

Day of German Unity

A history of strong economic and political ties

HANS CARL VON WERTHERN
GERMAN AMBASSADOR TO JAPAN

In 2017, almost one-third of all Germans have lived their entire lives in a unified Germany. They have never experienced first-hand the division that characterized our country for many years after World War II, but rather grew up in an outward-looking Germany surrounded by friends rather than mere neighbors.

This year marks the 28th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall. The most visible symbol of the Cold War itself stood for 28 years. Its fall not only led to my country's reunification that we celebrate today, but also enabled the integration of our



continent. As a result, young people today have come to know an integrated Europe whose internal borders exist more or less in name only. This has created a generation of young, cosmopolitan and European-minded Germans who have shown that they are ready to stand up for the values we cherish. Not only young people, but also Germans of all ages, have in recent years shown their compassion when it came to helping people in need, as well as their commitment to Ger-

man and European values. We can look to the future with confidence and optimism, knowing that these values exist not only in theory, but are also translated into action.

Germany is not an island, neither geographically nor politically. We are therefore not left untouched by the recent rise of populism around the world, which promises to give simple answers to difficult challenges. Nevertheless, in last month's federal elections, more than 87 percent of voters strongly reaffirmed their support for parties that want to protect the openness and diversity Germany stands for. People are taking a stand on issues they care about and are reconfirming Germany's strong culture of democracy. At the same time, we

must acknowledge that fears do exist and respond to them by actively engaging in dialogue and discussion.

It was on the basis of these values that we achieved the reunification of our country and made the European project the greatest political success story of the 20th century. European integration stands strong and will prevail over nationalism, protectionism and unilateralism. Germany's well-being is directly related to the well-being of the European Union. Therefore we will remain highly committed to the idea it embodies.

We will cherish our existing bonds and keep building new ones. Japan shares our liberal values of democracy, human rights,



German Chancellor
Angela Merkel
BLOOMBERG

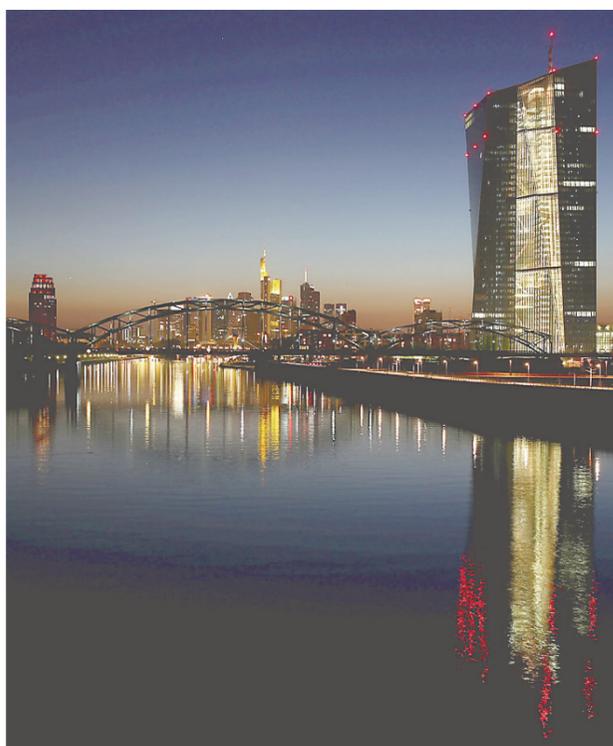
the rule of law and open markets. This makes Japan our most important partner in values here in Asia. We share not only strong economic and political ties, but also the bonds of true friendship.

We are stronger together than alone.

Therefore, we celebrate the Day of German Unity side by side with our friends from Japan and all over the world. On this happy occasion, I extend my warm greetings and best wishes to all readers of The Japan Times.



Visitors take a look at new models on the second media day of the IAA Motor Show in Frankfurt on Sept. 13. AP



The headquarters of the European Central Bank (right) is part of Frankfurt's famous skyline. REUTERS



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