"Germany, not Japan, as Essential Partner of the United States"

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As the German-American partnership entered its seventh decade in 2010, German leaders, politicians and analysts began to fear the relationship was undergoing fundamental, negative change: Germany would no longer be the key player for the United States as President Obama and Secretary of State Clinton "pivoted" or "rebalanced" to the Asia Pacific. Resources liberated by disengagement from Iraq and Afghanistan would allow the U.S to be "a diplomatic, economic, and strategic force for the 21st century" in the Asia Pacific region, now "the key driver of global politics."

The proponents of such policy change argue this will be "America's Pacific Century" with Barack Obama as "America's first Pacific president." At the center is a revival of Cold War thinking, restructuring the alliance with Japan to contain an ascendant China.

German and American critics of the new orientation cite the continued centrality of Europe for the U.S.: the EU constitutes the biggest trade partner for the U.S.; the EU and the U.S still represent 50% of the world's GDP; mutual foreign direct investment amounts to some $3 trillion. Despite differences in approach, the EU continues as America's most reliable partner in key international challenges from Afghanistan to the Balkans to the Middle East. Japan, by contrast, is a security partner only if Cold War concepts restore Japan's role as a bulwark against Asian communism.

Since President Obama's re-election, the administration also has begun to downplay the "pivot," arguing against an either-or proposition economically or politically: "this cannot and will not come at the expense of Europe" (Undersecretary Hormats); "President Obama and I continue to believe that Europe is the cornerstone of our engagement with the rest of the world (Vice President Biden)." Secretary Clinton revised her initial proposition to suggest that, as partners, the U.S. and Europe must pivot together to Asia. The Administration has matched reality to rhetoric, balancing the Trans-

Pacific Partnership negotiations by proposing negotiations on a Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, an idea warmly endorsed by Chancellor Merkel.

Many observers point to "soft power" values that bind the U.S., Germany and Europe: "open markets, freedom, tolerance and democracy" (Ambassador Murphy). Many of these values are shared, as well, with Japan, but Germany has made a unique contribution to tolerance and international friendship, which Japan cannot replicate. Germany was able to emerge as a trusted ally due in large part to its comprehensive, complex and successful policy of reconciliation with its former enemies that has defined its foreign relations for the last 7 decades and is absent in Japan.

As U.S. Military Governor in Germany in July 1949, John McCloy intoned: "The world will carefully watch the new West German state, and one of the tests by which it will be judged will be its attitude towards the Jews and how it treats them." The new German state heeded the American advice and successive German governments developed a "special relationship" with the Israeli government and Israeli society. At the same time, Germany was pursuing a policy of reconciliation with France, the "hereditary enemy," at both the official (*Aussöhnung*) and non-governmental (*Versöhnung)* levels. Later, especially after the end of the Cold War, Germany pursued similar policies with Poland and the Czech Republic. Germany's political and moral foreign policy of reconciliation has enabled its return to the "family of nations" and its place as respected regional and global leader.

Japanese society and some Japanese governments have made sporadic, tentative, and infant steps toward reconciliation with former Asian subjects of a Japanese Empire, but these pale in comparison with Germany's consistent, committed initiatives. Today conservative forces in Japan are rethinking even these modest efforts. The territorial disputes Japan has with both China and South Korea are ultimately explosive because the populations in these two countries feel Japan has inadequately faced its past as an aggressor and perpetrator. As a result, despite its economic importance, Japan cannot enjoy the regional and global stature and reputation conferred on Germany.

As a boy in Berlin, John Kerry, the new American Secretary of State, witnessed first-hand the remarkable path to rehabilitation Germany began to pursue in the early 1950s. When he returned in February 2013, there was both personal and political

reflection in his words: “Germany is without doubt one of our strongest and most effective allies in the world, and we are very, very grateful for your leadership, the leadership of your government, and the sustaining friendship of your people because it has made a difference.” Secretary of State Clinton had chosen Asia as her first foreign trip. Kerry chose Europe.