

Securing security through prosperity: the San Francisco System in comparative perspective

Kent E. Calder

Abstract The integrated system of political–economic relations that has prevailed in the Pacific since the September 1951 treaty of peace with Japan, known here as the San Francisco System, is distinctive in comparison with subregional systems elsewhere in the world. This paper outlines key defining features, such as (1) a dense network of bilateral alliances; (2) an absence of multilateral security structures; (3) strong asymmetry in alliance relations, both in security and economics; (4) special precedence to Japan; and (5) liberal trade access to American markets, coupled with relatively limited development assistance.

After contrasting this system to analogous arrangements elsewhere, especially in the Atlantic, it explores both the origins and the prognosis of this remarkably durable political–economic entity. Complementary domestic political–economic interests on both sides of the Pacific, reinforcing a brilliant original Japan-centric design by John Foster Dulles, account for persistence, it is argued, while forces for change center on the dynamic emerging role of China.

Keywords Comparative alliance politics; constitutional hegemony; economics and security; San Francisco System; John Foster Dulles; hub-and-spokes configuration.

Introduction

Just over half a century ago, on September 6, 1951, forty-nine nations met at the San Francisco Opera House to conclude a World War II peace treaty with Japan. The treaty and the political–economic arrangements surrounding it are highly distinctive in comparative context, as we will see.

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The Pacific Review

ISSN 0951–2748 print/ISSN 1470–1332 online © 2004 Taylor & Francis Ltd

<http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals>

DOI: 10.1080/0951274042000182447

And they have structured the conduct of transpacific affairs to a remarkable degree from that time to the present. The political–economic order they created is so closely tied to the momentous agreements made then that it deserves to be known as the ‘San Francisco System’ (Calder 1996: 151–2, 174–5, 195).

More concretely, the ‘San Francisco System’, as the term is used here, refers to the comprehensive structure of interrelated political–military and economic commitments between the United States and its Pacific allies that was catalyzed by the San Francisco Peace Treaty process of 1950–51. Some elements, like the ANZUS¹ treaty of July 1951 and the US–Philippine Mutual Security Treaty of August 1951, came in anticipation of San Francisco, as reassurance to wartime US allies uneasy at the re-emergence of their Japanese nemesis. Other portions, including mutual-security treaties with South Korea and Taiwan (both 1954) and South Vietnam (1956), came in the wake of the peace treaty, expanding its logic more broadly throughout the Pacific.

The System is in its totality a complex maze of treaties and administrative agreements, mainly bilateral. The various elements were originally animated by a common yet contradictory purpose: ensuring the nations of the region against a revival of Japanese aggression, while simultaneously ensuring sufficient economic opportunity for Japan that it could serve as a growth engine for the Pacific region as a whole.

This paper examines the San Francisco System from the relatively novel perspective of analytical political science. After outlining the System’s salient features, it compares them to analogous alliance structures elsewhere in the world, and in different epochs. Identifying the distinctive elements, it then seeks to understand the genesis and persistence of those traits, so apparently at variance from realist precepts, by considering the relevance of the ‘constitutional hegemony’ concept (Ikenberry 2001).

The paper pays special attention to ‘two-level’ interactions between domestic interests, especially ‘free-trade’ lobbies and multinational corporations, on the one hand, and the international system on the other (Putnam 1998). These overlapping interests, more than any embedded international norms, have helped give the San Francisco System the remarkable stability that it has maintained for over half a century. In exploring the concrete interface of domestic and international politics, the paper thus helps to clarify several issues: the domestic political supports for the prevailing Pacific international order, whether it can be considered true rule-based ‘constitutional hegemony’, and how durable the Pacific order is likely to be in the long run.

The smooth post-war transformation of Japan into an affluent yet broadly Pacific nation running huge trade surpluses with the world has eroded the original logic of the System. So also has the gradual inclusion of China, with its ambiguous security relationship to the US, in cooperative regional and global economic arrangements. Yet the underlying *structure* has proved remarkably durable. Indeed, it continues to define the broad profile of

Pacific relations in highly distinctive ways, with renewed salience in the wake of the Iraq War, and with enduring implications for the global structure of international relations.²

The meaning of San Francisco: scholarly debates

Distinguished historians have described the central diplomatic elements of the San Francisco framework, and their genesis, in some detail, albeit without dwelling on the structural aspects as political analysts might do (Iriye 1974: 182–92; Jansen 2000: 702–4). Among the few such scholars to have used the term ‘San Francisco System’ explicitly in English, Akira Iriye defined it as ‘the new regime of America–Japanese relations that resulted from the San Francisco peace conference of 1951’ (Iriye 1974: 182). While thus defining the term rather narrowly, he goes on to discuss, albeit in passing, the profound geopolitical transformation that the System wrought in the Pacific, renewing Japanese links with Southeast Asia, and estranging Japan from China, even as it consolidated direct US–Japan bilateral ties (Iriye 1974: 182–91).

Marius Jansen, another distinguished historian employing the term explicitly, although also in passing, does not directly attempt to define the concept, but stresses similar points: (1) a discontinuous redefinition of US–Japan relations, involving virtually unrestricted use of Japanese territory by the United States; (2) an estrangement of Japan and mainland China; and (3) the stabilizing role of the System for Asia, by insulating the region from the volatility of Chinese politics, and aiding Japan in recovering and prospering economically (Jansen 2000: 702–4).

The concept of the San Francisco framework as an organized ‘system’ has arguably been more common in Japanese scholarship than elsewhere in the world for two reasons: (1) the natural Japan-centric focus of the framework; and (2) the tendency toward structuralist thinking in the Marxist-influenced Japanese academic world. Kosaka Masataka, Miyasato Seigen and Hosoya Chihirō, for example, although not Marxists, have all invoked this system concept, stressing in particular how its provisions have systematically constrained the Japanese state, both domestically and in foreign relations (Kōsaka 1982).

Although the term ‘San Francisco System’ has not, as yet, been widely used even by historians, the Pacific diplomacy of the early post-war period, and how it was transformed by San Francisco, *has* obviously been widely debated. Some of the most acute and dispassionate analyses have been by European scholars, with their relative detachment from the intensity of the US–Japan bilateral embrace. Few speak of the Pacific political–economic framework as a ‘System’, calling attention rather to the incomplete nature of its development, failing as it has to achieve true multilateralism, and excluding both Europe and many major Asian nations from its embrace (Buckley 2002: 23–5).

Roger Buckley (1990: 169–86), for example, contrasts the San Francisco framework of the 1950s revealingly to Anglo-Japanese relations of the same period. The former, he notes, became increasingly influential and all-encompassing over time, while the latter grew ever more narrowly restricted to generally contentious economic matters. Through his parallel study of the two bilateral relationships, Buckley shows the strong and anomalous priority that Dulles gave to security over economic affairs, and the leverage of the US in forging a system with which remarkably few allies agreed.

The heart of the debate about San Francisco, conducted mainly among historians, has been over how that framework reintegrated Japan into Pacific regional affairs, and on what terms. The so-called revisionist school, with a large following within Japan itself on both the Left and Right, has emphasized subjugation. This broad group has stressed that San Francisco both: (1) subordinated Japan to US hegemony, by perpetuating Occupation-era military bases, as well as the ongoing political dominance of a docile ruling party; and (2) also rendered Japan the ‘orphan of Asia’ by estranging it from China.

Diplomats, conservative politicians, and non-revisionist historians have taken a more positive view of the San Francisco System. Edwin O. Reischauer (1965), for example, stressed that this framework returned Japan to a much more positive and balanced, yet uninhibited embrace with the broader world than it had enjoyed before 1945. That, in turn, opened the way to economic recovery, as well as to enhanced Japanese responsibility in the international community, he argued. Yoshida Shigeru, who himself concluded the peace treaty for Japan, strongly concurred with Reischauer, presenting a thoughtful historical perspective. He noted that both the Japanese government and people of the Meiji era had welcomed the Anglo-Japanese alliance of 1902, despite what he termed a much greater gap in ‘international significance and potential’ between the British and the Japanese of the period than pertained between the US and Japan half a century later at San Francisco. ‘It makes me wonder if these [recent] critics belong to the same race of people who acted with such determination and judgment, and without any trace of what can only be termed a colonial sense of inferiority’, Yoshida maintained (1961: 4).

Anatomy of the San Francisco System

The classic ‘San Francisco System’, as it emerged in the 1950s, lacked a codified, formalized body of rules, and had many tacit, non-transparent and contradictory elements. Nevertheless, it can broadly be considered to have had a distinct corpus of six salient features:

- 1 A dense network of *formal security alliances*, mainly bilateral, between the United States and key nations of the Pacific.

- 2 A ‘*hub-and-spokes*’ network of bilateral ties radiating from Washington. Apart from ANZUS, the San Francisco System did not create a multilateral security structure.
- 3 A highly *asymmetrical* structure, in both security and economic dimensions. The System offered military protection and economic access to non-US participants, while failing to impose analogous collective defense obligations upon them.
- 4 *Special precedence to Japan* – ironically, the defeated power – in terms of both economic opportunities and security obligations.
- 5 *Remarkably narrow consent and participation by the nations of the western Pacific*. Ultimately the only Asian nations that categorically supported the treaty itself were Pakistan and Ceylon – neither of which had been significantly involved in the war against Japan.
- 6 *Extensive economic benefits* to security allies of the United States, although not in the form of the direct reparations from Japan for which most of the Allies had originally hoped. These incentives were partially embodied in bilateral Treaties of Commerce and Navigation, offering open access to the US market for Asian firms. Yet reciprocity was rarely enforced.

Apart from these six main institutional features, ambiguous, unsettled boundaries were a major additional element of the System within Northeast Asia, arguably willed that way by its major architect, John Foster Dulles. These territorial issues had been dormant, of course, for the half century prior to 1945, during which Japan ruled the entire region in unified fashion, without meaningful boundaries of any kind. Since the San Francisco Treaty disposed of territorial issues concerning both the home islands of Japan and its former colonies, however, that treaty had the potential to either clearly define the post-war contours of the various Northeast Asian jurisdictions, including Korea and Taiwan, or to leave them in ambiguity.

The ambiguities that Dulles fostered helped to make Northeast Asia the ‘Arc of Crisis’ that it has been ever since (Calder 1996). Lack of clarity in the treaty over what constituted the Kuriles estranged Japan and the Soviet Union, for example. Similarly, ambiguity as to who held sovereignty over Takeshima/Tokdo, in the middle of the Japan/East Sea, complicated Japan–Korea relations. Lack of clarity regarding whether the Senkaku/Diaoyutai islands were part of Okinawa or Taiwan likewise estranged Japan and China. The treaty also failed to resolve North–South territorial divisions in Korea, not to mention relations across the Taiwan Strait. It thus enhanced prospects for future intra-regional conflict along multiple geopolitical dimensions.

The intra-regional conflicts among Northeast Asian nations provoked by treaty ambiguity ultimately enhanced the geopolitical leverage of the United States, particularly with an anxious and defensive Japan. This definitely served the geostrategic purposes of John Foster Dulles. It also helped

neutralize the potentially adverse long-term implications for US diplomacy of his indulgent approach to Japanese economic recovery.

Explaining the San Francisco System

Two questions thus immediately arise: (1) why the San Francisco System is structured as it is, and (2) why that configuration has been so *resistant to change*. Clearly America's Asian alliances, together with the overall *political-economic* framework in which they are embedded, are distinctive on both counts. The reasons *why* they are distinctive clearly hold importance for both policy and theory.

Two contrasting and rival interpretations are readily apparent. The structure of the San Francisco System, and its propensity to change, could theoretically be a function of American power in the Pacific, waxing and waning with American preference and influence. Alternatively the structure could be the product of a set of founding rules, or a 'constitutional' order, which has durability due to the *nature* of the rules themselves, and the way that they facilitate cross-national transactions within the region.

Understanding the configuration of the System

Regardless of the explanatory approach adopted, it is clear that the distinctive *features* of the San Francisco System clearly have their roots in the unusual historical circumstances under which the System was created.³ The absence of a multilateral structure appears initially to be a paradox, since US diplomat John Foster Dulles, Special Advisor to Secretary of State Dean Acheson and principal architect of the San Francisco System, liked the notion of collective security, and initiated regional collective-security frameworks in other parts of the world.⁴ He also expressed early support for analogous arrangements in East Asia, with Japan serving in an important supporting role as the Chinese Revolution cast a deepening shadow over Asia late in 1949 (Immerman 1990: 192–5; Schaller 1997: 33).

Several other nations of the Pacific also supported the notion of a region-wide security organization. Indeed, Korean President Syngman Rhee enthusiastically promoted the idea of a Pacific Pact, even earlier than the United States (Oliver 1978: 233, 255–6). The Philippines, Australia and Taiwan were also in the forefront, troubled by the dual dangers, as the 1950s dawned, of revolution in China and political-economic uncertainty in Japan.

Process matters

The absence of a multilateral framework, in spite of US preferences (as well as those of several allies), seems paradoxical in terms of international relations theory. Constitutionalists, concerned with system maintenance,

have no ready explanation. Realists would argue that hegemonic preference should normally triumph on such important matters of national security. Yet the anomalous outcome seems to have been determined instead by two *issue-specific process variables*: (1) the nature of the bargaining processes under way among the US, Japan and other allies at the time; and (2) the unusual leverage that the *time parameters* of the issue gave to the weaker party, Japan, in bilateral talks on the San Francisco peace treaty, cornerstone of the broader Pacific architecture, with the powerful US government.

Although the US was clearly the stronger partner, its chief negotiator, John Foster Dulles, felt an urgent need to conclude a peace agreement with Japan, transcending other regional diplomatic considerations, due to strong perceptions of that nation's strategic importance, domestic political fragility and nationalist proclivities. While convinced of Japan's importance to the US, especially given deteriorating American political-military fortunes in Korea following the Chinese intervention in the late fall of 1950, he was increasingly pessimistic about trends in Japanese nationalism and domestic political stability in Japan.⁵ Dulles saw a stable Japan, and one that could be a model of successful development for Asia as a whole, as central to American purposes in the Far East. 'We can if we will help Japan to be an exhibit in Asia of what a free society can develop in spiritual and intellectual richness and material well-being', he declared (1950: 230). Time, he fervently believed, was *not* on America's side.

Dulles's overriding concern was that post-war Japan not be driven once again to expansion by perceived injustice, as Tojo's wartime Japan and Hitler's Germany had been, in his view. A protracted Allied Occupation of Japan, without a peace treaty, would stir precisely the sort of complex sentiments, both within that tortured country and across the broader Pacific region, that could destabilize Northeast Asia, Dulles feared. The backlash against such an extended occupation would likewise undermine his secondary objective: making Japan a persuasive model of independent non-Communist development, that could contrast effectively to mainland China.

Alliance dynamics in the multilateral arena, complicated severely by the Korean War, constrained the initially preferred solution of a broad Pacific Pact within which Japan might be embedded, as Germany was in NATO. Britain, in particular, was moved by the troubling prospect that a US-led Pacific Pact would exclude Hong Kong from security guarantees, due to doubts by the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, at the height of the Korean War, of the viability of defending it against People's China. British diplomats felt that the omission would undermine the security not just of Hong Kong, but of their other colonial possessions in the region (Schaller 1997: 143-4).

Japanese Prime Minister Yoshida, ironically, was more prepared to postpone a clear settlement to both bilateral and multilateral negotiations than was Dulles, despite a shared concern that rising Japanese nationalism might poison prospective outcomes. The sheer tactical complexities of achieving Japanese domestic political consensus on the details of a peace

settlement – not to mention broader multilateral arrangements – clearly encouraged Yoshida in this temporizing direction (Dower 1979: 371–2).⁶ The passage of time, as the Korean crisis deepened in late 1950 and Chinese People’s Volunteers poured south across the Yalu, promised to make Yoshida’s task of consensus building easier – not least because he calculated that the deepening regional crisis would intensify American anxieties and elicit ‘*gaiatsu*’ (outside pressure) from Washington for a resolution.

Yoshida hence held leverage over Dulles with respect to *timing*, amidst the urgent uncertainties of the early Korean War. This he used to brilliant tactical effect. Dulles badly wanted an early settlement, while Yoshida was more indifferent and conflicted. In the end, the weaker but more patient party triumphed. The US-inspired multilateral security concept was shelved, and the distinctive ‘second-best’ San Francisco System of ‘hub-and-spokes’ bilateralism was born, amidst the pressure crucible of a North-east Asian regional crisis raising more American apprehensions than Japanese.

American affluence mattered

The integrated political–economic character of the San Francisco System – offering asymmetrical economic benefits to American allies, so as to reinforce their political allegiance – was an important, and distinctive, trait of the system, as noted above. This feature, like the ‘hub-and-spokes’ security structure outlined above, emerged in the System’s formative period during the Korean War. The United States in the early 1950s had by far the largest and most affluent market in the world, with close to half of global GDP. It simultaneously enjoyed per capita income levels more than double those prevailing anywhere outside North America at the time. It could *afford* to be magnanimous to others, if either its interests or its domestic political process so decreed.

The specter of China: key to asymmetries in economic policy

Why then was an affluent America *willing* to defer to a weaker East Asia economically through the San Francisco System, in ways that it refused to similarly privilege Europe in the transatlantic relationship? Such cross-regional comparative outcomes are inexplicable on either ‘realist’ or ‘constitutionalist’ premises. For constitutionalists, the Asian order should presumably have been analogous to the European, or at least been some definably rule-based system. For realists, the Asian order should if anything have been configured more favorably for the United States than it in fact was, reflecting American superpower leverage in the transpacific relationship.

As in explaining the origins of the San Francisco System, the analysis presented here privileges *policy process* at critical junctures, as the key to

explaining cross-regional variation. The San Francisco System was born amidst the early Korean War, in the shadow of the 1949 'Fall of China', and China's own sudden military entry into the Korean War late in November 1950. Stabilizing non-Communist Asia in the face of China's ideological challenge and military onslaughts, while simultaneously weaning Asia from China's economic attraction, were crucial priorities for the United States. They profoundly structured Pacific regional institutions – and encouraged pronounced transpacific asymmetry in their operation – during the turbulent formative days of the San Francisco order.

Northeast Asia's political–economic situation, as the Cold War deepened, reinforced the distinctively asymmetric trade opportunities that the United States came to accord its non-Communist allies in that fragile, turbulent region (Calder 1988). Japan, especially, was both depressed economically as the Korean War began, and nostalgic for longstanding trade ties with an Asian continent that had just fallen to Communism. Before World War II, particularly during the 1930s, Japan had traded primarily with Asia, especially mainland China, Korea and Taiwan. They made up the heart of its colonial empire and emerging Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. As noted in Table 1, 18 per cent of Japanese exports went to China alone during the mid-1930s, and 39 per cent to Northeast Asia as a whole. This proportion dwarfed the 16 per cent of exports flowing to the United States.⁷

Japan had been traditionally dependent on China for key raw materials and food, as well as for export markets. This dependence became especially pronounced in the 1930s, as Japanese political–military involvement on the continent steadily deepened. By 1934–36, for example, a full 71 per cent of Japan's soybeans, 68 per cent of its coking coal and 34 per cent of its iron ore were imported from China (Cohen 1958: 182). Overall, as Table 1 indicates, 36 per cent of Japanese imports flowed from its Northeast Asian empire, as opposed to only 25 per cent from the United States.

Japan, in short, had a history of deep economic interdependence with China. Yet it had few options in the early 1950s for reviving its badly disrupted traditional ties to continental Asia that an America at war with

Table 1 Eastward across the Pacific: sharp post-war re-orientation in Japanese foreign trade (per cent)

	<i>Japanese exports</i>			<i>Japanese imports</i>		
	<i>1934–36</i>	<i>1954</i>	<i>1956</i>	<i>1934–36</i>	<i>1954</i>	<i>1956</i>
United States	16	17	22	25	35	31*
China	18	1	3	12	2	3
Korea/Taiwan	21	8	6	24	3	2
South/Southeast Asia	19	31	27	16	19	21

Source: Ministry of International Trade and Industry data, as presented in Cohen (1958: 153).

Note: *represents figures for 1955.

China and North Korea could realistically accept. US policy-makers thus perceived American market access to be vital in assuring Japan's stability and pro-Western orientation. They apparently viewed South Korea's situation in similar fashion (Borden 1984).

As also indicated in Table 1, economic interdependence with the United States, centering on rising Asian exports to America, began inexorably to grow across the course of the 1950s, following conclusion of the San Francisco peace treaty. Such asymmetrical transpacific trade interdependence – ultimately much more unbalanced than transatlantic patterns, as will be seen – became an ever more central element of the San Francisco System. It was driven, as noted, by a potent triad: American affluence, the specter of China, and a catalytic process of Pacific regional institution building at the height of the Korean War.

Comparative alliance perspectives: a skewed economics for security bargain in the Pacific?

The San Francisco System is clearly distinctive, relative to other international alliance structures, in at least four ways. First, its 'hub-and-spokes' bilateralist structure, outlined above, is unusual. Multilateralism, which failed to materialize clearly in early post-World War II Asia, is more common elsewhere, notably in Europe (Schultz *et al.* 2001). In addition, the San Francisco System's integrated security and economic features contrast sharply to virtually all pre-World War II alliances, which tended to have a more exclusively military character (Liska 1962). Third, the conciliatory economic steps taken to rehabilitate a former enemy, Japan, contrast sharply to the punitive World War I Versailles settlement with Weimar Germany, which forced it to cede massive reparations that helped trigger its early collapse.⁸

The San Francisco provisions, finally, also contrast to post-World War II American policies toward Europe, particularly Germany. The US provided, for example, much less direct economic assistance to Japan than it did to Germany. Yet America accorded Japan unusually favorable (and highly asymmetrical) trading and investment arrangements, many of them informal, that Europe did not enjoy. These included informal American tolerance of Japanese trade protectionism, as well as of often substantial discrimination against foreign investment (Mason 1992: 152–61). The US likewise insulated Japan from the reparatory demands of its neighbors, in ways that it did not favor the erstwhile European Axis partners, Germany and Italy.

Virtually all the bilateral arrangements of the San Francisco System embodied a distinctive bargain: unusual and asymmetrical US *economic* concessions to the host nation, particularly with respect to trade and investment access, in return for unusual and asymmetrical *security* concessions from the United States. The System involved, in short, definite economics

for security trade-offs. These implied sharply more asymmetry between the economic and security arenas than was common in other US alliance relationships of the early Cold War period.

Many Pacific allies also agreed to provide substantial offset payments (host-nation support) to the US military, to cover the costs of their local presence. These escalated steadily over the years, to over \$20,000 annually per US soldier in Japan, more than four times the maximum achieved in Germany (Sandars 2000: 172). In Europe extensive host-nation support (HNS) was a rarity after the Occupation years, even in West Germany, where offset arrangements in support of US forces were terminated in 1976 (Sandars 2000). Asian partners also acquiesced in Status of Forces Agreements (SOFA) that allowed US military personnel substantially greater autonomy from host-national control in Asia than they commonly enjoyed in Europe.

On the economic side of the equation, the San Francisco System exhibited a 'trade more than aid' bias, as noted above. The United States supplied much less direct financial aid to its Pacific partners than the \$13 billion it provided to Europe through the Marshall Plan. Most of that was exclusively earmarked for Japan, and provided at levels much lower than those for Germany.⁹ Even war-torn Korea received relatively little in comparative terms.¹⁰

Why the San Francisco System has proved so durable: the key role of domestic interests

Clearly there have been *some* noteworthy changes in the structure of Pacific relations since the San Francisco treaty. Most importantly, the exclusion of mainland China and the Soviet Union has been progressively modified since the early 1970s, beginning with the loosening of longstanding strategic embargoes dating from 1948–51.¹¹ Indeed, with China's December 2001 admission to the World Trade Organization (WTO), the traditionally pronounced US economic discrimination in favor of American strategic allies that was an original hallmark of the San Francisco System has virtually disappeared. Vietnam, ostracized by the US for two decades after the fall of Saigon, became a WTO observer in 1995, ratified a favorable bilateral trade agreement with the US in November 2001, and is expected to finally join the WTO by 2005.¹²

In September 1999, responding to a North Korean moratorium on missile tests, the United States even lifted most sanctions against North Korea (Oberdorfer 2001: 423). The US has also countenanced a substantial deepening of economic relations between North and South Korea – a tacit policy that continued even amidst the nuclear crisis that began in the fall of 2002.

Multilateral bodies like the Asia-Pacific Economic Council (APEC), never envisioned by Dulles, have also grown somewhat more important in the economic arena. Since early 2002 Japanese Prime Minister Koizumi

Junichirō and Defense Minister Nakatani Gen have made important new proposals for expanded ASEAN/Oceania cooperation, involving both economics and security.¹³ China also concluded a multilateral free-trade framework agreement with ASEAN in November 2002, to be implemented over the coming decade.¹⁴

Yet what is remarkable is how *minor* the structural changes in Pacific affairs have been, given the enormous economic transformation that has occurred, and the amount of time – a full half-century and more – that has passed since the San Francisco peace treaty. Even China's rising involvement in the Pacific political economy – which some might regard as a major transition – has so far taken place largely within the parameters of the San Francisco System as originally defined.

In striving to explain the San Francisco System's remarkable durability, it is wise to remember both how *fragile* that system seemed at its origin, and how *epic* the subsequent *political-economic changes* that it has been forced to accommodate have been. As noted above, virtually all major Asian nations, apart from Japan itself, either directly opposed the San Francisco peace treaty or at least lodged formal reservations. The strong dissenters included not just China and the Soviet Union, but also India, Indonesia, Burma and South Korea. Even the Philippines protested bitterly, mainly against the lack of reparations from Japan. Key Anglo-Saxon allies of the United States, like Britain and Australia, were ambivalent about the treaty, as was much of the US Congress. Ultimately it was mainly Latin American support, reflecting US pressure, that garnered the treaty its large overall ratification figures, and hence international legitimacy.

Since the precarious origins of the San Francisco System, amidst the Korean War, its political-economic environment has also sharply changed. Japan's economy; for example, was only one-twentieth the economic scale of the US in 1950, when negotiations on the San Francisco treaty began (Cohen 1958: 12–13). It is now nearly half as large.¹⁵ Yet the System has been remarkably able to flexibly accommodate such massive change in the economic magnitude of key participants, together with numerous other challenges.

Why should the San Francisco System have proven to be so durable, despite apparent fragility at its inception? Some have recently stressed the 'constitutional' character of the rule-based American post-World War II approach to international political economy, which reduced the implications of *winning* in the international system, and hence locked weaker players, who feared losing, into an order that they could not control (Ikenberry 2001: 32). Others – hegemonic stability theorists – have simply stressed the continuing pre-eminence of American power (Gilpin 1987).

This analysis suggests the need for dipping *deeper* into the *domestic systems* of key nations for an explanation of system persistence than international relations theorists are prone to do. Neither the rules of the international order – often disregarded – nor the fluctuating power position of

the United States can explain either the contrasts to Europe or the persistence of the Pacific order. More importantly, the overlapping *preference structures* of *domestically dominant groups* have been the key sustaining element of the San Francisco System, this analysis suggests.

Two-level analysis – understanding both *domestic* interest–group structure and showing how it alternately constrains or sustains *international* relationships – is crucial to grasping both the durability of the San Francisco System and its potential for change (Putnam 1998: 427–60). In particular, the willingness of domestic interest groups in the US to trade off marginal economic costs to themselves in return for perceived security gains to their nation was critical to the stability of the San Francisco System in its early days. The openness of the system then gradually gave birth to new organized interests, such as large-scale distributors and multinational manufacturers, that helped sustain that trade and financial openness from the 1970s on.

American labor unions such as the AFL–CIO¹⁶ were willing, for example, to accept some marginal domestic job losses from import competition much more substantial than the major European powers were willing to accept, as the necessary price for eliciting security cooperation from America's Asian allies during the 1960s and 1970s. It was only in the 1980s, under a Republican Reagan administration, with whom the unions deeply differed on many grounds, that they came to see these losses as unjustified even by national security imperatives.¹⁷ By then, new transnational interests had arisen that countervailed their rising disaffection from the liberal international economic order (Destler and Odell 1987).

Meanwhile, in Asia the central political priority – for both the elite and, to a large degree, for the broader citizenry as well – was consistently economic. If the United States offered open markets and some economic aid through the San Francisco System, few worried about the constraints to sovereignty or to nationalistic sensibilities that inevitably flowed from US pre-eminence in the military area. From very different domestic origins, Japan, South Korea and Taiwan all smoothly evolved, with little resistance over the 1960s and 1970s, into commercially oriented trading states, all operating under the US security umbrella (Rosecrance 1986). Their approach to the economics-for-security trade-off implicit in the San Francisco System was, in its emphasis on economics, highly complementary to the security bias of the United States. Yet it was based on the interests of dominant local political actors, rather than any particular respect for clear rules *per se*. The prominent role of bureaucrats in East Asian political economies intensified the lack of transparency and the 'case-by-case' orientation. Indeed, the frequent disrespect for liberal trading rules – both through non-tariff barriers and 'orderly marketing arrangements' – has been a persistent feature of transpacific trade throughout most of the post-war period.

The relative weakness in Asia of local nationalist groups antagonistic to the security dimensions of the System also helped sustain the symbiotic

transpacific political–economic trade-off. Left-oriented labor unions and communist parties, for example, have never been strong in post-World War II Northeast Asia, in contrast to patterns across much of Western Europe. The nationalistic far right has also had trouble gaining traction in Asia. Indeed, Asian Gaullism has never really emerged to challenge the region’s uniquely asymmetric security bargains with the US, despite insistent predictions that this could happen (Kahn 1970; Malmgren 1970: 115–43; Shapiro 1981: 62–81).

Gradual regional transformation within the US domestic political economy also aided this symbiosis between East Asian economic development and a US-centric system of regional security (Calder 1985: 595–623). Over the course of the 1960s and 1970s, the Sunbelt states of the South and West steadily gained influence, as the leverage of the Midwest–Northeast Snowbelt slowly declined. In 1963, for example, California became America’s most populous state, eclipsing New York. By 2001, California’s population was 82 per cent greater than New York’s. Texas, rather than New York, had become America’s second most populous state (US Bureau of the Census 2001: 22–3). Economically, California had become larger than all but five nations on earth.

In both the Congress and the Electoral College, Sunbelt representatives became correspondingly more numerous and powerful as well. The three largest Sunbelt states – California, Texas and Florida – now provide over 41 per cent of the electoral votes required to elect an American president. Although George W. Bush lost California in 2002 he carried Texas, Florida and a broad range of other Sunbelt states, which provided the core of his narrow electoral-college margin. At the White House, John F. Kennedy was the last president elected from a Snowbelt state, Massachusetts, more than forty years ago.

The politically emergent Sunbelt has weak unions, vigorous agricultural and construction sectors, and little heavy industry competitive with Asia. Indeed, to this day there is no integrated steel mill in the Sunbelt. The only auto plant, at Fremont, California, is a General Motors–Toyota joint venture.

The Sunbelt, reflecting its economic complexion and interests, has exhibited a relatively moderate trade, financial and investment orientation toward Asia, both in Congress and at the state-government level. Heavy inbound direct investment since the mid-1980s has further disposed US authorities – both state and federal – to be moderate in their approach to Asia. Consumers and distributors have also benefited from transpacific interdependence, and been generally supportive of the open trading regime inaugurated under the San Francisco System (Destler and Odell 1987).

Despite rising US trade imbalances with Asia – reaching levels of 2:1 and 3:1 in favor of Asia by the 1980s, and stubbornly persisting ever since – there has hence been remarkably little support in the US for radical shifts in the status quo. This pattern has been especially pronounced in the Sunbelt.

Conversely, across Asia, exporters, rather than consumers, have dominated local political processes, persistently reinforcing the asymmetric bias of the San Francisco System even into the twenty-first century, despite its origins in an earlier, more hierarchical age. Both in Asia and in US internationalist circles, the clear common economic benefits of an open trade and financial system across the Pacific have thus been sustained by tacit, domestically rooted mutual political acceptance, rather than any clear, formalized constitutionalist bargain.

The security elements of the San Francisco system, forged in blood and crisis during the Korean War, in sharp contrast both to pre-war patterns and early post-war expectations, have likewise proven mutually acceptable on both sides of the Pacific, although there was never a clear ‘constitutionalist’ bargain on security matters either. US bases, and the ‘hub-and-spokes’ network of alliances within which they are embedded, largely maintained regional stability – international stability, as well as domestic one-party conservative dominance in key nations until the late 1990s. And stability has been vital to economic prosperity. That has become particularly true since levels of transnational investment and other forms of interdependence began spiraling rapidly throughout the Pacific Basin during the 1980s and 1990s.

Implications of the System for international affairs

Over the past thirty years the San Francisco System has evolved into one of the most important elements of the global political–economic scene, as noted above.¹⁸ To be sure, it has played an important role in accelerating the erosion of America’s basic industrial base, in such sectors as steel, automobiles and among consumer electronics. It has also provoked clear resentment among third parties, and among important elements of the general public in the Pacific Basin as well. Yet the San Francisco System has clearly reinforced American political–military pre-eminence in Northeast Asia, while facilitating massive capital flows to the United States, drawn from the recycling of Asian trade surpluses. These flows ultimately played a crucial role in both ending the Cold War, and in perpetuating the financial pre-eminence of the US dollar into the twenty-first century.

The most crucial feature of the San Francisco System, from a global political–economy standpoint, has been the precedence that it gave simultaneously to Japan’s economic recovery and to Japan’s systematic integration into a US-led political–military alliance structure. The System, in short, transformed Japan from an enemy into a dynamic, if subordinate, partner of the United States in the Pacific and global political economies. In this sense, the diplomatic handiwork of John Foster Dulles proved to be brilliantly successful.

Later American leaders built sensitively on Dulles’s fundamental insight: that broadening the regional and global role of an economically vigorous,

yet politically subordinate Japan was in American interest. In 1954, with strong US backing, Japan joined the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs (GATT), followed by the UN (1956), the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in 1964, and the G7 (1975). In each of these fora, Japan proved to be a strong American ally, reinforcing American political-economic influence globally in a world where US economic power, narrowly conceived, was ineluctably waning.

However opportunistic and perverse Japanese (as well as Korean and Taiwanese) trade policies may have been to the health of American basic industry – and the issue is hotly debated – East Asian financial policies have clearly given the US crucial latitude on the political-military front. During the late 1960s, Japan – in contrast to European nations like France – carefully refrained from converting dollar surpluses into gold when this threatened US foreign-exchange policy objectives. Similarly, in the 1980s and 1990s, all the US allies in Asia smoothly recycled their trade surpluses into US financial assets, especially Treasury bills, thus according the US important, otherwise lacking flexibility in its global political-military operations.

The San Francisco System, as suggested earlier, has had some perverse implications as well. Within Asia, the new ubiquity of American military presence around the rim of the Pacific – in Japan, South Korea and, for many years, Thailand, Philippines, Taiwan and South Vietnam – brought crime, environmental damage and often local resentment. Outside the region the very US pre-eminence that San Francisco engendered in Asia both stirred resentment in proud, long-colonial Europe, and accelerated the constriction of Europe's horizons and responsibilities, thus denying the Pacific a broader and more global support base than would otherwise have prevailed (Cohen and Iriye 1990; Buckley 2002).

The future of the San Francisco System

The key theoretical contention here, contrasting to realist and constitutionalist formulations in international relations, is that domestic politics must be considered in accounting for the profile and persistence of regional political-economic orders such as the San Francisco System. How domestic interests will evolve in the key nations, within the context of an emerging global economy, will thus be crucial in determining the future of the System as a whole. The System is clearly supported in the short run by its embedded features, such as an open US market, and the interest groups those features have spawned, such as prosperous US distributors and Asian exporters. National-security establishments in key member nations, especially the United States, are also general backers of the status quo.

Yet three basic forces are slowly transforming the San Francisco System. Most crucial perhaps is the steady emergence over the past decade of a truly global economic order. Successive international trade rounds and the coming of the World Trade Organization have gradually reduced the level

of trade discrimination between members and non-members of trading blocs world-wide, thus eroding the potential benefits of membership in any US-sponsored discriminatory economic schemes. China – a potential US adversary with strong competitive economic advantages *vis-à-vis* many US Asian allies – is becoming more and more deeply involved in these globalist economic undertakings. This development has significantly reduced the economic dividends for such allies of bilateral security ties with the US. Pacific alliances are inevitably coming to be judged ever more definitively in terms of their not-inconsiderable security merits alone.

Globalization and systemic risks have increasingly forced the US to ameliorate the economic frailty even of long-time military adversaries like Russia, China and, at times, North Korea. Indeed, North Korea, with which the US fought a protracted war during 1950–53 in which 37,000 Americans died, was from the mid-1990s until 2002 the largest recipient of US foreign aid in the entire Asian region, receiving over \$1 billion during the period, mainly in energy and food supplies.¹⁹ Although relations were constrained amidst the nuclear crisis, the prospect of revived assistance to continental Northeast Asia, in the wake of resolution, is strong.

Nationalism and democratization too are eroding the San Francisco System, by sapping the political capacity of host-nation governments to confer asymmetric security advantages on superpowers like the United States. In South Korea, for example, grassroots protests against US bases have already led to a re-negotiation of the SOFA agreement governing US forces in Korea, and helped lead to the election of labor activist President Roh Moo-Hyun in December 2002.²⁰

Parallel grassroots trends, including pressure for SOFA revision, are also observable in Japan, especially in Okinawa.²¹ Other changes in bilateral security arrangements, such as new limits on host-nation support, may well be in prospect. Grassroots protest has also led over the past generation to anti-nuclear policies in New Zealand that have essentially nullified that nation's security alliance with the United States. Anti-US sentiments have been reinforced, in many cases, by American unilateralism as well.

Since 1993 multilateralism has also slowly emerged to modify the 'hub-and-spokes' bilateral arrangements originally fashioned by Dulles. The Asia-Pacific Economic Council (APEC) has become more vigorous, and ventured gingerly into some security discussion. Multilateral development banks have become more active, albeit persistently constrained by an American veto.²² Among the most important recent multilateral innovations in economic-policy coordination has been the 'ASEAN Plus Three' (APT) process, born at the Kuala Lumpur APEC Summit of 1998 (Stubbs 2002: 440–55).

Lingering historical rivalries and complex domestic politics in key nations, however, make it unclear just how far the APT can ultimately go in undermining the security elements of the San Francisco System. In a lasting tribute to Dulles's handiwork, the deepest problems the APT now confronts

concern the integration of Japan, privileged beneficiary of American support at San Francisco, against whom many others in Asia continue to harbor unresolved claims. Japan has been markedly more reluctant than South Korea, in particular, to move toward deeper political–economic integration with the continent of Asia.

Ultimately, serious deterrence remains the province of the established bilateral alliances at the core of the San Francisco System. As long as fundamental national antagonisms remain within the Pacific region, this element of the original system will likely retain its value. On many emerging security issues, such as piracy, terrorism, drug-trafficking, energy and environmental protection, where broad international coordination is crucial, new multilateral regimes and coordination processes are, to be sure, gradually establishing themselves throughout the Pacific, as they are indeed also doing around the world.²³ Yet on basic issues of war and peace, as well as the crucial issue of imported energy from the Middle East, the powerful post-Iraq War position of the United States is reviving once again the political–economic importance for Asia of ‘hub-and-spokes’ dealings directly, and bilaterally, with Washington.

Conclusion

Much international relations theory, particularly that of a realist persuasion, presents politics among nations as a fluid, shifting pattern of alignments (Morgenthau 1993). Nothing could be further from the reality of Pacific political–economic ties across the past half century. Indeed, the basic pattern of political–economic relations in the Pacific remains remarkably close to what it was at the birth of the San Francisco System in the early 1950s. This remarkable continuity in the structure of international relations in the Pacific is particularly apparent when contrasted to the greater fluidity of relationships elsewhere in the world, including those within NATO.

‘Constitutionalist’ theory, to be sure, has recently focused insightfully on stability as a non-random element of international relations. Yet the work presented here suggests that framework to be incomplete. On close inspection, the international relations of the Pacific Basin have ‘*non-systematic*’, ad hoc, non-rule-based dimensions – much different from Europe, as Katzenstein and others have pointed out (Katzenstein and Shiraishi 1997). Those interactions also exhibit strongly asymmetric, yet *non-rule-based* elements – aspects dependent on continuing, affluence-based American indulgence – that cast doubt both on their ‘constitutional’, rule-based character, and on the ultimate viability of the San Francisco System at their core, were American power to wane.

The San Francisco System is thus more dependent on domestic political–economic developments in member countries, and on the persistence of American power, than ‘constitutionalist’ theory would admit. In its apparent dependence on American power and affluence for viability, the

System is also potentially consistent with realist formulations, assuming that its configuration reflects US interests. The issue remains moot as long as American power continues to be pre-eminent.

The San Francisco System has been remarkably stable thus far, this research has suggested, due to the temporary congruence of the underlying economics for security bargain at its heart with key domestic political interests in major nations of the region. Most importantly, the opportunity to pursue economic interest unimpeded by complicating security concerns has strongly appealed to the conservative Northeast Asian business and political elites of the region. Conversely, the opportunity to pursue national-security goals unchallenged by the most economically and technologically advanced nations of Asia has appealed to American leaders as well.

This complementarity of elite interests on both sides of the Pacific has been reinforced by rising transpacific capital flows, to cover heavy US trade deficits. These flows have offset the effects of over-consumption and declining trade competitiveness in the United States that naturally flow from the asymmetrical political-economic bargain at the heart of the San Francisco System. Yet the continuation of these stabilizing flows is contingent on a credibility of the United States and its currency that is rooted in the power and affluence of the United States. Whether the existing order could survive the diminution or diversion of those flows, or of a change in the seigniorage role of the US dollar in international finance, remains to be seen.

The Cold War, to be sure, has not ended as definitively in Asia as it did over a decade ago in Europe. Yet some stirrings of change, as noted above, are clearly visible. Populist opinion in both Asia and the United States is criticizing the old San Francisco bargain on nationalist as well as pragmatic grounds. The rise of China, and its gradual inclusion in a political-economic order long reserved for security allies, could be particularly corrosive of the San Francisco System as traditionally constituted.

The prospects thus appear strong for somewhat greater volatility in transpacific alliance relationships than heretofore. Common interests in energy supply and the stability of the Middle East could serve as forces for cohesion. Trade and financial imbalances could pull in the opposite direction, however. Both domestic and international systemic pressures in key nations combine to enhance this volatility and uncertainty. The key question is whether leaders with vision, holding an ability to communicate to their broader publics, will have the ability to look beyond the immediate future to forge a renewed strategic bargain, as their forebearers did so ably more than half a century ago.

Acknowledgements

The author appreciates the research assistance and comments of Min Ye, and the technical support of Edna Lloyd, in the preparation of this manuscript.

Notes

- 1 Literally, Australia–New Zealand–US, therefore ANZUS.
- 2 On those broader systemic implications, see, for example, Gilpin (1987).
- 3 On the historical evolution, including the central early role of multilateralism in American diplomatic thinking, see US Department of State (1977) *Foreign Relations of the United States 1951: Asia and the Pacific*, Vol. 6, Part I, Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, especially pp. 132–265.
- 4 See Dulles (1950: 88–99), for Dulles’s highly supportive general views on regional security organizations. Dulles, of course, became Eisenhower’s Secretary of State (1953–59) after completing his work as Acheson’s Special Advisor. His paradigms in regional organization were the Pan American Union, the British Commonwealth and NATO. Less than three years after designing the San Francisco System, Dulles was also the architect of the South East Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO).
- 5 A record thirty-five Communists had been elected to the Diet in late 1949, pledged to an early, total peace, and supported by Moscow. Labor unrest, including sabotage, was also a continuing concern. See Kataoka (1991).
- 6 Opinion polls of the period suggested that the Japanese public was highly ambivalent during 1951 on the details of the prospective treaty.
- 7 By 1939 the share of Japanese exports going to China alone had nearly doubled from 1934 levels to 34 per cent of Japan’s total exports due to deepening Japanese trade interdependence with Manchukuo. See Cohen (1958: 172).
- 8 The analogous Allied treaties of St Germain with Austria-Hungary and Sevres with the Ottoman Empire were similarly vindictive and destabilizing for the vanquished. See Lamb and Tarling (2001: 23–34).
- 9 Precise comparisons are obviously difficult. During 1948–49, however, the US Army requested of Congress a ‘Little Marshall Plan for Japan’, to finance US exports to Japan. Congress granted \$165 million under the Economic Recovery for Occupied Areas (EROA) program, compared to roughly \$400 million under the analogous Economic Recovery Program (ERP) for Germany. See Borden (1984: 74–5).
- 10 The high point was 1957, when South Korea received \$383 million in economic assistance, \$400 million in military aid, and \$300 million for the costs of US forces in Korea. Overall, Korea received about \$12 billion from the US Treasury for the entire 1945–65 period, a time frame far transcending the war-reconstruction era itself. See Cumings (1997: 306–7).
- 11 See Zhang (2001: 288). US–China trade, virtually nil from 1951–71, rose from \$12.9 million in 1972 to \$4.8 billion in 1980.
- 12 ‘Vietnam looks to WTO membership by 2005’, *People’s Daily Online*, March 6, 2002. Available online: http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/200105/11/print20010511_69668.html. See also World Trade Organization website, available online: <http://www.wto.org>.
- 13 See, for example, Nakatani Gen, ‘Perspectives on multilateral security cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region’, Presented at the IISS Asia Security Conference, Singapore, June 2, 2002.
- 14 <http://asia.news.yahoo.com>, November 4, 2002.
- 15 In 1999 the US comprised 30.3 per cent of global GDP, and Japan 14.4 per cent. See Asahi Shimbun, *Japan Almanac*, 2002 edition, Tokyo: Asahi Shimbun Sha, 2001, p. 80.
- 16 Literally, American Federation of Labor–Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL–CIO), the largest American labor-union confederation.
- 17 On the emerging criticism of national-security rationales for the San Francisco System, see Harrison and Prestowitz (1990: 56–76).

- 18 On the crucial role in the global political economy of transpacific trade and financial flows, see Gilpin (1987).
- 19 See the November 3, 1999, Report of the North Korea Advisory Group, available at <http://www.house.gov/international-relations/nkag.htm>. According to this report, aid to North Korea since 1994 has grown from zero to over \$270 million annually.
- 20 See Center for Strategic and International Studies, International Security Program (2001).
- 21 On recent trends in Okinawan opinion, coupled with concrete suggestions for Japanese and US policy reform, see Eldridge (2002: 48–50).
- 22 On Japan's new role in promoting multilateralism through such institutions, see Yasutomo (1995), especially, pp. 61–118.
- 23 On transnational crime, people-smuggling, energy and environmental-security issues, in particular, see Dupont (2001).

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