

### **Entangling the Pacific and Atlantic Worlds: Past and Present. A Symposium Commemorating Helmut Schmidt**

**Veranstalter:** Sarah Beringer, GHI Washington; Wencke Meteling, Johns Hopkins SAIS; Sören Urbansky, GHI Washington  
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**Bericht von:** Merle Ingenfeld, a.r.t.e.s. Graduate School for the Humanities, Universität zu Köln

The symposium in memory of politician and former German chancellor Helmut Schmidt took place at the University of California, Berkeley, between March 25 and 27, 2019. It was organized by the German Historical Institute Washington (GHI) in cooperation with the Institutes of European Studies and of East Asian Studies, University of California, Berkeley. Co-Sponsored by the GHI and the ZEIT-Stiftung Ebelin und Gerd Bucerius, this conference aimed to enhance the present debate on the rise of East-Asian powers and the remaking of global order.

At UC Berkeley, historians, social scientists, journalists, policy experts and former friends of Schmidt's discussed the shift from an international order centered on the Atlantic to one in which East Asian powers and namely China claim their weight. In his opening keynote „Shifting Tides“ MATT K. MATSUDA (Rutgers University) explored central themes of the conference, drawing special attention to connections between different historical events and discourses surrounding „the Pacific“ and „the Atlantic“, alluding to an ongoing „global shift“ from an „Atlantic“ past to a „Pacific“ future.

The first panel addressed imperialism, decolonization, and the Cold War histories of the Pacific region. From a global perspective, SARAH C. M. PAINE (Newport) outlined China's, Russia's and the United States' competing strategies over continental and, more importantly, maritime sovereign rights. She highlighted the role of modern maritime consumer economies for China's new-found interest in waterways and the building of a navy. DAVID WOLFF (Sapporo) explored the history of international relations and knowledge exchange in the Pacific region, focusing

on the national level. He pointed out that several national powers on the Pacific rose to their current positions through versions of a (communist) progressivism and that decolonialization in the region was not only directed towards European or American powers, but also towards former Asian empires like the Japanese and the Chinese Empire. WEN-HSIN YEH (Berkeley) concluded the panel by taking the audience on the *glocal* level to the Austronesian aboriginal people inhabiting Taiwan. They were at the forefront in Taiwan's struggle to break free from Chinese influence, but their claim to continuity of heritage is a luxury for small populations living on the edge of the Pacific.

The second panel „Atlantic Debates on Emerging Pacific Competitors“ centered on global effects of and Western responses to the „Japan“ and „China Shocks.“ MARIO DANIELS (Washington) explored U.S. economic security politics in the high-tech sector during the last fifty years, first in response to Japan's technological success and then to China as the most recent competitor for global economic hegemony. In both cases, U.S. economic interests were increasingly framed as national security interests as the development of new technology was increasingly outsourced to the private sector and the military became a regular costumer. AMY STUDDART (Washington) touched on similar issues of techno-nationalism, economic concerns, and the specter of declining global political influence prominent in transatlantic international relations. Her emphasis, however, was decidedly on current trends and prognoses, especially in light of President Xi Jinping's ambitions that China should replace the U.S. as the leading global power. FRANZ WALDENBERGER (Tokyo) examined the „Japanese miracle“ more closely from an economist's perspective, arguing how important it was for a country's successful long-term engagement in world markets that it be perceived as playing by the rules. Japan's extreme specialization, industrial policies, and imbalanced import/export ratio evoked hostile responses by major trading partners such as the U.S., which made it difficult for Japan to maintain its course in the long run. This became obvious in what is now known as

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the beginning of the „lost decade,“ the collapse of the Japanese asset price bubble in the early 1990s that led the country into a recession. The major difference between Japan's and China's search for power in international trade networks, Waldenberger concluded, is the way in which China directly and openly challenges U.S. hegemonic power.

In the conference's first roundtable on „Transformations of China Expertise in the West“ RICHARD MADSEN (San Diego) contemplated the role Taiwan played as a place to gain China expertise during the 1970s, since outsiders regarded it as culturally being part of China and as a useful and accessible stand-in. RUDOLF WAGNER (Heidelberg/Boston) discussed the role of ideology in the field of Sinology during the last fifty years, explaining that the Cold War conflict had a severe impact on the discipline's direction in the sense that it influenced what research subjects were addressed. Beginning with the gradual opening of the People's Republic of China in the late 1970s, the field began to expand and specializations became more important. Madsen and Wagner agreed that increasing specialization resulted in the decline of „universalist“ China experts and thereby in the loss of the „big picture.“ MING SHI (Berlin) explored the role of think tanks in the discussion about China today. Shi is convinced that in general they are adding positively to the debate, but too often only touch on the surface of issues without taking responsibility for their policy advice. Wagner agreed with Shi and argued that scholars in the West were not just responsible for transmitting their China expertise at home but that they should also help inform the Chinese.

During a fireside chat on „Helmut Schmidt: The Global Statesman“ former friends of his, THEO SOMMER, MANFRED LAHNSTEIN, and RONNY C. CHAN, deliberated on the question how the former German chancellor, a realist in global politics and well-disposed towards China, would assess the much more assertive stance China takes today (Schmidt died in 2015). Helmut Schmidt was a pioneer among Western political leaders in foreseeing this transformation, especially China's growing economic and political influence. He strove for dialogue

among equals at a time when the world was still divided into „communist“ and „capitalist“ camps. Historian and Schmidt expert KRISTINA A. SPOHR (London/Washington) pushed against counterfactual speculation and instead highlighted Schmidt's training as an economist and his conviction that geopolitics and geo-economics were inseparable. When Schmidt spoke of a future tripolar world order, he was thinking of the U.S., Russia, and China, not the European Union. Given the geopolitical turbulences the world is facing today, one might rightfully ask why the European Union still does not seem to be a force to reckon with.

The following round table on „The World Economy in a Shifting International Order“ shed light on China's geo-economic trajectory. VINOD AGGARVAL (Berkeley) set the tone of the discussion when he stated that Western countries' optimistic expectations regarding China's possible convergence to a capitalist economic system and then to liberal democracy had all been disappointed. China's idea of cultural diplomacy is concerning, and the introduction of social media in China turned out to become just another tool to enforce conformist behavior by its citizens. Taking an even more critical stance towards Western illusions about and misconceptions of China, EBERHARD SANDSCHNEIDER (Berlin) criticized the West's inability to reflect on its own unrealistic expectations as the main obstacle of understanding China and predicting the country's course. All past scripts for a Chinese world order (imperialism, fascism, communism) have failed, and China remains highly suspicious of any prescriptions by Western countries including an American understanding of what constitutes responsible political behavior. SHIHOKO GOTO (Washington) stressed the different thinking about power in East and South-East Asia, especially the belief in the collective and in networks of economic dependency as a source of peace. According to Goto, these two motives play a greater role in this region than globalization and anti-globalization, which seem to be mainly Western political positions. A common concern, however, is how changes in the global economy will affect national job markets. Regarding the fact that na-

tional economic concerns and international trade are deeply interwoven, STEFFEN KERN (Paris/Mainz) highlighted the G20 process that lead to a rapprochement towards China, its main achievement being a cooperation that enables an intense and regular dialogue on economic matters. Kern considered the improved communication as crucial for dealing with new types of risks and challenges in financial markets such as the rise of non-bank financial institutions, the impact of artificial intelligence on markets, and cyber security, and he pleaded that the EU maintain its role as one of the key players.

By focusing mainly on maritime spaces, participants of the round table „The Global Reach of Security Politics in the Pacific Region“ addressed the question of geostrategic expansionism in times of growing nationalist movements and economic competition in the Pacific and its consequences for the world. ULISES GRANADOS (Mexico City) focused on the issue of China's geographically expansive policies. With the world currently witnessing a power shift in China's favor in the Pacific, China will most likely face little resistance in the South China Sea, because the regions expect to profit economically from a cooperation, while the country will meet increasing opposition by a U.S.-Japanese alliance in the East China Sea. DO THANH HAI (Hanoi) highlighted the importance of the South China Sea for Vietnam, for which it represents a sort of lifeline to Japan and South-Korea, whereas China perceives this maritime territory as crucial region of geostrategic and economic importance. These conflicting interests explain why China has built a gigantic naval strike force and Vietnam has begun to reach out for new allies. ANDREW WILSON (Newport) informed the audience about recent collisions between the American and Chinese navies in the South China Sea as both nations attempt to police this territory in order to strengthen their claims to it. Anna Hayes (Townsville) evoked a similar image of an emotional China „flexing its muscle,“ steadily encroaching on the South China Sea. Hayes emphasized the role of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, an informal strategic format between the United States, Japan, Australia, and India.

KAREN DONFRIED (Washington) and PEER STEINBRÜCK (Bonn) in the concluding round table discussed the future of transatlantic relations in the „Pacific Century.“ Donfried explained that the United States' withdrawal from European politics has been going on for some time, and that the loss of an overall pro-European position in U.S. politics can be retraced to a feeling of being „left in the trenches“ in foreign affairs by their allies too many times. For this reason, Donfried stated, the current U.S. administration expects European states to show a lot more initiative in international politics. She argued that China's rise, resulting in a relative decline in U.S. power, should have been a reason for the U.S. and Europe to bond together more closely, an opportunity which has not yet been taken up. Steinbrück in response commented on European concerns regarding changes in U.S. international policy, in particular multilateral agreements. One of the main differences in the political culture of both sides, according to him, is their diverging understanding of the role of compromise for the democratic process. He warned of the game of naming, blaming, and shaming in international politics. In times of a shifting global order, Steinbrück argued, it will need more than the effort of two nations, Germany and the U.S., to prepare for the future and improve the political situation of the West.

In her closing keynote, ANN LEE (New York), who had been invited to talk on international financial cooperation, instead gave a pro-China propaganda speech. Out of respect for UC Berkeley's free-speech tradition, the audience let her finish and then sharply rebuked her false claims about the Chinese regime's crackdown of the Uighur Muslim minority, technological surveillance in China, and the country's alleged „historical rights“ to territorial waters. To those in the audience, particularly Europeans, who had not yet personally witnessed Peking's ideological battle, Lee's performance certainly was an eye-opener, as affected colleagues from Asia and Australia could tell.

## Conference Overview

### *Welcome & Opening Address*

Simone Lässig (German Historical Institute

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Washington, DC)

Michael Göring (ZEIT-Stiftung Ebelin und Gerd Bucerius, Hamburg)

Patrick Heinz (German Federal Foreign Office, San Francisco)

Axel Jansen (German Historical Institute Washington, DC)

*Opening Keynote - „Shifting Tides: Rise, Resurgence, and Deep Histories from the Atlantic to the Pacific“*

Matt K. Matsuda (Rutgers University, New Brunswick)

*Panel 1 – „Imperialism, Decolonization, and the Cold War in the Pacific Theater“*

Moderator: Lok Sui (University of California, Berkeley)

Sarah C. M. Paine (U.S. Naval War College, Newport); David Wolff (Hokkaido University, Sapporo); Wen-hsin Yeh (University of California, Berkeley)

*Panel 2 – „The Japan and China Shocks: Atlantic Debates on Emerging Pacific Competitors“*

Moderator: Wencke Meteling (Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore)

Mario Daniels (Georgetown University, Washington, DC); Amy Studdart (German Marshall Fund, Washington, DC); Franz Waldenberger (German Institute for Japanese Studies, Tokyo)

*Round Table 1 – „The Power of Interpretation: Transformations of China Expertise in the West“*

Moderator: Sören Urbansky (German Historical Institute Washington, DC)

Richard Madsen (University of California, San Diego); Ming Shi (Berlin-based Freelance Journalist); Rudolf Wagner (Heidelberg University)

*Fireside Discussion – „Helmut Schmidt: The Global Statesman“*

Moderator: Christoph von Marschall (Der Tagesspiegel)

Ronnie C. Chang (Hang Lung Group Ltd., Hong Kong); Manfred Lahnstein (ZEIT-Stiftung Ebelin und Gerd Bucerius, Ham-

burg); Kristina Spohr (Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore); Theo Sommer (Former Editor-in-chief, DIE ZEIT)

*Round Table 2 – „The World Economy in a Shifting International Order“*

Vinod K. Aggarwal (University of California, Berkeley)

Moderator: Sarah Beringer (German Historical Institute Washington, DC / Max Weber Foundation Pacific Network)

Shihoko Goto (Woodrow Wilson Center, Washington, DC); Steffen Kern (European Securities and Markets Authority / University of Mainz); Eberhard Sandschneider (Free University Berlin)

*Round Table 3 – „The Global Reach of Security Politics in the Pacific Region“*

Moderator: Lukas K. Danner (Miami-Florida International University/Bond University/China Foreign Affairs University/University of New Haven)

Ulises Granados (Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México, Mexico City); Anna Hayes (James Cook University); Andrew R. Wilson (U.S. Naval War College, Newport); Do Thanh Hai (Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam, Hanoi)

*Round Table 4 – „The Future of Transatlantic Relations in the Pacific Century“*

Moderator: Jeroen Dewulf (University of California, Berkeley)

Karen Donfried (German Marshall Fund, Washington, DC)

Peer Steinbrück (Former Minister of Finance, Germany)

*Closing Key Note – „Storm Clouds of a New Order? An Outlook in the Age of Trump“*

Ann Lee (Coterie, New York)

Tagungsbericht *Entangling the Pacific and Atlantic Worlds: Past and Present. A Symposium Commemorating Helmut Schmidt*. 25.03.2019–27.03.2019, Berkeley, in: H-Soz-Kult 01.10.2019.