

Recalcitrance and initiative: US hegemony and regional powers in Asia and Europe after World War II

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Abstract

This paper challenges the conventional wisdom that US power and preferences following World War II led to bilateralism in Asia and multilateralism in Western Europe. It argues that the challenges facing the United States in both regions were similar, as were US policies meant to address them. With some lag, the United States supported the economic recovery of the regional powers it had defeated (Germany and Japan), saw the restoration of regional trade as a prerequisite, sought military bases to assure postwar security, and envisioned rearming its former foes as part of its security strategy. The outcomes in the two regions reflected the preferences and reservations of regional actors. The critical differences between the regions were structural. The existence of middle powers was critical in Europe, the return of colonial powers to Asia precluded regional arrangements in the short term, and geostrategic differences shaped the requisites for regional security.

1 Introduction

Despite globalization and a plethora of international institutions, the world is comprised of regions (Katzenstein, 2005), which continue to be the focus of scholarly studies that assess the historic roots of regionalism and analyze the waves in which it has occurred.¹ Europe and Asia are conventionally contrasted, the former being characterized by strong regional economic and security institutions, whereas the latter manifests bilateral security and economic links and only nascent and weak efforts at regional economic integration and security agreements. Although ‘broadly speaking, regionalism has always been with us’ (Fawcett, 2004, p. 436), most regional institutions were founded since the Second World War, and the differences between Europe and Asia are rooted in the immediate postwar period. This paper discusses that era, challenges the conventional wisdom about what set Europe and Asia on different paths, and offers an alternative explanation.

2 Similar postwar problems in Europe and Asia

Western Europe and Asia’s disparate economic, political, and military arrangements warrant comparison because the two regions have shared important features. Especially in the years right after World War II, the two regions had many characteristics in common. Yet, the paths taken in the two regions were different, and many of the differences persist into the twenty-first century.

The two areas evolved from similar postwar circumstances. In each, an authoritarian power (Germany in Europe, Japan in Asia) had pursued territorial expansion aimed at controlling and subjugating its region. Both bids for hegemony had been defeated by the efforts of extra-regional powers, the United States and the USSR. The United States had waged a total war in both Europe and the Pacific and had vanquished Germany

¹ For a series of works on regionalism in a historical context, see Fawcett (1995, 2004, 2005, 2008, and 2013). For a recent review, see Mansfield and Solingen (2010). On comparative regionalism, see Acharya (2012), Acharya and Johnston (2007), Börzel (2002, 2011), Breslin et al. (2002), Katzenstein (1996), De Lombaerde et al. (2010), and Sbragia (2008). For a recent edited collection of the classic works, see Lawson (2009). For examples of the cottage industry comparing Asian with European regionalism, see Beeson (2005), Boisseau Du Rocher and Fort (2005), Fort and Webber (2006), Higgott (1998), Katzenstein (1997, 2005), Moon and Androsso-O’Callaghan (2005), and Murray (2010).

and Japan. Both regions then confronted devastation and the need to feed their starving populations. Both had to rebuild economically and politically. Both grappled with a legacy of local enmities, the memory of war, and a preeminent concern with the prevention of any renewed efforts to secure regional hegemony.

As the dominant global power, the United States has been a major economic and political actor in both regions. In each, it has been an ally of one of the major powers (Germany in Europe, Japan in Asia) it had defeated in World War II and has continued to provide a security umbrella for these major economic powers that have not translated their economic wherewithal into military strength. Yet in Europe, both economic recovery and security have entailed institutionalized multilateral agreements [the Organisation for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC), the European Coal and Steel Community, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)], whereas economic recovery and the provision of security in Asia did not generate comparable institutions.

3 Others' explanations

A conventional argument for the existence of regional institutions in Europe and their absence in Asia points to US power and preferences. This has become so accepted as a stylized fact that the abstract of one recent article begins: 'Why did the US prefer multilateral alliances in Europe, but bilateral alliances in Asia after World War II?' (He and Feng, 2012, p. 227). The article then goes in search of explanations for this presumed truth. Indeed, a substantial literature has been devoted to explaining this alleged US preference and the difference between the economic and security arrangements that developed in the two regions. One set of explanations emphasizes power and interest, and another emphasizes identity and norms.²

Relative power and interests are touchstones for the analysis of international politics, and their role in the postwar era was clear. There is no question that the United States was the most powerful actor in both Western Europe and the Western Pacific. There is also no question that the great powers in Europe (Britain and France) had no indigenous regional equivalents in Asia.

² For a review of approaches to the study of regional institutions, see Solingen (2008).

Some hold that in those places where the United States had to deal with more powerful local actors, its influence was reduced and multilateralism flourished. In contrast, where the US power advantage was greater, bilateralism developed.³ But bilateralism and influence are independent of one another. The Soviet domination of the multilateral Warsaw Pact was greater than the US sway over its bilateral security agreement with Japan. Moreover, the multilateral security arrangement in Western Europe gave the United States greater influence over Germany than did its bilateral arrangement with Japan.⁴

Liberal arguments also stress the importance of relative power imbalances affecting US preferences. One version points out that the United States could share its postwar burdens with European nations and this required multilateralism. In contrast, without having states in Asia with which to share its burden, the United States turned to bilateral arrangements. This understanding is both logically weak and empirically problematic. US security arrangements included a range of other states, including weak ones, and the United States preferred to share the burden and so reduce the cost of providing security in both Asia and Europe.

A second version of the liberal argument emphasizing power and interest holds that the United States had a broad economic and political agenda including an anti-Communist component that involved building centrist democratic regimes, a goal that could not be imposed with brute force. Multilateral arrangements were thus a vehicle with which to exercise US hegemony in places like Europe (Ikenberry, 2003). The problem with this argument is that the United States had an anti-Communist agenda in Asia, as well. It was as eager to build liberal market capitalism there as in

³ Cha (2009, p. 158) describes the bilateral outcome in Asia as the outcome of a US ‘powerplay’ to construct ‘an asymmetric alliance designed to exert maximum control over the smaller ally’s actions.’ Katzenstein (1997) makes this case even while emphasizing other determinants as well. Press-Barnathan (2000, 2003) argues that a regional strategy is adopted when power disparities between a hegemon and regional powers are moderate. Crone (1993, p. 502) argues that ‘U.S. predominance inhibited early attempts to organize the Pacific, by creating disincentives for the parties to institutionalize and multilateralize relationships.’ His argument focuses, as does the analysis later, on the preferences of regional powers rather than on the United States. The analysis here does not, however, root these in US predominance. The very flattening that he describes as occurring subsequently in the pattern of regional relations in Asia occurred without the benefit of, or need for, multilateral relations.

⁴ The reason is that the security agreement with Japan was signed on the same day as the peace treaty that granted it full sovereignty, whereas a final peace settlement restoring full German sovereignty was not signed until 1990.

Europe and understood itself to be in a battle for hearts and minds in both regions. Moreover, there is no clear logic linking the presence or absence of brute force with establishing bilateral or multilateral arrangements.

Constructivist arguments root the differences between European and Asian regional arrangements in identity and norms.⁵ One set focuses on identity and holds that unlike Europe, there was no collective identity in Asia, which precluded regionalism there. This argument is astonishingly problematic. Both regions have a history of extensive economic interaction but numerous wars and a record of deep enmities extending over centuries. Yet, the postwar politics of a Europe that had suffered two world wars and the deaths of millions in the space of a generation is alleged by these scholars to have somehow discovered its collective identity, whereas Asians, having experienced fewer wars and fewer deaths at one another's hands, were unable to do so. Moreover, an alleged common European identity did not preclude Europeans from going their separate ways when it suited them. Despite agreeing to restore regional trade and payments, the Western European nations went down separate paths of regional integration in the 1950s. The European Economic Community (EEC), created in 1957, consisted of six nations intent on building a common market, whereas seven other nations led by Britain created the European Free Trade Association intent on a less extensive form of regional economic integration.⁶ Moreover, despite a common security challenge, the European nations that had successfully managed to remain neutrals in World War II decided not to join NATO (Stein, 1998). In short, whatever common identity existed did not link all Western European nations in either regional security or economic agreements, and there is much to suggest that the war left a residue of hatred and fear in both regions.

The less benign variant of the identity argument suggests that multilateralism was acceptable to the United States in Europe because Americans saw Europeans, but not Asians, as equals. This implies that racism precluded the United States from treating latter as it did the former. But, the United States opposed the return of the Europeans to their former colonies following World War II and pressed the case for the independence of these

⁵ The two scholars most associated with this view are Acharya and Katzenstein. See the items cited elsewhere in the paper and referenced at the end including, among others, Hemmer and Katzenstein (2002).

⁶ For the two arrangements, see Benoit (1961). On the forms of economic integration, see Balassa (1961). Also see Machlup (1977), and McCarthy (2006).

Asian peoples. The United States granted independence to its sole possession, the Philippines. The United States certainly presumed the comparable ability of Asians to govern themselves. And although one can posit that the European nations were closer to being equals in that theirs were advanced industrial states, that would be making a realist argument about power.

A second constructivist explanation emphasizes Asian particularism and argues that multilateralism did not come to Asia because it did not reflect an Asian norm (Acharya 2005). In this view, Asian states are uniquely opposed to collective security arrangements, and their sensitivity to great power domination and intervention precluded their interest in a multilateral arrangement. This argument, too, is both analytically and empirically problematic.⁷ First, sovereignty and nonintervention norms do not provide security, and the prospects for domination are greater in a bilateral alliance with the United States than in a multilateral one in which other Asian states are members (He and Feng, 2012). Second, some Asian states were eager for a collective security arrangement after the war.

All the explanations proffered for the different preferences of the United States in Europe and Asia contain analytic problems. But their core flaw is that they try to explain a difference that did not exist. The United States pursued similar policies and had similar preferences in the two regions.

4 The problems of the postwar world

The war's end left the United States the world's dominant power, presumably strong enough to play an overwhelming role in the shaping of the postwar world. It was, at least momentarily, in sole possession of atomic weapons. It had 70% of the world's gold supply and, even more important, an undamaged industrial infrastructure. All the other current and former major powers faced major reconstruction. Except in Scandinavia, European industrial capacity had been crippled if not totally destroyed, as it was in Japan. Even in 1950, five years after the end of hostilities, the United States still produced 60% of the world's manufacturing output (Branson et al., 1980, p. 185).

⁷ The problems extend to work on more recent efforts at constructing regional arrangements: 'ASEAN scholarship's latest methodological fashion, constructivism, enables both academic and diplomatic accounts of the regional process to move from proposition to contradiction unencumbered by critical reflection' (Jones and Smith, 2007, p. 169).

War plans do not survive contact with the enemy; neither do postwar plans.⁸ US visions for the postwar world did not survive the realities of occupation and a reshaped world. Policy was characterized as a set of Ds: demilitarization, democratization, denazification, deindustrialization, disarmament, and decentralization (Serafino et al., 2006).⁹ But the redesign and reversal of these policies began even before the war ended.

Although wealthy and powerful, the United States confronted serious challenges. The economic mobilization for the war had lifted the nation out of the Great Depression, but US policymakers feared that the end of hostilities would bring renewed economic decline. The world needed US exports but had no money with which to pay and few exports with which to earn the requisite foreign exchange. The US military performed occupation duties and faced international security crises even as it undertook an extraordinarily rapid postwar demobilization.¹⁰

The immediate postwar challenge included occupying two former great powers and helping them and the liberated nations rebuild. Occupation authorities had to provide local security and deal with the immediate needs of populations living amid wartime destruction that had left many homeless and without adequate food.¹¹ A German's average daily caloric intake was often less than half that stipulated as normal by occupation authorities.¹² Moreover, occupation plans called for deindustrialization and for reducing rather than expanding production.¹³ Moreover, the occupation

⁸ The actual classic quote by the Prussian Army chief of staff, General Moltke, is 'No plan of operations extends with any certainty beyond the first contact with the main hostile force' (Moltke, 1993, p. 45).

⁹ Describing Germany, Hardach (1980, p. 90) calls these 'the policies of "de-" and "dis-."'

¹⁰ Rapid demobilization and declines in defense spending meant that capabilities did not match commitments in the late 1940s (Stein, 1993).

¹¹ As a result, in both Germany and Japan, the US generals in charge of occupation did not follow through on the harsh postwar plans developed in Washington, DC.

¹² See the description in Hardach (1980, p. 98) of the impact of this on social practices. Food was the number one preoccupation even in the liberated nations, as in France (Judt, 2005, p. 86).

¹³ The German standard of living was to be reduced to its 1932 level, and 1546 plants were to be dismantled just in the Western zones of occupation (Hardach, 1980, p. 92). Japanese industrial production was to be reduced to its level of the late 1920s (Nakamura, 1981, p. 31). On US occupation policy in Germany, see Diefendorf et al. (1993), Gimbel (1968), Kuklick (1972), and Schröder (1986). On US occupation policy in Japan, see Dower (1999), Gallicchio (1988), and Schaller (1985).

proved expensive, costing billions simply to achieve sustenance.¹⁴ The United States had to make up the difference and ended up providing direct relief and negotiating a series of bilateral loans with individual countries (Eichengreen, 2008, p. 96).

Very quickly, the postwar challenge also entailed political and security competition with the Soviet Union. The difficult wartime alliance did not survive the end of belligerencies. Indeed, even before the war in Europe had ended, US–Soviet conflict emerged. US officials perceived the USSR as posing a threat.¹⁵ During the emerging Cold War, all the Western European states came to see, although some did so sooner than others, their major security threat as coming from an expansionist Soviet Union. Within a couple of years, Asians came to see Communism as the primary threat as well.

The Soviet challenge included assistance to Communist insurgents and rebels from China to Greece and links to Western European Communist parties, which had strong electoral showings in early postwar elections in France and Italy. Hence, even as the United States encouraged the creation of democratic institutions, it worried that citizens in the defeated nations (and even in its allies) would, given their economic destitution, vote for Communist candidates. As Lucius Clay, the US Military Governor in Germany put it, ‘there is no choice between becoming a communist on 1500 calories and a believer in democracy on 1000 calories’ (Jennings, 2003, p. 14). Without more food, Army officials warned, ‘the great struggle ... to prevent [Germany] going communistic’ would be lost (Leffler, 2009, p. 75). This was a concern in Japan as well.

Establishing postwar stability proved even more difficult in Asia than in Western Europe, where countries liberated from Nazi control experienced internal conflict between collaborationists and partisans. In Asia, however, European colonial powers attempting to reestablish their prewar holdings faced sustained national liberation struggles. Whereas in Europe, political authority could be returned to local elites quickly, the attempts to reestablish imperial positions in Asia met opposition from the United States and faced Soviet-supported wars of national liberation.

¹⁴ For data on the magnitude of occupation assistance to Germany and Japan, see Serafino et al. (2006).

¹⁵ Although the Soviet Union did not have a military presence in Asia comparable to its one in Europe, it was quickly seen as posing a global threat (Friedman, 1997).

Yet despite their initial differences, the postwar security challenges in Western Europe and East Asia soon converged. In Asia, the initial postwar challenge was muted. But the failure of the Soviet Union to live up to commitments to hold elections and restore a unified Korea, together with the 1949 triumph of the Communists in the Chinese Civil War, effectively brought the Cold War to Asia. The North Korean invasion of South Korea the following year only magnified the immediacy of the perceived threat.

In short order, the wartime plans for the postwar world were tattered and undone. International institutions had inadequate resources for the magnitude of postwar reconstruction. The plans for political reconfiguration and the maintenance of security had to deal, albeit in different ways, with the new challenge of Communism. The economic plans proved both too costly and ignorant of regional economic realities.

5 The grand strategy of recovery and containment

The emergence of the Soviet political and military threat, combined with the requisites of occupation, resulted in the setting of a US grand strategy, one pursued in both Western Europe and Asia. The political, economic, and security challenges were seen as related and interlocking. The Soviet challenge initially placed a premium on preventing inroads by Communist parties, and this increased the urgency for economic reconstruction. An emphasis on economic growth also emerged from the need to minimize the costs of occupation. Economic recovery in the region required the recovery of the major economic powers in each region, which included Germany and Japan. Providing security against Communist power without excessive cost would require rearming Germany and Japan, which would also necessitate their economic reconstruction as industrial powers. Finally, economic recovery was made more difficult by the barriers to trade created by the emerging Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union.

5.1 Setting an economic course

Economic recovery proved enormously challenging. It required encouraging the renewal of trade in a context in which historic trade patterns were no longer available because of the Cold War with the Soviet Union and revolution in China. Achieving economic reconstruction in the new

geopolitical environment, despite both Germany and Japan being cut off from their traditional markets (Germany's in the East and Japan's in China), meant linking both nations to the West instead.

Wartime plans for the treatment of Germany survived just months after the end of the war. At war's end, interim zones of occupation quickly hardened.¹⁶ Germany was divided into four zones, each run by a different occupying power, each governed by separate policies, and each with internal barriers that precluded the functioning of a national economy. The lack of an integrated German economy, together with policies of deindustrialization, meant that the critical German market was missing as both producer and purchaser for the countries of Western and Eastern Europe. German coal, for example, was vital to French and German steel manufacturing (as well as for heating homes during winter), and Germany had also been a major importer of the products of the liberated nations of Western Europe (Judt, 2005, p. 87). In addition, the 'Soviet-American conflict in central Europe had erected barriers to almost any exchange' and 'sliced up marketing and exchange patterns that had underpinned important regional economies' (Cumings, 1993, p. 38).

Faced with major occupation costs, the United States shifted to a western strategy of integrating the western zones of occupation. Secretary of State Byrnes gave a major address in Stuttgart, Germany, in September 1946 in which he noted that the German economy was not able to pay for necessary imports and that the United States was 'firmly of the belief that Germany should be administered as an economic unit and that zonal barriers should be completely obliterated so far as the economic life and activity in Germany are concerned' (Byrnes, 1946). Initially only Britain agreed. Eventually France did as well, and this paved the way for the creation of a West German state.¹⁷

European reconstruction and recovery required not only the reconstitution of the German economy, but also the recreation of a regional economy. But both Depression-era and wartime protectionist measures and economic blocs made reestablishing regional economies difficult. Postwar negotiations to lower trade barriers through the General Agreement on

¹⁶ Trachtenberg (1999) argues that US policy at Potsdam in July 1945 already envisioned an amicable divorce and that the occupying powers would treat their zones of occupation as separate economic units.

¹⁷ Trachtenberg (1999) emphasizes the centrality of Germany in the origins of the Cold War.

Trade and Tariffs (GATT) resulted in US commitments to major reductions in its duties, whereas the other 22 nations made minimal concessions (Irwin, 1995).¹⁸ In addition to restarting trade, a system for clearing international payments was critical. There was a need for convertible currencies, but postwar efforts to maintain convertibility quickly failed. There was tremendous demand for dollars since the United States, as practically the only country whose industrial capacity had survived the war, was the sole provider of many essential goods. For example, 25% of Britain's machinery imports in 1938 had come from Germany, but that figure fell to just 3% in 1947, when (Judt, 2005, p. 87) almost half of all British imports came from the United States. Britain, strapped for cash, negotiated a bilateral loan with Washington. Economic recovery required resources to deal with the 'dollar gap' and 'dollar shortage' – the insufficiency of exports and reserves and thus the shortage of dollars needed to pay for imports from the United States. Like Europe's, Asia's regional economy and economic recovery required restarting trade, redeveloping a system for clearing international payments, and providing the dollars needed for purchases of goods from the United States.

US officials pressed forward with a broader recovery strategy in 1947. In a speech in Cleveland, Mississippi, on 8 May 1947, Under Secretary (and future Secretary) of State Dean Acheson noted that without additional outside aid, recovery 'would take so long as to give rise to hopelessness and despair' and that 'in these conditions freedom and democracy and the independence of nations could not long survive, for hopeless and hungry people often resort to desperate measures' (Acheson, 1947, p. 992). He pointed out that Europe and Asia had been dependent on German and Japanese production before the war and called for pushing forward 'with the reconstruction of those two great workshops of Europe and Asia – Germany and Japan – upon which the ultimate recovery of the two continents so largely depends' (Acheson, 1947, p. 994).

The plan to reconstruct the German workshop in Europe took a turn in 1947 with Secretary of State Marshall's proposal for what has since been called the Marshall Plan,¹⁹ a way to provide funds to Europe as an entity rather than through bilateral loans. In exchange, the European nations

¹⁸ On the British sustained practice of import controls, see Milward and Brennan (1996).

¹⁹ On the Marshall Plan, see Agnew and Entrikin (2004), Gimbel (1976), Hogan (1987), Jackson (1979), and Leffler (1988).

would have to coordinate their recovery plans and reduce barriers to trade among themselves. The Western European states constructed such plans and began implementing a variety of arrangements on their own. In October 1947, the Benelux nations ratified an agreement for a customs union. Within six months, France and Italy negotiated another. Shortly thereafter, France, Great Britain, the United States, and the Benelux nations agreed to include Germany in the program for European recovery, established international control of the Ruhr, an area critical for German industrial recovery, and agreed to the integration of all three Western zones of occupation in Germany with independence for West Germany. They established the OEEC to coordinate recovery plans and reduce barriers to intra-regional trade.²⁰ In 1950, French Foreign Minister, Robert Schumann proposed an economic arrangement that would ‘make war not only unthinkable but materially impossible.’ The result was the construction of the European Coal and Steel Community, which brought together France, West Germany, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg in a common market for coal and steel.²¹ The Europeans began a process of integration that Winston Churchill had called for in a speech at the University of Zurich in 1946 when he said that Europeans ‘must build a kind of United States of Europe’ and ‘the first step in the re-creation of the European family must be a partnership between France and Germany’ (Churchill, 1946b).

Germany presented an additional problem in that significant portions of its pre-war trade had been with nations the United States had come to consider hostile and wanted to contain. In 1938, 14.5% of German exports had gone to the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. After the war, Soviet domination of Eastern Europe and the installation of Communist regimes there meant that this aspect of German trade would have to be reoriented westward (Table 1). In 1948, only 2% of German exports (themselves substantially smaller than before the war) went east, and German trade with continental Western Europe, a destination for 43.1% of its exports in 1938, came to take 75.5% of West German exports in 1948. Economic recovery in Western Europe and the reconstruction of Germany could be

²⁰ On the OEEC, see Griffiths (1997) and Milward (1984).

²¹ On the role of coal, see Gillingham (1991). These six were the original members of the EEC. On the early history of European integration, see Dedman (1996), Hörber (2006), and Lundestad (1998).

Table 1: Percentage of Germany's exports, by destination, 1938, 1948, 1953, 1959

	1938	1948	1953	1959
Soviet Union and Eastern Europe	14.5	2.0	1.2	3.2
Continental Western Europe	43.1	75.5	56.7	52.9
UK	6.6	13.5	4.3	4.0
US	2.8	4.5	6.7	9.3

Source: United Nations, Statistical Office, International Trade Statistics, 1900–1960, May 1962, Table XXV–2.

Downloaded from United Nations, Statistics Division, Trade Statistics Branch, Historical Data 1900–1960 on international merchandise trade statistics, 28 April 2009.

Available at http://unstats.un.org/unsd/trade/imts/historical_data.htm

accomplished by rebuilding regional trading, which required only a slight reorientation of Germany's foreign trade.

Given the circumstances, the United States was prepared to accept violations of the liberal economic practices it had deemed essential to the postwar world. US policymakers had been guided by their view of the dangers of the prewar era and an assessment of what had led to the Second World War. The Great Depression had led to protectionist policies and beggar-thy-neighbor competitive devaluations that resulted in closed economic blocs. The collapse of world trade in the 1930s meant the collapse of national incomes. The result was not only the rise of fascism but the evolution of those competitive economic blocs into political ones that embarked on territorial conquest and control. Following the war, the world had to find ways to deal with the same problems it had faced beforehand in order to avoid a new depression and renewed political conflict. It could not revert to closed economic blocs engaged in protectionism and competitive devaluation. Postwar stability required prosperity and an open liberal trading world.²² And yet establishing this was even more challenging because of the devastation wrought by the war itself. In order to achieve European recovery, the United States encouraged economic integration in Europe²³ even at the cost of accepting discrimination against US products (Hieronymi, 1973).

²² 'The desire for an open world trading system merged economic, ideological, and geostrategic lessons of the interwar era' (Leffler, 2009, p. 68). Also see Pollard (1985).

²³ 'The very concept of 'economic integration' was largely born and popularized with American officials and economists in the 1940s' (Borden, 1984, p. 21).

The United States adopted a similar approach in the western Pacific. Its original plan for deindustrialization proved costly and politically problematic. It instead followed a ‘reverse course.’ Deindustrialization policies and reparations expectations were scaled back.²⁴

As in Europe, traditional trade patterns had been disrupted. Japan was cut off from raw materials it had previously imported from Korea, Manchuria, and China. In fact, Japan had lost all of its colonies in the war, or 45% of the territory of the former Japanese empire (Sugita, 2003, p. 6). Most of what had constituted its coprosperity sphere had either become part of the Communist world or had reverted back to control by Europeans. The United States encouraged regional trade in Asia but was stymied by Europeans bent on reestablishing colonial possessions.

For Japan, too, significant portions of its prewar trade had been with nations with which it could no longer trade. Almost half of Japan’s exports in 1938 (actually 45.6%) had gone to China (Table 2).²⁵ That figure was even larger in 1945 and thus ‘most American officials had viewed the restoration of commerce between China and Japan as vital’ (Tucker 1984, p. 184). In 1947–1948, ‘Korea, Manchuria, and North China were all targets of potential reintegration with Japan’ (Cumings, 1993, p. 39–40). Even after the Communist victory in China, the United States briefly considered allowing Japanese trade with China (Tucker, 1984). But the containment of the People’s Republic of China, which included an embargo, meant that only 0.3% of Japan’s exports in 1953 went to China.²⁶ Some hoped that Southeast Asia could take up the slack, and Secretary of State Acheson, describing a ‘great crescent’ running from Japan through Southeast Asia to the Middle East, encouraged Asian regionalism (Borden, 1984; Hess, 1987; Rotter, 1987; Schaller, 1982, 1985; Yasuhara, 1986; also see Hoshiro, 2009). Yet, European states that had returned to take control of their former colonies were initially not fully supportive of US policy. In 1948, the British even opposed US plans to include Japan as part of GATT (Forsberg, 2000; Korhonen, 1994).²⁷

²⁴ See the data and description in Nakamura (1981, p. 31).

²⁵ Note that there is some discrepancy in different reconstructions of Japan’s prewar foreign trade with China. Forsberg (2000, p. 16) gives the figure of Japan’s exports to China as 29.6% rather than 45.6%.

²⁶ During the immediate postwar years, there was a debate about the role of China in Japan’s foreign trade, see LaFeber (1997). Also essential on postwar Japan is Dower (1999).

²⁷ For Britain’s early recalcitrance on Japanese trade with its colonies, see Yokoi (2003). On Britain’s rivalry with the United States in East Asia, see Baxter (2009).

Table 2: Percentage of Japan's exports, by destination, 1938, 1948, 1953, 1959

	1938	1948	1953	1959
China *	45.6	1.6	0.3	0.1
Other Asia **	23.9	53.1	52.7	36.3
US	15.5	25.6	18.4	30.2

* Includes exports to the Mongolian People's Republic, North Korea and North Vietnam. For the years following World War II, the percentage may include trade to Taiwan because of the UN's inability to distinguish them from exports to mainland China.

** Includes the Far East and Sterling area nations (the figure for the Sterling area as a whole minus that for the UK, Iceland, Ireland, and the Middle East). This means that the figure includes Africa which unfortunately was lumped in with Australia and New Zealand in the table. Thus the figure overstates the percentage that went to East, Southeast, and South Asia.

Source: United Nations, Statistical Office, International Trade Statistics, 1900-1960, May 1962, Table XXIV-4.

Downloaded from United Nations, Statistics Division, Trade Statistics Branch, Historical Data 1900-1960 on international merchandise trade statistics, 28 April 2009.

Available at http://unstats.un.org/unsd/trade/imts/historical_data.htm

As in Europe, the United States accepted departures from trade openness in order to reconstruct a regional economy. The United States allowed Japan and Southeast Asian nations to impose discriminatory tariffs. British colonies were permitted to exclude US products. Reflected in its shift to supporting the French position in Indochina, the United States even came to accept continued colonialism as an element of a policy driven primarily by anti-Communism.

But a combination of factors led to a larger US role in the foreign trade of Japan than it played in that of Germany. Because China had been a bigger market for Japan than Russia and Eastern Europe had been for Germany, Japan had to make up a larger proportion of its prewar trade. Most important, the United States had been a more critical trading partner for Japan prior to World War II than it had been for Germany. In 1938, a year in which the Roosevelt administration discouraged commercial exchanges with Japan because of its military operations in China, the United States still purchased 15.5% of Japan's exports. By 1953, that figure had grown to 18.4%. It rose to 30.2% by 1959. In contrast, the United States accounted for only 2.8% of German exports in 1938, a figure that grew to 9.3% in 1959. The United States was a market for Japan in a way it had never been for Germany and played a larger role in Japanese recovery

than it did in Germany's. Regional trade in Asia did not entail either a free trade area or a common market.

Reviving the German and Japanese economies so that they could become engines of regional economic growth entailed changing occupation policies within each country and changing regional trade and payments patterns. Reversing the course of policy toward Germany and Japan meant a shift away from deindustrialization, attempting to limit reparations demands of others, and limiting the power of leftist unions for political as well as economic reasons. The United States would have to accept, therefore, historic corporatist arrangements that it had once hoped to destroy (Wend, 2001).

5.2 Setting a security course

In both Asia and Europe, the postwar world generated new security challenges and a US desire to avoid the problems of the past. The United States had twice entered war belatedly on the European mainland. During World War II, it had needed to secure both the Atlantic and Pacific and to reconquer a European mainland that had been entirely subjugated by its adversary. For any future conflict, the United States wanted to establish bases on island approaches to Europe and Asia and have its military play a short-term role occupying the defeated nations of Germany and Japan (Leffler, 1984, 1992; Ross, 1996).

In both regions, local states feared a renewed effort at regional hegemony by the defeated nations and, especially after the North Korean attack on South Korea in 1950, the prospect of Communist aggression. Countries looked to one another and to a US military commitment for security. In Europe, the Western European countries initially feared future German aggression. Before the end of World War II, policymakers in the UK, focusing still on Germany, believed that any threat should be handled by cooperation with France and the Benelux nations (Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg). But over time, the Soviet Union supplanted Germany as the primary security concern. The most public demonstration of the shifted focus to a threatening USSR came from Winston Churchill. The former Prime Minister, who had led his country through the war, described an iron curtain that had descended on central Europe and called for a treaty between the United States and Great Britain

(Churchill, 1946a).²⁸ As the Soviets became seen as an immediate danger, the British believed that cooperation with France and the Benelux nations needed to be supplemented by a larger Western bloc that included the United States. The first steps came in March 1947, when Britain and France signed the Dunkirk Treaty, in which Britain guaranteed to support France against any renewed German aggression.²⁹ This was followed in 1948 with the Brussels Treaty, which no longer focused on Germany as the sole source of danger.³⁰ NATO later emerged as an outgrowth of talks between this initial European grouping and the United States, Canada, and relevant others.³¹ In its call for an automatic military response in the event of an attack on a member state, the Brussels Pact had entailed a much stronger security commitment than would NATO, which stipulates only that the treaty provisions would be ‘carried out by the Parties in accordance with their respective constitutional processes.’ This additional language was added to appease members of the US Senate who did not want a hard commitment. Subsequently, the British and French acquisition of nuclear weapons also provided Western European states the independent ability to deter Soviet aggression.

As was true in Europe, postwar security arrangements in East Asia originated with independent countries in the region concerned about the new security environment. Like the European nations that initially feared Germany, Australia and New Zealand worried about future Japanese expansionism. In 1946, Australia proposed that Commonwealth members form a regional defense arrangement and then invite the United States to join (McIntyre, 1995).³² Others in the region had their external security assured by the return of European powers to their colonies.

²⁸ The historiographic consensus is that this was recognized first by the British. On the role of Britain, see Anderson (1981), Baylis (1993), Best (1986) Deighton (1990a, 1990b), Greenwood (1996), and Harbutt (1986). France is typically argued to have been the longest holdout regarding Germany, but there is disagreement among historians about how early French views shifted. Creswell and Trachtenberg (2003) argue it occurred as early as 1945, whereas Hitchcock (1998) sees it as occurring in 1947.

²⁹ On the Dunkirk treaty, see Baylis (1982), Greenwood (1983, 1984), Kent and Young (1992), and Zeeman (1986). Trachtenberg (1999) argues that the French government did not fear Germany, but that its public anti-German position was a charade for public consumption.

³⁰ On the Brussels Treaty, see Kaplan (1980) and Baylis (1984).

³¹ On the origins of NATO, see Baylis (1982 and 1993), Folly (1988), Cook (1989), Di Nolfo (1991), Folly (1988), Heller and Gillingham (1992), Henderson (1982), Henrikson (1980), Ireland (1981), Kaplan (1984), Petersen (1982 and 1986), Reid (1977), Smith (1990), Wiebes and Zeeman (1983), Wiggershaus and Foerster (1993), and Young (1990).

³² For regional and US interest in a Pacific Pact, see Press-Barnathan (2003).

US officials never questioned that their nation would play a role in securing the Western Pacific and spoke of making that ocean an ‘American lake.’ They had several plans to establish bases on islands in the Pacific. The main debate was about how many and whether to insist on outright possession and sovereignty or to pursue some form of trusteeship or negotiated arrangement for basing rights. The United States was interested in reaching a security arrangement but evinced no sense of urgency.

The triumph of Communist forces in China and the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950 changed US policy.³³ US officials contemplated a multilateral ‘offshore’ or ‘island chain’ security agreement that would include Australia, New Zealand, Japan, the Philippines, and possibly Indonesia. The British, who still had possessions in the region and retained a prominent role in Australian and New Zealand affairs (despite those nations’ independence and ability to sign international agreements), were opposed (Spender 1969).³⁴ In addition, Australian leaders were uneasy about the implications of such an agreement with respect to Japanese rearmament and about whether the Australian public would accept the idea of joining with Japan in a security arrangement.³⁵ The result was the Australia, New Zealand, and United States Security Treaty signed in 1951 and separate US bilateral security agreements (all of them assuring basing rights) with the Philippines, South Korea, and Japan. The nature of multilateral security arrangements depended not on US preferences but on the desire of regional actors.

In both Western Europe and East Asia, the United States envisioned military security as requiring the rearmament of Germany and Japan. Just as their recovery was essential to minimizing US costs and the key to regional recovery, so too was their rearmament essential to minimizing US security expenditures and the key to regional security. But rearming Germany and Japan would affect their neighbors and required the acquiescence of

³³ A lively historiographic discussion debates which threat was uppermost in the minds of Australian leaders and exactly when US reluctance for a treaty ended (McLean, n.d.).

³⁴ The British were more concerned with obtaining US security assistance for Southeast Asia. But Commonwealth countries in the region were unwilling to support the French and Dutch in the region and vice versa. The US was more concerned with East Asia and was worried about how its actions would be seen in the area and wanted to respond to regional initiatives.

³⁵ Anti-Japanese sentiment was quite strong in Australia (Rix, 1999, p. 5), but the signed treaty guaranteeing Australia and New Zealand’s security (ANZUS) allowed them to make peace with Japan (McIntyre, 1995). Australian leaders saw this as a first step toward an eventual broader security arrangement.

regional actors. In both cases, the preferences of local actors proved decisive. Plans in Europe for rearming Germany in the context of creating a European Defense Community were defeated by its failure in the French legislature. In Asia, Japan's preferences proved decisive as the Japanese government objected to US plans for its rearmament (Umetsu, 1995).

6 Contrasting cold war architecture

Despite the similar economic and security situations in Asia and Europe, the organizational architecture developed during the Cold War differed in the two regions. The challenges were the same: promoting the economic recovery of a defeated power and a war-torn region, resolving long-standing enmities, and containing a Communist rival. All required economic growth, the resumption of trade, and the provision of security.

The regional security worries posed by the potential resurgence of the defeated Germany and Japan gave way to the new security threats posed by the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China, which required not only a continuing security role by the United States, but also rearming the regional powers that had just been defeated. Dealing with the political and military challenge of Communist power entailed an integrated political, economic, and security response. The defeated would have to be economically and politically rebuilt and this, in the estimation of US officials, required rebuilding traditional regional trade patterns, although both German and Japanese trade would have to be redirected from Soviet controlled areas and from mainland China. New security arrangements would also be required, and regional powers would have to play a critical role. The United States would require forward basing rights and would be involved in providing security. The impetus for multilateral security arrangements in both Europe and Asia emerged from regional powers initially worried about the reemergence of their recently defeated enemies and subsequently focused on the possibility of Communist expansion. In both regions, regional powers came together to create regional agreements and then sought US adherence. In Europe, the result was NATO, which still did not include all of Western Europe. In Asia, the result was a smaller group, and the key constraint was imposed by regional powers and their willingness to join in a common defense arrangement.

US preferences regarding Europe and Asia were similar. The United States preferred economic regionalism, although by virtue of historic

economic relationships, it would play less of a commercial role in Europe than in Asia. On the security side, the United States preferred that regional actors work together and carry their weight. The United States envisioned rebuilding and rearming the powers it had defeated in World War II. Thus, the critical difference between developments in the two regions cannot be understood to have lain in US preferences and its greater power to establish its preferences in Asia.

The differences between Europe and Asia were structural and heavily dependent on the preferences of regional actors. The existence and preferences of great powers in Europe who undertook regional economic and security arrangements proved critical.³⁶ Reintegrating and rebuilding Germany entailed the agreement of Britain, France, and the United States, which each controlled portions of the western half of the defeated nation. Agreement and coordination were at the heart of US policy toward Germany because they reflected the preferences of regional powers that had a critical role in the course of German economic, political, and security developments.³⁷ The interests of the occupiers were similar. For example, German coal was critical to the industrial nations of continental Europe, and there were regular proposals for a regional agreement to control it.³⁸ Moreover, the Western European states were at roughly comparable levels of industrial development, and this facilitated discussion of forming either a common market or a free trade area. Great Britain and France could be significant counterweights to a rebuilt and rearmed Germany in any economic or security arrangement. In Asia, there were no middle powers to play such a role. The United States systematically excluded others from any role in the occupation of Japan, and so no agreement was necessary to undertake the reconstruction of Japan. Moreover, there were no middle powers that could offset Japanese economic and military power in any trade or security agreement.

³⁶ Given the European desire to bind the United States to European security, Lundestad (1986) talks of an 'empire by invitation.'

³⁷ The role of these middle powers continued until an agreement was reached in 1990 for a peace settlement for Germany. This required the agreement of the four victorious powers (the US, the Soviet Union, Great Britain, and France) and restored full sovereignty to a unified Germany.

³⁸ The US opposed French plans to annex coal producing areas of Germany. An International Authority for the Ruhr was established in 1949 to control the German coal and steel industry in the Ruhr region. The Schumann Plan of 1950 replaced it.

Asia was a different world. First, fear of a possibly resurgent Japan lasted longer because the threat of Communist power was not fully felt in the region until 1950. Second, European powers attempted to reestablish their colonial holdings and opposed economic integration of their colonies with Japan. The same set of European powers critical to economic multilateralism in Europe were critical to precluding it in Asia. Third, given their level of economic development and their former status as economic colonies of Japan, the newly independent countries of Asia continued to have extra-regional trade ties, were not eager to replace European colonialism with Japanese economic neocolonialism, and preferred to retain protection as a basis for their own development. Nevertheless, even without any effort at regional integration, the countries in the region absorbed a larger proportion of Japanese trade (see Table 2).³⁹ In Asia there were no great powers to play a comparable role to that which they played in Europe, to coalesce in order to deal with the prospect of resurgent aggression and to accept intra-regional economic arrangements as comparable economic powers.

On the security side, there was also the critical difference of geography. Providing European security against the Soviet Union required defending Germany, which would in turn necessitate a substantial army. Rearming Germany would make security more financially viable, as well. In contrast, irrespective of whether there were to be any formal security agreements, the United States fleet would play a role in the Western Pacific, so security for Japan did not require its rearmament. Japan's leaders were prepared to assure internal security but feared that the United States wanted rearmament in order 'to use Japanese soldiers as mercenaries in its foreign wars' (Forsberg, 2000, p. 41). It was Japan that rejected US entreaties to rearm.

In short, the US had similar preferences, pursued similar policies, and faced comparable problems in instituting them. It sought to rebuild Germany and Japan, pressed restoring regional commerce while restricting trade with Communist nations, and advocated German and Japanese rearmament. The differential outcomes in the two regions were a product not of US preferences but of the preferences and reservations of regional actors.⁴⁰ The United States accepted, in both Europe and Asia, trade

³⁹ Further, Japanese recovery was driven by US purchases for its Korean War needs.

⁴⁰ This was true later as well. For example, when the US did respond to others and acceded to a regional security agreement in Southeast Asia, regional powers proved reluctant to sustain it.

restrictions, capital controls, and currency valuations that were neither liberal nor in its economic self-interest but that were requisites for regional economic recovery. The United States also adapted to others' views of what they were prepared to do or not do to maintain security.

7 The implications for international relations theory

Great powers, especially the United States given the role it played in postwar reconstruction and in regional agreements, were critical to the creation of the postwar world. Yet, even at their heights, great powers have limitations. Their resources are finite; they cannot bear every burden. As rich and as powerful as the United States was following World War II, its decisions were driven in part by the need to minimize the costs of occupations and containment. This meant rebuilding former enemies and pressing the rearmament of its former war adversaries.

Great powers are also limited in what they can impose. Even in the case of the totally defeated Germany and Japan, the United States quickly became concerned about what direction postwar politics would take. The United States shifted from a proposed policy of deindustrialization and substantial reparations to one emphasizing economic growth and recovery. It could shift course unilaterally only in its occupation of Japan and in its zone of occupation in Germany. Rebuilding all of West Germany required assuaging British and French fears of a resurgent Germany before they would agree.⁴¹

Multilateralism and regionalism are outcomes of strategic interactions between nations and do not reflect the preferences of any given state, even the most powerful state in the system.⁴² They reflect local actors and their preferences and not merely those of great powers. The United States had a preference for economic regionalism and accepted and encouraged security multilateralism, but its preferences were effectively transformed by those of others. US pressure sometimes had the effect of generating pushback, and in the case of Europe, bringing states together to counter its pressure. A US preference for economic regionalism trumped its preference for open liberal exchange and currency convertibility. The United States accepted trade and capital controls in order to facilitate the reemergence

⁴¹ For the importance of followers for hegemons, see Stein (1984), and Williams et al. (2012).

⁴² One version of the origins of US multilateralism is in Patrick (2009).

of commerce and international exchange, which were seen as prerequisites to economic recovery.

Multilateralism and regionalism are distinct phenomena. The United States was interested in reestablishing regional trade and payments, but this did not necessarily require multilateral agreements pursuing economic integration. Intra-regional trade in Asia did not entail agreements of economic integration, not even in their weakest form, a free trade area. In other parts of the world, multilateral agreements have not led to regionalism but to institutions best characterized as zombies (Gray, 2013).

The role of middle powers was critical in Europe and, indirectly, in Asia as well. In Europe, regional powers took the lead in constructing regional institutions and even in anchoring the United States in a multilateral security arrangement (NATO). In contrast, the return of the colonial powers in Asia delayed the rise of states with independent autonomous decisionmaking capability and therefore also delayed steps toward regional integration.

The United States pursued basically the same policies in both regions and shifted course in both as the situation changed. What differed was the relative willingness of local actors to press forward with regional solutions. In Asia, this was fueled, in part, by the European powers' holding onto their colonies. The European states who accepted regionalism for themselves did not do so for Asia. Even the two defeated powers reacted differently. Japan rejected US pressure to rearm, whereas Germany accepted rearmament in a multilateral institutional context.⁴³ The course of European and Asian integration remained in the hands of Europeans and Asians.

Acknowledgements

My thanks to Koji Kagotani for the invitation that prodded this paper and for his comments, to Kan Kimura for hosting the workshop and for his comments, and to rest of the participants at the workshop where this was initially presented: Han Dorussen, Erik Gartzke, Benjamin E. Goldsmith, Takeshi Iida, Toshio Nagahisa, Barry O'Neill, Atsushi Tago, Motohiro Tsuchiya, Jeffrey R. Weber, and Yuki Yanai. My thanks to Amy Davis and Marc Trachtenberg for their extensive comments on the penultimate draft of this paper.

⁴³ On institutionally binding any rebuilt Germany, see Schmidt (1995).

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