**Think Transatlantic Week Examines U.S.-German Relations**

**by Karen Lautanen**
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In the spirit of exploring the common bonds that connect Europe and America, the European Union Center of Excellence/European Studies Center at the University of Pittsburgh participated in the Think Transatlantic! Campus Weeks sponsored by the German Embassy in the United States during the months of October and November. Campus-wide, German-focused events included multisite videoconferences, a film festival, and other events that highlighted themes of identity and explored the political and economic dimensions of the transatlantic relationship.

Funded in part by an award from the German Information Center USA (the center for public diplomacy at the German Embassy in Washington, D.C.), the EUCE/ESC planned a variety of activities that complemented other on-campus initiatives, including Pitt’s annual International Week.

The EUCE/ESC organized two videoconferences about Germany, as the centerpiece events for Think Transatlantic Week and as part of the EUCE/ESC’s
U.S. Elections: The View from Europe

From left to right: Vice Provost Alberta Sbragia and EUCE/ESC Director Ronald Linden listen to Associate Professor of Political Science Michael Goodhart on Nov. 8 during “U.S. Elections: The View from Europe.” Sbragia, the former EUCE/ESC Director, Linden, a Professor of Political Science, and Goodhart discussed European reactions to the results of the U.S. presidential election. The panel of experts examined how well Europeans understand America’s electoral process, what effects the presidential election will have on U.S.-Europe relations, the implications in regards to the eurozone crisis, and how Europeans viewed each candidate.

Europe in Crisis? The Prospects for a Renewed EU-US Partnership

Right: European Parliament President Martin Schulz speaks during a videoconference entitled, “Europe in Crisis? The Prospects for a Renewed EU-US Partnership” on Nov. 27 at the Center for Transatlantic Relations/School of Advanced International Studies (CTR/SAIS) at Johns Hopkins University. Bottom left: The European Union Center of Excellence/European Studies Center at the University of Pittsburgh joined the videoconference, along with the University of Illinois and SAIS’s Bologna, Italy campus. President Schulz discussed the ongoing transformation of the European Union, explained why he believes Europe will emerge stronger from the current economic crisis, and made the case for a close transatlantic partnership. Photographs courtesy of Miriam Cunningham, Johns Hopkins University.
Making Sense of the European Union’s Nobel Peace Prize

by Dr. A.S.M. Ali Ashraf
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Editor’s note: Occasionally, the EUCE/ESC reprints articles written by alumni and affiliated faculty. Dr. Ashraf received his PhD from the Graduate School for International and Public Affairs (GSPIA) at the University of Pittsburgh in 2011. He was awarded dissertation and pre-dissertation funding from the EUCE/ESC. The following originally appeared in The Daily Star of Bangladesh on Nov. 15, 2012, and it is being reprinted with permission.

The Norwegian Nobel Committee’s decision to award the 2012 Nobel Peace Prize to European Union (EU) has generated mixed responses. For EU officials, the Nobel Committee’s decision makes sense since the peace award goes to an institution that really deserves it. EU supporters are delighted by the fact that EU is the only regional intergovernmental organisation to win the prestigious peace prize. Senior EU officials, including EU President Herman Van Rompuy, European Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso, and European Parliament President Martin Schultz, said it was a recognition that was long overdue.

In order to grasp the importance of the Nobel Committee’s decision, one has to look into two contrasting approaches to peace: negative peace and positive peace. Negative peace refers to absence of war or violence, while positive peace implies promotion of social justice and inclusive policies. It is interesting that the Nobel Committee and EU’s supporters tend to highlight EU’s contribution to negative peace. This is because historical enmity between France and Germany caused many wars on the European continent. In the postwar era, the EU and its predecessors, such as the European Coal and Steel Community, the European Economic Community, and the European Community, facilitated rule-based cooperation among member states. Greater economic cooperation has created an incentive for stable relations while reducing the likelihood of war. This led the Nobel Committee to conclude that: “Today, war between Germany and France is unthinkable. This [the European integration process] shows how, through well-aimed efforts and by building up mutual confidence, historical enemies can become close partners.”

EU’s contribution to positive peace cannot be ignored altogether. This is exactly why the question of promoting democracy and human rights comes to the fore. Evidence can be found in the way EU membership is extended to countries in the Balkans and Central and Eastern Europe. More than one-third of EU’s 27 member states joined the organisation after the end of Cold War. Political democratisation and economic liberalisation were set as important preconditions for EU membership candidacy. It is thus no surprise that today’s democratic Hungary, Lithuania, and Poland, for instance, look completely different from and arguably better than their autocratic past. Democracy and human rights are valued so much for their role in expanding individual liberty, freedom of speech, and economic choices.

For cynics, the Nobel Committee’s decision to award the peace prize to EU is nonsense and an irony. Although critics appear to speak in one voice, there are many facets of EU’s Nobel critics, such as anti-colonialists, economic nationalists, and Euro-sceptics. Much of the historicist and anti-colonialist criticisms come from Afro-Asian political analysts. African observers are particularly unhappy at the Nobel Committee’s decision. For them, Europe’s long history of colonialism, slave trade, and military intervention have undermined African development.

Hebert Zharare, political editor of The Herald Online, criticises the “predatory behaviour” of some EU member states for creating two world wars and interfering in the internal affairs of other states. Economic nationalists in Greece, Portugal, and Spain have derided the EU’s Nobel prize, saying it was untimely when the Eurozone crisis has revealed divisions rather than unity. Nationalists are concerned with the EU’s role in imposing austerity measures in their countries, which have led to riots and social unrests.

Great Britain is well known for harbouring sceptical
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attitude toward the EU. In fact, on many international issues, the United Kingdom appears to be more Atlanticist than Europeanist. This means, in the conduct of international affairs, the UK attaches more importance to the United States of America and its principal military alliance North Atlantic Treaty Organization (Nato) than Britain’s European neighbours and the EU. It is thus no surprise that British Prime Minister David Cameron offered an unenthusiastic comment on EU’s Nobel Peace Prize. In a belated statement on October 19, 2012, Cameron remarked that the EU was not the only institution to be credited for making peace in Europe. He made it categorical that Nato deserved the credit too!

Turkish critics have joined the chorus saying the EU should be prized for its duplicity and hypocrisy. The source of Turkish anger is obvious: Ankara has long been kept waiting for EU membership. The European Commission has made it clear that the EU will not extend its membership to Ankara until Turkey improves its human rights standards.

Proponents of the EU respond to the critics by emphasising the past achievements of EU in stabilising Europe. They acknowledge the magnitude of economic challenges faced by the EU and its member states, but are hopeful that a strong EU, rather than a divided Europe, can better handle the economic anarchy. For them, absent European institutions, parochial national interests and right wing extremism will challenge the ethnic diversity and cultural plurality of Europe.

Contrasting images from EU’s supporters and critics offer a fresh opportunity for South Asia to examine the effect of economic integration on regional peace and stability. Established in 1985, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (Saarc) is yet to show visible progress in creating a free trade area. Saarc leaders can follow the EU’s footsteps and examine how the Europeans have put aside their parochial

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This month, the EUCE/ESC had the opportunity to catch up with alumnus Dr. Basak Yavcan, an assistant professor in Political Science at the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey (TOBB) University of Economics and Technology in Ankara, Turkey. In 2010, Dr. Yavcan, a Turkey native, earned a graduate certificate in West European Studies from the EUCE/ESC and a PhD in Political Science at the University of Pittsburgh.

Q: How did the education you received at the University of Pittsburgh help you for your current work?

A: For starters, the classes I took at Pitt equipped me with the right set of theoretical and methodological skills to pursue an academic career. The intellectually stimulating environment and great scholars I got to meet enabled me to build a large international research network. I now have research collaborators in Germany, the United Kingdom, Brussels, and France, as well as the United States and Turkey. Furthermore, with several research grants I received from the European Union Center of Excellence/European Studies Center at Pitt, I got to travel to Germany and conduct the fieldwork necessary to complete my dissertation. The knowledge and vision I received throughout those trips still help me with my current research and teaching. Finally, I also got to teach a seminar for the EUCE/ESC where I interacted with students who had a keen interest in the European Union. Since then, I’ve taught a few other classes in several locations, but my first class at Pitt is by far my favorite.

Q: What classes are you teaching at TOBB University of Economics and Technology?

A: Well I am teaching classes mostly on Comparative Politics and International Relations. During my first year here, the most challenging course to teach for me was International Political Economy. It was not exactly my area of specialization so, as always, my friends at Pitt were of great help by providing me with their syllabi and suggesting reading lists and documentaries. This term, I am teaching it for the second time and feel like I can answer students’ questions and make the class a lot more fun. Because of my experience at Pitt, teaching the European Union Integration course here was like a breeze. I could embellish the course with comparisons with the United States and with several anecdotes from the history of the European Union, as well as from my interactions with important European Union figures, such as [European Commission President] Jose Manuel Barroso. Overall my experience at Pitt helped me with my teaching greatly. So much so that I sometimes feel like I know more about politics in the United States and the European Union than I do about Turkey. This shows in my examples for concepts and institutions in class. Good thing that my students are very interested in those two cases.

Q: What research are you doing?

A: I am continuing some of the collaborative work I started at Pitt and adding new projects to them. I am currently applying for grants for a new project that involves newspaper content analysis on the portrayal of the European Union in Turkish media and possible framing effects this may introduce in relation to Euroscepticism. This is a comparative work with a former colleague from Pitt – Galina Zapryanova – who is currently at the University of Mannheim [in Germany]. The experimental lab facilities in both our institutions help us with this project.

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greatly. As part of my duty as the vice director of the Center for Social Policy Research here at TOBB University, I am also coordinating the Turkish leg of an European Union project on social exclusion in vocational education system. For this project, I design and analyze surveys with students, teachers and policy makers in Turkey.

Q: What are your thoughts on Turkey’s accession bid into the European Union?

A: The accession of Turkey to the European Union provides many opportunities, as well as challenges. Turkey shows an increasing willingness to engage with all its neighbors both to the East and the West. This puts the country in a unique position and possibly as a credible arbitrary with a strong economy in relation to the conflicts in the area. I believe this is of increasing importance for the European Union, which also wants to have an influence in the area both in terms of solving conflicts and as a normative power pursuing democratization and respect for human rights in the area. Turkey learned a lot from the European Union in this regard and stays committed to the process. It is part of the customs union and is a participant in many European Union-wide policy and research initiatives, and the recipient of several European Union funds. I guess even though the prospects for Turkey’s immediate membership are somewhat dim, both parties see themselves as indispensable partners as a result of their joint endeavors and socialization through multiple channels for the last two decades. I believe this provides us a case of complex interdependence, which tends to decrease the escalation of conflict and peaceful coexistence. Whether or not (or when) this relationship will turn into membership of the European Union will depend on Turkey’s commitment and progress, as well as the European Union’s internal processes and willingness to be defined as a multicultural entity.

Q: What are your career goals?

A: I don’t know where to start. On the one hand, I love the research I am doing and would like to be part of more international research networks and collaborative research projects. I would like to continue to work on public opinion in a comparative way, get to expand my theories and methods to new geographies and gain new insights into understanding inter-group relations. Nothing beats the rush of refining a theory or new survey results. On the other hand, I also enjoy doing policy relevant work and having some access to policy makers. I think being in a capital city is getting to me, as it allows me to actually change things in a more direct way. Also, I recently assumed an administrative responsibility that allows me to coordinate a team of graduate students for doing research. While I can see the challenges, I have always seen myself as a people person and this helps me find ways to increase efficiency and peaceful relations among the members of the team. I think I should pursue this newfound skill and maybe one day have a higher administrative position allowing me to change and contribute a lot more. In my opinion, the upcoming years will be quite a balancing act between all these goals. Luckily, the time I spent at Pitt prepared me to deal with a variety of different projects. One thing I know is that I will continue to do what makes me happy and it helps a lot to have the right set of skills to pursue that.

Q: What career advice would you give a political science major who is interested in the European Union?

A: I would advise them to first understand the history of European Union integration and the evolution of its institutions. This is imperative for understanding what the European Union has become today. I think it is an indispensable case for understanding institutional change. In my opinion, the European Union’s role as an international actor is an interesting and dynamic issue one could study. Its ability to negotiate on behalf of all its members in many international organizations makes it a very interesting case. It is quite interesting how in some cases this helps the liberalization of markets, while in others it serves as an obstacle. One thing that I find currently fascinating is what the European Union means to ordinary Europeans and how hard the European Union is trying to connect with them. This is clearly a result of the discussions of the democratic deficit in the European Union and indicates more power to the people. More people participate in European Parliament elections, more people go to the streets to protest its policies, and more firms go to Brussels to lobby European Union institutions. It remains to be seen whether or not the European Union will succeed in this endeavor and manage to diffuse a European Union identity.
national interests to move toward the formation of a regional community. Such lessons are particularly important for India and Pakistan, two South Asian archrivals who have fought three wars since independence in 1947, and have often boasted of their nuclear arsenals as the ultimate guarantors of national security. Today, the Kashmir dispute remains at the heart of bitter Indo-Pak relations, foiling the prospects for a strong Saarc process.

I contend that, like France and Germany in Europe, India and Pakistan in South Asia should come forward with a gesture of goodwill and friendship in constructing a strong foundation for Saarc. As a founding member of Saarc and an enthusiastic promoter of South Asian identity, Bangladesh should help bring New Delhi and Islamabad closer to the negotiating table. The EU can also extend its political clout and diplomatic support in this effort. Such efforts should aim to create a stronger Saarc, which will not only reduce conflict possibilities between India and Pakistan, but also promote democracy, free trade, and people to people contact in the region. Regardless of the negative image painted by the critics, the EU is likely to be seen by many South Asians as a role model of regional integration and a success story of peace.

In a ceremony on Dec. 10, the European Union was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. Accepting the award were European Commission President José Manuel Barroso, European Council President Herman Van Rompuy and European Parliament President Martin Schulz. Many of the leaders of the Member States were present, as well.
thought about how important she really is.”

Both video conferences were also featured as part of International Week, which took place between Monday, Nov. 12, and Sunday, Nov. 18. International Week is organized annually by the Global Studies Center, the Office of International Services, and the Study Abroad Office.

In addition to the two virtual roundtables, the EUCE/ESC organized a German film festival that included the movies, “Das Lied in Mir,” (“The Song in Me”) “Der Ruf,” (“The Last Illusion”) and “Wolke Neun” (“Cloud Nine”). These films complemented programing in the German and Film Studies departments, including a film series focusing on German Weimar Cinema. Each of the films addressed in some way the concept of identity. Taking place over the first two weeks of November, the films attracted students and faculty interested in both filmmaking and contemporary German society.

The Think Transatlantic! Campus Weeks campaign was initiated by the German Embassy in the hopes that better understanding of common goals and values will only strengthen the transatlantic relationship. The

EUCE/ESC Director Ron Linden (center left) addresses participants of “Angela Merkel’s Germany. Angela Merkel’s Europe?” on Nov. 15. Gregor Thum (center right), an Assistant Professor of History at the University of Pittsburgh, also served as a panelist. EUCE/ESC was honored to receive funding from the German Embassy in support of its German-themed programing and was pleased to be a part of the larger project. More than 6,000 students at 30 colleges and universities have participated over the last four years in Think Transatlantic! Campus Weeks. €