women in International Security Germany (WIIS.de); and Julia Santucci, former Senior Advisor in the Secretary of State's Office of Global Women's Issues during the Obama administration, discussed gender equity as a national security priority in Germany and the United States. On March 31, Pam Campos-Palma, a political strategist, former military intelligence analyst, and Director of Peace and Security at the Working Families Party, and Verity Coyle, Senior Advisor and Nonresident Fellow with Stimson's Conventional Defense Program, discussed feminist foreign policy and employing a people-centered approach to transatlantic security and peace. The event was moderated by Kristina Lunz, Executive Director of the Centre for Feminist Foreign Policy (CFFP) and held in partnership with the CFFP and 1014 Inc. And on April 14, Natalia Cardona Sanchez, Associate Director for Justice & Equity at 350.org, and Leonie Bremer, climate activist at Fridays for Future Germany, talked about the climate crisis with an intersectional feminist approach. The event was also moderated by Ms. Lunz, and held in partnership with the CFFP and 1014 Inc.



Journalist Birte Meier (2009 Kellen Fellow); Richard V. Reeves, Senior Fellow at the Brookings Institution; and Dr. Jutta Allmendinger. President of the WZB Berlin Social Science Center



### John J. McCloy Awards Dinner ACG Honors Oliver Bäte and Allianz SE and Former World Bank President Robert B. Zoellick



Former Representative Charlie Dent, who served as Co-chair of the Congressional Study Group on Germany; honoree Oliver Bäte, Chairman of the Board of Management of Allianz SE; and ACG Chairman Ambassador John B. Emerson



Former journalist Deidre Berger, Chair of the Executive Board of the Jewish Digital Cultural Recovery Project Foundation



ACG Chairman Ambassador John B. Emerson and honoree Robert B. Zoellick. Lead U.S. Official for the Two-Plus-Four Negotiations on German Unification, former President of the World Bank, and former ACG Board member

The American Council on Germany's John J. McCloy Awards Dinner honors business leaders of American or German companies for exemplary efforts to promote positive transatlantic economic relations. First presented in 1993, the awards are named in honor of John J. McClov. the founding Chairman of the American Council on Germany and the first civilian U.S. High Commissioner for Germany after World War II. The McCloy Awards Dinner brings together thought leaders, decision-makers, and stakeholders to celebrate the German-American partnership.

On October 13, 2021, the ACG honored Oliver Bäte, Chairman of the Board of Management of Allianz SE, and Robert B. Zoellick, Lead U.S. Official for the Two-Plus-Four Negotiations on German Unification, former President of the World Bank, and former ACG Board member, at its 28th John J. McCloy Awards Dinner in New York City. The dinner was the first major in-person event for the ACG since the COVID-19 pandemic hit New York in March of 2020. More than 320 attendees - all of whom were vaccinated against COVID-19 - were in attendance.

ACG Chairman Ambassador John B. Emerson underlined the importance of German-American cooperation in addressing global issues while highlighting the accomplishments of the evening's honorees: "Both of our honorees have demonstrated an adept understanding of the past, a strong sense of the challenges facing us today, and a vision for the future. Throughout their careers they have shown their resilience and their ability to consistently navigate complex challenges. ... Both of them have recognized that the German-American relationship is indispensable – and as steadfast transatlanticists have been advocates for finding ways to strengthen ties across the Atlantic." Ambassador Emerson also read a letter from President Joe Biden, who affirmed the United States' and Germany's commitment to democratic principles and said our biggest challenges are best faced in tandem with each other: "We cannot tackle these issues alone; they require global cooperation, and organizations like the American Council on Germany remind us of the importance of uniting around these shared values. Your work truly deepens the bonds between our two nations and bolsters transatlantic ties."

ACG President Dr. Steven E. Sokol described how the Council had pivoted quickly to offer online discussions when the COVID-19 pandemic caused much of the world to go into lockdown. As a result, the American Council on Germany was able to promote transatlantic dialogue to a much wider audience - including more than 15,000 unique viewers in more than 60 countries.



The 28th John J. McCloy Awards Dinner



ACG President Dr. Steven E. Sokol

"Our societal, economic, and political ties are so close that we could not imagine a better partner for each other. Our transatlantic community manifests itself in the most diverse and lively manner also thanks to the American Council on Germany."

- Chancellor Angela Merkel

German Consul General in New York David Gill (1992 Young Leader) said that no matter what government would take office following the German federal elections about two weeks prior, "whoever will form the next government, one matter is very clear: My country and its government will keep the transatlantic relationship high on the agenda and will keep close contact on all levels with our most important ally beyond Europe." Consul General Gill also conveyed greetings from Chancellor Angela Merkel, whose letter stated that "Our societal, economic, and political ties are so close that we could not imagine a better partner for each other. Our transatlantic community manifests itself in the most diverse and lively manner also thanks to the American Council on Germany."

Former journalist **Deidre Berger**, Chair of the Executive Board of the Jewish Digital Cultural Recovery Project Foundation – which is establishing a central archival database of cultural objects looted by National Socialists and collaborators – reflected on the transformation Germany has undergone since the fall of the Berlin Wall.

Former Representative Charlie Dent, who served seven terms in the House of Representatives representing the 15th District of Pennsylvania and as Co-chair of the Congressional Study Group on Germany, presented the 2021 McCloy Award to Mr. Bäte. The dinner featured a special video message from former U.S. Secretary of State James A. Baker praising his former colleague Robert B. Zoellick. Ambassador Zoellick, who was awarded the 2021 Transatlantic Leadership Award, said: "I always try to remind people that it would be absolutely foolish to let these countries [Germany and the United States] drift apart ... and that's where the American Council on Germany comes in .... This organization has worked over the years, including with the critical Young Leaders program, to keep people understanding, at a human level, the important relationships between these countries."

After the award presentation, both honorees sat down for a fireside chat with Ms. Berger to discuss the legacy of German unification more than 30 years ago – and how transatlantic partners can best tackle the challenges of today and tomorrow.

The ACG is very grateful to those who supported the dinner and helped make it a success.

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