

Robert Dujarric
Director Institute of Contemporary Japanese Studies
Temple University Japan Campus, Tokyo
robertdujarric@gmail.com
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Does Europe hold lessons for Asia?

European integration has been a two-step process. The first one followed the defeat of Nazi totalitarianism and the Soviet occupation of Central Europe. The second one was initiated by the unification of Germany, the liberation of Central Europe from communism, and the breakup of the USSR. We will focus on the first stage, which is one which laid the foundations of today's Europe.

Asians often ask themselves if the success of European integration can serve as a model for their region. As we shall see, the European experience is rooted in unique circumstances which, with a few exceptions, do not apply to Asia.

US role

1. Practically all Western European nations in 1945 were either US allies or under US occupation. They were all dependent on American economic assistance to survive. This gave the US enormous leverage. Obviously, this is not, and has never been the case, in East Asia.
2. American officials reached the conclusion that only a US-allied integrated Europe could create the necessary conditions to avoid a return of the "German problem" and provide for a Western Europe that could face up to the foreign threat from the USSR and the domestic dangers from Moscow-controlled communist parties. The geopolitics of Asia in the decades following World War II were totally different. The United States also perceived a communist menace, but geopolitics dictated a response that was not the same as the one Washington adopted in Europe.

In Asia, until the Korean War, Washington paid no attention to the peninsula, and therefore was oblivious to the relevance of Korea-Japan ties to American interests. After the conclusion of the Korean War armistice (1953), for a variety of reasons, US political-

military ties in the region developed along separate bilateral lines (Japan-US, ROK-US, Taiwan-US) rather than along the multilateral path of the Atlantic Alliance/NATO.

3. The United States and its main European allies shared comparable, though not identical philosophies, which gave the US an ideological stake in the success of western European integration. In East Asia, the ruling Japanese conservatives (what became the LDP in 1955) included in their ranks many whose commitment to liberal democracy was rooted in pragmatism rather than conviction. Many Japanese socialists were dogmatic anti-American. Therefore, Japanese politics did not generate the same sort of shared trans-Atlantic philosophical community that existed with West Germany's Christian Democrats and Social Democrats.

European factors

Push for integration

1. Many of the leaders of Western Europe shared this American vision of a (semi) united western Europe; in fact men like Jean Monnet (Europe's senior Founding Father) played a role in convincing Americans that this was the policy to pursue. This is not the case in East Asia, where there was no significant political movement that favored regional integration.

Moreover, the fundamental goals were different. From the start, many – though by no means all – Europeans wanted a supra-national entity which to which the member states would transfer some of their sovereignty. In post-1945 China, Korea, and Japan, there has never been any serious interest in giving up a large fraction of the state's sovereign prerogative to a supra-national body comparable to the European Commission.

2. Even Europeans who were ardent nationalists realized in the 1945-1955 period that there could be no economic recovery unless they cooperated. By making the Marshall Plan contingent on the Europeans working together, the United States reinforced the economic incentives to integration. In East Asia, intra-Asian trade is now important but in the immediate post-World War II period it could not save the region for the simple reason that China was in the midst of a civil war (to be followed by over two decades of self-destruction, i.e. the Great Leap forward and the Cultural Revolution) and Korea was wrecked the 1950-53 War. Therefore, while West Germany and its neighbors had to trade to survive and grow after 1945, for Japan the road to economic recovery involved exports to more distant markets in outside of Northeast Asia.

Europeans have always had to live with each other, though such cohabitation could as easily involve war and invasions as cooperation and peaceful coexistence. In Japan,

however, there was an alternative. When the great Japanese thinker Fukuzawa Yukichi (1835-1901), who founded Keio University, called on Japan to “leave Asia, and join the West/Europe” (脱亞入歐 in the traditional ideographs then in use) he expressed a view that still has some relevance to contemporary Japan. No European state, Britain included, has ever been able to think of “leaving Europe.” (For Fukuzawa, Asia was a state of underdevelopment and Europe meant modernity. He did not seek to take Japan out of Asia geographically but rather to move the country intellectually and philosophically closer to Western ideas. But for many Japanese, “leaving Asia” meant seeing themselves as honorary Europeans who shaved westerners’ contempt for the mainland¹).

Transnational institutions

-Religion

Several of Europe’s Founding Fathers, including Konrad Adenauer (West Germany, chancellor 1949-63), Robert Schuman (French, premier, then foreign minister, 1947-52), Alcide De Gasperi (Italian, premier, 1945-52) were Roman Catholic Christian Democrats who whose politics could not be separated from their attachment to the same transnational political-religious movement to which they belonged (Monnet, however, was not a Christian Democrat). Jacques Delors (President of the European Commission, 1985-95) and Helmut Kohl (German chancellor, 1982-1998), two men who played a key role in furthering European integration in the 1980s and 1990s were respectively a social-democratic Catholic and a Catholic Christian Democrat. John-Paul II (Pope, 1978-2005) actively sought to re-integrate Central Europe, in particular his native Poland, into the community of free European societies.

Catholicism did not prevent Catholic statesmen from defending their national interests, but it made them part of a fellowship that was politically significant. There is nothing similar in Asia, where Confucian tradition provides a set of common concepts but without the organizational infrastructure of the Roman Church. Protestantism and Judaism have played a much less significant role in European integration but they too have created networks that transcend national borders, and one day European Islam may also contribute to European integration.

-Politics

Social-democracy is another international political force that pushed for European integration. Though the Christian Democrats played a more visible role, one should not forget the contribution of moderate Socialists and labor unions to the construction of what is now the European Union. In Asia, the divisions of the left between Maoists, pro-Soviet communists, Kim Il Sungists, doctrinaire socialists, and moderate socialists, and the absence of democracy outside of Japan until the 1990s, prevented the emergence of a Socialist International on the European model.

¹ I am grateful to Masaru Tamamoto for pointing out to me that Asia was not, in Fukuzawa’s analysis, a place but a state of mind.

-Demography

Europe has been far more open to intra-European immigration than Asia has been to the movement of population between one Asian country to the other. In Western Europe, a far larger percentage of the citizenry, including members of the elite, are immigrants or the children and grand-children of individuals who arrived from other European states. Michael Howard, who rose to head the British conservative party in 2003, was the son of a Romanian refugee; the father of Elio di Rupo, president of the Belgian (francophone) Socialist party was the child of an Italian mine worker, and Nicolas Sarkozy, chairman of the ruling French UMP party and a possible winner of the 2007 presidential race, has only one French grand-parent. In East Asia, such population flows have been much smaller, and even rarer in the upper strata of society.

-Language

In Europe, national and linguistic borders do not follow the same demarcation lines. German is spoken in Germany, Austria, most of Switzerland, small parts of Belgium and Italy, and widely understood in Alsace (eastern France), Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Central Europe. French is also the mother tongue of many Belgians, of about a quarter of Switzerland's population, the official language of Luxembourg, and was historically the main foreign language of numerous European countries until several decades ago. English, also spoken in Ireland, is almost the second language of the Netherlands and Scandinavia, and widely used on the continent. These linguistic networks, which straddle borders, have played a much greater role than in East Asia.

Political and economic similarities

The core states of western Europe have not developed in lockstep, but compared to East Asia their economies and politics have been, and remain, far more homogenous. Even limiting ourselves to Northeast Asia, and excluding North Korea, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, and China have far less in common when it comes to their political systems and economies than do the 15 nations of the pre-21st century enlargement EU.

Ease of travel

In the past ten years, borders controls have gradually been abolished in most of western Europe. In the immediate post-war era, currency restrictions limited travel opportunities, but as soon as Europe recovered, western Europeans could easily travel to other European nations. In the 1990s, some Central Europeans and Eastern Europeans had difficulties getting visas, but the entry of Central Europe into the European Union has solved this problem. In East Asia, however, it can take months for a Chinese scholar to get a visa to Japan (or to the US), creating a major obstacle to contacts between Chinese and Japanese.

Historical background

Western Europe, unlike Northeast Asia, is an historical entity with a long pedigree. The shared links inherited from Greece, Jerusalem, Rome, Western Christianity, Charlemagne, the Renaissance, and the Enlightenment are a far stronger glue than the Sinic Confucian civilization of Northeast Asia. This did not prevent them from slaughtering each other during World War I and World War II, but unlike the Sino-Japanese wars and the invasion of Korea by Japan, Europe's conflicts were, to a considerable extent, civil wars. A western European who travels to another nation in western Europe will feel much more at home than an East Asian will in another East Asian polity.

Integration in Europe is partially a return to the past. Western Europe was integrated politically during the Roman Empire, the heart of the western mainland formed the Carolingian realm, and the Habsburg reined over a multinational realm for centuries while the papacy provided a supranational institution unknown in Asia. In Asia, however, there is no unified past to return to (in fact the word "Asia" or ["a" 亞 in Chinese] is a European invention which is not native to any East Asian language). Korea and Vietnam were – at least formally – vassals of China, which is not a state of affairs which appeals to them. Japan was never incorporated into the Chinese political sphere, and its only contribution to Asian integration was imperialism, which does not provide a roadmap for the future.

EU enlargement to Central Europe

The enlargement of the EU to states recently freed from communism (and to Cyprus and Malta) has made the Union more heterogeneous. Yet, the vast majority of the new citizens, those from eastern Germany (integrated earlier through unification), Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Slovenia, and the Baltic Republics live in countries that belong, admittedly with differences, to the Western European tradition. The challenge is to help them overcome the legacy of their Soviet-imposed systems and the disastrous decades that followed World War I.

The History issue: Germany, Japan

We will now touch on the one similarity which almost all commentators mention, namely the contrast between (West) Germany's successful management of its history and Japan's failure to deal effectively with the crimes of the Showa Era. In many ways, (West)

Germany's predicament and Japan's were similar. But even there, there are important differences.

Before going into the differences between Germany and Japan, one should not that not apologizing, or doing very little, is the norm, be it in Turkey with regards to the Armenian genocide, in China concerning the Communist Party and the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution, or in the New World when it comes to the fate of native peoples. In the Japanese case, however, what is critical is that the history issue affects directly its relations with China, Korea, and the United States, and therefore its national interest.

Role of the US

The United States approached the German and Japanese cases differently. It was obvious for Americans that if they were to bring about a new Europe, Germans had to make peace with their neighbors, and therefore deal with their Nazi past. In the Japanese case, the United States occupation regime paid little attention to Japan's relations with the mainland of Asia, which were of far less importance to Washington than Germany's ties with the rest of Western Europe.

Moreover, the attitude of Americans towards German and Japanese atrocities was different. Germany and America are European Christian societies. For the fifty years preceding Hitler's regime, Germany was the leading intellectual and scientific power in the West. Its culture, its music, its philosophy, captivated Americans. To see this great Christian European nation fall into barbarism on European soil (as opposed to brutalizing Africans or Asians overseas) was shocking for Americans, and called for both punishment and redemption. Germany was held by the US and Europe to a higher moral standard than was expected of Asian "pagans." There is little doubt that no American would ever have tolerated the appointment of a former Hitler cabinet member as West German chancellor, but the United States government did not hesitate to welcome Prime Minister Kishi, a minister in Tojo's government, in Washington DC.

In addition, it was possible in West Germany to find senior political figures who were both politically acceptable to US and western interests, i.e. moderate conservatives, liberals, or social democrats, and relatively untainted by the Nazi era. In Japan, however, there were far fewer men (almost no women were in important positions) who could simultaneously serve American goals and had not been associated with the war-time regime.

Different geopolitical and cultural environments

As noted earlier, the (West) German leadership was well aware that something had to be done to about the past. Germany needed good relations with western Europe far more than Japan required better ties with China and Korea. Fundamentally, Japan's reintegration into

world affairs was a bilateral Japan-US story, whereas from the start West Germany's was multilateral, involving the US, but also France, Britain, the EU, the Atlantic Alliance, East Germany, Poland, and the Soviet Union. Sorting out Germany's relations with Israel, and through Israel with Jews throughout the world, was essential for Germany's image in the West.

Europeans and Israelis realized that they had to establish a working relationship with West Germany, for economic and/or strategic reasons, regardless of how they felt about Germans. For China and South Korea, however, Japan was not a priority in the decades following 1945. Therefore, unlike China and Korea, where to this day Japan-bashing can be a national sport supported by the government, most of Germany's partners have played a positive role in reaching out to the Germans. As a German diplomat told me, we extended a hand of friendship, and our victims reached out to us. It is worth noting that, in contrast to China's policy of ignoring the role of Japanese aid in its school curriculum, Israeli textbooks, at least in the secular state educational sector, mentions the 1955 agreement with Germany over reparations.¹

In addition, the much stronger transnational civil society linkages that exist in Europe, including churches, facilitated this process. One of the first acts of Polish-German reconciliation was a letter of Polish bishops to the German episcopate in 1965. The weakness of East Asian civil society made it more difficult to manage the process of healing the wounds of the past

The legacy of Soviet crimes has also helped Germany. In former communist countries, in particular Poland, it is Russia, rather than Germany, that is the focus of national hatred. Therefore, Germany becomes a more acceptable partner simply because it is not Russia.

Dissimilar experiences: Nazi regime and Showa Era

Showa Era atrocities were perpetrated almost exclusively against foreigners. Nazi Germany, however, also slaughtered many of its own citizens and forced countless others, often the country's best and brightest (Einstein is but one example), to find refuge in foreign lands. Even excluding the victims of anti-Semitism, many Germans were tortured or murdered by the Gestapo and the SS or forced into exile, whereas far fewer Japanese suffered from persecution by their own regime during the 1931-45 war. Furthermore, many of the Jews murdered in Central Europe, though not German, were part of the German cultural sphere (men like Arthur Koestler, who survived, come to mind). In addition, there were death factories on German soil, whereas Japan's massacres occurred overseas. This allowed many Western military commanders to force local residents to visit these camps to see for themselves what Germany had done, something that was not feasible in Japan.

Consequently, it is difficult for a German to be unaware of the crimes of Hitler – they are etched on German soil in Dachau, Buchenwald, and railroad stations. They are found in the biographies of great Germans killed or forced to flee, and in the histories of families who

lost relatives or friends to the Nazis. For Japanese, however, there is little at home to remind him of the crimes of the Showa War, making it easier to focus on the bombing of Japanese cities by the US Army Air Force and to forget the pain the Japanese military inflicted on enemy civilians and POWs.

One should also take into account a country's needs heroes, especially when it must come to terms with a shameful past. In Germany, there were men of honor who rebelled against the Nazis. Colonel Count von Stauffenberg, the aristocrat who attempted to kill Hitler and several of his co-conspirators come to mind. Willy Brandt, later the first social-democratic chancellor of West Germany, who fled to Scandinavia to join the struggle against the Nazis is another example. They were surely too few men and women who stood up to Hitler, but enough to find figures whom Germans could be proud of.

Japan has no counterparts to Stauffenberg or Brandt whose bravery could be held as proof that there was another Japan that stood up for decency. When Willy Brandt went on his knees in front of the memorial to the Warsaw Ghetto, all knew that the West German premier himself had an irreproachable past as an anti-Nazi. It is noticeable that when chancellor Schroeder attended the 60th anniversary of the Normandy landings in 2004, he came with an old man, who as a young army officer had helped plan to the operation to kill Hitler. There is no one comparable in Japan with whom the Japanese Emperor or the Prime Minister could visit Nanjing.

In addition, Hitler was a lower-class outcast surrounded by misfits of humble background and little education. They led a revolutionary movement, dedicated to crushing the old conservative order. They were open about their contempt for the aristocracy, the officer corps, and the capitalists. It was thus possible after the war to separate the evil Nazis from the rest of the nation, especially the bureaucratic and military elite, even though its great majority had served Hitler faithfully. The 13-year Reich could be portrayed as an abnormal psychotic parenthesis in German history.

In Japan, there was no Nazi revolution. The top criminals were generals and bureaucrats, operating under the Meiji Constitution. The Showa emperor himself, whose role during the war years remains unclear, stood at the apex of the state. Thus, unlike Germany, when Japan apologizes, it does so on behalf of venerable institutions. In Germany one can refer to atrocities perpetrated "in the name of Germany," implying that gangsters hijacked the state. In Japan, it is harder to paint the emperor, the court aristocrats, and the graduates of the service academies and Tokyo University as pirates who temporarily took the helm of the empire.

Conclusion

Therefore, the history of Europe tells us how different Asia is from Europe. Understanding the nature of the European integration and reconciliation processes demonstrates that East Asia will have to come up with its own version, rather than seek to adopt, or adapt, European experiences. If there is one lesson that Asia can learn from Europe, however, it is that complete and unreserved apologies, accompanied by generous compensation, pay. Today, German soldiers are stationed on Polish soil, German troops can parade in France, the German Army can deploy units to the Balkans, and when Israel needed to get one of its citizens freed from Hezbollah captivity it asked German intelligence to negotiate his liberation. The past is still a burden for Germany, but it has not prevented it from establishing productive ties with its former victims. Japan's road will have to be different, and the challenges it faces are not the same, but the German experience, and the behavior of Germany's neighbors, deserves to be studied in both Japan and the rest of Asia.

¹ I am grateful to Ralph Amelan, US embassy in Israel, for this information.