

5-2015

# The Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere: The Failure of Japan's "Monroe Doctrine" for Asia

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## Recommended Citation


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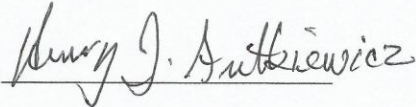
The Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere: The Failure of Japan's "Monroe Doctrine" for Asia

Honors in Discipline Thesis

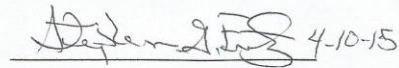
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## **Abstract**

By 1942, the Japanese occupied nearly all of East and Southeast Asia and their influence even spread as far as British controlled India. This occupation, known as The Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, was an ideological unity of Asia under the facade of mutual benefit and welfare of Japan and the other nations within the Sphere. However, The Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere failed because of the inability of the Japanese to form this mutual benefit between the nations within the Sphere. This work evaluates the events that led to The Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, life within the Sphere, and the reasons for its failure.

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## **Background & Introduction**

The Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere was Japan's attempt to form an economic and military bloc consisting of nations within East and Southeast Asia against Western colonization and manipulation, but it failed because of Japan's inability to promote true mutual prosperity within the alliance. Japan's rise to power was quick and her early successes convinced the Japanese that they were the supreme race. However, along with Japan's rise to power, she found the West to be less than supportive. Once Japan realized the West's unwillingness to allow an equal footing, she began to look to expand her own empire in Asia. Japan's attempt to conquer Asia led to her involvement and defeat in World War II.

During the Tokugawa Period (1603-1867), Japan was isolated from the outside world through Tokugawa Iemitsu's, "Closed Country Edict of 1635." This legal document was strict and designed to keep outside influences at bay. The Tokugawa Bakufu felt that outside influences, especially the Christian faith, had tainted the purity of Japanese culture and the prohibition of outside influences was necessary to preserve the Japanese identity. The first two laws of the edict stated, "Japanese ships are strictly forbidden to leave for foreign countries," and "No Japanese is permitted to go abroad. If there is anyone who attempts to do so secretly, he must be executed. The ship so involved must be impounded and its owner arrested, and the

matter must be reported to the higher authority."<sup>1</sup> The Edict also forbade any foreigners from entering Japan except for the Dutch who were confined to the port at Nagasaki due to their lack of desire to proselytize Christianity. Under such isolation, Japan maintained its feudal system and generally lived peacefully. However, in 1853, the United States thrust the outside world onto Japan's doorstep.

The United States took the American West following its war with Mexico (1846-48) thereby securing its Manifest Destiny; however, the United States began to look to the Pacific Ocean as a "new manifest destiny" by extending trade through the Pacific to East and Southeast Asia.<sup>2</sup> United States Commodore Matthew Perry landed at Edo Bay, modern day Tokyo, on July 8, 1853. This arrival eventually pitted Japan's samurai against the United States Navy in numerous skirmishes. The samurai were easily defeated because of Japan's lack of preparedness for modern warfare. These battles proved to the Japanese that Western military technology was superior to their dated methods of combat. This epiphany emphasized to the Japanese that modern technology was essential to national security. This realization acted as the catalyst that later resulted in the rise of modern Japan, imperialism, and ultimately the Greater East Asia War 1937-1945.

Ongoing frustrations with the Tokugawa Bakufu combined with the realization of how far Japan had fallen behind in military technology led to the restoration of the Emperor Meiji to the head of state and the removal of the feudal system. During the Meiji Period, 1868-1912, Japan became interested in trade and military technology, hoping to achieve equality with the West in terms of respect and military power. These goals led Japan into wars with China in the

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<sup>1</sup> Tokugawa Iemitsu, "Closed Country Edict of 1635, *The Seclusion of Japan*," [http://users.wfu.edu/watts/w03\\_Japancl.html](http://users.wfu.edu/watts/w03_Japancl.html). (accessed September 1, 2014).

<sup>2</sup> Hopper, Helen M., *Fukuzawa Yukichi: From Samurai to Capitalist* (New York: Pearson Education), 24.

First Sino-Japanese War (1894-95) and Russia in The Russo-Japanese War (1904-05). Both of these wars ended in Japanese success, which solidified Japanese belief that Japan was the dominant power of Asia. While Japan continued to grow utilizing the West's model, the West was unwilling to allow Japan to achieve equality as a world power.

Since the Meiji Restoration, Japan desired to align and achieve equality with the United States and Great Britain. Japan believed increased trade with China to be a major factor in the achievement of this goal, and the way to accomplish this new relationship with China was through entry into World War I.<sup>3</sup> Japan declared war on Germany and joined the Allied Powers of World War I. However, this rise of Japan eventually raised concern amongst its supposed allies. The U.S. and Great Britain checked Japanese growth through naval restrictions, which limited Japan's ability to build her military strength. In order to maintain their economic interests in China, the British and United States alliance enforced the "open door" foreign policy, which attempted to keep free trade within China giving no single nation absolute control of the country's goods and resources. The Japanese despised this policy, because they believed it only benefitted the British and Americans.<sup>4</sup> These military and economic limitations alienated Japan to the point that she no longer desired to achieve her respect through co-operating with the U.S. and Great Britain. This realization eventually led the Japanese to believe that the fascist regimes of Germany and Italy may better complement their goals.<sup>5</sup>

The United States' Great Depression and economic recession abroad during the 1930s had an unprecedented negative effect on the Japanese economy. This harm convinced Japan to conduct her own business internally and eventually resist the Anglo-American, or British-United

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<sup>3</sup> W.G. Beasley, *The Rise of Modern Japan* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), 155.

<sup>4</sup> Arita Hachirō, *Contemporary Japan, vol. X, no. 1, January, 1941*, in Joyce Lebra-Chapman, *Japan's Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere in World War II: Selected Readings and Documents* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1975), 76.

<sup>5</sup> Iyenaga Saburō, *Taiheiyō Sensō*, in Lebra-Chapman, *Japan's Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere*, 166.



States alliance. Despite naval limitations enforced by the Western powers, Japan expanded its military. Additionally, Japan emphasized the emperor's divinity through a national religion, *Jinja Shinto* or State Shinto, to establish a sense of patriotism to the nation and the emperor. Though technically secular by definition, State Shinto recognized the emperor's lineage to the sun goddess Amatersu, thus emphasizing his role as a deity, *kami*. These measures led to the birth of ultra-nationalism, a critical tool in Japan's participation in World War II.

Japan knew that her small geographic area and limited natural resources could not provide for peacetime operations, let alone sustain war against strong Western powers. In order to gain necessary resources, Japan needed to expand. Earlier in 1910, Japan annexed Korea to ensure Japanese influence in the region. The Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 spread Japanese paranoia of Soviet communism and encouraged further Japanese expansion. Many Japanese believed Korea to be a "Russian dagger pointed at the heart of Japan."<sup>6</sup> However, the small peninsula of Korea alone could not provide the resources Japan needed nor did it provide the desired protection from the spread of communism or defend against Soviet aggression. Japan looked north of Korea to Manchuria, a region full of lumber, iron, agriculture potential, and other resources necessary for the growth of an empire. Eventually, the rogue behavior of the Japanese Kwantung Army, an Imperial Japanese Army unit assigned to Manchuria with limited supervision from Tokyo, led to the birth of the puppet state of Manchukuo in Manchuria in 1932.

Despite the growth of the Japanese sphere of influence, Japan, either by genuine concern or manipulation, began to look to the political unrest in China as an opportunity to expand into North China. Japanese officials began to express that the battles between the Chinese

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<sup>6</sup> Lebra-Chapman, *Japan's Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere*, xi.

Nationalists and Communists were getting too close to Manchukuo.<sup>7</sup> In late 1935, Japan and China reached an agreement that allowed for Japanese settlement in North China. Eventually, Japanese interests and political tensions in North China led to the Second Sino-Japanese War in 1937. The Second Sino-Japanese War was extraordinarily brutal. In order to rationalize the military abuses against the Chinese, Japan utilized diplomacy and propaganda to announce a bloc against the West, promising to liberate East Asia from the West. In 1938, Japan announced the New Order of East Asia. This bloc included Korea, Manchukuo, Inner Mongolia, and large parts of China. The New Order was designed to combat European influence and colonialism in East Asia by constructing a "New East Asia of sovereign and independent countries."<sup>8</sup> The Japanese forced The New Order on its constituents regardless of whether they desired the new alignment or rejected it. This is particularly true in China, as the Second Sino-Japanese War became the bloodiest front of the War in the Pacific.

The Second Sino-Japanese War was very costly for the Japanese, so the need for different resources became compulsory. Japan next looked to Southeast Asia for these resources. However, Japan faced a problem expanding into Southeast Asia; Western colonialists already established governments in the region. In order for Japan to gain these resources, she had to initiate the war with the U.S. and European powers in the region. To accomplish this feat, Japan began to spread propaganda of their coming attempts to "liberate" the Asian peoples from white domination by air dropped pamphlets, radio broadcasts, and other means into South East Asia. In 1940, the extension of The New Order of East Asia to Southeast Asia was coined The Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, GEACOP, an ideological unity of Asia under Japanese leadership against the West. Prior to expansion, Japan assured Southeast Asians that they were

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<sup>7</sup> Beasley, *Rise of Modern Japan*, 194.

<sup>8</sup> Robert S. Ward, *Asia for the Asiatics?*, in Lebra-Chapman, *Japan's Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere*, 153.

coming to liberate them from the Western colonists. Longing for the arrival of their liberator, Southeast Asians began planning for independence that they hoped Imperial Japan would grant. However, these Southeast Asians soon found that liberation was not truly in Japan's plans, an epiphany that Koreans and Chinese had already realized. Due to unwillingness on Japan's part to allow these nations' independence and often through sheer brutality, many under the sphere grew to detest the Japanese. Even today, some Asians still despise the Japanese due to their harsh treatment of the Asians under Japanese occupation.

So what was the true purpose of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere? The ideas of the intention of the Sphere seemed to differ amongst the Japanese leaders. It seems that many Japanese leaders truly did intend to spread *kyōson-kyōei*, coexistence and co-prosperity, throughout the sphere. However, the Japanese military was the face of the policy and often dealt with those within the Sphere with brutal measures. Dr. Ba Maw, the head of state of Burma during the occupation, stated the cause of the failure of the Japanese as the betrayal of the Japanese militarists who were "totally incapable...of understanding others," and "saw everything only in a Japanese perspective."<sup>9</sup> Unfortunately for nationalists in Southeast Asia, the policy of the Co-Prosperity Sphere lacked the goal of true co-prosperity. While many argue that the failure of the sphere was because of short sightedness due to the war efforts, this assumption does not appear to be completely true. Racial motivations and the conviction of racial superiority also play a major role in the failure of the GEACOP. The true understanding of the intentions of the Sphere may never be known due to widespread destruction of government documents following the Japanese surrender in World War II.<sup>10</sup> However, one surviving document from the Ministry

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<sup>9</sup>Ba Maw, *Breakthrough in Burma*, in Lebra-Chapman, *Japan's Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere in World War II*, 157.

<sup>10</sup> John W. Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986), 262.

of Health and Welfare found in a used bookstore in the 1980s suggests that the GEACOP was established to manipulate other Asians into a hierarchy of nations under Japanese control, to help Japan achieve world leadership.





## The New Order of East Asia

Japan displayed interest in Manchuria since the Meiji Restoration, but outside forces pushed them into action later in the 1930s. Following the First Sino-Japanese War, Russia began to seize much of Manchuria to protect herself from ongoing political unrest in North China due to China's Boxer Rebellion, 1900-1901. Russia's occupation of Manchuria led the Japanese into war in order to maintain her interests in the region. Japan declared war on Russia in 1904 and won the Russo-Japanese War the following year. After this war, Japan gained Manchuria and undivided influence in Korea, but due to political pressure from the West, Japan gave Manchuria back to China. While Japan was unable to maintain possession of Manchuria, she did keep some of the former Russian military bases and the South Manchurian railway.<sup>11</sup> Japan achieved great military conquest in China and Russia during the Meiji Period, but after the Russo-Japanese War, Japan fell into a more peaceful role. Through the 1920s, the Japanese experienced economic growth and diplomatic foreign policy, but under this nonviolent surface, situations were arising that would lead to military expansion.

During World War I, Japan again hoped to increase their influence in Manchuria but she received opposition from the rest of the world in her attempts to realize it. One important reason for Japan's increased concentration on Manchuria was due to the Soviet Revolution in Russia in

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<sup>11</sup> Charles Fisher, "The Expansion of Japan: A Study in Oriental Geopolitics," *The Geographical Journal* Vol CXV (1950): 9, JSTOR Journals EBSCOhost, <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.etsu.edu:2048/stable/1789015>.( accessed August 28, 2014).

1917. Japan feared the spread of Russian communism and hoped to increase security in Manchuria to prevent its spread. While the desire to have such a safety net was justifiable, outside pressure kept Japan from securing such a buffer. During World War I, Japan's Twenty-One Demands of China in 1915 resulted in increased Japanese economic influence in China particularly in Manchuria, gave them former German bases in China, and influence into Inner Mongolia. Despite defeating a common enemy in World War I, Great Britain and the United States disapproved of Japan's Twenty-One Demands because of the added power the Demands gave to Japan limited the United States and Britain's control in China. The Twenty-One Demands marked the beginning of distrust between Japan and the Western powers. The Washington Conference in November 1921 enforced naval restrictions on Japan. This naval restriction placed a ratio of 5:5:3 between the U.S., Britain, and Japan. This restriction meant that for every five warships that the United States and Great Britain could have, Japan could have three. In addition to affecting relationships with Western powers, the 5:5:3 naval restriction also restricted Japan's influence in Guam, Hong Kong, and Singapore.<sup>12</sup> The U.S. and Great Britain also enforced the "open door" policy. This policy granted trade freedom in China. The Japanese despised the "open door" policy because they believed it only helped the U.S. and Great Britain and felt the U.S. and Great Britain used the "open door" as a "convenient means of pursuing their sinister designs of aggression."<sup>13</sup> In December 1921, The Four Powers Pact loosened the naval restrictions on Japan. This agreement required that Britain, France, Japan, and the United States consult each other in time of crisis and discouraged territorial expansion. However, the political damage was done; Japan had already begun to feel alienated by the U.S.-British alliance.<sup>14</sup> The

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<sup>12</sup> Beasley, *Modern Japan*, 162.

<sup>13</sup> Tōjō Hideki, "Address before the Assembly of Greater East-Asiatic Nations," in Lebra-Chapman, *Japan's Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere*, 90.

<sup>14</sup> Beasley, *Modern Japan*, 162.



5:5:3 naval restriction and the "open door" policy combined with the Great Depression of the late 1920s through 1930s ended the Japanese hopes of gaining the respect of the Anglo-American alliance.

This disconnect is evident in the use of expositions in Colonial Korea. These expositions were similar to state fairs and the Japanese used them to demonstrate Japanese modernity to the Korean people. During the 1915 Exposition, the Japanese displayed the powers of Western technology to impress the Koreans and to demonstrate what Japanese colonization and Western technology could bring the people of Korea. As the Japanese began to feel the alienation of the Anglo-American alliance, Japan began to display Japanese strength and celebrated East Asian culture to the Koreans in the 1929 Exposition.<sup>15</sup> In the 1929 Exposition, Japanese administrators shifted the focus from demonstrating what the West could give to Asia. Instead, they began to focus on the "co-prosperity between Japan and Korea."<sup>16</sup> The difference between the 1915 Exposition and the 1929 illustrate the shift from the Japanese mimicking the West to developing a new way to conduct themselves through independence from those they tried to mimic since the Meiji Restoration.

During the 1920s, Japanese "patriotic society" groups were growing. These groups believed Japan had become too "Westernized." Since the Meiji Restoration, Japan followed the West's lead in their methods of gaining military strength and economic growth. However, these societies held that following precedents set by the West had compromised Japanese virtues.<sup>17</sup>

Some leaders of these "patriotic societies" planned to carry out coups to expand the Japanese

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<sup>15</sup> Kal Hong, "Modeling the West, Returning to Asia: Shifting Politics of Representation in Japanese Colonial Expositions in Korea." (July 2008) *Comparative Studies in Society & History* 47, no. 3, 508, <http://ejournals.ebsco.com.ezproxy.etsu.edu:2048/Direct.asp?AccessToken=9IIIIXIX8X4QPD115IE5KEIDPXMM581MJ11&Show=Object>. (accessed August 28, 2014).

<sup>16</sup> Kal, "Modeling the West, 509

<sup>17</sup> Beasley, *Modern Japan*, 165.

empire. These "patriotic societies" developed phrases such as *Shōwa Ishin* or Showa Restoration and *Kōdō*, the imperial way, which became vital to Japanese expansionism. These phrases encouraged further restoration of power to the Shōwa Emperor, commonly referred to in the West by his personal name Hirohito. These "patriotic societies" planted the seeds that later grew into ultra-nationalism. They also influenced the young and impressionable military officers who would later lead the Kwantung Army, a prestigious yet radically *Kōdō* supporting Imperial Japanese Army unit, to invade Manchuria in 1931.<sup>18</sup>

In addition to security concerns, one of the largest causes for Japanese expansion was overpopulation. During the Tokugawa Bakufu, the Japanese kept their population under control by enforcing a procreation law that limited the number of children per family, but during the Meiji Restoration, these laws were repealed.<sup>19</sup> Much of Japan's land is too mountainous for large-scale agriculture. Due to Japan's small land mass and sprawling urban areas, food shortages became a problem as the Japanese were running short on arable land for agriculture. Although Japan's interests in Manchuria were political, Japan was also interested in her own survival. Manchuria is roughly three times larger than Japan and it could provide increased agricultural opportunities and land to occupy for Japanese immigrants.

Manchuria could provide Japan with much needed resources, but the political situation in China led Japan to worry that Manchuria could fall into Nationalist Chinese hands. In the late 1920s, the China's Nationalist Party, the Kuomintang led by Chiang Kai-Shek, was expanding. By 1926, Chiang Kai-Shek's military began pushing north. The Kuomintang took Nanking in 1927 and Peking, modern day Beijing, in 1928 defeating the forces of Manchurian warlord and Japanese puppet leader Chang Tso-lin. The chaotic political situation in China complicated

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<sup>18</sup> Beasley, *Modern Japan*, 166-67.

<sup>19</sup> Fisher, *Expansion of Japan*, 5

Japan's ambitions in Manchuria, so the Kwantung Army became proactive in achieving their goals. As the Kuomintang pushed closer to Manchuria, the Kwantung Army encouraged Chang Tso-lin to take refuge in Manchuria from North China following his defeat by the Kuomintang in North China. On 4 June 1928, disappointed in Chang Tso-lin's performance in North China, the Kwantung Army assassinated him on his way to back to Manchuria believing that Japan needed stronger leadership in Manchuria.

On 18 September 1931, the Kwantung Army bombed the South Manchurian railway near Mukden in order to make it look as though the Kuomintang attacked Japanese territory. This event is known today as the Manchurian Incident. The Manchurian Incident sped up Japan's imperial goals in Manchuria. These soldiers conducted the bombing without approval from Tokyo and possibly without the approval of their own commander.<sup>20</sup> The Manchurian Incident forced Japan into action in Manchuria believing that the Chinese carried out the bombing. By March 1932, Japan conquered Manchuria and placed puppet leader Pu Yi, the last emperor of China, to be the "head of state" in the new nation of Manchukuo. The Manchurian Incident and the establishment of Manchukuo led to international condemnation. Rather than deal with judgment from the international community, Japan withdrew from the League of Nations in 1933. Japan justified their actions not by attributing them to imperialistic opportunity, but by claiming that China's instability pushed them into action. Foreign Minister Uchida Yasuya wrote in response to China's condemnations to the League of Nations, "China is not an organized state; that its internal conditions and external relations are characterized by extreme confusion and complexity...[;]international law which govern the ordinary relations between nations are found

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<sup>20</sup> Beasley, *Modern Japan*, 173.

to be considerably modified...so far as China is concerned."<sup>21</sup> While this justification may not have appeased the international community, Japanese concern over the internal conflicts of China, especially between the parties of Chiang Kai-Shek and Mao Zedong, was genuine and influenced their decision to form Manchukuo.

Since the 1920s, tensions between China's Nationalist Party, the Kuomintang, led by Chiang Kai-Shek, and the Communist Party, led by Mao Zedong, divided the nation and left it vulnerable to Japanese invasion. The principles of communism and capitalism directly oppose each other, resulting in tensions within China that led to violent disputes between the two parties. The Western backed Kuomintang became the official government of China and possessed the majority of the major cities, but the Communists continued to expand as a "grass root" movement particularly in the rural areas.<sup>22</sup> Mao Zedong blamed the Nationalists for Japanese presence in Manchuria and its plans of expansion into the rest of China. He states:

They maintain, as they have done all along, that revolution of whatever kind is worse than imperialism...Their chieftain is Chiang Kai-shek. The camps of traitors are deadly enemies of the Chinese people. Japanese imperialism could not have become so blatant in its aggression were it not for this pack of traitors. They are the running dogs of imperialism.<sup>23</sup>

Mao's blame of the Kuomintang is rooted in the Chinese submission to the Japanese Twenty-One Demands in 1915. Tensions between the Chinese Nationalists and Communists continued until the Chinese Revolution of 1949. The Chinese Revolution eventually brought Communism to mainland China and the Nationalist Party moved their republic to Taiwan.

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<sup>21</sup> Beasley, *Modern Japan*, 174.

<sup>22</sup> "The Chinese Revolution of 1949," Milestones: 1945-1952, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1945-1952/chinese-rev> (accessed February 19, 2015).

<sup>23</sup> Mao Zedong, "On Tactics Against Japanese Imperialism, December 27, 1935," [http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-1/mswv1\\_11.htm](http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-1/mswv1_11.htm) (accessed September 1, 2014).

By 1932, the Kwantung Army had already begun planning expansion of Manchukuo by taking North China and Inner Mongolia. They hoped to gain more coal and iron from these regions to promote Japanese self-sufficiency. They began action by taking the Hopei and Chahar provinces of North China in June 1935 to "preserve peace."<sup>24</sup> By late 1935, the Japanese and Chinese made an agreement to allow Japanese settlement in North China. The 1936 Japanese document "Fundamental Principles of National Policy" laid the foundation of the New Order of East Asia in 1938 and the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere in 1940 by outlining a proposed relationship between Japan, Manchukuo, and China and its proposed expansion into Southeast Asia.<sup>25</sup> The underlying theme of the document was Japan's goal of shielding East Asia from the Soviet Union. It states, "Our basic policies for the continent include the elimination of the menace of the Soviet Union by assisting in the sound development of Manchukuo and strengthening the Japan-Manchukuo defense setup, preparing against Great Britain and the United States economic development by bringing about the close cooperation of Manchukuo, Japan, and China."<sup>26</sup> Also mentioned in the document was Japan's eventual goal of "extension of national influence as far as the South Seas."<sup>27</sup> However ambitious the "National Policy" was, by the end of 1936, the Chinese Communist Party and Nationalists reached an agreement and aligned in a united front against Japan complicating the goals of the document.

In July 1937, the Second Sino-Japanese War began after a confrontation between the Imperial Japanese Army and the Kuomintang military at the Marco Polo Bridge near Peking, known today as the China Incident. After the Incident, the Japanese began their conquest of China and further expanded their territory in China. Despite their victories in battle and

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<sup>24</sup> Beasley, *Modern Japan*, 194.

<sup>25</sup> Beasley, *Modern Japan*, 195.

<sup>26</sup> "Fundamental Principles of National Policy," August 15, 1936, Hirota Cabinet's National and Foreign Policies, <http://www.ibiblio.org/pha/timeline/144app01.html> (accessed November 13, 2014).

<sup>27</sup> "Principles of National Policy," Hirota Cabinet.

expanded territory, the Japanese never gained full control of China during its Greater East Asia War. Fighting continued in China throughout the Greater East Asia War, which was very bloody and bitter. A particular example of brutality of the war was at Chiang Kai-Shek's capital at the incident known as The Rape of Nanking in December 1937. A reporter from the *New York Times*, F. Tillman, witnessed the event. He stated, "the Japanese Army has thrown away a rare opportunity to gain the respect and confidence of the Chinese inhabitants."<sup>28</sup> Atrocities mentioned in the report include executions of surrendering Chinese troops, executions of anyone running in the streets, and executions of civilians suspected of being former troops. Perhaps most shocking of all was the fact that the Japanese troops were cheered upon their arrival into the city due to the Chinese hope that they would "restore peace and order."<sup>29</sup> However, the Rape of Nanking only solidified the Chinese hatred towards the Japanese.

With the war continuing in China, Japanese War Minister Konoe Fumimaro officially declared the New Order of East Asia in December 1938. Konoe explained that the New Order served two main purposes: to prevent against the spread of communism and to secure natural resources for the war effort in China.<sup>30</sup> A secondary goal of Konoe was "complete extermination of the anti-Japanese Kuomintang government to establish a New Order of East Asia together with...the Chinese who share in our ideals and aspiration."<sup>31</sup> This policy was to act as a "Monroe Doctrine" for Asia. According to Professor Kamikawa Hikomatsu the New Order of East Asia tried to accomplish three points: non-colonization, non-intervention, and isolation.<sup>32</sup> Kamikawa

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<sup>28</sup> F. Tillman, "The Nanking Massacre, 1937", *New York Times*, December 18, 1937, 1, 10.  
<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/nanking.asp> (accessed September 1, 2014).

<sup>29</sup> F. Tillman, "The Nanking Massacre."

<sup>30</sup> Konoye Fumimaro, *The Japan Times*, 23 December, 1938, in Lebra-Chapman, *Japan's Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere*, 68.

<sup>31</sup> Konoye, in Lebra-Chapman, *Japan's Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere in World War II*, 68-69.

<sup>32</sup> Kamikawa Hikomasu, *Contemporary Japan*, vol. VIII, no.6, in Lebra-Chapman, *Japan's Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere in World War II*, 26.

and others explained that the New Order of East Asia did not attempt to colonize nations within their bloc like the European model. Instead, the New Order of East Asia proposed a policy of co-existence between nations within it. Kamikawa also explains that the New Order was restricted to Asia, unlike the United States who spread outside of the Americas to the Philippines. The New Order of East Asia attempted to form a hierarchical society of nations under Japan and included Korea, Manchukuo, and North China, and Formosa (Taiwan) with a goal of mutual benefit and sought a "spirit of universal brotherhood."<sup>33</sup> Problems with the profitability of the New Order were quickly discovered due to the war in China's demand for resources. This demand for war supplies overshadowed the proposed mutual benefit of the bloc, which led to little consideration for long-term planning of the alignment.<sup>34</sup> These problems came to be the recurring theme of the Imperial Japanese blocs.

While still struggling with the war effort in China, and convinced of a Nazi victory, Japan joined in the Tripartite Pact with Germany and Italy in September 1940 with the hopes of keeping the Soviet Union out of China.<sup>35</sup> In June 1941, Germany attacked the Soviet Union without giving the Japanese warning. Japan felt the tension from the U.S. and elsewhere and began bracing for war. While the territory within the New Order of East Asia provided the Japanese with many of the resources needed for war, their current territory could not provide other necessary materials like oil, tungsten, and rubber. Thus, the Japanese began to look towards Southeast Asia, a region full of European colonial governments. However, the Japanese were confident they could successfully invade Southeast Asia due to European pre-occupation with

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<sup>33</sup> Arita Hachirō, *Contemporary Japan*, vol. X, no. 1, January, 1941, in Lebra-Chapman, *Japan's Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere in World War II*, 74.

<sup>34</sup> Beasley, *Modern Japan*, 198.

<sup>35</sup> Beasley, *Modern Japan*, 200.

World War II. In August 1940, Japan announced the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere and they soon launched their mission to bring Southeast Asia within their control.





## The Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere

Japan's Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, GEACOP, was an attempt to create a pan-Asian military, political, and economic union against oppressive white colonizers who occupied much of Southeast Asia. Japanese propaganda surrounding the Sphere boasted promises of harmony of the Asian peoples within the sphere, but reality often steered far from these promises. The Japanese often used brutal measures in the handling of the native peoples within the Sphere. While the promises of the GEACOP were probably genuine to most Japanese people and even some of their political leaders, much of the blame for its failures rests with the Japanese military men who occupied the nations within the Sphere. Racism is a critical factor for proper understanding of this topic. While the Japanese boasted such slogans as "Asia for the Asiatics" they also considered the Yamato race, the race of mainland Japan, the dominant race and desired to place the rest of the Asians in their "proper place" under Japanese leadership.<sup>36</sup>

Prior to Japanese expansion into Southeast Asia, nearly the entire region was subject to European colonization, but removing Western influence from Southeast Asia was one of the main goals of the GEACOP. The only exception to European dominance was Thailand, but even politically independent Thailand experienced Western economic pressures from France and Britain. However, as World War II was expanding in Europe, European governments were becoming less interested in their Southeast Asian colonies. The French, for example, easily

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<sup>36</sup> Lebra-Chapman, *Japan's Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere*, xiii.

handed Indochina over to the Japanese without a fight.<sup>37</sup> Other European nations were more stubborn, but as Japan would soon find out, Southeast Asia was not as profitable as hoped due to a lack of oil and desperate need for extensive infrastructure development. Making the situation even worse, wartime Japan was incredibly low on capital.<sup>38</sup> Despite this lack of capital, it was Japanese policy that economic hardships within the Sphere "must be endured."<sup>39</sup> This economic suffering included mainland Japan, who also endured food shortages during the war. The Japanese, though desperate to gain natural resources for war efforts, also desired to create an ideological union of Asians that differed from the European colonization model, which emphasized gaining capital above all. Under the GEACOP, Japan hoped to create a "spiritual essence" of Asian nations, which competed against the "materialistic civilization" that the West had built.<sup>40</sup> In addition to the gaining of more resources and creating a spiritual unity of Asians, the Japanese hoped to "prevent the outflow to the enemy...[of] petroleum, rubber, tin, tungsten, [and] cinchona (a plant used for medicinal purposes)."<sup>41</sup> The Japanese military was charged with the transportation of natural resources within the Sphere and with blocking other nations from gaining access to natural resources within the region. The last critical facet of the Sphere's extension into East Asia was agriculture. Prior to Japan's expansion, Chinese immigrants dominated Southeast Asia's agricultural market. However, the Japanese aspired to send large

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<sup>37</sup> Beasley, *Rise of Modern Japan*, 202.

<sup>38</sup> Choi Jung-Bong, "Mapping Japanese Imperialism onto Postcolonial Criticism," *Social Identities* 9, no. 3 (September 2003): 330  
<http://eds.a.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.etsu.edu:2048/eds/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=1&sid=4b5d8d4c-8185-4a5b-88e3-b9a0024f3f93%40sessionmgr4003&hid=4105> (accessed August 28, 2014).

<sup>39</sup> Harry J. Benda, et. al., *Japanese Military Administration in Indonesia: Selected Documents* (Yale University South-East Asia Translation Series, 1965), in Lebra, *Japan's Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere*, 115.

<sup>40</sup> Beasley, *Modern Japan*, 206.

<sup>41</sup> Benda, *Japanese Military Administration*, in Lebra-Chapman, *Japan's Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere*, 114-15.

numbers of immigrants to the regions within the Sphere to engage and lead in the agriculture business.<sup>42</sup>

The year 1941 marked Japan's move into Southeast Asia. In July, United States and the Dutch enforced an oil blockade in retaliation for Japanese occupation in French Indochina. This blockade led to a Japanese expeditionary force to the Dutch Indies.<sup>43</sup> As diplomatic pressure continued to rise, Premier Tōjō Hideki made his final attempt at negotiating with the United States on 5 November 1941. These negotiations failed and Japan launched its first strikes in December 1941 against U.S and British bases at Pearl Harbor and Singapore; these attacks signaled the beginning of the campaigns in Southeast Asia.<sup>44</sup> Japan captured British Hong Kong by Christmas 1941, Manila by 2 January 1942, they seized Malaya on 11 January 1942, Singapore on 9 March, Indonesia by March 1942, Burma by the end of April 1942, and Bataan by May 1942. During the next three years, thousands of United States and European prisoners of war would be subject to hard labor, torture, and execution under Japanese occupation.<sup>45</sup> Some Chinese immigrants also endured harsh treatment under Japanese military occupation in Southeast Asia. Japanese policy called to "extirpate the anti-Japanese character and...devote themselves to the prosperity of Greater East Asia."<sup>46</sup> Chinese immigrants that full-heartedly supported, or at least paid lip service to, Japanese occupation were not subject to such punishment, but those who were loyal to the Kuomintang or the former European colonizers were arrested or otherwise treated harshly.

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<sup>42</sup> Dower, *War Without Mercy*, 274-75.

<sup>43</sup> Beasley, *Modern Japan*, 200-02.

<sup>44</sup> Beasley, *Modern Japan*, 203-04.

<sup>45</sup> Beasley, *Modern Japan*, 204.

<sup>46</sup>"Plan for Leadership of Nationalities in Greater East Asia; General Staff Headquarters, 14th section 6 August 1942," in Lebra-Chapman, *Japan's Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere*, 120.

Treatment under Japanese occupation within the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere was often brutal even to those who were not prisoners of war. Unaware of the forthcoming treatment from their "liberators," many native Southeast Asians longed for the Japanese arrival to help them gain their independence. Perhaps the best example of this situation is the Indonesians in the Dutch East Indies. According to a local myth, the Dutch would be driven out by a yellow race from the north. The local people interpreted the myth to mean the Japanese, and the Japanese utilized the myth as means of propaganda.<sup>47</sup> Radio Tokyo sent many broadcasts to the native peoples of the Dutch East Indies promising liberation and promoting anti-Dutch feelings. The Dutch government in the region began to ban everything relating to the Japanese, including Radio Tokyo. The Dutch also arrested many Japanese immigrants and posted surveillance on anyone with close relationships with any Japanese people.<sup>48</sup>

The Japanese were successful in creating an anti-Dutch sentiment in the region, but they also spurred a nationalist movement that hoped they would gain independence upon Japanese arrival. As the Japanese arrived, they were greeted with cries of "banzai!" and little mercy for the former Dutch leaders was given. According to one report, "The natives must have no sympathy for the Dutch. They had tyrannized and exploited the Indonesian people. The Indonesians should help the Japanese to murder the Dutch."<sup>49</sup> Another group that was subject to brutality by the native Indonesians was the Chinese immigrants. The Chinese were particularly despised by some

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<sup>47</sup> Elly Touwen-Bouwsma, "The Indonesian Nationalists and the Japanese "Liberation" of Indonesia: Visions and Reactions," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 27 (March 1996).  
[http://ic.galegroup.com/ic/suic/AcademicJournalsDetailsPage/AcademicJournalsDetailsWindow?failOverType=&query=&prodId=SUIC&windowstate=normal&contentModules=&displayquery=&mode=view&displayGroupName=Journals&limiter=&u=tel\\_a\\_etsul&currPage=&disableHighlighting=false&displayGroupS=&sortBy=&source=&search\\_within\\_results=&p=SUIC&action=e&catId=&activityType=&scanId=&documentId=GALE%7CA18688389](http://ic.galegroup.com/ic/suic/AcademicJournalsDetailsPage/AcademicJournalsDetailsWindow?failOverType=&query=&prodId=SUIC&windowstate=normal&contentModules=&displayquery=&mode=view&displayGroupName=Journals&limiter=&u=tel_a_etsul&currPage=&disableHighlighting=false&displayGroupS=&sortBy=&source=&search_within_results=&p=SUIC&action=e&catId=&activityType=&scanId=&documentId=GALE%7CA18688389). (accessed September 2, 2014).

<sup>48</sup> Touwen-Bouwsma, "The Indonesian Nationalists."

<sup>49</sup> Touwen-Bouwsma, "The Indonesian Nationalists."

Indonesians. These feelings were not in vain, however, as mistreatment abounded. Chinese men were "forcibly circumcised" by a Sunni Islamist group in Indonesia named the Nahdatul Ulama and many Chinese shops were subject to looting.<sup>50</sup> The Japanese paid special favor to Muslims and Buddhists within the Sphere because it was easier to create anti-Western sentiment with these groups; however, anti-Western sentiments often did not equate to pro-Japanese feelings.<sup>51</sup> Despite the excitement for the Japanese arrival, little "liberation" actually occurred under Japanese rule; instead, Indonesians were subjugated to subordinate positions. Liberation did not occur because according to the "Principle Governing the Implementation," "existing governmental organizations shall be utilized as much as possible."<sup>52</sup> The Japanese plans for the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere were often more ideological than practical. Therefore, instead of adopting a new government with Indonesian nationalist leaders, the Japanese and many of the despised Chinese leaders were left in power.<sup>53</sup>

Burma is another region where the Japanese unintentionally created a nationalist movement. Dr. Ba Maw, who served as the Premier of independent Burma in 1943, speaks in high esteem of a Japanese military officer who helped to create this movement and eventual independence in Burma. The subject of discussion was Colonel Suzuki Keiji, commonly referred to as Bo Mogyo by the Burmese. Suzuki was the leader of the Burmese Independence Army.<sup>54</sup> Ba Maw claims that Colonel Suzuki "by his example, stiffened the backs of the Burmese in dealing with...Japanese armies."<sup>55</sup> Suzuki did this by standing up to the Japanese military, often outright rebelling against them, in order to gain Burmese independence. Suzuki told Ba Maw

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<sup>50</sup> Touwen-Bouwsmas, "The Indonesian Nationalists."

<sup>51</sup> Beasley, *Modern Japan*, 206.

<sup>52</sup> Benda, *Japanese Military Administration*, in Lebra-Chapman, *Japan's Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere*, 114.

<sup>53</sup> Touwen-Bouwsmas, "The Indonesian Nationalists."

<sup>54</sup> Ba Maw, *Breakthrough in Burma*, in Lebra-Chapman, *Japan's Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere*, 126.

<sup>55</sup> Ba Maw, *Breakthrough in Burma*, in Lebra-Chapman, *Japan's Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere*, 128.

"Independence is not the kind of thing you can get through begging for it from other people...the Japanese refuse to give it?...proclaim independence and set up your own government."<sup>56</sup> Though the Burmese gained their "independence" in October 1943, the reality is that all "independent" nations within the Sphere were more like puppet states.<sup>57</sup> However, the rebellious nature of Bo Mogyo guided the Burmese nationalists in their dealings with the Japanese and European colonizers.

The Japanese occupation in Malaya also created a rise in nationalism. Professor T.H. Silcock and Dr. Ungku Aziz explain that Malayan nationalism was nurtured through learned habits of violence under Japanese occupation.<sup>58</sup> Prior to the war, the Malaysians mostly felt that their British superiors were friendly. Through propaganda mediums prior to and during the GEACOP, Malaysians began to view themselves as Asians instead of subjects to British rule. This realization led to an "us and them" belief that created anti-European feelings throughout Malaya. After the Japanese invasion of Malaya in December 1941, many young leaders rose to the occasion to lead their new nation. However, they soon found that Japanese occupation meant sitting back as the Japanese led the government with some Malayan puppet leaders. Malaysians began to resent the Japanese and some even longed for their former British colonizers to save them from further Japanese brutality. Later, after the war was over and the British returned, these same Malaysians resented their British "saviors" who treated them much the same as the Japanese.<sup>59</sup>

The Japanese occupation of the Philippines had a unique consequence because of Filipino exposure to United States democracy and the methods they used to cope with Japanese

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<sup>56</sup> Ba Maw, *Breakthrough in Burma*, in Lebra-Chapman, *Japan's Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere*, 129.

<sup>57</sup> Beasley, *Modern Japan*, 206.

<sup>58</sup> T.H. Silcock and Ungku Aziz, in Lebra-Chapman, *Japan's Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere*, 141.

<sup>59</sup> Silcock and Aziz, Lebra-Chapman, *Japan's Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere*, 142-44.

occupation. One of the main tasks for the Japanese in the Philippines was the removal of the political parties in the Philippines. The only political party the Japanese allowed was the KALIBAPI, which was a pro-Japanese political party instituted to promote the Greater East Asia War. The KALIBAPI was dedicated to the "reconstruction of the Philippines," the "rehab of its people," the "promotion of the welfare of the people socially, spiritually, physically, culturally, economically," and "to strengthen their adherence to the principles of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere."<sup>60</sup> The Filipino Director-General of Association of the KALIBAPI was Benigno S. Aquino. Aquino was a very successful leader of the organization and promoted the Japanese war very well. However, Aquino was merely providing lip service to appease the Japanese military in the Philippines. Dr. Teodoro Agoncillo suggests that the "make-believe attitude of the [Filipino] people...perhaps saved them...from further Japanese brutalization."<sup>61</sup> The Filipino people were so afraid of Japanese treatment they developed consistent lying as a deterrent.

Perhaps the nation that endured the most abuse from the Japanese was Korea. This realization is quite peculiar because some Japanese tend to believe that the Koreans were part of the Yamato race, but it seems that biologic race was not as important to the Japanese as national identity in race.<sup>62</sup> Despite racial similarities, and the Japanese attempts to liberate the Koreans during the First Sino-Japanese War late in the nineteenth century, Koreans were far behind the Japanese in development. By the 1930s, the literacy rate in Korea was about fifteen percent.<sup>63</sup> One Japanese colonial administer explained that "the only reason why Korean industry is today not greatly flourishing is that the Korean people are on the whole weak and lazy, and lacking the

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<sup>60</sup> Teodoro Agoncillo, *The Fateful Years, Japan's Adventure in the Philippines, 1941-5*, in Lebra-Chapman, *Japan's Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere*, 133-34.

<sup>61</sup> Agoncillo, *The Fateful Years*, in Lebra-Chapman, *Japan's Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere*. 135.

<sup>62</sup> Dower, *War Without Mercy*, 267.

<sup>63</sup> Kal, "Modeling the West," 512.



spirit of enterprise."<sup>64</sup> This quote resembles the racial superiority of many of Japan's colonial European counterparts and calls to question what the Japanese considered the Yamato race. When Japan annexed Korea in 1910, the first Japanese man to lead the new colony was Governor-General Terauchi. Terauchi led Korea with an iron fist and it became a "military camp" under "extreme military dictatorship."<sup>65</sup> In order to force many people into industry, the Japanese stripped land rights from Koreans and adopted a system that mirrored that of the Highland Clearances of Scotland in that small farming communities were forced to relocate to make way for more profitable uses of the land. This was devastating to the Korean populace because three quarters of Korean citizens were involved in subsistence farming. This change led many Koreans to urban areas for industrial jobs and most of Korea's agribusiness shifted towards mechanized agriculture. Regardless of job prospects in the urban areas, the shift from rural to urban lifestyle irritated many Koreans. The assimilation process in Korea was more extensive than other areas within the Sphere. During the Greater East Asian War, Koreans were "coerced into marching to Shinto shrines...to pray for the victory of the Japanese armed forces."<sup>66</sup> Eventually, the Japanese prohibited Korean schools to teach the Korean language and instead taught only the Japanese language. Because the Koreans shared in the Yamato race, they were also heavily used for manpower for the Imperial Japanese Army through conscription. After generations of Koreans were educated under Japanese rule, many were loyal to the Japanese and even the former nationalists began to bow to Japanese rule or at least "paid lip service" to the Japanese cause.<sup>67</sup> However devastating the treatment of Koreans under Japanese rule, the

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<sup>64</sup> Choi, "Mapping Japanese Imperialism," 334.

<sup>65</sup> Lee Chong-sik, *The Politics of Korean Nationalism* (University of California Press, 1962), in Lebra-Chapman, *Japan's Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere*, 108.

<sup>66</sup> Lee, *Korean Nationalism*, in Lebra-Chapman, *Japan's Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere*, 109.

<sup>67</sup> Lee, *Korean Nationalism*, in Lebra-Chapman, *Japan's Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere*, 110.

exposure to industry recreated Korea from a rural and largely uneducated society into a world leader in technology today.

The belief in Yamato racial supremacy was a key factor in the Japanese expansion, colonization, and the development of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. One reason for their conviction of racial supremacy is the low number of Japanese suffering from mental disorders. The percentage of Japanese diagnosed with mental disorders is about 6%, compared to the worldwide average of 20%.<sup>68</sup> Additionally, military conquests in the first Sino-Japanese war and Russo-Japanese War further convinced the Japanese that they were the dominant race in Asia and these victories "fanned the release of the virus of racial assertiveness into the Japanese ideological bloodstream."<sup>69</sup> Assured of their racial superiority, the Japanese government began eugenics programs.

Upon defeat in World War II, Japanese bureaucrats burned incriminating evidence in government documents. However, in the 1980s a single copy of a secret document, "An Investigation of Global Policy with the Yamato Race as Nucleus," was discovered in a used bookstore. The Ministry of Health and Welfare completed this document on 1 July 1943 and it was written for only the highest-level bureaucrats in Imperial Japan. While it is generally accepted that the GEACOP failed due to shortsightedness and focus on the war, this report suggests that the Japanese intention of the Sphere was to dominate other races.<sup>70</sup> The document called for the improvement of the Yamato race both qualitatively and quantitatively. Suggestions for qualitative improvement include mental and physical training and selective marriages. Quantitatively, the document called for an increase in birth rate, improved medical facilities and

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<sup>68</sup> Dower, *War Without Mercy*, 269.

<sup>69</sup> Choi, "Mapping Japanese Imperialism," 331.

<sup>70</sup> Dower, *War Without Mercy*, 263.

insurance, with a target population of 100 million and five children per family.<sup>71</sup> Mainland Japan was overpopulated so expansion was necessary to accommodate the population growth and the document detailed such expansion plans. The document outlines the principle of *hakkō ichiu* or eight directions under one roof. In other words, the GEACOP was a stepping-stone to world leadership by placing the rest of the world in their "proper place" under Japanese supervision.<sup>72</sup> The "Yamato Race as Nucleus" document laid out maps in different stages of their plan with much of the world, as distant as North America, under Japanese control. One of the largest goals of the Sphere according to the "Yamato Race as Nucleus" document was to ensure that Japanese immigrants were in control of the agriculture business wherever they migrated. This is clear as the document states "we must plant the 'blood' of the Yamato race in this soil."<sup>73</sup> The document also outlines that these Japanese immigrants were to act as mentors and role models in the host country and even forbade any intermingling with other races. They planned to build Japanese cultural centers to remind Japanese immigrants of their national identity. This racial supremacy conviction is one of the largest reasons the GEACOP failed. Dr. Ba Maw, who generally supported the GEACOP, said this about its failures, "Japan was betrayed by her militarists and racial fantasies," that the Japanese were "totally incapable...of understanding others," and they "saw everything only in a Japanese perspective."<sup>74</sup> The Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere failed, despite some of its best intentions, because the Japanese, particularly the military men whom the other nations within the Sphere primarily dealt with, were too self-interested and convinced of their superiority.

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<sup>71</sup> Dower, *War Without Mercy*, 270-71.

<sup>72</sup> Dower, *War Without Mercy*, 274.

<sup>73</sup> Choi, "Mapping Japanese Imperialism," 335.

<sup>74</sup> Ba Maw, *Breakthrough in Burma*, in Lebra-Chapman, *Japan's Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere*, 157-58.

## Conclusion

*"[F]or Commodore Perry to open Japan was to set in motion a chain of events leading inevitably to the invasion of China and the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor less than a century later."*<sup>75</sup>

After centuries of operating in a feudal system led by a shogun, Japan was already a militaristic society. After the reversal of the "Closed Country Edict of 1635," exposure to advanced weaponry aided the Japanese in becoming a world military leader and enabled their expansion in Asia. Their use of brutality and failures to adhere to their own policy of *kyōson-kyōei*, co-existence and co-prosperity, ended their hopes of leading a pan-Asian society.

The Japanese surrendered to the Allied powers in September 1945, long after their realization that there was no chance of victory, but they remained diligent on the battlefields until the end. The principle of *chu*, or debt paid to the emperor, was not measured by military victory, but through suffering for the emperor in accomplishing his mission.<sup>76</sup> Despite the extreme violence carried out during the Greater East Asia War in the name of the emperor, Allied occupation of Japan following the war was relatively peaceful. This is because *chu* is expected no matter the circumstances. The same discipline and sacrifice for the Emperor Shōwa that was expected on the battlefield was also expected in defeat. Since that time, Japan has remained a world economic leader, particularly in technology. However, there are right-wing groups that

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<sup>75</sup> Choi, "Mapping Japanese Imperialism," 330.

<sup>76</sup> Benedict, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*, 207.

support, or at least do not completely condemn, wartime Japan's actions. In August 1999, Japanese parliament approved a bill that accepted the rising-sun flag and the anthem of Imperial Japan for government ceremonies.<sup>77</sup> These symbols of Japanese militarism were banned for official use since the end of World War II and this reversal caused international distress, particularly in South Korea and China, as these symbols have a similar connotation in East Asia as the swastika has in the West. These same right-wing groups also emphasize that Japan modernized its former colonies and puppet states, and proclaim that Japan helped to end foreign colonization in Southeast Asia after the GEACOP. However, it is important to note that the inability of Europeans to reclaim their former colonies was not a Japanese intention, but rather "an inadvertent result" and the colonies "attained independence by resisting the Japanese" not through Japanese assistance.<sup>78</sup>

The greatest legacy of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere is the birth of nationalism in Southeast Asia. Dr. Ba Maw gave credit to the Japanese for this feat when he said, "The phenomenal Japanese victories...really marked the beginning of the end of all imperial colonialism."<sup>79</sup> Despite never gaining pro-Japanese feelings within the Sphere, the Japanese were successful in creating anti-Western feelings. Additionally, under Japanese occupation, Southeast Asians were also introduced to modern education and centralized governments that further united and prepared them to deal with the returning European powers.<sup>80</sup> Despite these accomplishments of Japan's former bloc nations, it is important to understand that throughout the GEACOP, many of these occupied nations relentlessly fought the Japanese. This was certainly true in China, where the Japanese continued to fight both the CCP and the Kuomintang throughout World War

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<sup>77</sup> Choi, "Mapping Japanese Imperialism," 326.

<sup>78</sup> Iyenaga Saburō, *Taiheiyō Sensō*, in Lebra-Chapman, *Japan's Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere* 169.

<sup>79</sup> Ba Maw, *Breakthrough in Burma*, in Lebra-Chapman, *Japan's Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere*, 158.

<sup>80</sup> Willard H. Elsbree, *Japan's Role in South-East Asian Nationalist Movements* (Harvard University Press, 1953), in Lebra-Chapman, *Japan's Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere*, 163.

II. In the Philippines, Japanese troops dealt with guerillas, and in Burma, the Burmese Independence Army launched attacks against the Japanese.<sup>81</sup> The Japanese created many enemies throughout their Greater East Asia War and maintained few allies.

The Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere was many things to many different people. To some, it was an attempt to conquer the "evil" Western powers, to others it was an attempt to create a harmonious Asian society. Yet despite these positive intentions, there were also intentions to enforce racial supremacy and manipulate others for the development of the Japanese people. Regardless of its intentions, the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere was doomed to fail because of Japan's "inability to link a common cause" with those they were supposed to support.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Elsbree, *Nationalist Movements*, in Lebra-Chapman, *Japan's Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere*, 160.

<sup>82</sup> Elsbree, *Nationalist Movements*, in Lebra-Chapman, *Japan's Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere*, 160.

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