

Nov 18, 2021

Thank you, Sandy, and thank all of you who made this event possible. For me this is an extraordinary moment.

I was astonished when told that I had been selected to receive a prize in the name of the most famous statesman of our era, for I am famously not a statesman. Dr. Kissinger has long been a trusted advisor and friend. Through these tumultuous decades, his devotion is second to none in supporting our nations' ties and the trans-Atlantic bonds. I can only come humbly to the American Academy, receiving such recognition in the name of a man who commands universal respect.

I come here confident that Germany and America share a commitment to keeping alive these experiments that we call democracy. Our form of governance is designed to be hard, and we are reminded that democracy is not ours by divine right. These noble experiments are ours thanks to the sacrifices of those who went before us, paid for by their blood, sweat and tears. Our shared freedoms are our inheritance, but also our promise to our children's future.

When the day comes that our generation turns leadership over to the next, it's my earnest hope that our democracies will be on a stronger footing than today. In this effort Germany and America will play key roles.

To believe in the values we espouse requires that we take a stand in support of those radical ideas that grew out of Europe's Renaissance. We see those themes and sometimes the very words from yesteryear surfacing in our nations' defining documents.

Today I have the high honor of sitting once more alongside two of the most capable and devoted leaders of our effort to turn over an improved world to our children. This effort acknowledges the essentiality of Europe combined with our long-standing trans-Atlantic links. Only if democracies stand united in their commitment to our interconnected freedoms, can our nations withstand the tests of our time. This responsibility is a worthy cause, one we must not relinquish. Any illusions of autonomy, on either side of the Atlantic, are just that – illusions – and we must not irresponsibly relearn the hard way those lessons that history already makes clear.

President von der Leyen and Secretary General Stoltenberg, dear Ursula and Jens, you do me the greatest honor by being present. Across the free world we could not find two more astute leaders to guide our combined efforts. I remain proud of having worked at your side...forever grateful for your wise counsel through it all...where trust stands as the coin of the realm.

When you walk into a room, your names are passports to our trust. You gained your high reputations the old-fashioned way: earned in tough circumstances. As leaders you are not permitted to say you did your best; rather you must do what is required, and you stand that ultimate test every day.

Nothing is brain dead when you engage. Nothing lies moribund when your focused energy is brought to bear in the difficult but necessary effort to create common ground. You represent the best of us and even today it is your words that shape my thoughts.

America sees a stronger, intertwined Europe being in America's interest just as it's in the interest of Europe and democracies everywhere. We in the free nations must continue the quest toward unity of effort in defense of individual freedom and the rule of law.

Ultimately the EU and NATO are unions of values. They are necessary at a time when authoritarians sense they have the wind at their backs, calculating that our sometimes-raucous democracies are vulnerable to their meddling and bullying. It is your leadership, Jens and Ursula, that turns our values into concerted action.

This solidarity among democracies is in the best interest of all who live in freedom, not just for those of us in the trans-Atlantic community. Also, our stand for human rights gives hope to people who do not enjoy our freedom. So, it is most assuredly my honor to be selected for this award by the American Academy in Berlin, an institution unconfused in its mission of sustaining strong connections between Germany and America in the worldwide competition of ideas.

As a former NATO officer, I cannot come to the capital of Germany without the strongest sense of gratitude for Chancellor Merkel and the German people. Over 150,000 of your troops served honorably and ethically in Afghanistan after NATO invoked the shared defense clause, coming to America's aid. Today I pay my respects to the German families whose sons fell in battle as well as those families whose innocent loved ones died in the senseless 9-11 attack on New York City. We grieve for your losses as we grieve our own, and regardless of any heated political rhetoric, we

Americans will not forget our debt to those who came to our aid. We believe that we serve a higher purpose when banding together to protect values critical to shaping a better world for our children to inherit.

Such service continues to be crucial to the security and prosperity of our countries. New challenges arise. If we are to remain secure and prosperous, we will need to confront them together. We face a Russia whose President claws for legitimacy by foreclosing cooperation with free societies; it was sad to see the shuttering of the NATO-Russia Council offices. This is a wound inflicted on the Russian people by an unaccountable leader who sees peaceful relations with NATO and the EU as threatening his continued chokehold on power. All European democracies, even the smallest on Russia's borders, are seen as threats to Putin's control.

Our democracies also face a China increasingly repressive at home and aggressive internationally. Watching the orchestrated commercial, cyber and diplomatic attacks on Australia today is as revealing as it is disheartening. Employing its power to punish Australia for its democratic values like freedom of the press and punishing cultural institutions to silence scholarship – including at German universities – is not something we can ignore. We should all ask ourselves whether our countries could accept the

fourteen demands China has made of Australia, a fellow democracy that has tried repeatedly to craft a positive relationship with China. We must also ask whether our own economies can continue to prosper if an international order emerges where coercion of commerce becomes the norm. We cannot be who we claim to be if we turn a blind eye to such activity and more.

The United States isn't seeking confrontation with China or Russia. It was with great reluctance that as Secretary of Defense I concluded in our revised National Defense Strategy that great power competition had become the paramount threat to democracy. Over preceding decades the China we hoped for was prosperous and rule-abiding – because it was by opening up to market principles and protected by the rule of law that China was becoming prosperous. There can be no doubt that the hard-working people of China have been true beneficiaries of the international order we allies created following the tragedy of World War II.

But that seems not to be the China this Chinese government wants. And we allies are just at the beginning of figuring out what that means for us. The United States is perhaps earlier to conclusions, being a Pacific nation with long-standing alliance commitments in Asia. But the industrial espionage,

military recklessness, violations of other nations' sovereignty, and the human rights depredations China is committing against her own citizens can only continue to drive convergence among the democracies which can look away for only so long. I cannot imagine the German public being indifferent as they become more aware, just as our American public slowly, even reluctantly, came to grips with violations of international norms by China as well as Russia.

Dwight Eisenhower, the American President who welcomed West Germany into NATO in 1954, believed that the role for our militaries was to hold adversaries at bay while the vibrancy of democratic societies and their dynamic economies won the Cold War. No country better exemplifies that vision than a unified Germany. Who can fail to see that a once divided Germany, knit together after the fall of the Berlin Wall, is now a sparkling testament to what free people in a democracy can achieve? Your hard-earned success will not be lost to the dustbin of history so long as all democracies hold your example foremost in these challenging times.

In this competition between what sort of life to turn over to our children, were Europe to be passive, a spectator vice a participant, the world would be a poorer place, and Europe a mere appendage of Eurasia. Managing day-to-day affairs

is not enough, because a world in which European traditions and values have lost influence can only be a lesser world. And humbly I say to our German friends, you are key at this moment: A world lacking Germany's moral voice is a weaker world. The world needs to know what Germany stands for, and equally what Germany will not stand for. Your voice echoes loudly when it comes to the essential issues of our time.

Having studied admired German leaders, I am confident that in the ongoing competition between systems of governance, Germany's firm support can be counted on by fellow democracies under siege.

Challenged daily by brazen dictators, autocrats, and charlatans, this is a stern time. But we should not doubt our values; rather we should doubt our doubts, drawing strength from our values.

There are some in the West whose faith in democratic principles may have faltered. Yet just look at how many wish to emigrate to our countries, and you see faith and hope writ large. And who else believes in the magnetism of free societies? Vladimir Putin and Xi Jing Ping. That's why they're constricting the freedom of their own people while attempting to undercut ours.

US-German cooperation will be a bellwether for how Europe and the United States deal with today's rapidly transforming international landscape. We are coming out of a rough patch and yes, we will have future disagreements. But our past shows how we can honestly discuss our differences, then find an overarching strategic approach that helps navigate these waters. Recalling first principles, this is not so difficult if our nations practice a spirit of collaboration. For when it comes to the defense of freedom, NATO and the EU remind us of history's truism: we are stronger together.

Recall too that the bonds between Germany and America have never been solely about security. People-to-people bonds are more numerous than formal government relations. As the American Academy exemplifies, our friendship is also about science and industry and art and human thriving. These connections are not solely a product of the post-war era.

I try to imagine what the conversations between the great German scientist Alexander von Humboldt and American President Thomas Jefferson must have been like during Humboldt's 1804 trip to the young United States. Although he was at the end of a five-year expedition, Humboldt

wrote, “I could not resist seeing the United States and enjoying the consoling aspects of a people who understand the precious gift of liberty.” Humboldt and Jefferson discussed proof that the wooly mammoth had lived in the Americas, the monetary policy of Russia and the United States, and even the need for a canal to connect the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans. Our Library of Congress still holds the maps drawn by Humboldt for Jefferson, explaining where the boundaries of the Louisiana purchase lay – because Humboldt had already been there before any in Washington had. And while admirably a critic of that birth defect of slavery not yet eradicated in my country, Humboldt felt such a deep connection to the spirit of America that he described himself as “half an American.”

In accepting this award, with the greatest respect for Germany and the bonds our countries share, I hope for this day you will allow me to declare myself half a German.

Thank you.

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Link to Humboldt's map:

<https://americanart.si.edu/exhibitions/humboldt/online/copy-afteralexander-von-humboldt>

GE in AFG:

<https://www.dw.com/en/after-afghanistan-germany-rethinks-its-military-missions/a-58912418>

CH 14 demands:

<https://supchina.com/2020/11/18/the-14-sins-of-australia-beijing-expands-list-of-grievances-and-digs-in-for-extended-diplomatic-dispute/>