

Case study- Franco-German rapprochement

Aim of the project. (one sentence)

To end the historical enmity between France and Germany through cultural diplomacy, cultural and academic exchange and increased understanding.

Scenario: The Context in which the activity took place/issue it sought to address (250 words max)

With the culmination of World War II, the broken and battered nations of France and Germany found themselves staring into the abyss of destruction that was born out hostility between them. Cull notes on the historical hostility, “Generations of Frenchman were raised to look for *la revanche*- revenge against Germany for its seizure of Alsace, while Germans spoke of *Deutsch-französische Erbfeindschaft*- a cross generational enmity and vendetta.¹” With three major wars fought between the two great European nations in the span of 75 years, two of which escalated into global conflagrations, Germany and France sought to promote reconciliation through public diplomacy measures aimed at their respective civil societies to ensure that the historical rivalry and antagonisms that had generated generational hatred would be extinguished.

Over the next four decades, Germany and France would work together in public and private public diplomacy initiatives, carried out on a variety of levels ranging from youth programs and exchanges to political détente at the apex of society, to successfully form a bond that would take the place of belligerence. The roots of the public diplomacy reconciliation effort would be derived from three main programs: a) substantial youth and academic exchange, b) “twinning,” the linking of French and German towns, cities and regions, and c) the creation of institutes focused on Franco-German reconciliation, as well as exchange of respective language and cultural institutes.

Programme Activity (500 words): Describe succinctly the PD response to this scenario.

Franco-German exchange began under the aegis of individual initiatives, with the foundation in 1945 of the French *Bureau International de Liaison et de Documentation (BILD)* and its German counterpart *Gesellschaft für übernationale Zusammenarbeit (GüZ)*. Initiated by a Jesuit priest named Jean du Rivau, these organizations sought to advance Franco-German understanding through publications, academic youth exchange and familial exchange. By 1964, BILD had arranged more than 10,000 family exchanges and 170 meetings among youth groups².

Educational exchange gained further traction following the 1963 Elysée Treaty. Signed by Konrad Adenauer and Charles De Gaulle, the treaty designed to fundamentally end the historical chasm between France and Germany helped create the Franco-German Youth Office. With an annual budget of 20 million deutsche marks and 50 million francs, the Franco-German Youth Office helped facilitate the annual exchange of more than 300,000 French and German students through. By 1997, more than 5 million students had participated in 150,000 programs, creating an exchange termed “the greatest mass migration ever.”³

¹Nicholas Cull, “Public Diplomacy: Lessons from the Past,” USC Report April 2007, p.36

² CF Ulrich Krotz, *The Ties that Bind? The Parapublic Underpinnings of Franco-German Relations as Construction of International Value*, Minda De Gunzburg Center for European Studies, Harvard University, October 2002, p.11 available at <<http://www.ces.fas.harvard.edu/publications/docs/pdfs/Krotz4.pdf>>

Meanwhile, French and German municipal authorities became involved in the act of reconciliation through the “twinning” (*jumelage/städtepartnerschaft*) of cities. Born out of the 1947 Union Internationale de Maires (UIM), French and German mayors created arrangements to pair their respective cities and towns based on similar size, history or industry⁴. The first twinning took place with the linkage on Montbéliard and Ludwigsburg. Half a century on, the program would grow to more than 2,000 linked communities, including regions and provinces.

Furthermore, institutes were created to foster intellectual cooperation and cultural exchange. In 1948, the Franco-German Institute was founded in Ludwigsberg to advance political and social cooperation on an intellectual level. Conceived by three prominent German politicians, the “guiding idea was that without a new intellectual base and new forms of dialogue, political cooperation would be impossible.”⁵

Beyond institutes solely focused Franco-German issues, France and Germany opened numerous cultural diplomacy institutes. By 1996, there were 19 *Institutes Français* located throughout Germany, and 7 *Goethe Institutes* located in France⁶.

France and Germany also reinforced the levels of cultural cooperation, as seen in the cultural agreements marking the 25 anniversary of the Elysée Treaty signed in 1988. The 1988 agreements created the “de Gaulle-Adenauer Prize,” a premier prize for outstanding accomplishments in Franco-German understanding, as well as creating a joint High Council for Culture and mechanisms for increased university exchange. The 1988 agreement also laid the foundations for the launching of a joint Franco-German news channel. ARTE, which went live in May 1992, was dedicated to promoting programming related to Franco-German cooperation, and even news and weather from a Franco-German vantage⁷.

Analysis (250 words max) What does your example demonstrate?

The public diplomacy outreach between France and Germany through exchange programs, twinnings and cultural exchange and cultural diplomacy truly helped break down the wall of mistrust between the warring neighbors by creating foundations of trust and understanding.

Certain outside factors also helped facilitate the rapprochement. The sheer scope of the challenge of bridging the long-standing divide actually worked in favor of the two sides, as momentum was created in the hopes of putting an end the rivalry that had spawned such brutal conflicts. The near parity of France and Germany in the post-war world, based on the vast destruction wrought on both nations by the war and the rise of the bi-polar American-Soviet hegemony in international relations, helped provide a workable dynamic for cooperation. The vast devastation for both France and Germany following WWII meant that neither nation was in a position to threaten the other, and both were adjusting to the new Cold War reality⁸. Meanwhile, both sides were able to play on similar cultural structures in the form of common civic units (mayors) and common church culture⁹.

In addition, the exchanges had self-serving aspects for both France and Germany. For France, the

³ *ibid*, p.6

⁴ Cull, *op cit.*, p. 37

⁵ Krotz, *op cit.*, p. 10

⁶ *ibid*, p.11

⁷ Cull, *op cit.*, p.38

⁸ *ibid*

⁹ *ibid*

exchange programs and cultural institutes allowed it to further its policy of language export, while West Germany gained an important counter to the draw of internationalist propaganda stemming from East Germany that was aimed at its youth¹⁰.

Learning point (1-2 sentences) – What can others learn from this case?

Cultural and academic exchanges and cultural diplomacy can play a serious role in bridging historical enmity between long-time rivals; however, there must be a dynamic of cooperation for both sides to create the rapprochement. The efficacy of reconciliation efforts increase dramatically as public and private sectors both play active roles to strengthen the rapprochement. Targeting of youth, especially future leaders, can serve as force multipliers in future reconciliation efforts.

Sources for scenario and activity (including links to project website, online video or reference to the project in print media).

- 1) Cull, Nicholas, “Public Diplomacy: Lessons from the Past,” USC Report April 2007
- 2) Krotz, Ulrich, *The Ties that Bind? The Parapublic Underpinnings of Franco-German Relations as Construction of International Value*, Minda De Gunzburg Center for European Studies, Harvard University, October 2002, available at <http://www.ces.fas.harvard.edu/publications/docs/pdfs/Krotz4.pdf>

Please identify which approach and theme best describes the project.

Approach		Theme	
2.1 Listening	X		
Facilitation		Sustainability	
Exchange	X	Security	
Cultural Diplomacy	X	Citizenship, governance and education	
International Broadcasting		Social Justice and Diversity	X
Advocacy			

¹⁰ ibid, p.39