

Day of German Unity Special

Cooperation vital in addressing global issues

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On Oct. 3 this year, when we celebrate the 29th anniversary of our Day of Unity, Germany looks back on the events that paved the way for reunification: the so-called Monday demonstrations

and the fall of the Berlin Wall 30 years ago. Beginning on Sept. 4, 1989, the people of Leipzig took to the streets and week after week, they kept pressing for freedom of travel, democracy and basic political rights — patiently and peacefully. Their actions triggered tremendous change: on Nov. 9, the Berlin Wall came down, ushering in the end of the Cold War era. Today, the remains of the wall are not only a cultural landmark, but also a reminder that major obstacles can be overcome by the desire for freedom and a different future.

However, this inspiring experience should not make us complacent. In the early '90s, democracy, human rights, free trade and regional integration seemed to have proven their worth and spread all over the world. And indeed, they have been advancing in many places. But today we see also authoritarianism and protectionism on the rise. In an ever more opening and fast-moving world, some people not only see opportunities, but feel overwhelmed by complexity, seeking simple answers. And some decision-makers feel tempted to cater to this

sentiment by questioning integration and multilateralism.

But this path is leading nowhere. Instead we all benefit from cooperation based on rules and common interest.

Challenges such as climate change, arms proliferation or the digital revolution do not stop at national borders. If we want to remain able to shape our future in the face of those challenges, the answer is not withdrawal into the national shell, but stronger international partnerships, multilateralism and regional integration. For Germany, multilateral action always begins in Europe. As the new European leadership takes office next month, we look forward to working with it toward our common goal of a strong and sovereign Europe. We also welcome the stronger role the European Union is playing in this part of the world. With the European

partnership agreement and the strategic partnership agreement between Japan and the EU having come into effect earlier this year, I think we are on a very good path toward enhancing our cooperation across the board.

Despite all the changes at the global level, Japan and Germany are connected by a longstanding friendship. As the German ambassador-designate to Japan, I wish to contribute to further strengthening our partnership. There are many fields such as artificial intelligence, innovative mobility concepts or sustainable urbanism, in which both countries can benefit from cooperation and mutual learning. Both our countries also share a strong interest in strengthening the rules-based global order. After all, both our economies depend on free trade. Our knowledge-based societies need exchange and

connections and our security relies on strong partnerships. We therefore wish to enhance our tradition of working together in the G7, G20, the U.N. and other multilateral fora to promote nonproliferation, climate protection and U.N. reform, to name just a few.

In preparing for my work here in Germany and during my first few weeks in Japan, I have been deeply moved by the strong people-to-people relations between Germans and Japanese from all walks of life in all parts of both our countries. This is another aspect of our relations that deserves our full attention, as the Olympics and Paralympics next year will be an excellent opportunity for deeper understanding and friendship between German athletes and fans and their Japanese hosts. In this spirit I wish the readers of The Japan Times all the best — may our friendship never end.



People gathered on and near the Berlin Wall on Nov. 9, 1989, the day the wall came down. ©DPA

This content was compiled in collaboration with the embassy. The views expressed here do not necessarily reflect those of the newspaper.

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to the People
of
Germany
on the Occasion
of the Day
of German Unity



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