



## **Check against delivery!**

**Speech in honour of Madeleine Albright and Robert Zoellick  
at the presentation of the Shepard Stone Award,  
Aspen Institute Germany**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let's talk about telephone numbers. And not about tweets.

One of your predecessors at the State Department, Madeleine Albright, once asked: "Who do I call if I want to call Europe?"

That was Henry Kissinger. He put his finger on the fact that functioning political partnerships need reliable channels of communication. Red telephones, hotlines or secure mobile devices kept close at hand – contacts, dialogue and trust are needed in politics, diplomacy and business.

The European Union has long since established the post Kissinger once wanted to see. And the new European Commission will again include a High Representative of the EU Member States who will be available as a point of contact for *non*-Member States. Josep Borrell will keep his telephone close at hand, he will cultivate contacts, and in crises and conflicts he will negotiate and mediate on Europe's behalf. Even so, we Europeans are still a long way from speaking with *one* voice.



Yet that is not the only cause of the difficulties we are experiencing in transatlantic relations – which are vital, but under strain.

Both of you, Madeleine Albright and Bob Zoellick, particularly symbolise the *friendly* relationship between Germany and the United States. You stand for the shared ideals of freedom and mutual trust. And for open dialogue between our nations – as Shepard Stone might have put it, after whom the award you are receiving is named. The journalist and diplomat who founded Berlin’s Aspen Institute was not only an accomplished American expert on Germany, but also a staunch supporter of transatlantic understanding and a loyal friend to the German people. Traits which are shared by you, the recipients of this year’s award.

It is also appropriate that you are receiving this award just before the thirtieth anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall. On that historic day, the world changed. The turn events took led divided Germany to reunification and brought the peoples of Europe back together. One of the people in whose hands the matter rested was President George Bush senior, the only head of state of the four victorious powers who immediately supported Helmut Kohl’s push for reunification – advised by you, among others, Bob Zoellick. You were involved in the German reunification process as the US chief negotiator. Your proposal formed the basis for the “two-plus-four talks” – a negotiating format which allowed binding agreements to be reached between the Allies and with both German states. It will have been thanks to you that Secretary of State James Baker was so well-informed about the details of our Basic Law. It was also important to you that we gave a commitment to remain in the Alliance – and you will recall that we did not pay for reunification by, for example, promising to give up the German Mark in favour of the euro, as is often claimed.



On the ninth of November 1989, when the unthinkable happened and the barriers opened here in Berlin and, later that evening, along the entire intra-German border, no one knew what would happen next. Whether the Cold War would descend into violence after all. We didn't know the term "peaceful revolution" back then. We didn't realise that the Soviet Union, "made fragile by economic weakness and ideological weariness, [would shatter] like a dropped vase on a stone floor" – as you once strikingly put it, Mrs Albright. At that time, the images from Tiananmen Square in Beijing were fresh in our minds. The violent suppression of the protests against the Communist government there in the summer of 1989.

No one knew what would happen after the fall of the Berlin Wall. But the moment itself was enough. On that momentous evening, watching events unfold on television from Bonn, we marvelled at images which showed one thing: the unconquerable desire for freedom! The courage of so many GDR citizens who took to the streets to claim their freedom.

Today, we can look back on that November day in 1989 with joy, on a moment of happiness for Germany and an event which changed the world – and, with it, many of the outdated foundations of international relations. Yet we Germans never forget that the ninth of November has many meanings in our history. In 1938, it revealed the complete abandonment of decency and compassion, law-abidingness and humanity. People being humiliated and abused, synagogues in flames, Jewish businesses destroyed – the pogroms against Jews were euphemistically referred to as "*Kristallnacht*" in the German Reich. They were harbingers of the Holocaust. From which you and your family, Madeleine Albright, fled when you were a young child, leaving behind your native Czechoslovakia.



The ninth of November 1938 and the ninth of November 1989 are two poles of our history. Our ambivalent remembrance of the events which took place on this date places a special obligation on us to uphold the values of freedom and humanity, respect for human rights and democracy.

These values have now prevailed on our continent. We therefore acknowledge with immense gratitude how vocal you, Madeleine Albright, were in your support for the integration of not only the country of your birth, but all Central and Eastern European countries, into the Western family of nations, allowing it to become a *pan*-European family. This European integration is – like the transatlantic relationship – of enormous importance to us Germans at the centre of the continent. And to our neighbours as well.

Thirty years ago, we hoped that freedom and democracy throughout Europe would inspire cooperation and unanimity. Today we see that, although the division has been overcome, the effects of different historical experiences are still being felt. The twofold experience of dictatorship and foreign rule cannot simply be set aside in the countries of Eastern and Central Europe. We underestimated that in the West. We made assumptions based on our Western post-war experience of growing prosperity in the second half of the last century. But that experience cannot simply be replicated in the 21st century, given the complex changes taking place in the world. We can see today that we need to consider each other more if we want to achieve anything together – including at European level, we must hold more intensive talks, listen to each other more, and learn to understand each other better.

Madeleine Albright, you once wrote that political freedom cannot be administered from the outside. Political freedom is not some kind of



wonder drug that you administer to people one evening, and then they wake up the next morning and all the problems have been solved. We are seeing that at the moment – in Europe and in our own country.

The Cold War's bipolarity, with clear dividing lines between friend and foe, has been replaced by a new "world disorder". Globalisation, accelerated technological change and global power-political shifts are being accompanied by uncertainty, unpredictability and diffuse risks. The hope that liberal democracy would triumph around the world after 1989 has proved to be an illusion.

The democracies on both sides of the Atlantic are coming under pressure. New internal and external threats are affecting established processes. There are fewer and fewer certainties in societal and diplomatic relations in the age of globalisation. This trend is fanning the flames of national egoism. However, individual countries – no matter how big they may be – need allies, even if the cohesion of these alliances is declining. This is taking place within NATO, and in the EU as it moves towards Brexit – and also in our relations with the United States.

At the same time, new powers are asserting themselves in economic and political terms. China seems to be disproving the long-held assumption that free markets are inevitably followed by a free society.

The United States is withdrawing from or reinterpreting its role as a force for order in the world. At present, American interests are increasingly being advanced outside of the multilateral framework that the US itself built – and which you both played a special role in shaping. The framework in which Germany and the European Union place their trust!



Europe and the United States are allies – even if less importance is apparently attached to partnership at the moment. We continue to share fundamental common values! These values underpin our transatlantic partnership, which remains of existential importance to us Europeans. We cannot do without the United States in terms of our security, even if we want to cooperate more closely within the EU on security issues – and will need to do so if we Europeans do not want to become mere onlookers. We all depend – even more today than in the past - on cooperation with friends and partners, on international vigilance, flexibility and shared aims when it comes to security strategies, climate protection, issues of migration and the preservation of our prosperity.

We need and want both transatlantic and intra-European cooperation – not least in order to *jointly* defend, in these difficult times, freedom and social justice, progress and sustainable development, democracy, the rule of law and human rights.

That is why the EU is not equidistant from the United States and China, even though China is playing an ever greater role in the global competition of systems and is extremely important to our economy. China is a trading partner and competitor. Our current differences notwithstanding, the United States is always more than that: you are our friends and allies.

This also means that both sides can speak frankly to each other. As President of the World Bank, Bob Zoellick was never uncritical of us Europeans or Germans. As a friend, he repeatedly urged us to play a role commensurate with our position – in Europe, within the Alliance and in the world. As a friend, he was patient with us, sometimes more so and



sometimes less. But he was also frank. There is a lack of leadership – that was your justified reproach, Bob Zoellick. You have confidence in the ability of leaders and nations to shape the direction of change in line with their wishes.

We need such leadership more urgently than ever, including within Europe. Not half-hearted leadership, but considered leadership, coordinated with our partners. For us Germans, this means that we must also hold uncomfortable debates about our role in the global context and in transatlantic relations.

That requires trust. A precious asset in politics. Both of you, Madeleine Albright and Bob Zoellick, were and still are partners whom we trust – and you gave us your trust, not just as holders of high office, as Secretary of State of the United States of America and as President of the World Bank. You did so as people, people with a political assignment, but above all with a clear attitude characterised by empathy, your personal life experiences and individual family histories.

Having your telephone numbers, a direct line to you, was always reassuring and helpful. For the democratic values we share and defend require us to talk to each other – to head off crises or clear up misunderstandings. Ideally, face to face. And this evening offers a good opportunity for that.