

Event Report

TOWARDS THE FUTURE TOGETHER: 160 YEARS OF JAPANESE-GERMAN RELATIONS

On the occasion of the 160th anniversary of bilateral relations between Japan and Germany, KAS together with the Embassy of Japan in Germany brought together renowned politicians and experts from Japan, Germany and like-minded countries to discuss joint challenges and joint solutions in two panel discussions focusing on a strong, resilient and smart future.

Towards an Intensified Cooperation: Common Ground for Japan, Germany, and their Partners (Session 1 on 19th April)

In the first session, the shared importance of a rules-based international order pursued by both Japan and Germany was in the center of attention. In his opening remarks, H.E. Hidenao Yanagi, Ambassador of Japan to Germany, emphasized the need for inclusive economic prosperity and stability in the Indo-Pacific region. Japan welcomes and encourages Germany's intensified engagement in the region – in particular in the field of security and defense cooperation. Following his remarks, Prof. Dr. Beate Neuss, Deputy Head of KAS, pointed out the necessity for a deepened collaboration between both countries as well as like-minded partners given the immense challenges of our time, among others, the COVID-19 pandemic, the most dynamic developments in regional and international security, climate change and digitalization.

The Japanese panelists of the first session, Minoru Kiuchi MP, and State Minister Yasuhide Nakayama MP, underlined the important global role played by the economic powers Germany and Japan and their shared core values of liberty, democracy, human rights, rule of law and the preservation of the environment and welcomed Germany's Indo-Pacific Guidelines and the outcome of the recent bilateral 2+2. Considering an expansionist and assertive China having amassed considerable military and economic power, Germany and Japan must work together for a free and open maritime sphere and an international rules-based order – particularly in areas such as cybersecurity and borderless technology. Expressing his grave concern toward China's new long-range missile and China-Russia collaboration, State Minister Nakayama pointed out, "for cybersecurity, we need a friend". These views were echoed by the German panelist Roderich Kiesewetter MP, who emphasized the importance of Japan as a close and reliable bilateral partner to Germany. He described the paradigm shift in German policies towards the Indo-Pacific in areas of security and defense cooperation as long due and a closer collaboration with allies such as Japan, Australia and the United States as essential. The deployment of the German frigate "Bayern" in the Indo-Pacific from August 2021 to February 2022 – twenty years after the last harbor visit in Japan – therefore is an important sign.

In the following discussion, the panelists together with Ken Weinstein (Hudson Institute) and Defense Attaché Ben Poxon (Embassy of Australia) deepened the discussion on groundbreaking

shifts in geo-strategic, geo-economic and cross-domain challenges in the global order. As Ken Weinstein highlighted, "Anything that Germany does (...) reduces the burden of the United States and Japan in this region. We really do want a network alliance, that goes beyond the Indo-Pacific." Moreover, the role of public opinion regarding the power dynamics in the region was discussed, with a clearer stance by Germany desired by the Indo-Pacific partners. While the importance and intricacies of QUAD and QUAD +groupings were stressed, all parties involved reiterated ASEAN as central to the region. "What does it look like what we want?", as Ben Poxon concluded: "A region, where rules and norms are the binding dynamic, not power."

[Towards a Sustainable Economic Recovery: Resilience and Transformations after COVID-19 \(Session 2 on 21st April\)](#)

In the second session, an economic lens was applied as the COVID-19 pandemic continues to impose heavy economic challenges on both Japan and Germany. In his opening remarks to the session, Kenichi Bessho (Embassy of Japan) stressed the opportunities created by a closer economic cooperation between Japan and Germany in terms of their respective pledges to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to net-zero by 2050. Following his remarks, Hideki Makihara MP, mentioning the updated 2030 NDC challenge, emphasized the need for driving the global economy with the key elements of being digital and green. Alternative energy resources such as hydrogen and solar power, the green transformation of the automobile industry and the mobility of the future in Japan and Germany need to go hand in hand with an extended digital infrastructure and a rules-based security and standards for interconnecting communication – with Germany and Japan as export-oriented, machinery-heavy economies having an enormous potential for learning from and with each other.

Ulrich Niemann (German Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy) elaborated on the extensive and successful trade relations and economic cooperation between Japan and Germany, institutionalized in bilateral fora such as the German-Japan Environment and Energy Dialogue. As he emphasized, ministries in Germany and Japan should collaborate to build up a suitable environment for a sustainable, resilient and competitive economy and to set respective standards. Hubertus Bardt (German Economic Institute) added an assessment of the current recession as a highly severe one. Germany is thereafter under pressure to create an environment for the required vertical transformation regarding climate protection and digitization so urgently needed to overcome the recession and to structurally transform towards a future-proof economy. These challenges together with the necessity to secure skilled workers and the risk of protectionism are the most critical ones identified by German companies – which is likely mirrored in Japan. Martin Schulz (Fujitsu) explained that the pandemic pushed the Japanese Government for deregulation and digitalization, and compared the approaches of the Japanese Society 5.0 and the German Industry 4.0 in that regard and stressed the need for local adaptation and demand-driven solutions connecting green and digital factors. "We need to balance the grids. We need to connect things. We need to move around differently.", as Martin Schulz highlighted.

As concluded in the panel discussion, a global governance of resilience, green growth and a rules-based digitization with increased cooperation on climate, health, trade and security is the need of the hour. By combining their knowledge and skills and collaborating closely, Japan, Germany and their partners in the Indo-Pacific and beyond can contribute to an environmentally, economically and socially sustainable future, as moderator Gisela Elsner (KAS) summarized.