

Richard von Weizsäcker Visiting Fellowships 2016/2017 zusammen mit der Fritz Thyssen Stiftung und der Robert Bosch Stiftung "Jürgen Habermas, Ralf Dahrendorf, and the Westernization of Germany: A Dual Intellectual Biography" (Gastprofessur von Prof. Dr. Paul Nolte)

Initiative: Vorhaben mit besonderem Stiftungsbezug

Ausschreibung: The Richard von Weizäcker Visiting Fellowship at St. Antony's college, Oxford

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Research on the history of postwar and post-Nazi Germany has increasingly emphasized the key role of the "forty-fivers" generation in the transformation of traditional political cultures, mentalities, and intellectual styles into more modern patterns that were suitable to a liberal and democratic society. Together with writers, artists, and politicians, scholars in the humanities and social sciences stood at the forefront of a very deliberate attempt at moving the Federal Republic in the direction of cultural "Westernization". They did so in their academic writing and teaching, but also in their engagement in a wider public sphere, and by so doing redefined the role of public intellectuals in Germany and beyond. Jürgen Habermas (b. 1929) and Ralf Dahrendorf (1929-2009) arguably have been the most influential scholar-intellectuals of this group and generation. Building on previous own research on historians such as Hans-Ulrich Wehler and on the history of the social sciences, the project will attempt a dual portrait of Dahrendorf and Habermas, who over the course of several decades have been close allies in their public missions for a democratic Germany, yet started out from quite different personal backgrounds and intellectual traditions, and represented different versions of Westernization: classical idealist philosophy and Anglo-Saxon social science; Frankfurt School Marxism and Popperian liberalism; orientation towards the United States in Habermas's case vis-à-vis Dahrendorf's British connection, also through his tenure as Warden of St Antony's College. The project expands on a recent biographical trend in contemporary German cultural and intellectual history, while pursuing an original approach in the reconstruction of two public lives that have run parallel and antagonistic at the same time.

Projektbeteiligte

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