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America and Europe in the Twenty-first Century



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Congratulations ZEI Master Fellows of European Studies ‘Class of 2016’! Your choice to study European politics, culture, economy and society at this prestigious university will prove rewarding to you in many ways. Graduation is just the culmination of your formal academic training, and now you will apply what you have learned and continue to develop skills in the working world. I congratulate you on your personal achievements, and I wish you the best as you conclude your studies. I am sure you are excited. You have worked hard to get here and deserve to enjoy your Final Ceremony and also have a bit of fun.

There is no better time than now to embark on – or, rather, set your course – on your personal path in European Affairs. The European-American relationship remains an indispensable partnership. While not always easy in a global context with proliferating challenges and crises, we remain our best partners to work together to be in a stronger position to meet them.

The invitation to speak to you today on the importance of transatlantic relations, the impact of the upcoming U.S. presidential election in November, the merits of the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership or TTIP, and the many challenges to peace and security, is quite daunting. How I could inspire the hope that you all will need to confront this turbulent world with the confidence that you will be able to make a difference for the better? Major shifts, from globalization, digitalization and technological change are re-shaping our world. It is a difficult time, and navigating all the channels will require artful maneuvering through short-term and long-term trouble.

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As a long-time American diplomat, whose own career was and still is deeply engaged with this partnership, I admire you for choosing Bonn University's European Studies to build your own careers in this field. The relationship demands effort, and it has to be renewed. It is good that there is a new generation committed to it. As keen observers of Europe and America you already know that the transatlantic relationship, which must be based on mutual trust, is under stress. Yet, you have chosen to study and understand Europe's culture, politics, economics, and society. These fields are at the core of our partnership and will contribute to its future.

The transatlantic partnership was built after the destruction of the Second World War. Although the United States at the end of the war was the most powerful nation in the world, President Truman turned America away from the impulse of isolation and chose instead to engage with the world with strategic restraint, and to bind America to Western Europe and Europe to the United States. The liberal international order he built with European partners has contributed to stability throughout the ensuing Cold War through a U.S. guarantee for European security, a commitment which continues to this day.

Together with its European and global partners, the United States created a multilateral international institutional structure, including the United Nations, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, NATO and the Organization for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC). Wise leaders like Jean Monnet and Robert Schumann and the founding fathers in Europe came together to create what has become the European Union.

The strategic construct known as realism guided American policy then, and realism led the United States to align itself with Europe to rebuild democracy and the economies destroyed by war. The world order as we know it today was created by leaders on both sides of the Atlantic who chose multilateral institutions to turn power into order.

The night 27 years ago when East Germans breached the Berlin Wall has begun to recede into historical memory, like the weeks and months of 'Monday-demonstrations' leading up to it. These historic events demonstrated courage of the politically and socially motivated people, who

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stormed the Berlin Wall, which had imprisoned them for decades. That courage – and the determination of Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev not to send his soldiers to maintain Soviet control over East Germany – made possible the Peaceful Revolution that led to German and European unity.

For Americans and Europeans the fall of the Berlin Wall is what the storming of the Bastille 200 years ago was for the French – the symbolic end of the old order, and the end of an era.

You will need similar courage to preserve the benefits of peace and union that we know today. Formally ending the Cold War on November 15, 1990, leaders signed the Charter of Paris with a new vision of Europe. The Charter of Paris is the set of principles and norms agreed in the 1975 Helsinki Final Act, which were reaffirmed and adapted to the new realities by all major European powers, including the Russia (the Soviet Union), the United States and Canada. It is the Charter of Paris for a New Europe upon which our world order now rests.

The system of international norms and accepted policies is now at risk, which in 1990 and the past decades delivered Germany whole, free, and in peace, together with a widening part of Europe. Today, the transatlantic relationship has a multitude of challenges, and as you embark on your careers, it is my hope that you will work together with your peers on the other side of the Atlantic and throughout Europe to defeat threats to our values and to the peaceful European-American order.

Regional crises have overflowed and become global crises. Crises and conflicts came to Europe with the influx of war refugees from the Syrian Civil War and the invasion of Ukraine by Russian forces, violating the principles of not altering political borders by force. These crises pose a direct challenge to Europe's fundamental value-system. Add to these crises the terror of the self-proclaimed Islamic State. Even the controversial negotiation with a transatlantic partner on a comprehensive Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership seems overwhelming.

The wide range and diversity of crises already indicates the main point I would like to make; that is, the transatlantic partnership is critically important for maintaining peace and promoting prosperity in this 21st

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century. The free and peaceful order, the cause of so much hope and sense of relief after the Cold War, seems to be collapsing. You will have to defend the values in the transatlantic relationship that have contributed to peace and prosperity over the past 70 years.

The future of peace is less certain than it seemed in 1990. Your generation, growing up after the Peaceful Revolution generation, has enjoyed a peaceful and united Europe, following the Charter of Paris. Russian military action in Ukraine and annexation of Crimea you should realize, upends your lives. Despite the West's concerted, 25-year effort to have Russia join in international institutions and to have Russia join the WTO, associate with NATO, and become a partner in the global order, sadly, the answer under President Vladimir Putin has been "No".

President Putin wishes to return Russia to nationalist great power politics reminiscent of the early 20th century. His "Balance-of-Power" strategy has brought Russian military aggression in Europe into conflict with the transatlantic relationship's strategic restraint. President Putin's Russia has used force to create disorder, producing unstable states with frozen conflicts in Europe and on the borders of the EU in Georgia, Armenia, Moldova, and Ukraine. We must find ways to work toward adjusting President Putin's strategic calculus, so that he and Russia see possibilities of a constructive Russian role in international institutions that serves Russian interests, but only after Russian military power plays are thwarted.

Can the Kremlin work with transatlantic partners to tackle what may be the most difficult among the security challenges today including the rise of terrorism in the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and the Syrian Civil War? Interest politics, despite adversarial relations, dictates that we must try to work with Russia as we have done in Afghanistan, in preventing an Iranian nuclear weapon and destroying Assad's chemical weapons.

In Asia, a rising China with its own nationalistic ambitions also poses challenges to the transatlantic order. Transatlantic Partners in Europe and North America have contributed to stability in Asia. China is forcefully asserting its dream to reclaim the Senkaku Islands, Taiwan, and the South

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China Sea, which it aims to put entirely under its power and authority to the exclusion of others.

The South China Sea is a critical sea lane that links the Pacific and Indian Oceans, and nearly 50 percent of global merchant traffic, including European trade, and 80 percent of crude oil transports in route to Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan pass through its sea lanes. The freedom of passage through international sea lanes is globally important. The United States combines strong and traditional bilateral relations and participates in multilateral institutions to diplomatically resolve land and sea disputes. Europe's interests are directly affected by conflicts in this region. America's role is one of providing regional stability.

At the same time, violent extremism of the terrorist organization, so-called Islamic State in the Iraq and Syria (ISIS), has created chaos in the Middle East and created refugees, who have fled to Europe in search of peace and security. In Iraq and Syria, the Islamic State established an archaic caliphate and launched a catastrophic war, a genocidal killing spree, in fact, that forced millions from their homes. In the Middle East, peace is as elusive as ever.

The regimes of Ayatollah Khamenei and Kim Jong-Un pose nuclear threats to peace with Iran's nuclear program and North Korea's nuclear weapons.

In the transatlantic relationship itself, tensions have risen in negotiations over the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership. TTIP, which is meant to streamline the transatlantic economic relationship with political benefits, is opposed by civil society groups in both the U.S. and Europe. Efforts by TTIP negotiators on both sides to promote jobs and growth, while also setting transatlantic norms and standards in the TTIP negotiations, have instead led to mistrust. However, while TTIP offers a strategic answer to today's political and economic challenges, political leaders must overcome public mistrust about food safety, weakened regulations and American corporate dominance. German industry has strongly supported efforts to reach stakeholders and promote an agreement. However, despite support for TTIP, political leadership has neglected a

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full-fledged effort to include and address the public's concerns. Opponents have organized strong resistance to TTIP.

At the same time and in the other direction across the Atlantic, you have your own problems here in Europe, which directly affect us in America as well. The euro crisis lingers on and threatens to flare up along with a renewed Greek debt crisis. Anemic recovery from the Great Recession and financial crisis, and the policy dispute over austerity and stimulus, have fueled Euro-skepticism with anti-establishment protests and promoted the rise of right-wing, populist, nationalist political movements like the French Front National and the German Alternative for Germany (AfD) parties.

The British have voted to leave the EU. The 'BREXIT' debate is emblematic of the populist forces sweeping Europe and the United States. Distrust of elites has propelled the forces of European disintegration and fragmentation. This vote has international implications, including for the world order.

Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban is planning an anti-EU vote against obligations to accept war refugees. The Austrian presidential election nearly resulted in a Eurosceptic rightist being elected. The American and French presidential election campaigns have alarmed transatlanticists concerned about weakening unity. Chancellor Angela Merkel, European Council President Donald Tusk and U.S. President Barack Obama have all warned about Europe's unraveling and the fragmentation of the world order that has ensured European peace for decades.

Most things worth doing are not easy, it is said. While never easy, our task of defending our values and maintaining transatlantic unity has certainly become more difficult in light of the American presidential election campaign. In that campaign Donald Trump's populist appeal, based on fear, hate, and discrimination secured the Republican primary election as that party's nominee. The Democrats, too, are still divided by anger against Wall Street for recklessly gambling financially and causing economic recession, and the distribution of productivity gains to the top 1% of

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income earners. Democrats have yet to consolidate a political message of good governance and facts.

In the battle between fear and facts, fear has an upper hand. If, as most observers predict, the American political system will become even more dysfunctional and gridlocked in the coming years than it has been in the past, this is not a cause for anyone to rejoice. Neither is it an expression of “principle.” It is an expression of tribalism. The fight to determine control of the White House in 2016 is underway with unpredictable outcomes.

Providing perspective during this time of difficult challenges, Bonn University’s Prof. Dr. Karl Kaiser reminds us that the 1990 unification of Germany and Europe is owed in part to the security provided by the United States during the Cold War and to the political commitment of the United States to German and European unity. Now Europeans are concerned about the degree of continued American engagement in Europe.

In TTIP and in NATO you can see that the American commitment to European security continues to today. Warsaw is host to the NATO summit, and the alliance and is not a superfluous relict of the Cold War, nor is it a threat to Russia. It is the solid basis for today’s peaceful European order with the EU.

Now it is up to you to answer the question whether the Atlantic Community still matters for America and Europe in the twenty-first century. In times of stress like these, your predecessors, and now you, look for collaboration in across the Atlantic. That relationship remains indispensable for global security interests led by Europe and the United States. That relationship must shape not only Europe and Germany’s new responsibilities for foreign and security policy, but also assist leaders in Asia, Africa and South America to support existing and new structures for maintaining a peaceful world order.

I have seen the impressive list of your Master’s Thesis topics. You have chosen to study key issues facing the European Union, and, I might add, the transatlantic relationship as well as issues in global order.

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Drawing out just a few of your topics highlight your outstanding research and writing on key issues facing us today, including:

- Achieving the EU's Global Strategy: An Analysis.
- The Growth of right-wing Parties in the EU Political Landscape: Comparative Analysis of this Phenomenon across the EU Countries.
- Keep your friends close but your enemies closer? A Window of Opportunity for a Strategic Partnership between Russia and the European Union.
- The Role of Europe in the Stabilization of Failed States with Terrorist Strongholds in the Middle East and North Africa Region: Case Studies of Syria/Iraq and Libya.
- Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) Negotiations.
- Seeking for further cooperation: A comparative analysis of the transformation of EU and China.

Congratulations to all of you for such outstanding scholarship!

Public support for the resolution of all crises is also necessary to deal with refugees, territorial disputes in the Asia Pacific, and conflict in Europe and the Middle East. Henry Kissinger reminds us how important trust is in maintaining world order:

“[H]ow a people perceives the fairness of a particular world order is determined as much by its domestic institutions as by judgments on tactical foreign-policy issues. For that reason, compatibility between domestic institutions is reinforcement for peace [...] a shared concept of justice was a prerequisite for international order.”

We are partners in the values upon which our societies are founded. America was founded on the idea of consent of the governed and shares a common commitment to freedom and democracy with our European partners. Neither the United States nor the European Union can hope to tackle the crises outlined earlier – or global challenges on their own. We transatlantic partners will invariably have to overcome differences in order to work together. We are taking steps to improve capabilities and interoperability. As we had when we signed the Charter of Paris, and established and built the EU and NATO, we must also have the political will to defend to our values.

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Time has passed quickly in the eight years since 200,000 Germans gathered at the Siegessäule in Berlin to hear Presidential hopeful Barack Obama declare: “True partnership and true progress ... require allies who will listen to each other, learn from each other and, most of all trust each other.”

Let us not forget to listen to each other. Let me reassure you that what President Barack Obama said at the Siegessäule in Berlin in 2008 remains true: “America has no better partner than Europe.” And, I would like to add: Europe has no better partner than America.

Your generation is confronted with a set of geopolitical challenges that require all you have learned in your European studies to be answered. Policy differences must not undermine our sense of common values.

Today, fewer European understand and appreciate what sacrifices and commitments America for Europe after World War II and in the unification of Europe a quarter century ago. History, too, moves on toward the future. And the future belongs to you.

While controversy arises because each side reacts differently to events from the different roles and self-perceptions, you have acquired the necessary tools to analyze conflicts and to recommend action to resolve them. It is therefore of critical importance that you act on the knowledge you worked hard to accumulate. You have the challenge – and the chance – to renew the transatlantic partnership. Defense of freedom requires courage, and Europe needs to stand together with America in defense of our freedoms.

Reflecting on peace and stability in his recent book “World Order”, Henry Kissinger notes that the Westphalian order of sanctity of sovereignty is at risk. NATO and the West must contend with the competing approaches of strategic restraint and geopolitical Balance of Power strategies. Will the transatlantic partners grapple with these strategic questions and successfully produce rule of law, order, and stability?

Relationships like the ones you have built here at Bonn University are the basis for greater understanding that contributes to these strategic questions.

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Film and television Actor Bradley Whitford, who acted in NBC's *West Wing*, speaking at a graduation, had the following advice:

'Take action. Every story you've ever connected with, every leader you've ever admired, every puny little thing that you've ever accomplished is the result of taking action. You have a choice. You can either be a passive victim of circumstance or you can be the active hero of your own life.'

Nelson Mandela, put it this way:

"Our worst fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness, that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, 'Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented and fabulous?' Actually, who are you not to be? You are a child of God. Playing small doesn't serve the world."

You are more capable of achieving greatness than you may think. This is your challenge. You are now finished, yet just beginning. Now it is up to you. You are well prepared.

When the going gets tough, the tough get going. Remember President Obama's call "Yes, we can". You will determine whether the West is a meaningful unity between America and Europe in the Twenty-first Century.

Before you leave today, do not forget to thank your family, your professors and your friends who have guided you to this Final Ceremony. Congratulations ZEI Master Fellows of European Studies "Class of 2016". And good luck.

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