

RUSSIA IN UKRAINE

END OF THE PEACEFUL ERA IN CENTRAL EUROPE?

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The Russian invasion of Ukraine poses a fundamental challenge to the post-Cold War order, which has kept Europe relatively stable and at peace for the past twenty-five years. With his policy of aggressive nationalism and hegemonic aspirations, President Putin openly challenges the principles of sovereignty, self-determination, and democracy, on which this order was built. His worldview and, indeed, that of many others in the Russian elite, is premised on a perceived need to restore Russia to its former position of influence and greatness in the 'near abroad' and - through that - in the world. One year after the unrest in Ukraine commenced the question of how to respond to these ambitions still remains unanswered by the West.

1. The Policy Issue: Invasion, Annexation and Destabilization

In November 2013, Ukrainian President Yanukovich unexpectedly announced that he had suspended preparations to sign an association agreement with the European Union (EU), under which his country would have gained full access to the EU's common market in exchange for adopting the Union's legal and economic standards. He explained that this had become necessary due to Ukraine's worsening economic situation and deteriorating relations with the country's major trading partners in the Community of Independent States (CIS), particularly Russia (which alone accounts for almost a quarter of Ukraine's exports, a third of its imports, and significantly more in the energy sector). Russian President Putin had made his opposition to the association agreement abundantly clear in recent months and proposed the creation of a Eurasian Economic

Union, including the Western and Central European members of the EU as well as the former Soviet republics in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, as an alternative.

Yanukovich's decision triggered demonstrations on Maidan Square in Kiev, which rapidly grew in numbers and soon turned against the government of Mr. Yanukovich himself. Initially a peaceful demonstration for political and economic freedom, the situation on Maidan Square escalated when violent nationalists from the so-called Right Sector joined the protests and the government ordered riot police to quell the demonstrations. During clashes in late February 2014, more than 100 people died on either side, hundreds more were injured. As both sides accused each other for being responsible for the escalation, the efforts by the European Union - and, prominently, the Foreign Ministers of France, Germany, and Poland - to broker a truce came to no avail. On 21 February, President Yanukovich fled Kiev for

Russia. An interim, pro-Western government was established with Olexandr Turtschynow as President and Arseni Jazenjuk as Prime Minister. It was eventually replaced by a democratically elected President, Petro Poroshenko, who won the May 25 Presidential elections.

The events in Kiev triggered demonstrations on the Crimean peninsula and in Eastern Ukraine where a majority of Russian-speaking Ukrainians felt disenfranchised and feared that their interests would no longer be adequately represented in Kiev. A 23 February decision by the Ukrainian parliament to repeal the 2012 law on the principles of the state language policy, which allowed for the use of Russian in the courts, schools and other government institutions of Eastern Ukraine, only added to these fears. Although President Turchynov vetoed and effectively blocked the decision on 1 March, this did little to calm down the situation in the East. In a number of towns in Crimea and the Donbas region, pro-Russian militias tried to seize control of government buildings and public offices. Allegedly to protect the rights of ethnic Russians amidst the upheaval, Moscow came to their assistance.

Although no one was killed and not one of the R2P criteria addressed in Crimea before annexation by Russia, Putin intervened under the pretext of protecting ethnic Russians. Russia deployed tens of thousands of soldiers on the Ukrainian border and staged a clandestine invasion of the Crimean peninsula. Russian forces, operating without national symbols or identification marks on their uniforms and equipment, forced the Ukrainian army from Crimea. On 21 March Moscow formally annexed the territory. Russian intelligence agents and military forces subsequently supported an uprising in eastern Ukraine, unleashed violent conflict with the Ukrainian military and allegedly shot down a civilian Malaysian passenger plane, killing all 298 people on board. All the while, President Putin has denied the Russian intervention but praised the annexation, feigned no support for the rebels but maintained political and military support for the rebels, negotiated a tentative cease-fire but set conditions for Ukrainian governance of its eastern territory.

For almost a year now, scholars, analysts and politicians have been scrambling to explain Russian President Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine, the annexation of Crimea, and the

destabilization of eastern Ukraine. As the crisis lingers on and the situation in Eastern Ukraine threatens to turn into yet another frozen conflict on the Eastern fringe of Europe, it becomes increasingly clear that there are no easy solutions or quick fixes to the problem. A sustainable solution will undoubtedly require a more comprehensive understanding of the underlying motivations and causes driving Russia's policies and the Western response.

2. Analysis: Competing Narratives

Russia and the West have competing narratives to explain Putin's actions in Ukraine. Accusations the West did too little to take into account Russian interests after the collapse of the Soviet Union have gained sympathy for Russia today. Particularly in Germany, the debate over blame for the crisis seems to arise from self-doubt and is plagued with questions of who is responsible for the escalation of the conflict. From Putin and those seeking to understand him come arguments such as these about NATO and the U.S.: Does the enlargement of NATO and the EU pose a threat Russia? Did they violate any secret assurances not to expand these institutions eastward that were allegedly made to Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev by Chancellor Kohl and U.S. Secretary of State Baker in 1989/1990?

If, 25 years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, Russian President Putin has made a judgment call quite different from that of his predecessor in the Kremlin, who chose to keep Soviet troops in their barracks when East Germans took to the streets to realize their long-standing desire for a life in freedom and prosperity, this decision can only be properly understood by looking at the historical record. History - and how it plays out in the different (and competing) narratives of the West and Russia, informs this debate.

2.1 The Western Narrative

In November 1989, the fall of the Berlin Wall signaled the end of a divided Europe. While the regime in Beijing still crushed the student-led demonstrations for democracy on Tiananmen Square in June, change had already begun. In May, Hungarians had cut the barbed-wire fence sealing off their country from neighboring Austria. In June, Poles were able to elect representatives of the opposition movement

Solidarnosc to Parliament for the first time. From September, citizens of Leipzig took to the streets each Monday, expressing their desire for freedom in ever-growing numbers. In early November, the Berlin wall fell from the crush of people wanting freedom – and with it the communist regimes in Eastern Europe and, ultimately, the Soviet Union itself. The old order – the Cold War – was coming to an end.

Already in October 1989, on the occasion of the fortieth anniversary of the GDR, Mikhail Gorbachev had famously warned that those who came to late would be punished by history. In December, after a historic meeting with his counterpart from the United States, the President of the crumbling superpower declared: We are just at the very beginning of our road, long road to a long-lasting, peaceful period. ... And thus, many things that were characteristic of the cold war should be abandoned, also the stake on force, the arms race, mistrust, psychological and ideological struggle, and all that" (Gorbachev 1989). Optimists like the American political scientist Francis Fukuyama even went so far as to proclaim "The End of History" (Fukuyama 1989).

In November 1990, the leaders of a Europe that was whole again were joined in the French capital by their colleagues from the Soviet Union, the United States, and Canada to adopt the "Charter of Paris for a New Europe" (OSCE 1990). Sometimes compared to the Congress of Vienna (see Mandelbaum 1990), the gathering can indeed be regarded as the peace conference that ended the Cold War. The ideal that it enshrined was that of a "Europe Whole and Free" (Bush 1989), first expressed by President George W. Bush in a May 1989 speech in Mainz, where he invited Germany to join America as a 'Partner in Leadership' of the emerging new order.

The newly-united continent was to be governed by the common values the peoples of Europe had "cherished for decades: steadfast commitment to democracy based on human rights and fundamental freedoms; prosperity through economic liberty and social justice; and equal security for all our countries" (OSCE 1990). Explicitly, the heads of state and government pledged "to refrain from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State" and " to

settle disputes by peaceful means" (OSCE 1990).

This, of course, has always been more an ambitious expression of an aspiration than an accurate description of reality. Throughout the 1990s, the horrors of the wars in the Balkans gave proof to the fact that Europe had not reached the end of history. The jubilant celebrations that accompanied the admission of the first Central European countries to NATO in 1999 and the EU in 2004 obscured for a while that the expansion of freedom, democracy, and prosperity had come to a halt on the fringes of the former Soviet Union. In the geopolitical void between a weary European Union and a weakened Russia, a new zone of instability emerged: In Belarus, Alexander Lukashenko preserved Europe's last dictatorship for 20 years now. In Ukraine, a small clique of oligarchs has monopolized national power and wealth. In Moldova, Georgia, and Azerbaijan, secessionist movements and frozen conflicts have persistently undermined the authority and control of elected governments.

Yet, the principles enunciated in the Charter of Paris helped to contain these conflicts and mitigate fears that Sarajevo 1994 might turn into Sarajevo 1914. The expansion of the Euro-Atlantic structures of cooperation, in which these principles are enshrined, helped channel the revolutionary upheaval in Central and Eastern Europe into productive, democratic, and market-oriented reforms. President Clinton's strategy of "democratic enlargement" (Brinkley 1997) expanded the Western European zone of peace, freedom and prosperity eastward - not as a threat to Russia, but for the mutual benefit of all. Perhaps for the first time in history, the countries and people of Europe subscribed to a shared set of values which, for the past twenty-five years, has helped to keep the peace and ensured that Europe remained whole and free.

Looking towards Ukraine today, Westerners thus see a mirror-image of themselves - a people with the same longing desire for freedom, democracy, and prosperity as the citizens of the GDR. Courageous citizens no longer accepting oppression and tutelage, but determined to take control of their own destiny and standing up for the values universally shared across the continent. From this perspective, the audacity of the protestors in Maidan Square represents an opportunity to

expand the zone of freedom, democracy, and prosperity further towards the East and move one step further towards the completion of President Bush's vision of a Europe Whole and Free.

2.2 Putin's Narrative

Unlike most Europeans, however, Vladimir Putin does not believe in the principles or share the values underpinning the post-Cold War settlement. Unlike most of his compatriots, he did not experience perestroika. Stationed in Dresden as a KGB officer during the critical years of change, he despised the country he returned home to when ordered back to St. Petersburg in 1990. Unlike Mikhail Gorbachev, Putin did not embrace peaceful change that led to the transition from the Soviet Union to the Russian Federation. He has called the fall of the erstwhile superpower "a major geopolitical disaster of the century" (Putin 2005).

The collapse of the Soviet Union, the political unrest that followed, and the economic turmoil of the Yeltsin years were deeply unsettling to him. He was humiliated by Moscow's decisions to allow former empire join Western institutions. To his mind, these organizations, like the principles enshrined in the Charter of Paris, were the embodiment of an illegitimate order imposed by the West to perpetuate and codify the end of the Soviet Union as a defeat by the peaceful revolutions of 1989/90.

Putin made these views explicit in a manifesto published in December 1999, when he was preparing to assume the Russian Presidency. While conceding that "our people have accepted such values as freedom of expression, freedom to travel abroad and other fundamental political rights and human liberties", he ultimately considers them to be anathema to the "traditional values of Russia" (Putin 1999). These, he argued, are statist structures, social solidarity, and a belief in the greatness of Russia.

Although, unlike many Russians of his generation, Putin does not strive for a return to the Soviet system or some form of quasi-communism, the domestic instability and international weakness of Yeltsin's Russia instilled in him a conviction that a strong state constitutes a critical precondition for restoring Russia to former greatness. From the beginning, therefore, his policies were premised on the objective of rebuilding the Russian state and reestablishing it as a power to be reckoned

with: He built up Russia's financial reserves, reduced its debt, and reduced exposure to the global economy. But he has also curtailed individual freedoms, cracked down on the opposition, and placed the country's security apparatus firmly under his personal control. And he has moved to restore Russia's influence in the 'near abroad' - the former Soviet republics in its immediate neighborhood (see Gaddy & Hill 2012).

Putin understood the Soviet Union's collapse using a very narrow, Russo-centric lens and is determined to restore Russia in the international community. To this end, he has not only suppressed any democratic desires in Russia, but also rejected the desire for freedom and prosperity expressed by thousands of Ukrainians in Maidan Square. He has created a narrative of blame that frames the uprising on Maidan as being led by fascists and controlled by the West. Together, these forces have deposed a democratically-elected (and Moscow-backed) President and threatened the rights and, indeed, life of Russian-speaking citizens in Eastern Ukraine. His story about the crisis in Ukraine is that of a continuation of the perpetual encroachment of the West on the legitimate interests and rights of Russia and it is the Russians, to which he is determined to put an end.

Putin has therefore resolved to actively oppose the peaceful revolution on Maidan square - politically and economically at first and ultimately also with military force. He has invaded a sovereign country and annexed parts of its territory. He has failed to learn the lessons of November 1989. He has violently opposed the principles on which the post-Cold War European order was to be built. The Russian invasion of Ukraine has ended the period of constructiveness and peace that followed German unification.

2.3 The Historical Record

If Putin accuses the West of unduly encroaching on Russia's interests, violating its commitment not to expand its institutions Eastward, and failing to respect Russia's traditional sphere of influence in the 'near abroad', former U.S. Secretary of State James A. Baker III, speaking at the American Academy in Berlin on October 7, 2014, dismissed such claims as baseless: If Russia remained on the periphery of post-Cold War Europe, this was due to the internal crisis in which Russia was embroiled during the

Yeltsin years and its consequent withdrawal from international politics, not Western policies. Now declassified reports show a shared concern among President George H.W. Bush, Chancellor Helmut Kohl and Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev about the disintegration of the East German SED regime and the lingering potential of a violent escalation. Gorbachev and his Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze stemmed himself against a catastrophic Soviet military intervention, suggested by some in the Kremlin that would deny East Germans the right to decide their own fate. In exchange for agreeing to NATO membership of the united Germany, the Soviet leader received assurances that only the Bundeswehr, not foreign forces, would be stationed in the territory of the former GDR after unification. In addition, he secured agreements for a new German-Soviet treaty, a CSCE Conventional Forces in Europe treaty reducing the number of military forces in Europe, and a German-Polish treaty settling the Oder-Neisse border, which established stability on the Russian border. The issue of NATO taking new members was not an issue in 1990. After all, the Warsaw Pact still existed at the time.

In subsequent years, the West gradually adopted a strategy of "democratic enlargement" (Brinkley 1997) aimed at expanding cooperation both with Russia and the newly-independent Central and Eastern European nations. Throughout the 1990s, the Atlantic Alliance repeatedly assured Moscow that it was not a threat to the Russia. NATO changed its strategy to make nuclear weapons truly of last resort, minimizing the principle of 'first use.' The Allies changed both their 'forward defense' and 'flexible response' doctrines that had been directed against Eastern European and Soviet territory. NATO also extended a hand of friendship to establish diplomatic liaison with the former enemy. In 1991, the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC, later renamed Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council) was founded as a forum for consultation and cooperation. In 1994, the Partnership for Peace, a more far-reaching initiative for military-to-military cooperation among the former adversaries, was established at the NATO summit in Brussels. In 1997, NATO and Russia signed the Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security, in which they committed to cooperate in creating "lasting and inclusive" peace in Euro-

Atlantic area (NATO 1997). In 1999, the Czech Republic, Poland, and Hungary became the first former WTO members to join NATO. Three years later, the NATO-Russia-Council was established as a forum for handling security issues and joint projects.

At the same time, the newly-established European Union also started looking eastward. To mitigate the uncertainty and instability that invariably went along with the fundamental transformations the Central and Eastern European states underwent in the early 1990s, the EU poured considerable financial and administrative resources into its Eastern neighborhood throughout the 1990s. Through the PHARE Program and the subsequent Europe Agreements, the economic, political, and legal foundations were laid for the admission of 10 Central and Eastern European countries to the EU, which followed in 2004/07. From the Western perspective, these initiatives were widely regarded as mutually beneficial efforts to expand the zone of freedom and prosperity, which had helped to preserve peace and stability in the Western part of Europe for the past forty years. From the Russian perspective, however, they came to be seen as an endless series of provocations culminating in the 2008 offer of a Membership Action Plan to Georgia and Ukraine as a step towards full NATO membership. Receptive for such sentiments, German Chancellor Angela Merkel blocked the recommendation at NATO's 2008 Bucharest Summit. Nevertheless, Moscow violently asserted its claim to quasi-hegemonic rule over the former Soviet republics when invading Ukraine in August of that year. As the West stood by watching passively, Putin may certainly have been emboldened to pursue a similar strategy when he feared losing control over Ukraine as President Yanukovich prepared to sign the EU association agreement.

3. Policy Options for the West: Principles and Pragmatism

The Helsinki Accords, signed in 1975, committed participating countries to prevent changes in sovereign borders, except by peaceful agreement. This principle was reaffirmed in 1990 in the Charter of Paris for a New Europe. In the 1994 Budapest Memorandum on Security Assurances, Russia,

along with the United States and the United Kingdom, specifically committed to respect Ukrainian independence and sovereignty within its existing borders in exchange for Kiev giving up the nuclear arsenal it inherited from the Soviet Union.

These principles and commitments are central building blocks in the European security architecture. If Putin's actions in Ukraine stand in direct opposition to - and, indeed, open violation of - them, then these actions are more than a challenge to our values, but also a direct threat to our interests. Unlike Putin, who is still stuck in the geopolitical thinking of an age gone by, we know that our interests are irreversibly tied to our values: Security and stability are only sustainable if people can enjoy individual freedoms, participate in public affairs through open democratic processes, engage in economic pursuits of their own choosing and commensurate with their abilities and collectively decide about their destiny as a people and a country. In this sense, Putin's constant provocations - not only in Ukraine - are direct threats to the Europe whole and free that his predecessor, Mikhail Gorbachev, helped to create twenty-five years ago.

In response to this threat, the West has shown remarkable resolve thus far. It has been united its determination to compel Russia to honor the principles of a European order to which it has repeatedly committed itself - in the Helsinki Accords of 1975, the Paris Charter of 1990, and the Budapest Memorandum of 1994. The United States and the European Union, together with many other countries, have implemented successive rounds of sanctions against Russia's ruling elite and its economic interests, even if these come at a considerable cost to our own economies. The Atlantic Alliance has enhanced its presence in the Baltic countries and in Poland, conducted military exercises in the Black Sea, and started contingency planning for defensive action in - and with - Ukraine, while honoring its pledge not to permanently station NATO forces on the territory of the former Warsaw Pact.

Such a principled and resolute stance is important, not only to demonstrate the Central and Eastern European states that their concerns, nurtured during their bitter, decades-long experience with Russian rule, are taken seriously and that they can rely on the solidarity of their allies just as much as West Germany could during the Cold War. It is important also

to convince Putin that the costs of his aggressive, neo-imperial policy are higher for Russia - and for him personally - than a return to a cooperative, reform-oriented domestic and foreign policy. Only if Putin realizes that we stand united in defending both our values and our interests will he be compelled to accept the compromise that a diplomatic solution necessarily entails. And the sooner he does the better - after all, we need Russia's not only to resolve the crisis in Ukraine, but also to tackle the nuclear crises in Iran and North Korea as well as the Islamist revolt in Syria and Iraq.

By itself, however, such a policy will not suffice to resolve the underlying conflict of competing narratives and conflicting claims. While it may put an end to the current bloodshed in Ukraine, it is unlikely the recurrence of similar confrontations in the future. Rather than resolving the conflict, it may do little more than freezing it and thereby render Ukraine effectively ungovernable. The examples of Georgia and Moldova should serve to caution us against pursuing such a course.

The real challenge now before the West therefore is whether the European order can provide an opportunity for Russia to pursue its legitimate ambitions without putting the fundamental principles underpinning it in jeopardy. The 25th anniversary of the Charter of Paris may thus provide a welcome opportunity for convening a review conference next year. The purpose of such a meeting, of course, cannot be the reversal of the fundamental principles underpinning the European order. To the vast majority of European - and North American - nations that have benefited from the peace established by this order, these principles must remain non-negotiable. Yet, as recent history has shown, principles alone do not suffice to govern a continent that has returned to the realm of history.

The structures established at the end of the Cold War have proven incapable of tackling the challenges we confront. Rather than keeping the peace, OSCE observers have been taken hostage in Ukraine. Rather than serving as a forum to hammer out a compromise, the NATO-Russia-Council has been suspended during the Georgian crisis of 2008. As a result, we had to rely on ad hoc initiatives - by the foreign ministers of the Weimar Triangle in Ukraine, by the French President in Georgia, by an informal Contact Group in the Balkans - for our response

to the crises in post-Cold War Europe. None of these provides the sustainability and legitimacy that are needed for creating and maintaining a lasting peace in Europe.

What is needed, perhaps more urgently than at any time during the past 25 years, are workable - and mutually accepted - practical procedures to implement these principles enshrined in the Paris Charter while reflecting the realities of the 21st century. These include the fact that Russia is no longer a defeated superpower but a resurgent regional power. But they also include the fact that the people in the republics on Russia's Western borders have had enough of corrupt, Moscow-backed elites deciding the collective fate of their countries. Their legitimate aspirations for a life in freedom and prosperity, their desire to freely choose their government and the international institutions of which they want to be a member must be heeded just as much as Moscow's rightful claim to exercise its stake in Europe's shared security.

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AGENDA

AKTUELLES AUS DEM CISG

Offenes Praxisseminar im Wintersemester 2014/15

Von der Ukraine über Syrien, von der Ebola-Epidemie bis zum iranischen Atomkonflikt – die Schlagzeilen des vergangenen Jahres waren bestimmt von immer neuen internationalen Krisen und Konflikten. Doch was steckt hinter diesen Herausforderungen? Bedrohen sie wirklich unsere Sicherheit in Deutschland und Europa? Und welche Instrumente stehen uns zur Verfügung, um ihnen wirksam zu begegnen? Diese und andere Fragen möchte James D. Bindenagel, ehemaliger amerikanischer Diplomat und seit WS 2014/15 Professor für Internationale Sicherheit und Governance an der Universität Bonn, mit interessierten Studierenden aller Fakultäten diskutieren. Dabei sollen die Möglichkeiten der Diplomatie als Mittel zur Konfliktvermeidung und -Bewältigung im Zentrum der Debatte stehen.

Internationale Krisen, Sicherheit Konflikte, 2014 Kontroversen

Offenes Praxisseminar für Studierende aller Fakultäten
Mittwoch alle 14 Tage
16:00 bis 18:00 Uhr
Hörsaal XV, 2. OG
Uni-Hauptgebäude
Weitere Informationen:
www.cisg.uni-bonn.de

22.10. Spielball der Großen Mächte?
Die Ukraine zwischen Russland und der EU
5.11. Ein neuer ‚Krieg gegen den Terror‘?
Die Bedrohung durch den Islamischen Staat
19.11. Riskantes Spiel auf Zeit?
Die Atomverhandlungen mit dem Iran
3.12. Sicherheitspolitik in unsicheren Zeiten
Vortrag & Diskussion zum Dies Academicus
17.12. Intervention gegen Infektion?
Die Ebola-Epidemie in Westafrika
14.1. Sollbruchstelle der Globalen Ordnung?
Konfliktlinien im Südchinesischen Meer
28.1. Begrenzt einsatzfähig?
Deutschlands internationale Verantwortung

- 22.10. Spielball der Großen Mächte?
Die Ukraine zwischen Russland und der EU
- 5.11. Ein neuer ‚Krieg gegen den Terror‘?
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- 19.11. Riskantes Spiel auf Zeit?
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- 3.12. Sicherheitspolitik in unsicheren Zeiten
Vortrag & Diskussion zum Dies Academicus
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- 14.1. Sollbruchstelle der Globalen Ordnung?
Konfliktlinien im Südchinesischen Meer
- 28.1. Begrenzt einsatzfähig?
Deutschlands internationale Verantwortung

Vorträge und Veranstaltungen im November

- 4.11.2014 12:00 Uhr **Overcoming the Tragedy – From World War I to Building the European Union**
Friedrich-Naumann-Stiftung, Brüssel
- 6.11.2014 16:00 Uhr **25 Jahre nach dem Fall der Berliner Mauer: Welche Lehren ziehen wir heute daraus für Thüringen, Deutschland und die Ukraine**
Thüringer Staatskanzlei/Universität Erfurt
- 12.11.2014 19:00 Uhr **Deutsch-amerikanische Beziehungen: Eine starke Partnerschaft für ein sichereres 21. Jh.**
Amerika-Haus, IHK Köln
- 24.11.2014 **Building the Transatlantic Relationship From Naming America to Unifying Germany and Beyond**
Nordamerikastudienprogramm, Festsaal Universität Bonn

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