



AICGS 20th Anniversary Celebration
June 2, 2003
Ambassador Daniel R. Coats

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Friends and supporters of the American Institute of Contemporary German Studies,

The German-American partnership is an integral part of the histories of our two countries. In the last half-century, many of our most important achievements and triumphs have been shared ones. Those crucial and dramatic moments are bookmarks in the history of the long years of the Cold War. And looking forward, it is clear that ongoing changes in Germany, in Europe, in America and in the world, are – now over a decade after the end of the Cold War – just as crucial, and the triumphs and tragedies of our times just as dramatic.

The postwar ties between the United States and Germany have been the girders of our security, democracy and prosperity; and the foundation for the vision of a wider community of common values based on a shared commitment to open societies, free enterprise and the rule of law. President Bush's words in Krakow on Saturday were a reflection of that vision; the deliberations of the G-8 nations today in Evian a demonstration of that shared commitment, and the President's participation in the Roadmap summit later this week, a clear sign of hope for the future.

This wider community based on a strong transatlantic partnership, is a key to security, good governance and growth worldwide. And the German-American partnership remains crucial to the economic, political, and security interests of both of our two countries. That basic and central premise has guided the activities and goals of the American Institute for Contemporary German Studies. And so, on the occasion of the Institute's twentieth anniversary, we commend and thank you – you, Jack, you, the staff, the friends, the sponsors, the fellows of the Institute – for your commitment and dedication to the German-American relationship.

Your unique focus on the factors shaping policies on issues of high priority in both Berlin and Washington have made the Institute a major source of analysis and research on Germany and German-American relations. You have addressed not just the dramatic moments in the relationship, those moments that are most vivid in our collective memories, but also the undercurrents of that history.

Twenty years ago, in its early days, one of the main goals of the Institute was to provide a deeper understanding of the relationships within and between a divided Germany and a divided Europe, and the context for the undercurrents of the history that was playing out at that time.

In those early years, the dispute over intermediate range nuclear missiles was the Soviet Union's last major political and military challenge to the West. Soviet rearmament was so threatening that many in Germany, especially the young, concluded that appeasement was the only option, and America's response was perceived in many circles a threat worse than any Soviet missile. Arthur Burns, the U.S. Ambassador to Germany from 1981 to 1985, described the world of diplomacy he encountered as "a world in which perception of facts often obscures the facts themselves." The realities, the hard facts, of history -- as defined by a clear and common goal and a visible external threat -- were often forgotten, he said.

Today, we face new, less visible threats, threats that once again have been perceived differently in Germany and the United States. Fortunately, reality prevailed and we became witness to the triumph of freedom over tyranny. The Institute has shifted its focus to the challenge of understanding the new united Germany and the new political landscape in Europe.

The Institute's research programs and activities now examine the factors shaping current U.S. and German policies on issues relating to: counter-terrorism, defense and military cooperation, nonproliferation, fighting disease and poverty in the poorer areas of the world, the global economy and trade, domestic economic and social systems. All these are high priority issues in both Washington and Berlin in this new 21st century.

Former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger once remarked that one should accrue one's intellectual capital before entering government because one only depletes it while working in the bureaucracy.

And saying that, I do not mean to offend my colleagues from the Embassy. People working inside the system are not less gifted -- but they must operate by consensus; are at times, by necessity, risk averse; and are often simply overloaded with short-term operational issues and requirements. Unencumbered by official positions, think tank scholars can afford to give candid assessments of pressing global challenges -- both on and off the record.

Jack, we have spoken frequently and I have found your assessments and the information that you have passed on from your network of partners and scholars most useful. AICGS is a crucial member of the working partnership that connects many parts of our two societies, a tightly-meshed fabric spanning two continents. The Institute has facilitated German-American exchanges across political parties, between the private and public sectors, and among corporate leaders, political decision-makers, analysts, and the media. And it has been instrumental in creating new channels to connect current and future leaders in industry, government, and academe.

The Institute has published actively and profusely, on and offline, in Institute publications, in interviews on television and radio and in print, opinion articles for the op-ed pages of newspapers on both sides of the Atlantic, press briefings, public speeches, and articles for scholarly journals.

Congratulations to AICGS on this important anniversary. We thank you for all you have contributed to German-American policy and relations these past 20 years. And we look forward to your contributions in the next 20 years and beyond.