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CONFIDENTIAL

November 8, 2009

For: Hillary
From: Sid
Re: Westerwelle
CC: Cheryl

The following are notes of my conversation this morning with Wolfgang Ischinger (who will be at the Berlin event tonight). You will of course recall Wolfgang as the former director of the German Foreign Ministry and ambassador to the UK and US. He knows Westerwelle very well, Wolfgang's former staff is now mostly Westerwelle's senior staff and he understands Westerwelle's personality.

Wolfgang Ischinger
11/08/09

The important thing about Guido Westerwelle is that he's spent his entire life in politics. He's scored a dramatic success for a small party, which has traditionally scored 9 to 10 percent, but now at 15 percent. He wants to translate this victory into a sustained role for the Free Democrats in the system. There's a lot of ambition there.

He has not spent any significant amount of time on foreign policy, not his area of expertise, but he's a quick study. He's a fluent English speaker, not a conservative at all, advocated the idea of a nuclear free world, embraced fully. That is one operational area where the US can expect a lot of support.

He will make a real effort to maintain and expand a meaningful relationship with Russia. I don't see any friction at all with the US. He's a transatlanticist by nature and training.

One footnote: Westerwelle has argued during the campaign and in recent speeches that he wishes to promote a process that would allow the remaining US weapons in Germany, holdovers from the Cold War, to be eliminated. It's not an anti-US point, but a German way of saying we are in favor of nuclear disarmament. It should not be seen as a hostile act, but a German contribution to a nuclear free world.

He lives with a partner who has a PR agency. He represents a new generation that doesn't mind same sex partnership, symbolizes a new, more liberal society where the traditional taboos are no longer in existence. He's highly sensitive about it. He didn't come out of the closet for many years. There's a degree of vulnerability behind it.

He's not a 'buddy' guy, who slaps people on the back. It takes time to develop a trusting relationship with him. It's more difficult for him than others. He's a careful person in terms of personal relationships.

Hans-Dietrich Genscher is considered a trademark in Germany of successful diplomacy in the last decade before the end of the Cold War and the transition. (Genscher was foreign minister from 1974-92.) If you can say Genscher is your mentor that is thought to be reassuring in Germany. Kohl is out of circulation. Schmidt is retired. Genscher is really the only one. That Westerwelle refers to his relationship is reassuring given that Guido is not a foreign policy specialist. Genscher's blessing is good for him. At the personal level, the relationship was never intimate. It would not be correct to say Westerwelle is a Genscher creation. He made his own career.

Westerwelle is going to rely to a great extent on staff members who earned their experience in the Genscher days (and worked with Ischinger). The senior staff that will now be appointed at the foreign minister will be excellent—a lot of pro-transatlantic people in the lineup.

This is good news for the bilateral relationship. It will be easier to work this German foreign ministry than was the case with Steinmeier.

Westerwelle knows that the one relationship he must manage well is the one with Secretary Clinton.

My advice is that she works with him closely, as closely as with any European foreign minister, that would be very beneficial. If she can embrace him and make him look good that will make things go well.