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**Conference Summary
Jon Sawyer**

Jon Sawyer, Director
Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting
Suite 615
1779 Massachusetts Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20036
Tel: 202-797-5285
Email: jsawyer@pulitzercenter.org
Website: <http://pulitzercenter.org>

When I first heard that this year's conference would focus on the state of trans-Atlantic relations, I wondered if the focus was perhaps a bit too narrow. In our speakers and topics we usually cast a more global net, and when we think of crises around the world the problems of Germany or France or the United Kingdom don't usually leap to mind first. My own organization is a case in point: We call ourselves the Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting. We've done some 70 reporting projects around the world – and when you look at our website Europe is the only region with no representation at all.

The speeches and conversation this weekend proved my concerns unfounded -- demonstrating that at this point of extraordinary transition here at home, with elections three months off and Americans contemplating a change in direction after eight tumultuous years, there is no better prism through which to view our status in the world than the perspective of our oldest, closest allies. I didn't doubt Klaus Becker's prescience in making this the theme of our conference – but I am impressed that he managed to make it coincide with President Bush's farewell tour of European capitals, first, and then the extraordinary spectacle of Barack Obama speaking to 200,000 Germans in Berlin.

For a weekend devoted to trans-Atlantic relations it was helpful to begin with the on-the-ground observations of Sonke Lorenz, who has served this past year as deputy consul at the German consulate in Atlanta. He usefully framed the scope of the relationship between our two countries – with Germany serving as America's biggest trading partner in Europe and America Germany's most important trading partner outside Europe. He said American hospitality and patience had helped him cope with the rigors of a southern drawl - - and reminded us of the benefits of coming from a country where mastery of

foreign language is expected and where he, like many Germans, began the study of English in fifth grade. He said he had been startled by America's urban sprawl, the sameness of so many American cities, the lack of public transport, a housing stock with much less emphasis than in Europe on insulation. He suggested two reasons why: fuel prices in Europe that remain double those in the United States and a government tax structure more weighted to encouraging conservation and the use of renewable energy. Sonke reacted with amused surprise to a question about how many Germans come to the United States for medical care. Hardly any, he said, noting that to Germans it's a rip-off what American health consumers are asked to pay. But he also said he believed Germans could learn from us, when it comes to the assimilation of immigrants. "It's something we just forgot about," he said. "We thought these guest workers from Turkey and other countries would eventually leave, and we never integrated them. Now after 20 or 30 years we realize they are here to stay."

Scott Denham, professor of German and inter-disciplinary studies at Davidson College, painted a portrait of American academia's role in trans-Atlantic relations – and broader still, citizen engagement with the world – that was both optimistic and pessimistic. On the one hand is examples of elite colleges like Davidson, which has now committed to full financial aid for every applicant admitted -- part of a broader trend of elite universities committing to meritocracy and making our best universities truly open to deserving applicants from all economic classes. Also positive, the commitment of schools like Davidson to student experience abroad. Three quarters of the school's student body spend at least a summer abroad; he said; half spend a full semester and a quarter a full year. Carol Burke is pushing similar engagement at UNC-Chapel Hill but the comparable numbers there – just 2 percent having foreign experience by the time they graduate – demonstrate what a challenge we face. So do some of the more negative statistics and developments Scott cited – the fact that most school districts require two years of foreign language at the most, that foreign language professors generally rank lowest on faculty salary scales and that their numbers are ever shrinking, that in his own field recent developments include the elimination of German programs at the University of Florida and the University of Southern California. And more broadly, the fact that most students coming into American universities – or graduating from them, for that matter – simply don't know history. When they hear about Obama in Germany they don't appreciate the echoes of Jack Kennedy in his speech or, more basic still, the shared values from the Enlightenment on that undergird U.S.-European relations.

The antidote to such shortfalls is surely dedicated professionals like Scott, and smart young students who disprove the stereotypes -- students like Kyle Montgomery of Mt. Tabor High School in Winston-Salem, winner of this year's essay contest. He gave us a great reading of the essay, reflecting on the UN's role in meeting global health challenges – and how more responsible actions by individual state actors is at least as important as international intervention to achieve the Millennium Development Goals on health and other key indicators of quality of life.

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Dieter Dettke, longtime director of the Washington office of the think tank associated with Germany's Social Democratic Party and now a professor at Georgetown University – “I retired the American way,” he said, “by starting another job” – reminded us of how badly U.S.-German relations were damaged by the Iraq war but also put that confrontation in the context of a relationship that has survived past disagreements that were equally fraught – think of the Suez in 1956, or France's withdrawal from the military arm of NATO -- and one that has recovered more quickly than many of us would have predicted.

Dieter's book on the subject is called “Germany Says No: The Iraq War and the Future of German Foreign and Security Policy.” He stressed that Germany's opposition to the U.S. invasion of Iraq was not so absolute as many now recall – cooperation on intelligence continued, Germany made available key logistical facilities, it relieved pressure on U.S. forces by taking responsibility for the protection of U.S. barracks in Germany, and its naval forces helped CENTCOM in the protection of key sea lanes. But he also acknowledged that relations between Bush and then German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder were “the worst I can remember” and that in the months before and after the war's start there was a “total breakdown in communication.” How bad was it? Recall that conference in Europe in early 2003 when then Defense Secretary Don Rumsfeld was asked about German opposition. He said that yes, it was true, some countries did not support the war at all. These countries, he added, were Libya, North Korea ... and Germany. “Tell me one thing,” Dieter said. “Do you want to be in that category?”

Dieter underscored something else important about that 2001-03 period, something that didn't get the attention it deserved at the time by U.S. policy-makers. That was Germany's decision after the 9/11 attacks to support the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan. Many Germans were skeptical about the likelihood of success in occupying a country that had been fractured by 30 years of war already. Schroeder carried the day, in the name of 9/11 solidarity, but it was clear from the outset that Germany would have no stomach for a second war, in Iraq. “That's the dirty little secret of Schroeder's position against the war,” Dieter said – that from the beginning of Iraq war talk there was simply no possibility of a political majority in Germany for going along.

Both sides, Europe and America, have learned from Iraq, Dieter said. U.S. policymakers know better now that it's hard to be successful, even for a superpower, without strong permanent allies. On the European side, that it's difficult to oppose the United States, even in a difficult situation like Iraq. You risk being split, as Dieter put it, and a Europe divided is a Europe that doesn't mean much.

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Yet as Dieter and other speakers addressed the issues that a new president will face – Afghanistan, Iran, relations with Russia, missile defense – it became clear that the election of a new president, be it Obama or McCain, is not likely to resolve differences in approach and priorities that remain stark.

Consider the rapturous reception in Berlin and across the continent for Barack Obama. I think all the Europeans here this weekend would agree that if their countrymen could vote it would be Obama by a landslide. But whether Europeans will go along with Obama's priorities remains to be seen, starting with the position he has staked out for a beefed-up war in Afghanistan, in his view the real battlefield with al Qaida, and putting much more of the burden on our NATO allies.

Dieter endorsed the Obama policy, adding that in his view Germany must overcome its post-World War II aversion to the use of force and commit to the use of combat forces in Afghanistan. That issue comes to a head this fall, when Germany must decide whether, and on what terms, to renew its mandate for German soldiers serving in Afghanistan. That role has been restricted thus far to the protection of civilians but Dieter called on his country to do more, to get over its taboos and commit to the use of its forces in counter-terrorism and the fight against the Taliban.

Dieter acknowledged that he was hesitant to take this position because he saw the debate "going a different way at home" – as was demonstrated forcefully a few hours later, in the eloquent talk by Theo Sommer, the long-time publisher and editor of the leading German newspaper *Die Zeit*.

Theo summed up the issue with the kind of packed, vivid paragraph dissecting Obama's call for more European combat troops in Afghanistan that makes him the envy of other journalists: "First of all, we haven't got them. Second, American advice that Germans have to learn to kill again doesn't go down very well. Third, more troops won't do the trick. If we send another 10,000 men that wouldn't help. I'm very pessimistic, more than the other speakers here. I don't think we'll succeed where Alexander the Great, the British in the 19th century and Russia in the 20th century all failed."

Theo didn't stop there. He went on to a *realpolitik* expression of national interests that amounted to a direct assault on the liberal arguments for humanitarian intervention that began with Bosnia and Rwanda and that supporters of Obama have cited in their calls for intervention in Darfur as well as a stepped-up war in Afghanistan. Theo said fighting for victory in Afghanistan would require an armed force of nearly half a million troops. "We don't have them," he said, "and I don't think our publics would accept it." And more than that: "If I were a German or French or American general I would say, Is it really the task of our soldiers to make sure Muslim girls can go to school? I don't think so."

Harsh, to be sure, but worth the open discussion of means and ends -- and unintended consequences.

Theo called for realistic expectations of what can be achieved in Afghanistan. "I think in the end we'll have to accept a Taliban-lite regime," he said, "a pious regime without connections to al Qaida."

On the broader issue of U.S. relations with Europe Theo gave us a sobering account of all the ways in which the Bush administration fueled European alienation. Not just the Iraq

war itself but what he termed “an ostentatious disdain for everything Europe cherishes. What does Europe cherish? International organizations, diplomacy, accommodation, compromise, conciliation, jaw-jaw instead of war-war, to quote Churchill. George Bush scuttled the Kyoto protocol, withdrew from ABM, unsigned the U.S. agreement on the International Criminal Court, rejected land-mines ban, the small-arms treaty, and the biological-weapons convention, and dismissed the Geneva Conventions. If I googled a little more,” he said, “I’m sure I would have found some more.”

There was also a deep difference on how to deal with international terrorism and even the scope of terrorism’s challenge, with the Bush administration placing that challenge above all others and most Europeans seeing it as simply one concern among many. “For us the defining moment of recent history was not 9/11 but 11/9,” Theo said, referring to the date in 1989 when the Berlin Wall came down – “when Europe started becoming whole and free again.”

The fall of the Wall also signaled the end of the Soviet Union, and with it the existential threat that for half a century had superseded all others, uniting the U.S. and its European allies against a common enemy. International terrorists don’t pose the same level of threat, at least in European minds, Theo suggested, and in this new environment the fissures on values have reappeared – from the death penalty to guns and abortion and the role of religion in politics to what Europeans see as the egregious assault on law and value in the American response to terrorism. “Nothing has done more harm to America’s reputation than Abu Ghraib, Guantanamo, the abominable redefinition of torture, extraordinary renditions, abductions in foreign countries, and the dismissal of the Geneva conventions,” Theo told us. “Whoever becomes president, the first order of business will be to repair the damage done.”

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Catherine Kelleher, a foreign policy official during the Clinton administration and now professor at both the University of Maryland and Brown University, was equally pessimistic on Afghanistan and somber in her general projections. “Whoever becomes president will have a table full of problems and crises,” she said, “some difficulties and problems too long delayed in solution, others that are looking for any solution and not being able to find one.”

On Afghanistan she blamed the currently bleak set of options to a set of bad decisions by Americans and Europeans alike. On the American side, the Rumsfeldian notion that we could go it alone, that in a transformed American military special-forces troops on horseback or camel could use their laptops to call in precision bombing from air bases thousands of miles away. Many forget that in 2001 NATO offered to help in Afghanistan and we said no thanks, we’ll do it ourselves. By the time Pentagon officials realized they were facing a real insurgency in Afghanistan, one that require significant forces on the ground, every available troop and resource was being diverted to confront conditions in Iraq that by then were even worse.

The Europeans had no coherent strategy for Afghanistan either, Catherine said, except that it was different from Iraq and that they fervently hoped to limit their role to the sort of social and economic reconstruction that was infinitely more pleasant than combat operations. When the Americans belatedly began seeking real NATO help, in late 2003 and 2004, the response was laughably small – exactly one helicopter supplied, by all the European powers combined.

The result is a conflict marked by insurgency, terrorism and dangerous spillover potential – Iraq redux, and maybe even worse. “This is a war that’s going to be tinged with even greater risks that we can imagine,” she said, noting the proximity to Pakistan and all of its own instability, not to mention the presence of nuclear weapons. “This is not World War III. This is not asymmetrical warfare,” she said. “This is a mess – and it’s not going anywhere.”

On an only slightly cheerier note Catherine also addressed an issue that will confront the new president early on but that has received relatively little public attention – the planned deployment of missile-defense systems in Poland and the Czech Republic over the objection of Russia, some European allies, and congressional skeptics at home.

This program, stretching back to Ronald Reagan, has moved forward largely as a unilateral U.S. initiative, at a cost of \$5 billion to \$8 billion a year, with little oversight, and with little regard to the opposition of Russia and concerns as to the program’s cost and effectiveness. Russia has the means to get our attention, or at least our allies – as was demonstrated two weeks ago when the Czech government signed the agreement committing to proceed with construction of its part of the missile-defense system. Russia cut off the Czechs’ gas supply – affecting 40 percent of its total energy supply.

While Russia on the one hand has been bellicose, threatening all sorts of retaliation if the system moves forward, on the other it has suggested a willingness to cooperate on a broader system, one that would incorporate Russia as full partner. Catherine predicted that a President McCain would likely to follow the mostly unilateral course of the current administration, keeping Russia to the side, while a President Obama would be more likely to work with Europeans and Russia on a common way forward.

Either way, there remains the troubling fact that has overshadowed this program from the start – the question, that is, of whether it will ever reliably work.

“We still don’t have a technological solution,” Catherine said. “We’re still dependent on a kinetic kill – that is, we have to knock the missile off course to defend against it. We also have to find it out in the debris of space, within the mass of deceptive material any opponent would likely launch. It’s a very hard technical challenge. We’ve spent a lot of money and yet no one has come up with even a 50 percent surety – that is, better than chance - - that we’ll get the missile coming in.”

Is such a system better than the model of deterrence on which we have relied, successfully, for the past half century? Not at all certain, Catherine suggested, and getting

to a coherent and rational policy is all the more difficult in an environment of American public opinion where – thanks in part to those amazingly optimistic and confident statements way back when by Ronald Reagan – 80 percent of the public thinks we already have a working missile-defense system in place.

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This morning we began with Jay Williams’s wonderful photographs of cheetah and wildlife from East Africa and Namibia. At least that’s what Kem tells me – I was in the back office downstairs, typing up notes. I’m going to get on his email list – and I’m sure many of you will, too.

Then we heard from the European Commission’s Anthony Smallwood, who began with a brisk riposte to the canard over the long-standing chicken wars between the EU and the United States – to wit, the claim that even as EU bans U.S. chicken imports, on the grounds that said chickens are dipped in chlorine, the EU itself engages in the same practice when it comes to exporting its own chickens.

Not so, Anthony said. “We gently massage our chickens in Perrier while you prefer to dip them in industrial cleaning fluid. Not true that we resort to same practices in our export to middle east, as some evil-doers say. It may have been true in the distant past, but not any more.

It’s not just the George W. Bush administration that has taken Europe for granted. He recalled a recent conference at the University of Georgia of all past secretaries of state, from Henry Kissinger on. They spoke of the challenges of India, of China, and of systemic issues like climate change. Not one of those present mentioned either Europe or Africa.

Anthony’s main message was the remarkable success of the European Union – notwithstanding continuing divisions over membership expansion, the Irish rejection of new constitutional rules, and disagreements over specific foreign policy issues. It has led on climate change, on trade, and on finding diplomatic solutions to issues such as Iran’s nuclear weapons program. It has also achieved more than most critics acknowledge in the development and deployment of independent military assets for peacekeeping and enforcement, from Chad and Kosovo to its police training in Afghanistan and Iraq.

The success the EU has achieved has been in the context of a challenging, fast-shifting environment, Anthony noted, from the impact of globalization and the sudden emergence of China and India as major players to the increasing significance of what he termed “asymmetrical foreign policies” from new non-state actors that range from multinationals and NGOs to hedge funds. On the whole it has performed remarkably well, as the world’s preeminent example of “pragmatic conflict resolution” – first in its post-World War II success in overcoming centuries of intra-Europe warfare and then, post-ColdWar, in the remarkably seamless integration of eastern European countries long satellite to the Soviet

Union. Anthony said few could have imagined such success (the Balkans aside) – and that it could have been achieved through “the sheer attraction” of EU membership and the workings of its rigorous preparatory processes for new members.

“Last year we celebrated 50 years of European integration which has also been 50 years of unprecedented peace and prosperity,” he said. “It is now as unthinkable that my children would participate in a European war as it was almost inevitable that my father and grandfather would do so.”

Gale Mattox, national security specialist and political scientist at the Naval Academy, spoke about U.S.-European relations in the context of NATO and the EU’s attempt to build an independent security force. She described how NATO had come to what she called its most substantial crisis since 1949, in Afghanistan, a conflict that some say puts the organization’s very future at risk.

Gale gave us a very helpful reprise of the history of both organizations and how they have evolved over time, especially since the fall of the Soviet Union and lessons learned during the Bosnia and Kosovo wars, and the growing desires for a more robust European-led defense force.

For NATO it was an especially radical shift, for a defensive organization that never fired a shot between 1949 and 1999. In 1993-94 it became involved in peacekeeping, in Bosnia; 1999 saw its first-ever conflict in Kosovo and in 2003 came Afghanistan, NATO’s first military deployment outside Europe. “To go from not firing a shot to undertaking a European mission that was outside NATO’s member borders, to Afghanistan, a conflict that was outside of Europe,” Gale said, “really took quite a change in NATO thinking and its approaches.”

The EU, for its part, has pursued ever broader defense responsibilities, sometimes to the consternation of U.S. officials and with uneven budget support from its own members. Nevertheless the responsibilities the European security forces have undertaken are real, Gale noted – from its lead role in peacekeeping in Macedonia to its crisis-management role on forest fires, response to the Asian tsunami and intervention in the Democratic Republic of Congo. And more broadly, on foreign policy, the EU has stepped up its already very active leadership on issues such as the Middle East and Iran’s nuclear program.

Gale also made a very telling point about the controversy over NATO’s first ever invocation of Article 5, committing its members to support the U.S. war in Afghanistan, and the U.S. rejection of their help. Gale noted that despite that rejection there was European assistance in the Afghan war effort, on a limited basis, well before the August 2003 assumption of NATO responsibility for the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan.

She also noted something else that maybe wasn’t appreciated at the time, when NATO members voted on the day after the 9/11 to throw its collective weight behind the U.S.

response to the terrorist attack – that this use of Article 5 was something that none of the architects of the alliance would ever have imagined.

Think of it, Gale said. Dwight Eisenhower “would have been shocked at the idea that the first use of NATO was for the defense of the United States.”

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As Theo Sommer reminded us, for all the differences – current and past – the U.S. and Europe are bound together by the deepest bonds of culture, shared values, political institutions and interest.

“We may be rivals but we have to remain partners,” he said. “We must not lose sight of the global picture. By mid century there will be 500 million Americans and 500 millions Europeans – and 8 billion people in the rest of the world. We’re still the partners destined for each other.”

Or as Winston Churchill put it, in another time full of challenge, “the only thing worse than having allies is not having allies.”

Thanks to all of our speakers for a most insightful weekend, as good a preparation as we could hope for the political transition we are about to see. I look forward to being together next year -- and hopeful that our new leaders will have absorbed some of the lessons we have spent this weekend thinking through.

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