

## **Atlantik-Brücke e. V.**

### **XXVIII German-American Young Leaders Conference**

August 27 – September 1, 2006, Hamburg, Germany

### **Overtures and Finales: Germany and the United States**

Summary Report compiled by  
Elizabeth Hearn and Hannes Heyelmann

#### **Contents**

- **Introduction**
- **Overtures and Finales: Germany and the United States**
- **Rising Powers and Failing States**
- **Day in Bremerhaven**
- **Restarting and Reforming German-American Relations**
- **Conclusion**

#### **Introduction**

The Atlantik-Brücke convened its XXVIII annual German-American Young Leaders Conference on August 27, 2006, in Hamburg-Blankenese. The idyllic setting of the Warburg Family Estate allowed the participants to retreat from the everyday pressures of our various jobs and backgrounds in order to debate and discuss topics of transatlantic interest from the development of the Grand Coalition to how to save a failing international organization. As one of Germany and Europe's main port-of-calls for shipping and industrial interests, Hamburg was the perfect location for discussions of international security, economics and the growing trends in globalization. The weather fulfilled one of the stereotypes about Hamburg being often rainy and grey, but this had no impact on the spirit and atmosphere of the conference. This year's Young Leaders came from such a variety of backgrounds: government, finance, non-profit, think-tanks, business, media and academia...planes, boats and automobiles too. We even had two participants come all the way from Los Angeles – and only one was American!

#### **Conference Theme: "Overtures and Finales: Germany and the United States"**

Our week in Hamburg was dedicated to the changing times in which Germany and the United States have found themselves. New prominence on the part of the European Union can mean a variety of different things for German-US relations, some good and some bad. And in the end it will be up to the younger generation to decide whether this longstanding relationship will move forward, growing with the changes, or if it will remain stagnant as we face divides unlike any dealt with before. Our topics ranged from domestic troubles for each nation, international crises and conflicts and bilateral relations difficulties that will require agreement from both Germany and the United States to solve. Our discussions showed where our many similarities were, and also the points of division which this transatlantic talk was hopefully able to mediate somewhat. Over the course of the week we discussed:

- Grand Coalition and Lame Duck Administration
- Rising Powers and Failing States
- Restarting and Reforming German-American Relations

## **Sunday**

On the first day of the conference, the American participants listened to a lecture on internal German politics by **Professor Dr. Suzanne Schuttemeyer**, the Chair for Government and Policy Research at the University of Halle-Wittenberg. That Dr. Schuttemeyer was able to engage and inform 20 jet-lagged Americans on a topic of such detail and in such a comprehensive manner was truly remarkable. The information proved invaluable to understanding the Grand Coalition, and also as a basis for the European political mindset, as the week progressed. The first evening's dinner took place at the Elsa-Brändstrom-Haus on the Warburg Family Estate and we were able to finally meet our sponsors – **Dr. Beate Lindemann** (YL 1982) and **Dr. Walther Leisler Kiep**.

## **Monday**

On Monday, the Young Leaders kicked off the first part of the conference theme entitled **“Grand Coalition and Lame Duck Administration”** through an introduction of the four topics:

- 1.1 Challenges of Chancellor Merkel's Grand Coalition
- 1.2 Challenges of the European Unification Process
- 1.3 Challenges of a Second-Term Bush Administration
- 1.4 Challenges of a Deeply Divided America

After a short introduction of the topics, working groups gathered for intense debates throughout the day.

### **1.1 Challenges of Chancellor Merkel's Grand Coalition**

Our first topic was introduced to us with the age-old banter between the majority and the opposition and served as an excellent warm-up for the rest of our week. As was stated by one participant, “to be a party leader you do not have to be a rocket scientist”, but it certainly may help when working through the difficulties facing the current German government. Recent events such as the World Cup presented an amazingly unified picture of Germany to the rest of the world, but fixing the inner turmoil of Chancellor Merkel's coalition is proving more difficult than could have been imagined. Balancing opinions from both the SPD and the CDU/CSU means that only small steps are possible, instead of the sweeping alterations many feel are necessary. Correcting problems such as the economy, federal budget, and health care system will mean significant changes to the current design. Both sides of the Coalition need to accept risk in policy moves as opposed to the piecemeal consensus building occurring on most fronts. The ability of Chancellor Merkel to bring her Grand Coalition together, and to regain the power lost to a group of revolting Minister Presidents, will be a defining moment in what has been a truly singular political situation.

### **1.2 Challenges of the European Unification Process**

One of the most controversial topics discussed was the European unification process. The political and economic benefits of further “widening and deepening” vied with the ramifications of adding such a large

and diverse group of sovereign nations to the European Union's already overburdened organization. Discussions included the place of religion in a relatively homogeneous political organization, the economic and cultural boundaries present between Western and Eastern Turkey, and whether the EU is over-legislated or under-integrated. The definition of "unification" does not appear to be standard across all of the parties involved, and a thorough understanding needs to be agreed upon before further progress can be made.

We also discussed what the effect a true "European Union" – more than just economies, but military and political forces as well – will have on Euro-American relations. Where will US-German relations go, if Germany as a sole actor has nothing to offer the United States? One of our introducers was quite vociferous in pointing out all the potential failures in the existing EU system, and pitfalls coming in current negotiations. Many in the group reacted to this purposefully controversial point of view by defending the idea and ideal of a European Union. It was suggested that European power is dependant upon accepting further members. The soft power that is gained from the chance at accession is useful in solving conflicts and sponsoring changes. It is as important to 'keep the hope alive' as it is to actually allow accession in a timely manner. The lack of American involvement in the process was brought up as a negative, but one participant mentioned an American adage about politics and sausage making and how, to the American audience, watching European Union politics is like watching a seven-hour movie of sausage being made.

As Turkey's accession is always the first scenario that comes into any conversation of this type, its political and economic progress was cited often as reason for their inclusion in the EU. The point was made by one participant that Turkey's democratic progress is not just to join the EU, but for the betterment of Turkish society in general. The political and economic advancements being made won't simply go away if the accession becomes a reality or not. Turkey is truly reshaping itself, and joining the EU is only one of the end results, not the only reason behind Turkish modernization efforts.

### **1.3 Challenges of a Second-Term Bush Administration**

With President Bush's approval ratings at an all time low, it was not difficult for the working group to come up with challenges the Bush administration will face during the rest of its term.

The discussion focused first around domestic challenges, as many felt that these are issues President Bush cannot simply ignore. Among those is immigration, where the challenge for the Bush administration will be to balance homeland security concerns, economic growth and concerns of the US minority communities. Another topic discussed was energy: with the US dependence on oil undermining economic stability, as well as pushing the budget and trade deficits to all-time highs, energy costs have only just begun to show their volatility. Another big challenge is the growing gap between the rich and poor, exemplified in the Hurricane Katrina disaster. Also the upcoming mid-term elections were discussed, and the difficulties the administration could be facing if Democrats can take back the House and the Senate.

Foreign policy was debated as well, specifically, participants discussed how the Bush administration has managed to give the United States its worst reputation in recent history despite, or perhaps because of, President Bush's political legacy of "bringing freedom and democracy" by any means necessary. But while his foreign policy has been criticized in many countries, it has also become a big concern and source for criticism domestically, even among fellow Republicans.

## 1.4 Challenges of a Deeply Divided America

The political division in American society is very real and deep, although it was argued that the media overplays these divisions. People are not only split along party lines, but also along religious, economic, and racial fault lines. None of these issues are new, but they have been highlighted and exacerbated during the Bush administration.

It was suggested during the discussion that the deepest rifts are over the war in Iraq, rather than social or moral wedge issues such as gay marriage and abortion. However, while many in the American public remain deeply disturbed by the decision to go to war, it is the social and particularly the moral and religious issues that motivate people to vote and become involved. An example was given of a preacher in one of the mega-churches in the heartland of the US, who lost 1/3 of his 10,000 member congregation after he told them that religion had no place in government. Another example is playing out in Kansas, where a debate is raging over creationism and "Intelligent Design" being taught as a scientific theory rather than evolution.

At lunch, the Young Leaders were honored that **Dr. Wolfgang Schäuble**, Federal Minister of the Interior, came all the way from Berlin just to speak to us. Dr. Schäuble talked about a range of subjects from the Grand Coalition to the necessity for Germany to better integrate the over three million Muslims living in Germany into the pre-existing German society. During his speech he emphasized that "in a globalized world there is no safe haven anywhere" and "if we [EU and US] don't work together we will fail". What followed was a very interesting discussion with Dr. Schäuble about homeland security, immigration, and Turkey's chances of becoming a member of the EU.

After a long and productive day the Young Leaders were invited for dinner at the family home of the Warburgs, just a short walk from the Elsa-Brändström-Haus. Luckily the Warburgs were able to corral their lovely household pets (read: very large canine security systems) for our short trek across their property. **Max M. Warburg** (YL 1973) was the perfect host during the evening at his house, which has become a great tradition of the German Young Leaders conferences.

Before the dinner **Caio K. Koch-Weser**, Vice Chairman of Deutsche Bank shared his views about "Transatlantic Opportunities and Challenges" and talked about the challenges the EU is facing today as an organization with "...a constitution designed for six [member states], that worked for 10-15, but not for 25 plus". Koch-Weser, who previously held the roles of German Deputy Finance Minister and Managing Director of the World Bank, gave the Young Leaders some very insightful thoughts and his speech provoked many questions about a range of global economical and political issues.

### Tuesday

The bar at the Elsa-Brändström-Haus proved to be an attractive location again to end the day with good beer and wine so that, for many, a few hours of sleep was all they were able to achieve before breakfast at 8 AM the next morning. However, the introduction of the second part of the conference theme entitled "**Rising Powers and Failing States**" quickly focused and energized everyone again. The topics were:

- 2.1 End Games or Start-Ups: Iraq, Iran and Palestine
- 2.2 New Challengers: China and India
- 2.3 Out of Control or Under Control: Globalization

- 2.4 Also-Rans and Left-Behinds: The Fourth World

## **2.1 End Games or Start-Ups: Iraq, Iran and Palestine**

No dialogue on current affairs would be complete without these hot-button issues. But this working group ended up discussing the question more than answering it – can any of these regions be addressed as an “End Game” or “Start-Up”? Possibly the most unanimous decisions reached during the week was a rejection of this question, in favor of a debate on the causes and solutions to each conflict.

As all of these clashes have some similarities, along with key differences, there was no easy “cookie-cutter solution” presented to the group. Each situation is different but inter-related so that they all directly affect one another. The United States, Germany and Europe as a whole cannot handle one region without impacting their policies and abilities in each of the others. A more serious rift in the group formed when discussing whether these conflicts were cases of a clash of civilizations or simply wars over power and territory. Was this a simple, although serious, fight over land and preeminence? If so, would Western interests be able to intercede in a fight that was constructed predominantly around historically hurt feelings and king-of-the-hill mentality?

Taking another tack in the discussion led us to the most significant of differences in German-US relations: does it matter if an issue is broached by German (or European) diplomats vs. US politicians? The answer was a resounding “Yes!” – and so we discussed why such similar groups would have such different views on these topics. A key difference seemed to be that Islam is seen positively in Germany versus negatively in the United States. The issue of Islam in America cannot be seen separate from the discussion of terrorism, and the resulting military actions in Afghanistan and Iraq. Germany, however, has a much clearer path, and easier relations with many Middle Eastern nations. Germany has, so far, managed to escape the brunt of the terrorism-related public paranoia that still permeates American society. Both of these perceptions of Islam are illustrated by the foreign policy actions of each country, and are reflected back by Islamic populations worldwide.

## **2.2 New Challengers: China and India**

China and India, two countries with significant economic and population growth rates over the last 10 years, seem destined to become the next global superpowers. This is an outlook that worries many. China is a country with a communist regime involved in area turmoil, and India is democratically governed, but with a nuclear weapons program that causes concern regionally. Product piracy and immense energy needs were other concerns about both countries.

The biggest challenge is to guide the future growth of China and India in ways acceptable to the world community. If that is successful and the over two billion people in China and India live in stable countries with higher prosperity, everyone benefits.

But what if China or India decides to expand its influence and power beyond economics? How would the rest of the world react? What could be done? This was one of the hot issues debated in the working group. What would happen to the US economy if China, who ranks as the second largest holder of US debt in the world, stopped borrowing US dollars? China is already such an important trade partner to many countries that western politicians visiting China, with an entourage of business executives from their respective countries, regularly neglect to address the issue of human rights violations in order not to jeopardize new trade.

In the end the group pointed out though that the more India's and China's economies grow, the more these countries will want and need to be integrated in the global community and the more costly a political exit will become.

### **2.3 Out of Control or Under Control: Globalization**

Globalization has become almost a buzz word to describe the complexity of today's world and the way everything is somehow linked together on multiple levels. So the first challenge of the working group was to define globalization in order to discuss whether it is out of control or under control. The focus was not to decide whether globalization is good or bad, but how to regulate it. There seem to be at least three categories for globalization: financial, political and cultural, and to some degree almost everyone is affected, directly or indirectly. Some benefit while others loose out. But, who are the driving forces behind Globalization, who are just actors, and who are in control? There were probably more questions than answers during the discussion, but then again it is often more difficult to ask the right questions than give good answers.

Globalization is an interlinked system, frightening in its complexity, yet necessary for the overall development of the world. Control on different levels is important to balance the interest of the multiple parties involved. Control needs to be beyond economical or financial governmental organizations like the WTO and World Bank, but designing a better system is perhaps beyond our abilities for a variety of reasons.

### **2.4 Also-Rans and Left-Behinds: The Fourth World**

The future of the Fourth World is uncertain and occasionally terrifying. Looking at statistics on poverty, child mortality rates, environmental stability, and medical issues draw sharp contrasts between the haves and the have-nots. Protests around the world by university students, wearing sweatshop-made bandanas over their faces, have done little to raise public knowledge or fervor on some of the most serious developmental issues before world governments today. Environmental groups find themselves on the outer fringe of the outer fringe, faced with an administration in Washington that is unwilling to sign even the most basic of international treaties on emissions, water and air. China and India will soon be outpacing the rest of the world in consumption of fossil fuels and production of toxic emissions. But where do any of these facts leave villagers in Niger who have no food, clean water, or clothing, as the life-blood of their country is pumped out from under them by Western oil companies in cahoots with their government? The motives of developed countries in the developing world are always suspect regarding the public good – does cheap gas for an SUV in Idaho justify a family starving in Cameroon?

Countries work endlessly to chart out plans, budgets, and donations to combat HIV/AIDS, to promote immunizations for children, and to improve nutrition, but the red tape and corruption rampant in many Fourth World nations simply cannot be precluded by planning, no matter how thorough. Aid from NGOs or single countries can many times be detrimental to the public good, diverting much needed grain and water to warlords as bargaining chips instead of to the people starving in the Savannah. More money is thrown at problems time and time again, with the hope that some will "trickle down" to the people in need, but budget alone should not be the indicator of a relief program's success.

Solutions to these problems will not come without cost to Western nations. Trade barriers, agricultural subsidies, and environmental restrictions will play a huge part in correcting the course of the fourth world. Finding new and different ways to aid countries, like charities working on in-kind developmental opportunities,

will be the future of helping the least developed nations toward a brighter path for their citizens and the world economy in general. Changing the discussion to formulate the right questions instead of working on the best answers will be the largest hurdle the developed world will face in bringing about serious change in global well-being.

After the working group session in the morning **Kai Diekmann** (YL 1995), editor-in-chief of BILD, Europe's largest daily newspaper, hosted a luncheon at the Axel Springer Publishing Company offices in Hamburg. **Dr. Karsten Voigt**, the coordinator of German-American Cooperation in Germany's Federal Foreign Office, spoke after lunch about the improvements in the German-American relationship since Dr. Angela Merkel took over as Chancellor. Dr. Voigt alluded to the changing role of Germany in today's world, being for the first time in over 40 years in the center of a stable region, after being the source of conflict (WWII) and later located at the center of conflict (Cold War).

Afterwards the Young Leaders had the opportunity to see first-hand the BILD paper being assembled in a room full of editors and (as Kai Diekmann pointed out) an ever-present lawyer to minimize libel complaints afterwards by celebrities, etc. The afternoon was open for leisure time, which many used to explore a bit more of beautiful Hamburg.

In the evening we were invited to the amazing house located right on the famous Elbchaussee of **Dr. Ing. Dr. E.h. Jürgen Großmann** (YL 1982) for a large dinner reception also attended by quite a few representatives from Hamburg's society, business community, and media. Dr. Großmann is the owner and CEO of the steel-holding company Georgsmarienhütte and among others also member of Volkswagen's supervisory board. In a short speech covered by the public broadcasters NDR in the regional news next day, he reminded the current Young Leaders of the need to live a balanced life and to give back to society in order to be truly successful.

### **Wednesday**

On Wednesday the participants were able to take a break from our serious discussions for a day of travel and touring. The day's stops centered on Germany as one of the economic and industrial lifelines to the rest of Europe. For two days we'd been discussing political and economic topics with participants from German companies in the transportation, business, and banking sectors, but this was the day that allowed us to understand just how large a role German business plays in the international economic field.

Our first stop was the Lürssen Shipyard in Bremen where we were given a presentation on the Lürssen history and business model. The highlight of the presentation was a tour of the shipyard (with the occasional rainstorm, of course) and we were able to see the production chain from start to finish on all of their various lines. We were given a short presentation on the various products Lürssen offers and then given a thorough tour of the entire shipyard. It became clear to all of the participants that many of us were better positioned to benefit from Lürssen's military expertise than to ever enjoy the luxury line of their products! From the efficient computerized manufacturing equipment and the professional assembly lines, to the high-tech design plans and the interior furnishings section for the Meyer yachts, the Lürssen shipyard was a model of modern industrialism.

After a full morning and lunch in Bremen-Vegesack, we journeyed on to Bremerhaven for our introduction and tour at the Joint Venture Container Terminal (JVCT), the largest continuous port in the world. **Mr. Harry Mohns** of MSC Gate Bremerhaven and **Mr. Bernd Kupke** of BLG Automobile met us in the viewing area and gave us an overview of the operations at the JVCT. Mr. Kupke, Managing Director of the automobile

division, showed us the layout and explained the economy of size behind JVCT's import and export of 1.4 million automobiles annually throughout the world. Mr. Mohns of the container shipping division explained some of the technology behind container shipping, as well as the international legal and security ramifications of such a huge operation. After a waterfront tour of the shipping operations, which even the most mature of the participants enjoyed "with the eyes of school children," we then moved on to the future sight of Container Terminal IV. CT IV will extend the JVCT operating area to just under five kilometers and allow a total of 15 container ships simultaneous access to the facility. **Mr. Rogge** from CT IV spoke to us about the processes that go into such a large enterprise and we were shown a presentation on the technical and environmental concerns that went into the construction of such a complex structure.

Our evening ended at the German Emigration Center in Bremerhaven, a thoroughly modern and informative museum, dedicated to the people who have left Germany and the places they have gone. The museum, modeled after the steamships many emigrants would have taken on the journey from Germany to America, showed the development of the technologies and capabilities that greatly decreased the time spent traveling and increased the health of these emigrants in the new world. After tours given by **Mr. Haller** and **Mrs. Eich**, we retired to a dinner at the museum hosted by **Professor Gustav Rogge**.

### **Thursday**

After another sleepless night, the last working day of the XXVIII German-American Young Leaders Conference had a lot on its agenda. After an introduction of the last part of the conference theme "**Restarting and Reforming German-American Relations**" the following four topics were discussed in the working groups:

- 3.1 Searching for Common Ground: Allies for What?
- 3.2 Anticipating Shifting Grounds: Strategic Realignments?
- 3.3 Looking for a New World Order: New Roles for International Organizations
- 3.4 Seeking a New Normalcy: Ties That Bind or Ties Too Tight?

### **3.1 Searching for Common Ground: Allies for What?**

The Cold War was the main reason for a very strong transatlantic bond between Germany and the United States. Western Europe was constantly threatened by the overpowering military strength of the Warsaw Pact, and Germany existed as a divided nation in the midst of it. Only the continued presence of the United States could counterbalance the threat posed by the USSR.

With the end of the Cold War, the initial basis for the transatlantic relationship had vanished, but the ties and forums that had been established and fostered remained in place. Even without the common external threat, a close relationship between Germany and the United States continued without being questioned. After September 11<sup>th</sup>, the ties between the two nations initially grew even stronger, but not for long. The discontent with the foreign policy of the Bush administration, especially the invasion of Iraq, called the Alliance into question despite the gratitude and friendship toward America that had existed, at least in former West Germany, since the end of WWII.

Is there still a need for the two nations to be such close allies, especially if there seems to be the "if you help us to proceed a certain way that's great, if not we will do it on our own anyway" mentality? The

administration under Chancellor Schröder took a more cautious approach and distanced Germany from the United States, while Chancellor Merkel has tried to find a middle ground and strengthen the ties again.

There was little doubt in the working group that a close alliance with the United States is still necessary to cope with today's threats, particularly terrorism. But there was also little doubt that it will be very difficult to find the right balance and to come to a common understanding on foreign policy. If the recent concessions by the Bush administration lead to better international cooperation and more reliance on multilateral approaches, a strong alliance based on new commons grounds versus a pact from the past could be a realistic scenario. It is time to move forward!

### **3.2 Anticipating Shifting Grounds: Strategic Realignments?**

Perhaps the most important discussion of the week was about where Germany and the United States can go from here in their transatlantic partnership. This alliance has prospered over the past 60 years, but the changes and problems facing us are unlike any since WWII. How do we handle nation states like Iran? The traditional carrot and stick diplomacy does not have the same effect on regimes like Iran, Sudan and Syria – so where does that leave us?

In the game of threats versus diplomacy, threats are only as good as the ability and drive to carry them out, both of which require international agreement and cooperation. What is the next step for the United Nations, NATO and the EU? America will always be at the forefront of military actions across the globe, but the importance of nations like Germany accepting a share of military endeavors increases exponentially as new and different conflicts pop up all over the world. Is coercive diplomacy the evolution of former diplomatic episodes or merely the offspring of failed diplomatic and punitive efforts? And beyond the traditional nation-state conflict, how do Western powers handle challengers' expansion into new terrain? China's investment in Africa, which has quadrupled in the past five years, has not gone unnoticed, but has gone without response. Chinese requirements for raw materials and oil products will only increase in the next 20 years, and their influence in Africa will have far-reaching consequences which have little to do with oil fields. Iran's effects on regional Shia populations are a growing concern for every country involved in the Middle East. When looking at regional stability, terrorism and emerging separatist movements, the balance of power between Sunni and Shiite religious and political centers cannot be overestimated. Balancing historical friendships and enmities with modern day political realities will be a difficult undertaking for transatlantic partners in the future, but one that must be faced before consensus can be reached.

### **3.3 Looking for a New World Order: New Roles for International Organizations**

On this, the last day of discussion, a truly consensual decision was reached – that the only way the United Nations would be internationally effective again is "if Earth is invaded by creatures from outer space". Suggestions were made to push UN Headquarters into the East River. The world that created the United Nations is no longer the world in which the United Nations exists. The growth of the non-aligned movement, gridlock in the Security Council and arguments over expansion vs. clearing out ineffective bureaucracies – all of these signal problems for the future of the only truly international organization in the world. The quagmire faced by the United Nations is not all that different from those faced by NATO or the EU – the questions of corruption, competition and competence in the international governmental and non-governmental areas will be paramount in coming to a decision on big ticket agendas. Much like the widening vs. deepening discussion of the European Union, fixing core corruption and competency matters will vie against making these organizations more representative of their member states as a whole coming to such sweeping conclusions on

organizational matters. The end result of our discussion was not where are these international organizations going, but will they be effective or will they even be in existence 50 years from now.

### **3.4 Seeking a New Normalcy: Ties That Bind or Ties Too Tight?**

To determine what a new normalcy could look like, with ties that fit just right, the group decided to first find out what the United States and Germany have in common. What values do we share with each other and in which areas are we different?

The United States and Germany both have the shared values of democracy and free market economies. They also have similar cultures.

So far so good but, as is often the case, the devil lies in the details. Human rights and civil liberties are supported by both systems, but recently in the wake of September 11 – the US has passed a number of laws limiting civic freedoms beyond what Germany would be willing to accept. The pressure the US has put on airlines to provide detailed passenger data before take-off, despite privacy concerns by the EU, seems to be an example where ties are too tight. But not all human rights-related differences have come about after September 11<sup>th</sup>. The use of the death penalty in the US has been a contentious issue for a long time.

Overall there are different perceptions about the war on terror and the willingness to use force. These topics serve as a source for constant debate as to what degree Germany should support its ally by passing similar anti-terror laws, sending troops to conflict areas, etc.

The luncheon speaker was **Dr. Rudolf Adam**, President of the Federal Academy of Security Studies, who gave a very candid and fascinating speech about “A Clash of Civilizations? Terrorism, Islamic Fundamentalism and the Challenges of the Broader Middle East”.

In the afternoon it was time to summarize all the working sessions of the week, and the wrap-up session was chaired by **Professor Dr. Ludger Kühnhardt** (YL 1985), Director of the Center for European Integration Studies (ZEI) at the Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität in Bonn

The closing dinner was hosted by Hapag Lloyd AG at their corporate headquarters right next to the beautiful Alster Lake. **Ulrich Kranich**, a member of Hapag Lloyd’s management board said in his opening remarks that “a pillar of the Atlantic Bridge stands right here as ships have traditionally been bridge builders” (something we had learned the day before in the German Emigration Center in Bremerhaven, as Lloyd ships brought millions of emigrants across the Atlantic.)

The last address of the conference was given by **Dr. Michael Schaefer**, Political Director of the Federal Foreign Office in Berlin. His speech on “The Iranian Issue – Challenge or Chance for a New German-American Relationship” was a topic that could not have been more relevant with only a few hours left for Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad to comply with United Nation’s directive regarding Iran’s nuclear ambitions. The presentation was particularly insightful as Dr. Schaefer was directly involved in the negotiations with Iran.

The dinner reception ended with closing remarks from **Dr. Beate Lindemann** who congratulated each of us individually, in a small “graduation” ceremony, to now being a Young Leader. The night ended (or for some did not end as the bus for the Americans left at 6:00am the next morning) in the bar of the Elsa-Brändström-Haus, where we continued conversations and deepened friendships.

## **Conclusion**

It has become apparent again after this week not only just how complex and difficult economic, social, and political relationships are on a global level, but also how critical it is to have an ongoing dialogue about them. Even if answers are not readily available, as was the case in many of the working groups, understanding each others' points and concerns is a fundamental first step toward reaching a consensus. Just like **Dr. Wolfgang Schäuble** pointed out to us, we as countries and societies will all fail if we don't work together. In particular the German-American relationship, which after a few rough years is growing strong again, is particularly critical and we are confident that we as the new Young Leaders will do our part to keep it strong and embrace dialogue about issues around the world.

"Once a Young Leader – Always a Young Leader", this credo which **Dr. Beate Lindemann** shared with us on the first night has become very real after this amazing conference. We had the opportunity to listen to a very impressive range of guest speakers, many of whom had themselves been Young Leaders. We hope that in a few years some of us will be speaking at future Young Leaders conferences or hosting a dinner for them. And of course we will all work to give back to society because, as **Dr. Jürgen Großmann** kindly reminded us, that is the key to being truly successful.

This report is based on summary notes from the report authors and other conference participants.