in 1904–1905. The alliance lasted for two decades, until it was replaced by a quadrilateral treaty between Japan, the UK, France and the United States, signed in Washington in 1921.

After the Manchurian Incident in 1931, Japan went through a strenuous period of defining its course. While expanding its sphere of influence to mainland China and Indochina, this search resulted in an alliance with Germany and Italy, a neutrality pact with the Soviet Union and a disastrous war in the Pacific against the US.


In 1945, when WWII ended, this picture substantially changed. Japan lost all its colonial territories and areas under its sphere of influence, and devastated by war, began concentrating its efforts on economic reconstruction and on re-establishing primarily economic relations with the Asian countries. Japan also came under the strong influence of the United States.

Europe, which in principle appeared as a victor, in reality lost its colonial possessions in Asia and many countries were subjected to devastation at home. Europe also had to concentrate its energies on postwar economic recovery. For the countries that had fought against Japan, especially Great Britain and the Netherlands, the war left them with memories of humiliation and atrocities.

Thus, postwar relations between Japan and Europe began with mutual disregard at best, with a slow and cautious effort toward reconciliation, or at worst with a sense of antipathy from Europe towards Japan. A quarter of century of ‘irrelevance’ began, in principle, between Japan and Europe.

But of course there were relevant elements as well.

Postwar reparations

The first aspect of relevance came from the necessity for both of resuming peace and normal diplomatic relations. The reconciliation between Europe and Japan started with the San Francisco Peace Treaty, signed in September 1951. From Europe, seven countries that had fought the war with Japan signed this treaty: Belgium, France, Greece, the Netherlands, Norway, Turkey and the United Kingdom.
But in addition, to a certain degree the score of war had to be settled for Europe. Based on Article 14 (b) of the San Francisco Peace Treaty, these allied countries waived their rights for reparations. But based on Article 16 of this Treaty, Japan paid in 1955 to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) 4.5 million pounds “as an expression of its desire to indemnify those—who suffered undue hardships while prisoners of war of Japan.” In 1956 an additional 10 million dollars were “voluntarily tendered as a solatium” to the Netherlands “for the purpose of expressing sympathy and regret for the suffering inflicted during the Second World War by agencies of the Government of Japan upon Netherlands nationals,” based on the Protocol concluded between the two countries.

Even after these basic decisions were made by the Japanese and European governments, war-related issues were not entirely settled (Section 5 below).

**Normalization of economic relations**

In general, from the middle of the 1950’s onwards economic matters became the central issue between the two sides. In particular Japan placed high policy priority in resolving the question of whether and when membership to major international economic institutions such as GATT would be granted (Chapter 11).

Japan’s first application for membership to GATT in 1952 was opposed by the UK. It was in 1955 that Japan was accepted as a

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2 Article 14 (b) of the San Francisco Peace Treaty reads as follows: “Except as otherwise provided in the present Treaty, the Allied Powers waive all reparations claims of the Allied Powers, other claims of the Allied Powers and their nationals arising out of any actions taken by Japan and its nationals in the course of the prosecution of the war, and claims of the Allied Powers for direct military costs of occupation.” (MOFA, *Principal Treaties*, op. cit., p. 19.)

3 Quoted from Article 16 of the San Francisco Peace Treaty, MOFA, *Principal Treaties*, op. cit., p. 22. In addition to the UK and the Netherlands, Australia, France, the Philippines, Vietnam, Cambodia and other countries submitted a list as recipient countries. The US renounced its right (MOFA documents).