Speech by Federal President Joachim Gauck
at Waseda University
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Thank you very much indeed for inviting me to address your University today. This is not just one of the most renowned universities in Japan. It also has – and I am particularly happy about this – strong international ties, including 21 partnerships with German universities alone. That is exceptional. I hope that you can continue to maintain this collaboration with your partners and perhaps even expand it in the future.

This is a very special trip for me. It is my last visit to Asia as Federal President. And I am very happy that it takes me here to Japan, to the country that we Germans regard as a friend and partner, as a "distant companion". At least that is how very many people in Germany have seen your country since the term "distant companions" was used as the name of a major exhibition on Japanese-German relations – "distant" because we are separated by oceans and time zones; and "companions" because at the same time we are united by values and priorities. This spirit – the spirit of partnership and exchange – will inform my visit to Japan. I would therefore like to invite you to accompany me for a few minutes on a short mental journey to the sources of this closeness and the common ground that will emerge from similar challenges for the future.

First of all, however, I would like to tell you how impressed I have been by Tokyo as the centre of your modern and successful country. The many growing cities around the world want to learn from this metropolis and megalopolis, as it is so well organised and safe that Florian Coulmas, a German expert on Japan, speaks of the "happiness of urban life" with regard to Tokyo. I hope that every resident of Tokyo feels this way. I gained an impression of the dimensions of the city yesterday when Governor Koike and I visited the observation deck in the Tokyo Metropolitan Government Buildings. Rest assured that every visitor from Central Europe – including those from Berlin, which is also

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a dynamic city and not particularly small – is fascinated by the speed and dynamism of Tokyo. But when one comes here, Berlin looks like a village – admittedly, a nice one!

Naturally, Tokyo plays a special role in our relations. In addition to the German foundations, trade promotion offices, research institutes, German-speaking churches, Embassy and representations of some German states, Tokyo is home to an institution not found anywhere else in a comparable form, namely the German Institute for Japanese Studies. This institute does not merely gather and further Germany's knowledge about Japan – it is also a renowned research partner and has very good relations to institutions including Waseda University. The Institute stands symbolically for the attempt to learn from and with each other.

Over the course of history, we have done this in very different ways. The unifying force of culture is an intrinsic part of the relationship between Japan and Germany. Japanese art has had an enormous impact in the West, giving rise to Japonism in western art, ever since it was exhibited at the World Fair in Paris in 1855.

Books by Haruki Murakami, who I have been informed is a graduate of this University, are widely read in Germany. We also read books by Nobel Literature Laureate Kenzaburō Ōe, and Yōko Tawada, who lives in Berlin and writes in both Japanese and German. She will be awarded the renowned Kleist Prize in a few days' time. As ever, Hermann Hesse is popular in Japan, but so too, of course, are contemporary artists such as film director Doris Dörrie and photographer Andreas Gursky. And those who attend the New Year's Eve concert at the Berlin Philharmonie are amazed by the large number of Japanese music lovers who are always to be found in the audience. I imagine that quite a number of them make the long journey simply to attend this concert.

Modern Japanese culture is also popular worldwide. The younger generation is particularly interested in the comic and animation styles of manga and anime. And in Germany, too, thousands of young people regularly meet up at cosplay events.

Today I will travel to Kyoto, another city that is important for Japanese-German cultural and academic relations, and where I will award the Siebold Prize – a German award for Japanese researchers – to Professor Takeshi Kawasaki, who conducts research in Tokyo on German democracy. And when I visit Nagasaki at the end of my trip, then naturally the main aim of my visit will be to commemorate the dropping of the atomic bomb on 9 August 1945 and the many victims of the bombing. However, Nagasaki is also important to me as a meeting place between Japan and the West and as the first place in Japan where Germans were active. The young doctor Philipp Franz von Siebold set foot on Japanese soil at the harbour in Nagasaki in 1823.

He did not only work as a doctor – his role was in fact eminently political. In talks with the shogunate, he advocated that Japan open up to the outside world, while in Europe he worked to foster an attitude of openness and curiosity about Japan, as yet an unknown country. It is precisely this spirit that we can invoke today, that sustains and inspires us.

At bilateral meetings, one sometimes hears people say that Japanese-German relations are actually "boring because they are too good". If I look back today on our shared history, which began 155 years ago with the unequal Prussian-Japanese Treaty of Amity, Commerce and Navigation, then there can be no question of "boredom". The young German Empire and the rising Japan of the Meiji period, which initially had so many ties and influenced each other, became enemies in the First World War. Then came our countries' fatal alliance in the Second World War. Finally, we returned to the family of nations. Japan and West Germany's development into major economic players and, above all, democracies, shaped the post-war era.

However, distorted images often determined how Japan was perceived in the West. Indeed, such images still have a certain influence today. Since the 1990s, a frequently exaggerated narrative of stagnation in Japan has spread in Germany. What is sometimes overlooked is that Japan is now the most affluent country in all Asia, as well as an exceptionally democratic and peaceful society. What a remarkable path to the present day, in which our two countries are widely valued and respected.

We can feel grateful for the fact that Japanese-German relations are regarded as a given and as unproblematic. It is the duty of us all – both civil society and policymakers – to foster this relationship, especially in good times. For in times of need, we see just how important these ties are. I recall the year 2011 and the triple disaster of the earthquake, tsunami and nuclear meltdown, when many Germans – members of the public, the churches, the German Red Cross, and in particular the German-Japanese Societies – provided help, as they did again after the earthquake in Kumamoto this year. And on the other hand, Japan also provided support during the flooding in Saxony three years ago. We Germans are very grateful for this. Allow me to mention just one small example: I have been informed that a staff member of the Japanese Embassy in Berlin even took time off work to help as a volunteer in Dresden. That is truly a beautiful symbol for the state of our bilateral relations.

Japan and Germany, the number three and number four in the global economy, are more affluent than ever in 2016. Their education and research systems are highly developed. The Japanese and Germans enjoy a high standard of living. And yet we face questions that have arisen from our own success, so to speak. We feel the pains

of modernisation. Many of us ask ourselves what lies ahead as regards globalisation. Will we be able to safeguard what we have achieved? What does coming climate change mean for our lives? What impact will the Digital Revolution have on our society, companies and jobs? What will be the effects of demographic change?

Allow me to address some of these questions. The ageing society – be it in Japan or Germany – is something we of course initially see as a sign of a problem. And yet its root cause actually lies in our success. People here in Japan have a higher life expectancy than in any other country in the world. And Germans are also increasingly healthy and live longer. This has been made possible by the achievements of civilisation: positive economic development, technical innovations, better nutrition, better living conditions, preparation for old age, efficient health care systems, more education, and less heavy and physically demanding work.

But now let me talk about the challenges. Our major cities are growing because of the influx of young and often well-educated people, but smaller towns and rural areas are already faced with the problem of how the necessary infrastructure, including medical care, can be maintained. Social security systems are also coming under pressure. New questions are also arising for the labour market and industrial production. It will probably become increasingly difficult to find young, well-trained and specialised staff. And an ageing population is likely to have an impact on how and by whom investments are made. I read an amazing figure, namely that 30 percent of all start-ups in Japan are set up by people aged over 60. We should not underestimate the fact that many older people also want to give their lives meaning by continuing to play an active role.

We sometimes find different answers to demographic change in Germany than you do in Japan. We definitely see opportunities in immigration. The attitude of many Germans to immigration has changed in an astonishing way over time. For example, as recently as 1983, the coalition agreement, which defined the goals of the Federal Government of the time, stated: "Germany is not a country of immigration." Many voters shared that view at the time. Nowadays, two-thirds of the German population think it is good that Germany is becoming more diverse as a result of immigration. And there are signs that immigration can also at least mitigate the effects of demographic change.

As you know, last year Germany took in many people who had fled from violent conflicts. This was a step that greatly politicised and also polarised society in Germany. The newcomers are not immigrants in the strict sense of the word. Many, perhaps most of them, will only stay for a while. But we have grounds for optimism, as we hope to be able to offer these newly arrived people opportunities thanks to

endeavours by society as a whole and a foresighted integration policy. I do not wish to deny that parts of our population – not only in Germany, but also in other European countries – are sceptical of, and even hostile to, the high level of immigration. But overall, for example compared with people's attitudes 25 years ago, the population's openness and willingness to take people in have in fact noticeably increased.

We are very interested in the technological innovations being adopted by Japan in response to demographic change. Japan has better chances of success in this field than any other country thanks to its leading role in robotics. Robots are already able to help look after elderly and sick people. Japan is a pioneer in this field, and we in Germany can learn a great deal from its experiences and in general from its passion for innovation.

This is why I am pleased that Japan will be our partner country at the CeBIT computer trade fair next year. This is a great opportunity for Japanese-German collaboration in science and technology. After all, the Digital Revolution, a vast field that is seen as the fourth level of industrialisation, affects us all. The great interest in digital technologies, networks and interaction between people and machines also derives from the experience of the past that each new level of automation so far – despite initial scepticism each time – has meant that more people were in employment than ever before, often in more challenging roles. However, we will also have to face up to complicated ethical and moral questions, such as those posed by self-driving cars or the topics of artificial intelligence and data security.

Furthermore, we need to rethink some attitudes in the increasingly complex world of work, even if this world offers more opportunities for professional self-actualisation than ever before. For example, employees are facing ever greater demands, such as a requirement that they be contactable at all times. One of the results, at least in Germany, is that mental health problems are not uncommon and now account for one of the most common causes of early retirement. Policymakers must also play their part here – for example by promoting good working conditions.

Japan and Germany enjoy the best prerequisites for dealing with the challenges of the changing world of work – namely the ability to innovate technologically and to adapt their societies. Society as a whole has always experienced difficulties in adapting to industrial modernisation – industry 4.0 also requires a society 4.0. In our countries, tasks are not simply decreed. Instead, we conduct a common debate on what path our countries should take. We have the rule of law and freedom of opinion. As a result, fears and concerns are heard, not least in the process of democratic elections. This means we can assume that Japan and Germany are well equipped to deal with

the urgent issues of the day, and particularly with the risks associated with this modernisation – and hopefully they are in fact better equipped than other, less free, societies.

During my trips abroad in the past years I have heard an extremely wide range of answers to the questions posed by modernisation. Let us look at China, which I visited last March. Like many people in the world, I naturally have great respect for China's economic success, and I made this clear while I was there. But I also advocated the model of a democratic and open society during my visit because I firmly believe that individuals can only develop freely and make use of all their talents for the benefit of all if the society they live in is organised along pluralist lines.

The inherent strengths of an open society – a fair balancing of interests and the power of a lively civil society – should make us feel optimistic. We discuss things, sometimes arguing in the process, weigh things up and compromise. This is often tiring and tedious. But these efforts are what ultimately make us strong.

I would now like to address the topic of security. I come from a seafaring family. There was a maritime première last summer in my home town of Rostock at the Baltic Sea coast, when ships from the Japanese Navy took part in the annual sailing festival, Hanse Sail Rostock, for the first time. This was an important symbol for me because Japan and Germany, as countries low in raw materials but strong in exports, are particularly dependent on free maritime and trade routes and on an international order shaped by norms and based on binding rules.

But this order, as we know, value and support it, has come under pressure, on the one hand as a result of new terrorist threats, but on the other hand as a result of the resurgence of nationalism and the mistaken belief that protectionism and isolation, of all things, will create prosperity in the 21st century. In Europe, we have even experienced a situation in which borders were withdrawn in violation of international law, an annexation, something that calls our continent's peaceful order into question. However, I know that there are also grounds for concern in Asia. And there are now more refugees in the world than at any other time since the end of the Second World War, largely as a result of a war raging in the Middle East. This war also spells out how difficult it currently is for us to counter crises effectively using the international institutions and norms available to us.

We now have a strange situation. If we look at the world, we see that the number of critics, indeed opponents, of democracy is increasing – and this is also the case in some western countries. We must recognise that we are facing a clash of ideas: liberalism versus illiberalism and democracy versus autocracy.

Japan and Germany recognised some time ago that they should take on more responsibility at international level, also in their own interests. Some of the tests we are facing these days show how important this recognition is. Of course, our two countries already made significant contributions in the past. We have proven our expertise many times, for example in crisis prevention and conflict resolution; we are very active in development cooperation; and we are expressly committed to multilateralism. Our aim is to support the work of the United Nations and the established international institutions constructively at all times. And Japan and Germany worked extremely well together in their consecutive G7 Presidencies.

Our alliances – that is, the security alliance with the United States in the case of Japan and with NATO in the case of Germany – remain crucial to our security. And it is good that Japan is a partner in NATO. I would like to mention Japan's support for the NATO-led mission in Afghanistan. However, I am also thinking of Japan's role in South Sudan and in the Horn of Africa in the fight against piracy.

Nevertheless, as regards security policy, we need to do more for our own security, and we have already started doing so. In view of the changed situation, both Japan and Germany find themselves in a process of debate in politics and society on their own role in the world.

The fact that our current definition of security is based on values is, of course, a result of our violent history. From our own past, our two countries have learned that we want to foster peace and international law. Prevention and diplomacy always take priority in this. The fact that there are extreme cases, emergencies in which the international community realises that diplomacy will no longer suffice, is an awareness that does not come easy to either Japanese or German society. However, our history cannot be a reason to do nothing when violations of human rights turn into genocide and crimes against humanity. For all of these reasons, I would welcome an even more active dialogue on security policy between Japan and Germany – a dialogue that recognises the changed global situation, but also takes into account our many points in common.

And here in Japan in particular, one must add a further lesson: the horror of nuclear warfare must never be repeated. This is why we have joined forces to promote binding rules on non-proliferation, disarmament and greater arms control. Japan and Germany should continue to play a pioneering role in this area. And the international community must take an unequivocally united stance on North Korea, which poses a threat to the entire region.

A key feature of Japanese and German foreign policy – and one that is simultaneously an important source of credibility – is our commitment to international law. Within four years after the end of the Second World War, not only were the Constitution of Japan and the

Basic Law for the Federal Republic of Germany adopted – the Charter of the United Nations also entered into force and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was drawn up.

In Germany, we recently celebrated the 20th anniversary of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea in Hamburg. This court was established in a heyday of international law and has already had a Japanese president.

It is in the interests of both our countries to consolidate and expand the achievements of international law. That is why I am very worried that a growing number of countries no longer wants to work with the International Criminal Court, while others have never been willing to do so. But it remains the task of the international community to bring the perpetrators of genocide, serious war crimes and crimes against humanity to justice.

Common rules, and thus predictability, pay off for all countries, including the most powerful ones. In this, we rely on a persistent dialogue and the tireless willingness to find solutions bilaterally, multilaterally and under international law.

This must also be the goal in the East and South China Sea, where maritime territorial disputes pose a threat to stability – and perhaps even to peace at some point. Security and stability in Asia are also in the interests of Germany and Europe. Supporting our democratic partners in the world is a fundamental principle of German foreign policy. At the same time, it is vital to align rightful economic interests with our values.

For us Germans in particular, our unconditional endeavours to resolve conflicts peacefully and in line with international law are a duty that arises from our history of war and the Holocaust. It took a long time for this terrible history to be addressed honestly in the heart of German society. But addressing our own history, mistakes and crimes as openly as possible has proved to be the crucial requirement for reconciliation with our neighbours. After everything that had happened, the fact that Germany and France, but also Germany and Poland, could become partners, allies and then even friends is a historic stroke of good fortune. Particularly at times of uncertainty in the European Union, this remains a marvellous achievement and a sign of hope for us Europeans, but also for other parts of the world.

Despite all the well-known difficulties, we also see encouraging political progress and civil society projects in East Asia that can foster mutual understanding. Each step towards reconciliation and understanding is and remains important.

The question of whether democracy is compatible with so-called Asian values has accompanied me on all of my visits to Asia. During this visit, I am experiencing a Japan that impressively disproves this

cultural relativistic theory – a country shaped in a different way historically to European countries, a country shaped by Shintoism, as well as Buddhism and Confucianism, that has nevertheless become a stable democracy and is blessed with an active civil society. A country that, like my own, however, is facing great tasks. Let us continue to expand the Japanese-German partnership of values for the benefit of freedom and peace.

And I would like to encourage all of you, but particularly you, the young people here in this room to go out into the world, to visit Europe and Germany, and to get to know our continent and my country. We can never have too much of such exchange. And the individual always benefits. In the words of the philosopher Hermann von Keyserling, whose travels also took him to Japan, I would like to say that

"the shortest way to oneself leads around the world".

Thank you very much.