

# FDR's New World Order: A Chimerical Vision

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Strategically, the great issue of WWII was how to fill the vast power vacuum that would emerge from the defeat of the Axis powers. All four leaders of the allied powers sought to fill parts of this vacuum with geopolitical structures that would serve their respective interests.

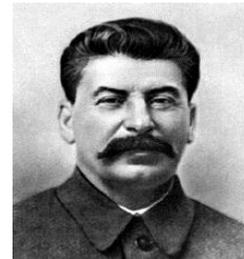
Churchill sought to reestablish the geopolitical structure put in place after WWI, which I have termed the Versailles system. He sought a more or less territorially intact Germany hedged in the west by an Anglo-French anchor and in the east by pro-British federations. Churchill also sought to restore the British Empire, recovering Asian colonies lost to Japan.



Chiang Kai-Shek's quest was more straightforward, but equally extensive, seeking the recovery of lands seized by Japan, such as Manchuria; by the Soviet Union, such as Outer Mongolia and Sinkiang; and by Great Britain, such as Hong Kong.



Stalin sought the creation of buffer states in Europe and Asia that would not only extend Soviet influence beyond its borders, but also protect against possible future invasion.



Only Franklin Delano Roosevelt had no territorial aspirations. He held the power to determine the ultimate outcomes, or combination of outcomes, of each of the other alliance members.



It is the thesis of this paper that at the conferences of Cairo, Tehran, and Quebec, FDR made offers to each of his allies that promised to fulfill their optimum strategic objectives. These offers were, however, mutually contradictory and could only be fulfilled insofar as each ally had the power to obtain FDR's support.

At Yalta, having led both Churchill and Chiang to believe that he supported each of them against the Soviet Union, FDR decided to satisfy Stalin's strategic designs at the expense of Churchill and Chiang Kai-Shek, in hopes of creating a lasting peace based on a U.S.-Soviet partnership. FDR's determined zeal to destroy German Fascism, Japanese militarism, and British colonialism opened the door to the emergence of Communist imperialism. It was a chimerical vision.

### *Early Discussions*

On the principle that one's own strategy cannot succeed unless he has defeated his opponents' strategy, FDR devoted little attention to the shape of the future during the first year after Pearl Harbor. He concentrated all efforts on defeating the Axis strategy. Only after the Axis defeats at Stalingrad and Guadalcanal did the president begin to address postwar issues, and then only schematically. FDR's first step was to insure that none of the allied partners succumbed to a separate peace, a goal advanced with the pronouncement of Unconditional Surrender at Casablanca in January 1943.

The first attempt to set forth a grand design came during the FDR-Eden talks of March 1943.<sup>1</sup> British Foreign Minister Anthony Eden

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<sup>1</sup> *Foreign Relations of the United States: The British Commonwealth, Eastern Europe, The Far East*, Volume III, 1943 (Washington, D.C.: Department of State, 1963), 1-48.

came to Washington prepared to discuss Britain's views on the shape of the postwar world and to represent Stalin's views, on which he had been briefed prior to his departure. The fundamental question was: what should be the geopolitical structure of states that would fill the vast political vacuum that would emerge in the wake of the defeats of Germany and Japan?

Both men agreed to support Stalin's minimum demand that the Soviet Union be accorded the terms of the Nazi-Soviet pact, which meant Soviet annexation of the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, and the eastern half of Poland, the reconstitution of Czechoslovakia as it had existed before 1938, the return of Bessarabia to the Soviet Union, and the reestablishment of the Finno-Soviet frontier with some territorial adjustments. Treaties with Romania and Finland would formalize the changes.

There were no Soviet proposals for the postwar treatment of Germany, no claim regarding Hungary, Austria, or anything relating to the Far East. Stalin's objectives, as expressed by Eden, were limited to securing the European invasion approaches to the Soviet Union and satisfying long-term Soviet strategic objectives for a territorial buffer in Eastern Europe.



Sir Anthony Eden, British Foreign Secretary 1940-45

FDR's and Eden's discussion of British and American strategies, however, was much broader, spanning the future structure of virtually the entire Eurasian land mass. FDR proposed a weak and disarmed postwar Europe from the Soviet border, wherever it was eventually drawn, to the Atlantic. He opposed the restoration to full power status of both Germany and France and believed peace in Europe would be preserved by the collaborative efforts of the United States, Britain, and the Soviet Union.

Eden proposed the restoration of the structure of Europe that had existed before Hitler, what I have termed the Versailles system that had emerged after WWI. The system posited a weak, but territorially integrated Germany surrounded in the west by the Anglo-French anchor and in the east by two federations of states linked to Britain and France. East European and Balkan federations would

function as both the eastern sector of German containment and as a barrier against Bolshevik expansion. This in fact was settled British strategy for Europe and Churchill would attempt to work toward this structure with every policy proposal he would make during the war.<sup>2</sup>

Stalin had already expressed his opposition to the federation concept. He was disinclined to accept a future Polish government run by the adamantly anti-Soviet leaders then residing in exile in London and he opposed the inclusion of Rumania in any Balkan federation, which would only be directed against the Soviet Union.

In the Far East, FDR proposed the establishment of a strong China to replace Japan. Reflecting the President's long-held opposition to European imperialism, he sought to assign a stabilizing role to China in Korea and in Indochina. In Asia, the United States, the Soviet Union, and China would collaborate to keep the peace and prevent a resurgence of Japanese militarism.

Eden disagreed with the concept of a strong China, believing that it would take years, and musing presciently, perhaps even a revolution, before the Chinese could build the power required to play a dominant role. Aside from reclaiming British imperial possessions, like Hong Kong and Singapore, however, Eden presented no clear conception for the postwar structure of the Far East.

During the talks, the President raised the idea of establishing a postwar world organization to replace the defunct League of Nations. Such an organization would have a general membership, but "real decisions should be made by the United States, Great Britain, Russia, and China, who would...have to police the world."<sup>3</sup>

Implicit in the talks was FDR's conception of postwar Soviet-American collaboration in both Europe and Asia with subordinate but important stabilizing roles to be played by Britain and China in their respective regions. In March of 1943 these were obviously preliminary thoughts about the postwar world. Serious and substantive proposals would have to await the further development of events on the battlefield. These would not be long in coming.

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<sup>2</sup> See Sir Llewellyn Woodward, *British Foreign Policy in the Second World War* (London: HMSO, 1962).

<sup>3</sup> FRUS, III, 1943, 39.

*The Emergence of FDR's New World Order*

In the week of July 5-12, 1943, the tide began to turn in favor of Allied forces in Europe, the Atlantic, the Mediterranean, and the Pacific. First came the Soviet counteroffensive following the failure of Hitler's Operation Citadel. Known as the battle of Kursk-Orel, it was the largest tank battle in history up to that time. The same week saw American-British forces invade Sicily, precipitating the surrender of Italy within two months. The autumn also saw the launch of major operations in the South and Central Pacific against Japan and the breaking of the German U-boat offensive in the Atlantic.

Assumption of the battlefield initiative meant that the outcome of the war was no longer in doubt. FDR sought meetings with allied leaders to discuss both the next steps on the battlefield as well as to begin the process of fleshing out respective postwar plans. FDR's eagerness to meet with his counterparts was also driven by intelligence rumors revealing Japanese efforts to broker a separate peace between Hitler and Stalin, as well as ongoing efforts to reach a similar agreement with Chiang Kai-Shek.<sup>4</sup>

Arranging for himself and Churchill to meet first with Chiang Kai-Shek at Cairo, Egypt (November 22-26), and then a few days later with Stalin at Tehran, Iran (November 27 to December 2), FDR put his strategy in motion. At Cairo, acting consistently with the view expressed earlier to Eden, FDR offered to make China a major power by war's end. Undoubtedly, FDR's knowledge that Stalin would enter the war against Japan after Germany's defeat colored his approach to Chiang.<sup>5</sup> Whether Chiang knew about Stalin's decision or not, FDR had to consider the prospect of Soviet armies filling the Japanese vacuum by entering Manchuria, and perhaps Korea, raising the ominous possibility that the Russians would emulate what the Japanese had done and seize control of these territories.

Thus, quite aside from the promise expressed in the Cairo Declaration to return Manchuria, as well as Formosa and the

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<sup>4</sup> Thomas O'Toole, "Japan Sought a German-Soviet Peace, War Data Show," *Washington Post*, September 12, 1978, A2.

<sup>5</sup> Stalin had declared his intention to Secretary of State Cordell Hull during the Moscow Conference a month earlier. Charles Bohlen, *Witness to History* (New York: Norton, 1973), 128.

Pescadores, to China after the war, and to bring about Korean independence “in due course,” FDR made three major commitments to Chiang.

First, FDR committed the United States to a major military campaign in Burma the following spring to break Japan’s blockade of China. Second, as part of a mutual assistance arrangement, he offered to arm and train ninety army divisions, which would give Chiang a million-man army and eventual great-power status.<sup>6</sup> Third, the president said that he would support China after the war against “foreign aggression.”<sup>7</sup>

Elaborating on what he meant by foreign aggression, FDR agreed to the granting of independence to Korea, Indochina, and the restoration of independence to Thailand. The clear inference was that China’s influence would be enhanced and Russian, French, and British influence, respectively, would be excluded from these areas, including Hong Kong. He also proposed a “leading role” for China in the post-war occupation of Japan.

Chiang Kai-shek was gratified by the President’s offers because after two years of American involvement in the Pacific war China had had little to show for it in terms of actual military support. He realized that FDR’s promise to build a million-man army, if realized, would take time and so sought to establish a postwar U.S. presence in the Far East as a counterweight to the Soviet Union, offering the joint use of Port Arthur (Lushun) on the Liaotung peninsula in Manchuria. FDR agreed to consider Chiang’s offer.

FDR promised much, indeed, promising what amounted to Chinese hegemony in the Far East after the war, while asking little in return. But what he did ask for raised troubling questions about what he had promised. As the President’s son, Elliot, recounted, the President insisted that as Chiang’s government

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<sup>6</sup> General Marshall confirmed FDR’s commitment to provide ninety divisions to General Stillwell shortly after Cairo. See Charles Romanus and Riley Sunderland, *Stillwell’s Command Problems* (Washington, D.C.: OCMH, 1956), 64. On the subsequent confusion that surrounded the ninety-division issue, see FRUS, *The Conferences at Cairo and Tehran, 1943* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1961), 889-90.

<sup>7</sup> FRUS *Cairo and Tehran*, 323-25.

“was hardly the modern democracy that ideally it should be...he would have to form a unity government, while the war was still being fought, with the Communists in Yenan. And he [Chiang] agreed... contingently. He agreed to the formation of a democratic government once he had our assurance that the Soviet Union would agree to respect the frontier in Manchuria.”<sup>8</sup>

FDR’s request that Chiang form a coalition government with the Chinese Communists laid the germ of the President’s grand design for the postwar Far East. Its full scope, however, would not emerge at Cairo, but three days later at Tehran in the deal he would work out with Stalin.



Stalin, FDR, and Churchill meet at Tehran. Churchill’s expression is symbolic of his dissatisfaction with the course of the conference, at which Roosevelt cooperated with Stalin to the detriment of British interests. Not present was Chiang Kai-Shek, whose hopes for an integrated China were also dashed at Tehran, despite FDR’s prior promises to that effect. ([Wikipedia](#))

### *FDR’s Deal With Stalin*

At Tehran, the “Big Three” made major decisions regarding current and projected military operations. The most important of these, of course, was the allied invasion of Europe. Coordinating *Overlord* with a Soviet offensive from the east occupied a substantial portion of the meetings of the three leaders and their staffs. While some discussion of postwar matters took place in Churchill’s presence, it was in FDR’s three private one-on-one meetings with Stalin that the President unveiled his conception of a new world order, along the

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<sup>8</sup> Elliot Roosevelt, *As He Saw It* (New York: Duell, Sloan & Pearce, 1946), 163-64.

lines of, but much further than, the ideas he had sketched out to Eden earlier in the year.

The President's plan centered around four main policies. First, was the convergence of Allied forces on Germany and Japan, resulting not only in their defeat, but also in their dismemberment and occupation to eradicate permanently their war making power. Second, it was *inter alia* to satisfy the Soviet Union's security needs by insuring the establishment of friendly states around the Soviet periphery. Third, was to provide the essentially land-locked Soviet Union with access to the seas of the world. And fourth, to construct international machinery whose function would be to maintain and manage the new order.



On Germany, the three leaders agreed on the destruction of the Reich, but offered different formulas for the future. The map to the left shows FDR's proposal to divide Germany into five self-governing parts (Prussia, Hannover, Saxony, Hesse-Darmstadt, and Bavaria-Baden-Württemberg) and

two areas under international control (Kiel-Hamburg and Saar-Ruhr).<sup>9</sup> Churchill countered with a milder proposal to separate only Prussia from Germany and construct a Danubian federation of Bavaria-Baden-Württemberg and the Palatinate.

Stalin, preferring FDR's proposal, but critical of both, declared "if Germany was to be dismembered it should really be

<sup>9</sup> Adapted from a map on [Wikipedia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1945_Plan_for_Germany).

dismembered.” Moreover, he opposed the creation of any federation. The danger to be prevented, he said, was German reunification. Thus, while all three leaders agreed Germany must be dismembered, they could not reach agreement on a specific plan. That task was entrusted to the European Advisory Commission created for the purpose.<sup>10</sup>

Japan’s fate also came under discussion, but most of it was omitted from the official conference record, save for Stalin’s reaffirmation of his intention to enter the Pacific war three months after the defeat of Germany. In the formal conference record, there was no discussion, for instance, of dismembering Japan, as there was of Germany. Stalin could publicly “make no commitments” regarding the disposition of Japan’s conquered territories, ostensibly because the Soviet Union was not at war with Japan and the Neutrality Treaty with Tokyo was still in force.

Part of the reason the official record was expunged, it seems, was because of sensitivity regarding the enormity of territorial changes affecting China. Part of it also was to conceal an extraordinary agreement FDR and Stalin had reached resolving a fundamental conflict of Soviet and American strategies. Long-term Soviet strategy had been to establish buffer zones around the borders of the nation. In Europe, this meant the creation of satellite states in Eastern Europe; in the Far East, the buffer zones were Manchuria, Outer Mongolia, and Sinkiang. The Soviets had already established a satellite state in Outer Mongolia and supported a friendly warlord in Sinkiang, but the key issue was Manchuria and who would control it after Japan’s defeat.

For close to half a century the United States had espoused the strategy of the Open Door for China, which meant unreserved support for Chinese territorial integrity, including Manchuria, which FDR had pledged publicly to return to China. American and Russian strategies were thus in direct conflict. FDR’s solution to this fundamental conflict was to propose that in return for Soviet commitment to China’s territorial integrity, the United States would insure that the Soviet Union’s “preeminent interests” would be safeguarded in Manchuria.

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<sup>10</sup> FRUS *Cairo and Tehran*, 600-04.

The heart of the deal was Soviet “preeminence” in Manchuria and the President sought to insure it through Soviet control over railways and ports (and, as would later become clear, direct occupation of the region by the Chinese Communists, then in far off Yenan). In discussing Soviet access to Far Eastern warm water ports, for example, FDR “mentioned Dairen [adjacent to Port Arthur on the Liaotung peninsula] as a possibility.” Stalin said he did not think the Chinese would like such a scheme, but the President thought, “they would like the idea of a free port under international guaranty.” Stalin assented with the comment “that would not be bad.”<sup>11</sup>

The deal over ports and railways would later be formalized in the secret agreement at Yalta, but FDR himself leaked the fact that they had discussed Far Eastern matters shortly after Tehran. In remarks to the Pacific War Council several weeks after the conference, FDR claimed “Marshal Stalin had specifically agreed” to the Cairo terms and to Korean independence after a forty year tutelage. He agreed that China should *own* the Manchurian railway system and should acquire the Ryukyu Islands from Japan. The Soviet Union wanted to obtain Sakhalin and the Kurile Islands. The official record contains none of these points, but to indicate their authenticity, FDR’s remarks to the Pacific War Council were included as an appendix to the official FRUS conference volume.<sup>12</sup>

If FDR had to conceal the deal about a disguised Soviet buffer zone in Manchuria, such was manifestly not the case over Eastern Europe. Based on Stalin’s pact with Hitler, the President accepted Soviet annexation of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, noting only that “it would be helpful for him personally if some public declaration in regard to future elections... could be made.”<sup>13</sup>

On Poland, the President not only agreed to Stalin’s proposal for the establishment of a “friendly” state, he offered a more generous package than the eastern half of the country Stalin had obtained from Hitler. FDR said that he “would like to see the eastern border moved further to the west [than Stalin had proposed] and the western border

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<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 567.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 868-69. Elliot Roosevelt, *As He Saw It*, 179-80, also confirms their discussion.

<sup>13</sup> FRUS *Cairo and Tehran*, 595.

moved even to the River Oder.”<sup>14</sup> His proposal would shift Poland some two hundred miles westward into Germany.

It was also clear from Stalin’s remarks that the progress of Soviet forces across Romania and Bulgaria would determine the political orientations of those countries. FDR raised no objections to Stalin’s observations, leaving the impression that he would have a free hand there.<sup>15</sup> Finally, FDR agreed to Stalin’s terms for Finland, which would have eviscerated Finland’s independence. These terms included a restoration of the 1940 treaty and a purge of the Finnish army.<sup>16</sup>

On the subject of granting the Soviet Union access to the seas and warm-water ports, FDR addressed four areas: the Mediterranean, the Baltic, the Far East, and the Persian Gulf. He proposed a revision of the Montreaux convention which governed passage through the Dardanelles to the Mediterranean. He “liked the idea” of placing the Kiel Canal under international control to guarantee Soviet access to the North Sea. He offered as noted above to grant Soviet access to the Chinese port of Darien, which would also be placed under international guaranty, and, finally, in a proviso that was omitted from the conference record, FDR wanted to construct a free port at the head of the Persian Gulf, “take over the whole railroad from there into Russia, and run the thing for the good of all.”<sup>17</sup>

FDR also proposed establishment of a world organization, which would legitimize and manage the postwar order. Proposing a three-tiered structure, the President envisaged a general assembly of thirty-five, or so nations which would meet periodically and make recommendations to a smaller executive committee of ten. The executive committee would have the power to deal with “all non-military questions.” The third and smallest group, which FDR termed the “four policemen,” would “have the power to deal immediately with any threat to the peace.” The four would be the United States, the Soviet Union, Great Britain, and China.<sup>18</sup> France was excluded.

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<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 594.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 544-45 and 588-89.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 592.

<sup>17</sup> Foreign Relations of the United States, *Diplomatic Papers 1944, Volume V, The Near East, South Asia, and Africa, The Far East* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1965), 483.

<sup>18</sup> FRUS *Cairo and Tehran*, 530.

Although France was not included in his proposal, the future of France came under discussion. Both FDR and Stalin opposed Churchill's view that France should be restored as a powerful state after the war. FDR was "100% in agreement with Marshal Stalin" that the French "must pay for their criminal collaboration with Germany." Disparaging De Gaulle, he said after the war no Frenchman over forty or any who had been part of the present government should be permitted to return to public life. France must be stripped of its overseas possessions; Syria and Lebanon should become independent and Indochina placed under trusteeship.<sup>19</sup>



Churchill, appalled by the outcome at Tehran, attempted a counterstrategy at the Cairo II conference in December 1943. Turkish President İnönü, whom Churchill hoped to entice into the war, sits between Roosevelt and Churchill. ([Library of Congress](#))

Even more stunning was FDR's turn against Chiang Kai-shek. At Cairo, Chiang had sought to obtain FDR's support to keep the Soviets out of Manchuria. This was the offer for joint cooperation at Port Arthur. Yet, at Tehran, just a few days later, FDR offered to *include* the Soviet Union at the adjacent port of Darien under an international guaranty. This was a fig leaf to cover over the plan to secure the Soviet Union's "preeminent interests" in Manchuria that went well beyond Darien to domination of the entire region.

Of all this, the more Churchill learned the more he was horrified. The new world order FDR unveiled at Tehran would be an American-Soviet condominium in which France, China, and Great

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 484.

Britain, not to mention lesser powers, would be reduced to subservient pawns. Worse, when the war ended and the United States withdrew, the Soviet Union would be the dominant power holding sway over both Europe and the Far East.

### *Churchill's Counter Strategy*

After Tehran, Churchill and FDR went back to Cairo for further consultations. There, the British leader initiated a broadly based counterstrategy. Churchill could not oppose FDR openly, only indirectly, but his purpose was to turn American strategy toward Britain and away from the U.S.-Soviet condominium. He sought to gain agreement on policies which would enable him to reestablish the Versailles system in Europe—a more or less whole Germany, the French anchor, and East European federations, and to recover the essential parts of the British Empire in Asia—principally Singapore and Hong Kong. All subsequent British policy must be evaluated in terms of the goals of restoring the Versailles system and preservation of the British Empire.

Churchill argued that the Tehran meeting had produced two important decisions: the Soviet decision to enter the Pacific War and the decision to mount the cross-channel invasion of France. For Overlord to have the “greatest chance of success,” Churchill believed, the contemplated simultaneous attack in southern France (codenamed Anvil) would have to be as strong as possible.<sup>20</sup>

Anvil should be on a scale of at least two divisions, which, Churchill blithely expanded, could provide landing craft for flanking operations in Italy and, if Turkey entered the war, capture Rhodes, too, although he quickly went on to say that “Rhodes had no longer the great importance which he had previously attached to it”.

It was in relation to Overlord, Churchill went on, that operations in Southeast Asia “must be judged,” and in his view the planned allied invasion of Burma (codenamed Buccaneer) was too costly. In view of the Soviet decision to enter the war the Allies would obtain a far better position from which to carry on the conflict against

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 676.

Japan from bases in Siberia than would be the case from bases in southern China resulting from the Burma operation.

FDR replied that all three operations, Overlord, Anvil, and Buccaneer, could be conducted without impairing the viability of any of them. Admiral King supported this view by confirming that since Overlord had been moved from May 1 to June 1 there would be more time to construct additional landing craft that would be sufficient for all theaters. But Churchill insisted that if more equipment became available it should be diverted for Overlord and Anvil and “pointed to the great military advantages that were to be gained by operations in the Aegean.” Turkey, Bulgaria, Romania, and Hungary “might all fall into our hands.... If we could get a grip on the Balkans, there would be a tremendous abridgment of our difficulties.” “All this,” he said, “would help Overlord.”<sup>21</sup>

FDR strove to reach a compromise with Churchill, agreeing that Overlord and Anvil were of primary importance. As far as operations in the Eastern Mediterranean were concerned, “if Turkey came into the war,” somehow it would be possible to “scrape up” the necessary landing craft to mount an attack. Finally, regarding the Burma offensive, FDR said that we should instruct Lord Mountbatten, commander of the Southeast Asian operation, “to go ahead and do his best with what has already been allocated to him.”

Churchill agreed with all the President had said, but the last point, on which he continued to demur. He maintained “it might be necessary to withdraw resources from Buccaneer in order to strengthen up Overlord and Anvil.” FDR declared that without very good reason “he could not agree with this,” to which Churchill rejoined that Overlord was a very good reason. Moreover, he said with finality, “he had never committed himself to the scale or timing of the amphibious operation in the Southeast Asian theatre.”<sup>22</sup>

Churchill's last comment was decisive. FDR agreed to postpone the Burma offensive until later in 1944 and a message to this effect was sent to Chiang Kai-Shek. It was a fateful decision in several respects. FDR had failed to uphold a major commitment to the

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<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 679-80.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 680-81.

Chinese leader, the first of several, which, moreover, meant that there would be no substantial American ground force on the China mainland with which to influence events at war's end.

On the other hand, Churchill had taken an important step in a longer-ranged plan. By obtaining the postponement of *Buccaneer* and the transfer of resources to *Anvil* he increased the quantity of forces that would be available in the Mediterranean theater. It also kept open the possibility of rerouting the advance to Japan from Burma through Southeast Asia and along the China coast, which would more directly support British interests.

After Cairo II, Churchill's counterstrategy brought Britain into direct confrontation with the United States. From November 1943 to March 1944, he mounted a major, desperate bombing campaign to knock Germany out of the war. In the spring, he sought to reach an accommodation with Stalin over respective Soviet and British influence in Romania and Greece. After *Overlord* began, he sought to insert British ground forces into Southeastern Europe, his soft underbelly scheme. Finally, he also sought to reestablish a pro-British Poland, a story best told in the context of the Warsaw uprising.

All of it, however, was a long shot, which, paradoxically depended upon the United States for its success. Britain was operating at a fundamental disadvantage: outgunned, outmonied, outmanned, and outmaneuvered by FDR and Stalin. But Churchill was determined to pursue the reconstitution of the Versailles strategy for Europe and recovery of lost colonial possessions in Asia.



The RAF bombing campaign of November 1943 to March 1944 tried to knock Germany out of the war before Roosevelt's vision for postwar Europe could be achieved. The RAF inflicted great damage and casualties but did not cause Germany to collapse. Here, an RAF Lancaster returns from a night mission to Berlin. ([Wikipedia](#))

The first step was the massive bombing campaign against Berlin in hopes of knocking Germany out of the war. Beginning November 18, 1943 and continuing for 132 days until the end of March 1944, Air Marshal Arthur “Bomber” Harris interspersed sixteen large-scale raids involving several hundred aircraft with thirty-two smaller ones involving one or two dozen each.<sup>23</sup>

The attacks inflicted considerable damage on Berlin and indiscriminate killings of civilians, but at very high cost. Harris expected losses of between four and five hundred planes from an inventory of over three thousand, but actual totals were over a thousand planes lost with over sixteen hundred damaged. The final raid on Nuremberg, March 30, 1944 resulted in ninety-four planes lost and seventy-one damaged, of 795 sent. Following the Nuremberg Raid, Eisenhower took control of Bomber Command on the grounds of needing this important asset for Overlord.

It was agreed that in coordination with Overlord the Soviet Union would mount a major counteroffensive. That, of course, would put Moscow in position to exert a powerful influence on the political reconstruction of the entire area from the Baltic to the Mediterranean. By mid-April, even before their summer offensive, Soviet armies had reconquered all of the territories held when war broke out in 1939. Churchill’s plan was to seek a quid pro quo with Stalin over Romania and Greece and support from FDR for the reconstitution of a pro-British Poland.

British discussions with the Russians occurred without American involvement or knowledge until, in mid-June, apprised of them, FDR consented to a temporary sphere of influence agreement overruling the objections of the State Department. These early British-Russian discussions would ultimately evolve into a major spheres of influence agreement for all of southeast Europe, but that takes us slightly ahead of the story.

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<sup>23</sup> Richard Overy, *The Bombers and the Bombed: Allied Air War Over Europe, 1940-1945* (New York: Viking, 2014), chapter 3.

Churchill's effort to obtain Stalin's support for a sphere of influence agreement in southeastern Europe occurred simultaneously with his plan to obtain FDR's support for a pro-British Poland. Churchill hoped that he could also use the Polish issue to drive a wedge between FDR and Stalin. But, while FDR sought to broker a compromise, he effectively supported the Lublin Poles over the London Poles, which meant that prospects were not good for establishing a pro-British Poland and reconstituting an east European federation between Germany and the Soviet Union.



Churchill vehemently opposed Operation Anvil-Dragoon, the August 1944 invasion of southern France. He favored an invasion in the Adriatic. ([U.S. Navy](#))

The climax of Churchill's efforts to shape a favorable East European settlement came in early August following the Normandy landings. In conjunction with the landings, the partisan war had erupted behind German lines and Churchill spared no effort to augment and support it. He had sent Polish exile Prime Minister Stanislaw Mikołajczyk first to Washington to obtain FDR's support and then to Moscow to see Stalin. He was in Moscow when the Warsaw uprising began and when Churchill sought FDR's support for an allied landing of forces at the head of the Adriatic.

After the Normandy beachhead had been established Churchill argued strenuously *against* Anvil in favor of using the accumulated resources for a large Balkan operation through the Ljubljana gap.<sup>24</sup> Such a move, of course, would have alleviated British difficulties in Southeastern Europe immeasurably, counterbalancing the Soviet Union. It would have placed Great Britain in position to exert strong influence on the immediate and post-war political

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<sup>24</sup> Herbert Feis, *Churchill, Roosevelt, Stalin* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), 344-46.

situations in Yugoslavia, Greece and Albania, and, depending on the scale of the effort, possibly on Bulgaria, Hungary, and Romania, just as Churchill had said at the second Cairo meeting. It conceivably might have had an impact on the outcome of the Warsaw uprising as well.

The climax of the British-American argument over the proposed Balkan campaign came during a series of heated meetings between Churchill and General Eisenhower that occurred after the beginning of the Warsaw uprising during “the first ten days of August.”<sup>25</sup> Churchill threatened to resign his office if approval was not forthcoming, but Eisenhower was unmoved. Nevertheless, despite failing to obtain U.S. agreement, Churchill took it upon himself to seek Tito’s support for a landing at the head of the Adriatic. In a meeting with the Yugoslav partisan leader on August 12-13, Churchill handed him a message that read:

“In the event of Allied forces occupying Northern Italy, Austria or Hungary...the *Supreme Allied Commander* looks to the Yugoslav authorities to cooperate with him in carrying out this policy....”<sup>26</sup>

Tito wanted no part of British landings on the Adriatic coast, which suggests that there was a clear sense of desperation that led Churchill to take this step. The German position in southeastern Europe was crumbling fast. There was emerging, in the words of Liddell Hart, “the widest open flank that had ever been known in modern war.”<sup>27</sup> The Russian offensive would precipitate the surrenders of Romania on August 23 and Bulgaria on September 6, as the Germans, having lost one hundred thousand troops in Romania, sought to extricate their remaining forces from Yugoslavia and Greece.

Churchill’s failure to obtain FDR’s agreement to move fast and deep into Southeast Europe pushed the Prime Minister to the brink of rupturing relations with the United States. Their differences

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<sup>25</sup> Dwight D. Eisenhower, *Crusade in Europe* (New York: Garden City, 1948), 281-82. Following Eisenhower’s rejection of Churchill’s proposal, the Prime Minister sent a message to Hopkins on August 6, recommending that the ANVIL force be sent to St. Nazaire, instead, to join the OVERLORD force, but it came to naught. See Robert E. Sherwood, *Roosevelt and Hopkins* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1948), 812.

<sup>26</sup> Winston S. Churchill, *Triumph and Tragedy* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1953), 76-77.

<sup>27</sup> B. H. Liddell Hart, *History of the Second World War* (New York: Putnam, 1971), 585.

were strategic and fundamental, but centered on timing. Churchill wanted to deploy Allied power as fast and as far to the east as possible, but for FDR the overriding consideration was how to slow the advance of British-American forces to permit Soviet forces to advance into Germany and southeastern Europe.

We have consistently subsumed these strategic differences as personality, or other conflicts among commanders, but there can be no question that commanders followed the direction of their political superiors. Thus, to cite one of many examples, General Eisenhower's refusal to permit General Devers' 6th Army Group to cross the Rhine at Strasbourg in November 1944 is attributed to a personality conflict, rather than to a decision that reflected FDR's strategy.<sup>28</sup>

Churchill's disagreement with FDR prompted him to arrange for a private meeting with Stalin in Moscow. FDR, belatedly realizing how deeply he had alienated Churchill, persuaded him to come to Quebec first for a meeting with him.



Roosevelt and Churchill at Quebec, September 1944. ([FDR Library](#))

*Quebec: An Offer Churchill Could Not Refuse*

The FDR-Churchill meeting at Quebec, September 11-16, 1944, is known to us mainly for the fiasco of the Morgenthau Plan proposing the harsh postwar treatment of Germany. But, in fact, its significance was far greater, amounting to a major shift in FDR's position to support for British objectives. In short, at Quebec, in discussing the entire range of policy issues since Tehran, FDR made Churchill an offer he did not expect, but was gratified to receive, for it promised the fulfillment of British grand strategy—and survival of the empire.

For FDR, however, in what was perhaps his most carefully choreographed conference of the war, most of his promises were but

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<sup>28</sup> David Colley, *Decision at Strasbourg* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2008).

temporary expedients designed to maintain alliance cohesion, and would vanish in the final weeks of the war like the Cheshire Cat's smile. This may account for FDR's decision not to invite Hopkins to the conference, ostensibly because he had "lost confidence" in him.<sup>29</sup> However, it would be the first and only time that he was so excluded. Hopkins was Churchill's confidante and FDR did not want him present offering advice and counsel to Churchill.

It would be fair to say that FDR drew Churchill to Quebec on false pretences. In what would be Hopkins only involvement in the conference, on August 19, he assured Churchill that "the President wishes to discuss military requirements for Phase II with you at your next meeting." FDR followed up this message to Churchill with one of August 30, saying, "we can renew our Tehran talk about Trieste and Istria at Octagon."<sup>30</sup> Thus, to entice him to Quebec, FDR promised Churchill that the United States would continue to provide financial and other assistance in the form of Lend Lease beyond the defeat of Germany and offered a favorable response to what he had up to now opposed – Churchill's desire for a landing at the head of the Adriatic and a drive into Eastern Europe.

Churchill's objectives were primarily to reach agreement on major military questions that would support British strategy, the reconstitution of the Versailles system in Europe, the recovery of imperial positions in the Far East, and the financial assistance that would sustain Britain after the war. Thus, the key issues he wished to discuss were the final assault on Germany, the capture of Berlin, the recurring issue of Eastern and Southeastern Europe, recovery of positions in Asia, especially Singapore and Hong Kong, and British participation in the war against Japan. The postwar treatment of Germany was not on his agenda, nor did he anticipate that the subject would come up.

FDR's overriding concern, on the other hand, was to insure common purpose through the endgame, including the postwar treatment of Germany, which, intelligence reports falsely indicated, was on the verge of collapse. FDR thus significantly, but temporarily,

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<sup>29</sup> Sherwood, *Roosevelt and Hopkins*, 814.

<sup>30</sup> Foreign Relations of the United States, *Conference at Quebec, 1944* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1972), 17, 24.

reversed his strategy and made a series of conciliatory offers that, in total, promised support for Churchill's objectives through the end of the war and the continued existence of the empire afterward. The President laid it on thick, saying that it was "a matter of profound satisfaction" to him that "at each succeeding conference... there had been ever increasing solidarity of outlook and identity of basic thought."<sup>31</sup>

On the reconstitution of the Versailles system, which involved the reestablishment of French power, a territorially integrated postwar Germany, and pro-British federations in Eastern and Southeastern Europe, FDR agreed to most of what the prime minister wished, except for France. FDR's attitude remained obdurate against De Gaulle, refusing to recognize the French Committee of National Liberation. He refused to extend Lend Lease and was against the reestablishment of France as a major power, and especially opposed recovery of French colonies. Churchill preferred "a De Gaulle France than a Communist France," but raised no objection, perhaps realizing that the issue of France and De Gaulle could be addressed later, after the main objectives in Germany and Eastern Europe were dealt with.<sup>32</sup>

As for the final drive into Germany and moves into Eastern and Southeastern Europe, FDR changed his positions. He now agreed that the main effort against Germany would be "on the left," that is in the north, as opposed to a southern advance and insured that Supreme Commander Eisenhower proffered a plan to this effect.<sup>33</sup> It seemed that FDR had agreed to the plan to seize Berlin before the Russians did, which would result in a substantially intact postwar Germany and the prospect of exerting leverage on the political reconstruction of Eastern Europe.<sup>34</sup>

Churchill also proposed a deployment of forces from the head of the Adriatic, Istria, and possibly from northern Italy, for an advance

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<sup>31</sup> "Meeting of the Combined Chiefs of Staff With Roosevelt and Churchill," September 13, 1944, *Ibid.*, 316.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 295, 423, 469.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 302.

<sup>34</sup> "Military Conclusions of the Conference," September 16, 1944, *Ibid.*, 469-76. Oddly, the agreement on occupation zones for postwar Germany showed Berlin well inside the Russian zone and the British zonal boundary at the Elbe River, over a hundred miles to the west.

through the Ljubljana Gap, giving Hitler what he termed a “stab in the armpit.” The objective should be “to get into Vienna before the Russians did.”<sup>35</sup> Such a drive would counter the advance of Soviet forces and offer an opportunity to promote British federation interests in Central Europe. Churchill was already preparing to move forces into Greece as part of his plan to create a federation in Southeastern Europe. Indeed, this was his proposed topic of conversation for his upcoming meeting with Stalin.

FDR agreed to retain 5th Army in Italy and made no objection to the proposed right turn into Eastern Europe. Both Leahy and Marshall emphasized that they had no “intention to withdraw troops from the Fifth Army.” FDR also agreed to retain amphibious landing craft in the Mediterranean. Admiral King spoke positively of amphibious operations “in Istria,” and of his intention to retain landing craft there for British use.<sup>36</sup> FDR also agreed to the return of Bomber Command to British control.<sup>37</sup> Finally, FDR publicly declared to Austrian Crown Prince Otto his determination to keep the communists out of Hungary and Austria.<sup>38</sup>

All this was music to Churchill’s ears, but FDR was attempting to resolve a major problem that he himself had created and only belatedly saw coming. FDR had committed the United States to the principle of supporting friendly states bordering the Soviet Union. Based on the prewar borders of the USSR, that referred only to Finland, Poland and Romania (Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania had been absorbed into the USSR in accordance with the Nazi-Soviet Pact).

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<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 314.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 303-4.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 309-10.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 298.

When FDR decided to move Poland two hundred miles to the west into Germany, it moved the Soviet border to Czechoslovakia. If Czechoslovakia's eastern province of Ruthenia were ceded to Russia, as it would be in June 1945, then the Soviet Union would have a direct border on Hungary. The President trotted out several formulas to avoid this outcome, including establishing Lvov as an international zone and drawing the southwestern border of Poland at Lvov instead of the River Neisse, to no avail. As we know, not only would the Soviets take control of Hungary, but of eastern Austria, as well.

On Poland, where Roosevelt and Churchill had fundamentally disagreed, the President had also changed his position. The Warsaw uprising had reached a critical stage during the Quebec meeting. Churchill wanted to provide support for the embattled Poles, who, if successful, could establish a provisional government in Warsaw. FDR agreed, offering to send "immediate aid to the Warsaw garrison," if the Russians would help.<sup>39</sup> After the conference, while at Hyde Park, Churchill pressed the President to send a message to Stalin requesting Soviet permission to use Soviet-controlled airfields in Romania to send supplies as well as pressing the Soviets to support the Poles. FDR agreed, and a message was drafted, but never sent.<sup>40</sup> Nevertheless, Churchill would send Mickolayczyk to Moscow a second time to seek Stalin's support with a copy of this telegram.<sup>41</sup>



The pre-war USSR had no access to Czechoslovakia or Hungary. Moving Poland westward and absorbing the Czech province of Ruthenia gave the Soviets this access after 1945. FDR vainly tried to avoid this by arguing that postwar Poland should include the province of Galicia and the city of Lwow. (Map adapted from [Wikipedia](#))

<sup>39</sup> "The Secretary of State to the Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Harriman)," September 12, 1944, *Ibid.*, 398.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 296-97.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

In the Far East, Churchill offered to contribute a British fleet and a thousand bombers to the final assault against Japan. FDR accepted his offer wholeheartedly, but the Joint Chiefs, particularly Admiral King, only reluctantly agreed, and only if British forces could be self-supporting. The Joint Chiefs, in fact, did not welcome British participation, considering it unnecessary for the assault against Japan. But Churchill had something else in mind.

Churchill agreed to open a major air route to China, but wanted to “liquidate” the Burma ground campaign as soon as possible, and move on through Southeast Asia. This was Plan Dracula, which would enable him to recover Singapore and Hong Kong. FDR preferred an “end run” strategy, which would bypass Singapore, but Churchill insisted that British forces recover the British colony “in battle,” rather than obtain it at the peace table.<sup>42</sup>

The growing problem of Chiang Kai-Shek’s relations with Stilwell was folded into FDR’s plan to show support for British strategy. The Japanese were attacking Lung Ling, a town on the China-Burma border. Chiang was pressing Stilwell to either divert Japanese forces by attacking Bhamo, south of Lung Ling, or reinforcing Lung Ling itself. Stilwell refused, complaining to Marshall, who was at that time in Quebec.

It was a critical moment and one affected by FDR’s reversal of policy toward Churchill. Chiang was on the verge of appointing Stilwell in command of all of China’s armies, as requested by FDR. But FDR’s peremptory reply to Chiang precipitated a near rupture in U.S.-China relations, which had the effect of putting the Burma campaign on hold and *inter alia* showing support for Churchill’s Plan Dracula.<sup>43</sup>

FDR also agreed to the establishment of British power and influence in the Mediterranean and at both ends of the Suez-Red Sea corridor to India. Harold Macmillan would become head of the Allied Commission for Italy and Britain would gain essential control of the Italian colonies in North Africa. Britain would exercise control either through trusteeship or directly over Libya, a reconstituted greater

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<sup>42</sup> “Meeting of the Combined Chiefs of Staff with Roosevelt and Churchill,” September 13, 1944, *Ibid.*, 316.

<sup>43</sup> For a detailed treatment of this explosive issue, see the author’s *China: A Political History, 1917-1980* (Boulder: Westview, 1982), 153-55.

Somaliland, around the Horn to Kenya, and have bases at Crete and Rhodes.<sup>44</sup>

Nor was this all. Regarding “the necessity for keeping the British Empire strong,” FDR also agreed to the “complete interchange” of information on atomic energy research. He offered Britain Europe’s “steel business” after the war, given the decision to prevent Germany from maintaining a weapons industry.<sup>45</sup>

It was ironically Churchill himself who set the stage for FDR’s proposal for the harsh postwar treatment of Germany. Anxious to obtain \$6.5 billion in Stage II financial assistance following Germany’s defeat, the Prime Minister insisted that Treasury Secretary Henry Morgenthau be present at Quebec when FDR made the commitment, presumably to effect a prompt transfer of funds. So, FDR invited Morgenthau to Quebec, not only to deal with the financial issue, but specifically “to talk about Germany.”<sup>46</sup> He did not invite either Secretary of State Hull, or Secretary of War Stimson, who both also had proposed plans for the postwar treatment of Germany that differed from Morgenthau’s draconian proposal.

In remarks at lunch on September 13, FDR set Churchill up for his postwar German plan. He opined that there were “certain groups...who evinced a kindly attitude toward the Germans.” They theorized that evil could be eradicated by “kindness.” Churchill took the bait, responding, “such sentiments would hardly be tolerated in Great Britain.” The British people, he insisted, “would demand a strong policy against the Germans.”<sup>47</sup>

FDR immediately told Morgenthau about the exchange, prepping him to be prepared to bring up his proposal during their dinner meeting that evening where they planned to discuss the German issue. When Morgenthau dutifully proposed his plan for the harsh treatment of Germany, Churchill was dumbfounded, asking FDR,

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<sup>44</sup> *FRUS Quebec*, 297, 409, 418.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 296.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 327.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 318-19.

"is this what you asked me to come all the way over here to discuss?"<sup>48</sup>

Indeed, FDR had enticed Churchill to Quebec promising to provide lend-lease financing after Germany's defeat, and to make him an extraordinary offer of support to sustain the British Empire, but only if the British leader would agree to a harsh peace for Germany. Although Churchill argued long and hard against a harsh peace, which he said would be like chaining Britain to a "dead German," after an overnight consultation with his Paymaster General, Lord Cherwell, Churchill abruptly reversed his position and accepted FDR's "bargain."

Churchill himself drafted the proposal for the postwar treatment of Germany, making its terms even tougher than Morgenthau had proposed. FDR, however, insisted that the terms apply not only to the Ruhr and the Saar, but to all of Germany.<sup>49</sup> Afterward, conveniently from Churchill's point of view, the "Morgenthau Plan" mysteriously leaked to the press, prompting FDR to disavow it. Nevertheless, although publicly repudiated, JCS 1067, the occupation directive for the control of Germany, contained most of what had been in Morgenthau's plan.<sup>50</sup> The plain fact was that the so-called Morgenthau Plan was FDR's.



Treasury Secretary Morgenthau is best known for his plan to pastoralize Germany. ([LOC](#))

### *Churchill and the Collapse of British Strategy*

The period between Quebec and Yalta was the high point of British strategy, or so it seemed. Churchill had obtained what he believed was a firm commitment from FDR to support British strategic objectives in Europe and Asia and promptly proceeded to Moscow to seek Stalin's support for British interests in East and Southeast Europe.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 327.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 361.

<sup>50</sup> John Wheeler-Bennett and Anthony Nichols, *The Semblance of Peace* (New York: Norton, 1974), 184-87.

Churchill's meetings with Stalin have been encapsulated in the famous "percentages" agreement. In their first meeting on October 9 (without Harriman present) Stalin agreed to Churchill's proposal whereby Britain would have 90 percent influence in Greece, while the Soviet Union would exercise 90 percent influence in Romania. The Russians would also obtain 75 percent influence in Bulgaria, while each country would exert 50 percent influence in Hungary and Yugoslavia.<sup>51</sup>

According to Lowenheim, et al, "the details of this arrangement appear not to have been communicated to Roosevelt."<sup>52</sup> In the joint Churchill-Stalin telegram to FDR the next day, October 10, they spoke only of the need "to consider the best way of reaching an agreed policy about the Balkan countries," omitting the fact that they had already done so.<sup>53</sup>

We have tended to view the percentages agreement as a stand-alone agreement, but it appears to have been part of a larger trade-off. Churchill attempted to bring about a satisfactory coalition government for Poland, summoning the leaders of the London and Lublin Poles together for face-to-face discussions, but intransigence on the part of both parties doomed the effort to failure. This failure meant that the Soviet Union would exercise dominant influence in Poland and Eastern Europe, while Britain would have a free hand in Southeastern Europe. Of course, as they all understood, political solutions would flow from the boots on the ground. Except for Greece and Yugoslavia, Soviet occupation would result in pro-Soviet governments imposed everywhere else, unless Stalin could be "persuaded" to act otherwise.

We have also tended to view the Moscow meeting from Churchill's point of view, not Stalin's. By all accounts, Stalin was as supportive of British plans as FDR had been, but for different reasons. While FDR had altered strategy to keep Churchill from acting independently, Stalin supported British plans to prevent a cease-fire on the western front, which he feared would result in the shift of

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<sup>51</sup> Feis, 449.

<sup>52</sup> Francis Lowenheim, Harold Langely, and Manfred Jonas, *Roosevelt and Churchill: Their Secret Wartime Correspondence* (New York: Dutton, 1975), 513.

<sup>53</sup> Feis, 449.

German forces to the eastern front. The possibility of a separate peace on the western front would preoccupy Stalin until the very end of the war.

Thus, Stalin, too, reversed positions he had taken at Tehran, and now encouraged British plans for a drive through the Ljubljana gap. He would welcome British assistance in “the advance of the Red Army through Hungary into Austria” and said he would be “glad to see the British move north from Istria” to join Soviet forces around Vienna.<sup>54</sup>

If Churchill and the British chiefs actually believed that FDR and Stalin had abandoned their own strategies in order to support a restoration of British strategy, it was a delusion of the highest order. In remarks to the House of Commons after his return from Moscow, he said:

“I am very glad to inform the House that our relations with Soviet Russia were never more close, intimate and cordial than they are at the present time. Never before have we been able to reach so high a degree of frank and friendly discussions of the most delicate and often potentially vexatious topics.”<sup>55</sup>

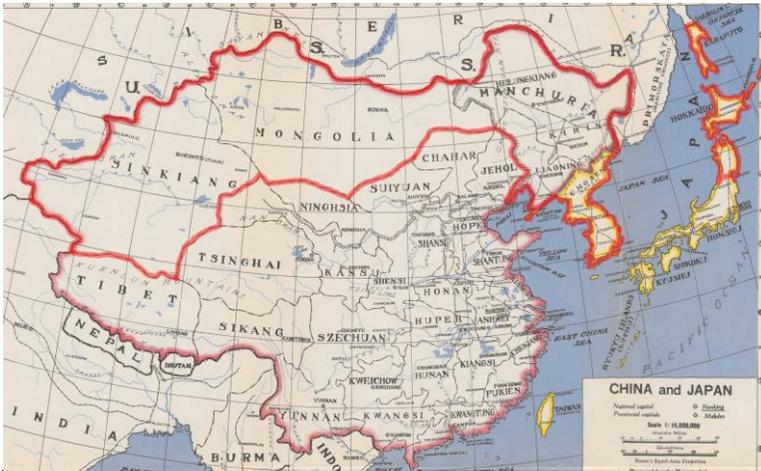
Churchill’s euphoria was a delusion that would be demolished in the days leading up to Yalta. By mid-December allied drives to the Rhine and across the Po Valley were stymied by Eisenhower’s decisions, harsh weather, and determined German resistance, then halted altogether by the German offensive in the Ardennes.<sup>56</sup> Although the Ardennes offensive failed, it caused further delay in the timetable of advance and by the end of the year Soviet forces were closer to Berlin than were British and American forces.

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<sup>54</sup> Feis, 445, was puzzled by Stalin’s reversal.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 468.

<sup>56</sup> See David Colley, *Decision at Strasbourg: Ike’s Strategic Mistake to Halt the Sixth Army Group at the Rhine in 1944* (Annapolis: U.S. Naval Institute Press, 2008).



At Yalta, FDR granted Stalin an enormous sphere of influence in Asia. It included Manchuria, Korea, Mongolia, and Sinkiang; control of Sakhalin, the Kuriles, and the Northern Territories; and, informally, occupation of Hokkaido and north Honshu. Truman later decided to exclude the Soviets from Japan. (League of Nations map)

### *Yalta and FDR's New World Order*

Neither FDR, nor Stalin had been in a particular hurry to set a time and place for the next meeting of the Big Three, but Churchill was. His vital objective was to capture Berlin, the centerpiece of the Versailles strategy, before the Russians did, and he knew that time was not on his side. Thus, he urged both of his partners to agree to a meeting and Yalta was eventually selected. They would assemble the week of February 4-11, 1945.

At Yalta, Churchill was devastated to realize that with the exception of a few, key military operations, FDR had walked back from crucial promises made at Quebec, as well as those made to Chiang Kai-Shek at Cairo. The truth was that at Yalta FDR put into place the final touches to the new world order strategy first set forth at Tehran.

Indeed, Tehran and Yalta should be understood as the bookends of FDR's strategy. Despite his debilitated condition at Yalta, the consistency of policy positions FDR took there when compared to those made at Tehran indicated that the President was still in command of his faculties. In other words, he was not bamboozled by a clever Stalin into giving away the store, as many scholars contend, or too ill to understand what he was doing.

FDR's new world order was based upon a presumed strategic partnership with the Soviet Union, which included Soviet participation in a world organization intended to maintain the peace. In this new world order, both Germany and Japan would be conquered, divided, and occupied. The Soviet Union would fill the vacuum created by the defeats of Germany and Japan with "friendly" states in East and Southeast Europe, and in the Far East in Outer Mongolia, Manchuria and Korea. The establishment of "friendly" buffer states would, however, come at the expense of British strategy and the restoration of Chinese territorial integrity. Indeed, FDR demolished both Churchill's Versailles strategy and Chiang Kai-Shek's hopes of recovering Manchuria on the altar of a chimerical vision of Soviet-American friendship.

The Versailles strategy, to reiterate, consisted of a weak, but territorially integrated Germany bounded in the west by the Anglo-French anchor and in the east by Allied federations in east and southeast Europe. However, Germany would be divided along lines of occupation, as FDR and Stalin wished, not kept intact, as Churchill had hoped. Except for Greece and Yugoslavia, the Soviets would control Eastern and Southeastern Europe, eliminating any possibility of re-establishing pro-British federations there. France would be brought partially into the victor's club, as FDR gave France an occupation zone in Germany. Described as an act of kindness, it nevertheless offered hope that the Anglo-French anchor could be rebuilt.

The *Declaration of Liberated Europe* made airy promises about free elections that could not be kept and was simply a fig leaf covering over Churchill's failure. There was much discussion of Poland, but no loosening of Moscow's grip. It was in Central Europe, as FDR feared, that Stalin outmaneuvered him. There had been no political agreement for Soviet domination of Central Europe. Just the opposite, yet Soviet forces seized control of Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Austria. Once in control, Stalin "negotiated" the accession of Ruthenia from Czechoslovakia, giving the Soviet Union a direct border on Hungary and a powerful position in the very heart of Europe.

Chiang Kai-Shek suffered a similar strategic defeat. The core of his strategy was, of course, the recovery of Manchuria, a region roughly the size of Western Europe. But, in the Yalta secret agreement, negotiated solely by FDR and Stalin and only signed

afterward by Churchill “with considerable reluctance,” FDR went back on his promise to Chiang and insured that the Soviet Union’s “preeminent interests” prevailed in Manchuria.<sup>57</sup>

Soviet control over Manchuria was only thinly disguised by proposals for railway leases and joint port-use arrangements. FDR also affirmed outright Soviet control over Outer Mongolia and disguised control of Korea through participation in a trusteeship. Soviet armies, Chinese Communist and Soviet-trained Korean forces would be poised to enter both areas to reinforce Moscow’s “preeminent interests.”

Then, ostensibly to “restore” Soviet possessions seized by Japan after 1904, FDR also returned “the southern part of Sakhalin” to the Soviet Union and “handed over” the Kurile Islands.<sup>58</sup> This last was a travesty. Japan had acquired South Sakhalin after its victory over Tsarist Russia in 1905, but the Russians had swapped the Kurile Islands for Sakhalin in the Treaty of St. Petersburg thirty years earlier, in 1875. Japan had not seized the Kuriles and no Russian “rights” had been violated. Furthermore, the definition of the Kuriles was generalized to include Japan’s Northern Territories, islands that had never been part of the Kuriles.

On Korea, FDR had walked away from his Cairo promise of independence in due course and proclaimed the idea of a three-power trusteeship that now included the Soviet Union, but not Great Britain. It was yet another fig leaf auguring total Soviet control over that country, for the President promised Stalin that no American troops would be deployed to Korea, or to China. Chiang would not have the capability to contest the outcomes in either place because the ninety-division army FDR had promised him had vanished in a barrage of official denials that such a promise had ever been made.

Chiang was not apprised of the secret agreement at Yalta until mid-June 1945, after Stalin had already deployed half of the seventy-six divisions that would invade Manchuria, too late for him to affect the outcome. But, after Yalta, Churchill still held a slim hope

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<sup>57</sup> Loewenheim, et al, *Roosevelt and Churchill*, 517.

<sup>58</sup> For the agreement, see *United States Relations With China* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1949), 113-14.



At Yalta in February 1945, Roosevelt broke the promises he had made to Churchill at Quebec and to Chiang Kai-Shek at Cairo. The strategic continuity between Tehran and Cairo indicates that Roosevelt was not sick or swindled at Yalta, as some authors contend. [\(NARA\)](#)

that the Versailles system could be reconstructed. FDR had vacillated over Poland and the division of Germany and had rehabilitated France.

With Montgomery's powerful 21st Army Group poised to advance in the north, Churchill believed that he could take Berlin before the Russians did and thereby influence outcomes in Eastern Europe, including especially in Poland. But his hope would be extinguished by FDR's decision of March 28, conveyed through Marshall to Eisenhower, to shift Simpson's Ninth Army away from Montgomery's 21st Army Group to General Bradley's 12th Army Group. This was "a stupefying blow," according to Toland, which effectively insured that the Soviets would reach Berlin before Montgomery did.<sup>59</sup>

Of course, not everything worked out the way FDR had planned. His successor, Harry Truman, upheld FDR's written commitments to Stalin, but altered unwritten understandings. Although claiming otherwise, Truman upheld FDR's vision of a divided Europe and Germany. While upholding the Yalta agreement on China, Southern Sakhalin and the Kurile Islands, he took sole control of Japan's main islands and divided Korea, a complicated tale I have told elsewhere.<sup>60</sup> Had FDR lived to insure that his strategy was carried out, in full, the Soviet Union would be with us still—a gigantic Communist colossus dominating the Eurasian landmass, and perhaps the world. A chimerical vision, indeed.

<sup>59</sup> John Toland, *The Last Hundred Days* (New York: Random House, 1965), 329.

<sup>60</sup> See my "Truman and the Pacific War End Game" elsewhere in this issue.