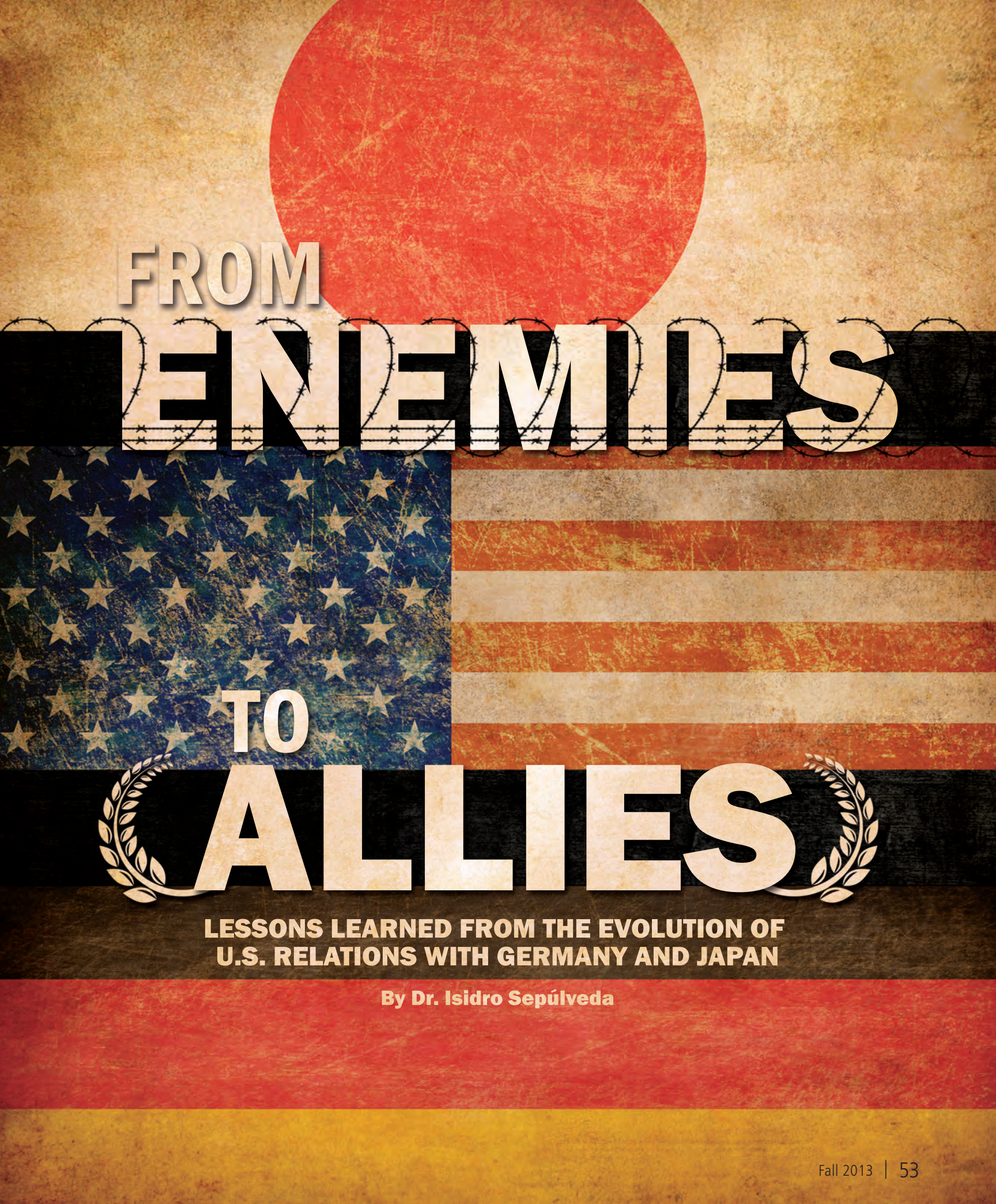

# FROM ENEMIES TO ALLIES

## LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE EVOLUTION OF U.S. RELATIONS WITH GERMANY AND JAPAN

By Dr. Isidro Sepúlveda

Early on a sunny morning in May 2003, Paul Bremer entered the former presidential palace of Saddam Hussein in Baghdad's new Green Zone. As the top U.S. administrator in Iraq, he should have felt like Douglas MacArthur after the surrender of Japan. But this was a different time and place.

A defeated Japan became a key ally of the United States, a relationship that endures today. Iraq remains a work in progress.

Nearly seven decades after the end of World War II, evaluating the evolution of U.S. relations with Germany and Japan reveals valuable lessons on transforming enmity into partnership. In Iraq and in Afghanistan, we are not there yet.

## With boots in the dust of rubble

At the end of World War I, the United States became a creditor to Europe and by the end of World War II, its indispensable protector. After the first struggle, Washington abstained from an expansive foreign policy, even declining integration into the League of Nations. But following World War II, isolationism was not an option. As General MacArthur said in his September 2, 1945, speech aboard the USS Missouri, "We must go forward to preserve in peace what we won in war."

The United States had achieved its greatest territorial expansion, taking over administration of a large number of Pacific islands. Militarily, it maintained occupying troops from the Philippines and Japan to Germany, while expanding its economic influence through the Marshall Plan, war loans and grants from liberated countries.

The United States was a superpower, with three-quarters of the global capital and two-thirds of the worldwide industrial capacity. This military and economic strength allowed for its rapid transposition in political and social influence, becoming the guarantor of global security and the role model for the Western world.

Between 1945 and 1947, the leaders of American foreign policy made changes unlike any other time in history. Even if the temptation to return to a new stage of isolation was reduced, the forming process of the "popular democracies" of Europe and their relationship with the Soviet Union forced the U.S. to confront a new perception of foreign policy.

The international order that arose from World War II was based on three fundamentals. First, the two superpowers—Russia being the second—that emerged from the war were declared anti-imperialist, which resulted in decolonization and the creation of more than 100 new states.

Second, the authority of the superpowers that systematically extended to all countries increased the global reach of the system. Even those who emphatically proclaimed "non-allegiance" emerged out of this process of decolonization.

And finally, the two superpowers were politically and economically antagonistic.

## From enemies to allies

Germany and Japan played unique roles in creating a new American foreign policy. They were not ordinary countries. Five years earlier they acted as superpowers. But by 1945 they had been defeated and occupied.

The United States had the ability to convert enemies—with militaristic and authoritarian regimes—into allies with fully democratic regimes and liberal economic systems. In each case the process was distinct.

In Germany, the occupation and the decoupling of the Soviet Union led to the division of the country into two ideologically opposing states.

In Japan, MacArthur had to force local politicians to draw up a second constitution since the first draft strayed considerably from comparable democratic principles.

While democracy building occurred, the war-ravaged nations rebuilt after suffering the lethal effects of new weapons including—for the first and last time in history—nuclear weapons.

The Cold War was instrumental in reconstruction. In the initial plans, MacArthur included a vision to avoid the resurgence of Japanese military power and the maintenance of the country's industrial, essentially agrarian, development at a low level. The outbreak of war in Korea demanded that the United States have industrial supplies as close as possible to the theater of operations. By relying on the industrial experience gained during the previous decades, the Japanese economic development plans met that goal and laid the foundations of what in the 1970s was known as the "Japanese Boom."

Even more quickly, the ideological confrontation in the heart of Europe forced the United States to implement the largest foreign aid program in its history—the Marshall Plan—and motivate reconstruction of German industry to levels higher than before the war. This led to what became known as the "German Miracle" in the 1960s.

By then, the defeated powers began to carry out the functions of their allies. Not only had they developed strong democratic systems and regained their economic strength, they became regional models of democratic stability and economic development.

Parallel to this process was a commitment to security and defense. The Warsaw Pact positioned Germany as the first stage for the communist expansion into Western Europe. Japan felt the threat of the Soviet Union. From Washington came security assurances that have endured to this day.

## Lessons learned

The slow transformation of U.S. relations with Germany and Japan solidified the friendship and its mutual applications. The lessons learned from this process show that the commitment to the defense of democracy and free markets sooner or later achieves success. But the extrapolation of these lessons to countries and cultures opposed to Western principles has not always produced the desired results. The long and traumatic experiences in Afghanistan and Iraq provide such evidence.

While all societies have the same basic needs, not all aspire to live in the same manner or be governed in the same way. Forcing change is counterproductive and solidifies radical positions.

Images of Iraqis euphorically receiving American troops and tearing down the statue of Saddam Hussein produced a mirage that led to unrealistic comparisons. Baghdad was not Berlin of 1945, and could not settle on a responsible government. Worse still, post-war violence disabled the peaceful reconstruction of democratic systems.

Nevertheless, hope should not be lost. Former German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer once said, "We all live under the same sky, but we do not all have the same horizon. In an instant age, perhaps we must relearn the ancient truth that patience, too, has its victories."

The lives of many young people and the effort of a generation may be the seeds of a future where people so distant can be linked toward the benefit of all. ★

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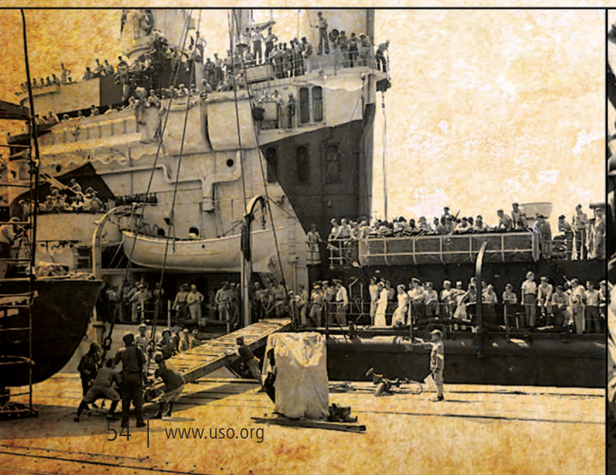


From left: A Japanese working party rigs the gangway as USS San Diego docks at Yokosuka, Japan, on August 30, 1945, to take part in the U.S. occupation of that facility. Navy photo

Pier-side scene during the U.S. occupation of Yokosuka possibly showing Marine Brigadier General William T. Clement, who commanded the landing party, greeting Navy Rear Admirals Oscar C. Badger and Robert B. Carney. Japanese officer in center is probably Vice Admiral Michitaro Tozuka, commander of the base. Navy photo

Troops distribute German-language newspapers. Army photo

Editor Heinrich Hollands of the *Aachener Nachrichten* watches as the first licensed newspaper comes off the press as General McClure looks on at right. Army photo