



The Joan B. Kroc
INSTITUTE FOR
PEACE & JUSTICE

“The Current State of German - U.S. Relations”

Wolfgang Ischinger
Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany
to the United States of America

Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace & Justice
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Welcome by IPJ Executive Director Joyce Neu

Welcome to the University of San Diego and to the Joan Kroc Institute for Peace and Justice. We are really delighted this evening to see such a good turnout of students and community members who have come to hear what I think will be a very interesting talk on German-U.S. relations by Ambassador Ischinger. Especially since just yesterday, in fact, we have a change of government in Germany, so this is a very timely talk I think. And we are also honored to have with us this evening the deputy consul-general – also based in Los Angeles, I believe- and that is Deputy Consul-General Norbert Kuerstgens. And also the Honorary Consul of Germany in San Diego, Herman Zillgens, a good friend of the Institute. I would also like to thank our co-sponsors for this event this evening: the Department of Political Science, the Department of History, and the World Affairs Council. [Warning about cell phones follows].

I would also encourage you to please make sure that you've picked up a folder – a flyer – of Institute events to make sure that you come back to hear some of our events. This fall, the Institute is honored to have two quite unusual groups here. One [is a] group of Women PeaceMakers who are here, and we have three of them in the audience this evening, from the

Philippines, Uganda, Zimbabwe, and Cambodia. We also are honored this semester to have Justice Richard Goldstone in residence. So I hope you will be able to be around to come to some of the talks that these different people will give in the coming weeks. With that, I would like to introduce the Honorary Consul, Herman Zillgens, to introduce the Ambassador.

Introduction by Honorary Consul Herman Zillgens:

Good evening. It is a real pleasure to be in such a distinct environment and building, and I hope we can continue this dialogue to foster better relations between Germany and the United States, and in particular the University of San Diego, for a long time to come. I would like to thank the leadership that made this event possible, and in particular Professor Neu, who is the director of this Institute for Peace and Justice, and a very capable associate and manager, Ms. Elena McCollim. I would also like to thank the World Affairs Council's Ms. Ina von Ber, who was able to get a reception at the University so we have both a World Affairs Council event and a university event.

Becoming an ambassador to the United States, one has to have a sterling record of accomplishment. Let me just read to you the short resume of Ambassador Ischinger. He presented his credentials on July 31, 2001 to President Bush. He comes from the area of Stuttgart and was born there in 1946. That is close [inaudible] and some people consider that area – [inaudible] – Germany's most valuable tribe. [Laughter]. In 1963-64, he was an American Field Service foreign exchange student in Watseka, Illinois, where he graduated from the high school in June, 1964. Mr. Ischinger studied law at the University of Bonn, Germany; Geneva, Switzerland; and obtained a law degree in 1972 and earned a masters degree from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy [at Tufts University] in Medford, Massachusetts in 1973. From 1973 to 1975, he served as the Staff Secretary of the United Nations in New York. He joined the Foreign Service in 1975, and he served in Washington, D.C., Paris, and in a number of senior functions of the German foreign office. From 1993-95, Mr. Ischinger was the Director of Planning staff and from 1995-98, he was Political Director. Mr. Ischinger participated in a number of international negotiation processes, including the Bosnia peace treaty, [the] NATO Founding Act, as well as negotiations on NATO enlargement in the Kosovo crisis. From 1998-2001, Mr. Ischinger was Staatssekretär at the Foreign Service Office in Berlin. That's the highest position you can obtain in the German government. There are only a few- I think less than 30 in the government.

He has published widely on foreign policy, security, and arms control policy, as well as on European and transatlantic issues. He serves on a number of non-profit boards, including the Board of Overseers of the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, the East-West Institute in New York, the Alfred Herrhausen Gesellschaft Frankfurt, the Council of Public Policy in Berlin, the German-American Field Service Youth for Understanding and Humanity Action in New York. He is also the chairman of the Ambassador Advisory Board of the Executive Council of Diplomacy in Washington, D.C. Please welcome Mr. Wolfgang Ischinger, German Ambassador to the United States.

Talk by Ambassador Wolfgang Ischinger

I am so pleased to be here and I thought what I should do in the 25 minutes or so I've been given to talk – and I hope we'll have an ample opportunity for some questions and discussion later – what I thought I should do is divide my time into, essentially, two chapters. Allow me to talk for a few minutes about the current situation in Germany, and I'd imagine some of you – those among you that read the newspapers and are interested in transatlantic affairs, and I would imagine that that would be all of you – would be interested in understanding what is going on and what to expect. And then I would also like to – in the second chapter, so to speak – talk for a minute or two about the wider framework of the transatlantic relationship, not only the bilateral German-American relationship. Let me get started.

You've all been reading, I imagine, newspaper headlines or op-eds that have been saying that Germany has had an election without a clear result, and it's like in Italy where they never know which government is in power. And it [Germany] is in chaos and Germany is without leadership and surely this will be bad news for all those who would be interested in having a strong government in Germany that would push the country forward in the direction of more comprehensive reforms. I think most of these comments are not really appropriate. And I want to explain to you why I think that a far more positive assessment of the outcome of the German elections and of the current situation is really in place. And I should stress – just to be on the record; just so there is no misunderstanding – that I happen to be employed by the outgoing German government, so I am not a hired propagandist for the incoming German government. [Laughter] However, it may well be the case that I will continue to serve in my capacity as the German ambassador to the United States for the incoming German administration because we have a different system. I am not a political appointee; I am a diplomat. I've been a diplomat for 30 years – 31 years today – and in our system, our ambassadors are not expected to resign when there's a change in administration. Our custom is that, in most cases, people will simply continue. So I may very well be representing the incoming German government once it's actually fully installed in a few weeks. Just to explain to you where I'm coming from.

Here is why I believe that the news you've been reading about Germany – the election results and the current negotiations about what is called a “grand coalition” – is actually good news. The German political system is a parliamentary system where you have two chambers in your parliament. You also have two chambers, you have the Senate and the House. We have two chambers: one is called the Bundestag and the other one is called the Bundesrat. The Bundesrat, which is the chamber bringing together the various [inaudible], has had and continues to have for the foreseeable future – the next several years – clear majority of the current conservative opposition of the party represented by Angela Merkel, who has now essentially won the election. The problem why Gerhard Schroeder, the current chancellor, was forced to call for elections was that he was unable to legislate and to push through his projects effectively because [the] opposition had the majority in the other chamber, and was capable, therefore, of blocking every single major project. The outcome [was] this election and the grand coalition that is now about to be formed under [Angela] Merkel; and for the women here, I hope it is good news that Germany is going to have – for the first time in its history – a female head of government. [Applause] Thank you very much.

What is going to happen is that the grand coalition will provide not only for a significant majority in the Bundesrat (which would make it relatively easy to make decisions if you have 100+ more votes than the opposition), it will also mean that the people who legislate in the Bundesrat will have very close allies in the Bundestag, the other chamber. In other words, if there are decisions to be made in Germany in the future on reforms, the likelihood of these decisions to be adopted by both houses of our parliament will be vastly increased as compared to the current “stalemate” situation. So I think the outcome of the election is not at all a problem. It’s actually more of an opportunity, and I look at it as a major opportunity for my country to finally come to grips with the kinds of issues that we should deal with and maybe we should have dealt with already in the recent past. Among them are issues that you are all very familiar with because they are essentially the same issues that America is dealing with: healthcare reform, taxation, pension reform, unemployment. Unemployment is an even bigger problem in our country than it is in yours. So we have major systemic issues to deal with, and I am confident, I am optimistic that this new government that you will see enter into power in about a month – I would think that by mid-November this new government will be sworn in – I predict that it will do a good job in overcoming some of these very important bottlenecks that we have had in the recent past. So my message to you is that this is not bad news. I think it is pretty good news.

Before I go to the other subject, let me just spend a minute or two on how things are in Germany today. I’m a daily reader of the Wall Street Journal, among a number of other newspapers. I think too many Americans are led to believe that Germany is a country where nothing works anymore. A country that has fallen into stagnation, that has been unable to reform; the conservatives in America believe that it is a country full of Communists because they are not in favor of the war in Iraq. So we’ve been getting relatively bad press, I think. I have found in my discussions with American audiences – academic, business, and others – that not many Americans are aware that, while there are many things that need to be improved in Germany, Germany exported more goods around the world last year and the year before than America. Germany is the world’s leading exporting nation. We export a lot more than Japan – and you probably have all your Sony things and television screens at home. Believe me, we export a lot more than Japan and we actually export more than the United States of America to the rest of the world. My very simple point is that there has got to be something we are doing right if we are continuing, and the likelihood is that that will continue in 2006 and forward. We must be doing something right if our goods are so attractive in the world market.

Our problem, of course, is that the German worker is a very, very expensive worker. The German worker makes more per hour and is more costly per hour to his employer than most workers in most other countries, which makes it a huge challenge for Germany to continue to be competitive in the world market. In a globalized world, we know that we will be able to sell our automobiles or machinery or software only if we can sell it at a competitive price and if our software or our machinery is at least as good as, if not better than, the rest of the world. That is a very, very difficult thing to do if one knows that today in China, 2005, ten times [as many] engineers – electrical engineers, software engineers – are being trained each year [as] are being trained in Germany. It is inevitable that the time will come when the Chinese will say to us, “Forget about your next-generation BMW. We can do it ourselves.” And I think they can; if not this year, a few years down the road. In other words, we have to try even harder; we have to push the envelope, as they say, even harder if

we want to stay ahead of the rest of them, and I think that is a challenge that we share exactly with other industrialized nations like the United States. So we are really in the same boat. But the point I want to make is that you should not think that there is only stagnation and a lack of vitality in the German business and economic and political system. We understand that if we stand still, if we do not move forward, we will fail. I think that is one of the reasons why elections were called in Germany, and I am confident.

Now let me turn to the other subject. Let me talk about the relationship of my country and of Europe with America. When I look at our bilateral relationship, I have to tell you that if one leaves aside the issue of Iraq, we actually have not many issues on which we disagree, at least not many serious issues. There are some disagreements, but that is normal between two countries of that size and importance. Most Americans do not know that Germany today is America's most important ally in Afghanistan. Did you know, for example, that only America has more soldiers in Afghanistan than Germany? We have the second biggest military contingent in Afghanistan. We also happen to have the second largest contingent of soldiers in Kosovo, [the] former Yugoslavia, and in Bosnia, and we're trying to help in a number of other crisis spots around the world. That is, from the point of view of my country, and when you consider my country's history, a huge departure. And I just want to dwell on that for thirty seconds. Ten years [ago], in 1995 – when we needed to work very hard to settle the war in Bosnia – ten years ago, that was Srebrenica in Bosnia when tens of thousands of people were murdered. Germany was not ready at that time to send soldiers abroad because we held a belief in the government where I was a senior official, we held the belief that German soldiers should never be seen abroad again because German soldiers had done so many horrible things in World War II that that should not be something that they should ever get involved in again. And it was a job left to senior American leaders, and British and French leaders, to come to us and say, "Look, we've got to really make a major effort in the Balkans, and you are the biggest country in Europe. Why don't you participate?" And we said, "But are we not going to create only resentment if German soldiers reappear in the Balkans after what they did in 1941-43?" We had a huge debate. To make the long story short, we sent a hundred. Only to drive trucks – no tanks – only to drive trucks behind the lines, to try it out. And then when we found that this worked, we sent a few more. I was working on these issues in 1995. Today we are in 2005 and we've had over the last several years, on average, 10,000 soldiers in various parts of the world, including as far away as Afghanistan. That is a huge departure.

We've come a very, very long way. You may think that 10,000 soldiers is nothing compared to your 140,000 in Iraq, but if you consider for a minute that we had zero in 1995 and that we had had zero for the last fifty years, it is a major step forward. And the important thing to remember is that we have been able to do that on a bipartisan basis. All the relevant political forces in the German parliament accepted that proposition and this policy and I think we have been really quite fortunate.

So our bilateral relationship on terrorism, on Afghanistan, on the Balkans, on how to deal with Russia, on the Middle East is actually one where we're working together better than at any moment that I can remember. If that analysis is true, you'll probably ask me, "Well Mr. Ambassador, are you suggesting that everything is fine? No problem?" I am not suggesting that at all. What I am suggesting is that the problem we have in the transatlantic relationship today is not really one between Ambassador Ischinger and the senior officials of the State

Department or between the German government and U.S., the Bush administration. I think what we do have is a very, very worrisome perception problem where too many Europeans – too many Germans – no longer have friendly feelings, vis-à-vis the other side of the Atlantic, and vice versa. I've been running into too many Americans who feel unhappy about how Europe has progressed. So I think we have a problem, not between our governments- we also have some problems between our governments – but I think the real problem is that we have an issue of our feelings about one another at the grassroots level [that] are making us drift apart. I think that is the huge challenge.

And I would like to spend a few minutes and conclude my presentation here with some thoughts about why that happens, what it is all about, and what could be done about it. First of all, I want you to understand that, as far as my own country is concerned, most of the negative vibrations should not be characterized as simple anti-Americanism. I think if you concluded that, you're going to be on the wrong foot from the beginning. When Hurricane Katrina struck, the German government felt enormous pressure from the grassroots level in Germany to help the poor people in New Orleans. Chancellor Schroeder called me personally four or five days after the disaster struck and said, "I've just given a press conference and I was asked at the press conference what we're doing. And I repeated that we're offering medical help and forensic help and food aid and I'm not getting any response from Washington. So Ambassador, I hope you're not just sitting in your nice yard in Washington. Go and do something and tell the Bush administration that we want to help." There was real pressure on him to demonstrate that we were going to be able to do something effective. And we did. I was lucky enough to find the right person in the Bush administration, and I can report to you that Germany was, and has been, the one country that has been able to provide a significant contribution to the relief efforts in New Orleans. We were able to send a team of over 100 volunteer specialists in water-pumping equipment, etc. They've been working; they continue to work today, and they will draw down their work over the next week or so because most of the water has now been pumped out of the New Orleans city area. And their work has been appreciated. I went down to meet with this group two weeks ago, and I cannot tell you how happy these Germans were to be able to help. And the interest of the German media at home in their work was enormous. They were on television everyday; these guys are now movie stars. And that explains something very important to me. It explains to me that there is on a people-to-people level a continuing affinity with America – an expression of closeness.

Germans have not forgotten what they owe to America in terms of what Americans did to help Germans since 1945. And I'm not only speaking here about the Marshall Plan immediately following World War II, I'm also talking about the fact that without the determination of the Bush administration, of father Bush in 1989-90, I would not stand before you today as the ambassador representing a united country. Without American help, I'm pretty sure our country would not have achieved unification. So there is a debt of gratitude that many, if not all, Germans feel we should express, and I felt it during the Hurricane Katrina event. We set up a little fund at my embassy. We did that four years ago when 9/11 struck, and after 9/11, within a few weeks I collected- and I also regard that as a sign of the closeness of our two peoples and societies- we collected over \$60 million from German companies and individuals to be given to the families of victims of 9/11. We've restarted that little fund and we've already collected a couple million dollars again. So I think the problem is not anti-Americanism.

I think the problem is of a slightly more complex nature. I'll try to explain it to you in just a few words. Americans have asked me when I discuss this question, "Why are we not appreciated anymore in Europe? What's the problem?" I think the problem is actually quite simple. If you go back through the last fifty years of transatlantic history, you can find that there was a period of time when America was exceedingly popular, not only in Germany, but throughout Europe. And I think the period when America was most popular was probably in the 1950s and 1960s, maybe into the 1970s; there was a problem, of course, with the Vietnam War. But, generally, these were glorious days of the transatlantic relationship. Why were Germans and other Europeans so happy to be led, to be under American leadership at that time, and why is that less the case today? I'll offer you my answer – and I hope that some of you will contradict me and offer me [your] own views – I think that America, after World War II, did a masterful thing. After World War II, the United States was already the single most powerful nation in the world. At that moment in time, you decided – you, Americans – to create the United Nations; you decided to create the World Bank; you decided to create the International Monetary Fund; you decided, by the way also, to create NATO, a few years later. In other words, you created – it was not a German invention or a Japanese invention – the international system. You created strong international institutions, and you were smart enough to make these suffering partners, including Germany, a country that had been defeated and occupied by Americans, you made it possible for this defeated and occupied nation to feel that it was being supported and helped by America. And once the occupation was no longer the big issue, you made it possible for Germans to feel very confident about the fact that America was going to take our interests into account and was going to be leading the West, taking into account all the interests of [the] Brits and the French and the Germans and the Italians and the rest of us. That was masterful diplomacy. If had a chance to teach a course, if I had the time to do that at your institution, I would teach it exactly about that period and how you did it because it was worthy of the Nobel Prize, how it was being done by very, very smart and farsighted people.

I think the problem today is that too many Europeans – and I don't even mention the Middle East, I would have to give you an extra speech about how the Arabs and Muslims feel about this, but I limit myself to Europeans – too many Europeans feel, rightly or wrongly, that America is no longer taking their interests into account in an adequate way, but that America is only pursuing its own interests, understandably after 9/11, looking at primarily how to protect America. What we need to do together – American and Europeans – we need to make sure that we are going to be reclaiming the high moral ground, not only vis-à-vis the rest of the world, but also vis-à-vis our own constituencies. The job to do is to make sure that people understand that the West – the West as a concept that is a concept of values of the individual, of human rights, of personal freedom – exists and is not dead, and that it is not that America is protecting itself from the rest of the world and Europe is going to be regarded as a future rival. We should be seen and we should feel as one in terms of facing the challenges of nuclear terrorism, nuclear proliferation, and the many other challenges that we face in the modern globalized world. I think that's the job to do.

I was so interested in learning earlier today in a different meeting I had that the American navy, when they went out in an unprecedented effort to help the nations affected by the tsunami earlier this year, did more for America's image than any number of speeches that Karen Hughes or any senior official from the State Department will ever be able to make.

The fact that the navy helped the poor villagers in Indonesia, who had been led to believe that Americans were only bad imperialists, was tremendous. I think you couldn't think of a better PR strategy than that, and that's exactly what I'm talking about. We need to be seen to do the good things, the right things, not only for ourselves, in terms of protecting our societies, but in bringing the good things to the rest of the world, including to the Muslim world.

I need to stop, but let me finish on one thought with respect to the Middle East because that is, of course, going to be the key area of foreign policy activity that is going bring Americans and Europeans together, hopefully, and not dividing us in the next period. And that brings me also back to the question of Germany as my concluding thought. We've been talking a lot about transformation. The catchword is "transformation." We're going to "transform the Middle East," right? In how many months and with what kinds of resources can we make these poor people in the Middle East into people with democratic societies, with elections, and so on. I've always been impressed by the enormous optimism of Americans and by this "Let's do it!" kind of attitude.

But as a German admiring these qualities, let me share with you one experience that we Germans made after we had achieved unification. When East Germany became part of West Germany in 1990, 15 years ago, we believed – and I was a middle-level official at the time, but I happened to be rather deeply involved in the efforts to unite these two countries – all we needed to do was sort of a mechanical effort to renovate the autobahns, to build modern railroads, to provide more modern housing, to have broadband Internet connections, and then all the rest would fall into place. Nothing was more wrong than that assumption because as it turns out, in the case of Germany – and I believe that Germany is no different than any other human society – what turned out to be easy was to provide broadband Internet connections. Renovating the autobahn cost a couple billion marks or euros, but that was also doable. What was much less easy to do was to change the way people think. And it turns out that after only one and a half generations – and maybe two generations depending on whether you count a generation as thirty years or forty years – Germans in East Germany had unlearned the capacity to be in charge of themselves, to be responsible for themselves, to make their own decisions about who to work for, what to do, where to live, where to go for a vacation. To make people who have lived in that kind of society transform themselves into people responsible for themselves and to teach them individual responsibility turned out to be, by far, the biggest challenge of them all. That's a very simple German lesson, but on the basis of that, I think we have to be rather modest as we approach the question of how we are going to transform societies elsewhere because I think the challenges are even bigger when you talk about countries and people and nations who are even further removed from classic Western societies than my society and your society. That is a huge challenge and I think we need to work on it together.

Let me simply conclude by saying that I am very optimistic about the transatlantic relationship. I don't believe that the fact that we disagreed so violently at times on Iraq between the Bush administration and the current German government, I don't think that that will have to be a continuing major burden or handicap on our societies.

I'll close with a little anecdote that is really a true story and it happened to me. When President Bush visited Germany in May, 2002 – his first visit – I was asked to fly to Berlin a

day early because Chancellor Schroeder wanted to see me and some others wanted to see me before President Bush arrived. So I took a commercial flight and arrived in Berlin a day early and I took a taxi cab from Berlin airport to the city. And there had been a lot of talk in the German press and television about a lot of anti-Bush demonstrations in Berlin, and Berlin is a city famous for its rather violent capacity to demonstrate. We were all concerned what that would mean on American television, how that would play out. So I said to the taxi driver, "What are you hearing about the demonstrations that are being planned for tomorrow night when President Bush is going to be in town?" The taxi driver was an old Berliner and said, "Why do you ask?" I said, "Well, I happen to work for the German embassy in Washington." I didn't mention that I was the ambassador. He said, "Oh. Are you going to be meeting with President Bush yourself?" I said, "Oh, well I probably will." And he said, "Here's what you're going to tell him: I am an old Berliner and I know that there will be rather violent demonstrations tomorrow night. Probably thousands of kids are going to burn tires and smash even windows, and it will be probably not a pretty picture. But the President of the United States should be reminded that these kids would never have had and would not have today the right to demonstrate against anything had America not protected us in our personal freedoms, in the freedom of the city of Berlin for the last fifty years." Then he looked at me and said, "How do you like that?" And I said, "I think you are actually right in making that point." I did have, of course, an opportunity to spend time with President Bush the following day even before the demonstrations happened and I told him my taxi driver story verbatim, and I actually think that it helped overcome that problem. What also helped was that the demonstrations turned out to be much less violent and much less visible than many of us had feared. So I think there is an undercurrent of enormous warmth that continues to exist between Germans and Americans. That's a wonderful asset of our bilateral relationship and that's what I've considered my most important mission – to build on that. Thank you for your patience and your attention.

Question-and-Answer Session

Dr. Neu:

Thank you very much. I'm sure that a lot of the issues you raised on transatlantic relationships, on people-to-people diplomacy, and on governmental policies may cause some people to have some questions. And what I would ask is we have a number of people in the audience – I want to thank our volunteers for being willing to help us with questions, so we have a couple of roving [microphones]. We have a question here.

Audience member:

Thank you for your presentation. I would like to ask you, where do you see Germany standing on the probability of Turkey joining the EU shortly, or after 10 or 15 years?

Ambassador Ischinger:

Thank you. That's a very important question. As I'm sure you all know, the question whether Turkey should be given the opportunity to be a future member of the EU has been a highly controversial issue in all of Europe. My government – the current German government still in power – has been advocating a positive response to Turkey's ambition. But I have to admit that just like in France and in most other European countries, this has

not been a popular issue. It's being hotly debated among Germans and among all Europeans, and believe me, it's not just about religion. There are those who've said, "Oh, you want to remain a Christian club? That would be a bad idea." I think it's not so much about religion, but it's about very fundamental questions about power and legitimacy and about the question who do our citizens want to be governed by. I'll give you one example. If Turkey is going to be a member of the European Union- and again I say to you that we've been advocating that- in 20 years, Turkey, when and if it actually becomes a member, will be with some distance the most populous nation of the EU. The Turks would have more members in the European Parliament than any other European nation, including my own. And Germany today is the country with the most members in the European Parliament. In other words, you're talking about an enormous political change in the whole setup. For small European countries like the Dutch or the Swedes or the Portuguese, I think it's not too difficult to understand that they feel that they might be marginalized if there is such a huge giant- a country with potentially 100+ million people- that's going to come in. Where will they be if there's such a big additional partner in the EU. So I think one should take these concerns seriously and debate them. I expect the incoming German government to honor the current commitments, namely that we will continue to negotiate in good faith with the Turkish government. But I think one has to understand that the chances of a Turkish membership being accepted by a popular vote – to be ratified – in the various member countries of the EU will only be good if this is going to be a decade long process. If Turkey actually becomes a member of the EU, and if Turkey does not – the Turks have a tendency to believe that Turkey is negotiating with the EU about a solution somewhere in the middle. That's not going to work. Turkey will have to accept that the Turks will enter into the EU and not that the EU is somehow moving closer to Turkey and that we'll have a new solution. So this is going to be a long and complex negotiation and one that will be burdened by enormous skepticism among the voters in most European countries. It's one of our big challenges. Thank you for asking the question.

Dr. Neu:

That was a question from one of our graduate students in our Peace and Justice Studies Program. And I would like to ask those- there's a gentleman right here who's had his hand up- please identify yourself when you ask a question.

Audience member:

Sure, I'm Ron Bee, a former Robert Bosch Fellow in Germany for a year, as well as Director of the Institute for World Affairs at San Diego State University. I wanted to make a couple comments about what Germans have been doing in the Middle East beyond what the Ambassador has said. Namely, after 9/11, German pilots flew our AWACS planes over the United States so that we could go to Afghanistan. That was the first step. Also, Germans are training policemen in the United Arab Emirates for Iraq, and the policemen are really on the frontlines of the insurgency and counter-terrorism issue. But you also spoke, Mr. Ambassador, on non-proliferation and that we need to focus on that. Germany has been part of the E3/EU talks with Iran and those talks have not gone so well. At a meeting where I held military-to-military meetings in the Middle East, I invited British, French and Germans to come and speak about those talks and it was too hot a potato, not to mention the IAEA where I used to work. So what I'd like to know now is, what is the status of those negotiations with Iran? Where do you see this going in terms of the United Nations Security Council? And do you think that the Iranians have taken after the North Korean model,

namely that once you have a nuclear stick, then you get more economic and political carrots?
Thank you very much, Mr. Ambassador.

Ambassador Ischinger:

Thank you very much. Thank you for a very good question. Well, that would actually be the topic for a whole separate discussion. My 30-second or one-minute answer would be that we're working against very strong odds on this Iranian case. The outcome of the recent elections in Iran, according to most experts, has not helped. On the other hand, I think something very important has happened between Europe and the United States. As I said earlier, I've been at this diplomatic business now for 30 years or more. When I first served as a young diplomat in Washington at the end of the 1970s, I was there at exactly the moment when the American hostages were taken. And the one thing that I have regretted the most about Iran as a foreign policy issue has been that for the last 25 – almost 26 – years since the hostages were taken, we have not been able to get our act together. There has never been a consolidated, coherent Western approach. There was always an American approach that was essentially in favor of sanctions and no relationship with Iran, and there was always more of a European approach that tried to engage the Iranians, but we were never seen together. I think those who benefited from that disagreement were essentially the bad guys in Iran. I think that over the last seven or nine months, beginning after the reelection of President Bush, we have actually seen a [change] of European and American policy. We've been pleasantly surprised by the fact that the Bush administration has – after lengthy discussions in which I was intimately involved – finally agreed to offer some support to the European efforts to draw the Iranians into a negotiation. You're right that we've not been successful so far; I don't know if we ever will. On the other hand, the likelihood that we, namely the West that I was talking about earlier- America, Western European allies in principle – that we can effectively deal with the United Nations will increase if we can show to the rest of the international community that we have seriously tried to make a credible and *bona fide* offer to the Iranians. The Russians and the Chinese will have no choice but to say, "We accept your proposition. You made a generous offer to the Iranians. It's now their fault if they rejected that if they continue not to enter into any serious negotiation." I think it will be at that point that our chances of getting a majority decision in the Security Council will be significantly higher. So I think this is a very complicated diplomatic dance that we're playing and will continue to play. A very complex field with, unfortunately, no clear pattern solution, but that's why we get paid such great salaries. [Laughter]

Dr. Neu:

Thank you. We have a couple away in the back on that side and there's a gentlemen in the back on that side. We'll get microphones to you.

Audience member:

Hi there. Christopher Lynn, CSB International Corporation. I had the opportunity to study in Germany back in 1980s. Ronald Reagan was the president then, it seemed like a lot of the German people thought that he was a cowboy and had his finger on the nuclear button and everyone was afraid of him, not knowing what he would do. And 20 years later, we've won the Cold War with policies he put in place. And right now, I see the same type of mindset towards George Bush and the President's administration. He's taking it to – the global war on terror – in the same way: taking it to them rather than waiting for it to come to us. It seems to me that Europe might have, as you mentioned, a disagreement [with] the ways

things are done in Iraq, for example. What are some of the things that you or the German people or the German government would say that they should be doing differently? Could you give us some examples?

Ambassador Ischinger:

Thank you very much. That's a very important question. I think there is no disagreement between Germany as a nation, the German government, and the United States on the question on how important it is to effectively combat terrorists. No question at all. Again, let me remind you of what I said earlier: We are your number one partner in Afghanistan. We've even sent, unknown to most Americans and in a vast departure from our earlier practice, combat troops – Special Forces – to Afghanistan. So there's no question that we agree on that huge challenge that we're facing together. There is, of course, and there was and continues to be, a difference on Iraq in terms of diplomatic day-to-day work that we have managed to put behind us. There is no need for me to argue to Secretary Rice or the National Security Advisor over what should or should not have happened. We've decided to look at the future and not at the past. But of course there is a fundamental difference here. While we agree that terrorism is [an] important [issue], and we should do everything we can about it, most Germans – and certainly the government I represent and many other governments in Europe – have concluded that the case of Iraq is not really part of the fight-against-terrorism problem. That's a huge debate. Again, you can disagree with that and many will disagree with that, but that's what it's all about. Is that part of the War against Terrorism or is it not?

The other difference is that – and I just misspoke because I shouldn't have called it the War against Terrorism. Americans call it a war. We, in Europe, have never called it a war. It's also a major difference and has many implications. When the American government speaks of a War against Terror, I've been given to believe that you're really talking about a war using military forces, which in fact you are using. My own government and other European governments have never used the word "war." We've always spoken more in terms of "fighting" or "combating," but the word "war" has never been used. And that brings me to a much more fundamental point. It's so easy for Americans to speak in terms of war and to actually engage in war because the American experience has been one where your nation has been engaged in wars for good purposes. You've had some wars where some Americans believe that the purpose was not so clear, like Vietnam or now more recently Iraq. But generally, the American experience over the last 200 years has been that you've been conducting wars in foreign countries for good and positive purposes, including World War II – saving the Germans from dictatorship, liberating Japan, etc. Our experience with war is a very different one. My own father, who was a soldier in the German Luftwaffe in World War II, is 95 today. I think he has converted to total pacifism because he realized after World War II that he was fighting a war on the wrong side and that most of his friends had died and that he participated, at his low level, in a regime that was dreadful. His conclusion was, like many of his generation, never, ever again. No war, no German army, no soldiers, pacifism. I happen to believe that's the wrong answer. But that's a cultural difference that has been created because we come from such different historical experiences, we Germans as compared to you Americans. That's also something you have to keep in mind when we talk about the things that we do. When President Bush speaks of the war that you're conducting, many young Germans, who have heard from their dads or mothers that war is a bad thing, they don't understand that language. It's a language easy to understand for young

Americans. So we have a problem of translation and a problem of communication about this war and peace issue.

I was actually in a private meeting with President Bush one day where a senior German politician explained to your president exactly the same thing that I was just explaining about my own dad. Namely, that his father had also decided to be against any war and any German participation in any war. And I remember President Bush saying, "That's so fascinating because no one has ever explained that to me that you have that problem in Germany." So it's important to understand that enormous difference. When you're familiar with German history, it's not too difficult to understand why we would have this difficulty with the very concept of war. I'll take one more.

Dr. Neu:

I just also wanted to say that you've seen war in your lifetime or your parents' lifetime on your soil, and Americans have not for 140 years. I think that also gives us a slightly different readiness to engage. Yes, the gentleman back there.

Audience member:

I'm a student at Francis Parker here with my Human Geography...

Ambassador Ischinger:

I don't see you. Where are you? Oh, okay. [Laughter]

Audience member:

I'm a student at Francis Parker here with my Human Geography class. I was wondering if Germany had any plans for programs to help increase or encourage population growth above zero.

Ambassador Ischinger:

That's a very good question, thank you. You are hitting on, what I think, is the single most urgent, but so far not adequately treated problem in modern Western societies. The German population growth is not zero, but is actually negative. If we don't do anything about it, Germany's population will be reduced from 82 million today to about 73 million by 2050. Those of you that can do arithmetic will find it easy to figure out that that means that any pension system we have will be bankrupt long before 2050. No healthcare system is going to survive the pressures of fewer and fewer people in the workforce and more and more people in retirement. Fewer and fewer young kids are growing up to start working and make money to supply the income for the older population. So that's a huge challenge. Your question is what are we doing about it. Nothing. [Laughter] No, I shouldn't say nothing, but it's harder for Germany to do something serious about it than it has been, in my view, for Americans. You have, especially in this part of the United States, immigration. I know that immigration is not only seen as a benefit by some, but it actually maintains the population level of a country. Because we were never an immigration country in the past, immigration is not something that Germans find easy to accept as a notion. We have had over the last 30 or so years, the immigration of a few million [people], mostly Turks and some other southern Europeans. But in order to maintain our population level, or even have it continue to grow, we would have to develop a policy where we would open our doors a lot more. That's being rescinded by many people because we don't have enough jobs for the current population,

and people are afraid that Turks or others would come in and work for less money than the Germans. You can imagine – you have the same problem with Mexican immigrants – this is an issue where you are facing a lot of resentment and a lot of opposition, but we need to tackle it because if we don't, we will have a huge problem, maybe not next year, but in 5 or 10 or 15 or 20 years, by the time you are teaching your courses in “Demography” or whatever.

Dr. Neu:

Please join us – the Ambassador will stay for a few minutes to meet some of you. We will have a reception in the rotunda. I hope you'll pick up a flyer with the Institute events. Please join us for something to eat and drink.