



Top: Konrad Adenauer and Charles de Gaulle, 22 January 1963. *PHOTO: French Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs.*

Bottom: Angela Merkel and François Hollande, 22 January 2013. *PHOTO: Getty Images.*

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50 years of the ‘twin engine’

Franco-German reconciliation, European integration and reflections for Asia

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Abstract

On 22 January 2013, French President François Hollande and German Chancellor Angela Merkel gathered in Berlin to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the signing of the Élysée Treaty, the document that ended centuries of rivalry and warfare between their two countries. It is all too easy to forget the importance of Franco-German reconciliation. The 1950 Schuman Declaration, which led to the creation of the European Union’s (EU) predecessor, the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), sought to render the prospect of war between France and Germany ‘not only unthinkable but materially impossible’. Over 60 years later, when the EU was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, the Norwegian Nobel Committee noted that indeed, ‘war between Germany and France is unthinkable’.

Halfway around the world in Asia, the other theatre of World War II, tensions between China and Japan have arisen, with Taiwan and South Korea also in the fray. Nationalist movements in these countries have grown. This background brief lays out the issues for a timely reappraisal of the applicability, or otherwise, of the European integration and reconciliation processes to East Asia.

The brief seeks to outline the contours of the historic act of Franco-German reconciliation, and its consequences ever since. Starting from a brief look at the history of rivalry and war between the two countries, the brief examines the events leading to the signing of the Élysée Treaty in 1963, and the development of Franco-German exchanges that have cemented the relationship. Difficulties between the countries are also raised. A timescale analysis of the opinion of the two publics is considered, as a measure of the success of Franco-German reconciliation.

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50 years of the ‘twin engine’ Franco-German reconciliation, European integration and reflections for Asia

LOKE HOE YEONG ¹

Introduction: Celebrations amid difficulties

On 22 January 2013, French President François Hollande and German Chancellor Angela Merkel gathered in Berlin to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the signing of the Élysée Treaty, the document that ended centuries of rivalry and warfare between their two countries. Amid the pomp, the current difficulties between the two leaders and their countries were momentarily forgotten – the differing strategies between the socialist Hollande and the pro-austerity Merkel in solving the euro zone debt crises, and France’s unilateral action in Mali, which put Germany in a bind with regard to its own military contribution. These disagreements prompted one journalist to write that ‘a chill has settled over the Rhine’.²

It is all too easy to forget the importance of Franco-German reconciliation. The common charge is that those generations of French and German citizens born after World War II take the peace between their countries for granted. The 1950 Schuman Declaration, which led to the creation of the European Union’s (EU) predecessor, the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), sought to render the prospect of war between France and Germany ‘not only unthinkable but materially impossible’. Over 60 years later, the EU was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for the ‘advancement of peace and reconciliation, democracy and human rights in Europe’, and the Norwegian Nobel Committee noted that indeed, ‘war between Germany and France is unthinkable’.³

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² Taylor, Paul. 2012. ‘Franco-German chill reshuffles cards in Europe’. Reuters, 10 December 2012.

[<http://uk.reuters.com/article/2012/12/10/uk-eu-france-germany-idUKBRE8B905E20121210>](http://uk.reuters.com/article/2012/12/10/uk-eu-france-germany-idUKBRE8B905E20121210)

³ Nobel Prize, Official website of. 2012. ‘The Nobel Peace Prize for 2012’.

Halfway around the world in Asia, the other theatre of World War II, tensions between China and Japan have arisen, with Taiwan and South Korea also in the fray. Centred on the disputes on the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands and Dokdo/Takeshima islets, it has led to various confrontations at sea, and worrying escalations with jets being scrambled on a number of occasions. Nationalist movements in these countries have grown. The charge often levelled at Japan is that it has not fully ‘learnt’ from Germany in dealing with its war past. Besides bearing in mind that the situation in Asia cannot be simplistically compared to Europe, one has to be careful that applying the ‘lessons’ of Germany may actually backfire. For instance, the scholar Jennifer Lind has warned that apologies issued by the Japanese government on its wartime conduct can and indeed have led to serious backlashes from nationalistic elements back home.⁴

The prudent way forward therefore is for Asians serious about pursuing a peace agenda to examine the European case in greater detail, and reflect on what can and need to be done to confront Asia’s own histories in order to move forward with reconciliation.

This background brief seeks to outline the contours of the historic act of Franco-German reconciliation, and its consequences ever since. Starting from a brief look at the history of rivalry and war between the two countries, the brief examines the events leading to the signing of the Élysée Treaty in 1963, and the development of Franco-German exchanges that have cemented the relationship. Difficulties between the countries are also raised. A timescale analysis of the opinion of the two publics is considered, as a measure of the success of Franco-German reconciliation.

The concept of reconciliation

Germany has had no comprehensive or overarching policy of reconciliation with its former enemies or victims of the Nazi era. This has not prevented successive German governments and their officials from being remarkably consistent in their foreign policy articulations over the years. The Christian Democrat chancellor Helmut Kohl said ‘we want to realise the aims that Adenauer declared as the principle objectives

<http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/2012/press.html>

⁴ Lind, Jennifer. 2009. ‘The Perils of Apology: What Japan Shouldn’t Learn From Germany’. *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2009. 132-146.

of foreign policy in 1949; understanding and reconciliation, particularly with France, Israel and Poland’,⁵ while the Social Democratic-Green coalition agreement of the Gerhard Schröder government declared that ‘German foreign policy is peace policy’ and its commitment to ‘good neighbourliness and historic responsibility’.⁶

As pointed out by Feldman, German policies towards reconciliation reflect the meanings of both the German equivalents of the word – *versöhnung*, which implies a philosophical/emotional aspect, and *aussöhnung*, which conveys a practical/material element.⁷

The scholar Ulrich Krotz has drawn attention to the ‘parapublic’ underpinning of Franco-German relations, which describe state-organised and -financed interactions between private individuals or collective actors.⁸ ‘Parapublic’ interactions, for Krotz, have been a very important process of Europeanisation that is independent of European Union-led initiatives.

The history of Franco-German rivalry

Emergence of France and Germany as national entities can be traced to the Treaty of Verdun of A.D. 843 when the empire of Charlemagne was divided between three of his heirs – the third entity from this division corresponds to the territory stretching from today’s Netherlands, through the French provinces of Alsace, Lorraine, Burgundy and Provence, to northern Italy. In successive centuries, there had been hostilities between the French and German proto-entities and their sub-entities.

However, it would only be meaningful to speak of the beginning of Franco-German rivalry in the modern age of nationalism after the Napoleonic wars, which ended in 1815. The kingdom of Prussia gradually became the

⁵ Speech by the Federal Chancellor to the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations, Chicago, 19 June 1997. *Bulletin*, Presse- und Informationsamt der Bundesregierung no. 63, 30 July 1997. 751.

⁶ Cited in Feldman, Lily Gardner. 1999. ‘The principle and practice of ‘reconciliation’ in German foreign policy: relations with France, Israel, Poland and the Czech Republic’. *International Affairs*, 75:2. 333.

⁷ Ibid. 334.

⁸ Krotz, Ulrich. 2007. ‘Parapublic Underpinnings of International Relations: The Franco-German Construction of Europeanization of a Particular Kind’. *European Journal of International Relations*, 13: 3. 385-417.

most powerful of the German states, and its Minister-President Otto von Bismarck led the unification of Germany to become the first German Chancellor. The German Empire came into being in 1871, following Prussia’s defeat of France in the Franco-Prussian war. France was forced to cede the territories of Alsace and Lorraine, and to pay an indemnity of five billion francs to the German Empire. Thereafter, the ideas of ‘hereditary enmity’ (*Erbfeindschaft* in German) and of *l'esprit de revanche* ('desire for revenge') in France were born.

France and Germany went to war again, when the countries of the Central Powers (comprising Germany and Austria-Hungary) and the Allies (comprising France, Britain and Russia, based on the Triple Entente) were drawn into battles culminating in World War I. Defeated by the Allies, Germany was forced to return Alsace-Lorraine to France, and to pay reparations amounting to 132 billion gold marks. The German territories of the Saar and the Ruhr were occupied by French troops slightly later, when Germany failed to pay war reparations, as provided for by the Treaty of Versailles.

Adolf Hitler and the Nazis came into power in Germany in 1933 on a revisionist platform. Starting with large scale rearmament to the invasion of Czechoslovakia and Poland, World War II descended upon Europe. Germany invaded France in 1940, occupying it for four years. Upon Germany’s unconditional surrender in May 1945, the country was divided into four zones of occupation by the Allies – the United States, Britain, France and the Soviet Union.

Post-World War II settlements

Understandably, France remained distrustful of its eastern neighbour after World War II – it was, after all, the third war in a century with Germany. France’s post-war foreign policy was designed to keep German resurgence under control. Nonetheless, the French were also cognisant of not punishing Germany ‘till the pips squeaked’,⁹ as they did at Versailles after World War I.

France was again concerned about the Saar and the Ruhr territories, where the coal and steel industries of Germany were centred. The French wanted these

⁹ As uttered by Sir Eric Campbell-Geddes, a member of the British cabinet, at a rally before the Versailles peace conference.

industries and their host territories to be controlled internationally, as they wanted to limit Germany's industrial and war capacities. Giving in to French demands in their Monnet Plan, the US allowed the Saar to be made a protectorate of France. It was not until French Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Robert Schuman's proposal for the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) in 1950 that France started to turn away from a policy of permanent occupation of parts of German territory. The Saar was returned to West Germany in 1957 after a local referendum, although France retained its economic right to the Saar coal mines until 1981. The Ruhr was run by an international authority chaired by the Allied powers until 1952.

France soon cooperated more fully with the British and the Americans, and the three western zones of occupation merged – first in 1948 as an entity using the common reformed currency of the Deutschmark, and eventually in 1949 as the Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany) with partial sovereignty. With the Cold War raging, the US pushed for the rearmament of Germany, agreeing through the 1951 Bonn Conventions to grant West Germany full sovereignty. The French National Assembly voted this plan down, as well as the European Defence Community (EDC) treaty, fearing a threat to French national sovereignty. An alternative framework with slight tweaking of some provisions was then offered through the 1954 Paris Agreements. With the termination of the Allied occupation of Germany through the Paris Agreements, West Germany attained full sovereignty in 1955, with its integration into Western Europe guaranteed through its full membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the Brussels Pact.

Élysée Treaty, 1963

The opportunity to attain a new level of reconciliation between France and Germany came in September 1958, when West German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer met French President Charles de Gaulle for the first time. While Adenauer had been chancellor since the establishment of the Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany) in 1949, de Gaulle was in the process of returning to power in France after a 12-year hiatus. In the constitution of the French Fifth Republic that was being drafted in 1958, the president was to be given greater executive powers. Ostensibly, this gave de Gaulle greater prerogative in foreign policy than the preceding head of government of France, the prime minister of the Fourth Republic.

After several meetings, the friendship between the two leaders culminated in their signing of the Élysée Treaty (also known as the 'Treaty of Friendship') on 22 January 1963. The treaty document was a brief one, outlining the general areas of Franco-German cooperation for the future. Nonetheless, the vision of the treaty was realised in very real terms in the ensuing 50 years.

Treaty provisions

The treaty provided for the leaders of the two countries to meet at least twice a year. More frequent meetings were envisaged for the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Ministers of Defence, ministers-in-charge of youth affairs, and government officials. An inter-ministerial commission, to be created in each of the countries, would be charged with monitoring cooperation between the two governments.

On important issues of foreign affairs, the two governments undertook to consult each other before making decisions. On Defence issues, exchanges of personnel and a harmonisation of strategic doctrines were provided for.

The third area for Franco-German cooperation was on education and youth issues. The two governments sought to promote instruction for students in the languages of each other's country. Academic terms and qualifications in the two countries were to be better synchronised. A body supported by a joint fund would be created to facilitate exchanges between French and German youths, including artists and workers. Cooperation between scientific and research institutes would increase their contacts across the border through cooperation.

The immediate development - Franco-German Office for Youth

The Franco-German Office for Youth (*L'Office franco-allemand pour la jeunesse* in French, *Deutsch-Französisches Jugendwerk* in German), perhaps the most enduring product of the treaty, was established in summer that same year the treaty was signed. An organisation presided over by the ministers for youth affairs of both countries, it has facilitated the participation of 8 million French and German youths in various exchange programmes in each other's country since its inception.¹⁰

¹⁰ French-German Youth Office (website). 'Dates and key statistics'. <<http://www.ofaj.org/english-version>>

The document that established the Office, the Intergovernmental Agreement of 5 July 1963, stated that its purpose is to ‘tighten the bonds between young people in both countries, to strengthen their mutual understanding and, to this effect, to provoke, encourage and, where necessary, to set up encounters and exchanges between young people’.¹¹

The Office partners with different organisations to encourage interest in intercultural awareness, as well as to facilitate vocational training, and covers exchanges of students from the primary to university level.

Franco-German exchanges over the years

Personal relationships of the leaders

The Élysée Treaty institutionalised the relationship of leaders of France and Germany, by providing for them to meet regularly. This led the way for successive leaders of the two countries to forge a kind of personal relationship rarely seen among politicians – one thinks of Konrad Adenauer and Charles de Gaulle; Willy Brandt and Georges Pompidou; Helmut Schmidt and Valéry Giscard d'Estaing; Helmut Kohl and François Mitterrand; and Gerhard Schröder and Jacques Chirac.

The symbolism of such closely-knitted relationships between national leaders is in itself powerful enough as evidence of genuine reconciliation. The image of Mitterrand and Kohl holding hands in 1984 at the site of the Battle of Verdun of World War I has attained iconic status. More recently, Angela Merkel and Nicholas Sarkozy, while having earned the not-so-flattering sobriquet of the ‘Merkozy duet’, is nonetheless a reflection of the continued perception of the importance of the Franco-German partnership in European affairs.

Religious and civil society groups

Religious leaders in both countries re-established contact early on after the end of World War II, tapping on Christian teachings on forgiveness to foster reconciliation between countries. The relationship between Konrad Adenauer and Robert Schuman, the latter in his role as an early post-war prime minister of France, has been characterised as ‘Roman Catholic

interaction’. ¹² Indeed, both men were devoutly religious. In 1962, a landmark Mass of Reconciliation was held in Reims Cathedral, where the kings of France once were crowned, with de Gaulle and Adenauer in attendance.

Interactions between religious and civil society leaders were not confined to the Roman Catholic Church. As early as 1946, the French Protestant church participated in the synod at Speyer, Germany. That same year, the non-governmental organisation Moral Re-Armament (known today as Initiatives of Change International) started inviting German and French political, religious and civil society leaders to its conference centre in Caux, Switzerland. The German delegation was initially treated coldly by the other conference delegates. ¹³ But through further conferences in subsequent years, Moral Re-Armament played a key role in reconciling French and German leaders from the political, religious and civil spheres, at a time when the international contact with German figures was very limited. One of these conference delegates was Konrad Adenauer, before he became the German chancellor, when he was in the process of building up the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) party.

Town twinning

While schemes to twin towns from different countries already existed in Europe before World War II, the Élysée Treaty certainly paved the way for more, and extended the concept to schools and regions in France and Germany. Besides complementing youth exchange programmes, economic and touristic exchanges also proliferated from the twinning schemes.

Vergangenheitsbewältigung ('Coming to terms with the past')

While it derived its intellectual basis from the philosophical and cultural spheres, the concept of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* has had a very real application in the everyday lives of Germans. It has been most conspicuous in the practices of Holocaust remembrance – in the building of Holocaust memorials, through the school history curriculum, laws against Holocaust denial, and reparations and frequent

¹² Feldman. 1999. 338.

¹³ Initiatives of Change International (website). '1946-1947: Contribution to Franco-German reconciliation'. <<http://www.iofc.org/history/franco-german-reconciliation>>

¹¹ Article 2 (1) of the Intergovernmental Agreement of 5 July 1963. Cited in ibid.

apologies made by German leaders to the Jewish people and the state of Israel.

It has also been applied to Franco-German relations, as part of a broader act of Germans coming to terms with the atrocities committed by the Third Reich. While apologies and other acts of contrition offered by German officials were largely addressed to the Jewish people, due to the overwhelming extent of suffering from the Holocaust, the French were highly attuned to them. What the French valued most, though, were not apologies or war crimes trials, but the revision of history education in Germany. They felt that 'books and syllabus must be fundamentally revised, not only from the angle of de-Nazification, but also from all traces of an aggressive spirit'.¹⁴ During the period of post-war Allied occupation of Germany, the French took the issue of education in Germany seriously. Hearnden noted that 'of the three Western allies, it was the French who approached the "re-education" issue with the greatest precision... policies were adopted somewhat in the spirit of a *mission civilisatrice*, designed in this case to awaken in the Germans a love of freedom and individualism as revealed in French cultural traditions'.¹⁵

But the concept of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* had yet to sink into the German psyche at this point of time. Until the 1960s, Germany pursued what Lind calls an 'Adenauer model', in which it acknowledged war time atrocities while emphasising its post-war achievements. The then recent war was largely glossed over in textbooks in which, according to Richard Evans, 'very little was said about Nazism. Next to nothing was taught in schools... critical enquiry into the German past was discouraged'.¹⁶ The emphasis was on German victims of Nazism, such as those from the resistance movements. Nonetheless the German government did pay huge amounts of reparations, especially to the state of Israel.

It was only in the late 1960s, when the Social Democrats came into power in Germany, that German

atrocities committed during World War II were earnestly explored. Official German statements relating to the war also became markedly more apologetic. As *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* began to sink in, former concentration camps started to be memorialised, and history education was revamped to reflect an apologetic remembrance of Nazi crimes in greater detail.

According to Lind, Christian Democrat conservative politicians have been careful not to be overly apologetic of the German past, and steered the country back to the 'Adenauer model' when they returned to power in 1982. This apparently stemmed from their fear of the far right who could then offer Germans a 'prouder version of history'.¹⁷ Conservative politicians in the 1980s told Germans to 'walk tall again' and to 'come out of Hitler's shadow'.¹⁸

Nonetheless, German leaders continue to make statements of apologies to this day. For their part, the French have not shied away either. In 1995, Jacques Chirac became the first French president to apologise for French complicity in the Holocaust during the Vichy regime which collaborated with Nazi Germany.¹⁹

*A joint history textbook - Histoire/Geschichte*²⁰

In 2006, a history textbook for secondary school students jointly written by French and German historians, titled '*Histoire/Geschichte*' ('history' in French and German) was published for the first time. It covered the history of both countries and of Europe after 1945. Hailed as the first such joint history textbook by any two countries, it was published simultaneously in the two languages and approved for use by the education authorities in France and in all the 16 federal states of Germany.

Already in the late 1940s, historians and educators from both countries had been convening to discuss textbook revisions. But the idea of jointly producing and implementing a history textbook was only mooted

¹⁴ Helen Liddell, quoting a 1947 manuscript by Marek St-Korowicz, as cited in Lind, Jennifer. 2003. 'Apologies and Threat Reduction in Postwar Europe' (manuscript). Paper prepared for delivery at the Memory of Violence Workshop, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 24-25 January 2003. 27. <web.mit.edu/rpeters/papers/lind_apologies.pdf>

¹⁵ Hearnden, Arthur. 1974. *Education in the Two Germanies*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell. 37.

¹⁶ Evans, Richard J. 1989. *In Hitler's Shadow: West German Historians and the Attempt to Escape from the Nazi Past*. New York: Pantheon Books. 11.

¹⁷ Lind. 2009. 140.

¹⁸ Franz Josef Strauss and Alfred Dregger, quoted in ibid.

¹⁹ Ganley, Elaine. 1995. 'Chirac: France's Apology To Jews'. *The Seattle Times*, 17 July 1995.

[<http://community.seattletimes.nwsource.com/archive/?date=19950717&slug=2131858>](http://community.seattletimes.nwsource.com/archive/?date=19950717&slug=2131858)

²⁰ Nathan/Ernst Klett (website). '*Histoire Geschicht: Deutsch-französisches Geschichtsbuch/Manuels d'Histoire franco-allemand*'. <http://www2.klett.de/projekte/geschichte/dfgb/>

by the young participants at the 2003 Franco-German Youth Parliament meeting, incidentally on the 40th anniversary of the signing of the Élysée Treaty. The idea was taken up by the German Ministry for Foreign Affairs and the French Ministry of Education.

The project of authoring the textbook was not without contentions. One concerned the depiction of the United States, seen as a great power rival in France but more as a 'rebuilder' of Europe in Germany. Another concerned Communism, which has been an important movement in French political history, but is associated with the East German and Soviet dictatorships in Germany. These differences, according to the authors, have been carefully explained in the final product of the textbook.

Other differences were of a more light-hearted nature. It was noted in the course of the venture that German textbooks have tended to be wordy while their French equivalents have been more akin to glossy magazines with generous illustration. The final joint product went with the latter style.

A second volume covering the period from 1815 to 1945, an arguably thornier period to deal with, was published in 2008. Consequently the idea of joint history textbooks was also mooted for Germany and Poland, and for Slovakia and Hungary.

A Franco-German cultural TV-channel – ARTE

In 1992, the Franco-German public-service cultural television channel ARTE (*Association Relative à la Télévision Européenne*) went on air. The first time a television channel had been created for two audiences, Mitterrand and Kohl sought to 'bring French and German citizens closer on a cultural level and promote cultural integration throughout Europe'. ²¹ An agreement between the two governments was signed. Headquartered in Strasbourg, there are two more entities of ARTE, in Paris and Baden-Baden, responsible for programme production. Documentaries are the mainstay of ARTE, though the genres of films, information programmes and music, theatre and dance programmes are also well covered. Besides options available for subtitling and dubbing when receiving the channel, hosts also speak both French and German in alternation.

²¹ ARTE (website). 'The ARTE Group'. <http://www.arte.tv/de/arte-the-channel-engl/2197470.html>

The Franco-German Brigade, Eurocorps and security cooperation

In 1987, the Franco-German Brigade²² was formed after a decision made at a summit between Mitterrand and Kohl. A brigade of currently 6,000 soldiers, it consists of an armoured reconnaissance regiment an artillery regiment and three infantry battalions from both countries and stationed in various towns. Its headquarters in Mülheim, Germany, and its logistical support unit are staffed binationally. When the multilateral army Eurocorps²³ was formed in 1992 with the participation of France, Germany, Belgium, Luxembourg and Spain, the Franco-German Brigade was integrated into it as its nucleus. Besides joint military exercises, the brigade has been notably deployed as a peacekeeping mission to Kosovo in 2000, among others.

Consultations on security issues between France and Germany were also further institutionalised around this time. In 1988, the Franco-German Defence Council was set up. These interactions between Paris and Bonn led to the formulation of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) in the Maastricht Treaty creating the EU.

Difficulties in Franco-German relations

The historian Feldman wrote that 'reconciliation is a long and difficult process'. She noted that even Adenauer had said, in reference to the Élysée Treaty, that 'this friendship between France and Germany is like a rose that will always have buds and flowers,' and, he added, 'thorns'.²⁴ Any study of Franco-German reconciliation, therefore, should not shy away from discussing difficulties in the bilateral relationship.

Even during the course of ratifying the Élysée Treaty, the Germans ruffled Charles de Gaulle when German lawmakers inserted a preamble into the document reaffirming West Germany's commitment to NATO and its defence ties with the United States. De Gaulle, who had separately been protesting against the strong role of the US in NATO, was reportedly enraged and hinted

²² Franco-German Bridge (website).

<http://www.df-brigade.de>

²³ Eurocorps (website). <http://www.eurocorps.org/>

²⁴ Passeron, André. 1966. De Gaulle Parle 1962-1966. Paris: Fayard. 341.

that the treaty could become a dead letter.²⁵ In 1966, under separate circumstances, de Gaulle withdrew France from the NATO military command. That raised the question of how French troops could be allowed to remain on German soil after being transferred from NATO command, which was the post-war agreement, to French national control. Despite this awkward situation potentially raising issues on Germany's security and sovereignty, Germany ultimately consented to French troops remaining.

Over the years, relations between France and Germany in the European Economic Community (EEC) was occasionally tense on issues of agricultural subsidies, monetary coordination, and the French initial rejection of Britain's membership of the community. Germany was also not pleased during the 'empty chair crisis' of 1965-6 when France temporarily withdrew its representative from the EEC's Council of Ministers in protest over its veto rights on new European Commission proposals. It did not help that Adenauer's successor as chancellor, Ludwig Erhard, was nowhere as sympathetic to French interests as his predecessor was.

Despite all that the Élysée Treaty provided for, and the years of regular meetings at the political level, the increasing prospect of German reunification in the late 1980s was still viewed with trepidation by many of the French elites. Mitterrand had confided his fears with British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, who later revealed that Mitterrand was 'clearly irked by German attitudes and behaviour... but was at a loss as to what he could do'.²⁶ He sought assurances from the reunified Germany as to its future military behaviour and to renounce any nuclear weapons capability. A French journalist wrote at this time that 'when Germany becomes larger, it is inevitable that this evokes the phantom of a grand Germany whose ambition spilled blood in crimes across Europe'.²⁷

Public opinion and attitudes

Perhaps the best vindication of the policies of Franco-German reconciliation has been in the dramatic

reversal in public opinion. As the German-French scholar Alfred Grosser pithily put it,²⁸ the French view in 1944 was that there was 'no enemy but Germany', but by 1960 that view had changed to 'no friend but Germany'. In a poll conducted in 1950 asking French respondents to rank various countries in order of preference, Germany came out in last place, behind the Soviet Union.²⁹ In 1965, West Germany garnered 20 per cent of votes in a poll to earn the place of being France's best friend.³⁰ That figure grew to 48 per cent in a 1983 poll.³¹

In a study on integration between France and Germany at various levels by Puchala,³² the mid-1950s to the early 1960s was identified as the period during which the greatest improvement in mutual perceptions at the people-to-people level occurred. It might be noted that this corresponds to the period immediately preceding the signing of the Élysée Treaty. This suggests the provisions of the treaty cemented and institutionalised whatever goodwill at the people-to-people had already been built up through projects of European integration starting with the establishment of the ECSC.

French attitudes towards German reunification have been slightly more mixed, but generally positive. The support of the French public for German reunification has been steadily growing. In 1960, only 33 per cent of them supported German reunification, growing to 62 per cent in 1987.³³ In a poll conducted in France in October 1990 when Germany was officially reunified, only 37 per cent of respondents 'rejoiced about [German] unification'.³⁴ It was noted, though, that the figure was 55 per cent among young people in the 18 to 25 age bracket. But it was the French elites who were more uncertain, even alarmed. American negotiators observed that French leaders 'will consider raising the question of the unity of Germany as extremely

²⁸ Grosser, Alfred. 1967, *French policies under de Gaulle*. London: Little, Brown. 6.

²⁹ Stoetzel, Jean. 1957. 'The Evolution of French Opinion'. In *France Defeats EDC*, edited by Lerner, D. and R. Aron. New York: Praeger. 74.

³⁰ Poll by Institut Français d'Opinion Publique, published in *France Soir*, 18 March 1965.

³¹ Poll, 'L'image comparée de la France et l'Allemagne de l'Ouest', SOFRES (May 1983). 1.

³² Puchala, Donald J. 1970. 'Integration and Disintegration in Franco-German Relations, 1954–1965'. *International Organization*, 24. 183–208.

³³ Sondages, no. 3 (1960), p. 71; 'La Reunification Allemande?' *Geopolitique* (1987). 6–9.

³⁴ SOFRES. *L'état de l'opinion* 1991. Paris: Seuil.

²⁵ De Menil, Lois Pattison. 1977. *Who Speaks for Europe? The vision of Charles de Gaulle*. London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London. 125

²⁶ Thatcher, Margaret. 1993. *The Downing Street Years*. London: HarperCollins. 797

²⁷ Frappat, Bruno. 1990. 'Puissants voisins'. *Le Monde*, 13 October 1990.

explosive'.³⁵ Mitterrand's fears of German reunification, as confided to Margaret Thatcher has already been noted above.

French analysts and scholars believe that Germany's participation in European integration has been the key towards reversing French perceptions of their country as a threat.³⁶ In this vein, one of them has commented that 'the EU has changed everything'.³⁷

European integration and the 'twin engine'

The post-war Franco-German relationship has often been described as the 'twin engine' that has been the driving force behind European integration. In theoretical debates, scholars argue that regional integration mitigates violent conflict between states for two main reasons – economic interdependence, which makes it irrationally costly for them to go to war, and the phenomenon of information sharing, which facilitates the peaceful resolution of disputes.

To achieve peace on the European continent after World War II, the link between the need for reconciliation between France and Germany and for integration in Europe was made early on. In 1946, Winston Churchill said that 'the first step in the re-creation of the European family must be a partnership between France and Germany'.³⁸

One prior form of the 'European family' was the Concert of Europe system that existed from 1815 to World War I. Based on the balance of power, it was a form of collective conflict-solving mechanism, albeit a flawed one that led to an arms race on the eve of World War I. Currency unions were not alien to the continent either. The *Zollverein* (German customs union) established in 1818 was a successful early venture in economic integration, although it was intended for the unification of the German states. Ideas for a European federation were raised as early as the 17th century by the mathematician and philosopher Gottfried Leibniz.

European integration in the 1950s

The 1950 Schuman Plan, which led to the creation of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), is remembered today for its lofty language and its symbolism of the birth of modern European integration that has resulted in today's European Union. The date on which the proposal was announced as the Schuman Declaration, 9 May 1950, is marked today as Europe Day. But in some quarters in France, such as those pushing for French control over the Ruhr, the plan was lent support as an 'attempt to shackle German heavy industry',³⁹ although that aim itself was not fulfilled. As mentioned above, France was primarily preoccupied with putting the Ruhr and the Saar territories of Germany under French or international supervision. The Schuman declaration sought to place the coal and steel sectors under a supranational authority as the starting point to make war 'materially impossible' between member states.

Through the negotiations following the Schuman Declaration, the French and German delegations made mutual compromises in realising the ECSC. Four other countries – Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg – were also involved in the negotiations, and subsequently became the six founding member states.

Following the establishment of the ECSC, the idea of a European Defence Community (EDC) was mooted by the French prime minister as a pan-European defence force. It was voted down in the French National Assembly as an unacceptable loss of French national sovereignty and hence abandoned, though the treaty was already ratified by the other ECSC member states. Nevertheless, there was support later for the European Economic Community (EEC) which was created by the 1957 Treaty of Rome, as a further means of broadening and deepening economic integration through a common market. A separate and legally distinct institution, the European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom) which dealt specially with the European market for nuclear power, was also formed concurrently.

³⁵ Zelikow, Philip, and Condoleezza Rice. 1995. *Germany Unified and Europe Transformed: a Study in Statecraft*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. 88.

³⁶ Interviews conducted by and cited in Lind. 2003. 45.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Churchill Society, London (website). 'Winston Churchill speaking in Zurich, 19th September 1946'. <<http://www.churchill-society-london.org.uk/astonish.html>>

³⁹ Lovett, A. W. 1996. 'The United States and the Schuman Plan. A Study in French Diplomacy 1950-1952'. *The Historical Journal*, 39: 2. 455.

Monetary union

In the 1970s, after the Bretton Woods international monetary system ended, the European Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM) was set up to fix currency exchange rate margins to reduce variability. By 1988, discussions on creating a monetary union were in full steam. Once again, France and Germany were at the centre of the negotiations for an Economic and Monetary Union (EMU), providing an ‘inner negotiation within the wider EMU negotiations’.⁴⁰ This was very much a reaction to Germany’s impending reunification. The negotiations were not entirely smooth sailing, as rival versions of a ‘French model’ – emphasising democratic legitimisation of economic and monetary policy – and a ‘German Bundesbank model’ – in which the independence of the European Central Bank (ECB) was paramount – of the EMU were thrashed out.

Despite these differences, what was not in doubt was that the French and German negotiators were committed to the principle of the EMU as a ‘central plank in the unification of Europe and to Franco-German reconciliation as the motor’.⁴¹ Nonetheless there was an informal understanding between the technocrats of the two finance ministries that it was ‘better a second-best outcome at our (technically competent) level than an “nth-best” solution in the hands of heads of state and government and foreign ministers’.⁴²

On 1 January 2002, euro notes and coins were introduced.

Core-Europe and a Franco-German federation

After the Maastricht Treaty which created the European Union was signed, a proposal for a ‘Core Europe’ (*Kerneuropa*) was put forward in 1994 by Wolfgang Schäuble, then chairman of the CDU/CSU group in the Bundestag, in the ‘Schäuble-Lamers Paper’. The paper advocated the constitution of a ‘hard-core’ of member states within the EU, consisting of the original members of the EU but controversially excluding Italy. France and Germany would form the de facto ‘core of the hard-core’. It warned that the EU was in danger of becoming a loose association with fewer

economic aspects for cooperation, as the membership of the bloc and the differentiation of interests within it expanded. In the wake of the ongoing euro zone sovereign debt crises, and with Schäuble himself currently serving as the Minister of Finance in the German government, the ‘Core Europe’ idea has regained traction as that of a ‘two-speed Europe’.

The idea of integrating France and Germany perhaps reached its logical end-point in 2003, when the German European Commissioner Günter Verheugen and his French colleague Pascal Lamy called for a Franco-German federation – in effect, a unification of the two countries – in a joint article published in the *Berliner Zeitung* and *Liberation* on the 40th anniversary of the signing of the Élysée Treaty.⁴³ They envisaged a federation with common governmental institutions, pursuing common foreign, security, and financial policies. The proposal, however, has not caught on. The Franco-German Ministerial Council, however, was set up that same year to replace the regular summits of the heads of state of France and Germany as designated in the Élysée Treaty.

The enlargement of the EU to 27 member states, and more importantly, the current debt crisis in the EU, has increasingly brought about debates as to whether the Franco-German ‘twin engine’ would continue to be the driving force for European integration. The Franco-German ‘engine’ will remain a necessary, but perhaps not sufficient, force to bring the EU to its next stage of integration.

Asia – Comparisons and reflections on Japan’s relations with its neighbours and comparisons with the Franco-German case

The application of the case of Franco-German reconciliation to Japan’s relations with its East Asian neighbours is hardly new. Politicians, activists and even social media users in China and South Korea have at times pointedly asked Japan to ‘learn’ from the German experience of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*.⁴⁴ They have decried official Japanese statements of apology for its wartime conduct as ‘too little too late’.

While the issue of school history textbooks and history education between France and Germany have been a

⁴⁰ Dyson, Kenneth. 1999. ‘The Franco-German relationship and economic and monetary union: Using Europe to ‘Bind Leviathan’’. *West European Politics*, 22:1. 25.

⁴¹ Ibid. 33.

⁴² Ibid. 26.

⁴³ Kirk, Lisbeth. 2003. ‘Verheugen and Lamy propose Franco-German federation’. *EUobserver*, 21 January 2003. <<http://euobserver.com/institutional/9084>>

⁴⁴ Lind. 2009. 133

cornerstone for cooperation and reconciliation, it is precisely a bone of contention that continues to engender enmity between Japan and its neighbours. The revisionist *New History Textbook* approved by the Japanese Ministry of Education in 2001, which downplays the history of Japan's military aggression, sparked protests in China, Hong Kong, Taiwan and South Korea. For its part, the South Korean government-approved history textbook has been criticised for not mentioning the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki at all. Meanwhile Chinese textbooks have been criticised for significantly playing up the Nanjing massacre in editions from recent years, whereas history education in mainland China was previously focused on portraying the Nationalist Kuomintang in a bad light.⁴⁵

The continued visits of Japanese leaders to the Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo on key occasions, as of late 2012, is another polarising act with no equivalent in the Franco-German case.

It is to the academic debates that one should turn to for better illumination. More balanced and constructive in their conclusions than the statements made by politicians and activists, these debates have been ongoing between Chinese, Japanese and Korean scholars.

Academic debates

Wu Yikang wrote the seminal Chinese text on Franco-German reconciliation in 1996.⁴⁶ Although it does not discuss comparisons with East Asia, Wu's article has had the effect of establishing a neo-realist mode of analysis in Chinese circles – that it was the calculation of national interests between France and Germany against the backdrop of the Cold War and a 'common Soviet threat' that made reconciliation feasible.

While agreeing with a neo-realist reading of the politics of reconciliation, the Japanese scholar Toshiro Tanaka has also emphasised the issue of improving the public image of former enemy states. To this end, Tanaka argues for the importance of cultivating friendships and exchanges between youths, which was an integral part

⁴⁵ Sneider, Daniel. 2012. 'Divided Memories: History Textbooks and the Wars in Asia'. *Nippon.com*, 29 May 2012. <<http://www.nippon.com/en/in-depth/a00703/>>

⁴⁶ Wu, Yikang. 1996. 'Fade Zhouxin yu Ouzhou Yitihu' (The Franco-German axis and European integration). *Ouzhou* (Europe), No. 1.

of the Franco-German reconciliation underpinned by the Elysee Treaty.⁴⁷

On the school of thought which believes the case of Franco-German reconciliation to be inapplicable to East Asia, Jiang Zhou perhaps best sums up the key conditions which have been absent in the Sino-Japanese case:⁴⁸

1. France and Germany were both weakened after World War II;
2. Franco-German reconciliation was supported by the United States and, it might be added, by the Cold War policies of the West;
3. Both France and Germany have shared disastrous war experiences over a period of time, whereas Jiang presumably believes that Japan only shared this experience towards the very end of World War II;
4. There is a greater form of unity between 'French and German civilisations'.

According to Min Shu,⁴⁹ the majority of Japanese scholars working on the topic agree that Japan has dealt with war responsibility less satisfactorily than Germany did. Here, the Japanese scholar Yamaguchi proposes four reasons why this was the case:

1. Due to the drastic use of atomic bombs on Japan, the Japanese have tended to see themselves as victims of the whole war;
2. The effect and influence of the US occupation of Japan – as presumably compared to the experience of European integration – had given it a very different domestic environment from that of Germany;

⁴⁷ Tanaka, Toshiro. 2003. 'Peace and Reconciliation between France and Germany after the Second World War'. Paper presented at the 3rd ASEF Round Table, Institute of International Relations, Hanoi, Vietnam.

⁴⁸ Jiang, Zhou. 2003. 'Women Shifou Xuyao 'Dui Guanxi Xin Siwei' huo 'Waijiao Geming' zhi Er' (Whether do we need "new thinking towards Japan" or "diplomatic revolution" II). *Guangming Guancha* (Guangming Observer), 30 July 2003.

⁴⁹ Shu, Min. 2008. 'Franco-German reconciliation and its impact on China and Japan: scholarly debates'. *Current Politics and Economics of Asia*, 17:1. 45.

3. The long-term dominance of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) in Japan had reduced pressures to address war responsibility more deeply, as presumably was the case when the Social Democrats won power in Germany in the late 1960s;
4. Post-war economic growth in Japan, in stark contrast with the economic situation of countries around it, has made the issue of good neighbourly relations less important for ordinary Japanese.

Yet other scholars from outside Asia have made pointed observations and recommendations. Jennifer Lind has proposed that the ‘Adenauer model’ of reconciliation, in which atrocities are acknowledged but post-war achievements are emphasised, is more workable than the model of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*. In steering away from the public fixation on Japan’s inadequacy of remorse, she also suggests that real puzzle to be explained ‘is not why Japan cannot apologize but why Germany could’.⁵⁰

Conclusion

The story of Franco-German reconciliation after centuries of rivalry and war is an inspiring one that is certainly worthy of study and reflection. One should however be cognisant of being naïve in its application. To do so would be to overlook the difficulties France and Germany have faced in their process of reconciliation, and the broader historical and regional contexts in which this reconciliation took place. The specific historical and regional contexts within which Franco-German reconciliation took place must be carefully weighed before any ‘lessons’ from Europe could be applied to the Asian context. This background brief aims to lay the issues out for a timely reappraisal of the applicability of the European integration and reconciliation processes to East Asia as the latter deals with the seeming intractability of historical grievances, sovereignty claims and rising nationalism.

⁵⁰ Lind. 2009. 143.

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