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## GERMANY AND JAPAN

### LEADING CIVILIAN POWERS, OR MEDIUM-SIZED POWERS FURTHER BACK IN THE PACK?

*Markus Tidten*

Even though they may at first glance appear to be unconnected, two recent events serve to underline the importance of the relationship between Germany and Japan and demonstrate why it is so vital to continue developing this relationship in a positive and constructive way. The visit of the German President to Japan, much longer and more intensive than is normal for such state visits, was clear evidence of the great trust that Germany places in Japan. During this, the 150<sup>th</sup> year of their bilateral relationship, the visit showed the great regard Germany has for a country that has made almost super-human efforts to rebuild after the once-in-a-lifetime disaster that befell it on March 11.

The second event concerns the strategic approach taken by both countries to develop a pragmatic combination of secure partnership and commitment to development policies. From October 12 to 13 Angela Merkel visited Mongolia for the first time as German Chancellor. The main aims of this state visit were to discuss the provision of new technology for the exploitation of the country's rich natural resources, especially rare earths, to look at ways that Germany might benefit from them, and to finalise contracts for the training of some of Mongolia's military to work as UN peacekeepers. Mongolia, which lies between Russia and China, both geographically and politically, recognises the importance of building economic ties with the USA, Europe, Japan and South Korea for its future as a free democratic country. A development partnership between Germany and Japan could make a very important long-term contribution to such a large, but sparsely populated, country as Mongolia. Supporting Mongolia's

economic and political independence from its two powerful neighbours, China and Russia, will require fair competition based on democratic principles. Alongside South Korea, Japan is the one country in the region that really shares these principles with Germany.

## A LOOK BACK AT GERMAN-JAPANESE RELATIONS

Many people in Germany who are interested in Japan and those in Japan who are interested in Germany have

since January been celebrating 150 years of diplomatic relations between the two countries. It all really started with Prussian aspirations and Japanese pragmatism. What is

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actually being celebrated this year is the anniversary of the signing of the "Friendship, Trade and Shipping Agreement with Japan"<sup>1</sup> by the Kingdom of Prussia, as represented by Count Eulenburg, on January 24, 1861. Even though it was competition amongst European countries and the USA and a desire to have access to the world's ports that motivated the signing of the agreement, it can still be seen as the beginning of a period of mutual respect and high regard between the two countries that continues even today. The spirit of the agreement has been able to survive the short-term enmity of the two countries during the First World War<sup>2</sup>, as well as that tragic period at the beginning of the last century when the Axis Powers, Japan, Germany and Italy, were brothers in arms. The fact that 150 years ago the only legally binding languages in Edo, today's Tokyo, were

1 | Cf. Bundesgesetzblatt des Norddeutschen Bundes Band 1870, No. 1, 1-24, February 20, 1869 edition, published on January 14, 1870. The contract in Dutch, German and Japanese in the Secret State Archives of Prussian Cultural Heritage in Berlin is the only document that still exists after the Japanese counterpart was almost certainly destroyed by one of the many fires following the Great Kanto Earthquake of September 1, 1923.

2 | Originally acquired by Prussia as part of the agreement with the Count Eulenburg Mission, the Tsingtau colony was seized by the then enemy Japan after the start of the First World War. Many of the German defenders were taken to Japan as prisoners of war, including to the infamous Bando prison camp on Shikoku, the smallest of Japan's four main islands. The camp inmates gave a performance of Beethoven's 9<sup>th</sup> Symphony, the beginning of the tradition in which the concert is performed every New Year In Japan, even today.

Japanese and Dutch<sup>3</sup>, is these days considered little more than a minor flaw. German as a language and Germany as a country played no part in Japan at that time. While this may have been annoying for Count Eulenburg, his job was to sign an agreement on behalf of all of the German states, that is to say the members of the German Federation,<sup>4</sup> and as a result to ensure that the members of the Federation obtained some kind of right of general representation.

### THE START OF A NEW ERA

After both countries' disastrous involvement in the Second World War – or the Pacific War as it was known in the region around Japan – both German states were held in high regard by the Japanese during the Cold War. There was probably no other country in Asia that celebrated the reunification of the two German states as

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emotionally and sympathetically as Japan. Japan reinstated diplomatic relations with the Federal Republic of Germany in 1951 and established them with the GDR in 1973.

The feelings of joy at Germany's reunification amongst the more nostalgic in Japan were often expressed in strikingly pragmatic terms – something along the lines of 'we like the Germans so much and in the past we had two German countries, what a pity that there is only one of them now.'

3 | At that time Dutch was, to all intents and purposes, the official foreign language used by foreign delegations arriving in Japanese ports, due in part to the relationship between the Dutch and the Japanese shoguns. Any interpreting into other European languages was done via Dutch as the relay language.

4 | The Prussian Eulenburg Mission of December 1859 to October 1862 had been mandated to sign a trade and shipping agreement with Japan, China and Siam (today's Thailand) on behalf of all 38 member states of the German Federation, founded in 1815 at the Vienna Congress (34 principalities and the four free cities of Bremen, Frankfurt, Hamburg and Lübeck). However, the Japanese shogunate government stubbornly refused to agree to this type of 'representation agreement', arguing that state contracts were only possible between rulers. It was only after Count Eulenburg was able to convince his opposite numbers after many lengthy discussions that his authority came from the Prussian king, that they at least agreed to sign the agreement with Prussia. Cf. Gerhard Krebs (ed.), *Japan und Preußen*, Monographien des Deutschen Instituts für Japanstudien, Vol. 32, 2002, 77 et seq.

The Federal Republic of Germany is now Japan's biggest trading partner within the European Union. In 2008, goods to the value of 25 billion euros were imported into Germany from Japan. For Germany's part, they export around half as much to Japan, representing around 13 billion euros. The USA remains Japan's most important export market. Since the end of 2002, German foreign trade with China now exceeds that of trade with Japan. Despite all the historical and systemic differences between Japan and the People's Republic of China, both economies have become extremely interdependent. Tokyo and Beijing like to sum up this relationship as "hot economics and cold politics".<sup>5</sup>

Since the end of the Cold War, both Germany and Japan have shown a particular interest in fundamentally reforming the United Nations Security Council. Both countries argue that they should have a permanent seat on the council. While Japan can argue that Asia is under-represented, with China being the sole representative of the region on this key committee, Europe already has two permanent members with a right of veto: France and Great Britain. Japan, more often than Germany, has consistently referred to the so-called enemy state clause<sup>6</sup> in the UN Charter as a form of atavism. The fact that every UN member state has the theoretical right, at least legally, to intervene militarily in 'enemy states' without an official UN mandate,

5 | *Seirei Keinetsu* (政冷経歎): This expression first surfaced in the media during Junichiro Koizumi's first period in office (Prime Minister from April 2001 to September 2007) and describes the special nature of relations between Japan and China. At a political level these relations were often tense due to Koizumi's regular visits to the Yasukuni Shrine – considered a "war criminal shrine" by the Chinese – on the one hand, and the growing mutual interdependence of both economies on the other.

6 | The so-called "enemy state clause" refers to sections of Articles 53, 77 and 107 of the United Nations Charter. They originate from the original version of the Charter in 1945. According to these articles, member states can act against all 'enemy states' from the Second World War, basically Germany and Japan, without requiring a resolution from the Security Council, if these enemy states are pursuing policies of aggression. Who was to decide if something amounted to a policy of aggression was not clear. In 1995, at the 50th UN General Assembly, it was decided to declare this clause obsolete. The decision to strike this clause from the Charter 'as quickly as possible' has, however, not yet been carried out.

is naturally a source of much annoyance to Japan, the UN's second biggest contributor.

### PRESENT AND FUTURE – LIMITS OF THE COMPARISON

**Especially the unresolved Korean question and the rise of communist China show that the foreign policy in Northeast Asia still resembles the old East-West conflict.**

Despite the fact that after the war both countries became economically successful and reintegrated into the western political system, their foreign policy and security structures could not be more different. While in Europe the Cold War ostensibly came to an end with the fall of the Berlin Wall, foreign policy in Northeast Asia still resembles the old East-West conflict, especially with the unresolved Korean question and the rise of communist China. It is a paradox of recent history that a country like the Federal Republic of Germany, in which individualism and permissiveness are key characteristics of modern society, generally tries to attain consensus within the European Union on its major foreign and security policy issues<sup>7</sup>, while Japan likes to claim special status in its foreign and security policy. This can be seen for example in Tokyo's attitude towards the USA. It expects a certain amount of special treatment and is annoyed when important government representatives visiting Asia do not include Japan as the first port of call on their itinerary, or even worse, don't include Japan at all. During the Six-Party Talks on the denuclearisation of North Korea<sup>8</sup> it was very important for Japan that the issue of abductions<sup>9</sup> also be included on the agenda. Japan also

7 | The fact that since reunification some EU member states have complained more and more about Germany "going it alone" in areas such as energy and monetary policy, has, however, had no effect on the ongoing internal argument on the "Brussels Regulation".

8 | The Six-Party Talks are a multilateral forum, chaired by China and including the USA, Russia, Japan, South and North Korea, that has been in place since 2003 with the objective of finding a solution to North Korea's energy needs and stopping the country from pursuing an uncontrolled atomic energy and nuclear weapons programme. There have been no more talks since April 2009, as North Korea refused to continue to take part.

9 | In the 1970s, many young Japanese people were kidnapped by North Korean agents. They were forced to attend special institutions to give language and general training to agents who would then be sent to operate in Japan. Pyongyang has admitted this up to a point, and even allowed some of those kidnapped earlier to return home, but there are many others who have disappeared without trace.

constantly likes to remind the rest of the world of how it is particularly threatened by China's aggressive foreign, economic and defence policies.

**GERMANY: SUCCESSFUL REGIONAL INTEGRATION –  
JAPAN: ONGOING SPECIAL ROLE AS  
A FRONTLINE STATE**

The very different political circumstances of both countries need to be taken into account when trying to compare two supposedly similar countries. While the Federal Republic of Germany has enjoyed the support of neighbouring countries with similar economic and political views since 1945, initially as West Germany, and later as a reunified country at the geographical and, in some respects, political centre of Europe, Japan can in many respects be seen much more as a frontline state standing alone.<sup>10</sup> While the Federal Republic was also seen a frontline state standing against the Eastern Bloc before reunification, it always enjoyed a politically calm and economically stable hinterland, whose security was protected by membership of NATO. Japan, on the other hand, has no countries around it with a similar economic or political ideology. To the north there is Russia, with whom they still haven't signed a peace agreement over half a century after the end of the Pacific War.<sup>11</sup> To the west is North Korea, a totalitarian state that claims to have nuclear weapons, and which has no qualms about carrying out unannounced long-range rocket tests over Japanese territory.<sup>12</sup> Behind them is the People's Republic of China, which, despite having maintained diplomatic

10 | Whether South Korea turns out to be a true partner to Japan, in terms of shared values, as a result of the increasing intensity of relations between the two countries in recent times, will depend on whether their ongoing historic aversion to each other can be overcome both quickly and in a pragmatic way. A generation change among the political elite of both countries should help in this respect.

11 | The main sticking point is the unresolved dispute over the Kuril Islands. Japan claims sovereignty over the three islands known as the South Kuril Islands in Russia, Shikotan, Etorofu and Kunashiri, as well as the Habomai island group. Towards the end of the Pacific War, the Red Army invaded these islands, known in Japan as the "Northern Territories", in contravention of a neutrality agreement.

12 | Cf. n. 21.

relations since 1978, insists on acting aggressively towards Japanese coastguards operating in the disputed waters between the two countries.<sup>13</sup> To the South and East is the vast expanse of the Pacific Ocean and the more than 8,000 kilometres you have to travel before you reach the west coast of the USA, Japan's alliance partner.

The common ground discussed on the occasion of the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first agreement between the two countries this year, especially amongst those who have a real interest in each other's country, mostly revolves around the idea of a partnership between Japan and Germany based on shared values. The German Foreign Minister talked about this aspect of the German-Japanese partnership during his visit to Tokyo in January 2010 and referred to the enormous potential to be had from further developing this relationship from a trade perspective. As the potential influence of Germany and the European Union on Japan's political environment is very limited, and as Japan cannot really be expected to get involved in Germany's interests in a European context, the only real sphere of influence that this partnership based on common values can really have is within a wider regional and global

framework. The almost total integration of

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both nations in multilateral organisations, such as the G8, G20, World Bank, IMF and WTO, forms the basis for responsible economic action in line with rules agreed and accepted by all parties. Berlin and Tokyo

feel no pressing need to set up some kind of special collaboration agreement between Germany and Japan. And neither country believes that the two economic powers will jointly take a stance against other countries within the framework of these multilateral organisations.

In terms of specific political issues, especially foreign and security policy, things look very different, however. The end of the East-West conflict brought with it a whole

13 | In September 2010 a Chinese fishing boat rammed a Japanese coast guard boat in the disputed waters around the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands. Japan later released the captain, who had been arrested by the authorities, after enormous pressure from the Chinese. Cf. also n. 18.

range of possibilities for making a partnership based on shared values more concrete. The potential for agreements on foreign and security policy issues are by no means exhausted. Admittedly, both countries still lack in satisfactory understanding and background knowledge of the respective different position. However, Japan's security policy encompasses far more problematic constellations, also with indirect references to a Federal Republic embedded in the EU and NATO. Defence against proliferation and the security of maritime routes could be alleged as examples. Even though Germany's room for manoeuvre is severely limited by ongoing and, of course, legitimate 'foreign policy harmonisation pressures' from Brussels, there are no major differences in values between Brussels and Berlin in terms of a democratic and market economy-based approach to policy. In practice, concrete foreign policies are generally only formulated through argument and debate. In terms of advocating the same values – democracy and the rule of law, respect for human rights, free and fair trade – Japan is a natural and powerful ally on the world stage. Attitudes towards Afghanistan and current measures to combat international terrorism and piracy are good examples of how this partnership works in practice, in the sense that both countries have common goals. Reforming the Security Council and development cooperation activities are, on the other hand, areas where more dialogue between Germany and Japan is required if a consensus is to be reached.

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### **JAPAN, A POLITICALLY WEAK ECONOMIC SUPERPOWER**

Japan's more immediate region, Northeast Asia, has two particular problem areas in terms of foreign and security issues. Current communications technology and the global networking of various types of risk potential mean that, while Northeast Asia as a troublespot may be 10,000 kilometres away from Germany geographically, the impact of what happens in that region can be felt in Germany and Europe as a whole very quickly. One problem area is the ongoing tension on the Korean peninsula. Since Korea's partition in 1953, at the end of the three-year Korean War, there has been a Stalinist dictatorship north

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of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel, which still represents the demarcation line established by the ceasefire commission between the so-called 'Democratic People's Republic' to the north and the Republic of Korea to the south.

There have never been any diplomatic relations been Japan and North Korea. Indeed, those in power in North Korea's capital city, Pyongyang, actually consider South Korea and Japan to be vassal states of the enemy, the USA. And yet for more than a decade now, South Korea, the USA, China and Japan have been making strenuous efforts to provide North Korea with economic aid and food, because the country has not been able to feed its own people for many years now. In spite of this help, and in contravention of international agreements,<sup>14</sup> the regime there has been committed to developing nuclear weapons, and as such has become a direct threat, not only to its neighbours South Korea and Japan, but also indirectly to Germany. Intelligence from South Korean, Japanese and American sources suggest that Pyongyang has been able to forge close ties with Pakistani nuclear experts in order to work on developing its own nuclear weapons.<sup>15</sup> For want of any other goods and services of value, North Korea has been covertly exporting huge amounts of weapons and rocket technology. There are genuine concerns that

14 | In 1985 North Korea signed the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, also known as the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NNPT). By the beginning of the 1990s there were rumours that North Korea was secretly processing fissile materials from its reactors for use in weapons. Many years of negotiations, especially between the USA and North Korea, about supplying North Korea's energy needs via the international community, as opposed to there being full international control over the country's nuclear installations, eventually failed. In January 2003 North Korea cancelled its membership of the NNPT, something which had never happened in the history of the Treaty before. Since then Pyongyang has shocked the region and the rest of the world by carrying out long-range rocket tests and attempted nuclear tests. It has also not shied away from aggressive military action, such as the artillery attack on the South Korean island of Yongpyong in November 2010. *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, „Seoul spricht von Vergeltung“, November 24, 2010, <http://faz.net/frankfurter-allgemeine-zeitung/politik/seoul-spricht-von-vergeltung-11068633.html> (accessed November 25, 2011).

15 | Abdul Qadeer Khan is considered the father of the Pakistani atom bomb. According to secret service reports, North Korea apparently provided massive support for his uranium enrichment programme.

what are known as non-state actors may also be amongst the regime's customers. That these exports may include weapons of mass destruction, or the necessary technology to create them, which is what is meant by proliferation, is considered a serious threat by all western democracies. If we also consider Germany's special situation vis-à-vis the Middle East conflict – which we could call the Israel factor – then stopping this proliferation is vital for Germany's interests. When we take into account the arms deals that have been uncovered on a number of occasions between North Korea and unstable regimes such as Syria, the Yemen and Iran,<sup>16</sup> then the reassuring geographical distance between Germany and North Korea loses all its significance.

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The second problem area, which has echoes of the Cold War in terms of rhetoric and behaviour, is the relationship between Japan and China, especially when it comes to Taiwan. Although Japan has had a one-China policy since 1978<sup>17</sup>, Taiwan is still far-and-away Japan's favourite part of China. Taiwanese politicians generally also have good relations with Japan. Beijing is constantly complaining about high-ranking Taiwanese dignitaries visiting Japan. But beyond China's annoyance, there is the more serious issue of the region's particular security problems caused by the Taiwan situation. With the signing of the "Taiwan Relations Act" by the U.S. government in 1979, as a consequence of American adopting a one-China policy following the establishment of full diplomatic relations between the USA

16 | In August 2009 the United Arab Emirates confiscated weapons from a cargo ship bound for Iran. Spiegel Online, August 28, 2009, <http://www.spiegel.de/politik/ausland/0,1518,645739,00.html> (accessed March 24, 2011). In December 2002 Spain broke into a cargo ship and found rockets bound for Yemen amongst its cargo. Cf. Berliner Zeitung, „15 nordkoreanische Scud-Raketen an Board – für Al Qaida-Terroristen?“, December 12, 2002, <http://bz-berlin.de/archiv/15-nordkoreanische-scud-raketen-an-bord-fuer-al-qaidaterroristen-article206122.html> (accessed March 24, 2011).

17 | Diplomatic relations with China were re-established in 1978 through the intermediation of Kakuei Tanaka (Japanese Prime Minister from July 1972 to December 1974) and a friendship and peace agreement was signed. Tanaka himself was unable to sign the agreement personally as he had been removed from office following the Lockheed scandal.

and the People's Republic, the USA made a commitment to prevent any change to Taiwan's situation brought about by external aggression, and this commitment included the use of military force, if required. What amounts to basically a protection agreement, when seen in conjunction with the

security agreement signed between the USA

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and Japan, could constitute a significant risk to Japan in the event of a conflict between the USA and China. Given that historic ill-feelings

between Japan and China continue to run

deep<sup>18</sup>, and there are current differences of opinion on certain territorial issues,<sup>19</sup> Japan tends to watch China's defence expenditure very carefully – there has been annual double digit growth in its defence budget for years now – and to gauge to what extent the EU, and Germany in particular, are prepared to acknowledge Tokyo's concerns and adjust their policies towards China accordingly.<sup>20</sup>

Both these potential problem areas, the tensions on the Korean peninsula and the uncertain future of the Straits of Taiwan, have to be watched very carefully by Tokyo, as any unfavourable developments could threaten Japan's security, not only in the narrow military sense, but also in economic terms. Since 1998 the threat from North Korean rockets has been a real and present danger.<sup>21</sup> If it came to

18 | History books are a source of permanent tension. In Japan, school book publishers publish new history books at regular intervals. The Chinese feel that the Culture Ministry responsible for approving the history books is too lax in granting approval to books from certain political or right wing publishers. In these books the often terrible human rights violations that were carried out in the past by Japanese imperial troops in China are either presented in a very euphemistic way, or not even mentioned at all. The Chinese generally ignore the fact that schools can choose which text books they use and generally don't select this type of book anyway.

19 | The island group known in Japan as Senkaku and in China as Diaoyutai are not occupied, but are simply a collection of rocks. However, the fact that there are rich manganese deposits and gas reserves nearby, means that the two countries, who are both highly dependent on energy imports, are now arguing about who has the right to exploit these resources.

20 | Tokyo is carefully monitoring the EU and German positions on the arms embargo against China, which was agreed as a reaction to the events that unfolded in Tiananmen Square in 1989.

21 | In August 1998 North Korea carried out an unannounced test of an earlier Taepodong type long-range rocket with a range of approx. 2,900 kilometres. It flew over northern Japan and then apparently fell into the Pacific. Since then, North Korea ➤

a military conflict between South Korea – and therefore the USA – and North Korea, then Japan would also be directly involved as a result of its alliance agreement with the USA. Even the security of Japan's foreign trade gives little cause for optimism. The Straits of Taiwan lie close to one of the most important SLOCs<sup>22</sup> for Japan, along which most of its energy imports and product exports are transported.

### **GERMANY AND JAPAN: TWO GREAT CIVILIAN POWERS HAVE THEIR WEAKNESSES**

Although Japan has one of the biggest economies in the world – it was recently relegated from second to third place by China – it doesn't carry anything like the same weight on the international political stage. This is in part due to the often polite reserve of the Japanese. Despite its enormous economic potential, Japan is a highly dependent country. In addition to being dependent in terms of natural resources, it is also dependent on the USA for its security – a tragic consequence of its activities at the beginning of the last century. The people of the country, living under foreign occupation for the first time in its history, quickly developed an aversion to everything military. With Japan's successful transformation into a democracy, much of which was down to the USA, the country established a democratic order that lifted its resolute anti-militarism to a constitutional level.<sup>23</sup> Being a leading exporter, but having little in the way of natural resources, has clearly made Japan economically

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has further developed its rocket programme and now has rockets with a range of up to 10,000 kilometres.

22 | "Sea Lines of Communication" is the name given to the primary maritime transport and communication routes along which freight is transported. In Japan's case these routes pass through a number of potential conflict regions such as the Straits of Taiwan, the Straits of Malacca, and on through the Indian Ocean to the Gulf region.

23 | The post-war constitution was initiated by the American occupiers, under the leadership of General Douglas MacArthur, but with many suggestions provided by Japanese constitutional experts, and was passed into law in 1947. Article 9 of the preamble, known as the peace clause, forbids the deployment of troops and denies Japan the right to wage war. In contrast to, say, German constitutional law, which has seen many changes, amendments and additions, the wording of the Japanese constitution has remained the same to this day and nothing has been added or removed.

dependent. You only have to look at the region to appreciate the fundamental differences with Germany's situation. If Japan wanted to promote its own political ideas in its region, whether in terms of regulatory or economic policy in the broadest sense, it would be hard pressed to do so due to the lack of common universally-accepted values such as the rule of law, democracy and the market economy. It should be mentioned at this point that South Korea has become something of an exception to this rule, in large part due the way it has changed in recent years. This can also be seen in the positive bilateral relations that now exist between Japan and South Korea. Northeast Asia has no federation of states with mutual responsibilities towards each other like the EU. While it is true that China has become essential to Japan's economy and foreign trade, there are no common values that can be called upon in the event of a conflict, or which both countries have a mutual interest in preserving. Apart from economic incentives, Japan has no real leverage for resolving conflicts. If it came to the ultimate conflict, where territorial integrity and the life and health of its people were at risk, it wouldn't even have the option of using the threat of military action as a deterrent. Here Japan is reliant on its alliance partner the USA and America's ability to intervene quickly and effectively.<sup>24</sup> In recent years Japan has also established new security alliances with the likes of South Korea and Australia, although there are no concrete mutual defence commitments or the kind of well-established command and control structures and joint operations that are a part of the security agreement between Japan and America. And at this stage there are no plans for these to be put in place.

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The relative rigidity of Japan's foreign relations, especially in the area of security, owes a lot to the origins of its security agreement.

Germany's defeat and reconstruction involved the participation of all the allies, while in Japan help with reconstruction came from one single ultimate victor, the USA. Another factor is Japan's social structure and

24 | For this reason there are still a lot of American military bases in Japan, mostly on the islands of Okinawa. In total the USA has approx. 30,000 military personnel stationed in Japan. The necessary infrastructure, including airfields, accommodation and administration buildings, were mostly financed by Japan under the heading of 'host nation support'.

traditions. From very early on Japan developed into a nearly perfectly structured hierarchical society, practically isolated from the rest of the world. This highly socially structured country in 1945 was presented a very different social model by the occupation forces of the USA, one that offered a completely different relationship between authority, legitimacy and competence. The imposing of traditional social structures through the new model worked remarkably well in the beginning remarkably well in the beginning, as small leadership mistakes could be corrected relatively quickly and easily in this traditional structure, or at the very least they could be glossed over.

After centuries of accumulated experience, Japanese society accepted as a matter of course that those in power, and in this case the authorities, still had more expertise than the individual citizen. This is still partly true today. This basic ingrained trust in political decision-making, together with their belief in the reliability of existing energy supply systems and in the ability of the emergency services, may help to explain the behaviour of those affected in the wake of the Fukushima disaster. The painful truth for Japan is that this behaviour, which was viewed as evidence of remarkable composure by foreigners watching on television, actually represents a form of acquired helplessness in the face of highly complex reality. A social system, in which those who exercise power and authority are automatically credited with having superior ability and expertise, is at real risk if leadership structures are created irrespective of competency and expertise.

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However, the impressive way in which Japan dealt with the aftermath of Fukushima, both in technical and social terms, still gives pause for thought. In addition to the crises in the energy sector and in disaster management, Japan also experienced a system breakdown, the long-term political and social effects of which are difficult to predict. People should not be surprised or discouraged if Japan experiences a sustained period of regular changes of government and party-political upheaval. Even Japan's ability to rebuild has a long and well-established tradition. When will there ever be a better time for Germany to show Japan that their

oft-talked about partnership can have some real substance and real goals?

### **GERMANY AND JAPAN – THE LIMITS OF THEIR INFLUENCE**

Like Germany, Japan relies on its potential as a civilian power and especially on its economic strength to maintain and pursue its own interests. If we understand 'a leading civilian power' to mean a state based on democracy and a market economy, one which can influence other countries, or communities of countries, using so-called 'soft power', then both Germany and Japan could be described as being leading civilian powers, albeit with differences in terms of quality, scale and influence. Japan tends to have rather limited influence within its own region, but more significant global influence. Germany, on the other hand, is able to exert more influence regionally, thanks to its relatively strong economic position within the EU, but its global influence is much smaller. However, it can be said that Germany does have some indirect influence beyond the confines of the EU. Both Germany and Japan can be considered classic civilian powers that use soft power to pursue their foreign and trade policies. They are both 'leading' in terms of their cutting-edge developments in the fields of science and technology, especially in the area of the environment and in the engineering and car manufacturing industries.

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However, both states are also largely dependent on developments over which they have limited influence. Japan's security, for instance, is highly dependent on America's policies towards China and the efforts of the Chinese and the Americans to ease tensions on the Korean peninsula. In the case of China, the high interdependence of the two economies requires concessions to be made in areas where Japan has a totally different set of values, like human rights and democracy. When it comes to North Korea, Japan has limited possibilities beyond sanctions and the freezing of North Korean accounts in Japanese banks. The ineffectiveness of these measures can be seen in the way in which Japan's views within the Six-Party Talks and their

complaints about unannounced rocket tests and flight paths that cross Japanese air space are treated with contempt.

### **GERMANY AND JAPAN – POTENTIAL FOR MORE COOPERATION AND DIALOGUE**

Even though an analysis of the political environment surrounding each country, the degree to which they are integrated regionally and the political instruments available to them in pursuing their interests, may produce very different results, it would still make sense for them to continue and even strengthen their cooperation and dialogue. This year in particular, the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary

**This year, the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of relations between the two countries, there has been regular and detailed discussions on potential bilateral cooperation.**

of the establishment of relations between the two countries, there has been regular and detailed discussions on potential bilateral cooperation. There are many examples of where mutual interests are already being served by indirect cooperation, but there are also other areas where it is not only possible, but politically advisable, for more dialogue to take place in order to identify additional opportunities for this type of cooperation. Here we are not talking about direct cooperation in terms of concrete and physical work in each other's countries – Germans and Japanese actually working shoulder-to-shoulder in each country, or even in third countries or regions. This type of cooperation is not so easy, due to clear differences in organising systems and administration, and would not be particularly realistic on any great scale. This is not necessarily a disadvantage, nor should such direct cooperation be painstakingly enforced, especially when we consider the whole range of possibilities that exist for indirect cooperation, in the sense of both countries working towards achieving common goals. A good example of this would be both countries' reactions to the Iraq War<sup>25</sup> or the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 and their very different practical approaches to Afghanistan. So, when looking at

25 | The invasion of Iraq by the so-called Coalition of the Willing began on March 20, 2003. The USA and Great Britain were the leading nations in the 40-country coalition. Japan was officially a member of the coalition from the start, due mainly to the political pressure brought about by their alliance with the USA, but they didn't actually take part in any military operations during the war. Germany, on the other hand, decided not to become involved at all.

opportunities for bilateral cooperation between Germany and Japan, it is important to consider very carefully the different regional and political environments in which both countries operate.

A very useful example of how this indirect cooperation can work is the way that Japan has carefully, but effectively, developed a closer relationship with NATO. Germany's position within this alliance and the options it may have for resolving the problems in Afghanistan, for example, could be significantly enhanced if Japan were to bring its own problem-solving potential to the table. This would make it much easier to realise the common goal of achieving multilateral cooperation to ensure stability and a peaceful future for this war-torn country.

While Germany has been involved militarily in Afghanistan for approximately 10 years,<sup>26</sup> Japan has never taken part in any military operations or combat missions in the country. The only military involvement Japan has had was

the participation of Japanese marine units in the refuelling of ships from the US-led Coalition of the Willing in the Indian Ocean during Operation Enduring Freedom. Official

**Japan's official relations with NATO only effectively began in 2007, building on political discussions between Tokyo and NATO representatives that had been going on since 1990.**

relations with NATO only effectively began in 2007, building on political discussions between Tokyo and NATO representatives that had been going on since 1990. The first concrete measure undertaken by Japan was to make a significant financial contribution to NATO peace-keeping operations in the Balkans. An "Individual Tailored Cooperation Package (TCP)" has been in place since 2007. It is a work programme that systematically evaluates potential cooperation measures on an annual basis. One important result of this programme was the humanitarian involvement of members of the Japanese self-defence forces in selected PRTs (Provincial Reconstruction Teams) in Afghanistan. This only became possible after the Japanese government upgraded its Defence Agency to a full Ministry

26 | German Army's military involvement in Afghanistan can be traced back to December 21, 2001 when parliamentary paper 14/7930, which allowed German soldiers to be deployed in Afghanistan as part of the ISAF, was passed during the 14<sup>th</sup> term of the German Bundestag.

of Defence and the Japanese premier Abe<sup>27</sup> offered Japan's services for civilian humanitarian activities.

While global networks and structures offer both countries many opportunities for indirect cooperation, there is also definite potential for more direct cooperation, despite the relatively large obstacles presented by different cultural traditions and languages. Most direct communication is done in English (learning each other's languages is too costly, both in terms of time and money), is mostly confined to private spheres and private business areas, but is slowly growing.

According to official figures<sup>28</sup> around 6,000 Germans live in Japan, while approximately 30,000 Japanese live in Germany.<sup>29</sup> The Association of German-Japanese Societies<sup>30</sup> lists 45 German-Japanese societies in Germany and 57 Japanese-German societies in Japan. The main activities of these bilateral groups tend to be cultural, but they are also in a position to go beyond mere cultural issues and provide and maintain channels of communication within each country for the purpose of sharing their social beliefs and ideals. Some of the societies are dedicated to exchanging experiences on the business front.

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27 | Shinzō Abe was the successor to Junichiro Koizumi and prime minister from 2006 to 2007. He was one of the last LDP prime ministers before there was a change of government in 2009 from the LDP to the DPJ (Democratic Party of Japan). Abe's visit to NATO in 2007 was the first by a Japanese government leader and in a much-publicised speech he talked of the future possibilities for cooperation between Japan and NATO.

28 | All data on population groups in Japan are taken from *Nihon Tokei Nenkan* (Statistical Yearbook) 2011, Somucho Tokeikyoku (Statistics Bureau) (ed.).

29 | More precise figures can be obtained from data provided by the German Federal Statistical Office: <http://destatis.de/jetspeed/portal/cms/Sites/destatis/Internet/DE/Navigation/Publikationen/Publikationen.psm1?cmxpath=strukturen/vollanzeige.csp&ID=1025396> (accessed March 1, 2011).

30 | The directory also lists business circles, youth groups and other theme-specific associations. <http://vdjg.de/ueber-den-vdjg/djg> (accessed March 10, 2011). Information about Japanese-German societies can be found on the homepage of the Tokyo Japanese-German Association [http://jdj.or.jp/list/vdjglist\\_d.html](http://jdj.or.jp/list/vdjglist_d.html) (March 13, 2011).

## SUMMARY AND OUTLOOK

Diplomatic relations have existed between Germany and Japan for 150 years now, if we include both the Prussian Empire and the German Federation eras. These relations were only broken off briefly during the First World War and during the early reconstruction phase after the Second World War. Relations today are considered to be both very good and very stable by the respective governments as well as by the peoples of each country, or at least by those sections of the population that have a particular interest in the other country. The wording of the preamble to the "Friendship, Trade and Shipping Agreement with Japan", signed on January 24, 1861, has been proven to be accurate, in that relations between the two countries are characterised by friendship and mutual respect. Even the partition of Germany did not damage Japan's attitude towards the country, nor did it favour one part of the country over the other. Quite the opposite: Japan managed to avoid expressing any great anti-communist sentiments towards the eastern part of the country.

During the East-West conflict both countries, the Federal Republic of Germany and Japan, were firmly in the Western camp. Germany, or at least the free part initially, and then later the whole country after reunification, pursued a clear policy of alignment with the West. In regional political terms this can be seen in its ever-growing integration within the EU, while from a security standpoint it has taken on more and more responsibility within NATO. In

contrast Japan, because of its somewhat different geo-political situation, has been solely reliant on the security provided by its alliance partner, the USA. Even today, there is no real affinity among Japan's immediate neighbours that would allow the kind of integration into economic and political multilateral structures that has been achieved in Western Europe.

There is no real affinity among Japan's immediate neighbours that would allow the kind of integration into economic and political multilateral structures that has been achieved in Western Europe. The conflicts that define the region around Japan are different to those in Europe, both in terms of nature and duration. As a result, the end of the East-West conflict, predominantly centred on Europe as it was, has had little effect on these conflicts. Japan's economic and political survival is still basically dependent on the USA.

There were always going to be limits, therefore, to the building of direct bilateral relations between Germany and Japan during the post-war period. On the German side, it was the EU and NATO that defined all of the country's foreign policy activities, while for Japan, the unusual position of being a junior partner in a security alliance with the USA in Northeast Asia, had a kind of filter effect on foreign policy initiatives. The growing global nature of a wide variety of socio-political fields does now offer new opportunities and challenges for the relationship between Germany and Japan. The globalisation of interdependent economic and political processes, which these days are less and less affected by geographical, ideological or other systemic restrictions, is forcing countries and their governments to look for consensus beyond regional associations and alliances in order to maintain or promote their national interests.

At a time when global challenges are reaching beyond the borders of individual states or alliances, especially challenges relating to climate change and environmental problems, a partnership between Germany

and Japan, based on common values, can be seen as being both highly relevant and necessary. The number of political areas that offer the most potential for German-Japanese cooperation, both direct and indirect, is growing as a result of globalisation. These include specific areas relating to the environment and peace. Of course, the two countries are competitors when it comes to research and development into alternative energy, but collaboration between the two leading industrial nations to create a global framework for the implementation of this new technology can only be to the advantage of all concerned.

**The number of political areas that offer the most potential for German-Japanese cooperation, both direct and indirect, is growing as a result of globalisation.**

Because of Japan's obvious cutbacks in recent years,<sup>31</sup> development aid also remains a potentially rewarding field for goal-oriented cooperation between the two countries. Tokyo used to see development aid as a kind of substitute

31 | Japan's average development aid contribution amongst the DAC countries remains at 20 per cent. In 2010 it contributed (in 2006 prices) 7,812 million U.S. dollars, 7.9 per cent less than the previous year. Cf. Munzinger-Archiv, *ICH-Länder aktuell* 19/11; Wirtschaft A-5.

foreign policy during the time of the East-West conflict (in Japan it is not called development aid but 'economic cooperation'), but in recent years its actual foreign policy has become much more important within politics and society as a whole. There are pragmatic economic reasons for this as well. The country's huge national debt of almost 200 per cent of GDP is forcing the country to make savings in many areas, and this has meant that Tokyo has had to reduce its expenditure on Official Development Assistance (ODA).

When it comes to the politics of peace, the closer ties between Japan and NATO, including Japan's support for global disarmament and concrete measures to strengthen non-proliferation agreements, are positive signs that the

two countries can work effectively together as

**It is in the area of security in particular that additional systematic and goal-oriented discussions could help to identify further areas with the potential for indirect cooperation.**

partners, even though they actually operate within very different foreign and security policy structures. It is in the area of security

in particular that additional systematic and goal-oriented discussions could help to identify further areas with the potential for indirect cooperation. The fact that both "civilian powers" are having a similar debate on the political deployment of the military (and here that specifically means non-military deployment), should be a subject of greater interest than it currently is, not only to each other, but to third parties as well.

There are also some positive signs in the area of economic and financial policy. Both Germany and Japan have a vested interest in the Euro remaining stable. In the same way that security issues offer opportunities for cooperation, as mentioned above, then economic issues must also offer similar opportunities to two like-minded partners, especially because they are members of different alliances. The list of potential areas for German-Japanese cooperation does not stop there. We have already looked at general areas, such as Security Council reform and energy policies, but there are other more concrete challenges, such as finding a solution to the Middle East crisis and appropriate policies for dealing with Russia and China.

Because of the triple disaster around Fukushima on March 11 this year, the energy policy debate in Japan has taken

on a new and more painful dimension. As a result, it has suddenly become more important for Tokyo to have pragmatic and future-oriented policies towards Russia. There are not many areas within the political spectrum where the interests of the two countries can be aligned so neatly. Russia is Japan's neighbour and is also not so far from Germany. Providing technology for the exploitation of Russia's energy resources, political and social measures to promote and secure democratic structures and developing of a 'strategic' partnership based on mutual respect and trust (without wishing to over-use the term "strategic partnership", this does seem to be more than justified when talking about Germany, Russia and Japan) are all goals that no two countries could have more interest in achieving than Germany and Japan.

The difficulties involved in developing stronger bilateral relations at a time of fixed blocs during the Cold War have largely disappeared today. Globalisation has brought its own challenges for medium-sized civilian powers, but has also created a lot of opportunities to define mutually relevant goals and to develop complementary and cooperation-based strategies to achieve these goals. The future holds a lot more possibilities for a partnership based on common values between Germany and Japan than Eulenburg could ever have dreamed possible in 1861. And of course today we can envisage many different contributions being made by the two countries for the benefit of the international community as a whole than we might ever have dared to imagine in the aftermath of the catastrophe of the last century.