

**'Co-Prosperity' or 'Commonwealth':
Japan, Britain and Burma 1940-1945**

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Abstract

The entry of Japanese forces into Southeast Asia in 1940 and 1941, now generally identified as one of the vital causes of the Pacific War, and the following Japanese interregnum in the region during the war have been the focus of a considerable volume of studies. In particular, the causation and motivation behind Japanese expansion into Southeast Asia has been a matter of much historiographical and public debate in recent years. This thesis aims to clarify the goals behind Japanese policy and explore how it evolved both prior to and during the war, and how it in turn affected British policy.

This study explores these subjects with particular focus on the following issues. It examines how the idea of building a 'Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere' developed as the rationale for Japanese policy and to what extent the Japanese pre-war and wartime policy to nurture nationalist aspirations in Southeast Asia was driven by the ideological claims behind this concept. It also assesses how the Japanese southern expansion and the following occupation influenced British policy towards Southeast Asia, where Britain faced the rise of a number of active nationalist movements. These questions considered at the general level are also examined through a case study of Burma which provides an interesting example for the analysis of the real motives and intentions behind Japanese policy as well as for studying its impact on British policy planning to maintain its presence in the region.

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Introduction

More than sixty years have already passed since the end of the Second World War in Asia and in the intervening period, the confrontation between Japan and the West over the control of Southeast Asia both prior to and during the war has attracted scholarly attentions of from many different angles. Among the many perspectives on the Japanese-Allied conflict in the region, the emergence and impact of the vision of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere is probably the most politically controversial subject. The war fought in Asia and Pacific between 1941 and 1945 is often referred to in Japanese by its wartime name '*Dai Tōa Sensō*' [the Greater East Asian War] which implicitly identifies the conflict as a struggle to achieve the elimination of the Western colonial structure from the region. From this viewpoint, the concept of the GEACPS is often considered to be a symbol of Japan's altruistic effort for decolonisation and 'Asian liberation'.

Some Japanese writers and scholars have supported the view that Japan's aim was, from the beginning, to liberate Asia from the yoke of Western colonialism and that it should be given considerable credit for bringing about the collapse of the pre-war colonial regimes and for emergence of independent states in the region following the end of *Dai-Tōa Sensō*. This view has, for instance, been presented by Hayashi Fusao in one of his works '*Dai Tōa Sensō Kōteiron* [An Affirmation of the Greater East Asian War]'. Hayashi has argued in this study that the war fought during the period of 1941-45 was a conflict between America's attempt to maintain a 'white Pacific' and Japan's struggle to construct a 'yellow Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere'. He interprets the war not as an act of Japanese aggression or as a struggle for the redistribution of colonial territories but as Japan's heroic effort to liberate the oppressed Asian peoples from more than two centuries of Western domination which had shattered the peace that Japan had previously maintained with its neighbours. The emergence of new independent states after the war, he argued, is a reminder of the objectives that Japan fought for during the war against the Anglo-American powers. Such ideas have been repeatedly enunciated by many authors, especially on the Japanese side. It is not unusual even nowadays to find a considerable numbers of studies which follow a similar line of argument.¹

One notable example of the resurgence of this revisionist interpretation of the war during the latter half of the 1990s was the establishment of the 'Association for the Advancement of Liberalist [sic] View of History' with Professor Fujioka Nobukatsu of Tokyo University as its driving force. Heading a group of scholars and teachers who demand a fundamental reconsideration of modern history education, Fujioka argues that Japanese

history is steeped in self-negation because it has embraced and indigenised two hostile foreign conceptions of Japanese history: the Asian nations' hatred of Japan and the national interest of the Western Allies. Fujioka has affirmed both that the war was one of self-defence and that the Asian nations had ultimately benefited from Japan's actions, and he developed those ideas further in an intensive debate with his opponents such as Yutaka Yoshida, a professor of social science at Hitotsubashi University.

It is important to note that this 'revisionist' school in Japan has created a 'public' image of the war which has resonated with some in Japanese society beyond the boundary of intellectual circles. This is apparent, for instance, from the fact that there has been a significant mobilisation of political and financial forces behind Fujioka's group. A number of politicians, mainly from the Liberal Democratic Party, have formed various study groups and established ties with the association. They have frequently invited the School's members to address the need for promoting historical education 'with dignity and balance'. Furthermore, these groups together have developed and implemented a strategy of approaching prefectural and local assemblies with the aim of influencing the content of history textbooks.² With a view to reinforcing support for this re-emergence of the revisionist interpretation of the war, it is not surprising to find that various controversial comments have been made by conservative and rightist politicians across party lines. For instance, Okuno Seisuke, a member of the House of Representatives from the Liberal Democratic Party stated in March 1989 in an article that:

'I believe that this war was a war of liberation to emancipate Asian people from the oppression of the white race as stated in the statement of the Emperor at the end of the war. It was not a war of aggression. How dare the Japanese people deny the connection between the Greater East Asia war and the liberation of Asia, when many people in Southeast Asia say their independence was achieved through it?'³

Furthermore, Norota Yoshinari of the Liberal Democratic Party, a member of House of Representatives and then chairman of the Budgetary Committee, remarked on 18 February 2001 that 'not a small number of Asian leaders viewed the 'Greater East Asia War' as a turning point to bring about the end of colonialism and independence of their countries which was accomplished through Japan's war effort.'⁴ Other recent comments by Japanese public figures suggest that this is not just an idea shared by a precious few but that it has gained wide currency among some of the current political and intellectual leaders of the nation.⁵

Countering the resurgence of these nationalist views, a number of Japanese historians have presented critical studies of the war that have argued that Japanese

expansion into Asian countries was an 'act of aggression'. Professor Ienaga explored the issue of Japan's responsibility for the war in one of his works titled *Sensō Sekinin* [Responsibility for the War] and presented his view that the Japanese confrontation against the Allied powers was clearly a war of expansion.⁶ Eguchi Keiichi brought forward a detailed counterargument against the revisionist views and argued that Japan would only be able to overcome its memory of the war in the Pacific and Asia by offering self-criticism of its history of aggressive expansionism throughout the first half of the 20th century.⁷ Shinobu Seizaburō has also presented his analysis of the origins and impact of the conflict by arguing that the independence of Asia was a by-product of the war rather than the intention of the Japanese government at the time.⁸ Within this framework, scholars generally agree that the vision of the GEACPS with its ideal of liberating colonial subjects in Asia was an ideology designed to romanticise and justify Japan's expansionist ambitions.⁹

As a number of prominent historians, including the above, have demonstrated, the validity of the revisionist argument is highly debatable especially when one considers the following points. First, the Japanese expansion into Southeast Asia prior to the outbreak of the war was primarily driven by its desire to exert control over the abundant natural resources of the region as well as its strategic concerns regarding the termination of its ongoing conflict with Nationalist China. This has been revealed by a number of scholars including Mark Peattie, Henry Frei, and Gotō Kenichi whose works have examined the causation and motives behind Japan's southern advance.¹⁰ The importance of Japan's desire to build an autarkic economy as the impetus behind its southern expansion has been made abundantly clear by, for instance, the works of Michael Barnhart and James Crowley.¹¹ As has been demonstrated by these studies, Japan's interest in the rise of nationalist aspirations in Southeast Asia played little, if any, role in driving forward its challenge to the Western colonial powers in the region.

Second, the view that the 'Greater East Asia' was a war of 'liberation' is legitimate only when one neglects the existence and development of nationalist movements in many of the colonial territories in the region prior to the beginning of Japan's actual expansion. The nationalist aspirations for independence in those territories had already grown into sizeable political forces largely within the context of their long anti-colonial struggle against Western suzerain powers. Against this background, the extent of Japanese influence on their development is debatable.¹² Thus any view that presupposes Japan's role as a 'liberator', single-handedly emancipating the passive and helpless Asian subjects, is too simplistic and problematic. Moreover, it is important to see that many of the nationalist movements that fought against the return of European rule had their roots in resistance against Japan.

Third, any positive account of the Japanese war has to be counterbalanced by consideration of the records of the inhumane treatment that people in the region suffered prior to and throughout the war. Besides the notorious stories of the atrocities that Japan conducted in China, episodes of forced labour in Southeast Asia have been subjected to a number of detailed studies by scholars both in Japan and abroad. For instance, it has been estimated that the construction of the Burma-Siam Railway, notoriously referred as the 'railway of death', claimed the lives of 100,000 Burmese and Malay Indian labourers.¹³ In recent years, the issue of 'comfort women' has also been brought to public attention by an increasing number of studies.¹⁴ With memories of these brutalities still vivid in Asia today, one finds it hard to accept the affirmative account of 'the Greater East Asia war' without serious reservations.

It has to be noted, however, that despite equivocation on the above points being morally unacceptable, especially for the Japanese, defining the war simply as a unilateral war of expansionism is equally problematic. While the war in question was no doubt one of expansionism against the countries in Asia, it was a two-edged struggle which was also fought to challenge Western imperialism in Southeast Asia and its moral justification. In this sense, the phrases bandied around at the time such as the 'liberation of Asia' and 'new Asian order' were not mere slogans aimed at providing a veneer to the unjustified incursions into foreign lands, and it is therefore too simplistic to view the war as a mere aggressive military action which was undertaken as a collective effort of the entire nation with one objective in mind. Whether it be a 'holy war' or an 'expansionist aggression', portraying the conflict as one pitting Allied idealism against Japanese moral failure (or vice versa) is nothing more than an exercise in naivety that distorts historical reality and the lessons to be learnt from the conflict. These issues have to be considered by taking a clear and balanced view that does not play down the aggressive side or exonerate Japan for the war it waged.

* * *

With the memory of the war being fresh in the minds of the present generation, debate on the nature of the Japanese quest into Southeast Asia still presents a very difficult task for historians today. Due to this continuing controversy, some of the issues which hold the key to unweave the tangled web of motives and causations behind the war have been left without much scholarly attention. The origins and nature of the vision of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere [*Dai Tōa Kyōeiken*] is one issue which has been the subject of a surprisingly small number of studies. Since the end of the conflict, a great number of works

have been produced to examine the emerging confrontation between Japan and the West in Southeast Asia prior to the war and its development during the conflict in the region. For instance, a lucid explanation of how Japan led itself into the confrontation with the Anglo-American powers has, for instance, been presented by the '*Taiheiyō Sensō e no michi*' series which was edited by *Nihon Kokusai Seiji Gakkai* in 1963. In particular, the sixth volume of that series provided a detailed study of the process by which Japan began to expand its influence into Southeast Asia and, ultimately, found itself at war with the United States and Britain.¹⁵ This survey by various Japanese historians has been supplemented by a number of international studies that have considered the subject from a broader perspective. The product of a conference at Lake Kawaguchi, Japan, '*Pearl Harbor as History – Japanese-American relations, 1931-41*'¹⁶ provided a set of essays which were devoted to an examination of foreign policy decision-making in the United States and Japan in the decade preceding the outbreak of the war. More recently, Iriye Akira has presented an overview of the origins of the war in Asia and Pacific by examining the roots of the conflict through Japan's challenge to the Washington treaty system and the outbreak of the war with China.¹⁷ Some of the themes examined in the above works have been revisited by a number of books such as '*Taiheiyō Sensō*', edited by Hosoya Chihiro, which comprehensively studied the origins and nature of the war and its impact on East and Southeast Asia. However, it has to be pointed out that, while many of the existing works have studied Japan's expansion into Southeast Asia as one of the most important immediate causes of the Pacific War, only a small number of studies have comprehensively examined this Japanese expansion in relation to the concept of the GEACPS.

Among the few existing studies that have examined the concept of the GEACPS as their main focus, one of the classic works is '*Japan's Great East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere in World War II*' edited by Joyce C. Lebra. It presents a comprehensive collection of statements and written works by decision-makers, scholars and writers as well as Japanese policy documents on the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere during the pre-war and wartime periods, and reveals the complexity of the picture surrounding the origins and nature of the concept that rationalised Japanese short-time rule over Western colonies.¹⁸ Yet there are only a limited number of works that have re-examined and developed new perspectives on the issues explored by this study. Most of the writings have examined the concept of the GEACPS in passing and historians tend to be negative about its importance, as exemplified by the analysis of W. G. Beasley. In his work *Japanese Imperialism*, which studies the development of Japan's imperial expansion since the latter half of the nineteenth century, he dismisses the concept as an after-thought which only

took shape in time of war and was chosen for propaganda purposes partly because it was 'politically convenient' in the sense of inhibiting opposition from those who found themselves under Japanese dominance.¹⁹ This tendency is also apparent among some of the Japanese literature including Ieyaga Saburō's study of the Pacific War, *Taiheiyō Sensō*. In the work translated in English as *Japan's Last War – World War II and the Japanese, 1931-45*, the author used many accounts by Japanese individuals to provide insights into the war and argued in the study that the moralistic Japanese slogans had 'little relation to the brutal inhumane realities in Japanese-occupied Asia'.²⁰ Recently, Peter Duus has provided an analysis of the concept of the GEACPS and re-examined the role played by this vision in his edited volume *The Japanese Wartime Empire, 1931-45*.²¹ While his argument has shed new light on the role played by the concept, it has not been fully explored by more extensive consideration of the subject.

Recent years have seen some scholarly attempts to study the origins and nature of Pan-Asianism, which underpinned the development of the vision of the GEACPS, from an intellectual angle. For instance, Susan Townsend's *Yanaihara Tadao and Japanese Colonial Policy: redeeming empire* has thoroughly examined life and idea of Yanaihara Tadao, one of leading political scientists in pre-war Japan who wrote about the creation of a new global civilisation with Japan at its heart.²² This study by Dr. Townsend has provided a vital insight into the struggles that the Japanese intellectuals faced at the time to develop Pan-Asianist idealism and come to terms with and rationalise the nation's narrower strategic goals in the region. Miles Fletcher's work *The Search for a New Order - Intellectuals and Fascism in Pre-War Japan* has examined the attempt of Japanese intellectuals to gain influence on Japan's policy making through their involvement in a number of research organisations such as the Shōwa Research Association.²³ Matsuura Masataka's two studies on the pre-war development of Pan-Asianism are also noteworthy as they have provided analyses of the important changes in the vision of Pan-Asianism during the 1920s and 1930s. They have revealed how the idea spread among Japanese leaders within and outside the government through the network of Pan-Asianist organisations and how it developed into a sizeable ideological force to underpin Japan's growing interest in East and Southeast Asia.²⁴

The role of Japanese intellectuals during the pre-war and wartime periods is also explored by a significant volume of literature in recent years that examines the intellectuals of the Kyoto School of Philosophy, Nishida Kitarō and Tanabe Hajime in particular and their role in transforming early Pan-Asian ideas into a more concrete ideological foundation for Japan's relations with Asian countries and the West; which would later develop into the vision of the GEACPS. Recent writings by scholars such as Graham

Parkes, Christopher Gotō-Jones and David Williams²⁵ have revisited the arguments put forward by the Kyoto philosophers and challenged the orthodox interpretation of the Kyoto school presented by, for instance, Harry Harootunian which has labelled it as a group of ultra-nationalists supporting Japanese imperialism.²⁶ These studies have revealed the importance of the role played by the key figures of the school in forming the ideological basis of the new East Asian order as well as revealing the complexity of their stance towards Japan's policy and its war effort. As this thesis focuses on the political and diplomatic dimensions of the evolution of the Greater East Asian Co-prosperity Sphere, the philosophical origins of pan-Asianism and the influence of intellectuals are not central to its approach. Yet the recent resurgence of interest in the Kyoto school of philosophy and its impact on the intellectual dimension of Japanese expansionism in East and Southeast Asia has greatly contributed to broaden our insight into the origins and nature of the ideological underpinnings of expansion.

In view of the paucity of studies dealing with the ideological dimension of Japan's war against the Anglo-American powers, the work of two Japanese scholars stand out. Iriye Akira's book, *Power and Culture – the Japanese-American War, 1941–45*, has examined the views of these two antagonists and illustrated how both sides perceived the conflict and their own actions. This book is important because it has provided an analysis of both the political and cultural dimensions of the relations between the two countries and because it illustrates the impact that the issue of 'war-aims' and the theme of Pan-Asianism brought to the nature of the conflict between Japan and the Western colonial powers.²⁷ Moreover, in his study *Taiheiyō Sensō to Ajia Gaikō* [Japan's Asia Policy during the Pacific War: Political Struggles over "Asian Liberation"], Hatano Sumio has built on Iriye's work and studied the development of Japan's wartime policy planning towards its occupied territories in East Asia and Southeast Asia. Through his study of Japanese archives, Hatano has examined the views of the *Gaimushō* on Japan's wartime diplomacy and revealed how the idea of 'Asian Liberation' emerged as an important theme in Japanese policy-making and how it affected Japan's policy to grant independence to some of territories under Japanese occupation and its decision to convene the Great East Asia Conference in 1943.²⁸ Indeed, these two works represent the only serious and extensive attempts in recent years to understand what the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere was and how it affected Japan's wartime policy planning towards Southeast Asia. This study is designed to re-examine these questions and contribute to fill the gap in our understanding of the origins and nature of the war in Pacific and Asia by providing new perspectives on the issues surrounding this highly controversial subject.

* * *

In approaching the subject, this study considers the following aspects of the vision of the GEACPS as an important key for analysis. One of the aspects is the ideological origins of the concept especially from the beginning of the 1930s. Existing studies have generally approached the development of Japan's policy of southern advance and the road to war against the Allied countries from the diplomatic, economic and military perspectives. These works have primarily explained the origins of the confrontation through consideration of issues such as Japan's right of self-defence in the face of the British and American economic embargo, the government's reaction to the power vacuum in Southeast Asia following the outbreak of the war in Europe, and the debate surrounding the army's northward ambitions and the navy's southward stance.²⁹ However, this does not fully explain why Japan had to undertake aggressive southern expansion even at the cost of a confrontation with the militarily and economically dominant Western colonial powers in the region, which in retrospect seems a strategically irrational decision to make. While analysis of the political process that led Japan to these decisions is important, disregarding ideology as a mere afterthought creates the danger of neglecting the important role played by the vision of the GEACPS as the ideological basis for Japan's policy-making. This is an important point to note particularly because it is a vital perspective which Iriye and Hatano have missed out in their studies. By limiting the scope of their studies to the wartime period, both studies have neglected the important continuities behind the vision of the GEACPS and Japan's policy planning towards the occupied territories in Southeast Asia.

Far from being a mere afterthought, the GEACPS was an ideological construct that emerged in the context of the long-term development of Pan-Asianism. During the pre-war years, early Pan-Asianist idealism changed its emphasis according to Japan's practical strategic considerations and provided important elements of continuity in the concept of the GEACPS. This explains the extent and rapidity with which the vision of the GEACPS came to be embraced as a fundamental principle of Japanese policy-making following its emergence in July 1940. Soon after its endorsement, the idea was shared extensively among the Japanese decision-makers as a rationale and exerted considerable influence on Japan's actual policy planning prior to and throughout the war. As Peter Duus has pointed out, it rapidly acquired the status of a national goal and was embraced by the highest leadership as the touchstone of Japanese policy when the concept emerged with the formation of the second Kono Cabinet in the summer of 1940. The GEACPS was routinely spoken of as a grand national quest and reference was repeatedly made to the

'world historical significance' of the vision. More importantly, at the meetings among top decision makers, choices were justified or rejected and decisions of major national policy were endorsed on the grounds that it would promote, or impede, the establishment of the GEACPS. This suggests that the concept served a broader ideological function than simply disguising Japan's imperialist ambitions with an idealistic façade.³⁰

By focusing the scope of their studies on the wartime period, Iriye and Hatano's works paid little attention to another notable aspect of the GEACPS which consistently influenced Japan's policy-making towards the Southeast Asian colonies both before and during the war: the mutable nature of the concept. A vital feature of the concept of the GEACPS was that it was not based upon a static and consistent set of objectives which set strict parameters for the formulation of policy. Rather, its emphasis and goals shifted in accordance with the political and strategic concerns that preoccupied the minds of Japanese leaders from time to time. Until recently, many studies on Japan's foreign policy making have been conducted largely in the context of the conflict between the dominant military services and the weakening civilian elements, in particular the Foreign Ministry. Yet the *Gaimushō* [Foreign Ministry] and the other non-military sections were not so far out of power as earlier accounts had supposed. Japan's foreign policy planning process was much more complex than a mere confrontation between the aggressive military and the liberal, 'internationally minded' Foreign Ministry. What emerges instead is that there was a constant struggle to create a broad civil-military consensus in favour of aggression abroad and the rapid increase of Japan's economic and political influence in Southeast Asia. The conflict between the two parties was not so much about the objectives of Japanese foreign policy as the means to attain the goals. In this context, the vision of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere functioned as an ideological construct that provided a rationale for Japanese policy planning and which changed its goals and means in response to the various internal and external factors surrounding the Japanese government. This tendency seems apparent throughout the period to be examined in this study. For instance, as the Japanese officially pushed forward the policy of 'southern advance' and a confrontation with the Western colonial powers became increasingly inevitable, the emphasis of the vision transformed from the formation of an economic co-operative body in the region into a more exclusive and autarkic regional bloc. As the war broke out and Japan expanded its sphere of influence, the Co-Prosperity Sphere came to stress the military and strategic aspects with the idea of 'self-defence and self-existence'. As the country developed new policy lines in the latter half of the conflict which encouraged 'nationalist aspirations' and granted independence for some occupied territories, it then became a doctrine with more emphasis on the establishment of a regional community. Thus, the way in which the

concept of the GEACPS evolved provides significant insights into the minds of Japan's decision-makers.

Moreover, the impact of this ideological construct on the Allied powers' war strategy is also an important aspect to be examined by this study. Japan's advocacy of a new order in the 'Greater East Asia' played a notable role in determining the characteristics of the emerging conflict with Britain and the United States. As has been argued by Christopher Thorne in his work *The Allies of a Kind – The United States, Britain and the war against Japan, 1941-45*³¹ as well as in John Dower's *War without Mercy – race and power in the Pacific War*³², the interactions between Japan and the Allied powers in the ideological sphere constitute a vital part of any discussion on the conflict fought in Southeast Asia. The confrontation between Japan and the Western colonial powers in the region is noteworthy not only because it was a key factor that made the war inevitable. It was also significant because the support of nationalist causes in Southeast Asia with its ideological claim of 'Asian Liberation' had a considerable influence in forming the character and course of the war. In the conventional framework of power politics, Japan's attempt can be viewed as a traditional challenge in which one colonial power tried to expand its sphere of influence at the expense of another. In this context, the war might be seen simply as another story of a quest for raw materials and natural resources. Nevertheless, the conflict came to have a somewhat different character in ideological terms owing to the fact that the Japanese advocated the expulsion of the Western powers from Asia through the establishment of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. By portraying Japan's war as a struggle to supplant the existing order created by the Anglo-American powers, and not as a crass contest over power and wealth, the concept posed serious ideological problems for the Allied powers and enabled Japan to pursue collaboration with indigenous nationalist elements in Southeast Asia. Thus, in spite of its controversial nature, an analysis of the emergence and nature of the vision of the GEACPS and its role in Japan's policy-making provides an important dimension to deepen our understanding of causation and motivation behind the Japanese expansion into Southeast Asia before and during the war.

This study also differentiates itself from the works of Iriye and Hatano by considering the evolution of British policy towards Japan and its colonial territories as a vital component of this study. One of the important characteristics of the two scholars' studies is that they tended to examine Japan's southern expansion and its ideological confrontation against the Allied powers within the framework of the Japanese-American conflict. This is partly due to the enormity and controversial nature of the Japanese attack in Pearl Harbor which was perceived by the United States as a completely unjustified and unprovoked aggression,

violating international codes of behaviour. However, the importance given to the relationship between the two powers has led these scholars to focus on the subject from a rather narrow perspective and resulted in the exclusion of other factors that could provide equally important keys to deepen our understanding of the nature of the war. As the country which had the most extensive colonial interests in the region, a study of the British perspectives helps to shed light on the complex position that East and Southeast Asia held in international politics.

More specifically, a consideration of British policy is important for the purpose of this study for two reasons. As both Ian Nish and Hosoya Chihiro have pointed out, the confrontation in 1941 was to a degree an Anglo-Japanese conflict because the economic and political rivalry of the two powers in East and Southeast Asia provided an important underlying context for the war.³³ For instance, the trade friction over market access that emerged in the 1930s became one of the critical issues in Anglo-Japanese relations and developed into a source of bitter commercial rivalry. Moreover, Britain's control of raw materials, through both the formal and informal empire, constantly created tensions between the two powers as it was perceived by Japan as a means to manipulate raw material supplies to the detriment of its economy. This conflict of interests not only functioned as a major destabilizing element in East Asia but also served as an important factor that led Japan to the desire for autarky and expansionism in Southeast Asia. This important perspective on the history of East Asia has, for instance, been developed by Peter Lowe who presented an account of the emerging conflict in East and Southeast Asia through a consideration of British-Japanese relations in the region in his work '*Great Britain and the Origins of the Pacific War - a study of British policy in East Asia 1937-41*'.³⁴ Ian Nish's edited work '*Anglo-Japanese Alienation, 1919-52*' also provides a series of studies that deal with pre-war aspects of the two countries' alienation and has contributed to draw a more international picture of the origins of the Pacific War.³⁵ A number of studies have built on this work and provided further insights to deepen our understanding of how the war came about. For instance, '*Britain, Japan and the Pearl Harbor – avoiding war in East Asia 1936-41*' written by Antony Best illustrates the British efforts to avert conflict with Japan and its consistent failure to accommodate Tokyo's interests in East Asia with its own and shows how events led to the outbreak of a war.³⁶ Key issues in Anglo-Japanese relations during the period leading to the war have also been addressed by Japanese scholars such as Hosoya Chihiro and Kibata Yōichi.³⁷ As these works have effectively demonstrated, a range of issues separated Britain and Japan and provided a major impetus in driving Japan towards the southern expansion that would ultimately lead to a war for influence in Southeast Asia.

The publication of these studies both in Japan and Britain has raised an intensive debate on the complex interplay between these countries leading to the outbreak of the war, which includes the question of whether the eventual confrontation of the two should be seen as the unavoidable outcome of their growing animosity or an unfortunate consequence of what could have been avoided. This study does not address that issue, but rather focuses on a more specific analysis of the interaction between the two powers. In the chapters dealing with the pre-war period, British policy towards Japan will be examined as a key component of this study to assess how it influenced the course of Japanese southern expansion and what impact it had in determining the character of the GEACPS. It has been noted above that the concept of the GEACPS shifted in accordance with the internal and external factors that preoccupied the minds of Japanese leaders from time to time. Japan's perception that its rapidly expanding economy was stultified by the obstacles inherent in Britain's colonial structure in Southeast Asia and the way Britain responded to Tokyo's growing aspiration for autarky provided an important stimulus to this process of transformation. Through an examination of British sources, in particular those of the Foreign Office, this thesis endeavours to explore the above questions.

The examination of British policy in this study does not end at the start of the war as the emphasis on Anglo-Japanese conflict over the colonies in Southeast Asia is not limited simply to the events leading to the outbreak of the war. It can be taken further to demonstrate that the interaction of these two powers was a major factor which determined the characteristics and course of the war throughout the period following the start of the actual Japanese occupation of the Western colonies. In one of its vital aspects, the war fought in Asia and Pacific was an ideological conflict that needs to be seen within the perspective of the long-term presence of the Western colonial structure and Japan's ideological challenge against it. That is not to say that the immediate causes of the war were essentially ideological ones, nor was the Japanese thrust to the region primarily motivated by its idealism. However, in its wider setting, Japan's advocacy of the vision of the GEACPS revealed the ideological nature of the war between Japan and the West.

In this context, the importance of Anglo-Japanese interactions lies in the fact that Britain had been exerting its influence in Southeast Asia as the largest suzerain power in the region whose sphere extended from India to British New Guinea and further. When Japan started to control those colonial possessions in Southeast Asia with its ideological claim of establishing a new order, it forced the Allied powers to engage in a political war that aimed at countering Japan's self-styled 'anti-colonialist struggle'. Britain was virtually the only colonial power in the region which, along with the United States, could devise a political strategy against the Japanese in absence of the Netherlands and France, which

were under German control. Thus Britain's interplay with Japan is important as it was at the centre of an ideological struggle to respond to the Japanese justification of its rule over the region.

The impact of the war on the British colonial structure in the region and London's response to the challenges have been the subject of a number of existing studies. The above mentioned work by Christopher Thorne has set the tone for the studies of those issues.³⁸ In addition, William Roger Louis' *Imperialism at Bay, 1941-45* and John Sbraga *Anglo-American Relations and Colonialism in East Asia, 1941-1945* have also touched upon the subjects through examination of the wartime controversies between Britain and the United States on the future of the colonial world as well as the forces behind imperialism during World War II.³⁹ Nicholas Taring's *The Fall of Imperial Britain in South-East Asia*, moreover, has provided an analysis on the impact and ramifications of the war on British policy planning.⁴⁰ However, these existing works do not cover the issue of how Japanese propaganda affected British views on the future of the empire or its strategy to engage in a political warfare.

This study examines the British response to meet the Japanese challenge and analyses its policy planning to devise a political warfare campaign aimed at undertaking an offensive against the Japanese through a consideration of the Political Warfare (Japan) Committee [P.W.J.C.]. The P.W.J.C. was an organisation that was designed to provide policy guidance to the existing machineries involved in political warfare against the Japanese occupied territories and to co-ordinate the formulation of effective policies that would reinforce the Allied military strategies in the region. A study of the circumstances surrounding the establishment of the organisation and the role it actually played within the British policy-making process illustrates its inherent structural problems in devising an effective strategy and also the weakness of Britain's ideological standing in the region.

The last but no less important aspect of this thesis is the case study of Burma as a means to analyse the real motives and intentions behind the Japanese policy as well as its impact on British policy planning. The Japanese occupation of Southeast Asia during the conflict has been one of the most closely studied periods of the region's history. Since the late 1940s a considerable number of studies have examined the events of the war years from local, national and regional perspectives. Following the publication of Willard Elsabee's analysis of Japanese policy towards the region's nationalist movements, there has been considerable debate on issues such as the impact of the war on the social and political transformation in Southeast Asia, the nature of Japanese policy and the implications of the indigenous response.⁴¹ Alfred McCoy and Josef Silverstein, for instance, have provided

further insights on these issues by building upon Elsbree's study. The literature on the wartime period has now developed to the point that all of the region's major states have been studied, and, in several areas, differing schools of interpretation have emerged. However, the case of Burma has been covered by a relatively small number of works up to the present in comparison to countries such as Malaya, Indonesia and Thailand, which have been subject to a number of studies including extensive works by A. J. Stockwell on Malaya.⁴² This study focuses on the case of Burma which became one of the first two countries to which Japan granted the status of an independent country within the GEACPS in 1943 along with the Philippines.

It is important to note that Japan had been actively involved in assisting the Burmese nationalist movement since the late 1930s. The activities of the *Minami Kikan*, a government-sponsored organisation, is a well-known example of Japanese support for nationalist aspirations in Burma which has been the subject of a number of studies.⁴³ Yet one has to note that Japan's assistance for the Burmese movement actually began well before the foundation of the organisation. The Japanese had been engaged in various activities for a number of years prior to the emergence of the GEACPS and had established close ties with some of the key Burmese figures in support of the nationalist cause. A study of the Japanese policy towards Burma's nationalist aspirations therefore provides an important perspective to examine key questions including the motives behind Japan's advocacy of 'Asian Liberation' and its policy of supporting nationalist movement in Southeast Asia as well as to what extent this activity was related to the ideals of the GEACPS.

Up to the present, only a few works exist on the Burma-Japan relationship. The most thorough study is provided by Dorothy Guyot which is based on Japanese and Burmese language sources.⁴⁴ Her work has been built on further by Jan Becka, U Maung Maung and Robert Taylor who have deepened our understanding of how the Japanese influenced the political development of Burma during the pre-war and wartime period.⁴⁵ Among a number of works by Japanese scholars, Ōta Tsunezō's study *Biruma ni okeru Nihon gunsei-shi no kenkyū* [A Study of the Japanese Military Administration in Burma] is particularly noteworthy because of its detailed and extensive research on the Japanese policy documents produced by the local military administrations in the country as well as by the central government of Tokyo.⁴⁶ Nemoto Kei's works have also dealt with a wide range of issues surrounding Japanese-Burmese interactions and how they engendered the development of Burma's nationalist movement.

One notable tendency apparent in the majority of the existing studies on Japanese rule in Southeast Asia is that they have looked at the bilateral relationship between Japan

and Burma. However, Burma presents an especially interesting case study because of the fact that Britain and Japan were engaged in direct and intensive confrontation over the legitimacy of their respective claims to control the territory during both pre-war and wartime period. In 1939, Britain, the ruling power in Burma, announced its intention to give the country dominion status in future. Yet the pledge of the British government was, at least from the perspective of the Burmese nationalists, far from clear as to the timing and form of its independence. It was in this context that Japan found an opportunity which it could seize upon in order to win the support of Burmese nationalists by indicating its support for independence of the country. Japanese policy-makers identified the British colony as one of the areas they could make best use of the ideological appeal of the GEACPS.

With the beginning of the Japanese occupation, Burma became important not only because of its strategic position on the front line of Japanese military campaign and a starting point of the British counter-offensive, but also of their conflicting political strategies. Burma became a key battle-ground in the political warfare between Britain and Japan to win the support of Burmese nationalists and present a sound argument as to why its rule over the country was more justified than the other. British war-time policy planning towards Burma has been examined by F.S.V. Donnison's *British Military Administration in the Far East, 1943-46* and Geoffrey Matthews' *The Re-Conquest of Burma, 1943-45*.⁴⁷ Nicholas Tarling's two articles on the subject have also provided a detailed analysis of Britain planning for post-war Burma.⁴⁸ Yet this has been an area covered only by small number of studies. This thesis examines the views and conflicts of British policy planners, those of the Burma Office in particular, and assesses the impact of the Japanese propaganda and occupation of Burma.

* * * *

Based upon the above framework, this thesis develops its argument in the following structure. In the first chapter, the origins of the GEACPS are examined through an analysis of the growth of Pan-Asianist ideas during the 1930s. In particular, it examines the process by which the growing Japanese antipathy towards the international system dominated by the Western colonial powers and the search for creation of a new order influenced the nature of Pan-Asianism and how this affected the development of the co-prosperity sphere as an ideological foundation for Japan's policy-making. It is studied through an examination of the role played by the *Shōwa Kenkyū-kai* [Shōwa Research Association], which exerted significant influence on Konoe Fumimaro, the Premier at the time of Japan's announcement of the GEACPS. This chapter also considers the context in which various

parts of the Japanese government agreed to take a bolder posture in exerting influence over Southeast Asia by the summer of 1940. While the three important elements in Japan's decision-making, the Army, Navy and the Foreign Ministry, came to support a policy of expanding its influence over Southeast Asia, their motives and objectives regarding the pursuit of such a policy were considerably different. The Foreign Ministry was not an exception to this tendency. The ministry developed its interest in *Nanshin* from its own concerns and came to favour a southern advance by interpreting the policy plan in a way that fit its own ends and means. The chapter reveals how the Japanese government came to favour the policy of a southern advance in spite of these significant differences over motives and goals.

In the second chapter, the emergence of the concept of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere and the development of Japan's policy of a southern expansion are considered. In examining these subjects, the foreign policy developed by Matsuoka Yōsuke towards independent and colonial territories in Southeast Asia is analysed as an important factor that determined how the ideal of the GEACPS developed and how this then affected Japan's policy of southern advance. It also studies how British policy responded to the Japanese expansion and, in turn, influenced the emergence and development of the concept. This chapter argues that, rather than being an ideological drive, the concept of the GEACPS functioned as a means to incorporate the various interests and views envisaged by different segments of the Japanese government into an executable policy of a southern advance. It also argues that the vision of the GEACPS was not a product of careful planning with a consistent set of goals or a certain prefixed geographical scope, but that it transformed according to changes in the domestic as well as the international circumstances surrounding the Japanese government. Through a study of British-Japanese interaction, it examines how the GEACPS transformed its character from a loose co-operative body aimed at economic and political ties with the countries of the region to become an autarkic and exclusive regional bloc as Japan's confrontation with the colonial powers of Southeast Asia became inevitable.

The third chapter deals with the pre-war Japanese policy towards Burma as a case study of Japanese activities in the region prior to the outbreak of the war. It is examined in conjunction with a study of the development of the nationalist movement in Burma under the colonial rule of Britain and of the British policy to cope with the increasing appeal of the indigenous elites. It is important to note that Japan maintained considerable interests in Burma before the start of the war and engaged in a wide range of political activities. Although the extensive support provided by the *Minami Kikan*, established in February 1941, is a well-known episode, Japan was involved in support of the nationalist movements

against British rule even before the foundation of that organisation. An examination of the motives and objectives behind the Japanese involvement in such activities provides a case study of how the nature of the commitment towards Southeast Asia transformed prior to the war and how it changed when the establishment of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere became an actual possibility with the outbreak of the conflict in the region.

The fourth chapter considers how the success of Japan's initial campaign and its ideological claim of 'Asian Liberation' affected the nature of the conflict with the Allied powers and its own planning to rule the newly occupied territories. The initial success of Japanese expansion into Southeast Asia and Japan's advocacy of 'Asian Liberation' based on the ideological claim of the GEACPS not only strengthened Tokyo's position in its war effort against the Allied powers but also made the issue of the future position of colonial territories a significant factor in the conflict. The vision of the GEACPS also enabled Japan to rationalise the Japanese policy towards the newly occupied territories in Southeast Asia and the establishment of a new order centred on the Japanese leadership. This chapter pays particular attention to the discussions undertaken by top Japanese leaders from various backgrounds at the *Dai Tōa Kensetsu Shingi-kai* [Council for the Establishment of the Greater East Asia] and reveals the motives and objectives behind Japan's initial wartime policy to rule the occupied territories in Southeast Asia. It also examines how the Japanese occupation policy towards Burma was formulated and implemented in Burma, and how the nature and goals of this policy shifted from the blueprint envisioned by the *Minami Kikan*.

In the fifth chapter, the changes in the war situation and the attempts of the Japanese policy makers to readjust war objectives during the latter stage of the war are examined as the main focus of this chapter. As the Japanese military had experienced a series of serious defeats by the end of 1942, the strategic perimeter connecting the occupied territories was endangered and they were gradually compelled to change their overall strategy from offence to defence. It was in this context that the question of whether local anti-colonial aspirations for national independence should be encouraged began to be considered seriously among decision-makers in the government. This chapter deals with this emergence of a new policy line and, especially, the role played by the *Gaimushō* in developing a new phase of Asian diplomacy. Another subject to be considered in this chapter is the British policy planning for the re-occupation of Burma which aimed at re-capturing the former colonial territory from the Japanese. While the changing war situation made Britain's reoccupation of Burma an increasingly feasible military option by the beginning of 1943, the start of actual discussions on this issue revealed that it was a highly complicated task involving delicate political considerations. In particular, the

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Japanese propaganda based on the vision of the GEACPS and the independence of Burma in August of 1943, granted by Tokyo, determined that the British attempt to regain its influence in Burma would be a matter of more than simple military planning. This chapter also examines how British policy towards Burma was formulated during this period and to what extent it was affected by these Japanese political initiatives.

The sixth chapter considers Japanese policy planning towards Burma following its independence, the rise of the anti-Japanese resistance movement organised by the Burmese nationalists and the development of the British policy of collaboration with Aung San. The way in which Japan handled Burmese independence is conventionally considered as one of the primary elements that accounts for the subsequent rise of anti-Japanese sentiment among the Burmese nationalists. In particular, the fact that the Japanese Army considerably influenced the form of Burmese government and limited the extent of Burma's autonomy after the 'independence' has been cited as a major accelerator for the growth of the Burmese resistance movement. This chapter reveals that the civilian segments of the Japanese government, the Foreign Ministry in particular, were not immune to the thinking that alienated the Burmese nationalists and that such thinking was deeply rooted in the nature of the concept of the GEACPS. It also examines how the Burmese leaders turned against the Japanese rule and formed an anti-Japanese resistance movement. Another subject to be dealt with in this chapter is the British policy planning towards Burma which aimed at securing collaboration from the Burmese leaders in order to regain its influence over the country. The uprising of the Burmese nationalists against the Japanese was a blessing for the British who were setting out on their own military campaign to recapture Burma. The new political forces growing out of the changing political condition presented a favourable opportunity for the British to ease the process of re-establishing their own position in the country. Nevertheless, the British instead found themselves confronted by a strong nationalist sentiment as a sizeable political force that claimed the right to independence. This chapter illustrates the British dealings with the Burmese nationalists and its ill-fated attempt to reclaim its influence as a suzerain power of the country.

Notes for Introduction

¹ Hayashi Fusao, *Dai Tōa Sensō Kōtei Ron [An Affirmation of the Greater East Asia War]*. Tokyo: Banchō Shobō, 1974) This view is expressed mostly by Japanese authors. Hayashi is probably the most famous advocate, but it has been expanded upon by, for instance, Hasegawa Michio 'A Post War View of the Great East Asian War' in *Japan Echo* 11, Special Issue (1984) as well as in 'Aija ni ikiru Dai Tōa Sensō [The Greater East Asian War which lives in Asia]' edited by ASEAN Centre. Tokyo: Tentensha, 1988.

² Rikki Kersten. 'Neo-nationalism and the 'Liberal School of History' *Japan Forum* vol. 11 no. 2 1999, and Oguma Eiji, Recent Trends in Right-Wing Historical Revisionism in Japan. *Social Science Japan* vol. 30 2004.

³ Okuno Seisuke, 'Aija kaihō sen to shiteno Dai Tōa Sensō' [the Greater East Asia war as a war of liberation] *Minzoku to seiji*. March 1989.

⁴ *Yomiuri Shinbun*, 18 February 2001.

⁵ For instance, *Newsweek* reported in 1991 that Ishihara Shintarō, currently serving as the Governor of Tokyo, 'said in a magazine interview recently that it was time to revive the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere ... Ishihara added that this time there would be no need for military action, because if Japan's Asian neighbors resisted Japan could simply cut off aid and technology'. *Newsweek* (International Edition), 25 November 1991, p. 32. Another example was the case of Sakurai Shin, a member of Parliament and then director-general of the Environment Agency, reportedly commented on August 1994 that Japan had occupied Asian countries not out of its desire to 'invade' but 'with a belief that it would benefit neighboring territories.'

⁶ Ienaga Saburō. *Sensō Sekinin [Responsibility for the War]* Tokyo, Iwanami Shoten: 1987

⁷ Eguchi Keiichi. *Nihon no Shinryaku to Nihon jin no Sensō-kan*. [Japan's war of aggression and its interpretation] Tokyo, Iwanami Shoten: 1985.

⁸ Shinobu Seizaburō. '*Taiheiyō Sensō*' to *Mouhitotsu No 'Taiheiyō Sensō' - Dai Niji Sekaitaisen Ni Okeru Nihon to Aija* [the Pacific War' and Another 'Pacific War' - Japan and Southeast Asia During World War II]. Tokyo: Keisō Shobō, 1988.

⁹ See, for example, Koji Shibusawa. *Dai-Tōa Kyōei-ken No Shisō [Ideology of the Great East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere]*. Tokyo: Kōdan-sha, 1995. Gotō Kenichi. "Dai-tōa Sensō' Kaihō Shikan no Kyomō-sei" [Fallacy of historical view that defines 'Greater East Asia War' as a war of liberation] *Sekai* vol. 608 1995.

¹⁰ Henry P. Frei, *Japan's Southern Advance and Australia from sixteenth century to World War II*. University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu: 1991, Peattie Mark R., 'Nanshin: "the southward advance", 1931-41, as a Prelude to the Japanese Occupation of Southeast Asia, in Duus et al. eds., *The Japanese Wartime Empire*'. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996. Gotō Kenichi, *Kindai Nihon to Tōnan Aija [Modern Japan and Southeast Asia]*. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1986

¹¹ Michael A. Bamhart, *Japan Prepares for Total War: The Search for Economic Security, 1919-1941*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987. James B. Crowley, *Japan's Quest for Autonomy: National Security and Foreign Policy, 1930-1938*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1966.

¹² See, for example, Goto Kenichi. "Dai-Tōa Sensō' Kaihō Shikan No Kyomō-Sei [Fallacy of the 'Greater East Asia War' as War of Liberation]." *Sekai* (1995): 170-80.

¹³ See, for instance, Robert Hardie. *The Burma-Siam Railway: The Secret Diary of Dr Robert Hardie, 1942-45*. London: Imperial War Museum, 1983.

¹⁴ See, for example, Yoshimi Yoshiaki, *Comfort Women: Sexual Slavery in the Japanese Military During World War II*. Columbia University Press: 1995. George Hicks, "The 'Comfort Women'". In *The Japanese Wartime Empire 1931-1945*, edited by Peter Duus, Ramon H. Myers, Mark R. Peattie. Princeton University Press: 1996.

¹⁵ *Nihon Kokusai Seiji Gakkai Taiheiyō Sensō Gen'in Kenkyū-bu*, ed. *Taiheiyō Sensō e no Michi - kaisen gaikō-shi*, vol. 6 "Nanpō-Shinshutsu" (Tokyo, Asahi Shinbun: 1963) This volume was translated and published as James W. Morley, ed. *The Fateful Choice - Japan's Advance into Southeast Asia 1939-41*. New York: Univ. of Columbia Press, 1980

¹⁶ Dorothy Borg and Okamoto Shunpei eds. *Pearl Harbor as history: Japanese-American relations 1931-41*. New York, 1973

¹⁷ Iriye Akira. *Pearl Harbor and the Coming of the Pacific War: A Brief History with Documents and Essays*. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 1999.

¹⁸ Joyce C. Lebra, ed. *Japan's Great East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere in World War II - selected readings and documents*. Kuala Lumpur, Oxford Univ. Press: 1975.

¹⁹ W. G. Beasley, *Japanese Imperialism, 1895-1945*. Oxford, Clarendon Press: 1987, p. 233.

²⁰ Ienaga Saburō, *Taiheiyō Sensō [The Pacific War]*. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1969.

²¹ Hosoya Chihiro, Honma Nagayo, and Iriye Akira. *Taiheiyō Sensō [the Pacific War]*. Tokyo: Tokyo Daigaku Shuppan-kai, 1993.

Peter Duus, Ramon H. Myers, and Mark R. Peattie, eds. *The Japanese Wartime Empire, 1931-1945*.

Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996.

²² Susan Townsend. *Yanaihara Tadao and Japanese Colonial Policy: Redeeming Empire*. Richmond: Curzon, 2000. See also, Susan Townsend. 'Yanaihara Tadao's Comparative Critique of Japanese and British Colonial Policy 1923-1937'. In *Japanese Perspectives in Asia*, edited by Shigeru Akita and Susan Townsend, 31-54. London: LSE STICERD, 1995.

²³ William Miles Fletcher. *The Search for a New Order - Intellectuals and Fascism in Pre-War Japan*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982.

²⁴ Masataka Matsuura. 'Shimaguni', Sosite 'Riku No Teikoku' Kara 'Umi No Teikoku' He: Nagasaki, Dairen, Kobe.' [From Island Nation, Land Empire to Sea Empire: Nagasaki, Dairen and Kobe], *Kokusai Seiji* 139 (2004): 107-24. And, Masataka Matsuura. 'Han-Ajia Shugi Ni Okeru 'Taiwan Yōin' – Ryōgan Kankei O Meguru Nichi-Ei-Chū Kan Kōsō No Seiji Keizai-Shi Teki Haikai [the "Taiwan Factor" in Japanese Pan-Asianism: The Role of the Political Economy in the Struggle between Japan Versus Britain and China over The Taiwan Straits.] *The Hokkaido Law Review* (2004): 927-78, 1383-84.

²⁵ Graham Parkes, 'The putative fascism of the Kyoto School and the Political Correctness of the Modern Academy' *Philosophy East and West* Vol. 47 No.3. David Williams, *Defending Japan's Pacific War: The Kyoto School Philosophers and Post-White Power*. London, Routledge Curzon: 2004. Christopher Goto-Jones. *Political Philosophy in Japan: Nishida, the Kyoto School and Co-Prosperity*. London, Routledge Curzon: 2005.

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²⁶ Harry Harootunian. *Overcome by Modernity: History, Culture, and Community in Interwar Japan*. Princeton, N.J., Princeton University Press: 2000.

²⁷ Iriye Akira, *Power and Culture - the Japanese-American War, 1941-45*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1981.

²⁸ Hatano Sumio, *Taihelyō Sensō to Ajia Gaikō* [Japan's Asia Policy and the Pacific War]. Tokyo: Tokyo Daigaku Shuppan-kai, 1996.

²⁹ Masataka Matsuura. 'Han-Ajia Shugi Ni Okeru 'Taiwan Yōin' – Ryōgan Kankei O Meguru Nichi-Ei-Chū Kan Kōsō No Seiji Keizai-Shi Teki Haikai [the "Taiwan Factor" in Japanese Pan-Asianism: The Role of the Political Economy in the Struggle between Japan Versus Britain and China over The Taiwan Straits.] *The Hokkaido Law Review* vol. 55 no. 3 (2004): 929-930.

³⁰ Peter Duus, 'Imperialism without Colonies: The Vision of a Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere.' *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 7, no. 1 (1996): 54-72.

³¹ Christopher Thome, *Allies of a Kind - the United States, Britain and the war against Japan, 1941-45*. London: Hamish Hamilton, 1979

³² John W. Dower, *War without Mercy - race and power in the Pacific War*. London: Pantheon, 1986.

³³ Hosoya Chihiro, 'Britain and the US in Japan's view of the International System, 1937-1941'. In, *Anglo-Japanese Alienation 1919-1952*, edited by Ian Nish. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1982, pp. 57-75, and Ian Nish, 'Japan and the Outbreak of War in 1941'. In *Crisis and Controversy: Essays in Honour of A.J.P. Taylor*, edited by Alan Sked and C. Cook. London, Macmillan, 1976, pp. 130-147.

³⁴ Peter Lowe, *Great Britain and the Origins of the Pacific War - a study of British policy in East Asia 1937-41* (Oxford, Clarendon: 1977) British policy towards the region is further examined by the same author in Peter Lowe, *Britain in the Far East - a survey from 1819 to the present*. New York, Longman: 1981.

³⁵ Ian Nish ed. *Anglo-Japanese Alienation, 1919-52 - papers of the Anglo-Japanese Conference on the History of the Second World War*. Cambridge, Cambridge Univ. Press: 1981.

³⁶ Antony Best, *Britain, Japan and Pearl Harbor - avoiding war in East Asia 1936 - 41* (London, Routledge: 1995)

³⁷ See for example, Hosoya Chihiro, ed. *Nichi-Ei Kankei-Shi 1917-1949 [History of Anglo-Japanese Relations 1917-1949]*. Tokyo: Tokyo Univ. Press, 1982. Hosoya Chihiro and Ian Nish, eds. *Nichi-Ei Kōryū-shi* 6 vols. Tokyo: Tokyo University Press, 2000-2001. Ian Nish, and Yoichi Kibata, eds. *The History of Anglo-Japanese Relations: The Political-Diplomatic Dimension*. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000.

³⁸ Thome, *Allies of a Kind*.

³⁹ William R. Louis, *Imperialism at Bay, 1941-45: The United States and the Decolonization of the British Empire*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977. John Sbraga, *Anglo-American Relations and Colonialism in East Asia, 1941-1945*. New York: Garland, 1983.

⁴⁰ Nicholas Tarling. *The Fall of Imperial Britain in South-East Asia*. Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1993.

⁴¹ Willard H. Elsbree. *Japan's Role in Southeast Asian Nationalist Movements, 1940-45*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1953.

⁴² Anthony J. Stockwell, *British Policy and Malay Politics during the Malayan Union Experiment, 1942-1948*. Kuala Lumpur, 1979. A. J. Stockwell ed., *Malaya Part 1, The Malayan union experiment, 1942-48.*, London, HMSO: 1995.

⁴³ See, for example, Izumiya Tatsuro. *The Minami Organ*. Translated by Chain Tun Aung. Rangoon: Higher Education Department, 1981. Nemoto Kei. *Aung Sang – Fūin Sareta Dokuritsu Biruma No Yume, Gendai Ajia No Shōzō Vol. 13*. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1996. Suzuki Takashi. "Biruma No Minzoku Dokuritsu Undo to Nihon Gunsei." *Meiji Shōgaku* 45 (Special Edition) (1996): 27-91.

⁴⁴ Dorothy H. Guyot, *The Political Impact of the Japanese Occupation of Burma*. Yale University: 1966.

⁴⁵ Jan Becka, *The National Liberation Movement in Burma During the Japanese Occupation Period (1941-1945)*. Prague: Oriental Institute in Academia, 1983. Maung Maung U. *Burmese Nationalist Movements 1940 - 1948*. Edinburgh: Kiscadale Publications, 1989. Robert H. Taylor. *The State in Burma*. London: Hurst, 1987.

⁴⁶ Ōta Tsunetzō, *Biruma ni okeru Nihon gunsei-shi no Kenkyū* [A Study of the Japanese Military Administration in Burma] (Tokyo: Yoshimura Kōbun kan, 1967)

⁴⁷ F. S. V. Donnison. *British Military Administration in the Far East, 1943-46*. London: HMSO, 1956.

Geoffrey Matthews. *The Re-Conquest of Burma, 1943-45*. London: Gale and Polden, 1966.

⁴⁸ Nicholas Tarling. 'An Empire Gem: British Warfare Planning for Post-War Burma, 1943-44.' *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* XIII, no. 2 (1983) and "a New and a Better Cunning': British Wartime Planning for Post-War Burma, 1942-43.' *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* XIII, no. 1 (1983): 33-59.

Chapter 1

The Emergence of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere and Japan's Southern Advance, up to July 1940.

On 29 June 1940, Arita Hachirō, the Foreign Minister in the Yonai cabinet, broadcast a radio speech in which he made a statement on Japan's position in Asia. It was the first occasion that the concept of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere (*Dai Tōa Kyōei-ken*) appeared in any official document or announcement. This was followed on 1 August by a proclamation from his successor, Matsuoka Yosuke, asserting that Japan's foreign policy was now directly aimed at establishing this new order. The emergence of the idea of *Dai Tōa Kyōei-ken* was of vital importance for two reasons. The first was that the concept, which gradually emerged as an official doctrine after Arita's statement, stretched beyond the boundaries of earlier Pan-Asianist concepts and included the Western colonial territories in Southeast Asia within Japan's sphere of influence. Second, the announcement by Arita coincided with the moment when Japanese decision-makers started actively to exert pressure on the Western colonies in the region. Japan's vision of forming a sphere of influence in East Asia was thus clearly expanding its geographical scope towards the European colonial possessions in South-East Asia.

In examining this important period in Japanese history, which prepared the background for the outbreak of the war in Asia, the motives behind the emergence of the 'Greater East Asia War' have been largely explained from diplomatic, economic and military perspectives. In this context, the concept of the GEACPS has generally been treated as a mere justification for Japan's growing aspirations in Asia, thus adding a moral veneer to its naked expansionism. While an analysis of these three aspects is important in understanding the motives behind Japan's growing interest in South East Asia, writing off the concept as a mere afterthought is a mistake. To do so neglects important continuities in ideology that pervaded the Japanese leadership during this period. One aspect is that it is this ideology that holds a key to explain why Japan set its path to confront the Anglo-American powers' dominant economic and military power, which seems, in retrospect, an illogical decision to make. The ideological origins of the GEACPS provide an important clue to understand the motives that drove Japan to attempt to control the region as its sphere of influence.

As is now generally accepted, the statements of the two Foreign Ministers were not the starting point in Japan's desire to assert its influence over the resource-rich colonial territories in Southeast Asia. Nor did the concept of creating a new order, an important theme inherent in Arita and Matsuoka's announcements, emerge suddenly in the summer

of 1940 without any underlying context. Throughout the period of development and expansion since the late Meiji era, the southern regions (*nanpō*) had constantly drawn Japan's attention within the ideological framework of Pan-Asianism. The idea of Japanese cultural superiority over other Asian races had been expounded as early as the late nineteenth century and steadily grew in intensity throughout the early twentieth century. For instance, in 1882 Fukuzawa Yukichi, a well-known Japanese educator, wrote 'Japan's Mission in Asia' in which he discussed the idea of Japan's 'manifest destiny' to be the leader of Asia. In the early part of the twentieth century, several ultranationalist groups and writers, such as the Black Dragon Society and Ōkawa Shūmei, gained increasing popularity with their view that Japan should take a leadership role in Asia. Many of these ultranationalist groups believed that the moral purity of the Japanese entitled them to such a position. Japan's confidence in its destiny to lead Asia was bolstered further when it became the first Asian country to defeat a Western power in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-5.

However, notable changes in the nature of Pan-Asianism took place in the years following the end of the First World War in 1918 and the ideal emerged as an increasingly substantial ideological force by the beginning of the 1930s. While maintaining continuity with its antecedents developed during the Meiji-era, the changing concept increasingly characterised itself by its strong antipathy to the international status quo dominated by the Western colonial powers and by its aspiration for the establishment of a regional order to protect Japan's special rights in the region, in particular in China. This tendency became increasingly apparent after the collapse of world trade between 1929 and 1931, followed by an atmosphere of protectionism and imperial preference, and Japan's withdrawal from the League of Nations after its occupation of Manchuria.¹ What is important to note for the purpose of this study is that the concept came to gain influence as a sizeable political force within Japan's decision-making process. Thus what had originally been a doctrine calling for the liberation of Asian peoples increasingly developed into one that espoused a Japanese 'Monroe Doctrine' for East Asia.

This inclination is, for instance, apparent in the views of Konoe Fumimaro who was one of the dominant political personalities in Japan during the period the late 1930s and the early 1940s. As the Premier, who first declared in 1938 the establishment of a new order in East Asia which soon evolved into the vision of the GEACPS, Konoe's view on the international order and Japan's position within it is noteworthy. Konoe's antipathy to the international system and desire for a new regional order is clearly visible even from his writings prior to the beginning of his political career. In his essay 'Reject the Anglo-American-Centered Peace', published in the 15 December, 1918, issue of the

leading nationalistic journal *Nihon oyobi Nihonjin* [Japan and the Japanese], he denounced the international order that was being created following the allied victory in the First World War. Konoe believed that the democracy and humanitarianism put forward by Anglo-American politicians were merely being used to 'provide a mask for their self-interest', and that in the name of fighting a war of democracy and humanity, they were in reality attempting to sanctify their own interests and maintain a status quo that suited their needs. While Germany was primarily responsible for the war, he continued, the Anglo-American nations were manipulating logic in a cunning way by identifying its violation of the pre-war peace with it being an enemy of justice and humanity. The true nature of the present conflict, he contended, was 'a struggle between the established powers and the powers not yet established' – in other words, between those nations that benefited by maintaining the status quo and those nations which would benefit by its destruction.

Konoe felt that the present position of Japan in the world demanded its working for the destruction of the status quo, especially in the economic field. The economic imperialism of the Anglo-American powers, he stated, prevented 'the free development of other nations and enriches the imperialists without requiring the use of force' by enabling the most powerful to monopolise enormous amounts of capital and natural resources. In his view, the peace conference failed to suppress this rampant economic imperialism, the Anglo-American powers would become the economic masters of the world and dominate it through the League of Nations and arms reduction in the name of preserving the status quo, thus serving their own selfish interests. In contrast, Japan's needs were that all powers should open the doors of their colonies to others, so that all nations would have access to the markets and natural resources of the colonial areas.² Konoe's views on the international system, which were made explicit in this essay, remained basically unchanged and continued to influence his entire political career.

The distrust of the international order dominated by the Western colonial powers, exemplified by Konoe, soon developed among Pan-Asianists into a quest for a new order in East Asia by which Japan exert its leadership in the region and protect its interest as a dominating economic and military power. For developing those views and providing an ideological framework to the idea of establishing a new order in East Asia, it is important to note the influence of the Shōwa Research Association [*Shōwa Kenkyū-kai*]. The association was established as a think-tank in late 1933 and attracted a number of prominent figures including intellectuals and officials from varying intellectual and professional backgrounds, among them were Takahashi Kamekichi, Yabe Teiji and Ryū Shintarō. Membership of the association also extended to members of various ministries.

Those who served on the organisation's executive board included Arita Hachirō, Aoki Kazuo who would later become the Greater East Asia Minister, Kaya Okinori, who served as Finance Minister in Konoe's first cabinet and Tōjō cabinet, and Taki Masao, the director of the Cabinet Planning Board. The members of the consultative committee were actively involved in the process of interpreting developments in foreign affairs and charting guidelines for a comprehensive foreign policy. Konoe's call for establishing a new deal in Asia was envisaged as the fundamental goal of the association and leading members enthusiastically pursued his vision of redressing the distribution of resources in the world.

In refining Pan-Asianism as an ideological construct, two members of the association played an especially significant role: Rōyama Masamichi and Miki Kiyoshi. As a founding member of the association and a close friend of Konoe, Rōyama shared his critical view of the League of Nations and his resentment against the West. While Rōyama regarded the League as the beginning of 'international politics' in the sense of establishing a world community, he foresaw serious difficulties for the organisation due to its inability to limit the economic exploitation of small nations by more powerful ones.³ Rōyama believed that the organisation had inherent structural problems because it entrusted the major powers, which pursued their own selfish interests, to undertake the responsibility for supervising the economic interests of the larger international community. In particular, he was dissatisfied with the League's inability to prevent Western attempts to limit Japan's influence in Asia and its special rights in the region, especially in China, which were set out in the Amai statement of April 1934.

It was in this context that Rōyama developed the concept of a regional league in East Asia as a solution, in which Japan would dominate as the major economic and military power. Rōyama envisaged 'the forging of new economic relations with the Pacific' as an alternative to the popular idea of devising an exclusive Japan-Manchuria bloc, which, he viewed, was too small to sustain Japan's economic growth. The region, he advocated, invited a 'new adventure for Japan because of its advantageous geographical position.' Instead of seeking an imperialistic economic advantage, it must establish a new planned economy in the region. If the Japanese displayed the same type of enthusiasm toward this goal as they did during the Manchurian crisis, they could become, in 'thought' and 'morality', the champions' of 'Far East, the Pacific, and the world.' These statements revealed Rōyama's growing conviction that Japan's security depended upon its leadership of both East Asia and the Pacific region.⁴

Rōyama's ideas on Japan's position in the region are important because his view of Japan's future laying in the dominance of Asia became a key assumption of the entire Shōwa Research Association and set a precedent for Miki Kiyoshi's attempts to define a

new philosophy to unite Asia. Invited to join the association in 1938 in order to establish the Cultural Problems Research Group, Miki Kiyoshi, one of the most established Japanese philosophers of the pre-war era, contributed to develop and reinforce the concept from a philosophical dimension. He argued that, having been subjected to the dominating influence of the West, Japan now faced a historical mission to lead the Orient and, therefore, needed to create a new thought of international significance that would enable Asia to determine its own destiny. Miki sought the foundation of this new vision in the idea of a 'co-operative body' which would set a high value on Confucian 'humanism' on proper social relationships and place the welfare of the whole above the selfish interests of individuals. Oriental society was, he wrote, a society dominated by close ties of kinship as in a traditional rural community, and this stood in contrast to modern Western society marked by rational and contractual relationships.⁵ The 'co-operative body' was an uniquely Asian concept that would enable the Orient to overcome the insidious doctrine of Western individualism and an international order dominated by self-seeking Anglo-American powers. This idea of 'co-operativism' provided an ideological basis for the formation of a regional bloc that would seek the 'liberation of Asia from Western imperialism.'

It is important to note that the ideas developed by these prominent members of the Shōwa Research Association were not aimed at merely academic argument within intellectual circles. They were an attempt to exert significant influence on actual government policy planning. Elaborated when the Japanese government was engaged in the war against China, Miki's vision provided a rationale for a 'new order' of relations between Japan and China. He argued that the China Incident, which broke out in 1937, was an event of historical significance that presented Japan with an opportunity to fulfil its 'historic mission - the unification of Asia,' by leading the way towards creating a new East Asian 'co-operative body.'⁶ The war, Miki contended, entailed a universally significant moral purpose and marked a new stage in world history through the creation of a new regional order in East Asia. On the basis of his guidelines for an East Asian bloc, the members of the China Incident Policy Committee within the association made specific policy suggestions for accomplishing that goal, which envisioned a new regional bloc of China, Manchuria and Japan and an East Asian policy liaison body to co-ordinate military, economic and diplomatic policies among the three nations. This soon became government policy when Konoe made a radio address on November 1938 and proclaimed that Japan's war aimed at the creation of an East Asian 'new order'. The similarity between his speech and the association's proposals suggests that Konoe shared Miki's perspective on the China Incident and sought a Pan-Asianist solution to the conflict.⁷

Thus, the concept of Pan-Asianism, characterised by its antipathy towards the

present international system and its call for the destruction of the 'status quo', provided an important ideological rationale for Konoe and the Shōwa Research Association, and pushed them towards the idea of forming a regional bloc in East Asia during the 1930s. As the prospect of an East Asian regional body became the dominant ideological goal of the Shōwa Research Association, its ardent advocacy of a new Asian order played a central role in the devising of further plans for the comprehensive reform of Japan's domestic and foreign policies based on the principles of 'co-operativism'. Konoe recognised the unprecedented adoption of Pan-Asianism and antagonism to the West among the political, intellectual and economic leaders in Japan and endeavoured to use it as a political foundation for his attempt to pursue the recognition of Japan's special position in East Asia.⁸ This prepared an important setting within which the even broader concept of the GEACPS emerged at the beginning of the 1940s. The vision, embraced by Arita and Matsuoka, was, in one sense, merely a logical extension of Konoe's original attempt to form a new political and economic framework among the three East Asian nations. Thus, although Pan-Asianism provided only a vague and abstract proposition for detailed policy formulation, its influence on Japan's decision-making was a vital element that helps to account for the emergence of the GEACPS.

One has to note, however, that, in spite of its importance, the development of Pan-Asianism does not fully explain the following two questions regarding the timing of the emergence of the GEACPS and the motives behind the policy of a southern advance. Why did the establishment of the Co-Prosperity Sphere emerge as an actual policy goal in 1940, and why did the concept suddenly expand its geographical scope and come to include the Western colonial possessions in Southeast Asia? In order to answer these questions, it is important to examine the internal dynamics of Japan's decision-making process during the period. The views envisaged by the three primary forces of decision-making within the Japanese government, the army, the navy and the Gaimushō, reveal that they respectively came to favour the policy of a southern advance based on the concept of a GEACPS for a variety of different motives and objectives in the summer of 1940.

Japan's Southern Advance and the Army

When one examines the Japanese Army's growing interest in Southeast Asia, it is important to note its close association with the development of the undeclared war against China which broke out on 7 July, 1937. As is illustrated in the phrase 'Advance towards the North and Defence in the South [*Hokushin Nanshu*]' which summarised policy in the early

1930s, the army's attention at first was concentrated upon expansion in China and preparation for a possible war with the Soviet Union, Japan's primary hypothetical enemy. While a small number of middle-echelon army officers asserted the strategic importance of the raw materials of Southeast Asia, the army high command indicated little interest in the region. Concluding that the 'Southern Regions Question' was best left to the navy, it poured its energies into military adventures in Northeast China. While 'the Fundamentals of National Policy', approved in August 1936, indicated the country's concern for the region, at least initially the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese conflict it confirmed that the army would be preoccupied with 'Northern affairs'.

However, the protracted nature of the Sino-Japanese War that broke out in July 1937 slowly changed the army's view on the South. In spite of the initial optimism shared among the army leaders, Japan's failure to bring the China incident to a quick conclusion had critical economic and political implications. For one thing, the conflict against China turned out to be far more costly than had originally been anticipated and imposed a serious burden on Japan's economy. By 1939, it became more and more difficult to increase material allocations for the war effort and Japan became ever less able to sustain the previous year's output of critical materials.⁹ Japan's economic difficulty was coupled with the failure of its attempts to conclude the war through secret negotiations with the Chungking regime which only deepened the army high command's sense of frustration.

The outbreak of the European War in September 1939 provided a good opportunity to initiate the army's expansion into Southeast Asia for the western colonial powers were now preoccupied with the conflict at home. Yet the army refrained from immediately taking advantage of this sudden change in international relations as indicated by an army policy document that was endorsed by the Foreign and Navy Ministers in December 1939.¹⁰ '*Ōshū Sensō ni tomonau tōmen no Taigai Shisaku* [A Proposal for Japan's foreign policy in reaction to the outbreak of the European War] emphasised that Japan should 'maintain her neutral stance towards the European War and seek measures which would promote the speedy settlement of the Sino-Japanese War according to the prearranged plan'.¹¹ There were three factors in the international situation which prevented the army from strongly committing itself to a move towards Southeast Asia. One important consideration was that the sudden and unexpected conclusion of the Nazi-Soviet Pact in August 1939 nullified the army's plan for a closer alliance with Germany directed against the Soviet Union which would contain the threat from the north. In addition the large-scale border clashes between Japan and the Soviet Union at Nomonhan in the early summer of 1939, which led to grave defeat for the Kwantung Army, forced Tokyo to take a conciliatory policy towards Moscow. Another important factor was the need to maintain good relations with the United States. In

July, Washington had given notice that it would abrogate its treaty of commerce and navigation with Japan after six months and this made Tokyo reluctant to take any drastic action which might further deteriorate US–Japan relations. All of these factors therefore made the army refrain from taking advantage of the international circumstances to initiate penetration into Southeast Asia in the autumn of 1939.

Nevertheless, the army's policy of non-intervention in the European War underwent a reversal in the early summer of 1940. One of the most important elements which brought about this change in the army's stance was the series of German military successes on the Western front between May and June. The rapid German offensive into the Low Countries was followed by the surrender of France on 17 June and thus provided a favourable opportunity for Japan's advance to the south. The words 'Don't miss the bus' became the catch-phrase of the day and army officials, dazzled by these German victories, even expected the speedy surrender of Britain. This sense of optimism started to generate a feverish clamour for an opportunistic grab of the now vulnerable European colonies in Southeast Asia. An even more significant factor that initiated the army's change of mind was related to the prolonged war against the Nationalist China. By early 1940, after making agonising attempts to search for an early settlement, the army came to realise that it would not be possible to defeat Chiang Kai-shek by purely military means in the face of the deepening crisis in Japan's wartime economy.¹² In view of these circumstances, officials in the Army Ministry began to focus on the settlement of the China war mainly through two measures, bolstering the puppet regime under the pro-Japanese figure Wang Ching-wei and making efforts to arrange direct negotiations with Chiang Kai-shek in Chungking. While the prospect of an early conclusion of the war through collaboration with Wang gradually faded as the weakness of his political support became apparent, the army officials saw a certain degree of progress in the negotiations which had arisen out of the direct peace overtures made to the Nationalist China known as the *Kiri Kōsaku* [Paulownia Operation] initiated since February. By June, Japanese army leaders came to place great hope on the success of the operation and expected that there soon might be negotiations over the conditions of a cease-fire between Chungking and Tokyo.

This brought a significant change in army planners' thinking on southern advance policy.¹³ What is notable about the change in the army officials' stance was the rise of an assumption that Japan would be able to enhance the prospect of settling the China war by linking it with a southern strategy aimed at the blockade of supply routes from French Indochina to Nationalist China.¹⁴ The existence of outside supply routes to the Nationalist China through French Indochina had been an important factor that enabled Chiang Kai-Shek to sustain his struggle against Japan in spite of heavy material losses. It was vital

because the flow of materials from Britain, the United States, the Soviet Union and France through Indo-China provided Chungking with most of its strategic and other materials prior to 1939.¹⁵ The army leaders came to see this as a major obstacle to the early settlement of the war. It was in this context that a move towards the southern region became an increasingly attractive policy option for the army high command as the occupation of northern Indochina would halt the traffic of the supplies and force a conclusion of the war against Nationalist China.

The emerging tendency of the army to lean on a policy of *Nanshin* as a means to settle the Sino-Japanese War was reflected in the document '*Sekai Jōsei no Sui ni tomonau Jikyoku Shori Yōkō* [Outline of the Main Principles for Coping with the Changing World Situation]' of 27 July 1940, which was based on an army draft of 3 July with revisions proposed by the navy. The change in the army's stance was illustrated in the draft; 'regarding the settlement of the China war', it asserted that, 'all measures, including attempts to terminate any third-party support and aid for Chiang Kai-shek, should be taken to defeat the Chungking regime'. It went on to say in another clause that 'a complete blockade of material aid for Chiang has to be endeavoured in Indochina ... and, according to the circumstances, this could be attempted by resorting to force'.¹⁶ The importance of this document lies in the fact that the army hereby associated the settlement of the Sino-Japanese war with measures to block the supply route via Indochina to the Chiang regime by assuming that one of the greatest obstacles to an early conclusion of the prolonged conflict was British and French assistance to Chiang. The army leaders' interest in a policy of a southern advance, which originated in its search for an early settlement of the war with China, thus emerged and quickly developed into advocacy of an aggressive southern advance.

Japan's Southern Advance and the Navy

The document 'Fundamentals of National Policy' drawn up in August 1936 mentioned the idea of a peaceful and gradual southern advance in parallel with continental expansion largely owing to the navy's insistent assertion on this as a national priority. The rise of the navy's interest in Southeast Asia in the mid-1930s can be explained by two primary factors. Firstly, it was partly due to the navy's desire to blunt the army's claims for a 'northern advance' as a national priority, which had already taken the form of armed expansionism and led the army to get an increased share of armaments and budgetary appropriations. Furthermore, the years 1935-36 were important for the navy since the London and

Washington treaties on naval limitation expired and led to the termination of Japanese co-operation with the Anglo-American naval powers.¹⁷ This raised anxiety about the possibility of a naval race with Japan's traditional hypothetical enemy number one, the United States, as well with Britain which in 1936 was included among Japan's potential enemies for the first time. The navy desired to rationalise and secure support for a naval arms build-up through its advocacy of a southern strategy as a counterweight to the army's self-proclaimed mission in the Asian continent. In other words, the navy's advocacy of *Nanshin* during this period was largely motivated by its budgetary strategy vis-à-vis the army rather than a reflection of its serious consideration for the actual conquest of Southeast Asia.¹⁸

It is, however, misleading to conclude that the navy's southern strategy was solely a means to fulfil its institutional requirement for a larger budgetary appropriation. One also needs to note the existence of economic problems which alarmed the navy in the 1930s. That is that the navy was increasingly disturbed by Japan's heavy reliance on the United States and the western colonial powers for its supply of strategic materials, especially petroleum. Initially, the Japanese government did not consider it necessary for Japan to control its own materials such as petroleum, rubber and scarce metals (for instance, tin, nickel and copper) as these resources were available from the United States and western colonial powers through the medium of peaceful trade. Nevertheless, the navy began to express its growing concern over the shortage of petroleum for its fleet and of aviation fuel for its air force, particularly when the renewal of the naval race was confirmed by the termination of the two naval treaties. It was against this background that the navy began to assert the southern strategy as an actual policy option, which resulted in the emergence of '*Nanshin*' as a national policy in the 'Fundamentals' document.¹⁹

For a moment, the adoption of 'Fundamentals' document appeared to give equal footing to the navy's policy of a southern advance alongside the army's continental policy. Yet the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese war in July 1937 and its quick escalation into a full-scale confrontation changed the position of the *Nanshin* strategy. The conflict in China forced the southern strategy back into a subordinate position vis-à-vis the more urgent continental programme of the army and the navy was compelled to support army operations in the continental theatre. The navy's advocacy of 'northern defence and southern advance' thereby lost its function as a restraint on the continental expansion. However, it did not necessarily imply the navy's abandonment of its *Nanshin* ambitions. The navy, rather, consolidated the southern advance through its co-operation with the army's war effort against Nationalist China. In 1938, it took advantage of the war to establish control over the South China coast and seized a number of small islands in the

South China Sea. These moves culminated in its occupation of Hainan in February 1939. Hainan was immediately put under the control of the naval administration in Taiwan and the navy established a Special Service Office.²⁰ Furthermore, it was also during this period that serious investigations on the southern region began to be elaborated by the navy study groups such as *Tai-Nanyō Hōsaku Kenkyū-kai linkai* [Research Committee on Plans Concerning the South Seas].

What is notable about the series of military operations carried out by the navy is the fact that it started to exert its influence in the 'southern area' by acquiring new stepping stones in South China. These moves were undertaken by the navy as part of the war effort, in co-operation with the army, to blockade material support from abroad arriving through the coast of south China. However, from the navy's perspective, its advance into South China was also the first step to extending its influence towards the Western colonial preserves in Southeast Asia.²¹ The navy's thinking was illustrated in the document 'the Summary Draft of a Policy for the South' which was formulated by the Navy National Policy Research Committee in April 1939 and which provided a fairly detailed picture of the navy's policy towards the southern region ranging from economic to cultural administration policy plans. The document was significant because it clearly revealed the primary objectives of its policy of southern advance: the weakening of western colonial authority through political and economic means, and expansion of economic activities in the southern region including the development and utilisation of resources in the region. The document stated in a clause named 'Basic Policy of Economic Administration' that 'we should promote industries in each region under our guidance, taking into consideration the whole economic sphere under Japanese guidance' and pledged to promote a variety of industries in countries such as the Netherlands East Indies, Malaya, Sumatra and Philippines. It furthermore asserted that Japan ought to promote 'preparatory projects aimed at driving out British and French political and economic power in the future from the southern area'.²² As is indicated in this document, the navy's vision of southern advance went through a transformation from a bureaucratic tactic with vague and ill-defined phraseology into a more articulated option of navy policy planning with its operations in South China as a turning point.

With the outbreak of the European War, a magnificent vista for Japan's actual expansion into Southeast Asia was opened and a drastic change in national policy began to be advocated by middle-ranking officers of the navy. As has already been examined above, the government initially refrained from making such changes and the navy, along with the army and the foreign ministry, still gave priority to the settlement of the Sino-Japanese war at the earliest opportunity. Yet, this policy of non-intervention went

through a reversal in the early summer of 1940 and the army, as we have seen, began to advocate an aggressive southern advance in the face of the increasingly favourable situation of the European war. At this juncture, however, the navy's posture towards a policy of a southern advance was cautious in contrast to the army which went as far as to contemplate the possibility of a lightning offensive against the French and Dutch colonies in Southeast Asia. Throughout the 1930s, the navy, the traditional exponent of the *Nanshin* strategy, developed its concept of a southern advance primarily in the context of its search for controlling the strategically vital resources of Southeast Asia. Although there were a certain number of middle-ranking officers who envisaged an aggressive *Nanshin* policy, the navy had up to now supported its policy in the region through activities such as financial assistance for companies to develop iron mines or search for oil and the establishment of commercial relations with western colonies via Japanese trading companies.²³ In other words, the navy's initial design for a southern advance was through economic and political penetration by gradual and peaceful means. Furthermore, the navy's cautious approach was driven by its desire to avoid the risk of war with the United States. This was indicated in the navy's reply to the army draft of 'Outline of the Main Principles for Coping with the Changing World Situation' on 3 July 1940. It agreed with the draft 'in its general outline', but pointed out that its greatest weakness was 'not making serious consideration' about the possible response of the United States.²⁴ The navy believed that the connection between Britain and the United States was unbreakable and asserted that any attack on British possessions in the Far East would lead to a war with the United States. From this point of view, the navy submitted a counter-draft which stressed the need to avoid forceful means 'insofar as possible' and accomplish their objectives through diplomatic negotiation. Thus, on the whole, the navy maintained its cautious stance towards a forceful southern advance during this period.

The Role of the Foreign Ministry in Japan's Southern Advance

In studying Japan's foreign policy throughout the pre-war and wartime period, it is often assumed that the decision-making process was largely dominated by the jingoistic and adventuresome military, in spite of the *Gaimushō's* attempt to oppose or restrain its hard-line tendency. Therefore Japan's decision-making is largely examined by focusing on the conflict between the Foreign Ministry and the military services. As a result, the views and plans advocated by the Foreign Ministry have been left largely unexamined. They have merely been labelled as 'liberal and internationally minded' based on the supposition that

the ministry largely disapproved of the army's hard-line expansionist policy.²⁵ To be sure, the process in which Japan's foreign policy was formulated was characterised from time to time by a certain dualism caused by disputes between the *Gaimushō* and the military, especially the army.²⁶ It is, however, misleading to assume that the policies and objectives of the ministry were entirely in opposition to those embraced by the army and the navy. The following examination appears to suggest that the views and ends of these two important elements in the Japanese government were not necessarily contradictory to those of the Foreign Ministry in regard to the southern strategy.

In 1935, the Foreign Ministry produced a memorandum titled '*Kokusai Kankei yori mitaru Nihon no Sugata*' [Outlook of Japan's position in Current State of International Relations]. In the document, the ministry sought to explore the new principles of Japan's foreign policy. It stated that Japan's foreign policy in the mid-1930s consisted of two goals; establishing the country as a stabilising power in East Asia by exerting economic and political control over China, and seeking the recognition of such a position from the Western colonial powers, including the United States and Britain, through the maintenance of good relations. The document stated that the primary objectives of Japan's foreign policy in Asia were to 'make China aware of its responsibility to ensure the stability of East Asia in co-operation with Japan' and to 'prevent the country from allying with the Soviet Union or Western powers to confront with Japan'. In other words, the *Gaimushō* considered it vital to position Japan as a regional power with political and economic influence over China and thus ensuring the stability of East Asia. Within this framework, the strategic importance of Southeast Asia was completely secondary to that of China. However, in the thinking of the Foreign Ministry, it was vital for Japan to take a friendly approach in its dealing with the colonial territories in South and Southeast Asia. The document stated that 'apart from the protection of Japan's economic interests in the region, Japan should not intervene in the affairs of the British possessions such as India, South Seas and Australia that are the strong foundation of its empire.'²⁷ Southeast Asia was therefore considered as a region that would be used as a means of bargaining in Japan's pursuit of Western recognition for its special position as a stabilising power in East Asia.

However, the Foreign Ministry gradually started to shift its stance towards Southeast Asia following the endorsement of the above mentioned policy document '*Kokusaku no Kijun*' in August 1936. For one thing, a drastic change in the international economic environment surrounding Japan has to be noted as an important reason for the rising tide of those wishing for a bolder posture and an endorsement of a policy of southern advance. The 1930s was a period in which Japan gradually expanded its economic influence over Southeast Asia. Taking advantage of its geographical proximity, cheap cost, speed of

delivery, and the ability to produce designs of high quality, Japan steadily increased its share of Southeast Asian markets during the first half of the 1930s. However, by the mid-1930s, the rapidity and scale of Japanese economic expansion had led to a hostile reaction by the Western colonial governments in Southeast Asia. This meant that it became increasingly difficult for Japan to maintain its economic activities in the region.²⁸

The Western colonial powers in Southeast Asia encouraged Japan's investment in the region as long as it served their purpose. Yet, they were concerned that Japan's successful competition was eroding their economic links with the colonial peoples, which would ultimately lead to the weakening of their authority, and therefore sought to halt the inrush of Japanese products through various import-restricting measures. Furthermore, the outbreak of the China War in July 1937 enhanced Japan's increasing export and import difficulties by not only doubling Japan's requirements for raw materials from Southeast Asia but also by raising tensions between Japan and the Western colonial powers.

The situation was exacerbated by the beginning of the European War in 1939. The outbreak of the conflict meant that many of the strategic resources of the European empires were now diverted towards the war effort of the colonial powers which, in turn, meant that Japan's trade problems deepened.²⁹ Western restrictions on the entry of Japanese exports, capital, and migration into Southeast Asia brought two important consequences. Firstly, the attempt by colonial powers to freeze Japan out of the region served to heighten anti-Western and anti-colonial sentiments among the Japanese which developed into a growing public interest in the policy of a southern advance amid a rise in Pan-Asian rhetoric. On the government level, furthermore, it led to a growing realisation by officials that a fundamental redirection of the nation's foreign policy would be necessary. Thus, the restrictive Western measures and the consequent aggravation of Japan's economic environment contributed to increased support from government officials at various levels for a more aggressive pursuit of Japanese economic and strategic interests in Southeast Asia.

In the face of the outbreak of the European War, the Foreign Ministry tried to formulate a new foreign policy plan to cope with the changing situation and a number of policy drafts were produced by various bureaux within the ministry. In fact, many of the documents produced by the *Gaimushō* suggest that a considerable portion of diplomats came to favour the policy of expanding Japan's economic and political influence in Southeast Asia if it could be achieved without risking a confrontation with the West. The views of the primary bureaux in the *Gaimushō* were summarised in a document which was prepared by the second section of the Research Bureau [*Chōsa Ni-ka*] on 14 September, 1939, titled '*Ōshu-sen ni taisuru Kihon-teki Taïdo* [Japan's Basic Stance towards the

European War]'. It is important to note that the views of all of the bureaux were not entirely in accord. The main difference to be found was over the priority of the *Gaimushō*'s policy in view of the outbreak of the European War. The East Asian Bureau tended to emphasise the early settlement of the Sino-Japanese war as the priority and put Japan's economic and political penetration into Southeast Asia as secondary. On the other hand, the Investigation Bureau saw a policy of Japanese economic and political expansion into the region through diplomatic negotiations as more important than the conclusion of the China war, while the view of the Europe-Asian Bureau tended to focus on the development of Japan's economic interests in the region. However, the document reveals that, in spite of those differences, the ministry's most influential bureaux were advocating a policy to take advantage of the situation in Europe and to secure the Western colonial powers' recognition of Japan's economic and political influence in Southeast Asia through diplomatic negotiations.³⁰

Such a stance was also illustrated in the document '*Ōshū-sen o keiki to suru Teikoku Gaikō Hōshin-an* [A Proposal of Measures to be pursued in response to the European War]' which was forwarded on 18 September by *Ōshū-sen Taisaku Shingi-kai* [A Committee to Deliberate Japan's Foreign Policy in response to the European War]. This was a group that consisted of representatives from various bureaux within the *Gaimushō*. The document asserted that Japan should push the Western colonial powers in the region 'to withdraw from their position of political predominance in China and the southern region and to grant access to their economic interests in many parts of the world' by taking advantage of the favourable position of the country.³¹ As was indicated in a memorandum prepared by Matsumiya Jun, the chief of the Research Bureau, there were, at this stage, still those who opposed using diplomatic pressure to capitalise on the opportunity provided by the outbreak of the war and increase Japan's political and economic presence in the region.³² Yet, these documents suggest that such an idea was steadily gaining hold among the bureaucrats in the *Gaimushō*.

It was against this background that Arita stated in his radio speech of 29 June:

'In order to realize [the establishment of world peace], it seems to be the most natural step that peoples who are closely related to one another geographically, racially, and economically should first form a sphere of their own for co-existence and co-prosperity and establish peace and order within that spheres, and at the same time secure a relationship of common existence and prosperity with other spheres. ... The countries of East Asia and the regions of the South Seas are geographically close, historically, racially, and economically very closely related to each other. They are destined to cooperate and minister to one another's need for their common well-being and prosperity, and to promote peace and progress in their regions.

The uniting of all these regions in a single sphere on the basis of common existence and assuring thereby the stability of that sphere is, I think, a natural conclusion.³³

The basic stance of the new Cabinet of Admiral Yonai Mitsumasa, with Arita at the *Gaimushō*, was to seek an improvement of Japan's relations with Britain and the United States. Nevertheless, one has to note the fact that the government, at the same time, was eager to change the status quo in East Asia by peaceful means in order to secure the country's access to raw materials and markets in the Western colonies. In other words, the co-operative policy with the West was pursued on the condition that Western colonial powers were willing to make a fundamental alternation to the present conditions in East Asia. This tendency is indicated, for instance, in the ideas of a figure such as Shigemitsu Mamoru who exerted his influence over the mainstream of Japanese diplomacy throughout the crucial period of the 1930s and the first half of the 1940s.³⁴ Throughout the 1930s, Shigemitsu had envisaged that the objective of Japan's foreign policy was stability in East Asia and, for that purpose, its political superiority and control in the region should be recognised by the powers in return for Japan's recognition of their economic interests in the same area.³⁵ Although his stance was, in principle, to seek a rapprochement with the Western powers in the region which would not impinge upon Japan's interests in East Asia, he came to claim by the summer of 1939: 'if western colonial powers do not agree to this, there is no alternative but to drive them out'.³⁶ In the face of the defeats suffered by France, Netherlands and Britain in Europe during the summer of 1940, Shigemitsu became aware of the possibility that Japan could gain increasing economic and political influence in Southeast Asia which was now much more vulnerable to its penetration. On July 25, he, therefore, tried to convince the *Gaimushō* that Japan's firm posture towards Britain could lead to the latter's recognition of the Japanese interests in the region. He sent a telegram asserting: 'it was necessary for Japan to consolidate her position in East Asia. As a result Japan should encourage England to get herself out of the position she has got into ...'.³⁷ As indicated in the views of Shigemitsu, there were officials in the Foreign Ministry who came to believe that Japan's southern advance could be accomplished without risking a war with Britain and the United States if it was done by gradual means.³⁸ Thus, when Foreign Minister Arita Hachirō, whose vision had represented the main line of thought within the ministry, asserted the formation of a 'Co-Prosperity Sphere' over Southeast Asia in June 1940, he had the considerable backing from officials at or above the level of bureau chief and even those who were not members of his faction gradually banded together in his support.³⁹ By the summer of 1940, a substantial portion of figures in the *Gaimushō*, let alone Arita, Matsuoka as well as Shigemitsu, came to favour the policy of expanding Japan's economic and political influence in Southeast Asia through diplomatic pressures

on the Western colonial powers in the region.

The Foreign Ministry was soon presented with an opportunity to put these ideas into practice. Following the resignation of the Yonai Cabinet on 17 July, Konoe Fumimaro formed his second cabinet by appointing Tōjō Hideki as the War Minister, Yoshida Zengo as the Navy Minister and Matsuoka Yosuke as the Foreign Minister. The last of these was famous as the man who had contributed to taking Japan out of the League of Nations in February 1933. The ministerial roster of the cabinet is notable because it included three figures - Tōjō, Matsuoka, and Hoshino Naoki as the president of the Planning Board – who had Manchurian backgrounds. Moreover, the Cabinet Planning Board contained a number of *Shōwa Kenkyū-kai* members, such as Inaba Shūzō and Wada Kōsaku, who shared Konoe's perspective on the problems Japan was facing and the best means to solve them. The newly appointed Prime Minister now had authority to take his long-cherished Pan-Asianist views into government and envisage the establishment of a new order as a core principle of his cabinet's policy-making.

On 19 July 1940, an informal meeting was held among Konoe, Matsuoka, Tōjō and Yoshida at Konoe's private residence to co-ordinate their respective views on matters such as Japan's foreign policy prior to the formation of the cabinet. As is indicated by those facts, the primary members of the cabinet were in agreement on the basic principles of the foreign policies to be conducted.⁴⁰ The decisions made at the informal meeting, which is normally called the Ogikubo Conference, comprised four principles: to strengthen the Tokyo-Berlin-Rome axis with a view to furthering the establishment of a 'New Order' in East Asia; to conclude a five-year or a ten-year non-aggression pact with Moscow to gain time for the completion of armaments against the Soviet Union; to absorb the British, French, Dutch and Portuguese overseas possessions in East Asia into the 'New Order' in the region; and to exclude any intervention from the United States that might prevent Japan's effort to construct the 'New Order' insofar as any unnecessary conflict with Washington could be avoided.⁴¹ In order to achieve an early settlement of the China War, those principles were endorsed in parallel with the policy of preventing any attempts by third powers to aid Chiang Kai-shek. The formal confirmation of this agreement appeared in the form of the cabinet approval given on 26 July to the policy document entitled '*Kihon Kokusaku Yōkō* [The Main Principles of Japan's Basic National Policy]' which was drafted by the cabinet planning board, headed by Hoshino.⁴² The principles assented to by the four primary decision-makers in the government at the conference thereby became a national policy to be followed by the country.

What is remarkable about the document is that these policies were advocated on the grounds that they would promote Japan's construction of a 'New Order in the Greater East

Asia'. The approval of 'the Main Principles...' was followed by Matsuoka's announcement on 1 August stating that the principal aim of Japan's foreign policy was to 'establish the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere'. This implied that Japan's national policy under the Kono cabinet would be executed with the aim of establishing the GEACPS; the concept of *Dai-Tōa Kyōeiken* had now come to acquire the status of a national goal. Although all of those key decision-makers were in accord about advancing the policy of *Nanshin*, they interpreted the southern strategy in a way that suited their own ends and prepared to execute the policy through their own means. What moulded these various visions and objectives into a coherent policy of a southern advance was the emerging concept of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere.

Britain in the Far East and Japanese expansion, up to July 1940.

As has been argued above, there was an emerging consensus among Japanese policy makers that the West had not shown appreciation or understanding of their country's acute problems and, therefore, Japan was entirely justified in pursuing a policy of expansion into Southeast Asia. It was, however, not only the Japanese but also the British who felt they were in a difficult situation in this part of the world. In order to understand the course of events which led to the emergence of the GEACPS, it is important to examine Britain's position in the region during the period up to July 1940 and its perception of the Japanese move towards southern expansion.

When one considers the British stance toward the Japanese expansion during the period, it is important to note that the country's world-wide empire was dangerously over-stretched but that, in spite of that, Britain still sought to maintain the status quo established in South-East Asia. By the latter half of the 1930s, it had become apparent that the eastern part of the empire was increasingly vulnerable. Britain's defence problem in the Far East was particularly deepened in the spring of 1939 by a new series of crises in Europe. There was growing anxiety concerning the policies of Germany and Italy as well as the extent of London's commitments in the Mediterranean and Middle East. Not only had Britain already committed itself to defend Egypt and Iraq, but it also turned its anxious eyes to Greece, Romania, and Turkey in March-April 1939 following Hitler's decision to occupy the rump of Czechoslovakia and Mussolini's seizure of Albania. Furthermore, the outbreak of the European conflict in the late summer confirmed a growing perception shared among many in Whitehall that Britain was simply not powerful enough militarily to protect its colonial possessions in Asia. Under these circumstances, as J. C. Steddale Bennett of the

Foreign Office noted in a memorandum, Britain was 'liable to be bluffed' so long as it was 'living on bluff and the defences in the Far East were weak.'⁴³ What made the situation even more complex for Britain was the vital importance of the raw materials from the South-East Asian colonies for its war effort against Germany. Moreover the conflict required Britain not only to allocate its imperial resources to its European war effort but also to deny them to Hitler's Germany through economic warfare. Thus, the advent of war in Europe brought grave repercussions in Southeast Asia and raised a number of questions with regard to Britain's future policy toward the region.⁴⁴

It was under these circumstances that Britain had to confront Japan's growing aspiration for southern expansion. Initially it sought to minimise its problems with Japan through a limited rapprochement on particular issues. Now that the empire's resources were diverted to defeat Germany, it was essential to seek a compromise and prevent Japan from destroying the status quo of the region by taking advantage of events in Europe. Between the summer of 1939 and June 1940, an agreement between Britain and Japan, indeed, seemed closer than any time since the summer of 1937. One of the attempts made to ease relations was to solve the crisis at Tientsin in which Japan pushed for the withdrawal of foreign garrisons from China and decided to test British power by blockading the British concession there. Another opportunity was presented by the satisfactory settlement of the *Asama Maru* crisis of January 1940; a Japanese merchant ship, which was intercepted by a British warship, HMS *Liverpool*, over German passengers, caused outrage within Japan due to high-handed nature of the action. Economic relations were another area in which Britain sought a major breakthrough for improved relations with the Japanese. Whitehall was well aware of the fact that Japan was 'very anxious that their supply of raw materials from the British Empire shall be assured.'⁴⁵ Britain, therefore, sought to take advantage of this situation with a view to the relaxation of political tensions with Japan.

There were several reasons why Whitehall found it important to come to terms with Tokyo in regard to economic relations. Following the outbreak of the European war, Britain became increasingly concerned with Soviet ambitions and the nature of Soviet-Japanese relations. Having concluded a non-aggression pact with Germany on the eve of the war, the Soviet Union was reported to be openly hostile to Britain and increasing its influence in China. However, Whitehall could not take the risk of antagonising China and the United States by forming an anti-Soviet front in East Asia with France and Japan which emerged as one of the options by the end of 1939.⁴⁶ It was also a great danger for Britain's war effort if Germany made an arrangement with Japan for the delivery of supplies through the Trans-Siberian Railway. In conducting economic warfare against Germany, the

Trans-Siberian Railway was one of the weakest spots in Britain's contraband control in the Far East. While the amount of supplies which could reach the enemy by this route was strictly limited, even the small bulk of munitions of war and certain materials such as wolfram, rubber and tin would constitute a serious loophole in the British campaign against Germany. There was a danger that this could pose a major threat to the Allied war effort as it secured Germany's continued access to such resources as rubber, nickel and tin from the Netherlands East Indies, wolfram and antimony from China, copper from the United States, and vegetable oils from Manchukuo. Whitehall gradually realised the seriousness of the situation and found it necessary to deal with the Japanese on the trade issue in order to prevent them from exporting these supplies to its enemy. It was against this background that Whitehall chose to consider the economic aspect of Anglo-Japanese relations as an area to explore a rapprochement.

Britain was thereby posed with the difficult question of how it could deal with Japan's desire for securing its access to raw materials in the British Empire without causing any detrimental effect on its war effort in Europe. However, within Whitehall, views on the best means to come to terms with the threat of Japanese expansion were not necessarily in harmony. As the new year of 1940 opened, an endless debate developed as to the extent of concessions Britain could make to Japan. One side of the debate was represented by, for instance, Sir Robert Craigie, the British Ambassador to Japan. On 1 January, Craigie dispatched a telegram to the War Cabinet which emphasised the importance of distinguishing between moderates and extremists within Japanese decision-making. In the report, he argued:

'Though every Japanese naturally desires the advancement of his country's fortunes, distinction must be made between moderates who favour gradual expansion through the control of vital raw materials and the development of overseas markets as the solution for Japan's organic economic ills and extremists who, impelled by mystical fanaticism, aspire to world domination. It is the extravagant jingoism of the latter which we hope to see confounded once for all in the outcome of the present adventure in China.'⁴⁷

Based on this view, Craigie advocated that Japan could best be appeased by taking a lenient stance over problems arising out of the difference in economic interests between the two countries. He observed that the moderates were more influential in the Japanese decision-making due to its current disillusionment with Germany and Italy, and that the survival of the Abe government, which was working for improving relations with Britain and the United States, depended on whether it could succeed in its foreign policy. Britain would, Craigie believed, need to make certain concessions in order to encourage this political tide

in Tokyo and prevent the extremist government from coming into power to carry out a re-orientation of Japan's foreign policy. While he was trying to make it clear to Japan that Britain was prepared to pursue a reasonable settlement of Anglo-Japanese rivalries, Craigie was not in favour of a policy to seek for a settlement with Japan at any cost. He was willing to choose the option of confrontation if Tokyo went beyond what Britain could afford to accommodate.⁴⁸ However, he believed that Britain could avoid confrontation with Japan by exploring a workable solution through its negotiation with the moderate elements within the Japanese government.

In this regard, he was critical of the approach taken by Washington towards the Japanese during the period. The end of January 1940 marked the expiration of the commercial treaty between Japan and the United States and the beginning of formal economic pressure against the empire. Throughout the year that followed, the United States government opened an intensive debate about the wisdom of applying such pressure while commencing its own rearmament programme. Showing little interest in the formation of the allegedly more co-operative Yonai cabinet, American leaders conducted their trade with Japan on an ad hoc basis without any legal framework to protect their respective rights. Washington believed that by doing so it could keep up the pressure for improving the behaviour of the Japanese who realised the impossibility of winning a war against the United States and, therefore, were anxious to avoid a confrontation.

In spite of dissent from Craigie's American counterpart, Joseph C. Grew, the American Ambassador to Japan, the State Department in Washington was fairly sceptical about the advantages it could gain from a policy of supporting the Japanese moderates. Grew argued that Japan's drive for self-sufficiency would actually provide Washington with an opportunity to improve relations by increasing the country's dependency on the United States.⁴⁹ However, the State Department disagreed with his observation. It believed that the United States first needed to see how influential the moderates were and, if any, what they could offer to improve relations between the two countries. Washington was doubtful whether the Japanese frustrations would necessarily lead to its expansion toward south and believed that it should impose certain economic restrictions on Japan if it wished to give pause to Japanese leaders without resorting to the threat of military force. It was this latter line of thinking that Craigie objected to. On 1 January 1940, he noted, when referring to a summary of the American assessment of the situation that had been sent to him, that

'Policy as outlined by United States Secretary of State in Washington ... is too drastic for the present delicately balanced situation. Had this policy been initiated a year ago it might have well 'accelerated' impact of present internal difficulties and resulting tendencies towards moderation in Japanese policy. At this stage however and with a European war in progress it

is of the greatest importance that these tendencies should be fostered and there is less justification now for taking the risk involved 'in' checking these through the adopting of even too rigid a policy towards Japan.⁵⁰

Craigie maintained his belief in the existence of Japanese moderates during the whole of the period of his diplomatic service as Ambassador to Japan. In his final report composed in September 1943, he noted that he had always contended that there were moderate elements in the Japanese politics who believed that a major war with great powers in the region should be avoided and that the country's objective could be secured through the exercise of steady political pressure combined with the prosecution of a policy of commercial and industrial expansion. Their existence, he stated, had been distinguished from the extremists who held that such methods were too slow and too uncertain and that a war with Britain, possibly with the United States, would become inevitable in the not too distant future.⁵¹ He was, thus, of the opinion that Britain's interests would have best been served by seeking to come to terms with Japan's gradual economic expansion, not by British intransigence which only helped the radicals in Tokyo to sabotage the moderates' attempt for rapprochement with the West.

Nevertheless, this view was by no means shared widely among his colleagues. One of the figures who expressed reservations about Craigie's opinion was Sir George Sansom, the commercial counsellor at the British embassy in Tokyo, who had a deep knowledge of many aspects of Japanese society and culture with his long experience of Japan as a member of the diplomatic service and as a historian. Sansom was less sanguine than Craigie as to the possibility of achieving a general settlement with the Japanese in the economic field. He believed that there were fundamental differences between the interests of the two powers and that these ultimately made a conflict inevitable. It was, in his view, open to serious doubt if Britain could find 'any really useful friends in Japan' with whom to establish more peaceful Anglo-Japanese relations. Sansom was sceptical, in contrast to Craigie, about the existence of any effective moderate force in Japanese politics and rightly observed that the practical difference between the extremists and the moderates was 'not one of destination, but of the road by which that destination is to be reached and the speed at which it is to be travelled.' That is not to say that he entirely denied the possibility of approaching certain elements in Japan with whom Britain could work for a rapprochement. Nevertheless, these moderate elements were, Sansom suggested, diffuse and far from unified and could not be helped by concessions from Great Britain. Thus he concluded that 'if this interpretation of present conditions in Japan is correct it follows that to surrender to Japan on any point of principle will not help us and even to give way on minor issues, while it may be advisable on general grounds of conciliation or special grounds of local

expediency, is of dubious value in a struggle with which has so far not developed between extremist and moderate forces in Japan.'⁵²

His view was shared by many in the Foreign Office who were involved in the Far Eastern affairs. For instance, M. E. Dening of the Far Eastern Department commented on 12 January 1940 to the above observation by Craigie. While he accepted Craigie's argument about Japan's natural desire for securing its access to raw materials, Dening was sceptical about his observations on the Japanese moderates. He noted in his minute that,

'Our complaint against the moderates has ... been that they do not hesitate to take advantage of and to profit from the acts of the extremists. Their excuse when we protest against such acts is that they are powerless. This excuse would be more convincing if they did not display such readiness to reap what the extremists have sown.'

R. A. Butler, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of the Foreign Office, also assented to this view by commenting that Craigie 'may overrate the importance of the Jap[anese] moderates & in this connection I have studied Sir George's views'.⁵³

Reflecting these observations, the stance of British decision-makers towards Japan's expansion in East Asia was notably cautious. As well as doubting the validity of Craigie's argument about the existence of effective moderate elements in current Japanese politics, many in Whitehall were reluctant to accept his view that Britain should encourage the moderates who favoured gradual expansion through the control of vital raw materials and the development of overseas markets. Rather, there was a wide measure of consensus among them that the Japanese aspirations and the British interests in the region were fundamentally irreconcilable and it would be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to come to terms with the Japanese idea of a 'new order.' Sansom noted in a memorandum on British policy in the Far East that all Japanese wanted a 'new order' in Asia and that the establishment of such a 'new order' would ultimately involve displacement of Britain in the Far East. He thus concluded that 'the more one reflects upon this situation the more one is obliged to conclude that no satisfactory solution can be found' without British recognition of a 'new order' in Eastern Asia in which Japan plays a dominant part.'⁵⁴ Sir Archibald Clark Kerr, the British Ambassador to China, agreed with Sansom's view by noting that:

'The new order in East Asia has been something which we have told ourselves that we can in no circumstances accept because it promises early destruction of all that we value in the Far East, and after that still greater dangers. About the meaning of the new order there can now be no doubt despite the occasional friendly assurances which Sir R. Craigie is obliged to put in the balance against the outbursts of the Tokyo press and assertions of the Japanese Generals.'⁵⁵

The sense of vigilance shown by Whitehall was further deepened in the face of a number of remarks by Japanese leaders. Arita Hachirō, the Japanese Foreign Minister, made a speech on 9 February regarding Japan's policy of forming a 'new order' and stated that the new order meant the political, economic and cultural co-operation of Japan, China and Manchuria with particular emphasis on economic collaboration. This was in part aimed at making clear that it would not include any other countries or imply cutting off of economic relations with third countries. The Foreign Office, however, maintained its distrustful stance as reflected in Denning's comment on 13 February. He noted that 'F(oreign) M(inister) Arita has been careful in his reference to the 'new order', for he has omitted to say that the 'co-operation' of China and Manchukuo is actually to be at his dictation, as in fact it already is in the case of Manchuria.' Denning also observed that such an order would not bring Japan to a final solution of its problems for the natural culmination of such a move was Japan's expansion towards vital British possessions in Southeast Asia.⁵⁶ Another statement by Arita, this time to the budget committee of the House of Representatives, did not lessen Whitehall's suspicion. Arita remarked that, while seeking economic expansion in the southern region, Japan had no territorial ambitions towards the southern countries and was, if other countries would consent to it, prepared to conclude non-aggression pacts in the region. In response to that, Denning commented:

'Mr. Arita's remarks are obviously designed to reassure the Netherlands. They are not in fact very reassuring, for he says that 'Japan must seek expansion in that direction. A similar necessity 'drove' Japanese into Manchuria and later into China.'⁵⁷

There was also evidence suggesting that growing support for the policy of a southern advance was being expressed by an increasing number of Japanese politicians, press and intellectuals. For instance, on 19 March, the British Consul-General of the Netherlands East Indies, H. C. Walsh, cautiously reported the activities the Pacific Association (*Taiheiyō Kyōkai*) whose founders included significant Japanese figures such as Matsuoka Yosuke, who had assumed the post of vice-president, and Yoshizawa Kenkichi, a former Foreign Minister, and which had connection with other notables including Prince Konoe, Admiral Suetsugu Nobumasa, and General Matsui Iwane. Walsh communicated to London about a bellicose speech made by one of the association's members, Kondo Misao, who stated that Japan must be acknowledged as the master of East Asia and that it would deprive British and American citizens of any rights they acquired in the *Nanyō*, that is to say all territory south of China and Japan.⁵⁸ These reports did not help Japan to ease Britain's suspicion of its intention to advance into the southern region.

In the essential details, the observations made by British policy-makers such as Sansom were correct. As has been examined above, most Japanese policy-makers from various segments of the government came to favour a policy of southern expansion by this period and, as Sansom pointed out, the primary difference among them was over the means to achieve it rather than the goal itself. There were only a few, not so influential, Japanese who fundamentally disagreed with the more bellicose policy pursued by the governments throughout the period. The cabinet of Admiral Yonai Mitsumasa, with Arita as Foreign Minister, for sure, desired to secure improved relations with Britain and the United States. Yet, it should be noted that they pursued such a policy on the condition that these two powers were prepared to meet Japan by making considerable concessions to ease the latter's basic problems of a lack of raw materials and markets. This was a condition that Britain could hardly accept at ease, especially when the country was in the middle of the conflict with Germany and when its possessions in the Far East played such a vital role for its war needs.

The British policy towards Japan that had to be executed under these circumstances required delicate handling in order to make a balance between a number of contradictory factors. At the beginning of March, the Foreign Office examined the possibility of improving Britain's trade relations with Japan as an active step to change the present state of general Anglo-Japanese relations. The Foreign Office concluded that 'the result of that examination has shown that our war economy has severely restricted our capacity to meet Japan's requirements.' However, it accepted the necessity of dealing with Japan on those issues by noting that 'within the limitations imposed upon us by our own military and economic needs, we should endeavour to meet Japan and should bear in mind the possibility of improving our trade relations should the opportunity to do so arise.' As the memorandum suggested, the British policy towards Japan had to be conciliatory but firm and should not make concessions which could strengthen Japanese militarism. While indicating the possibility of granting trade facilities to Japan, it had to bear in mind that its own war needs were an overriding consideration.⁵⁹

What made the situation even more delicate was the fact that Britain could not take any action which might appear to run counter to the policy of the United States in the Far East or sacrifice the war effort made by Chiang Kai-shek against the Japanese. Whitehall was particularly concerned with what it saw as the confused and ill-considered posture of Washington towards Tokyo during this period. Britain consistently endeavoured to encourage more positive initiatives from Washington, as its dependence on the United States' support in the European war made close co-operation with the country axiomatic. Yet, for President Roosevelt, a direct American commitment was out of question as it could

lead to a negative reaction from public opinion and America's own defence capabilities were still far from adequate. Britain, therefore, could hardly expect any direct American involvement to be forthcoming in the immediate future, even if the United States began to consider increasingly rigid measures of economic restrictions against Japan. Indeed, Britain might face, as Butler noted, the danger of 'counting on the Americans and then being let down'.⁶⁰

Moreover, Whitehall had to be careful not to discourage Chinese resistance against Japan, as it needed to ensure that the war in China continued to act as a drain on Japan's resources, thus preventing another conflict from arising in East Asia. Britain, in theory, would have benefited most by increasing its assistance to the Nationalist cause. Yet this was not in practice a feasible option for an extension of the aid meant diverting resources from the British war effort in Europe. Moreover, such a policy might lead to an exacerbation of its relations with the Japanese. The only possible option left for London was to encourage Chungking's resistance against Japan verbally and not to undermine Chiang Kai-shek's position at the expense of a settlement with Tokyo. As Clerk Kerr suggested from Chungking, the greatest danger to Britain in the Far East was that of antagonising the Japanese, but it was of greater importance not to lose the sympathy of Americans and to continue unobtrusive assistance to Chiang Kai-shek.⁶¹ Britain, thus, had to face the considerably difficult task of finding a way to come to terms with Japan's growing aspiration for southern expansion while maintaining its close co-operation with the United States and China.

It was against this background that the Anglo-Japanese economic talks finally began on 14 May between the two main negotiators, Sir Frederick Leith-Ross, Secretary to the Ministry of Economic Warfare, and Okamoto Suemasa, the Counsellor to the Japanese Embassy in London. The talk was held by exchanging the list of materials Britain wished Japan to consider as contraband and the raw materials Japan wished to import from the British Empire. In spite of the initial sense of optimism shown by the both sides, they soon found the talks were approaching stalemate: they both felt that the other's list of commodities was too extensive to accept while the two sides were equally determined to make as little compromise as possible over vital issues. Following several meetings towards the end of June, it became increasingly apparent that the economic talks had no chance of success and the negotiations between Leith-Ross and Okamoto were abandoned after a final meeting on 28 June.⁶² In spite of the two countries common desire for improved relations, they found it impossible to compromise as the potential disadvantages involved were unacceptable to both parties. The negotiations revealed that the concurrent British and Japanese war efforts were simply not compatible.

This was, however, by no means the end of the British effort to seek a general settlement with the Japanese. It has to be noted that the period of the negotiations coincided with the rapid deterioration of the Allied position in East Asia which was caused by the defeat of Netherlands and France in the face of the German blitzkrieg. As has been shown, the might of the German campaign led to a renewed belief in Japan that it would best benefit by alignment with Hitler and taking advantage of the power vacuum emerging in South-East Asia. This perception on the Japanese side led to its sudden and high-handed demand on 19 June for the closure of the Burma Road which was one of the last supply routes to China. In the face of Japanese pressure, Britain signed the Burma Road agreement on 17 July which banned the transport of war materials including petrol to China until 18 October. This episode revealed that the newly formed Churchill government had to neutralise the Japanese threat to British interests in East Asia by whatever resources were available, including appeasement if necessary.

At the beginning of July, the Joint Planning Sub-Committee suggested to the War Cabinet in a draft memorandum titled 'The Situation in the Far East in the Event of Japanese Intervention against us', that

'A wide settlement in the Far East, including probably economic concessions to Japan, will inevitably be necessary sooner or later. Piecemeal concessions are of doubtful value. Our policy should be directed towards the conclusion of permanent settlement with Japan on the widest lines and at the earliest possible date.'⁶³

However, this argument was not accepted without reservation. Sir John Brenan of the Far Eastern Department indicated his disagreement in a minute by noting that the committee did not envisage any intermediate stage between peace and a total and declared war. By suggesting the example of Japan's relations with Russia, he claimed that the failure to secure a general settlement did not necessarily mean a total war in East Asia and that there was a possibility of the former remaining at peace and continuing correct diplomatic intercourse with its opponents while engaging in violent hostilities in a limited area. Brenan thus suggested the need to consider alternative policies between a declaration of total war and the maintenance of peace by virtue of a general settlement. Dening supported the basic line of his argument by commenting that 'We have decided to close the Burma Road for three months, but even if we had not, it is a matter of considerable doubt whether Japan would resort to total war'.⁶⁴ In spite of the reservations shown in these minutes, there was a consensus shared by many in Whitehall, that as the finalised version of the Chiefs of Staff Committee report noted:

'Our own commitments in Europe are so great that our policy must be directed towards the avoidance of an open clash with Japan. ... it is most desirable that a wide settlement in the Far East ... should be concluded, rather than that we should wait to be faced with a series of Japanese *faits accomplis*. The possibilities of obtaining such a settlement at the present time are doubtful; but ... every effort should be made to bring it about.'⁶⁵

While tranquillity in East Asia was needed more than at any time in recent years, Britain was in a very weak position and it had to deal with Japan at its most disadvantageous moment.

Throughout the period, London was well aware of Japan's basic problems, that is to say the need to secure its access for raw materials and to obtain a clear field for its expansion. However, Britain found it impossible to accommodate such desires which were now starting to extend their geographical scope to the Western possessions in South-East Asia. Some British figures believed that the two countries could reach a reasonable agreement through negotiations with moderate elements within the Japanese government. Yet, as others rightly observed, the interests of the two parties in the region were fundamentally irreconcilable and only a few Japanese, if any, would pursue a settlement that would sacrifice the basic requirements of the country. Even if there was such a force within the Japanese government, British suspicion of the Japanese intensions was too deep-rooted to be hopeful of a settlement. British scepticism on Japanese intension would further be deepened following the formation of the new Konoe government in the middle of July, which would turn out to be more bellicose than its predecessor.

Conclusion

As the above consideration has revealed, the emergence of the vision of the GEACPS in July 1940 was the outcome of both long-term ideological and short-term political and economic contexts surrounding the Japanese government. Ideologically, the growth of the Pan-Asianist concept in the 1930s was particularly important. While retaining its features from early years, the Pan-Asianism that developed during the period characterised itself by its desire to change the international status quo under the Western domination and its aspiration for the establishment of a new regional order in East Asia. This Pan-Asianist idea, widely shared among Japan's prominent political leaders, was refined by Rōyama, Miki and other prominent members of the *Shōwa Kenkyū-kai* and prepared a vital ideological framework for the concept of the *Dai-tōa Kyōeiken*.

More pragmatic and realistic considerations of Japan's strategic and economic

necessity also influenced the form and timing that the vision emerged as the ideological basis of Japan's southern expansion. By the middle of 1940, a move towards the southern region became an increasingly attractive policy option for three key elements of Japan's decision-making for different reasons. While the army viewed it primarily in the context of its search for an early settlement of its prolonged conflict with Nationalist China, the navy's call for the *Nanshin* strategy was essentially motivated by its search for controlling the strategically vital resources of the region. The role of the Foreign Ministry in promoting the policy of southern expansion is also noteworthy. In contrast to the general image of the *Gaimushō* as an advocate of international co-operation that enjoyed limited influence on policy-making, it played a vital role in endorsing the southern advance as a means to secure recognition of Japan's economic and political influence in the region from the Western colonial powers. Thus, in the face of the unprecedented power vacuum in Southeast Asia caused by the German offensives in Europe, all of the three came to view by the summer of 1940 that a southern expansion would best serve for Japan's national interest.

It is also important to note that the inability of the British to make economic concessions underlined Japan's need to expand into Southeast Asia. Throughout the period, Britain sought to maintain the status quo established in the region. While Britain endeavoured to deal with Japan's growing aspiration through a limited economic rapprochement on particular issues, it was not in a position to do so without causing any detrimental effect on its war effort in Europe. The British war economy severely restricted its capacity to meet Japan's requirements. Moreover, Britain's policy option was limited by its inability to take any action which run counter to the policy of Washington and sacrifice the war effort of the Nationalist China. Thus, it turned out that national interests of Britain and Japan were essentially incompatible.

At the same time, it is important to note that Britain's apparent weakness made it appear that Japan could expand through the application of diplomatic pressure and the threat of force without actually needing to recourse to war. It became increasingly clear that Britain's defence problem in the region was deepening as a result of a new series of crises in Europe. Growing anxiety concerning the policies of Germany and Italy as well as the extent of London's commitment in other parts of the world made Britain's policy options to counter Japanese expansion considerably limited. This factor also played an important role in determining the timing of the emergence of the GEACPS and its nature.

Notes for Chapter 1

- ¹ Matsuura Masataka. "Shimaguni", Sosite 'Riku No Teikoku' Kara 'Umi No Teikoku' He: Nagasaki, Dairen, Kobe.' *Kokusai Seiji* 139 (2004), p. 108.
- ² Konoe Fumimaro. *Seidanroku*. (Tokyo: Chikura Shobō, 1936), pp. 6-7. Cited in, Oka Yoshitake. *Konoe Fumimaro - a Political Biography*. Lanham: Madison Books, 1992, pp. 10-13.
- ³ William Miles Fletcher. *The Search for a New Order - Intellectuals and Fascism in Pre-War Japan*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982), p. 28.
- ⁴ Rōyama Masamichi, *Sekai Kyōkō to Burokku Keizai*. (Tokyo: Nihon Hyōron-sha, 1932), pp. 91-92, cited in, Fletcher, p. 32.
- ⁵ Shōwa Research Association, *Shin Nihon no Shisō Genri*. In Miki Kiyoshi, *Zenshū vol. 17: Rekishi-teki kenkyū, shōhen, sonota*. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1968, pp. 513-14. Also cited in *ibid.*, p. 113.
- ⁶ Fletcher, p. 111.
- ⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 115.
- ⁸ Matsuura, p. 118.
- ⁹ Michael A. Bamhart, *Japan Prepares for Total War - the search for economic security, 1919-41* (New York: Cornell Univ. Press, 1987), pp. 136-7, 155-6.
- ¹⁰ Hatano Sumio and Asada Sadao, 'The Japanese Decision to Move South (1939-1941).' In *Paths to the War - new essays on the origins of the Second World War*, eds. Robert C. Boyce and Esmund Robertson (London: Macmillan Education Ltd., 1989), pp. 385-6.
- ¹¹ The Diplomatic Record Office, the Foreign Ministry, Tokyo, (abbreviated hereafter as DRO), A.1.1.0.30 'Shina Jihen Kankei Ikken [Documents relating to the China Incident]' vol. 7. See also, Hatano Sumio 'Nanshin e no Senkai 1940 – 'Jikyoku Shori Yōkō' to Rikugun. [Japan's Turn for a Southern Advance – 'Jikyoku Shori Yōkō' and the Army]' *Ajia Keizai*, vol. XXVI, no 5 (1985), pp. 25-8.
- ¹² Hosoya Chihiro, "The Japanese-Soviet Neutrality Pact" In Morley, *The Fateful Choice*, p. 32.
- ¹³ Hatano, 'Nanshin e no Senkai', pp. 30-33.
- ¹⁴ Asada and Hatano, p. 388.
- ¹⁵ Hata Ikuhiko, 'Futsu-in Shinchū to Gun no Nanshin Seisaku' In *Nihon Kokusai Seiji Gakkai Taiheiyō Sensō Gen'in Kenkyū-bu*, ed. Taiheiyō Sensō e no Michi - kaisen gaikō-shi (abbreviated hereafter as TSM), vol. 6 'Nanpō Shinshutsu' (Tokyo: Asahi Shinbun, 1963), p. 187.
- ¹⁶ The full text of this document is published in, *Taiheiyō Sensō e no Michi*, vol. 8 "Bekkan Shiryō-hen [Supplementary volume: Documents, hereafter cited as TSM]" (Tokyo, Asahi Shinbun: 1963), pp. 316-7.
- ¹⁷ Mark R. Peattie, 'Nanshin: The 'Southern Advance' 1931-1941 - as a prelude to the Japanese Occupation of Southeast Asia.' In *The Japanese Wartime Empire*, eds. Duus et al., pp. 213-4.
- ¹⁸ Bamhart, p. 44.
- ¹⁹ Hatano, Sumio. 'Nihon Kaigun to Nanshin Seisaku no Tenkai [Japanese Navy and the Development of the Policy of Southern Advance].' In *Senkan-ki Tōnan-Ajia no Keizai Masatsu [International Commercial Rivalry in Southeast Asia during the Inter-war Period]*, eds. Shinya Sugiyama, and Ian Brown (Tokyo, Dōbun-kan: 1990), pp. 151-2.
- ²⁰ Henry P. Frei, *Japan's Southern Advance and Australia - from the sixteenth century to World War II* (Honolulu, Univ. of Hawaii Press: 1991), pp. 143-4.
- ²¹ Peattie, *Nanshin*, p. 217.
- ²² English translation of the document in Lebra, pp. 64-7.
- ²³ Hatano, *Nihon Kaigun to Nanshin*, pp. 154-5.
- ²⁴ TSM, pp. 315-6. 'Sekai Jōsei no sui ni tomonau Jikyoku Shori Yōkō', 22 July, 1940.
- ²⁵ Sakai Tetsuya. "Eibei-Kyōchō to 'Nicchū-Teikei'." In *Nenpō Kindai Nihon Kenkyū*, ed. Kindai Nihon Kenkyū-kai (Tokyo,), p. 62.
- ²⁶ Usui Katsumi. 'The Role of the Foreign Ministry.' In *Pearl Harbor as History - Japanese-American Relations, 1931-41.*, eds. Dorothy Borg, and Okamoto Shunpei (New York: Columbia University Press, 1973), p. 128.
- ²⁷ DRO, A.2.0.0.X
- ²⁸ Peattie, *Nanshin*, pp. 200-202.
- ²⁹ Bamhart, pp. 148-9.
- ³⁰ DRO, A.1.1.0.30 vol. 7, 'Ōshū-sen ni taisuru kihonteki taido', 14 September, 1939.
- ³¹ DRO, A. 1.1.0.30. vol. 7, 'Ōshū-sen o keiki to suru Teikoku Gaikō Hōshin-an', 14 September, 1939.
- ³² DRO, A.1.1.0.30. vol. 7, 'Teikoku Jikyoku Gaikō Hōshin-an Kettei ni kansuru Oboegaki' [A Memorandum on A Draft of Measures to be pursued in response to the European War], drafted by Matsumiya Jun, 19 September, 1939.
- ³³ JFM, A.1.0.0.8 'Kokusai Jōsei to Teikoku no Tachiba ni kansuru Arita Gaishō Hōsō kankei Ikken' [On Foreign Minister Arita's announcement on the International situation and the position of the Empire]
- ³⁴ He assumed the following posts throughout his career as a diplomat: the Minister to China (1931-2), the Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs (1933-6), the Ambassador to the Soviet Union (1936-8), the

ambassador to Britain (1938-41), the Ambassador to the Nanking regime (1942-3), and Foreign Minister on three separate occasions (1943-5, 1945, 1954-6). See, Antony Best, "Shigemitsu Mamoru and Anglo-Japanese Relations." In *Britain and Japan: Bibliographical Portraits vol. II*, ed. Ian Nish (Richmond, 1997)

³⁵ JFM, A. 2.0.0.X1. <Matsumoto Kiroku> "Shigemitsu taishi no Ōshū Seikyoku Hōkoku [A Report on the Political Situation in Europe by the Ambassador to Great Britain, Shigemitsu], August 1939.

³⁶ JFM, A. 2.0.0.X1. "Shigemitsu taishi no Ōshū Seikyoku Hōkoku [A Report on the Political Situation in Europe by the Ambassador to Great Britain, Shigemitsu], August 1939.

³⁷ PRO, WO208/862, 082394. Shigemitsu to Matsuoka 26 July, 1940. Also cited in Best, *Shigemitsu*, p. 254.

³⁸ Shigemitsu Mamoru, *Gaikō Kaisō Roku* [Diplomatic Memoirs] (Tokyo, Mainichi Shinbun: 1978), pp. 212-3. Cited in, Best, *Shigemitsu*, p. 253. See also, Shiozaki Hiroaki, *Nichi-Ei-Bei Sensō no Kiro: Taiheiyō Sensō o meguru Seisenryaku* [The Crossroads of the Anglo-American-Japanese War - The Political and Military Strategies for the Pacific War] (Tokyo, Yamakawa Shuppan-sha: 1984), p. 54.

³⁹ Usui, 'The Foreign Ministry', p. 142.

⁴⁰ J. C. Butow, *Tōjō and the Coming of the War* (Stanford, California, Stanford Univ. Press: 1961), pp. 148-9.

⁴¹ TSM, pp. 319-20. 'Sokaku-chū Shichū Kaigi (Ogikubo Kaidan) Kettei [Decisions made at the Ogikubo Conference]', 19 July, 1940.

⁴² Butow, pp. 148-9.

⁴³ PRO, FO371/24726, F4184/23/23, Minute by J. C. Steddale Bennett, 31 August, 1940.

⁴⁴ Antony Best, *Britain, Japan and Pearl Harbor: Avoiding War in East Asia, 1936-41*. London: Routledge, 1995, p. 87.

⁴⁵ PRO, FO371/24723, F618/103/23, Sir V. Wellesley, Ministry of Economic Warfare, Memorandum of proposed trade agreement with Japan, 23 January, 1940.

⁴⁶ Best, *Britain, Japan and Pearl Harbor*, pp. 100-102.

⁴⁷ PRO, FO371/24708, F297/193/61, Craigie to the War Cabinet, 1 January, 1940 (received 11 January, 1940).

⁴⁸ Antony Best, 'Sir R. Craigie as Ambassador to Japan 1937-1941', pp. 242-3, in Ian Nish ed., *Britain and Japan: Bibliographical Portraits*. London, 1995, pp. 238-339.

⁴⁹ See Bamhart, P. 176-7.

⁵⁰ PRO, FO371/24708 F297/193/61, Craigie to the War Cabinet, 1 January, 1940.

⁵¹ PRO, PREM3/158/4, Final Report of Sir R. Craigie on Conclusion of his Mission to Japan, September, 1943. 'Memorandum on the Survey of events during the period of my appointment as His Majesty's Ambassador in Tokyo'

⁵² Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919-39, 3rd series, vol. 10, H.M.S.O., London, 1955-84., P. 528. Appendix I, F8502/6457/10, Memorandum on British policy in the Far East by Sir G Sansom, 3 August, 1939.

⁵³ PRO, FO371/24708, F297/193/61, minutes by Denning and Butler. *Italic by the author*.

⁵⁴ Documents on British Foreign Policy, F8502/6457/10, P. 531.

⁵⁵ PRO, FO371/24708, F870/193/61, Clark Kerr to Halifax, 4 February, 1940.

⁵⁶ PRO, FO371/24723, F1130/17/23, minute by Denning, 13 February, 1940.

⁵⁷ PRO, FO371/24375, F1071/205/23, Japanese desire for economic expansion in southern countries, minute by Denning, 13 February, 1940.

⁵⁸ PRO, FO371/24743, F2557/2557/23, Japan's Southward Expansion Policy, from Consul General Walsh (Batavia), 19 March, 1940.

⁵⁹ PRO, FO371/24708, F1639/193/61, Review of the Far Eastern Situation by Foreign Office, 6 March, 1940.

⁶⁰ *ibid.*, F297/193/61, Minute by Butler, 1 February, 1940.

⁶¹ *ibid.*, F870/193/61, Clerk Kerr, 4 February, 1940.

⁶² See, Best, *Britain, Japan and Pearl Harbour*, pp. 107-9.

⁶³ PRO, FO371/24722, F3530/3530/61, 10 July, 1940.

⁶⁴ *ibid.*, Minutes by Brennan and Denning, 11 July, 1940.

⁶⁵ PRO, PREM3/156/2, C.O.S. (40) 592, 31 July, 1940, 'The Situation in the Far East in the event of Japanese intervention against us'.

Chapter 2

The Emergence of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere and the Policy of the Southern Advance, July 1940 — December 1941.

On 1 August, Matsuoka Yōsuke, the newly appointed Foreign Minister, proclaimed that the aim of Japan's foreign policy was 'to establish the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere' whose scope would include Southern areas such as the Netherlands East Indies and French Indo-China with Japan, China and Manchukuo as its core. Following the formation of the 2nd Konoe Cabinet, the Japanese leaders also began to advocate the vision of the Co-Prosperity Sphere as enthusiastically in private counsels as in public pronouncements. The policy document '*Kihon Kokusaku Yōkō* [Principles of the National Policy]' approved by the Cabinet meeting on 26 July advocated that 'the fundamental aim of the foreign policy pursued by the Empire is to construct a new order in the Greater East Asia' and the policies listed on the document were accepted on the grounds that they would promote Japan's establishment of such an order.¹ The idea of 'a New Order in Greater East Asia' thereafter began to be used as the ideological basis for the Japanese policy making. Why did the vision acquire the status of a national goal with such rapidity? What role did it play in determining the direction of Japan's foreign policy?

In understanding the nature and role of the concept of the GEACPS, it is important to note the fact that, at a policy level, its ideological aims were ill-defined and the actual means to give its substance were left notably ambiguous. Besides the general understanding that it signified a self-sufficient sphere of influence under the Japanese leadership based on the principles of 'coexistence and co-prosperity', there was no consensus among the Japanese policy makers as to what it precisely meant, which areas were to be covered, and how it was to be established. For instance, in the above mentioned speech, Matsuoka went only as far as suggesting that its geographical scope included 'southern areas such as the Netherlands Indies and French Indo-China' as well as the three core nations of Japan, Manchuria and China. His statement was even more equivocal on the means by which the establishment of the GEACPS was pursued. The speech mentioned in passing that the first priority in establishing the GEACPS was 'to avoid all obstacles, tangible or intangible, which attend completion of dealing with the China Incident.'² This lack of any clear definition was an important feature of Japan's decision making and the role played by the vision of the GEACPS; it was not the concept was insignificant, but that its ability to provide a consensus rested on its ambiguous nature.

The formation of the second Konoe cabinet did not mark the end of the ongoing debates as to the appropriate nature of the Japanese policy to expand its influence in the

southern region. Rather, the government was deeply divided over Japan's strategic direction. By the summer of 1940, the army came to be increasingly in favour of an aggressive southern advance aimed at tightening the blockade on material aid by the Western Powers through French Indo-China and Burma, and concluding the war of attrition against the Chungking regime. The navy was, in contrast, cautious and opposed to any forceful southern strategy. While it showed interest in stationing troops in French Indochina as a first step to gain control over Thailand, Burma, Malaya which possessed strategic materials such as coal, iron ore and rubber, the navy was wary of taking military action which might provoke Washington and, therefore, refused to consider any forceful move into Southeast Asia.³ The *Gaimushō* was determined to exploit the favourable situation in Southeast Asia created by the collapse of France and Netherlands as far as possible and to expand Japan's sphere of economic and political influence in the region. But it too consistently opposed any measure that would require actual military action and the occupation of the southern regions.⁴ One of the causes for the division within the Japanese government was the fact that Japan had to confront a consistent and serious dilemma, which had intensified following the outbreak of the European War in 1939. On one hand, it was aware of the need to take advantage of the situation and strengthen the country's position in East Asia thus freeing itself from its heavy economic reliance on the Western powers and their colonies. On the other hand, it was vital for Japan to avoid antagonising them by openly encroaching on their vested interests in the region, which might ultimately lead to a conflict with the United States and Britain. In the summer of 1940, the Japanese government still appeared uncertain about the best way to pursue these contradictory goals through the policy of a southern advance.

In the face of this dilemma, the ideological influence exerted by the vision of the GEACPS is significant. In the face of such divergent interests and policy goals, it provided an important ideological basis that enabled the Japanese decision-makers to form a broad coalition and put a policy of southern expansion into operation under the slogan of the establishment of 'Greater East Asia'. Matsuoka played a key role in advocating the vision of the GEACPS and implementing the policy of a southern advance. Soon after his accession to the position, the new Foreign Minister faced the need to reconcile the contradictory policy goals of obtaining vital materials as well as securing an outlet for its exports in the face of the restrictive measures implemented by the Western powers without antagonising them. He believed that the most feasible option for solving this dilemma was a policy of using diplomatic pressure to obtain agreements with the resource-rich European colonies, which would guarantee favourable trade. Being successful in his attempt to have his views reflected in government foreign policy, he was determined to take advantage of

the favourable situation caused by the German victories in Europe and thus extricate the country from its considerable economic dependence on the West. Most importantly, Matsuoka sought American and British recognition of Japan's special position in the region and the establishment of a new regional order. This formed the core of Matsuoka's diplomacy throughout the period between the summer of 1940 and the early 1941.⁵ It was through the ideological appeal of the GEACPS that the Foreign Minister pursued and drove Japan's thrust into the southern region.

The above ideological function of the vision of the GEACPS is noteworthy for it determined two important characteristics of the concept. Firstly, reflecting its broad conceptual appeal, the vision of '*Dai Tōa Kyōeiken*' was considerably ambiguous in terms of precise form and method by which such a new order would be formed. Secondly, it changed its emphasis and goals in accordance with Japan's strategic position and policy priorities during the period. A careful examination of Japan's policy documents reveals that, during the period between the summer of 1940 and the spring of 1941, the concept of the GEACPS envisaged a set of goals and means to achieve them which were markedly different from those of the following period. During this initial phase of Japan's southern expansion, the vision of the GEACPS aimed at the establishment of a loose sphere of influence largely in the economic field rather than an exclusive regional bloc which would totally eliminate the Western presence in the region. The new order was envisaged as an economic bloc whose stability would be secured under the aegis of Japan which would have special rights as the leading regional power. The GEACPS during this period was a regional order that was premised on commercial intercourse with the other spheres of influence, including investment and development co-operation.⁶ This is evident, for instance, from Matsuoka's remarks at a local governors' meeting on 7 October, which stated Japan's intention of not excluding the involvement of countries outside the sphere in the activities within 'Greater East Asia.' Thus, while Japan would try to include the Dutch East Indies, French Indo-China and Siam within the GEACPS, economic activities on equal conditions to Japan would be guaranteed to the outside powers.⁷

This tendency was also clearly visible at the national policy level, too. This is, for instance, illustrated by the policy document '*Nanpō Keizai Shisaku Yōkō*' [Principles of Economic Policy towards the Southern Region], which set the foundations for the Konoe Cabinet's economic policy up to early 1941. Drafted by the *Dai-go linkai* [the Fifth Committee] of the Planning Board and endorsed by a cabinet meeting on 16 August 1940, the policy paper advocated the establishment of 'an economic new order' in the south as the primary objective of Japan's policy towards the Greater East Asia in parallel with the conclusion of the prolonged conflict with the Chinese nationalists. This policy, according to

the document, was designed to counter the 'bloc economy' developing in the world and to remove various restrictions imposed by the Western colonial authorities which obstructed the economic activities undertaken by Japanese nationals. With this particular set of preoccupations, the actual conquest of the countries in the region was not considered as a tangible option and Japanese policy planning towards the region paid very little attention to the problems surrounding the possible occupation of the region. Instead, the despatch of advisers to supervise trade, transportation and communications within the bloc and the strengthening of Japanese enterprises were envisaged as the best means to ensure the control of materials in the region. The document further asserted that 'coercive measures with military diplomacy can be applied in order to acquire more extensive and vital economic interests', and that the expansion of the country's political influence would be pursued together with such economic measures.⁸

Japan's initial approach to the Western colonial possessions in the region reflected this original vision of the GEACPS and the policy goals of Japan's southern advance. Japan's first actual move toward the south began with its advance into northern Indochina on 22 September, 1940. Taking advantage of the surrender of France in June, Japan had already succeeded in closing the military supply route to the Chungking regime through French Indochina. In this new manoeuvre, the Japanese pressed the French authorities further into accepting the passage of its military forces through Indochina, the provision of supplies and the use of air and naval bases in the territory to support its war against the Nationalist China.⁹ However, it has to be noted that the Japanese government's attempt to gain a hold over the French Indo-China was not confined to military action. Matsuoka viewed that it as an opportunity to expand Japan's predominant economic position through diplomatic pressure by taking advantage of the presence of the military threat to fulfil his objectives.

This is evident from the announcement that Matsuoka made at the beginning of negotiations with the French Ambassador to Japan, Arsène Henry on 1 August. The Foreign Minister demanded that French Indochina grant 'treatment equivalent to that given to France, French nationals, and French products' in regard to Japanese trade and the entrance of Japanese nationals and products. This request by the Foreign Minister was accepted by Henry on 30 August when the Matsuoka-Henry agreement was concluded.¹⁰ On 3 September, the Japanese Government further proclaimed its economic designs on the French possession by endorsing the policy documents '*Tai Futsu-in-shi Keizai Hatten no tame no Shisaku*' [Policy for the economic development of French Indo-China] and '*Tai Futsu-in-shi Busshi Shutoku narabini Bōeki Hōsaku Yōryō*' [Measures for resource acquisition and trade with French Indo-China]. The former document proclaimed the aim of

establishing closer economic ties with Indo-China as part of Japan's 'Greater East Asia Economic Sphere' to seek 'the removal or relaxation of various restrictive measures which impede commercial activities of Japanese nationals, and endeavour to develop favourable unilateral economic relations with the country'. The acquisition of vital resources was also an important element in the Japanese policy towards Indo-China and the government planned to demand from the French authorities a guarantee for the export of resources such as rice, limestone, manganese, phosphorous ore, tin, rubber, and zinc.¹¹ These economic considerations were among the top priorities on Matsuoka's agenda.

As a second part of the southern advance, the government endorsed a series of talks with the Netherlands East Indies which were begun in mid-September by a special envoy Kobayashi Ichizō, the Commerce and Industry Minister in the cabinet. Here too, Japan's policy envisioned substantial concessions in the economic field for Japanese businessmen, both private and public, in regard to their access to oilfields, rubber plantations, and mineral mines in the region.¹² The negotiations were based on the document '*Ran'in Kōshō Hōshin* [Principles for the Negotiation with the Netherlands East Indies]' which was approved by the cabinet on 27 August and then immediately sent to the Japanese Embassy in Batavia. It reasoned that 'the empire's fundamental aim of ending the Sino-Japanese conflict and establishing an East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere was severely obstructed in the face of the American embargoes on vital sources. In order to achieve the above objectives, the government now has no alternatives but to obtain the necessary materials from the southern region, especially the Netherlands East Indies, through securing closer economic ties with the Dutch colony as well as a greater political position.'¹³

The 'Principles', furthermore, asserted that Japan was to: 1) make the Netherlands East Indies part of the East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere; 2) support absolute self-determination for the Indonesian people; 3) and conclude with the Netherlands East Indies concrete pacts for the defence of that territory in order to secure peace in the East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, including the Indies.¹⁴ The Netherlands delegation refused to respond to the wide-ranging list of proposals as an agenda for negotiations, considering that acceptance of such terms would reduce the East Indies to the status of a Japanese colony. Due to the Japanese fear of bringing the United States and Britain to the defence of the Dutch East Indies, the actual negotiations were therefore largely confined to specific economic issues. Yet the document seems to reveal that an essential aim of the negotiations was to include the Dutch colonies into Japan's economic, as well as political, design of a new order.

What Japan sought during the period subsequent to the formation of the Konoe Cabinet was therefore primarily to increase its economic presence in South-East Asia

through diplomatic pressure. As is apparent from a number of policy documents, Japan maintained its stance to pursue the establishment of the GEACPS through securing close political and economic ties with the countries in the region during the period between the mid-1940 and the beginning of 1941.¹⁵ As was stated in the policy document, *Tai Doku, I, So Kōshō-an Yōkō* [Principles of negotiations with Germany, Italy and the Soviet Union], approved at the Liaison Conference on 3 February 1941, Japan assumed its position as the political leader of the Greater East Asia and enunciated its responsibility to maintain order within the region. Yet it also made clear its intention to 'abide by the principle of open-door and equal opportunity in the area of general trade', while reserving its preferential position in obtaining war materials within the sphere.¹⁶ By executing such a policy, Matsuoka was hoping to change the status quo of the region which was, from his point of view, remarkably unfavourable to Japan and causing the country a lot of problems.

Nevertheless, in the face of its deteriorating relations with the West, Japan began a significant shift in its stance towards the policy of southern advance which became gradually apparent from the beginning of 1941. Up to the end of 1940, the Japanese government had managed to pursue its policy of expanding its economic and political influence in Southeast Asia primarily through diplomatic negotiations, in spite of the army's persistent demand for more aggressive approach. The army's desire for forceful southern advance had been contained partly due to the cautious stance taken by the navy which maintained its opposition to any hard-line approach because of its fear of American intervention. Nevertheless, the navy, hitherto content with a passive stance, was beginning to take the initiative for a hard-line southern policy by early 1941.¹⁷ This change of stance signified more than a mere shift in the balance of power within the Japanese government. In fact, it suggested the growing influence of a consensus to support a forceful southern advance. This was clearly indicated in its attempt to mediate the border dispute between Thailand and French Indochina.

At the end of 1940, Thailand took advantage of the situation in Europe and demanded the return of territories in Laos and Cambodia that had been under Thai suzerainty before being incorporated into French Indochina. This confrontation between Thailand and Vichy France presented Japan with a good opportunity to intervene and commit itself to further southern expansion. On 27 December, the Liaison Conference endorsed the policy document '*Tai oyobi Futsuin ni taishi torubeki Teikoku no shochi*' [Measures to be taken by the empire towards Thailand and French Indochina]. This decision committed Japan to a policy of establishing close military, as well as political, ties with Thailand and French Indochina through mediation and diplomatic pressure.¹⁸

While diplomatic pressure was used as a means to secure a foothold in the area,

there was a considerable gap between the view of the military services and that of the Foreign Ministry as to the method by which the above objective was achieved. On 29 January, a Liaison Conference was held to consider measures to be taken for the mediation of the Thai-French Indochina dispute. In the discussion, the military services demanded resorting to open military action in order to put pressure on French Indochina and, in spite of Matsuoka's reluctance, such moves by the navy and army were approved in the document '*Tai-Futsuin Funsō Chōtei ni kansuru Kinkyū Shori Yōkō*'.¹⁹ By this time, the border dispute had escalated into an armed conflict between Thailand and the French administration of Indochina, and the army decided to prepare for coercive action. Due to its fear that the Thai government might seek British support, this line was set out immediately after the approval of the policy plan at the Liaison Conference. Hoping to take advantage of the situation, the navy also drew up plans to position its fleet and air-force from Japan, Taiwan, and Hainan to exert pressure on the French and to land seven hundred marines at three places along the coast of French Indochina to secure permanent bases near Saigon and the Camranh Bay.²⁰ As Thailand and French Indochina accepted Japan's mediation proposals, the navy's manoeuvre for landings did not take place and the units dispatched to the area were recalled to Japan. The navy's policy towards the Thailand–French Indochina dispute, however, became so belligerent that even the army general staff was surprised by its strong posture.²¹

One of the reasons the navy suddenly started to take an extremely tough stance was because, by early 1941, the prolonged negotiations with the Dutch East Indies were close to ending in failure. On 4 January, the Japanese delegation, now headed by Yoshizawa Kenkichi, had tried to reinvigorate the negotiations by presenting a new set of demands including a complete restructuring of the political framework of relations between Japan and the East Indies, the granting of independence to the Indonesians, and the participation of the East Indies in Japan's Co-Prosperity Sphere with a mutual defence agreement.²² Japan wanted a guarantee of 3.15 million tons of crude oil and distillates annually for five years, but the Dutch were willing to supply only less than 1.5 million tons on a six-month contract, which was less than half of Japan's requirements.²³ The Japanese delegation, having been forced to accept the Dutch offer, pressed the East Indies to accept other demands for fixed annual quantities of bauxite, nickel, rubber, and manganese. Nevertheless, the Netherlands East Indies continued with tough attitude towards Japan, in part because the latter had concluded the Tripartite Pact with Germany and Italy on 27 September. Facing the stiff posture shown by the Dutch authorities, Japan increased the pressure on the Netherlands delegation. On 21 January, Matsuoka made a speech in the Diet which stated that the Netherlands East Indies was to be included within the bounds of

Japan's Co-Prosperity Sphere and that Japanese relations with the Dutch colony needed to be fundamentally realigned. General J. C. Pabst, the Dutch Minister to Japan, protested on 31 January that his government rejected any idea that the Dutch East Indies were part of a new East Asian order under the leadership of any power. The Vice-Foreign Minister Ōhashi Chūichi replied that Matsuoka's speech was 'only a view of Japan, therefore the Netherlands authorities need not accept it. The economic negotiations in Batavia are a separate matter.'²⁴ Consequently, the negotiations made little progress and were finally terminated on 15 February. The gloomy outcome of the negotiations was coupled with the navy's institutional reorganisation, with especially the establishment of 'Dai-Ichi linkai [the First Committee] in December 1940, through which officers impatient with the existing 'passive' stance replaced senior officers and began to assert their leadership over the navy's policy towards Southeast Asia.²⁵ These elements appear to have convinced the navy that it could secure the strategic materials required for its operations only through a forceful southern advance.

The gradual shift in the Navy's stance was evident in the views that it presented at the Liaison Conference that met on 30 January 1941. During the discussion to consider the Japanese policy towards Thailand and French Indochina, the Navy demanded that the French authorities should allow it to set up air and naval bases in its colonial possession, and insisted that if necessary Japanese leadership should be established over these countries through the 'use of force'.²⁶ The policy document sanctioned at the conference '*Tai Futsuin-Tai Shisaku Yōkō* [Outline of Measures towards French Indochina and Thailand] also indicated the more bellicose approach Japan was leaning towards. It clearly stated Japan's desire to establish military, political as well as economic control over French Indochina and Thailand as a part of the *Dai Tōa Kyōei-ken* and the use of force was approved as a means to secure actual military control over those countries. The ominous threat of military action was temporarily reduced when Japan exchanged notes with French Indochina and Thailand on 11 March that secured promises from them not to enter into agreements with any third countries against the political, economic or military interests of Japan. The radical advocates of southward expansion in the army and navy were thus prevented for the time being from engaging in any premature implementation of the forceful measures embraced by the decision '*Tai Futsuin-Tai Shisaku Yōkō*' of 30 January. However, it became increasingly apparent by the spring of 1941 that the Japanese military leadership was starting to lean towards the idea that only military actions could guarantee access to the strategic resources of the Southeast Asian colonies. This was, in part, the result of increasing pressure from the British, which interpreted and responded to Matsuoka's policy initiatives according to its own interests, which were markedly different

from those of the Japanese.

British Response to Japan's Initial Southern Advance

Following the arrival of the new Japanese cabinet, both Craigie and the Foreign Office came to perceive that a drastic transformation was taking place in Japan's foreign policy and its posture towards Britain. One apparent indication of this shift was the flow of provocative remarks made by influential Japanese figures after Matsuoka's announcement to establish *Dai Tōa Kyōeiken* at the beginning of August. On 24 July, Craigie reported on a recent broadcast by Konoe on Japan's foreign policy which pledged that the policy of southern advance would be executed in the way best suited to the 'changes in the situation'. Craigie observed that Japan was increasingly leaning towards an aggressive policy to 'free herself economically from dependence of foreign countries' and, in this context, 'expansion towards the South has become increasingly vital.'²⁷ The British perception of Japan's increasing determination for *Nanshin* was confirmed by other speeches by Japanese leaders both inside and outside the government – for instance, those by the new Commerce and Industry Minister, Kobayashi Ichizō and by the President of the Kanegafuchi Spinning Company, Tsuda Shingo, from the business community. Kobayashi, the new Commerce and Industry Minister, stated on 1 August that 'with Japan, Manchukuo and China as the nucleus and embracing Great Eastern Asia, a common economic sphere ought to be able to adopt and carry out an economic policy of self-sufficiency without the assistance of Britain or America forthwith and in the future that of any other country.' Tsuda touched on the same subject in *Tokyo Nichi Nichi Shinbun* on August 7 and wrote 'What is meant by the new structure? The first step toward that goal above all else must be a departure from an economy that is dependent on Britain and America.'²⁸

Craigie accurately understood the cause for this alarming change in the stance of the Japanese government. He presented his analysis in a telegram to London and noted:

'Development of war in Europe must further hamper Japan's exports and force her to consider economic and diplomatic measures by which she can diminish her dependence upon supplies hitherto purchased with foreign exchange. This means inter alia that Japanese Government will endeavour to monopolize resources of the Netherlands East Indies and French Indo-China and in general to construct on [*sic*] self-sufficient economy in eastern Asia comprising as wide an area as they can cover by negotiations and threats.'²⁹

The realisation of this Japanese ambition had two implications for Britain. It meant not only that Tokyo would secure vital natural resources both for its own consumption and export for Germany, but also that British colonial possessions would be even more exposed to the threat of the Japanese expansion. Whitehall could in no way allow Japan to make such a move. If Japan were able to proceed unhindered to the realisation of its scheme of regional self-sufficiency, it might find a solution for its economic problems. However, as Sir Alexander Cadogan, the Permanent Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office, noted, this was achievable only 'at the expense of other Powers'. Therefore Japan 'should not be allowed to proceed unhindered to the realisation of her aims in Indo-China and the Netherlands East Indies because, once she has accomplished that, Malaya and our imperial communications will be gravely endangered'.³⁰

Facing these ominous signs of Japan's growing ambitions, the policy options open to the British government were considerably limited. For one thing, the gloomy state of Britain's defences in South-East Asia had not been improved in spite of a number of reports warning of the need to reinforce its military presence in the region. This ongoing defence problem posed difficult questions particularly when Britain considered what measures it could take to defend the Netherlands East Indies in case of Japanese aggression. On 27 July, 1940, the Chiefs of Staffs reported on what measures could be taken in case of a Japanese attempt to occupy the Netherlands East Indies, but were unable to reach a consensus about how Britain should react in the absence of American co-operation.³¹ The issue was examined by the War Cabinet two days later, yet the discussion still saw no clear conclusion. Lord Halifax, the Foreign Secretary, warned that Britain's position would deteriorate gravely if it allowed the Japanese to take possession of the Netherlands East Indies, as Japan would then be standing across its route to Australia and New Zealand.³² In spite of indications that the Japanese intended to move on the Netherlands East Indies and French Indo-China, which Matsuoka had expressly included within his East Asian 'Co-prosperity Sphere', Britain was virtually incapable of responding to the Japanese threat militarily without the assistance of other powers.

Moreover, the lukewarmness of Washington about providing any form of military assistance was coupled with intensification of its economic restrictions on Japan. This further deepened the uncertainty about future British policy countering Japan's expansionist moves in Southeast Asia. The basic stance of President Roosevelt during this period was to maintain the policy of aiding Britain in order to avoid the country's defeat by Germany. However, the survival of Britain in the European theatre was considered to be the priority as the Japanese, he viewed, would refrain from using its forces in Southeast Asia until Britain's situation became hopeless. At the same time, Washington was reluctant

to undertake any measures which could be construed as a direct challenge to Japan as the Roosevelt administration did not want to face a war in East Asia. Under these circumstances, the United States chose to give pause to the Japanese expansionist aspirations by showing its firmness in the economic field. On 2 July the National Defence Act was approved and became law with provisions that permitted the president to ban the exports of commodities he designated to countries of his choice.³³ That measure was followed by Roosevelt's decision to keep the United States fleet in Hawaiian waters and to implement economic sanctions against Japan. In late July, the U.S. Government made the decision to embargo aviation gasoline, lubricating oil, tetraethyl lead (a blending agent), and number-one heavy melting scrap iron and steel. Furthermore, the ban on aviation fuel was clarified further to include gasoline of 87 octane or above by 6 August in order to prevent Japan from subverting the intent of restrictions through boosting purchase of gasoline above 87 octane with additives.³⁴

The implication of this American stance was twofold for Britain. It not only indicated that direct and military American assistance would not be forthcoming in the immediate future, but also that the U.S. policy of restricting the export of vital commodities could lead to an escalation of Japanese aggressiveness. Some in Whitehall were therefore alarmed by such measures and expressed critical opinions. Ashley Clarke of the Far Eastern Department made reservations about the U.S. measures by noting 'if we could count on full American armed support this might even so be worth risking, but as we know that such support will not be forthcoming and we cannot afford to take undue risks of a Japanese attack which we should have to meet alone'.³⁵ At the same time, as Dening noted in a minute on July 6, Britain 'must not discourage American enthusiasm too much' so as not to lose its support in the future when it was most needed. Thus, Britain needed a carefully balanced policy which would not lead the country into a two-front war but, at the same time, would prevent the Japanese from expanding its influence over the Western possessions in South-East Asia by force. This was especially so now that Japan started to show an increasingly bold posture.

In the meantime, the only option which was available to Britain for dealing with the situation was the adoption of economic measures. In the face of this complicated situation in East Asia, an interdepartmental meeting was held at the Foreign Office on 14 August to discuss possible economic measures designed to retard Japan's programme of southward expansion. One of the difficulties Britain had in considering any policy of this nature was that it did not at present possess many effective economic weapons apart from a policy of obstruction, delay and refusal in cases where facilities were requested by the Japanese. It was agreed that certain lines of actions were required to 'make the Japanese feel that an

anti-British policy would involve them in increasing difficulties'. However, the development of a systematic policy necessitated further consultation and co-ordination with its colonies and dominions. As the minutes of the meeting stated, 'the extent to which economic reprisals could be introduced against Japan would ... depend upon the extent to which the Dominions, India, Burma and the Colonies would be prepared to forgo if necessary their imports from Japan and the export of their own products which provide them with the means of subsistence'. In the face of such complicated questions, Britain was still reluctant to adopt any form of co-ordinated actions and concluded:

'... we have not yet reached the stage for any systematic action of a positive nature. In connexion with the desire of the Japanese to obtain increased supplies of oil from the Netherlands East Indies, it is for consideration that we should continue to delay and eventually even to refuse increases in the categories the export of which has been banned by the Americans. ... In general, however, ... we should not for the moment proceed to positive action on an organised scale, but rather reserve this for such eventualities as an attack on Indo-China or strong Japanese pressure on Indo-China and Thailand for the establishment of military, naval and air bases from which Malaya and the Netherlands East Indies could be threatened.' ³⁶

Nevertheless, it did not take a long time before Britain was forced to consider the possibility of more drastic measures. On 30 August, Matsuoka, the Japanese Foreign Minister, concluded an agreement with the Vichy regime's ambassador which promised to grant Japan preferential economic status in return for the latter's promise to respect the rights and interests of France in the Far East, in particular the territorial integrity of Indo-China. At the same time, Matsuoka demanded the right to station Japanese troops in, and allow free passage through, the northern half of French Indo-China. By 22 September, Admiral Decoux surrendered to the Japanese pressure which involved an ultimatum that the Vichy government either sign an agreement or face a war. These moves made it clear that Tokyo was seeking economic gains by using the threat of force. The Ministry of Economic Warfare alarmingly reported on the possible effect of Japanese control of Indo-China:

'... the prizes to be gained in Indo-China are of very considerable interest and importance to Japan. It is true that wealth of Indo-China is mainly in foodstuffs and rubber but the possibility of developing the coal, iron ore and other minerals is the kind of expansion for which Japan is seeking. If she conquered the country or, through the threat of force, obtained special privileges, she could secure for herself her full requirements of rubber and assurance of supplies of rice in years of bad crops, useful supplies of anthracite, unexploited minerals and

a market for manufactured goods.¹³⁷

It now seemed clear that Japan was aiming at securing vital sources through unilateral expansionism.

Furthermore, the Japanese government announced on 11 September that its economic mission led by Kobayashi Ichizō, the Minister for Commerce and Industry, had been sent to the Netherlands East Indies for the negotiation of closer economic ties with the Dutch. These new waves of Japanese expansion brought an important change to Britain's consideration of its policy in East Asia; the Foreign Office's search for the possibility of a general agreement in the economic field had come to an end. On 18 September, R. A. Butler expressed his scepticism about the likelihood of an East Asian settlement with Japan under the present conditions. The Parliamentary Under-Secretary observed that there was no point presenting a British plan for peace and commented that 'any temptation I had to think so was killed when I realised the forces under the new gov[ernment].'¹³⁸ Thus it became gradually apparent that Britain, even if it wished, would not be able to make any concessions without facing opposition from the United States and the dominions, if the current aggressive state of the Japanese was taken into consideration. Also Britain had little to offer as favourable concessions even if Japan were to become more conciliatory, as it was not in a position at the present time to work for equality of opportunity.

It was the news of the conclusion of a Tripartite Pact between Germany, Italy and Japan arrived on 27 September that firmly pushed British policy in the direction of openly opposing Japanese expansion in South-East Asia. As Matsuoka explicitly stated at a meeting of the Japanese leaders in the presence of the emperor, the military alliance with the Axis Powers was clearly designed to deter the United States from committing itself directly to the current war effort by threatening it with a two-front war. The pact, by which each signatory would go to war in case of either being involved in a conflict with a third party, was a decisive move for Japan as it established the framework of the diplomacy that led to the struggle against the Anglo-American powers. From Britain's point of view, this meant that the Japanese had tied itself with the very country it was confronting in Europe and, therefore, a policy of appeasement towards Japan became even more pointless. The change of London's stance caused by these events was indicated clearly in a telegram sent by Craigie following the announcement of the alliance. Craigie observed that the alignment of Japan and Germany;

'has now been formalised by the Three-Power Pact which, notwithstanding the assurances of Japanese official spokesmen to the contrary, represents the transition from non-involvement

to non-belligerency. Japan has, in fact, chosen to put an end to her political isolation and to risk having to run the gauntlet of economic isolation, for which the Japanese press professes to believe that she is fully prepared... I am convinced that at this time the only method of meeting this situation lies in a concerted display of firmness by ourselves and the United States whose interests and security are now as directly threatened as are our own.³⁹

As Dening put it, Japan's signing of the pact with the Axis powers caused a significant shift in Britain's stance to face the Japanese southern advance. It was no longer a question of taking unobtrusive reprisals against its expansion but far more a matter of depriving Japan of the sinews of war and restricting the volume of materials essential for its war effort from proceeding to the country.⁴⁰

Britain's shift towards a firmer stance was reinforced by the growing co-operation of the United States. Against Matsuoka's expectations, the signing of the Axis Pact only confirmed the American perception that Japan was developing an ambitious and aggressive programme to establish its hegemonic position in South-East Asia. Washington responded to the Japanese move not only by extending its economic sanction but also by offering greater support to Britain. There were, to be sure, differences of opinions within Roosevelt administration as to the wisdom of imposing more stringent sanctions against Japan. While figures such as Henry L. Stimson, Secretary of War, Harold Ickes, Secretary of the Interior, and Frank Knox, Secretary of the Navy, envisaged that a policy of pressing and punishing Japan would best serve to contain its expansion, Secretary of State Cordell Hull believed that such measures would lead to a war which had to be avoided at least for the time being. Yet this was a difference over means rather than aims. No officials accepted the Japanese logic that the United States should be wary of the Tripartite alliance and that the best response to it was to show a conciliatory posture and acquiesce to the Japanese moves to enlarge its influence in the South. Rather, Washington came to increase its commitments in the region in order to preserve the status quo in Asia and the Pacific, and an indication of Washington's determination for a new tough policy came on 30 September when Hull submitted a proposal to recommend that the United States and Britain should commence staff talks.⁴¹

In the face of these positive signs from the United States, the War Cabinet found no reason to maintain the closure of the Burma Road and, on 3 October, decided to make an early announcement of its intention not to renew the Burma Road agreement as a direct means of expressing Britain's displeasure at the signing of the Pact. This decision was, at the same time, a reflection of the judgement by Churchill and his cabinet that the situation in both Europe and Asia had changed for the better and, therefore, Britain saw no point in submitting to Japanese pressure. Furthermore, the fact that the Japanese had now allied

itself with the enemy camp meant that Britain not only needed to refuse the continuation of the agreement but also had to implement more rigid measures. In the absence of actual American military co-operation, the most feasible way of containing further Japanese expansion was to increase economic restrictions along with Washington. It was in this context that a telegram was despatched to the Dominions on 19 October discussing the possibility of developing a joint economic policy towards Japan with the Dominion governments, the United States and Netherlands. It suggested the need to adopt a co-ordinated policy that would bring the export of all essential goods, including all raw materials, to Japan under strict control. In other words, trade would be permitted only under licence and Japan would be treated as a 'dangerous destination' for the purpose of export licensing. The Commonwealth governments were consulted with the idea of aligning themselves with a joint policy on these lines. Thus, by the beginning of October, Britain had started moving towards a policy of resistance against Japan and, notably, it was a result of a consensus formed among the most influential departments in Whitehall for the first time since June 1937.⁴²

The increasing determination of the British government to confront Japanese expansion was demonstrated in the form of tightening economic measures against Japan. The months following the conclusion of the Tripartite Pact saw the further introduction of economic measures against Japan by the British government. It was considered that Britain's position in the Far East and in the Pacific would be likely to remain insecure as long as it remained largely on the defensive in Europe and until it could show Japan 'the will and power to resist it by force' together with the United States. However, it was apparent that Britain was gradually gaining confidence about showing a firm stance against Japan.

London was now determined to limit its exports to Japan to normal pre-war trade levels, defined as 75 per cent of the 1939 figures, and gradually to restrict the sales of strategic materials as well as placing an embargo on the export of key commodities. These measures were not only exercised by Britain itself but also implemented as co-ordinated action throughout the Empire. By the end of November, the British policy of economic restrictions had been accepted by India and all the dominions, except Australia. Furthermore, Japan was faced with the end of iron and steel scrap exports as well as the reduction of supply of Indian manganese.⁴³ British measures were not confined to the exports which went directly to Japan from its empire. It was also decided that, from 15 November, no further deliveries of goods subject to export control would be permitted to go to Indo-China, which was under the increasing influence of the Japanese, and other empire governments were requested to take similar action in parallel with London.⁴⁴ In addition, it

began an effort to co-ordinate economic restrictions with Netherlands East Indies, and this proposal was approved by both the Foreign Office and the Ministry of Economic Warfare on 27 November.⁴⁵ Britain thus sought to prevent Japan from reducing or nullifying the effect of its policy by replacing the restricted materials with those from sources outside direct Anglo-American control. This was coupled with the beginning of British actions to curb Japan's import of key commodities from South America which also considerably increased economic pressure on the Japanese.⁴⁶

Nevertheless, besides these economic measures, the options available to Britain for hampering Japan's thrust for southern expansion were fairly limited under the present circumstances. This became apparent when the Kono government set out its political manoeuvre to mediate the border dispute between Thailand and the Vichy French regime in Indo-China which was designed to strengthen Japan's presence in the region. The British position in the dispute was difficult because of the complex consequences of its possible moves. Britain hoped to hinder the Japanese effort to gain further influence in the region, and sought to find ways to solve the border dispute without allowing any advantage to be gained by Japan. The difficulty was, however, that the country could not afford to support either side in the dispute. On one hand, open support for Thailand's cause would lead to the further encroachment of Japan into Indo-China and increasing Japanese control over the colony's vital materials. On the other hand, British assistance for the French cause meant that the Thai government would inevitably fall under the influence of the Japanese. Acceptance of Japanese mediation, which would lead to the enhancement of its prestige and recognition of its claim of leadership in East Asia, was a serious development from Britain's point of view. Yet there was no effective measure available to Britain for containing the crisis, and all it could do was cautiously watch Matsuoka's successful move for political and economic penetration into these countries.

It was against this background that British suspicions about the expansionist tendency of Japanese policy culminated in February 1941. The beginning of 1941 saw a number of bellicose and antagonising remarks by Matsuoka which inflamed the already delicate situation in East Asia. In an interview held on 17 January with a journalist from the Australian Associated Press, the Foreign Minister expressed his views on the likelihood of a war in the Pacific and stated, instead of denying the possibility, that he would take no action without careful consideration. Matsuoka also made clear Japan's intention to participate in the economic development of the East Indies, Thailand, Burma and Indo-China as a part of southward expansion programme, while emphasising that it had 'no intention of shutting off supplies of essential raw materials from the rest of the world'.⁴⁷ A further blunt statement came in the Diet on 20 January, claiming that the Tripartite Pact

was the embodiment of peaceful but powerful co-operation directed towards the establishment of the New World Order in both Europe and Asia. It was also coupled with a flow of aggressive remarks by other Japanese leaders. These speeches infuriated Whitehall, which was reflected in a comment by Denning stating:

'... in fact, his speech is, I think without exception, the most undiplomatic ever delivered by a Japanese Foreign Minister in the past 20 years. And it is ... intended to pave the way to southward expansion, and if necessary to war. It bodes very ill indeed for the possibility of a peaceful solution of the Far Eastern situation...'⁴⁸

Under these circumstances, it was not surprising that Britain became extremely alarmed by the sudden emergence of rumours of imminent Japanese attack in Southeast Asia. On 27 January, Sir Robert Craigie reported from Tokyo the existence of the general feeling that 'the crisis in the Far East will come within the next few weeks'.⁴⁹ By early February, increasingly ominous signs of imminent Japanese action were reported to Whitehall and created the fear that Japan's southern advance in Southeast Asia might be co-ordinated with a new German offensive in Europe. With this deepening sense of crisis, the most feasible move for Britain was to seek for direct assistance from the United States, but it could barely afford to press Washington into action in the face of the recent indications of its reluctance to undertake further commitments and its inherent isolationist tendency. Thus exertion of diplomatic pressure was one of the few options available to Britain in order to contain the Japanese and prevent its potential assault on British possessions in Southeast Asia.

On 7 February, a meeting was held between Anthony Eden, the Foreign Secretary, and Shigemitsu, the Japanese Ambassador at London, to discuss the state of the relations between the two countries. Eden referred to disquieting reports on the recent Japanese moves to mediate the Thai-French Indo-China border dispute and protested about the general deterioration of Anglo-Japanese relationship and Matsuoka's bellicose pronouncements. The Foreign Secretary stated that it was impossible for Britain to ignore recent developments and made clear that it had no intention of sacrificing its possessions at the dictation of any power. He further indicated that if British territories were attacked, there should be no room for doubt that the country would defend them with the utmost vigour.⁵⁰ Moreover, Craigie made a similar form of protest to Ōhashi, the Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs, on 12 February. Craigie warned that, in the face of increasing signs that the tempo for Japan's expansion was being accelerated, Britain and Japan might find themselves at war independent of their own volition. Demonstrating Britain's preparedness for a war, the Ambassador stated that Britain was bound, however regretfully, to make 'our

preparations'.⁵¹ At the same time, newspapers in London published a number of articles during these tense days reporting the growing tensions in Southeast Asia and helped to generate the impression that Britain was determined to face the impending crisis.⁵²

In the following weeks, the Japanese started to indicate signs of backing down from a confrontation with Britain. On 21 February, a conversation was held between Matsuoka and Craigie at the British Embassy in Tokyo. The Foreign Minister expressed his concern about the tendency of recent public remarks by quoting a statement of the British ambassador in Washington, Lord Halifax, which reported Britain's steady and substantial increase of its forces in Southeast Asia, as well as a pronouncement by the Dutch Minister in Washington showing the determination of the Netherlands East Indies to fight anyone that attempted to attack the territory. Matsuoka further explained his difficult position within the government, in which the Foreign Minister was under great pressure from Japanese military and naval authorities for the despatch of reinforcement to the region. He protested that these statements could produce considerable tension and gave Craigie a positive assurance of Japan's pacific intentions.⁵³ One week later, Matsuoka restated his general policy along the same lines that he and the Prime Minister belonged to a minority who thought that the ideal of Co-Prosperity Sphere was something which should be achieved through peaceful means and forced upon nobody.⁵⁴ Together with further evidence from various sources, these reports confirmed the impression that the crisis had passed its danger points and that the Japanese were retreating to a more moderate stance. Craigie noted from Tokyo:

'... the situation is today easier than it was a week ago, and that combined with firm stand by the United States, Australia, Netherlands and ourselves has had most salutary effect in calling bluff off the Japanese military is the opinion unanimously held by all colleagues with whom I am in contact. The change is also reflected also in my recent conversations with the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs and in the tone of the press.'⁵⁵

Several days later, R. A. Butler, the Permanent Under Secretary for the Foreign Office, assented with this view and expressed his satisfaction with the result of these events.

What emerged from this chain of events during these few months was the growing confidence of Britain that the Japanese ambitions for southern advance could be contained by a show of firmness. Britain tided over this difficult period of a potential crisis through the skilful use of propaganda and diplomacy, and came to believe that, combined with a display of Anglo-American unity, it found very effective weapons to deter further Japanese moves to expand its influence in Southeast Asia. During the period of the crisis, there was also a sign of significant progress in the field of the co-operation with the United States.

Washington began to show its willingness to discuss military planning and to share intelligence information while an indication of gradual move for closer collaboration to impose economic measures against Japan. By the spring of 1941, Britain had managed to persuade the United States to extend its export-licensing programme. Washington added a large number of commodities to its list during March and April, and the Philippines was included in the sphere of American export control system by the end of May. Moreover, progress was made by both Britain and the United States in the field of shipping restrictions. By March all tankers from the two countries were withdrawn from the Pacific and the export of oil drums were put under licence. At the same time, bunker controls for Japanese shipping were introduced by Britain to ensure that vessels only had enough fuel to take them to their next port of call, while Washington established its own controls by May.⁵⁶ The trade embargo by the Western powers became a considerably powerful and debilitating measure for Japan. Thus Britain came out from the crisis with an increasing determination to face the Japanese expansion with a show of its will to resist.

Growing Confrontation and Changes in the Nature of the GEACPS

Japan recognised in the face of this increasingly difficult environment that a drastic re-orientation of its strategy was required. Instead of deterring Japan's aggressive expansion, the show of firmness by London and Washington caused unintended changes in Japan. That is to say that the increasingly tight economic measures imposed by Britain and the United States had a significant impact because they brought about a notable change in the concept of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere and confirmed Japan's growing inclination towards an aggressive southern expansion.

One of the notable changes apparent in the concept of the GEACPS was that the term 'self-defence and self-existence [*Jison Jiei*]' now began to appear as an important theme in the vision and to replace the idea of 'the establishment of a self-sufficient sphere of influence'.⁵⁷ This was not a simple amendment of phraseology but a reflection of the military services' growing awareness that Britain and the United States were increasing their economic and political pressures against Japan through embargoes and military co-operation. As has been argued above, the Japanese government initially pursued a policy designed to increase Japan's economic and political influence in Southeast Asia through a series of diplomatic initiatives, but this did not necessarily mean the formation of a regional bloc to which the Western colonial powers were to be denied access. Yet the concept of the Co-Prosperity Sphere now came to have a much more exclusive character

which aimed at establishing Japan's predominant military, political and economic position over the region.

This is clearly indicated in a policy paper '*Tai-Nanpō Shisaku Yōkō* [Outline of Policy towards the South] adopted by the navy and army on 17 April, which marked Japan's departure from the original vision of the GEACPS.⁵⁸ It stated that 'the objective of policy toward the south, in accordance with the process of strengthening the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, is the rapid strengthening of Japan's defence posture for the sake of the empire's self-existence and self-defence'. It, furthermore, asserted that 'the empire will exercise military means for the sake of its self-existence and self-defence' if Japan's self-existence was threatened by the embargoes imposed by the United States, Britain and others or those powers increased their pressure in order to contain Tokyo.⁵⁹ Thus, the military services came to accept the national goal of establishing the GEACPS, which was to be achieved even through forceful means, in order to secure Japan's 'self-defence and self-existence' against the United States and other Western colonial powers.

One of the factors in the background to this vital change was the gradual decline of Matsuoka's influence as a deterrent against aggressive expansionism. The Japanese Foreign Minister had persistently opposed the use of force based on his belief that such military operations in the region might induce the direct involvement of the United States as well as helping to bring about closer co-operation between the Anglo-American powers. Such a development, he viewed, would only make it more difficult for Japan to achieve its goal of establishing wider economic and political influence in Southeast Asia, and it was therefore vital to pursue the goal through diplomatic measures.

Matsuoka believed that the Anglo-American powers could be kept apart strategically if proper diplomatic measures were applied.⁶⁰ In his view, the establishment of a four-power entente among Japan, Germany, Italy and the Soviet Union was a precondition for driving a wedge between Britain and the United States and to deter American military intervention in Southeast Asia. Even if the Soviet Union could not be drawn into such an entente, the conclusion of a non-aggression or a neutrality agreement, he claimed, would enable Japan to advance south without any fear of a threat from the north as well as lessening the possibility of a military intervention by the United States. Nevertheless, his advocacy of such a strategy gradually lost its appeal with the decision of Hitler on 22 June to nullify the non-aggression pact concluded with the Soviet Union. This signalled the collapse of Tokyo's grand strategy to coalesce with Germany, Italy and the Soviet Union against the Anglo-American powers. Moscow was now driven to seek the assistance of Britain and the United States and in effect added that country to the Anglo-American coalition. The clash between Germany and the Soviet Union, the two major states in

Matsuoka's vision for an entente, therefore further isolated Japan. Both the navy and the army now became convinced that a southern advance through military means was the only way to fulfil their objectives.

In view of Japan's increasingly difficult position, there were some policy options available apart from an aggressive advance into the Western colonial possessions in the region. One of the options Japan could pursue was, Prime Minister Konoe suggested, to release itself from the Axis pact and seek an accommodation with Britain and the United States. Japan could in no way afford to go to war with both the United States and the Soviet Union, and it also had to secure a continued supply of raw materials. Konoe advocated that these aims necessitated a readjustment of Japanese relations with Washington. The corollary of this was that Japan would need to make concessions in China and Southeast Asia, but he believed such concessions would be worthwhile if they led to an improved relationship with the United States. In essence, he was arguing for a return to an earlier pattern of Japanese foreign policy that attached great importance to economic and political ties with the Anglo-American powers.⁶¹ However, this was an unacceptable policy option for any of the other decision-makers within the Japanese government. For Japan's military services and Matsuoka, a return to the framework of co-operation with the Anglo-American powers at this stage was not only incompatible with the Axis alliance but also would mean abandoning the scheme to establish a 'Co-Prosperity Sphere' in Asia. Furthermore, such a reorientation was tantamount to submitting to Anglo-American pressure and acceding to the preservation of the economic and political 'status quo' in the region, which was the very thing Japan had been struggling against for years. It was thus an unthinkable proposition by any standard for the majority of Japanese policy planners.

While many in the government agreed that a rapprochement with Britain and the United States was not an option, they were considerably divided over the best policy to take advantage of the rapidly changing international environment. Some argued for joining forces with Germany to attack the Soviet Union in order to destroy one corner of the emerging anti-Axis alliance. Yet most strategists urged caution, fearing that a precipitous move to the north would drain resources away from China and Southeast Asia. There was intensive and serious discussion at the highest echelons of the government as to the next steps Japan should take. The conclusion that Japanese policy-makers reached by the beginning of July was of vital importance. Between 26 June and 2 July, they continued to debate on the fundamentals of Japanese policy and the result of their deliberations was the crucial policy document '*Jōsei no suii ni tomonau Teikoku Kokusaku Yōkō* [Outline of national policies in view of the changing situation]', sanctioned by the Imperial Conference

on 2 July. What is important about this memorandum was the fact that it indicated Japan's determination to 'construct the Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere regardless of the changes in the world situation.' It stated that Japan would seek the settlement of the Chinese war, prepare for southern expansion and try to solve the 'northern problem.' In particular, greater specificity was given to southern advance by referring to a decision made by the Liaison Conference on 25 June that had called for the stationing of Japanese troops in southern Indochina. The memorandum declared that Japan was determined to 'remove any obstacles at all costs' in order to achieve these objectives. It went as far as stating that Japan was now 'prepared to go to war against Britain and the United States for that purpose.'

Despite the aggressive tone of this document, this did not necessarily mean that the Japanese leaders were now determined to confront the Anglo-American powers. Given the increasing pressure from Britain and the United States on Japan's southern expansion policy, the Japanese leaders could have refrained from the invasion of southern Indochina for fear that it might incur Anglo-American retaliation and enhance the risks of war with them. However, Japanese leaders appeared to calculate mistakenly that the risk of war could be averted by acting with lightning speed to entrench Japanese power in southern Indochina. If that could be carried out without incurring foreign intervention, Japan, they assumed, would successfully be able to enlarge its empire and be in a better strategic position to fight a war, should it become necessary. Thus the army issued an operational order for the stationing of Japanese forces in southern Indochina on 3 July, the day after the crucial policy guidelines had been approved. The invasion was, in principle, designed to proceed peacefully through negotiation with French authorities. Yet the army was prepared to achieve the desired result by military action if the colonial administration refused to reach an agreement. On 14 July Japan presented a note to the Vichy regime, demanding the right to station troops, and a peaceful landing of 40,000 troops on the Indochina coast was accomplished between 28 and 30 July. Having already been aware of the Japanese actions through 'MAGIC', the programme for deciphering Japan's diplomatic telegrams, the American President Roosevelt issued an executive order freezing Japanese assets in the United States on the 25th which was followed by similar measures by Britain on the 26th and the Netherlands on the 27th. On 1 August, a total oil embargo went into effect, and this confronted Japan with a shortage of petroleum.

In the face of the increasing tensions, Prime Minister Konoe tried to resume conversations with the United States as the best way to avoid a crisis. In order to communicate Japan's sincere desire for an understanding with the Anglo-American powers, he sought the resignation of Matsuoka as Foreign Minister, who resolutely opposed to the

aggressive expansion by military means. The Kono Cabinet resigned as a group on 16 July to spare Matsuoka's embarrassment and the third Kono Cabinet was established two days later. Despite the hope that it would be interpreted as a gesture of goodwill and reciprocated by American interest in overtures, Kono's attempt did not improve the growing tensions between the two parties

As a result of the economic measures taken by Britain, the US and the Netherlands, Japan came to envisage pursuing a far more autarkic and exclusive vision of the GEACPS which envisioned the expulsion of the West from the region and not merely its subordination. With Japan's access to supplies of raw materials became increasingly restricted due to the economic blockade of the Anglo-American powers, only in the autumn did the Imperial Headquarters start to give serious consideration to the occupation of colonial territories in Southeast Asia. On 16 November, the Imperial Army and Navy produced a document named 'Central agreement between the Army and Navy on the Military Administration in the Occupied Areas (*Senryō-chi Gunsei Jisshi ni kansuru Riku-Kaigun Chuō Kyōtei*)'. With this document, they reached an agreement on the areas of principal administrative responsibility that both parties would take within the occupied territories. Hong Kong, Philippines, British Malaya, Sumatra, Java, British Borneo and Burma would be put under the Army's jurisdiction, while the Navy would take primary responsibility for Dutch Borneo, Celebes, Moluccas, New Guinea, Bismarck Archipelago and Guam.⁶²

The above decision by the Imperial Headquarters was followed by the basic policy documents outlining the plans for the Japanese military administration of Southeast Asia: 'The Essentials for Enforcement of the Administration of Occupied Southern Areas (*Nanpō Senryō-chi Gyōsei Jisshi Yōryō*)'. The importance of this document, approved by the Liaison Conference on 20 November, lay not only in the fact that it set a formal guideline for the initial phase of Japanese occupation policy towards Southeast Asia, but also because in its explicit insistence on the priority of Japanese needs in Southeast Asia. The document declared that temporary administrations in all occupied territories except for Thailand and French Indo-China would be established until political stability had been restored. It gave priority to Japan's seizure of vital strategic materials in the region as well as making the Japanese occupation forces self-sufficient by using supplies from the local economies. As to the economic hardships of native population that might be caused by this Japanese resource acquisition, it simply stated that such difficulties must be endured and that the welfare of the indigenous people was to be sacrificed to Japanese military requirements.

Treating resource acquisition and the establishment of self-sufficient economy as primary goals, this document clearly indicated the Japanese stance towards the policy of

supporting national independence in Southeast Asia. Existing governmental organisations were to be utilised as much as possible, and organisational traditions and national customs respected. However, the document stated that premature encouragement of indigenous movements for national independence must be avoided by ‘fostering the confidence of the local population towards the Imperial Forces’. No other significant reference can be found on the treatment of nationalist movements in the region, and only a vague allusion was made to the fact that the decisions on the future status of the occupied territories were to be left to the Japanese Government, presumably until the overthrow of existing colonial government and the conclusion of the coming war.⁶³ Thus, utterly devoid of any consideration for the political aspirations and economic well-being of the indigenous peoples in the region, the Japanese central government completely contradicted its previous policy of galvanising popular support from the colonial subjects of Southeast Asia through its rhetoric of co-prosperity. Thus it was confirmed that the establishment of the GEACPS was to be pursued through military means in the form of war with the Western colonial powers in Southeast Asia which would break out on December 1941.

Conclusion

An ironic aspect of this episode in Anglo-Japanese relations was that the eventual outcome of the two countries’ interaction was what both sides had been constantly struggling to avoid. Although Japan and Britain had sought to find ways to accommodate the other’s needs in the region, the interests of the two turned out to be incompatible. While Japan followed a policy of diplomatic pressure to solve its exacerbating economic problems, Britain responded by imposing gradual economic restrictions which further exacerbated the Japanese position. It was strategically vital for Britain to contain Japanese aggression in the region and London sought to achieve this by extending restrictions on Japan. However, by doing so, Britain produced the very reactions it hoped to avoid.

The fact that Japan’s attempt to expand its influence in Southeast Asia finally led to a confrontation with Anglo-American powers had important consequences for the character of Japan’s vision of the *Dai Tōa Kyōeiken*. That is that the establishment of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere began to be pursued beyond the initial framework of securing strategic materials and adequate markets, and came to take the form of an autarkic and defensive regional bloc centred around Japan to be established through war against the colonial powers in the region.

As has been argued above, Japan’s initial attempt to secure its predominant position

in Southeast Asia was pursued insofar as it did not lead to a conflict with the western colonial powers, especially the United States. What the Kono government initially pursued was to secure the Western powers' recognition of Japan's special political and economic interests in Southeast Asia through diplomatic negotiations and the emphasis appears to have been placed on a formation of a self-sufficient economic bloc. The establishment of such a sphere of influence was not necessarily designed to exclude the interests of the Western colonial power in the region.

However, as the confrontation with the United States and Britain became increasingly unavoidable by the summer of 1941, policy documents began to emphasise the construction of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere for the sake of Japan's 'self-defence, self-existence' and the vision changed its character into a more exclusive regional bloc where stress was placed on military and strategic concerns. This considerable change in emphasis is illustrated in the contrast between two policy documents in August 1940 and December 1941. Originally, '*Nanpō Keizai Taisaku Yōkō* [Principles of Economic Policy towards the Southern Region]' prepared by the *Kikaku-in* [the Planning Board] in 1940 advocated that the primary objective of Japan's policy towards the south was to establish an economic sphere of influence in Greater East Asia and to remove the various restrictions imposed by the Western colonial authorities which obstructed economic activities undertaken by Japanese nationals.⁶⁴ The document was, however, re-drafted in December 1941 and changed its emphasis drastically. It asserted that the essential goal of the government's policy was to build an autarkic economy within the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere and to secure vital materials from the colonial territories in the sphere even by resorting to force.⁶⁵

Given the opportunistic nature of the concept, one might argue that Japan's 'Co-Prosperity Sphere' could have taken a more peaceful and less exclusive form if it had been possible to conclude a diplomatic solution to the problems between the West and Japanese at an earlier date. However, the two parties' efforts to frame an understanding that would allow for their co-existence in the region were hampered by the incompatibility of their interests. For reaching any kind of settlement, it would have been necessary for one side to undertake a fundamental change of its policy towards East and Southeast Asia. However, Britain's acceptance of Japanese predominance in the region was as unthinkable as Japan abandoning its quest for a new order that would change the Anglo-American *status quo*. Thus it was an almost inevitable consequence of the circumstances surrounding Japan that *Dai Tōa Kyōeiken* emerged as an autarkic and exclusive regional bloc which was designed to confront the Anglo-American powers in the coming war by including the whole region both inside and outside the influence of Britain

under Japanese control.

Notes for Chapter 2

- ¹ TSM, pp. 320-21. 'Kihon Kokusaku Yōkō', the Cabinet Meeting, 26 July, 1940.
- ² Joyce Lebra, *Japan's Great East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere in World War II - selected readings and documents*. (Kuala Lumpur, 1975), pp. 71-72.
- ³ This is, for instance, indicated in one of its policy papers 'Tai-Futsuin hōsaku ni kansuru kenkyū [A Study of Policy towards French Indochina]' drafted on 1 August by the Operations Section of the Navy General Staff. *Gendai-shi Shiryō* [Historical Sources on Japanese Modern History], vol. 10, no. 3, 'Nicchū Sensō' [The Sino-Japanese War], pp. 369-71. 'Tai-Futsuin hōsaku ni kansuru kenkyū', 1 August, 1940, prepared by the operations section, the Navy General Staff.
- ⁴ See, Mori Shigeki, 'Matsuoka Gaikō ni okeru Taibei oyobi Taipei-saku - Nichi Doku I Sangoku Dōmei Teiketsu zengo no Kōsō to Tenkai.' *Nihon-shi Kenkyū*, vol. 421, 1997: p. 42, Inoue Yūichi, 'Arita no 'Kōiki keizai-ken' kōsō to tai-Ei kōshō.' *Kokusai Seiji*, 56.: pp. 82-3, and Hatano Sumio 'Arita Hōsō no Kokunai-teki Bunmyaku to Kokusai-teki Bunmyaku' in Kindaishi Kenkyū-kai ed. *Hendō-ki no Nihon Gaikō to Gunji - Shiryō to Kentō*. Tokyo: Hara-shobō, 1986: pp. 158-9.
- ⁵ Mori, *Matsuoka Gaikō*, p. 43.
- ⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 61
- ⁷ *Asahi Shinbun*, 7 October 1940.
- ⁸ JFM, E.0.0.0.8 vol. 3, 'Nanpō Keizai Shisaku Yōkō', 16 August, 1940. The full text of the draft by the Planning Board, is in, Nakamura Takafusa and Hara Akira eds. *Gendai-shi Shiryō vol.43 - Kokka Sōdōin 1* (Tokyo, Misuzu Shobō: 1970), pp. 177-8.
- ⁹ Hata Ikuhiko, 'The Army's Move into Northern Indochina', in Morley, *Fateful Choice*, p. 155.
- ¹⁰ JFM, A.4.6.1.F/SI-1, 'Taikoku-Futsuryō Indoshina kan kokkyō funsō ikken [Documents relating to the Border Dispute between Thailand and French Indochina]' vol. 1, 'Letter from Arsène-Henry to Matsuoka', August 30, 1940.
- ¹¹ JFM, E.0.0.0.8. vol. 2, 'Tai Futsu-in-shi Keizai Hatten no tame no Shisaku', 3 September, 1940.
- ¹² JFM, B.2.0.0 J/N 2-3 vol. 2, 'Ran-in Taisaku Yōkō', proposed by Gen. Koiso on 11 August, 1940.
- ¹³ JFM, B.2.0.0 J/N 2-3 vol. 2, 'Ran-in Kōshō Hōshin', 27 August, 1940.
- ¹⁴ Gaimushō, ed. *Nihon Gaikō Nenpyō narabi ni Shuyō Bunsho* [Chronology and major documents of Japanese foreign relations] 1840-1945, (Tokyo, Hara Shobō: 1965), volume 2, pp. 440.
- ¹⁵ See, for example, *Tai Futsu-in Tai Shisaku Yōkō*, 30 January 1941, in Sugiyama Memo, p. 167.
- ¹⁶ Sugiyama Memo, p. 177. *Tai Doku, I, So Kōshō-an Yōkō*, 3 February 1941.
- ¹⁷ Hatano, 'Nihon Kaigun to Nanshin', pp. 155-6.
- ¹⁸ JFM, A.4.6.1 F/SI-1 vol. 1, 'Taikoku Futsuryō-indoshina kan kokkyō funsō ikken'.
- ¹⁹ JFM, A.4.6.1.F/SI-1 vol. 1, 'Emergency Measures on the mediation of the Thai-French Indochina Dispute', 19 January, 1941.
- ²⁰ *Bōei-chō Bōei Kenkyū-jo Senshi-shitsu* [War History Division, the Japanese Defence Agency], *Senshi Sōsho Daihon'ei Rikugunbu dai 2-kan – Shōwa 16 nen 12 Gatsu made* [The Army General Staff, vol. 2 – December, 1941], pp. 180-82.
- ²¹ Tsunoda, *Navy's Role*, p. 284
- ²² JFM, B.2.0.0.J/N 2-3, vol. 1, 'Yoshizawa Daihyō yori Ran gawa ni teishutsu seru oboegaki [memorandum presented to the Netherlands by Yoshizawa]', sent by telegram to Matsuoka on 16 January, 1940.
- ²³ Bamhart, pp. 165-7.
- ²⁴ JFM, B.2.0.0.J/N 2-3, vol. 1, 'Dai-Tōa Kyōeiken ni kansuru Matsuoka Daijin gikai enzetsu ni tsuki Shōwa 16 nen 1 gatsu 31 nichi zaikyō Oranda kōshi Ōhashi jikan kaidan yōryō [Summaries of the conversation held on 31 January between Pubst and Ōhashi on the Diet speech of Matsuoka]', 31 January, 1941.
- ²⁵ Hatano and Asada, p. 393.
- ²⁶ The Record of Discussions in the 7th Liaison Conference, 30 January, 1941 and 'Tai Futsuin-Tai Shisaku Yōkō' in Sugiyama Memo, pp. 167-72.
- ²⁷ PRO, FO371/24723, F3593/7/23, Telegram from Craigie 24 July, 1940.
- ²⁸ PRO, FO371/ 24726, F4981/23/23, C. L'Estrange Malone to Butler, 28 October, 1940.
- ²⁹ PRO, FO371/24735, F3267/205/23, Telegram from Craigie, Monthly Economics Reports on Japan, 26 July, 1940.
- ³⁰ *Ibid.*, Halifax to Craigie, 14 August, 1940.
- ³¹ PRO, CAB 66/9, W.P. (40) 289, Far Eastern Policy Report by the Chief of Staff, 27 July, 1940.
- ³² PRO, CAB 65/14, W.M. (40) 214th conclusions, Minute 7. Confidential Annex, 29 July, 1940.
- ³³ Bamhart, p. 183.
- ³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 192-4.
- ³⁵ PRO, FO371/24741, F3634/677/23, Minute by Ashley Clarke, 20 July, 1940.
- ³⁶ PRO, FO371/24733, F3900/103/23, Minutes of meeting held at the Foreign Office, 14 August, 1940,

and Minute by Ashley Clarke, 22 August, 1940.

³⁷ PRO, FO371/24720, F4490/3429/61, Ministry of Economic Warfare, 29 September, 1940.

³⁸ PRO, FO371/24710, F4770/193/61, Minute by Butler, 18 September, 1940.

³⁹ PRO, FO371/24737, F5295/626/23, Telegram from Craigie, Effect of Treaty concluded between Japan, Germany and Italy on Anglo-Japanese relations, 11 October, 1940.

⁴⁰ PRO, FO371/24734, F4432/103/23, Minute by Denning, 28 September, 1940.

⁴¹ Best, *Britain, Japan and Pearl Harbor*, P. 129.

⁴² *Ibid.*, P. 130-31.

⁴³ PRO, CAB96/1 FE (40) 10th meeting 28 November, 1940. See, Best, *Pearl Harbor*, PP. 133-34.

⁴⁴ OIOC, M/3/967, War: Trade: Restrictions on exports to Japan, B16084/40, 9 November, 1940.

⁴⁵ PRO, CAB96/1 FE (40) 44 'Restriction of Exports to Japan' Far Eastern Committee memorandum 8 November, 1940. See, Best, *Pearl Harbor*, P. 134.

⁴⁶ Best, *Pearl Harbor*, pp. 134-35.

⁴⁷ PRO, FO371/27878, F298/12/23, Craigie to the Foreign Office, 20 January, 1941.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, F390/12/23, Text of speech by Mr. Matsuoka at the Seventy-sixth session of the Imperial Diet on January 20 1941.

⁴⁹ PRO, FO371/27760, F454/9/61 Craigie to the Foreign Office, 27 January, 1941.

⁵⁰ PRO, FO371/27886, F648/17/23, Eden to Craigie, 7 February, 1941.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, F895/17/23, Craigie to the Foreign Office, 12 February, 1941.

⁵² Antony Best, 'Straws in the Wind': Britain and the February 1941 War-Scare in East Asia.' *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, vol. 5, no. 3 (1994): p. 657.

⁵³ PRO, FO371/27888, F1307/17/23, Craigie to the Foreign Office, 21 February, 1941.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, F1432/17/23, Craigie to the Foreign Office, 28 February, 1941.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* F1307/17/23, Craigie to the Foreign Office, 21 February, 1941.

⁵⁶ Best, *Pearl Harbor*, pp. 150-151.

⁵⁷ Hatano Sumio. 'Nihon no 'Shin-Chitsujo' Rinen to Sensō Mokuteki [Japan's concept of 'New Order' and War Aims].' *Shin-Bōei Ronshū*, vol. 8, no. 3 (1983): p. 35.

⁵⁸ Satoshi Hattori. 'Matsuoka Gaikō to Nanshin Seisaku - Yonkoku Kyōshō No Shiten Kara.' *Kobe Hōgaku Zasshi* 48, no. 4 (1999), pp. 980-81.

⁵⁹ Gaimushō, *Nihon Gaikō Nenpyō*, vol. 2, 495-6. English translation in Morley, *Fateful Choice*, pp. 303-4.

⁶⁰ Hosoya Chihiro, "Britain and the United States in Japan's View of the International System, 1937-41", In Nish, *Anglo-Japanese Alienation*, p. 69.

⁶¹ Yabe Teiji, *Konoe Fumimaro* vol. 2 (Tokyo, 1952), p. 299.

⁶² Trager, p. 35. *Senryō-chi Gunsei Jisshi ni kansuru Riku-Kaigun Chūō Kyōtei*, 16 November, 1941.

⁶³ Bōei-chō, Bōei Kenkyū-jo, Senshi Henshi-bu. *Shiryō-shū Nanpō no Gunsei*. Tokyo, 1985, p. 568-70.

⁶⁴ 'Nanpō Keizai Shisaku Yōkō', 6 August, 1940, the Planning Board, full text of the document in, Nakamura Takafusa and Hara Akira eds. *Gendai-shi Shiryo vol. 43 - Kokka Sōdōin 1 [The Sources of Modern History vol. 43 - National Mobilisation 1]* (Tokyo, Misuzu Shobō: 1970), pp. 177-8.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 195-8.

Chapter 3

British and Japanese Policies towards Burma and Growth of Nationalist Movement, 1935-41.

The two previous chapters have examined the emergence of the concept of the Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere and the role it played as the ideological basis of Japan's national policy to undertake a southern expansion. As this account of Japan's economic and political motives to push for a southern expansion has demonstrated, the development of the vision as an actual goal of Japan's policy making was driven by its quest for raw materials and the increasing economic pressure exerted by the Anglo-American powers. Support of nationalist aspirations in Southeast Asia hardly played a significant role as a driving force behind Japan's growing desire for southern expansion and the concomitant emergence of '*Dai Tōa Kyōeiken*' as the ideological basis of the Japanese policy. However, it is interesting to note that Japan had been involved in activities to encourage nationalist movements in Southeast Asia prior to the outbreak of the war. And such activities were undertaken in countries that would be included within the self-claimed boundary of the 'Co-Prosperity Sphere' by the Japanese. Burma was one of those countries where the Japanese had actively supported indigenous nationalists during the pre-war era. The activities of the *Minami Kikan* in Burma have been the subject of various studies, many of which have illustrated its encouragement of the Burmese nationalist movement as an episode demonstrating Japanese goodwill. However, what were the motives of the Japanese government when it engaged in such activities in Burma? How do they fit into the overall design of Japanese southern expansion? To what extent was Japan's support of Burmese nationalists driven by the ideology of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere?

Rise of Burmese Nationalist Movement

One of the elements that makes a study of the Burmese nationalist movement a complicated task is the fact that Britain, as the ruling power, played an important role in its development. Since its full annexation of Burma in March 1886, Britain, the ruling country, adopted a consistent policy of extending the country's degree of autonomy and, indeed, pledged its intention to grant Burma dominion status prior to the Japanese conquest. The emergence and growth of the nationalist movement in Burma was therefore to a considerable degree a consequence of the British policy to develop the country into a

modern state.

One of the most obvious consequences of British colonial policy was the evolution of the Burmese middle class. Britain encouraged some Burmese to leave the villages and take advantage of the economic, educational and career opportunities created as a result of the economic and administrative changes which were introduced and encouraged by the British. This rising new class came to form an important part of the political system as the country developed into a modern colonial state. Nevertheless, the indigenous middle class was not the main beneficiary of the development of state and economy in Burma, in spite of its relative prosperity. British officials were guaranteed a privileged position in the government and the commercial interests of British firms in the country were securely protected under the colonial system. In addition to that, there emerged intense competition between the Burmese and the non-indigenous population, especially Indian immigrants. The Indian population came to supplant the Burmese in many fields, and the Burmese middle class became increasingly dependent on the government or on Indian financiers for their incomes. It was in this context that Burma saw the rise of nationalist aspirations among the emerging middle-class political elite which sought to take advantage of political opportunities and to defend the interests of their class in the developing society.

The initial growth of the nationalist movement in Burma began on the eve of the twentieth century. By the beginning of the 1890s, a group of intellectuals, government officials and Buddhist monks became increasingly concerned with the challenges posed to Buddhist beliefs and institutions by the utilitarian ethics of the modern state based on the principle of the separation of government and religion. This forced educated Burmese to rethink the basis of social and political action in their transforming society and led to the foundation of the Young Men's Buddhist Association (YMBA) in 1904. However, this group developed its activities primarily as an organisation seeking the promotion of Buddhism and Burmese culture, and nationalism was rather unimportant in its agenda during this initial period.

It was the outbreak of the First World War that provided an important stimulus to the gradual spread of nationalist aspirations among Burmese elites. Compelled to rely on the manpower and material resources of the empire, Britain sought to secure the co-operation of India for its war effort and promised 'the gradual development of self-governing institutions, with a view to the progressive realisation of responsible self-government in India as an integral part of the British Empire.'¹ This pronouncement had a considerable impact on the perception of educated Burmese. Burma had been an administrative unit and a province of the Indian British Empire since its annexation. Burmese elites believed that their country merited similar treatment in return for the services it had provided for the

British war effort. In the face of the growing demands of the Burmese, the British Parliament decided to put Burma on an equal footing with India in 1921. It extended the dyarchy system of tutelary democracy to the country and granted the Burmese limited autonomy in the field of legislation and administration. Under this system, the number of the legislative council members was increased to 103, and 56 seats were allocated to the Burmese. An executive council, consisting of three Burmese ministers, was also established to assist the governor in such areas as defence, law and finance. Thus Burma became represented in the new Indian legislature with a substantial increase in the number of local bodies.

All these elements helped to encourage the development of political activities and nationalist aspirations in Burma, and the mobilisation of increasing numbers of people from various sectors of Burmese society into political and social actions. In 1920, the YMBA changed its name to GCBA (General Council of Burmese Associations) which was organised for more explicitly nationalist ends and was led by middle-class lawyers, businessmen, landowners and journalists. However, throughout the 1920s, the organisation faced internal conflict over the question of whether it should seek a transfer of political powers through co-operation with the British or by encouraging political activities against the government in the form of protests and boycotts of elections for the Legislative Council. Thus, intensive debates over the question were repeated and by the beginning of the 1930s the GCBA had split into several factions.

One of the pivotal events in the 1930s that enhanced political activity was the announcement of the Government of Burma Act in 1935 and its implementation in April 1937, which granted a more representative and liberal constitution and further separated Burma from India. It established a system of parliamentary government which was similar to the Westminster model of British cabinet government and provided a means for Burmese politicians to involve themselves in the management of the central state. It was as a consequence of these initiatives by the British that the mid-1930s saw the emergence of more mass-based political parties.

There were three main political parties that were active during this period. One of the major parties in Burmese politics of this period was the *Myochit* Party which was a part of the original fragmented nationwide independence movement and was formed by members of the House of Representatives, many from the GCBA subgroups. Following the implementation of the Government of Burma Act, the leader U Saw organised the party with the backing of rich landowners and emerging industrialists among the Burmese, and based its activities on the established parliament in the form of what would come to be known as 'legislature politics'. In other words, the *Myochit* Party sought to defend and

enhance the position of the middle class and regain Burma's independence through co-operation with the British authorities.

There were two other influential organisations which became central to Burmese politics by the late 1930s, and both of them envisaged the political agenda moving beyond the general nationalist aim of independence for Burma. The *Sinyetha Wunthanu Party* - another derivative of the GCBA - was led by Dr. Ba Maw and adopted socialist aspirations aimed at winning the support of the agriculturists and peasants of the country-side. The party leader Ba Maw became the country's first premier under the new constitution and maintained the post until 1939.

The other party to note for the purpose of this study was the *Thakin* party (the *Dobama Asiayone*), probably the most dynamic force in Burma's youth nationalist movement. This party was founded by a group of students from the Rangoon University at the time of the GCBA split and was based on the youngest generation of the middle class with the belief that fresh blood was necessary for a renewed nationalist struggle for independence. Formally established in July 1933, the *Thakin* Party gradually rose to be a prominent political force after its takeover by the former leadership of the All Burma Students' Union (ABSU), including Thakin Aung San, U Nu and Ne Win. Under the slogan of establishing full '*Ko Min Ko Chin*' (a free democratic republic), the party envisaged the abolition of the Government of Burma Act, 1935, and the drafting of a new constitution by a constituent assembly exercising full self-determination.

One of the predominant features of the divisions between the above parties lay in the difference of approach they took in order to achieve the objective of Burma's independence. While all of the parties sought to attain a similar political goal, they aimed at building a nationalist struggle for self-government through different means. On one hand, many of the factions that had emerged from the split within the GCBA came to adopt the policy of seeking the extension of Burma's autonomy through collaboration with the British in the Legislative Council. On the other hand, there were parties that sought to attain the country's independence through a series of mass mobilisations and other forms of activities outside the Burmese legislature.

British Policy for Burma's Independence Movement

As has been examined above, the British policy towards Burma began to extend the degree of autonomy through the introduction of a dyarchy system in 1923. Further to this the implementation of the Government of Burma Act in the spring of 1937 was one of the

most advanced measures taken by the Western suzerain powers during the period. Such measures naturally had a significant impact on the development of political and economic activities in the country and encouraged the growth of nationalist aspirations. However, these reforms still fell considerably short of the expectations and demands of the Burmese political elites whose aim was to gain either total independence or, at least, a form of government similar to that of the self-governing dominions in the Empire.

As Ba Maw described in his memoirs, the Burmese perceived that the measures introduced by the British, holding power to regulate the pace of progress, were 'so slow and piecemeal that in the end very little was changed in substance.'² The former Premier of the country viewed that

'... in Burma the British allowed years to go by with talk of petty reliefs and remedies when genuine reforms were needed, and then talked of reforms for another long span of years when something much more radical was needed. The result was that by the time the talks were over the situation had changed so much that most of the measures planned to be taken had gone outdated...'³

His criticism of British policy was not without foundation. Even under the Government of Burma Act enacted in 1937, the power of the Burmese legislature representatives was considerably restricted by a number of provisions. They provided the Governor with direct and indirect authority over all departments of administration by giving him powers in the forms of 'reserved subjects', special responsibility' or 'individual judgement'. Furthermore, he could assume total powers enabling the virtually complete suspension of the constitution under Section 139 of the new constitution.⁴ The British government certainly began to transfer substantial power and authority to Burmese politicians. Yet there was a significant gap between the speed and extent which Britain was prepared to grant autonomy and Burmese people's expectation. This difference in attitudes became clearer with the outbreak of the European War.

Perceiving that the war increased of their bargaining position with the British, the Burmese leaders in the government pressed the Governor in the autumn of 1939 to secure firm promises for more rapid constitutional advance, namely greater autonomy ultimately leading to the country's dominion status. Nevertheless, the reaction of the British was rather vague and unwilling. In the face of the Burmese ministers' request that Britain clarify its position on the question of Burma's future status, a statement was released on 7 November 1939 that pledged the British would 'continue to use their best endeavours to promote the attainment of Burma's 'due place in the "British Commonwealth of Nations" so far as it lies with them to do so.'⁵ Nevertheless, as the Marquess of Zetland, the Secretary

of State for Burma, stated to Sir Archibald Cochrane, the Governor of Burma, the general stance of London on this issue was 'to avoid anything that might be interpreted as conveying a promise in relation to constitutional progress.'⁶

From the viewpoint of Zetland, Burma's constitutional advancement was to be achieved only if Burmese leaders could prove that they would utilise 'opportunities already offered [sic] to fit themselves by their own efforts to undertake additional responsibilities'.⁷ The Secretary of State also was concerned that any fresh enunciation of the policy might be interpreted as 'conveying a promise of some developments more comprehensive and more rapid than we are in fact prepared to contemplate' and would cause serious reactions in other parts of the Empire.⁸ This cautious stance was countered by the Governor who warned London that His Majesty's Government's denial of dominion status 'would be universally regarded in Burma as an inexplicable reversal of policy and a gross betrayal of all those who are now working for advance along constitutional lines.'⁹ The majority opinion in London was, however, not as apprehensive as the Governor about the country's nationalist aspirations. The view of the British government was reflected in the record of a War Cabinet meeting held on 22 November 1939, when Lord Halifax, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, stated that it lay entirely with the British Government to 'decide when and how conditions were such as to justify any particular stage of constitutional advance'. He went on to say that the government could only 'promise that it looked forward to the time when Burma would be a self-governing community equal in status with the other members of the Commonwealth'.¹⁰ Thus, the British stance towards the colony's future status did not change, which was a major disappointment for all political groups in Burma and created little favourable public response.

In the middle of 1940 Italy entered the war in Europe and the prospect of a Japanese southern advance looked increasingly alarming. In the face of the deepening international crisis, the Burmese Prime Minister, U Pu, made a statement to the Governor on 22 June:

'At this critical juncture in the history of the world and of the war of freedom and democracy against brute force, the policy of the Government of Burma is to give the utmost help in the common task of making the forces of freedom and democracy triumphant in the present conflict. ... While, therefore, the policy outlined above is unconditional, the Government of Burma would strongly urge upon His Majesty's Government the necessity of satisfying the legitimate aspiration of the people of Burma by making a declaration forthwith to effect that on the termination of present war, His Majesty's Government will grant Burma a Constitution which will enable her to take at once her due place as a fully self-governing and equal member of any Commonwealth of Federation of free nations that may be established as a result of the war.'¹¹

The offer made by Cochrane in response to this statement was rather limited. With the approval of the War Cabinet Cochrane proposed an administrative change by which a Burmese would be appointed as a Councillor to the Governor who 'would be mainly concerned with explaining and popularizing Defence measures and encouraging recruitment'. On the question of Burma's future, the Burmese Government's reply did not go beyond the position pledged the previous year which had stated that His Majesty's Government 'will continue to use their best endeavours to promote the attainment of Dominion status as being the objective of Burma's constitutional progress.'¹²

The explosive nature of these issues became even clearer when Winston Churchill and Franklin Roosevelt announced the Atlantic Charter on 14 August 1941. Its third article declared that the governments of the United States and Britain 'respect the right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they will live; and they wish to see sovereign rights and self-government restored to those who have been forcibly deprived of them.' An intense debate broke out between Burmese leaders and British politicians over the interpretation of Point III because it had the implication of publicly committing Britain to develop self-government throughout the Empire. Furthermore, expectations of Burmese independence grew even more when Clement Attlee, the Lord Privy Seal, stated to an audience of West African students in London that the article would be applied to 'all races of the world, coloured as well as white.'¹³

The Burmese Premier, U Saw, knew that his cabinet would not last unless he was able to gain clear constitutional advances. He therefore took advantage of the opportunity and sought a clearer assurance from the newly appointed Governor, Sir Reginald Dorman-Smith, committing Britain to the immediate establishment of full self-government in Burma following the conclusion of the war. In the face of increasing pressure from U Saw, Dorman-Smith consulted the Secretary of State for Burma, Leo Amery. On 16 August, the governor expressed his view that 'it will be very hard to persuade Burma that a Declaration of apparently universal application made by Churchill and Roosevelt together must be limited in its application to Burma by previous statements made by the Governor.'¹⁴ Amery's stance on the issue was, to say the least, uncompromising and unamiable. While noting that Britain should avoid giving the impression that it would not apply the principle to Burma in post-war conditions, he stated that 'it is clear from circumstances in which declaration was made that ... point 3 relates to countries which in recent years have been overrun by aggressor nations' and 'there is ... nothing essentially different in point 3 from what was said by H.M.G. to Burma...'¹⁵

This was, indeed, not just his own personal view but a reflection of the general

atmosphere in London. Churchill's response to the question was recorded in his personal minute stating that

'Generally speaking it is silly to make heavy weather about these broad affirmations of principle. I am sure that the Lord Privy Seal in his remarks did not intend to suggest e.g. that the natives of Nigeria or of East Africa could by a majority vote choose the form of Government under which they live, or the Arabs by such a vote expel the Jews from Palestine. It is evident that prior obligations require to be considered and respected, and that circumstances alter cases.'¹⁶

This observation by the Prime Minister was generally in line with the views expressed by the other members of the War Cabinet on 4 September. The Secretary of State for the Colonies, for instance, enunciated that 'we could not admit the right of unfettered choice to those who, in the words of the League of Nations Covenant, were 'not yet able to stand by themselves under the strenuous conditions of the modern world.' Thus the view generally expressed in discussion was that 'the Atlantic Charter, agreed between the Prime Minister and President Roosevelt, was directed to the nations of Europe whom we hoped to free from Nazi tyranny, and was not intended to deal with the internal affairs of the British Empire...'¹⁷

Burmese public opinion turned increasingly antagonistic in the face of statement by Churchill to the House of Commons on 9 September which publicly refused the application of the Charter to all elements of the British Empire. The Prime Minister's announcement faced unanimous condemnation by Burmese newspapers. *New Light of Burma*, for instance, stated on 26 September:

'It is most disappointing that the statement is neither fine in language nor satisfying to the expectations of Burmans. It is like being given a stone when one has asked for bread. Burma has queried whether she will be given freedom at the end of the war in accordance with the third item of the Churchill-Roosevelt declaration and the Premier has replied that Britain has not altered from her considered policy of establishing Burma's self Government the present declaration is in no way different from the previous declarations. It is deplorable that Mr. Churchill does not realise that in such a war it is necessary to enlist the whole-hearted support of the subject countries and that in order to win such support freedom should be granted to these countries which were no less worthy of the same than the European countries.'¹⁸

Such responses from the Burmese press made it no less difficult for U Saw to handle the situation.

The last attempt by U Saw to attain a promise of Dominion status for Burma was

made when he visited London in October and November 1941. Although the Burmese Prime Minister sought to secure the co-operation of the British Government, the atmosphere in London was in no way conducive to providing a general assurance of Britain's intentions. Saw met with some sympathy for his case but no promises were forthcoming. On 11 November, he made a request to Amery that Burmese affairs should be transferred from the Burma Office to the Dominion Office as a clear indication of Burma being 'well on the road to full self-government'. To this Churchill flatly replied that 'we fear that it would be out of the question to undertake any change of this kind in war time'.¹⁹ The British Prime Minister also adopted a cool tone in his answer to the general question of Britain's intentions for Burma's future status. On his arrival to London, U Saw made a public statement in *The Times*; 'What Burma wants to know is whether, in fighting with many other countries for the freedom of the world, she is also fighting for her own freedom. Does victory by the democracies mean full self-government to Burma? The demand for complete self-government is a unanimous demand of the Burmese people, and it was made incessantly long before the Atlantic Charter.'²⁰ Churchill turned aside any further discussion with U Saw on the issue and replied;

'In the midst of the life and death struggle in which this country and Burma, and indeed the whole cause of free government in the world, are involved, it is not possible, as I know you realise, either to enter upon the detailed examination and discussion required for the solution of these important problems or to anticipate or prejudge conclusions which must themselves be affected by that examination and by the situation at the end of the war.'²¹

Unable to see any progress, U Saw left London disappointed. He was no more pleased when he set off to the United States to meet with President Roosevelt. The Burmese Premier seemed to believe that Roosevelt would be willing to apply pressure on Churchill for Burma's constitutional advancement if his talks with London failed to get the desired results. Nevertheless, Roosevelt declined any talks with him on the Atlantic Charter or Burma's independence, and the Americans in general 'made it plain to him that their principal interest in Burma was as the channel through which American supplies to China had to flow'.²² Thus U Saw failed to gain a clear assurance for Burma's future independence. This was a hard blow for all politicians in Burma, who believed in the goodwill of Britain, and, from their point of view, it clearly demonstrated the folly of their constitutional pursuits.

The failure of the Burmese politicians within the Legislature to achieve constitutional advancement not surprisingly led to a growth in support for the more radical nationalist factions. They argued that the British state would not allow the drastic change necessary to

regain independence and establish a more just distribution of economic and political power for the Burmese. The radical Burmese nationalists therefore sought to achieve the country's independence by subverting the existing order and steadily developed as the main force in Burmese politics. However, while succeeding in attracting a considerable extent of mass support, they faced a serious political problem: a lack of adequate funds to sustain their activities. The situation became even more difficult due to the colonial government's increasingly oppressive measures against the party's political and organisational activities, which came in the form of jailing or police surveillance of its leaders. These problems deepened their sense of the need for a drastic reorientation of the political strategy. It was in this context that Japan appeared in the picture of Burma's national liberation movement as an external power providing support for the nationalist cause.

Japanese pre-war plans towards Burma

In examining the pre-war Japanese involvement in Burma, previous studies have been inclined to focus on *Minami Kikan* as the originator of Japan's full-scale commitment to the Burmese nationalist movement. Within that framework, Japanese activities in the country prior to the arrival of Colonel Suzuki Keiji have largely been treated as a mere prologue for the development of Japan's vigorous operations following the establishment of *Minami Kikan* in 1940. It is, however, important to note that Japanese activities to support Burma's nationalist aspirations were already underway on a considerable scale by the latter half of 1937.

Japan and Burma maintained a degree of economic and political relations prior to the mid-1930s. Japan was an exporter of textiles and some manufacturing goods to Burma, and imported rice and cotton from the country. However, its share of the bilateral trade in both countries' overall balance was rather negligible.²³ Also in the sphere of cultural and political relations, the two nations did not have particularly strong ties with no major historical connection and the number of Japanese nationals residing in Burma before the outbreak of Second World War was confined to about 600 persons.²⁴ Japan's effort to build a closer relationship with Burma began to develop in 1935 when a Burma-Japan Association was established in Tokyo to promote cultural contacts. It was through this association that visits by many influential Burmese figures, such as politicians and journalists, were organised and political ties gradually developed. On the whole, Burma's position in Japan's political and economic picture was rather marginal up to the mid-1930s.

Nevertheless, there was a notable growth in Japanese involvement in Burma's political and economic affairs after 1937. One of the primary reasons for this development was the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War in July. With the start of the conflict, Japan became seriously concerned about the development of boycott movements against Japanese products, which were being organised by the local Chinese community in Burma. The extent of Japanese anxiety over the spread of boycott is evident in a number of detailed reports and telegrams exchanged between the Foreign Ministry and the Japanese Consul in Rangoon.

The existing records of the *Gaimushō* reveal that Kaneko Toyoji, the acting Japanese Consul in Rangoon, became heavily involved in the investigation of the Chinese boycott activities especially from the latter half of 1937. Kaneko, who had assumed his position in April 1936, reported upon the scale of the movement in an alarming tone in a telegram sent in November. The main element in the movement was the 'Anti-Japanese National Salvation Union' which was established in Rangoon by the local Chinese community on 20 July. The leaders of this organisation facilitated a number of demonstrations all over Burma and collected contributions from the membership that, according to a report, ran up to the sum of 700,000 rupees by the end of 1937.²⁵ A demonstration held on 10 November, for instance, was attended by about 3,000 participants who pledged to boycott Japanese products and petition the Burmese government to terminate its trade with Japan.²⁶ Furthermore, an 'All Burma Union for Anti-Japanese Boycott' was established under the initiative of the organisation in order to promote the participation of Burmese and Indian populations. For that purpose, the leadership requested that the Burmese Chamber of Commerce as well as the Indian Chamber of Commerce participate in these activities.²⁷ It was reported that these activities in support of the Chinese cause were gaining support among a group of Indian Congress members, and Burmese journalists, as well as some members of the Thakin Party.

As Kaneko observed, the actual effect of these activities was not extensive and the Chinese population in the country was not necessarily united under the leadership of the union. It was, for instance, reported that the union was divided between members of Fukien and Canton origins who disagreed over the best means to achieve its goals.²⁸ This considerably limited the political and economic impact of the boycott movement on the Japanese. Nevertheless, this was still an ominous sign from the Japanese perspective, especially in the face of the lukewarm attitude of the Burmese Government. In a report, Kaneko advocated:

'In spite of the fact that the impact of the activities were so far limited, the effect of the boycott movement will be extremely detrimental for Japan if the Chinese leadership manage to win

support of other populations. It is therefore vital to apply measures as soon as possible to isolate the movement and prevent the escalation of their activities.'

On these grounds, the acting Consul requested more substantial funds to induce the Burmese political parties to back Japan as well as to increase the number of Burmese personnel engaged in intelligence activities.²⁹ It was in this context that Japan increased its commitment to the country and sought to contain the anti-Japanese resistance of the local Chinese community by supporting the Burmese nationalist parties through financial support.

The Burmese politicians also saw great benefit in receiving financial support from the Japanese. These funds from the Japanese Consul had great implications primarily for the following reasons. One of the most difficult problems for the Burmese political parties during the period was the decline of popular support which was partly caused by their reliance on the British and Indian funds in order to maintain their political activities. The ability of the Burmese political elite to reflect the political and economic interests of Burmese people was considerably hampered, as it was kept in office with funds from the Indian community who were in intense competition with the Burmese middle class over the control of the nation's economy. The receipt of funds from the Japanese Consul enabled the Burmese politicians to pursue their political strategies for the nationalist cause more independently.³⁰ It also brought great benefits from the Japanese perspective. Through its financial support of important political figures, Japan not only managed to make many Burmese nationalists pro-Japanese but exerted notable influence on the country's politics itself.

A notable recipient of Japanese assistance was U Saw who would later become the last Prime Minister of colonial Burma. U Saw, who was a follower of U Ba Pe during the Dyarchy regime, visited Japan in 1935 when he was still a minor politician. After this U Saw became an active supporter of Japan as a successful Asiatic nation that had risen to parity with the Western Powers. When the Foreign Ministry began its effort to win over Burmese nationalists, U Saw became the favourite target of Japan's manoeuvring for the containment of the boycott movement.³¹ The Japanese funds that Saw received from Kaneko were used for his political activities. He managed to take control of one of the most influential Burmese newspapers, the *Sun*, financed his campaign for the parliamentary general election in 1936 and founded his new political party '*Myochit*'.³² Through Japanese financing, Saw therefore established himself as one of the most influential politicians in the pre-war colonial Burma.

The existing British sources also reveal the intensity of the Japanese activities in the late 1930s. Closely monitoring the Japanese activities to support the Burmese nationalists,

the British colonial authorities did not remain a silent onlooker and became increasingly wary of this development. The Burma Defence Bureau was one of the institutions which kept a cautious watch on the various Japanese activities in the country. The Burma Monthly Intelligence Summary of November 1938, for instance, showed concern about vigorous propaganda effort. It reported that an offer of Rs. 5000 had been made by Furuhata, a prominent member of the Japanese community in Burma, to the Executive Committee of the Young Sangha's Association of Rangoon on the condition that the Association would advocate friendship with Japan. The same report also noted that Kaneko and Furuhata had requested that U Saw and Aung San protest against the transport of Chinese munitions through Burma.³³ From Tokyo, the British Consulate warned in December that 'the Japanese are sending commercial travellers and other business and professional men to Burma with instructions to spread anti-British and pan-Asia propaganda'.³⁴

What especially concerned the British authority was the activities of Kaneko who maintained strong connections with influential Burmese figures such as politicians and journalists, including U Saw and Ba Maw. The government of Burma sent a telegram to the Burma Office in London on 6 January 1939 and warned that 'shortly after Mr. Kaneko was recognised as Japanese Consul in Rangoon on the 1st of April 1936 he came to notice as tending to display a disposition to interest himself somewhat actively in matters outside the normal sphere of a foreign Consul's functions.'³⁵ The government's misgivings about the consul's manoeuvre in Burma were not without foundation. Intelligence reports suggested Kaneko's active involvement in various political activities such propaganda and espionage in Rangoon. It was reported on 9 July 1938 that the Consul had been active among vernacular newspapers to disseminate anti-British propaganda and planned 'a big pro-Japanese drive' with the assistance of U Saw. In particular, Kaneko was said to be behind the formation of U Saw's private army '*Galon Tuts*' with a view to using them for pro-Japanese purposes. The bureau reported further examples of his activities such as his meeting with Ba Maw on 11 November 1938, in which he endeavoured the latter to obtain the support of the Burmese Premier for establishing a branch of the 'Japan-Burma Association' in Rangoon.³⁶ Intelligence even suggested that Kaneko and his agents were connected to the communal violence that swept Rangoon in the autumn of 1938.³⁷ This continuous flow of reports from the Burma Defence Bureau suggesting Kaneko's active involvement in internal politics led to the protest of the government of Burma that demanded Kaneko's removal. The Government of Burma despatched a telegram on 31 January and expressed further misgivings about the Japanese Consul:

'it can ... hardly be beyond Mr. Kaneko's knowledge that the leaders of the present Opposition

parties in Burma are prepared to go to considerable lengths in the way of fomenting disorder both by speeches and by the press organs which they control and in which the interviews with him are reported for the purpose of embarrassing the Government, and that his association with these persons therefore is, to say the least, an indiscretion. ... Kaneko's recent activities ... are likely to have an undesirable effect on the public mind in view of the present state of opinion ...'

The telegram thus articulated the opinion that 'if Mr. Kaneko's undesirable activities do not cease forthwith, His Majesty's Government will have no alternative but to ask the Japanese Government to transfer him.'³⁸ Due to a strongly worded protest by the British Government, Kaneko Toyoji was removed from the post of the Japanese Consul in Rangoon and replaced with Kuga Shigeyoshi from Ceylon at the beginning of February.³⁹

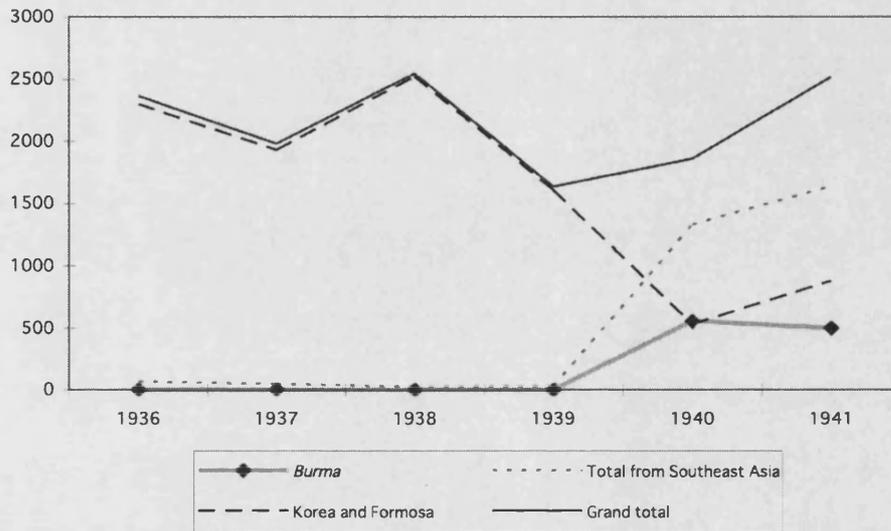
However, Kaneko's removal did not mark the end of Japan's political manoeuvres in Burma. Intelligence collected from the summer of 1939 onwards by Sir Josiah Crosby, the Minister to Thailand, suggested that Burmese nationalists were in contact with the Japanese legation in Bangkok with a view to plotting to smuggle arms into Burma.⁴⁰ It was suggested that the plot, which the government of Burma had under close observation, was engineered by the Japanese and aimed at smuggling arms into Burma with a view to encouraging the outbreak of risings in Southern Burma. British intelligence reported on 8 August that a Japanese national named U. Koizumi, working for a Japanese-owned medical institution in Bangkok, outwardly took the most active part in the conspiracy and that the Secretary to the Japanese Legation in the capital was likely to be playing a vital part.⁴¹ It was also suggested that Japan believed that providing a supply of arms to the various 'private armies' established in Burma such as the above mentioned *Galon Tats*, founded by U Saw, might help to lead to a successful revolt. If the Burmese agreed to accept the arms from Thailand, the Thai officials, British intelligence suspected, would be willing to train Burmese in their handling. There was also an indication that this plot was developing into a more comprehensive plan for the invasion of British territories by the Japanese from bases in Thailand in which the Burmese would assist Japan by staging an armed rebellion. British intelligence reported that the chief exponent of this scheme were two Japanese named Furuhashi and Kokubu, and that Burma expected to be granted its independence by the Japanese in return for its services. Japan was believed to be seeking a commercial treaty favourable to it together with control over the oil-fields for 30 years.⁴² Thus there was an indication that Japan was involved in activities designed to increase its influence in Burma throughout the latter half of the 1930s. What is important to note here is the fact that the Japanese undertook these activities in co-operation with the Burmese nationalists well before the establishment of the *Minami Kikan*. In one sense, the

emergence of the *Minami Kikan* was therefore only a consequence of Japan's steadily growing aspiration to increase its presence in Burma and marked gradual rather than a radical shift in the nature of its commitment.

Emergence of the *Minami Kikan* and the Burma Independence Army

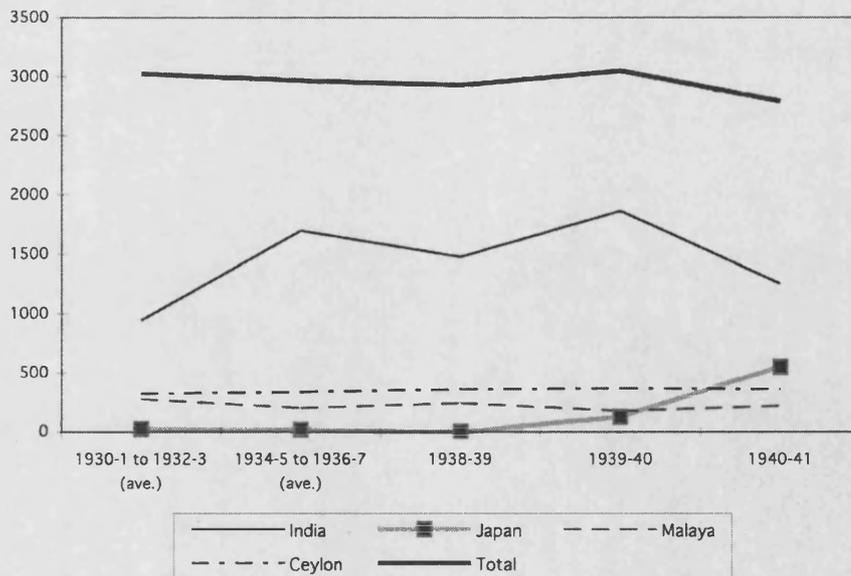
One of the factors that provided a pretext for the emergence of the *Minami Kikan* was the changes in the international environment surrounding the Japanese government between 1939 and 1940. One significant event which caused a change in Japan's perception of the country was the opening of the Burma Road in January 1939 which enabled the Western powers to provide vital supplies to the war effort of the Chinese Nationalist Government against Japan. With the Japanese gradually seizing control of southern China's sea ports, the supply route connecting Lashio in the Shan States and Kunming in south-western China became a major nuisance for Tokyo which was struggling for an early conclusion of this war of attrition. Japan thus stepped up its propaganda activities in Burma to win over the sympathies of the Burmese and reduce the effects of the boycott campaigns waged by the Chinese nationalists. Furthermore, with the start of the European war, the Western powers' increasing need to divert vital materials from the colonies for their own war effort was coupled with misgivings about the growth of Japanese political and economic influence in the region, and led to the imposition of tighter restrictions on trade between Japan and Southeast Asian colonies. Burma was one of the countries where the effect of the European war and Western misgivings was most apparent. The Government of Burma, under the instructions of the British government, sent an official letter on 16 December 1939 to notify Japan that it would suspend the export of wolfram ore from Burma for at least one year for the purpose of conserving natural resources.⁴³ In spite of vigorous protests by the Japanese, the British government declined to comply with Japan's request to permit export of the material on the grounds that it needed to secure adequate supplies of wolfram for the Allied war effort.⁴⁴ Thus, as Shigemitsu, the Japanese Ambassador in London, put it, there was a perception that not only were Japanese exporters 'experiencing considerable hardships and ... losing long-established markets' but also that 'frequent cases of restrictions placed on exports to Japan ... inevitably jeopardise Japanese industry.'⁴⁵

Chart 3.1 Japanese rice imports 1936-1941 ('000 tons)



Source: Jerome B. Cohen. *Japan's Economy in War and Reconstruction*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1949, p. 369.

Chart 3.2 Exports of rice from Burma ('000 tons)



Source: Reports on the maritime Trade and Customs Administration of Burma, India Office Records, V/24/487, V/24/488, V/24/489, cited in Paul Kratoska ed. *Food Supplies and the Japanese Occupation in Southeast Asia*. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988, p. 17.

It is also important to note that this was a period when Japan became increasingly reliant upon Burma as a source of rice, the most sensitive barometer of its over-all food position. Prior to the Sino-Japanese War, the Japanese government had initiated a programme to make the empire self-sufficient in rice. Consequently, only about two per cent of Japan's rice imports came from non-empire sources in the late 1930s. Nevertheless, Japan suffered from a serious shortage of rice caused by poor harvests between 1939 and 1941. In particular, the failure of Korean rice crop in 1940 brought about a disastrous effect on Japan's rice imports. Imports from Korea, hitherto the largest source of rice supply, went down by 42% in 1939 and decreased further in 1940 to only about 66,000 tons. This was combined with the decline of imports from Formosa and caused a sharp decline of supply from these two countries, which were hitherto the almost exclusive source of Japan's rice imports.⁴⁶

As is clearly indicated in chart 3.1, this shortfall in the Korean and Formosan crops between 1939 and 1940 brought about a significant change in the pattern of Japan's rice importing. It forced Japan to supplement the deficit by drastically increasing its rice import from Southeast Asia. In particular, Burma, which had supplied only a nominal amount prior to 1939, became one of the largest rice exporters to Japan in 1940 and 1941. Prior to the beginning of the war in Southeast Asia and Pacific, there were primarily three major rice-surplus areas in Southeast Asia: Burma, French Indochina and Thailand. Burma was the largest rice producing country of the region among these countries.⁴⁷ On average between 1935/6 and 1939/40, Burma produced approximately 4.9 million tons of milled rice and was the largest rice exporter in the world during the period with annual exports amounting to about 3 million tons of milled rice.⁴⁸

As chart 3.2 indicates, Japan suddenly surpassed Ceylon and Malaya, which had previously been the second and third largest importers of Burmese rice, and became the second largest importer of rice for Burma. In the face of the need for increasing rice imports, Japan became heavily reliant upon Burma as a major source of supply. It is evident from a report of the Government of Burma that Japan purchased 500,000 tons of rice from Burma during the year 1940 as opposed to the annual average of 15,800 tons between the years 1935-6 and 1938-39.⁴⁹ It was against this background that Burma's importance to Japan drastically increased as part of the overall picture of economic and political designs towards the region. The Japanese government considerably intensified its efforts to take advantage of the Burmese nationalist movement as a means to fulfil its various economic and political objectives.

It is important to note that, as a result of this changing environment, there was an important shift in the focus of the Japanese strategy of supporting the Burmese nationalist

movement. Japan not only intensified its military reconnaissance activities, but the target of Japanese support gradually shifted towards the radical Burmese nationalists outside the legislature. One vital reason for this shift was the increasing British surveillance on Japanese activities in the country. Examination of the documentary records shows that the British were well aware of the Japanese secret work in Burma. However, the British authorities, until now, let it go on as long as nothing vital was involved for the purpose of keeping track of Japanese intentions in Burma. However, following Kaneko's removal, the activities of the Japanese figures in Burma were considerably confined as they were kept under more intensive surveillance by the British intelligence services in the country. The political map of Burma was changing, too. U Saw, previously a main recipient of the Japanese funds, now managed to create new bases of support and thus was no longer as reliant on Japanese assistance as he used to be.⁵⁰ Consequently, it became increasingly difficult for the Japanese to provide support within the existing framework of activities.

Furthermore, the Burmese nationalist movement was also facing an impending crisis due to the increasing pressure from the British authorities. By the middle of 1940, the anti-colonial activities in Burma assumed an unusually wide scope. On April 1, the Freedom Bloc, a nationalist coalition of the political parties outside the legislature, convened a mass demonstration in Rangoon demanding the abolition of the 1935 constitution which was followed by a May Day festivity.⁵¹ Subsequently, the leaders of the organisation called for a mass rally in the Rangoon Jubilee Hall, which was attended by the representatives of other Burmese political parties. During the same period, a country tour was also organised and the Freedom Bloc leaders visited various districts of Burma and appealed to the people to take up resistance against the British.⁵² These activities by the Burmese nationalists provoked an intense reaction from the British authorities. The Government of Burma began wholesale arrests of the nationalists on charges of sedition and other political offences under the Defence of Burma Act. As a result, many leaders of the Thakin Party such as Thakin Soe and Thakin Nu were imprisoned between May and June 1940.⁵³ Furthermore, influential political figures, including Dr. Ba Maw and Dr. Thein Maung, were interned and sentenced to various prison terms, while the colonial authorities issued a warrant for the arrest of Aung San, the Secretary-General of the Freedom Bloc. The arrests of these leaders dealt a heavy blow to the Burmese national liberation movement and led to the disintegration of the Freedom Bloc. Thus the momentum of Burma's struggle for independence was considerably undermined in 1940.

Under these circumstances, the Thakins, the most radical element in the liberation movement, began to seek foreign support to secure sufficient funds and arms that could be used for the struggle against the British. The party leadership was divided over the

question of where to look for assistance: some looked to India, China or Russia for aid. While others placed their hopes in Japan, they were rather a minority.⁵⁴ Although the Thakin Party sought to develop close ties with the Indian liberation movement, the Indian National Congress was not in a position to provide the Burmese nationalists with such material support. The party leadership also counted on China as a potential source of assistance and sent a delegation to Chungking at the invitation of the Nationalist Government in December 1939.⁵⁵ While Chiang Kai-shek was interested in getting the support and sympathy of the Burmese for his war effort against Japan, the Kuomintang, which was heavily dependant on British support, was hardly in a position to provide support for the anti-colonial struggle in Burma. Moreover, the effort of the delegation to get in touch with the Chinese Communist Party brought no positive results. Consequently, Japanese assistance was the only alternative left for the Burmese liberation movement in order to continue its activities for the nationalist cause. It was against this background that the Japanese intelligence work stepped up to the next crucial stage with the arrival of Colonel Suzuki Keiji who would become the most influential Japanese agent operating in Burma.

Japanese Occupation planning in Southeast Asia and the Burma independence army

Suzuki arrived in Burma in June 1940, when British oppression against Burmese nationalists in the Freedom Bloc was being intensified. Calling himself Minami Masuyo, he led the espionage activities with two companions and worked under the cover of being a *Dōmei* press agency and *Yomiuri Shinbun* correspondent. Suzuki also took on the honorary duties of being the general secretary of the Japan-Burma Friendship Association. Following his arrival, he skilfully avoided the British secret service and rapidly moved to achieve his main task, that was to study the lay of the political land, develop useful contacts and determine how Japan could prevent the Western Powers from providing supplies for China through the Burma Road. The Japan-Burma Friendship Association provided a good place to establish contacts with influential Burmese figures and there Suzuki met with Dr. Thein Maung, an associate of Dr. Ba Maw. After meeting various people and consulting his principal contact, Thein Maung, he reached a conclusion that the Thakins were the most promising anti-British political forces.

When Suzuki left Burma in early October 1940 to avoid arrest by the British authorities, he was informed about Aung San and his associates from the Thakin Party who were in exile in Amoy. On his way back to Japan, Colonel Suzuki stopped over in

Taiwan and arranged to find them. The order to find the two Burmese and ask them to leave for Japan was sent via Taiwan to the *Kempeitai* (Japanese military police) at Amoy. Early in November 1940, Aung San and his associate were discovered by Major Kanda of the *Kempeitai*, and they agreed to accept Suzuki's offer and go to Japan. In Tokyo, Suzuki presented the plan for Burma's independence, written by Aung San at his request, to the Army General Staff in early 1941. The plan included military aid for the Burmese independence revolution, that is to establish strong 'defence structure' in Burma to be carried out with the active assistance of Japan and with Burma as a part of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere.⁵⁶

Thus the Imperial General Headquarters approved the establishment of a secret organisation, and the *Minami Kikan* (Minami Intelligence Organisation) was formally founded in Tokyo on February 1941. The *Minami Kikan* was placed under the direct command of the Imperial Headquarters and was formally headed by Suzuki, whose alias in Burma became the official name of the organisation. Established as a joint venture of officers from both the Army and Navy with a rigid division of responsibilities, the organisation was charged with two primary tasks; to close the Burma Road and to support the Burmese nationalist movement. As a part of the latter task, the *Minami Kikan* initiated a plan to bring young Burmese volunteers to Japan and provide them with military training for directing an armed uprising in Burma against the British. On 21 February, members of the organisation left for Bangkok to form a local branch of the *Minami Kikan* in some cities of Thailand and to establish communication lines with 'underground' Burmese nationalists.⁵⁷ At the same time, Aung San was secretly shipped to Japan by a Japanese freighter along with a Japanese member of the organisation on 14 February. He was to contact the Thakin leaders and make arrangements for smuggling thirty young volunteers out of Burma to Japan for military training.⁵⁸ By the end of July 1941, a group of young Burmese nationalists had secretly left the country and headed to Hainan for combat, intelligence, and political training. At the end of October, the training in Hainan was completed and four members of the group were shipped back to Bangkok for organising and directing guerrilla activities against the British. Thus the establishment of the *Minami Kikan* and the subsequent Japanese activities brought the co-operation of the Burmese nationalists with the Japan military intelligence to a higher stage and the organisation attained a key position within the headquarters as an organisation taking control of all Burmese nationalist groups oriented towards Japan.

Suzuki's activities and the establishment of the *Minami Kikan* described above constitute a well-known episode in the Japanese effort to assist Burmese nationalists and a number of studies have been produced in the past dealing with this subject. While

conflicting versions of particular events and their significance have been presented, many of the studies appear to share certain assumptions. One of the tendencies, particularly predominant in the Japanese literature, is the emphasis on the positive nature of the organisation's activities and its contribution to Burma's struggle for independence. This is most apparent in the memoirs written by the former members of the organisation which have provided an account of their selfless and devoted activities that greatly contributed to the independence of the country.⁵⁹ The scholarly works on the subject in both Japanese and English are not free from such assumptions, too. '*Biruma ni okeru Nihon Gunsei no Kenkyū*' written by Ōta Tsunezō, one of the most detailed studies by a Japanese writer on the country's rule in Burma, noted the value of the organisation's activities for the Burmese nationalist cause that 'without a doubt, turned unfavourable criticism on the nature of the Japanese rule in Burma to a more positive direction'.⁶⁰ Reflecting considerable reliance on the Japanese sources, studies by Joyce Lebra and Won Zoon Yoon are also inclined to emphasise the enthusiasm of the members and the importance of their role for the independence of Burma.⁶¹ There are some notable exceptions to these works by scholars such as Robert Taylor and Louis Allen, who have both expressed scepticism about the indispensability of the organisation in regard to the development of the Burmese nationalist movements.⁶² Yet, as a whole, the majority of the existing works focus heavily on the activities of the *Minami Kikan* and accept the role played by the organisation as a symbolism of Japanese effort for Burma's nationalist cause.

However, a careful reading of the policy planning procedure appears to indicate a rather different picture. Colonel Suzuki drew up a document titled 'Plan for the Burma Operation (*Biruma Kōsaku Keikaku*)' in December, 1941. This document set the initial goal of the organisation's activity as stirring up disturbances throughout Burma in order to hamper the enemy's operations and to induce the co-operation of the Burmese in the Japanese war effort. In order to achieve this objective, the organ was to establish a volunteer army with the thirty Burmese figures, who had already been trained by the Japanese, as its core. The document also pledged that the Burmese volunteer army was to become the main body of a new independent government that would inherit government property and government managed enterprises. However, once the occupation process was completed, the administration of the areas under the control of the Japanese forces was to be executed through the military administration under the leadership of the *Minami Kikan*. While the document emphasised the maximum utilisation of the existing autonomous structures and pledged the establishment of an independent regime as an important policy goal of the Japanese occupation, there was, indeed, no mention of a specific period or timing to realise this aim.⁶³ On balance, the organisation's policy shows a

curious resemblance to war-time planning by the Imperial Headquarters in its emphasis on the need of Japanese 'tutelage' and the lack of any concrete planning for Burma's actual independence.

Even if the 'genuine' apprehension for Burma's nationalist causes existed among the Japanese members of the organisation at personal level, the impact they brought to the actual Japanese policy planning was probably less than it has been claimed by many of existing literature, Japanese writings in particular. As has been examined in the previous chapter, Japan's initial expansion into Southeast Asia was largely focused on the economic and political penetration through diplomatic pressure until the beginning of 1941. A notable feature of the policy of southern expansion during this period is the conspicuous absence of its consideration on actual military occupation. When Suzuki set out his activities in Burma around the same time as the formation of the second Konoe Cabinet, envisaging the establishment of the GEACPS as its core principle, Japanese policy planning towards the region paid very little attention to the problems surrounding the possible occupation of the region. The conquest of the colonial territories in the region was not considered as a tangible option. Within this broad framework, the Japanese policy planning towards Burma was largely focused on two objectives. Firstly, Japan sought to manipulate the attitudes of the subject peoples of Burma in order to stir up its growing nationalist aspirations thus helping to undermine the Western colonial order. By doing so, the country hoped to create a favourable economic and political environment for the Japanese. Second, closely related with the above, Japan's policy to Burma during the period was deeply connected with the need for a prompt settlement of its war against China. It was therefore imperative to halt the flow of materials along the Burma Road, which was, from Japan's point of view, a major factor in prolonging the conflict. The need for interdicting the Burma Road became more acute following the British Government's decision in October 1940 to reopen the supply route that had been closed during the monsoon season. During this period, Colonel Suzuki's activities of disrupting, and ultimately eliminating, British influence in the country through its support for the Burmese nationalist aspirations was accepted because it by and large fitted the needs of the central Government. That was the reason for the organisation's planning to be tolerated by Tokyo.

Nevertheless, from early 1941, curiously coincides with the time when Matsuoka began to mention Burma as a target of Japan's expansion planning,⁶⁴ the Japanese pre-war planning towards the region saw a drastic shift due to the growing tension in its relationship with the Allied countries. Now that Japan faced increasingly tightening economic restrictions and the vision of the GEACPS came to have more exclusive and aggressive tendency, the Imperial Headquarters started to give serious consideration to

the occupation of colonial territories in Southeast Asia. The priority of Japan's planning became seizure of vital strategic materials in the region as well as making the Japanese occupation forces self-sufficient by using supplies from the local economies. Treating resource acquisition and the establishment of self-sufficient economy as primary goals, Japan considered the policy of supporting national independence in Southeast Asia as secondary. While Japan envisaged maximum utilisation of existing governmental structure in the Western colonies, it clearly indicated that premature encouragement of indigenous movements for national independence must be avoided by 'fostering the confidence of the local population towards the Imperial Forces'. No other significant reference can be found on the treatment of nationalist movements in the region, and only a vague allusion was made to the fact that the decisions on the future status of the occupied territories were to be left to the Japanese Government, presumably until the overthrow of existing colonial government and the conclusion of the coming war.⁶⁵ Thus, when Japan's occupation of colonial territories became an increasing possibility, the Japanese government withdrew its previous stance of encouraging popular support from the colonial subjects of Southeast Asia through its rhetoric of co-prosperity. Thus, it became increasingly evident that there was not much space left for *Minami Kikan* within the grand design of the Japanese government. While the organisation, established and developed largely at Colonel Suzuki's discretion, and sought to exert its influence as the organisation to lead the Japanese liberation of Burma, the Imperial Government regarded it as an organisation to infiltrate into Burma and disturb the British defence of that country through guerrilla warfare.

Now that the occupation of Southeast Asian colonies gradually emerged as a real possibility, the Imperial Government started to take the formulation of occupation planning under its direct control. On 21 November, General Terauchi Hisaichi, the Supreme Commander of the Southern Army, directed the organisation to suspend all activities and move to Saigon. Three days later, the *Minami Kikan* was placed under the direct control of Terauchi, and its command authority shifted to the 15th Japanese Army Command in Bangkok. Thus, Japan's policy towards Burma saw a drastic shift with considerably different objectives and emphasis that completely nullified its ideological approach to the peoples of Burma. Japan's pre-war rhetoric of co-prosperity and its denunciation of colonialism could have brought an expanded and extended support. Yet they were hereby absorbed entirely in the strategic and operational concerns which emerged on the eve of the war.

Conclusion

During the period of colonial rule before the outbreak of the war in Asia, Britain introduced a number of measures that gradually extended the degree of autonomy given to the Burmese. These moves culminated in the British government's pledge to consider the colony's future dominion status in the Empire. Nevertheless, however benevolent British rule might be, it could not prevent a rising feeling of resentment among the people of Burma against what they saw as exploitation or fulfil the expectation of Burmese leaders with growing nationalist aspirations. In order to counter the opposition movement of the Burmese nationalist outside the government, U Saw and his colleagues within the colonial government sought to secure a clearer assurance of London for the future independence of the country, but faced a flat refusal from the British government. Whatever Britain's plan for the colony's future, the situation in the territories facing possible Japanese expansion was not such as to produce solid resistance to the invader.

Japan emerged in the picture as a player willing to take advantage of the conflict between the British and the Burmese nationalists. Developing its interest in Burma within the framework of its emerging political and economic design for the region, Japan commenced its intelligence activities in the mid-1930s and this eventually led to the establishment of the *Minami Kikan* supporting the Burmese nationalists outside the government by 1941. While these two phases of Japanese involvement in Burma had different motives and objectives, they shared a notable common feature: a complete absence of ideological assumptions set down as early as the late nineteenth century. In spite of its long-term advocacy of 'Asia for Asiatics', this theme was never a main drive behind the Japanese activities in Burma during the period. Even the most ideological figures like Suzuki never lost sight of Japan's material as well as strategic advantages and, as this study reveals, the Japanese effort to support the Burmese nationalist aspirations during the pre-war period was largely developed in the context of its own self-centred motives and preoccupations in the economic and political as well as strategic spheres. The nature of Japan's design for Burma would be revealed even more clearly when the war provided an opportunity to include the country as a part of its newly formed empire.

Notes for Chapter 3

- ¹ Maung Maung, *Burma and General Ne Win*, (Bombay, 1969), p. 6.
- ² Ba Maw, pp. 3-4.
- ³ *Ibid.*
- ⁴ U Maung Maung, *Burmese Nationalist Movements 1940 - 1948* (Hong Kong, 1989), pp. 7-8.
- ⁵ The British Library, Oriental and India Office Collections (hereafter OIOC), Burma Office Files, 9102/39, from Secretary of State to Burma to Governor of Burma, 20 October, 1939, cited in, Taylor, *U Saw*, p. 174.
- ⁶ OIOC, M/3/730, no. 194, Personal telegram by Secretary of State for Burma to Governor of Burma, dated 22nd October, 1939.
- ⁷ *Ibid.*
- ⁸ *Ibid.*, no. 195, telegram from Secretary of State for Burma to Governor of Burma, 23 October, 1939.
- ⁹ *Ibid.*, 492C, from Governor of Burma to Secretary of State for Burma, 17 November, 1939.
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, extract from War Cabinet Conclusions 91(39), dated 22 November, 1939.
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*, M/3/729, Burma Office, 2 July, 1940.
- ¹² *Ibid.*
- ¹³ *Ibid.*, M/3/733, Extract from *The Times*, 16 August, 1941.
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.*, Telegram from the Governor of Burma to Secretary of State for Burma, 16 August, 1941.
- ¹⁵ *Ibid.*, Telegram from Secretary of State for Burma to the Governor of Burma, no. 225, 15 August, 1941.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*, Prime Minister's Personal Minute, M.812/1., 20 August, 1941.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*, Extract from War Cabinet Conclusions 89(41), 4 September, 1941.
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*, From Governor of Burma to Secretary of State for Burma, 26 September, 1941.
- ¹⁹ *Ibid.*, M/3/18, no. 1398, U Saw to Churchill and Amery, 11 November, 1941.
- ²⁰ *Ibid.*, M/3/729, U Saw's letter to *The Times*, 16 October, 1941.
- ²¹ *Ibid.*, M/3/733, From Churchill to U Saw, 3 November, 1941.
- ²² *Ibid.*, Telegram, Halifax to Foreign Office, 22 November, 1941, cited in, Taylor, 'Politics in late Colonial Burma: The Case of U Saw', *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 10, no. 2, 1976, p. 190.
- ²³ Jan Becka, *Burmese National Liberation Movement under Japanese Occupation*, (Prague, 1983), p. 47.
- ²⁴ Burma (Simla) Information Office, *The Burma Handbook* Simla: Government of India Press, 1942, p. 112, cited in Jan Becka, *The National Liberation Movement in Burma during the Japanese Occupation Period (1941-1945)*. Prague: Oriental Institute in Academia, 1983, p. 47.
- ²⁵ Diplomatic Record Office (hereafter DRO), Foreign Ministry, Tokyo, E.3.3.0 J/x1-B1 vol. 2, Telegram no. 245, from Kaneko to Hirota Kōki, Foreign Minister, 29 November, 1937.
- ²⁶ *Ibid.*, Telegram no. 38, from Hirota to Kaneko, 11 November, 1937.
- ²⁷ *Ibid.*, Telegram no. 39, from Hirota to Kaneko, 10 November, 1937.
- ²⁸ *Ibid.*, Telegram no. 5160, from Kaneko to Arita Hachirō, Foreign Minister, 3 November, 1938.
- ²⁹ *Ibid.*, Telegram no. 245, from Kaneko to Hirota, 29 November, 1937.
- ³⁰ Robert Taylor, 'Politics in Late Colonial Burma: The case of U Saw', *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 10, no. 2, p. 165.
- ³¹ Nemoto Kei. *Aung Sang – Fūin sareta Dokuritsu Biruma no Yume*, (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1996), P. 87.
- ³² *Ibid.*, pp. 87-8.
- ³³ Public Record Office (hereafter PRO), Kew, FO371/23566, F13733/4452/23, Japanese activities in Burma. From the Burma Office to the Foreign Office, 22 November, 1938.
- ³⁴ *Ibid.*, F866/866/23, Japanese activities in Burma. From R. L. Crowley, the British Consulate, Tokyo, to the Foreign Office, 26 December, 1938.
- ³⁵ OIOC, M/6/43 From A. H. Seymour to the Under Secretary of State for Burma, 6 January, 1939.
- ³⁶ *Ibid.*
- ³⁷ OIOC, F125/6 Linlithgow papers, Linlithgow to Zetland 23 November 1938 no. 46. Cited in, Antony Best. *British Intelligence and the Japanese Challenge in Asia, 1914-41*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002, p. 152.
- ³⁸ PRO, FO371/23566, F13733/4452/23, from E. P. Donaldson, the Government of Burma, to the Burma Office, 31 January, 1939.
- ³⁹ *Ibid.*, F1856/866/23, from D. T. Monteath, 22 February, 1939.
- ⁴⁰ OIOC, M/5/79 'Reports of a conspiracy to smuggle arms into Burma from Siam', Burma Office memorandum, undated. Cited in, Best, *British Intelligence*, P. 152.
- ⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 'The Bangkok Conspiracy to smuggle arms into Burma with a view to starting a rebellion', 8 August 1939.
- ⁴² *Ibid.*, Burma Defence Bureau to the Burma Office, 8 August 1939.

⁴³ PRO, FO371/23566, F546/103/23 Suspension of export of Wolfram ore from Strait Settlements and Burma, Letter from Kamimura, the Japanese Consul-General at Singapore, 22 January, 1940.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, F866/103/23, Suspension of export of Wolfram ore from Straits Settlement and Burma. C. W. Baxter, Ministry of Economic Warfare, 5 February, 1940.

⁴⁵ PRO, FO371/24731, F2161/102/23: Japanese Trade with Great Britain and Dominions. Memorandum by Shigemitsu, 30 March, 1940.

⁴⁶ PRO FO371/24735, F2485/222/23 Japanese purchase of foreign rice, 4 March 1940. See also Paul H. Kratoska. 'Rice Production in mainland South-East Asia'. In Paul H. Kratoska ed., *Food Supplies and the Japanese Occupation in Southeast Asia*. Houndmills, 1998: p. 14.

⁴⁷ Kurasawa Aiko, 'Transportation and Rice Distribution in South-East Asia during the Second World War', in, Kratoska, p. 32.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

⁴⁹ PRO, FO371/24735, 1101-C, Cochrane, the Governor of Burma, to Craigie, 26 November, 1940.

⁵⁰ Taylor, *U Saw*, p. 174.

⁵¹ New Burma, Rangoon, April 5, 1940, cited in, Becka, p. 65.

⁵² *Ibid.*, June 9, 1940, cited in, op. cit.

⁵³ John Cady, *A History of Modern Burma* (Ithaca, 1958), pp. 149-50.

⁵⁴ Maung, *Burma and General Ne Win*, p. 74.

⁵⁵ Becka, pp. 61-62.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 70.

⁵⁸ Ōta Tsunezō, *Biruma ni okeru Nihon Gunsei-shi no Kenkyū* [A Study of the Japanese Military Occupation in Burma] (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbun-kan, 1967), pp. 26-7.

⁵⁹ Izumiya Tatsurō, *Biruma Dokuritsū Hishi – Sono na ha Minami Bōryaku Kikan* (Tokyo, 1967), Yamamoto Masayoshi, *Biruma Kōsaku to Chōryaku Shōkō* (Tokyo, 1978).

⁶⁰ Ōta Tsunezō, p. 461.

⁶¹ Joyce Lebra, *Japanese Trained Armies in Southeast Asia* (New York, 1977), Woon Zoon, *Japan's scheme for the liberation of Burma: The role of the Minami Kikan and the "Thirty Comrades"* (Athens, Ohio, 1973).

⁶² Robert Taylor, 'Burma in the Anti-Fascist War', in, Alfred W. McCoy ed., *Southeast Asia under the Japanese Occupation* (New Haven, 1980). This work is one of few studies that questioned the impact of the pre-war and war-time Japanese presence on the development of Burmese nationalist movements.

⁶³ Frank N. Trager, *Burma: Japanese Military Administration, Selected Documents, 1941-45* (Philadelphia, University of Philadelphia Press: 1978), pp. 27-31.

⁶⁴ See Chapter 2 of this thesis. In his conversation with Craigie on 17 January 1941, Matsuoka stated that Burma was a part of Japan's southern expansion programme. PRO, FO371/27878, F298/12/23, Craigie to Foreign Office, 20 January 1941.

⁶⁵ Bōei-chō, Bōei Kenkyū-jo, Senshi Henshi-bu. *Shiryō-shū Nanpō no Gunsei*. (Tokyo, 1985), p. 568-70.

Chapter 4

The Start of the Japanese Occupation and British Reconstruction Planning in Burma, December 1941 – March 1943.

The war that started with Japan's audacious attack on Pearl Harbor and its offensive against Malaya resulted in an astonishingly successful outcome for the Japanese during its initial phase. A string of unbroken victories, largely brought about by exceptional ingenuity and tenacity as well as considerable rapidity, was achieved all through Southeast Asia and Pacific – ranging from Malaya, Burma, the Netherlands East Indies and the Philippines to various Pacific islands. By the beginning of March 1942, Japan had subjugated most of the Southern regions, which was an achievement well beyond the expectation of the most sanguine policy-makers in Tokyo.

In the middle of this swift military campaign, Japan's Prime Minister, Tōjō Hideki, made a speech to the House of Peers in the 79th Diet session on 21 January 1942 and pulled together the threads of short-term and long-term planning behind the Japanese policy. Tōjō proclaimed that the aim of Japan's war struggle against the Western Powers was to establish 'the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere' and secure an order of co-existence based on ethical principles in which Japan would serve as its core. At the same time, the announcement revealed Japan's plan to grant independence to Burma and the Philippines, while occupied areas vital for the defence of 'Greater East Asia' such as Malaya and Hong Kong were to be held under Japanese rule for the purpose of augmenting its fighting strength. *Asahi Shinbun*, one of the major Japanese newspapers, commented on his speech in a series of editorials and appraised it as 'a groundbreaking policy statement'. The newspaper stated that Tōjō's vision outsmarted the Atlantic Charter, a symbol of dominant Western imperialism, by acknowledging the liberation of Asia as one of the important goals of Japan's war effort.¹

Nevertheless, Japan could by no means be wild with joy over the unexpected scale of the success achieved by the initial campaigns. The Japanese advance was certainly a heavy blow to the Western Powers in terms of their execution of the ongoing war and future presence in the region. Yet this sudden emergence of an empire also brought Japan immense responsibilities that posed Tokyo with a number of serious problems. As a result of the military campaigns, control of Southeast Asia now became far from being a purely military matter and the Japanese suddenly found them assuming tremendous obligations, ruling a vast area that contained various races and peoples in different stages of political and economic development. The Japanese faced this reality, while having made very little preparations to devise a coherent scheme for these occupied territories.

The previous chapters of this study have examined the growing interest of Tokyo since the latter half of the 1930s in expanding its economic and political as well as military influence over Southeast Asia. Following the endorsement of the policy document, '*Kokusaku no Kijun*' [the Fundamentals of National Policy] of the Five Ministers' Conference in August 1936, voices from various segments of Japanese elites had been heard advocating the expansion of the country's trade as well as the strengthening of broader economic ties with the southern region. In the political and military sphere, too, Japan had seen the development of vigorous activities in the region especially subsequent to the outbreak of the European War. Nevertheless, as has been suggested in the previous chapters, the pre-war Japanese policy towards the region was primarily focused on the increase of Japan's political, economic as well as military presence which, at the most, aimed at establishing a loose sphere of influence. It was less than one month before its attack on Pearl Harbour that the Japanese started to give serious consideration to how it could rule the Western possessions in Southeast Asia as an integral economic and political unit of the 'Co-Prosperity Sphere'.

Intellectually, too, the number of academic studies on Southeast Asia was close to minimal and general knowledge of the countries in the region was not widely shared among the Japanese policy-planners. As Grant Goodman has pointed out, Japan's political, military and cultural energies had been heavily focused on Northeast Asia largely due to Japan's sinic cultural heritage and its historic fear of Russia. Moreover, Japan had a relatively profitable trading relationship with most of Southeast Asia by dealing almost exclusively with colonial officials and Chinese merchants, despite its occasional conflict of interests with the colonial powers of the region. Accordingly, the position of Southeast Asia as a subject of academic study was rather marginal in contrast to the prestige given to the study of Northeast Asia whose peoples, languages, and cultures were well known in Japan.² Consequently, as a Planning Board memorandum of 1943 admitted, most of the information concerning Asia had to be 'derived from existing enemy resources'.³ Thus the sudden chance of realising a new order in Southeast Asia revealed a remarkable lack of preparation by the Japanese. It was in this context that the Japanese government, in haste, started consideration of the detailed occupation policy planning towards Southeast Asia.

***Dai-tōa Kensetsu Shingi-kai* and Japan's policy planning for the Co-Prosperity Sphere**

Conventional studies produced in the past have been inclined to emphasise the dominant

influence of the military within the decision-making process and largely examine the policy-planning process in conjunction with study of the military operations. The role of the civilian elements of the central government in formulating a coherent occupation scheme has attracted less attention partly due to the paucity of relevant materials. However, an examination of the wartime policy planning by the civilian segment of the central government level is important for two reasons.

Firstly, the Japanese occupation planning was an attempt to administer the territories under its control as a single political and economic unit which required detailed study and preparation beyond purely military matters. Such planning involved careful consideration of a scheme to form a self-sufficient and exclusive political and economic bloc in the region. Policy co-ordination among the various segments of the government was therefore indispensable in order to integrate the vast area stretching from Manchuria to Burma. Secondly, the occupied territories of the Southern region had been colonial possessions of the Western powers, and the military lacked sufficient expertise in contrast to its substantial knowledge and experience in China. The control of those colonies therefore required the assistance of those segments of the government that were well versed in European affairs. These factors, combined with the serious shortage of man-power caused by the over-stretched military operations all over the region, enabled the civilian decision-makers to exert their influence on the occupation policy-planning.⁴ The establishment of *Dai-Tōa Kensetsu Shingi-kai* [the Council for the Construction of the Greater East Asia] was one of the notable examples indicating that the Japanese occupation planning was undertaken by a number of Japanese leaders with both military and civilian backgrounds.

The council, affiliated to the Planning Board, was set up on 10 February 1942 with the approval of the Cabinet. As the document titled '*Dai-Tōa Kensetsu Shingi-kai secchi ni kansuru ken*' [On the establishment of the Council for the Construction of the Greater East Asia] stated, the council was designed to assist the formulation of the basic occupation policy for the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere through co-ordination between the leaders of various groups both inside and outside the government.⁵ The Council was divided into seven sub-committees presided over by the general board [*Dai-ichi Bukaī*] and each sub-committee was responsible for policy planning in separate fields such as education and culture, population, economy, industry, agriculture, trade and finance, and transport. The directorship of the general board was assumed by the Prime Minister, Tōjō Hideki, and the sub-committees were chaired by the active ministers of the Cabinet. Among them, Suzuki Teiichi, Minister of State, headed the fourth committee dealing with general economic policy, while Kishi Nobusuke, Minister of Commerce and Industry, and Kaya Okinori, Minister of Finance, served as the chairs of sub-committees dealing with

industrial and trade and financial policy respectively. Furthermore, the committee members consisted of a number of influential figures from the military as well as the political and business communities: among them were Arita Hachirō, Shiratori Toshio, Koiso Kuniaki, Ayukawa Gisuke and Tsuda Shingo.⁶

Table 4.1 List of Member of ‘Dai-tōa Kensetsu Shingikal’ Subcommittees

	Policy Area	Chair	Example of committee members
First Committee	General Policy	Tōjō Hideki, Prime Minister	Arita Hachirō, Koiso Kuniaki, Kuhara Fusanosuke, Machida Chūji
Second Committee	Education	Hashida Kunihiko, Minister of Education	Andō Kōtarō, Hosokawa Moritatsu, Inoue Ikutarō, Tokutomi Iichirō
Third Committee	Population	Koizumi Chikahiko, Minister of Health	Fujiyama Aichirō, Ito Bunkichi, Tsuda Shingo, Takahashi Sankichi
Fourth Committee	Economy	Suzuki Teiichi, Minister of State	Ayukawa Gisuke, Ishiguro Tadaatsu, Sakurauchi Yukio, Tsuda Shingo
Fifth Committee	Mining, Industry, Electricity	Kishi Nobusuke, Minister of Commerce	Fujiwara Ginjirō, Hirao Hachisaburō, Ōkōchi Masatoshi, Tsuda Shingo
Sixth Committee	Agriculture, Forestry, Fishery	Ino Hiroya, Minister of Agriculture and Forestry	Ishiguro Tadaatsu, Shimada Toshio
Seventh Committee	Trade and Finance	Kaya Okinori, Minister of Finance	Ōkubo Toshikata, Ishiwata Sōtarō, Kodama Kenji, Yūki Toyotarō
Eighth Committee	Transport	Terashima Ken, Minister of Communications	Matsumoto Kenjirō, Ōtani Noboru

Source: constructed from Akashi Yōji and Ishii Hitoshi (eds.) *Dai-Tōa Shingikal Kankai Shirō vol. 1*. Tokyo, Ryōkei Shosha: 1995, pp. 4-5.

The discussions of the Council committees that were held mainly during the first half of 1942 are noteworthy for they clearly reveal the scale of problems that Japan had to face as a result of the sudden expansion of its empire, and the views of the Japanese leaders on how the country should deal with them. One of the notable characteristics of Tokyo's scheme was its emphasis on the importance of Japan's self-proclaimed 'intrinsic value' serving as a vital ideological basis for the new empire. The Council vigorously stated in the document '*Dai-tōa kensetsu ni kansuru Kiso Yōken*' [the fundamentals for the construction of Greater East Asia] that Japan's ultimate object in the current war was 'to build a new order in Greater East Asia' based on its own moral principles.⁷ Such an order staunchly rejected the influence of the Western ideas and the systems upon which the country had sought to model itself as a modern power. Japan must eliminate the 'pernicious influences' of Western liberalism, democracy, and imperialism and create a world more suitable for the traditional Japanese values of harmony, purity, and selflessness. The Co-Prosperity

Sphere, built on the foundation not of Western ideas but of such moral principles, was designed to eliminate the vested interests and presence of the Anglo-American powers and liberate the peoples of 'Greater East Asia' from Western aggression. Under the Japanese leadership, the territories were expected to 'assume their proper place' within the Co-Prosperity Sphere and willingly co-operate with Japan, the liberator, for the construction of such an order.

In spite of their denial of Western influences, the Japanese leaders were not in any way opposed to the idea of the development and industrialisation of the occupied region. They claimed that centuries of Western domination and colonialism had restrained, rather than encouraged, Asian development. Japanese policy, stressing mutual dependence, co-operation and harmony, would pursue 'the growth and development of industries best suited to individual territories and of resources that are most abundant'.⁸ Far more than a conventional struggle merely pursuing security and expansion of its territories, it was, they asserted, a necessary step to expel the Anglo-American presence from Asia and realise the complete transformation of international relations based on the principle of 'co-existence and co-prosperity'. Thus Japan sought to proclaim a vision of the new Asia which would ouster the existing influence of the West and create a new regional order replacing the Western colonialism.

Nevertheless, no matter how attractive it sounded as a political proposition, this vision neglected the economic reality surrounding Japan's newly formed sphere of influence. One of the important characteristics of the pre-war economic structure in Southeast Asia was its close trade links with the suzerain powers. As a producer of primary commodities and a market for industrial products, Southeast Asia had consistently been dependent on outside economic forces, in which the Western powers played a dominating part. Prior to the outbreak of the war, more than 50 per cent of exports from Southeast Asian colonies were primary products that went to the ruling country as well as other colonial possessions in the region. Imports to the region also indicated the similar tendency: the manufactured products of the West and primary commodities produced within the region constituted the overwhelming portion of the total amount. Despite the fact that Thailand remained an independent country of the region, its economy was also closely integrated in the colonial economic structure and heavily reliant on trade with the colonies and suzerain powers of the region.⁹ In the face of the 'dire lack of accurate information on the Southern region', it was 'in reality, extremely difficult' for Japan to take over the control of the economy of such a scale which contained countries in various stages of development.¹⁰

Table 4.2 Trade Balance In Southeast Asia (1938)

[Export]

	Burma	Indochina	Netherlands East Indies	Malaya	Philippines	Thailand
Britain	18.8(%)	3.3	5.3	14.2	2.6	1.4
British Colonies	59.5	13.7	28.2	13.2	1.4	71.0
Netherlands*	2.7	5.3	20.4	7.0	2.2	5.7
France*	-	53.0	1.7	7.5	1.4	-
The United States	3.6	5.4	13.6	29.8	77.2	11.1
Japan	6.9	2.9	3.1	9.3	6.5	1.2
Other	8.6	16.5	27.7	19.0	8.7	9.6

[Import]

	Burma	Indochina	Netherlands East Indies	Malaya	Philippines	Thailand
Britain	12.7(%)	2.1	8.0	18.4	2.1	11.8
British Colonies	70.3	19.6	15.5	11.4	3.6	42.8
Netherlands*	0.6	1.0	22.2	27.4	4.4	6.9
France*	-	47.3	2.0	2.7	1.2	-
The United States	0.2	8.8	12.6	3.1	68.1	4.7
Japan	1.8	3.1	15.0	2.2	9.6	14.8
Other	14.4	18.2	24.8	34.8	11.1	19.1

*The figure of Netherlands and France include their colonial possessions

Source: Nanyō Kyōkai ed., *Nanpō-ken Bōeki Tokai-hyō*, Tokyo, Nihon Hyōron-sha: 1942

If controlling the economy of the old Western colonies was a delicate task to handle in itself, it was made even more difficult by Japan's pledge to wipe out the Western influence and create a new economic system in the region. It is important to note that the position of pre-war Japan within the trade structure of Southeast Asia was rather peripheral. As is indicated in the tables above, the proportion of Japanese exports towards Southeast Asian countries was confined to around 10 per cent of the total amount. The country's share of imports from the region also indicated a similar value. Against this background, the task lying in front of Japan was immense. The conquest of Southeast Asia in early 1942 greatly simplified Japan's economic goals of bringing about the nullification of the West as competitive powers in the region. However, the sudden extension of the Japanese empire also meant that Japan would have to assume the role as the exclusive importer of primary products and raw materials as well as the sole exporter of manufactured products to the occupied territories. Japan, in no way, had the economic capabilities to involve itself in

such an undertaking. It was apparent that Japan was suffering from a serious shortage of various commodities while the southern region had materials which were required urgently. Raw materials such as oil and rubber would have to be imported immediately in order to strengthen the empire's economic capability. That would lead to an immense trade imbalance between Japan and the region.

The members of the committee were not unaware of these grave economic implications. Indeed, the economic aspects of the occupation policy was the major issue on the Council's agenda, which was indicated by the fact that four out of eight sub-committees were designed for the consideration of economic affairs. On 19 March 1942, the 4th committee was established for formulating the basic economic policy and commenced intensive discussions under the chair of the Minister of State, Suzuki Teiichi. One of the issues that particularly concerned the committee members was how Japan could fit its economic policy planning into the country's pledged causes for the war effort. The idea of replacing the existing colonial structure in the region with its own new order had considerable appeal as a slogan, but it was, to say the least, problematic as a practical basis of Japan's economic policy. The implication of the idea was that Japan had to face the formidable task of creating an exclusive self-sufficient economy in Asia by completely removing present economic and financial systems that had been formed under centuries of Western colonial rule. As the minutes of the committee meetings reveal, serious doubt was cast by some committee members on the practicability of the policy of integrating the region into the newly formed regional economy and developing its potential as a mainstay of the empire's economic power.¹¹ Japan was here put in an ironic situation. As the committee bluntly stated, the only way to build up a strong regional economy was to ignore the imbalance and 'exploit the resources of the South'¹², which was precisely what Japan denounced as the misdeed of the 'Western Imperial powers'.

Nevertheless, from the viewpoint of many of the committee members, this was an entirely justified measure to implement as the leader of the 'Co-Prosperity Sphere'. Japan's so-called 'exploitation' of the southern region was, Suzuki stated, 'different from that of the Western colonial rulers by its nature'. For the empire was committed to undertake the policy 'for the purpose of guarding the region from the aggression of the Anglo-Saxon powers'.¹³ What also differentiated the Japanese efforts from those of the Western colonial powers was the fact that it was a 'temporary measure, which can be called as 'co-operation rather than exploitation'' in contrast to the systematic and permanent exploitation by the West. It was a phase in a long-term process that all members of the 'Greater East Asia' had to carry on collectively for the sake of building the 'Co-Prosperity Sphere'.¹⁴ The Committee went on to reason that Japan was making great sacrifices and fighting against

the aggression of the Allied Powers for the cause of the people in the region. Besides being the natural right of a conquering nation, it was therefore an obligation for the people of Southeast Asia to assist Japan's struggle and endure the short-term difficulties which were to be expected in the course of the establishment of the new order. Thus the Japanese policy makers assumed in a sanguine manner that the people would willingly tolerate the economic problems such as the trade imbalance and sacrifice themselves for its 'noble cause' if Japan endeavoured to explain the nature of its current war-effort.¹⁵

As a consequence of the discussions held during March and April 1942, the policy document '*Dai-tōa Keizai Kensetsu Kihon Hōsaku*' [the Fundamentals of the Establishment of the Great East Asian Economy] was endorsed by the General Board on 4 May and approved by the Cabinet Meeting four days later. '*Dai-tōa Kinyū Zaisei oyobi Kōeki Kihon Seisaku*' [the Fundamentals of Financial and Trade Policy in the Greater East Asia] was also drafted by the 7th Committee, which had been set up for the formulation of more substantial policy planning in the economic, trade and financial fields.¹⁶ The documents clearly reveal the three main policy goals of Japan's economic planning during the initial period of the occupation. Firstly, these plans emphasised the supremacy of Japan as the leading nation of the 'Co-Prosperity Sphere', and the speedy reinforcement of Japan's economic ability to execute the total war was ranked as the foremost priority of economic policy.¹⁷ Secondly, Japan staunchly rejected the Western economic ideas and systems based on individualism and liberalism that were inimical to the innate Japanese values. The documents pledged that 'the empire is to reject erodent Western concepts such as internationalism, liberalism and capitalism, and establish the economy on the basis of a new concept'.¹⁸ Thirdly, the policy demanded various forms of 'burden-sharing' in the occupied territories to assist the establishment of an autarchic economic bloc. In the area of trade within Greater East Asia, the top priority was given to the supply of vital raw materials from the occupied territories. Moreover, the export of materials from Japan to strengthen the empire's war capability was placed as the highest priority ahead of the export of consumer products that were urgently needed for maintaining the people's livelihood in the region. Thus the documents demanded various contributions by the occupied territories 'according to the capability of each territory'.¹⁹ On 7 August, the policy plans proposed by the Council, ranging from education, economy, finance, agriculture, and communications, were transmitted to the headquarters of the military administrations in the region and issued on the command of the superintendents [*Gunsei Kanbu Shirei*]. These proposals were also sanctioned by the Liaison Conference of 19 August and became the basis of the Japanese occupation policy.²⁰

As has been illustrated by the discussions of the Japanese leaders in the Council, the

questions which preoccupied the minds of Japanese policy-makers were how the country could make maximum use of the resources in the newly acquired territories and how such measures could be fitted into the ideological framework of Japan's 'new order'. Japan sought to justify the prospective problems of its economy policy with the ideological reasoning of 'Liberation of Asia from the Western exploitation'. These were the characteristics which became even more apparent in the policy of the local military administrations in the occupied territories.

The Japanese Military Administration in Burma

As was the case in the other target territories, the Japanese military offensive in Burma brought an unexpected scale of success during the initial phase of the campaign. Japan launched its attack against Burma from French Indo-China which was already secured as the foothold of operations before Pearl Harbor. Its strategy was to mobilise the 15th Army for the takeover of Thailand and the conquest of Burma with the support of the 10th Air Brigade. A Japanese-Thai agreement was signed on 8 December and Rangoon suffered its first air raid within a few weeks. During December the Japanese secured the Kra Isthmus area, took over Victoria Point, the southernmost town in Burma and this was followed by a northwestward drive through Burma. Soon Tenasserim fell under Japan's control together with the strategic ports and airfields of Mergui, Tavoy and Moulmein. Within the next five months, most of Burma was swept by the Japanese advance; Rangoon fell on 8 March, Toungoo, 30 March, Prome, April 2, Magwe, 16 April, Lashio, 29 April, Mandalay, 1 May, and Myitkyina, 8 May. By the end of May, Japan had conquered most of Burma with its resources such as rice, oil, tungsten, and manganese as well as its population numbering around 16 million.

One of the important policies that the Japanese devised for Southeast Asia immediately after occupation was to mobilise the whole of the occupied territories to support their war effort and make them dependable partners in the GEACPS, and Burma was not an exception. Soon after establishing local control in Burma, the Japanese military government organized by the 15th Army set up an independent group designated to manage propaganda affairs [*Senden-han*] and undertook a series of campaigns by employing various media including newspapers, pamphlets, books, pamphlets, photographs and radio broadcasting. It can be said that propaganda was, from the very beginning of the occupation, one of the most important tasks of the military government. Japan saw it as vital means to influence people's minds [*Minshin ha'aku*] and propagandise

and tame them [*Senbu kōsaku*] for the purpose of ensuring the maximum mobilisation of the country's human and natural resources.²¹ To achieve the overriding goals of the propaganda campaign, a number of *bunkajin* ('men of culture' or intellectuals) were recruited and utilised: among those sent to Burma were Takami Jun, Oda Takeo, Toyoda Saburō and Yamamoto Kazuo, some of Japan's well-established writers of the time. Under the supervision of *Senden-han*, they engaged in various propaganda activities that aimed at educating the Burmese people in the importance of the Greater East Asia war and the establishment of the GEACPS as a part of the struggle for 'Asian liberation'.²² It has to be noted, however, that despite the vigorous attempt to depict themselves as 'liberators' of Asia, the Japanese occupation policy towards Burma was actually shifting in completely the opposite direction.

One of the most notable transformations brought about by this unexpectedly successful military campaign in Burma was a change in the Japanese stance towards independence of the country. During the initial Japanese offensive in Burma, the Minami Kikan and the Burma Independence Army (BIA) took part in the operations as an independent military unit in accordance with the pre-war planning. The BIA was organised in Thailand and received weapons and equipment of the standard and scale for three infantry battalions. Small advance contingents were despatched in December 1941 for a mission to reach Rangoon before the entrance of the main Japanese force. Meanwhile, their underground political supporters in Burma engaged in activities to organise, recruit and prepare for the arrival of the Japanese. During the period of late March to early April, Colonel Suzuki established what was called the 'Burma Baho Government' and appointed Thakin Tun Ok, one of the Thirty Comrades, as the chief administrator of Burma. However, the central government set up Suzuki was short-lived. At the beginning of June, the Burma Baho Government under Thakin Ok was superseded by an administration under the direct control of the Japanese. Moreover, a decision was made to disband the Minami Kikan and the Burma Independence Army. Suzuki was assigned a new post in the Imperial Headquarters and the BIA was reorganised as the Burma Defence Army under the control of Aung Sang at less than 15 per cent of its earlier strength.²³ Thus a coalition of the various nationalists groups, known as the Executive Administration, was established by the order of General Iida Shojirō, the commander of the 15th Army, and Dr. Ba Maw was appointed as the chief administrator on 1 August.

As had been indicated in a policy proposal by *Minami Kikan* on the eve of the war, the main objective of the Japanese operation in Burma had been to destroy the existing political organisation and create turbulence in the country through the activities of a volunteer army established by that organ. Under the initiative of Colonel Suzuki, an

independent government was to be formed by capable members of the Burmese nationalist movement following the completion of the Japanese occupation.²⁴ One of the most important motives in Tokyo's approval of this planning was closely related to its design towards India. As a part of its attempt to eliminate British influence from the region, the Japanese were actively involved in support of Indian nationalist movements. Following the outbreak of the war in Asia, the Indian Independence League and the Indian National Army were organised among captured Indian troops and the sizable Indian civilian population in Malaya and Burma. The initial granting of independence to Burma therefore was endorsed partly due to Japan's calculation that such a measure would give impetus to its ongoing project to utilise anti-British nationalist sentiments in India.²⁵

Nevertheless, the Japanese design towards Burma underwent a major transition in the face of the unexpected scale of its military success in the area. As a result of its military operations, Japan managed to take the whole country under its control within 6 months and Burma became a vital forefront of the war effort bordering two belligerent countries, Britain and China. Burma was not only a country where an Allied counteroffensive was expected but also held the key to the Japanese attempt to conclude the war against China by cutting off important supply lines to Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist regime. The vital strategic position of Burma therefore made it all the more imperative for Japan to undertake direct rule of the country. Thus the Imperial Headquarters designated Burma as one of the areas where it should 'set up military administration' by the end of June along with British Malaya, Sumatra, Java and British Borneo by the end of June.²⁶ Burma's role as a key strategic area for the defence of the 'Greater East Asia' thus took precedence over its function as a base for Japanese support towards the Indian nationalists.

The new overall objective of the Japanese occupation in Burma was articulated in the policy document titled '*Hayashi Shūdan Senryō-chi Tōchi Yōkō*' [General Plan for the Control of the Occupied Areas under the Hayashi Army Group] issued by Iida Shōjirō, the Commander of the Army Group on 15 March 1942. The document stated that 'Burma, in all respects, would be entirely liberated from the British yoke and establish close military and economic ties with the Imperial Japan'. In spite of its advocacy of the need to establish an independent government in Burma in the future, the Japanese bluntly declared that the actual realisation of such a measure could only be expected after the end of the conflict. The question of independence should not be mentioned for the time being in order to 'avoid any unfavourable reaction' and the Burmese people must be 'carefully guided so as not to lose their hope for the future.'²⁷ This was precisely the stance Britain had taken prior to the war and now 'Burma for the Burmese', the slogan that Prime Minister Tōjō had eagerly advocated 6 months before, ceased to mean the immediate independence of the country.

This sudden change in the Japanese stance was a clear reflection of the shift in the emphasis of the occupation policy.

Economic factors also played a vital role in bringing about the shift in Japan's stance towards the independence of Burma. Japan's economic problems became even more immense now that the scale of war had expanded from China to almost the entire area of Asia and the Pacific. Burma, rich in natural resources, had to be integrated into the 'Co-Prosperity Sphere' as one of the permanent sources of supplies. Japan's economic designs in Burma were clearly indicated in the above mentioned document, '*Hayashi Shūdan Senryō-chi Tōchi Yōkō*' of 15 March. The fundamental objectives of the Japanese economic policy in Burma was to strengthen Japan's economic power and reduce its economic burden during the establishment of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. In order to attain these primary goals, British and American financial dominance had to be terminated and a new economic structure established as the basis of the GEACPS.²⁸ Important resources were to be promptly exploited and procured in order to increase Japan's ability to execute the total war. Great emphasis was to be placed on both the development and procurement of important resources. Moreover, Japan declared that important industries, trading, and exchange would be controlled by the occupation forces while enforcing an economic blockade against the United States and Great Britain (including India).²⁹ Reflecting the policy of the central government, the Japanese military administration in Burma pledged the complete removal of Western economic influence and its replacement by a new economic order. What the establishment of the Japanese new order meant was, as revealed by the planning, that Japan would impose controls over every aspect of the Burmese economy which would be made to serve Japanese economic objectives instead of those of the British.

Japan had two primary objectives in ruling Burma as a part of the 'Greater East Asia' economy. Firstly, Burma was expected to function as a source of vital raw materials that were to be exported to Japan in order to strengthen its war capability. In particular, the Japanese were keen to exploit the mineral resources abundant in Burma: among these were petroleum and non-ferrous metals (copper, lead zinc, tungsten, cobalt and nickel)³⁰. For that purpose, the military administration confiscated the four major British petroleum firms operating in the country prior to the war: the Burma Oil Company, the British-Burma Petroleum Company, the Indo-Burma Petroleum Company and the Irrawaddy Petroleum Syndicate. These companies were put under the direct control of the Japanese occupation authority which would gradually entrust their management to government-designated Japanese firms. The same measures were also imposed on the British mining companies. The Burma Corporation, Mawchi Mine Ltd., the Anglo-Burma Tin Corporation,

Consolidated Tin Mines of Burma Ltd., and Tavoy Tine Mines Ltd. came to be controlled by the military administration and were to be handed over to Japanese companies.³¹

Secondly, the Japanese military administration assigned Burma the role of an exporter of daily commodities to the territories within the Co-Prosperity Sphere. It was a measure designed to achieve the self-sufficiency of the occupied regions and minimise the economic burden on the Japanese. Japan planned to export commodities such as rice, rice polish, teakwood, millet and oxhide from Burma. To accomplish its economic objectives, the Japanese administration exercised strict control over the distribution system and allowed large Japanese trading companies to monopolise the trade between Japan and Burma. Prior to the outbreak of the conflict, only a few Japanese companies, both large zaibatsu companies and medium-sized enterprises, had established branches or representative offices in Burma to conduct foreign trade in competition with European merchant houses, overseas Chinese merchants and other traders. The commercial activities of the Japanese trading companies within the country were relatively inactive before 1942 largely due to the fact that Burma's principal export commodities, such as rice, were under the dominant control of British firms based in London.³² However, as the record of the Japanese Occupation Army indicates, nine Japanese firms - Mitsui Bussan Kabushiki Kaisha, Mitsubishi Shoji, Senda Shokai, Nihon Menka, Daishin Bōeki, Hata Shokai, Nanyō Shōkō, Shionogi Shōten, and Nissan Jidōsha - were designated as government-authorized traders by the end of September.³³ The appointment of those authorised companies was coupled with the establishment of Burmese branches by a number of Japanese firms. As shown in the table below, thirteen firms set up their branches in Burma and the military administration granted monopolies over trade in certain commodities or in particular area. By July 1943, the number of Japanese companies active in Burma rose to thirty-two.³⁴ Thus, from the outset of the military occupation, a number of Japanese firms were able to enjoy a virtual monopoly of the domestic and foreign trades in the absence of their European and other competitors.

Table 4.3 List of Japanese Companies opened branches in Burma (as of 31 July, 1942)

Company Name	Type of Business
Ataka Sangyō K.K.	Purchasing of mines in Yamethin area. Operation of Burma Aluminum Factory and Joint management of Machine Tool manufacturing Co.
Daimaru K.K.	Collecting of hemp bags. Manufacturing of alcohol. Operation of enemy owned factories in Akyab area.
Kanegafuchi Shōji K.K.	Collecting of Burma tea and wool.
Kobayashi Mining Company.	Operation of the Mawchi Mines.
Kōshō K.K.	Cultivating, collecting and processing of cotton and hemp. Throstle spinning business. Cotton mill. Dealing with beef suet.

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Maruei K.K.	Operation of chinaware factory. Operation of laundry shops. Poultry farms. Collecting of textile rags.
Mitsubishi Kōgyō K.K.	Tavoy Mines. Purchase of mines in the Tenassarim area.
Mitsubishi Shōji K.K.	Leather. Tanning Materials. Management of Burma Engineering Co.
Mitsui Bussan Kabushiki Kaisha	Collecting of castor beans in the Tenasserim area.
Nichimen Jitsugyō	Cultivating, collecting processing of cotton and hemp. Manufacturing vehicles. Throstle spinning business. Management of knitting factories and Starch Mill Co.
Sankō K.K.	Production of straw goods. Manufacturing of agricultural equipment. Operation of cast metal manufacturing company. Soap manufacturing. Collecting of soda ingredients. Manufacturing of soda for medical purposes.
Senda Shōkai K. K.	Cultivating and processing of hemp. Collecting of lacquer liquid, rosin and turpentine. Operation of Universal Machine Tool Co.
Tōyō Menka K.K.	Distribution of resources.

Source: Constructed from '*Kigyō Tantō Shōsha Ichiranhyō, Sangyō-bu Kankai* [List of Industrial Companies engaged in Business in Burma] in Ōta Tsunezō, *Biruma ni okeru nihon Gunsei-shi no Kenkyū*, Tokyo 1964 pp. 570-71.

In contrast to its detailed and strict planning for resource acquisition, the Japanese military administration paid little attention to its role as the sole supplier of commodities for Burma. As indicated in the two tables below, pre-war Burma shared one of the tendencies common in most of the Western dependencies in the region: a lack of sufficient industrial capacity to secure domestic supply of daily commodities and a heavy reliance on the ruling counties to sustain its balance of trade. In the case of Burma, India, Britain and its other colonial territories constituted well over 85% of its total sum of exports between 1935 and 1940, while about 80% of Burma's imports during the same period came from within the British Empire. Under these circumstances, it was evident that the Japanese occupation of Burma would lead to the interruption of trade with India and other parts of the British Empire and inevitably cause extreme economic disruption.

Table 4.4 Burma: percentage of trade, 1935-40.

Export

	1935-36	1936-37	1937-38	1938-39	1939-40
India	63(%)	62.3	50.9	54.4	60.0
Britain	10.6	10.9	16.9	12.7	13.2
Other British colonies	13.2	13.3	17.6	15.9	14.4
Total of British Empire	86.7	86.4	85.4	83.0	87.6
Japan	2.8	4.0	2.3	1.8	4.0
Germany	2.3	2.0	3.8	3.8	1.3
Netherlands	1.2	1.6	1.5	0.6	0.2
China (except Hong Kong)	1.2	0.5	0.5	0.4	0.8
Others	5.8	5.4	6.4	10.3	6.1

Import

	1935-36	1936-37	1937-38	1938-39	1939-40
India	47.8(%)	50.2	49.2	53.9	55.4
Britain	22.8	19.0	20.1	18.8	17.2
Other British colonies	5.1	5.2	5.0	5.6	5.0
Total of British Empire	75.7	74.4	74.3	78.3	77.6
Japan	11.3	11.0	8.8	6.9	8.0
Germany	2.4	2.7	3.3	2.3	1.2
Netherlands	1.2	1.2	1.9	2.7	1.4
China (except Hong Kong)	0.3	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.5
Others	9.2	10.5	11.5	9.6	11.3

Source: Constructed from, Nanyō Kyōkai, ed. *Nanpō-Ken Bōeki Tokai-Hyō*. Tokyo: Nihon Hyōron-sha, 1942.

The Japanese military administration in Burma was aware of the gravity of the problem as was indicated in '*Hayashi Shūdan Gunsei Jisshi Yōryō, Sangyo no Bu*' [Summary of Enforcement of the Military Administration for the Hayashi Army Group – Industrial Matters], issued by the military administration on April 1942. The document stated that special measures would be required in order to integrate Burma's economy into that of 'Greater East Asia'. As its trade had been dominated by the members of the British Empire, Japan expected to face a number of difficulties in Burma ranging from a surplus in export goods, shortage of import goods, a fall in the price of native products, a rise in the price of the necessities of life and unrest in the life of the natives. Nevertheless, the Japanese simply stated as measures to meet the situation that 'special attention must be paid to preventing such conditions'. Since these problems could not be settled through

trade alone, 'it is', the document went on to say, 'essential that the control of commodity distribution be carried out in conjunction with propaganda and pacification measures'.³⁵ Moreover, it noted that the pressure upon the people's livelihood, due to the procurement of resources for national defence and self-support of the Japanese army in the areas, 'shall be applied to the utmost of their endurance'.³⁶

'*Showa 17 nendo Biruma Busshi Kōryū Keikaku – Minju-yō*' [Trade Planning for the Civilian Demand of Burma in the Year 1942], endorsed in July, further reveals the lack of concern for the welfare of the Burmese people in the Japanese economic planning. As part of the attempt to achieve self-sufficiency in the occupied territories and to minimise the economic burden of the Japanese, Japan assigned Burma the role as an exporter of rice. 286,000 tons was planned to be exported to Japan, 66,000 tons to Philippines and 272,000 tons to Malaya. In exchange for the rice, Japan supplied 50,000 tons of salt and 10,000 of sugar from Java and 10,000 tons of cement and 100,000 tons of coal in 1942. Nevertheless, most of the mineral resources of Burma were requisitioned for the Japanese war effort. Japan also neglected its important role as a dominant supplier of manufactured goods such as machinery, textiles and chemical products. It was estimated that Burma would require supplies from Japan amounting to 115,000,000 rupees in the year 1942. Japan, however, decided to assign only 13,119,000 rupees of supplies, approximately a tenth of what Burma requested.³⁷ The outcome of the policy was apparent: the loss of vital commodities would cause considerable hardship for the people in Burma.

What becomes evident from the initial policy planning undertaken by the Japanese is that the *Dai-tōa Kyōeiken* was a self-oriented project designed to serve the Japanese interest of strengthening its war capabilities. Japan, as the leader of the new order, would control every aspect of political and economic affairs in the region, and the welfare of the people in occupied territories were wholly subordinated to the need of Japan's war efforts. This pattern would also characterise Japanese policy in Burma throughout the period of occupation.

The political impact of the Japanese occupation on Britain

Japan's sweeping victory had a considerable impact on various aspects of the British war effort as well as on the other Western colonial powers in Southeast Asia. Before the beginning of the conflict, a sense of optimism was shared in London that the Japanese offensive could be held on the Malayan Peninsula for a period long enough to co-ordinate an effective strategy with the Netherlands and the United States. Nevertheless, this illusion - which prevailed widely among British and American politicians and military commanders -

was shattered from the first day of the conflict. The Japanese started its offensive against Malaya one hour and forty minutes before the attack on Pearl Harbor. Subsequently Western possessions in the region were swiftly captured one after another: Hong Kong fell on 25 December, followed by the capture of Manila on 3 January 1942. The lack of preparation to confront the Japanese advance was evident: the British Far Eastern territories were deprived of the necessary reinforcements to support their defence operations. Furthermore, the British battleship *Prince of Wales* and the battle cruiser *Repulse* were sunk, which revealed the failure of London's naval strategy in Southeast Asian waters. The British national disaster was extended by 15 February with General Percival's surrender at Singapore, the bastion of its empire in the Far East. In the face of the unstoppable momentum of the Japanese advance, the British position in Burma also crumbled rapidly and Rangoon was taken on 8 March. Sir Reginald Dorman-Smith, the Governor of Burma, was forced to retreat to Simla and to establish an administration in exile. On the following day, Java fell under Tokyo's control which forced the Dutch colonial government to flee into exile in Australia. For Britain, this was the most humiliating moment of the whole war campaign that broke out in the Far East. It not only indicated the collapse of Prime Minister Churchill's strategy to contain the Japanese advance, but also was the greatest reverse experienced by the British Empire since the loss of the American territories in the eighteenth century.

The consequence of these events was, indeed, not confined to the temporary loss of British colonial interests in the region. The sweeping victory achieved by Japan had broader implications for various aspects of the conflict. Japan's swift conquest enabled it to control a vast area that held abundant natural resources and vast population. K. G. Grubb of the Ministry of Information went as far as saying in an Overseas Planning Committee memorandum that Japan's Co-Prosperity Sphere was 'so far from being utopian, a perfect and sound political and economic proposition'. He argued that Japan's territorial acquisition ensured not only an abundance of cheap labour in East Asia which rendered the question of extraction costs relatively unimportant, but also secured considerable immunity against the effects of any blockade. The area under the Japanese control, ranging from Manchukuo to Burma, was 'almost entirely self-sufficient not only in food stuffs but also in all the important industrial raw materials - coal, tin, iron, oil, rubber, metal etc. required to build up a powerful industrial system'.³⁸ His high opinion of the 'Co-Prosperity Sphere' was not necessarily shared widely among British officials. Yet it would surely become a considerable advantage for Japan in waging a large-scale war if the Japanese could show its ability to bring out the great economic potential of the occupied territories

Furthermore, the formation of Japan's economic sphere was also valuable as

propaganda against the Allied powers. The basic argument behind this Japanese economic project was that the colonial powers had not only failed to fully develop the resources in the region, but also, to the detriment of Japan and the rest of Asia, had obstructed Japan's attempt to take advantage of these resources even where progress had been possible. The Japanese control of the regional economy was, thus, going to benefit all of the member countries in the 'Co-Prosperity Sphere'. Britain was certainly not taking the Japanese reasoning at face value. A memorandum by the Joint Intelligence Sub-Committee on 22 April 1942, dismissed Japan's justification of its expansionist policy by stating that:

'The real purpose of the CPS that the Japanese have been sponsoring is to obtain for the Japanese the raw materials and markets that they require for their industries. The "Co" side of co-prosperity, in so far as it applies to the occupied territories, is purely a means towards this end. In other words, the Japanese hope to be better able to secure what they want by putting forward the idea of partnership, although their only real intention is one of domination.'

However, the sub-Committee admitted that the Japanese argument should 'receive a specious credit in so far as the Japanese were able to accuse the colonizing power of not developing the resources to their fullest extent.' The lack of adequate British propaganda against this Japanese reasoning, it noted, had 'tended largely towards the acceptance of what does appear to be a prima facie case for the development of these areas for the co-prosperity of both Japan and the countries in question.'³⁹ These factors combined, the newly formed economic bloc would pose a considerable threat to the Allied powers in both economic and ideological terms.

It was the political impact of the Japanese occupation and indoctrination of 'Co-Prosperity Sphere' that was felt even more by the Western colonial powers. The Japanese conquest unveiled an explosive issue that had been inherent in the long Western rule over Southeast Asia. The initial success of the Japanese expansion into the region not only strengthened Tokyo's position in its war effort against the Allied Powers, but also forced the latter to confront an explosive ideological issue. The Japanese had invaded colonial outposts that the westerners had dominated for generations, taking for granted their superiority in all respects over their Asian subjects. Japan's belated emergence as a dominant power in Asia called the very existence of the colonial system into question and challenged the entire mystique of white supremacy on which centuries of European and American expansion had rested.⁴⁰ If the Japanese challenge were interpreted in the traditional framework of the rivalries among the advanced industrial nations, the reaction of Asian subjects to it would have been of secondary importance in comparison with the survival of the British Empire and the other Allied powers. However, Japan's Pan-Asian

slogans played upon rising nationalist sentiments all over the region and led to a favourable response among many Asians to the initial Japanese victories over the Americans as well as the British. Japan's rhetorical device of calling the war a conflict to build Asia 'for the Asiatics' thus had a deep significance for the Allies.

In the light of the grave implications of Japanese propaganda, H. C. Walsh, the British Consul General to Batavia, was one of those who had a sense of foreboding about the emerging problems well before Japan completed its successful military campaign. In January 1942, he observed that:

'This slogan of "Asia for Asiatics" [*appeals*] especially [*to*] those living in colonies or in semi-colonial conditions under European nations. It is the strongest point of Japanese propaganda and for the European the most dangerous, since the European nations must find it difficult, if not possible, to find any counter-slogan of comparable value.'⁴¹

K. C. Grubb of the Ministry of Information was also alarmed by Britain's disadvantageous position in its political warfare against the Japanese and noted that:

'the memory of western aggression and of the humiliations they involved is still fresh in the minds, not only of Japanese themselves, but also of Chinese, the Indo-Chinese and the Thais, and is always liable to be aggravated by the Westerner's attitude of racial superiority ... it should be remembered that neither Chinese nor any other Far Eastern people have any particular reason to be grateful to the Anglo-Saxon Powers, who came to their countries to make money and not to benefit their populations; and that their eagerness to overthrow Japanese "Co-Prosperity" will be restricted so long as they think that the only alternative to it is a return to the status quo.'⁴²

The implication of the Japanese slogan was not confined to the immediate problem of waging political warfare in the territories that were once under the British control. Its scope extended to the very existence of the British influence in the region following the termination of the conflict. As Gent of the Colonial Office noted in his memorandum on 7 August, the most complicated post-war problems were likely to arise with regard to the southern area; 'except in Siam all of them were a year ago under the sovereignty of Western nations whose executive authorities had since then violently evicted or (in Indochina) subdued by Japan.' There was undoubtedly an immense dislocation throughout this region, even more in the psychological than in the administrative or economic sphere. Under these circumstances, the memorandum warned, it would be 'unwise to assume that a future military victory of the United Nations will automatically restore the state of affairs existing at the beginning of December 1941.'⁴³ All over the region, the economic and political impact of the Japanese expansion cast an ominous shadow over Britain's war

effort. Britain faced the urgent task of having to formulate an effective strategy for political and economic warfare in order to counter the Japanese manoeuvre.

However, in spite of the seriousness of the circumstances, the British response to deal with the Japanese challenge in Southeast Asia was rather nominal and ill-coordinated. For one thing, there was a lack of adequate organisation within the government to execute a well-concerted strategy. Since the outbreak of the war, extensive efforts were made to co-ordinate the allied military effort in the Far East and build up strength for an eventual offensive against the Japanese. Britain was, however, devoid of the effective machinery for political warfare that was necessary to supplement and facilitate its military effort. Britain's political warfare in the Far East had hitherto been dealt with primarily by the Political Warfare Executive (PWE), which was formed in August 1941 by amalgamating parts of the European sections of the BBC and of the Foreign Publicity Department of the Ministry of Information. The activities of the PWE were nominally extended to the Far East on the outbreak of the conflict with Japan. Yet the organisation had very limited expertise on Far Eastern affairs, and the area it covered was restricted to Japan and the neighbouring territories under its control such as Korea, Manchuria and China. Furthermore, the activities of the PWE and similar organisations were ill-coordinated and not conducted on the basis of a coherent scheme or objectives. While considerable amounts of intelligence were available, they were not properly collated or utilised to the full extent. As a Foreign Office memorandum noted, the sources ranging from diplomatic reports to military intelligence were dealt with in a piecemeal manner and with an eye to immediate problems. Thus the information was 'buried and lives only in the memory of individual officials.' There was an urgent need to co-ordinate all the forms of intelligence that furnished material concerning Japanese policy and methods.⁴⁴ The Far Eastern Department of the Foreign Office raised the issue on 10 February 1942 and noted that:

'We are doing something by propaganda and counter-propaganda to defeat Japanese policy but on a scale which is insufficient and in a manner which is still too haphazard. ... What we need is the machinery to devise a definite political warfare policy designed not only to defeat the Japanese at their own particular games but also to pass as rapidly as possible to the offensive against Japan.'⁴⁵

Thus Britain needed to overcome a serious lack of expertise and co-ordination in order to counter the Japanese propaganda activities against the Western colonial possessions in Southeast Asia.

It was against this background that the Foreign Office Committee for Offensive and Defensive Political Warfare Against Japan (short title: Political Warfare (Japan) Committee, or P.W.J.C) was established by the Foreign Secretary on 17 March 1942. The Committee

consisted of the representatives from the Foreign Office, the Ministry of Information and the Special Operations Executive (S.O.E.), whose posts were undertaken respectively by M. E. Denning, K. Grubb and Gladwyn Jebb. The chair of the committee was assumed by Brigadier D. Brooks of P.W.E. and T. E. Bromley of the Foreign Office, was also involved as the secretary. The primary object of the British political warfare campaign was to attack the Japanese politically from various angles and to reduce to a minimum the advantages they may seek to gain in the territories they had overrun or threatened. For these purposes, the P.W.J.C. was designed to function as an organ to provide policy guidance to the existing organisations involved in political warfare against the Japanese occupied territories and co-ordinate the formulation of effective policies that would reinforce the Allied military strategies in the region.⁴⁶

While the establishment of the P.W.J.C. was a sound solution to meet the difficulties, it was set to face challenges from the beginning which were caused by the Committee's inherent structural problems and the weakness of Britain's ideological standings. For one thing, the Committee was not endowed with any executive function but its role was rather confined to the advisory sphere. Although the P.W.J.C. was responsible for policy guidance in political warfare against Japan, the machinery for executing that policy was administered by the Ministry of Information and the S.O.E. P.W.J.C.'s influence on the making of actual political warfare strategy was restricted further by the fact that it had to seek the approval of the Chiefs of Staff before any policy guidance was given on questions affecting the strategic conduct of the war.⁴⁷ Moreover, the P.W.J.C. had the responsibility of establishing close liaison with wide-ranging parties within and outside the government that were involved in Britain's war effort in the Far East, which included not only the Dominions Office, the India and Burma Offices and the Colonial Office but also representatives of the nations at war with Japan such as France and the Netherlands. With its rather limited authority and the extensive number of parties that it had to consult, co-ordination among the various interests and the formulation of a coherent strategy for the British political warfare was a very difficult task to handle.

In the ideological sphere, the room for manoeuvre to formulate effective propaganda was considerably limited under the present circumstances. For one thing, Britain's failure to protect the peoples of Hong Kong, Malaya and Burma, coupled with naval and military disasters of considerable magnitude, had shaken the faith of its subjects in its ability to offer any effective resistance to Japanese aggression. Japan's continuing naval, military and air operations were now effectively preventing the British counter-offensive that had to be undertaken to restore its position in the Far East, and threatened further to bring about the dissolution of its rule in the region. As long as Britain remained on the defensive in both

a military and political sense, it would be forced to follow the Japanese plan of actions passively. Under such circumstances, the mere promise of rapidly redressing the military balance would, therefore, have carried little conviction unless the allied powers managed to secure one or two resounding victories to their credit.

Being in a disadvantageous position militarily, it was imperative for Britain to seek out the Japanese weaknesses in political area and to do everything possible to strike at them with its own propaganda. But it also proved very difficult to combat the Japanese claim that they were fighting a war of 'Asian liberation' against the European races. One way to counter this Japanese slogan was to induce the resistance of the people in Southeast Asia by convincing the former colonial subjects that it would be much worse for them to accept Japanese domination than to throw in their lot with the Allies. Nevertheless, as John de la Vallette of Ministry of Information pointed out on 9 July 1942, the people in the Far East could 'only be interested in fighting the war if they have some clear conception of what they may look forward to as its outcome.'⁴⁸ Britain was, at the present time, in no position to commit itself to clarify the future status of former colonial possessions after the war. Thus, the task of finding an ideological basis to facilitate effective propaganda proved very difficult for Britain under the current circumstances. It was in Burma where the impact of the Japanese propaganda was particularly apparent.

The Beginning of British Wartime Planning for Post-war Burma

Following the Japanese conquest, Burma became a vital strategic frontline bordering India, the stronghold of the British empire in the Far East, and Britain was on the defensive against further Japanese military advances into Burmese territory. The formulation of an effective political strategy was a vital counter measure to win over the support of native populations and recover the country as part of its sphere of influence. However, Burma posed particularly difficult problems, largely due to the Japanese announcement that pledged to grant independence for the country. As a Foreign Office memorandum observed, 'Burma's history of dissatisfied experience with British rule, succeeded by a type of Japanese treatment specially calculated to gain full collaboration of the Burmese, separates Burma from Japan's conquered territories with respect to psychological warfare approach'.⁴⁹ Now that the long-time colonial rule was abruptly terminated by the Japanese, Britain needed to go back to Burma not as another 'invader' but as a 'liberator'. Yet Britain lacked the ideological basis to counter Japan's propaganda of 'Asian Liberation' and vindicate its return to the territory.

In particular, those who were directly involved in policy-making for the recovering and rebuilding of Burma were concerned with the current British standing vis-à-vis Japanese propaganda. Dorman-Smith noted in a memorandum of February 1943 that Japan's statement that Burma would be given complete freedom in the immediate future was effective propaganda regardless of its real intentions and made Britain's previous statements less attractive.⁵⁰ The governor perceived that Britain had done 'all too little to persuade the mass of the people that our war was their war', and that its post-war success or failure would to a considerable degree depend on its approach to problem of re-occupation.⁵¹ A similar voice of concern was also heard from those who were involved in Burmese affairs in London. In February 1943 Leo Amery, the Secretary of State for India and Burma, advocated the immediate need for counter-propaganda against Japan and pronounced:

'The principal reason for urgency is that we at present lack a basis for propaganda towards Burma of the positive kind which is necessary to make it effective. The lack of this must I fear greatly hamper our political warfare and reduce its usefulness as an auxiliary to military operations. The enemy on the other hand have done a great deal in the hope of winning the Burmese over to their side by setting up the semblance of free administration under Ba Maw and by the facile promise of complete independence for Burma this year. It is high time that we were placed in a position to counter these moves by an effective positive political warfare of our own stating what we intend to do for the Burmese when, with their assistance, we have driven out the enemy. ...'⁵²

To reiterate Britain's policy of eventual self-government for Burma was not sufficient as this would not by itself go very far in competition with the Japanese promises. This was especially so because a certain period of direct rule was necessary for undertaking the material and social reconstruction of Burma. Thus Britain urgently needed positive policy planning which could convince the Burmese people that Britain would restore Burma's normal life on improved foundations and that it would equip the country for full self-government at the earliest possible timing.

It was against this background, that the Governor of Burma was summoned back from Simla to London in August 1942 and in order to provide the War Cabinet with an account of the problems and a forecast of the main tasks of reconstruction which Britain would have to face in Burma after re-occupation. In the memorandum he presented to the War Cabinet, Dorman-Smith suggested four primary principles of British policy in regard to the reconstruction in Burma after reoccupation. Firstly, he stated that it would be necessary for Britain to resort to a system of direct rule during the period of reconstruction which could

not be undertaken solely by the Burmese. Secondly, during the period of direct rule within a range of five to seven years, Britain should consult Burmese opinion through suitable advisory bodies to fulfil its pledge of granting full autonomy. Thirdly, detailed studies would have to be conducted on the whole range of administrative duties in order to avoid reviving the defective features of pre-war Burma. Finally, Britain should be prepared to provide funds for the reconstruction of Burma, subject to any inter-Allied arrangements which may be reached.⁵³

However, right from the beginning, the British planning for a new Burma faced the problem of having to fulfil conflicting political needs. One of the major dilemmas in the governor's policy of reconstruction was how to reconcile the need for direct rule with the strategic requirement of promoting political autonomy to counter the Japanese propaganda. On one hand, the planning needed to present an attractive alternative to Japan's policy of independence and to bolster the support of the Burmese population in order to secure its assistance for Britain's war effort. For that purpose, Britain needed to indicate clearly its intention to restore in Burma the degree of autonomy it possessed before the war and set the country on the road to full self-government. On the other hand, a period of direct rule by the British was required in order to undertake a large-scale economic and social reconstruction project on various aspects of the Burmese society. The idea of direct rule was also important for Britain as it believed that the country was fighting the war to preserve the Empire. Britain's power in the region could never be restored in the same way as before and it could be on the winning side only at the cost of vast concessions to the anti-imperialist United States. Yet post-war Britain would still have a major role to play in Burma as the suzerain power of the Empire. The dislocation and destruction of the war, therefore, would have to be turned to its advantage and the defects of pre-war Burma needed to be eliminated in order to create a lasting link between the two countries, ultimately to keep Burma in the 'Commonwealth of Nations'. Dorman-Smith tried to reconcile these conflicting objectives by arguing for a period of direct rule of a specified duration: the British government would have to assume direct administration of Burma in order to provide for its defence and its reconstruction, but a time limit should be laid down.

Nevertheless, this idea immediately faced opposition from various segments of the British decision-making elites which set their eyes on different priorities. There were sections within the British government that staunchly refused to consider granting Burma the status of a self-governing country. From their viewpoint, Britain's direct rule in Burma would have to be continued for an indefinite period. Winston Churchill was a figure who represented such a school of thought. The British Prime Minister's aim was always to preserve the empire as well as to win the support of the United States, and it was

impossible to appear to be giving away the empire in advance.⁵⁴ At least in the eyes of Churchill, Burma, therefore, should not be provided with any definite duration of direct rule that would force Britain to commit itself to a promise of Burma's fully independent status. Furthermore, the idea faced opposition even from those who were more realistic than Churchill in taking account of the necessity to come to terms with the opinion of Burmese nationalists. Being asked his views on the issue by Churchill, Sir James Grigg, the Secretary of State for War, replied that Burma was 'unfitted for self-government on the British plan' and that much of the pressure for self-government had 'originated from the pongyis (Buddhist priests) who have been much under Japanese influence if not in Japanese pay.' In his view, the future welfare of Burma

'depends on the British retaining quite unashamedly the ultimate authority there and I have hoped that one result of the war would be that we could openly claim this ultimate authority and exercise it openly so long as there was no agreement with the Indian or Burma political parties which we could accept without fear and without shame. ... On both grounds, therefore, we needn't make any promises to Burma now, not even surreptitiously. Moreover if we have got to spend large sums on restoration we are entitled to safeguard our investment and our trade. Altogether I would say that there is no point in making promises of self-government to Burma and certainly promises with a time limit would be very silly.'⁵⁵

As was reflected in the remarks of Grigg, there was a tendency, shared especially among those who were in London, to believe that the people in Burma would accept a programme without promise of self-government or specified duration of direct rule.

However, the reports of Dorman-Smith's conversations with his Reconstruction Department and Burmese advisers in December 1942 reveal that such an idea was impractical as an actual policy plan. While all accepted the necessity of a period of direct rule to undertake the task of reconstruction, both the Burmese and Reconstruction Advisers emphasised that any statement devoid of a definite time limit 'will completely fail to strike a responsive chord in Burmese minds'. In the eyes of those who were involved in the planning at Simla, an announcement with a specified duration was an absolute prerequisite for the post-war resumption of direct rule by the British. There was a division of opinions as to the length of the period. The advisers to the Reconstruction Department argued that at least ten years would be required to carry out the reconstruction and equip Burma for full self-government following the conclusion of hostilities with the Japanese. Yet Burmese advisers believed 'seven years is in our view maximum possible deferment of aspirations of Burmese people if their goodwill is to be retained.'⁵⁶ Here the government of Burma faced serious dilemma: direct rule for only a short period would not ensure the

large-scale reconstruction envisaged by Britain, while a longer duration might alienate Burmese co-operation. This conflict of interests was coupled with the general atmosphere of unwillingness prevalent in London to commit Britain beyond its pre-war promise towards Burma, which made it difficult to formulate a concrete post-war plan.

Furthermore, the Burma Office's effort to formulate policy plans suffered another setback in the financial sphere. Being in a serious financial state as the result of its continuing war efforts, Britain lacked the funds necessary to provide adequate support for the large-scale reconstruction project that was the primary justification for undertaking a period of direct rule in Burma. The Burma Office's reconstruction planning was based on an assumption that Britain was willing and could afford to provide financial assistance for the project. As Amery reasoned in his memorandum submitted to the War Cabinet in August 1942, Britain would have to agree in principle that 'an obligation will rest on the Imperial Government to supply generous aid in restoring her to her normal life' since Burma suffered so severely through being a theatre of war in the conflict between the British Empire and Japan. If financial assistance were forthcoming on a generous scale, responsible Burmese opinion, Amery believed, would acquiesce to a certain period of direct rule as a temporary provision which was necessary for the reconstruction and the restoration of Burma's capacity for self-government.⁵⁷ It was therefore vital for Britain 'to get the financial aspect as clear and firm as may be possible both for the sake of our reconstruction planning and (most important) to enable effective use to be made of our intentions in our political warfare.'⁵⁸

Nevertheless, there was a stark contrast between the stance of the War Cabinet and those who were directly involved in the reconstruction planning in Burma. Sir Kingsley Wood, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, observed on 22 February 1943:

'I should not find it easy to agree to a statement in any future announcement that H. M. Government will be prepared to meet the expenditure necessary during the reconstruction period over and above that which Burma herself can reasonably be expected to bear, even though this were qualified by explaining that this is so far as our own resources permit. An announcement of this kind, combined with propaganda which stresses mainly our future financial generosity seems to me very rash and likely to lead to future disappointments which will cause great political trouble.'⁵⁹

It was thus by no means an easy task to obtain a financial commitment from the Treasury as war continued and Britain moved nearer to bankruptcy.

In the light of the response from the Treasury, the Burma Office turned its eyes to the

British business community in Burma as a possible financial source for the project. However, securing the assistance of British firms operated in pre-war Burma turned out to be no less difficult. Having operated almost as monopolies in the controlled economy of pre-war Burma, the British commercial concerns, the Burma Office viewed, had a role to play by helping the work of reconstruction through their commercial activities. As they had been the object of vigorous criticism by Burmese nationalists, the Burma Office believed that they should be encouraged to disarm their critics through participation in Burma's post-war development. The idea also seemed to serve a propaganda purpose. C. F. B. Pearce, the Chief Civil Affairs Officer for Burma, noted that the re-establishment of the trade was an effective form of British propaganda especially as 'the Japanese appear to have done little for the Burmese people in this respect.' The marketing of the natural products of the country, coupled with provision of supplies to retailers to meet the essential civil needs, would also do much to re-establish confidence.⁶⁰ It was essential for these purposes to ensure the active involvement of the British firms in Burma. The British firms were, however, unyielding and indicated their reluctance to return to Burma at all.

The view of the British commercial concerns was revealed by a meeting held between Amery and their representatives on 17 February 1943. The firms were most concerned about the uncertainty of the post-war conditions in Burma and its likely effects on British commerce. The commercial representatives demanded that losses due to enemy action and denial policy in Burma would have to be fully compensated in order to restore the position they held before the invasion of Burma. The firms were also alarmed by the length of the direct rule period. The firms' opposition against the early specification of a fixed period was, in part, due to their anxiety about attacks from any future nationalist government in Burma. If self-government were to follow the period of reconstruction, security would have to be given to the firms reinvesting capital in Burma so that business could look after their own interests without interference from the independent Burmese Government, or full compensation would have to be granted by the British Government in the event of expropriation. It was stated that 'even those of us who have money are not likely to venture it in Burma until we know how we will be treated, and one reason why we would like to know something more about it is that we stand together on this problem and none of us is likely to prejudice by our action the interests of the others.'⁶¹ Thus the struggle of the Burma Office to secure financial support for the reconstruction programme met with vigorous opposition from both the Treasury and the British business community in Burma.

It was against this background that British planning for the reconstruction of Burma was reconsidered and a draft proposal was submitted to the War Cabinet on 29 March

1943. The policy plan suggested setting a maximum of seven years of direct rule by His Majesty's Government through the Governor of Burma. It reasoned that this period was designed to give Britain sufficient time for the execution of reconstruction planning and the restoration of stable conditions. In order to meet the discontent of Burmese nationalists who demanded the establishment of a self-government at the earliest timing, it claimed that steps should be taken to frame a new Constitution and prepare for the transfer of responsibility to the Burmese. The powers of government during this interim period should be entrusted to a small Commission which would include Burmese assisting the Governor in an advisory capacity. The inclusion of Burmese members was a measure designed to avoid any criticism that Britain was going back on its pledges for Burma's future independence.

The paper also tried to make a case that it was a British interest to give financial assistance so far as its own resources allowed 'in order to help Burma to become an asset instead of a liability to the British Commonwealth'. Material reconstruction in Burma of both public and private property was required together with the re-establishment of essential services including public health, education, and agriculture for the restoration of the social and economic life of the country. The proposal suggested that the British should assist those re-construction measures through the export of capital equipment and consumer goods, and seek to restore Burma's position as a market and a source of supply. The document claimed that the total bill for Burma's reconstruction was 'not likely, judged by our standards, to be a heavy one, though relatively far beyond its own immediate resources.'⁶²

A striking feature of the draft policy was that it completely failed to present Britain's return to Burma as an attractive counter-proposal against the Japanese propaganda which was one of the important objectives for devising the policy. Due to intensive opposition from the War Cabinet, not least by Churchill, the proposal lacked any clear indication of British intentions in respect to both Burma's future independence and financial assistance for the country's re-construction. In a Cabinet Meeting on 14 April, Churchill stated that he saw 'no reason to add anything' to the declarations already made on the eventual policy of self-government. As regards the interim period, the view was expressed that it would be undesirable to adopt a detailed programme, such as that outlined in the paper by the Secretary of State for Burma, as a basis for political warfare activities. 'We could be out-bidden by the Japanese on the programme outlined, while any public statement at this stage as to certain items in the programme (e.g., the fixing of a limit of seven years for the interim period of direct administration by His Majesty's Government through the Governor) might well give us the worst of both worlds'. As for financial assistance, the Chancellor noted that the Treasury had already pronounced that His Majesty's Government would be

ready to provide funds and organisation for the restoration of destruction so far as this was beyond the territory's resources. It was unwilling to go beyond this statement, or 'to say anything which might imply that Burma was to be given a preferential position.' This view met with general support from the War Cabinet. Thus the overall conclusion of the Cabinet was that it was premature to decide on a detailed policy and that it should add no new promises of financial help.⁶³ 'I am afraid Winston was in his most impossible mood', Amery wrote to Dorman-Smith. 'The thing is that he has an instinctive hatred of self-government in any shape or form and dislikes any country or people who want such a thing or for whom such a thing is contemplated. So far from being pleased with the thought of continued direct rule for a period of years, all he sees in it is that we are to spend money in order to be, as he puts it, kicked out by the Burmese afterwards.' Thus, the attempt of the Burma Office to form a reconstruction plan in Burma suffered from setbacks that were caused by a number of contradictions in the policy as well as the conflicting views of British policy-makers.

Conclusion

As this chapter has demonstrated, the Japanese policy-making for the newly occupied territories in Southeast Asia was an attempt to deal with the unexpected success of its military campaigns on an ad hoc basis. The discussions on the '*Dai-Tōa Kensetsu Shingikai*' revealed a serious lack of political and economic preparation to rule the 'Greater East Asia', and the slogans of 'Asian Liberation' and 'Co-Prosperity' were primarily used as a justification of the Japanese control of the region whose methods were not so different from what Japan denounced as misdeeds of 'Western Imperialism'. The Japanese policy plans towards Burma during the initial period of its rule demonstrated that such a tendency was apparent not only in central government circles but also at the local administration level. The shift of Japan's stance away from the immediate independence of Burma and the hasty establishment of authoritarian local government indicated that the Japanese rule in Burma was designed to maximise its control of political and economic resources for the war effort rather than a carefully planned project motivated by its ideological claims.

However, the Japanese occupation of Western colonial possessions in Southeast Asia and its propaganda added a new dimension to the war that was being fought in the Far East. They posed a serious threat to Britain's war effort by uncovering its lack of an ideological basis to counter the Japanese propaganda and making it difficult to devise an effective political warfare strategy against Japan. This had grave implications on the British

Chapter 4 – The start of Japanese occupation and British reconstruction planning for Burma, December 1941 – March 1943.

long-term war planning in Southeast Asia where Britain intended to reclaim its influence as a regional power. In Burma, the Burma Office started its policy-making for the country's reconstruction and sought to attract the support of the Burmese people by presenting a roadmap leading to Burma's self-governing status. Nevertheless, Britain failed to produce a clear plan for post-war Burma which was likely to convince the Burmese people of the legitimacy of the continuing British presence in the country after the termination of the conflict. It was against this background that Japan and Britain faced the changing tide of the war which brought a new phase in the conflict by the spring of 1943.

Notes for Chapter 4

- ¹ 'Dai-tōa Sengen no Sekaishi-teki Igf, Asahi Shinbun, Jan 23-26, 1942.
- ² Grant K. Goodman (ed.), *Japanese Cultural Policies in Southeast Asia during the World War II* (Hong Kong, 1991), p. 2
- ³ Ishikawa Junkichi, *Kokka Sōdōin-shi: Shiryō-hen [a history of national mobilisation: a collection of historical sources]*, vol. 4 (Tokyo, 1976), p. 848, a similar account of Japan's unpreparedness for ruling the occupied territories can be seen in: The Research Institute of Asian Economy, 'Minami' and 'F' *Kikan Kankeisha Danwa Kiroku* [Recollections by members of 'Minami' and 'F' kikan] Tokyo, 1979, pp. 29-30, cited in, Shinobu Seizaburō, 'Taiheiyō Sensō' to Mouhitotsu no 'Taiheiyō Sensō' ['The Pacific War' and another 'Pacific War'] (Tokyo, 1988), pp. 72-73.
- ⁴ Yagi Yoshikazu, 'Senzen oyobi Senchū no Tōa kankei Kinyū Chōsa – Taiheiyō Sensō kaisen ji no Nanpō chōsa' *Nihon Shokumin-chi Kenkyū*, vol. 3, 1990, p. 97.
- ⁵ Akashi Yōji and Ishii Hitoshi (eds.) *Dai-Tōa Shingi-kai Kankei Shiryō vol. 1* (Tokyo, 1995) p. 2.
- ⁶ Ishikawa Junkichi, *Kokka Sōdōin-shi, Shiryō-hen vol. 4*. (Tokyo, 1976) pp. 1339-41.
- ⁷ *ibid.*, p. 1295.
- ⁸ *Dai-Tōa Keizai Kensetsu Kihon Hōsaku* (Principles for Construction of Greater East Asia Economy), *ibid.*, p. 1300
- ⁹ Kobayashi Eiji, *Dai-tōa Kyōei-ken no Keisei to Hōkai* (Tokyo, 1978), pp. 391-394.
- ¹⁰ Akashi and Ishii, vol. 3, pp. 51-53, Ishiwatari Sōichirō's remarks in the second session of the 4th Committee, 27 March, 1942.
- ¹¹ See, for example, *ibid.*, pp. 78-79, Itō Bunkichi's remarks in the third session of the 4th Committee meeting, 2 April, 1942, and pp. 25-7, Fujiwara Ginjirō, the second session, 27 March, 1942.
- ¹² See, for example, *ibid.*, p. 68, Fujiwara, the third session, 2 April, 1942.
- ¹³ Ishikawa, pp. 1277, Suzuki Teiichi, the third session, 2 April, 1942.
- ¹⁴ Akashi and Ishii, vol. 3, pp. 76-77. Ayukawa Gisuke, the third session, 2 April, 1942.
- ¹⁵ See, *ibid.*, pp. 19-20. Hirao Hatsusaburō, and, p. 42, Ayukawa, the second session, 27 March, 1942.
- ¹⁶ *ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 6-7.
- ¹⁷ Ishikawa, pp. 1300-1, 'Dai-Tōa Keizai Kensetsu Kihon Hōshin'.
- ¹⁸ *ibid.*, pp. 1300-1, and p. 1314, 'Dai-Tōa Kinyū, Zaisei oyobi Kōeki Kihon Hōsaku'.
- ¹⁹ *ibid.*, pp. 1318-9.
- ²⁰ *ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 6-7.
- ²¹ Grant K. Goodman, *Introduction*, in Goodman ed. *Japanese Cultural Policies*, pp. 2-4.
- ²² During the initial period of occupation, propaganda activities in Burma was developed by the propaganda group [*Senden-han*] within the military government. In July 1942, *Senden-han* was divided into two bureaux: the Rangoon Intelligence Bureau [*Rangūn Jōhō-bu*] and the Military Propaganda Department [*Gun Senden-bu*]. The Rangoon Intelligence Bureau was merged with *Gun Senden-bu* in November and became a single organisation. Ōta Tsunezō. *Biruma ni okeru Nihon Gunsei-shi no Kenkyū [A Study of the Japanese Military Occupation in Burma]*. (Tokyo, 1967), pp. 197-200.
- ²³ Frank N. Trager, *Burma: Japanese Military Administration, Selected Documents, 1941-1945*. (Philadelphia, 1971), p. 11.
- ²⁴ Trager, pp. 27-8.
- ²⁵ Sugiyama Memo, pp. 67-8, 'Sekai Jōsei Handan', 7 March 1942.
- ²⁶ Bōei-chō Bōei Kenkyūjo, Senshi Henshū-bu, *Shiryō-shū Nanpō no Gunsei*, (Tokyo, 1985) p. 23.
- ²⁷ Ōta, pp. 487-88.
- ²⁸ *ibid.*, p. 489. See also: 'Hayashi Shūdan Senryō-chi Tōchi Yōkō', Article 3-3-19. Translation in Trager, p. 48.
- ²⁹ *ibid.*
- ³⁰ Mori the 7800th Corps, 'Biruma Gunsei-shi' [History of Japanese military administration in Burma] (Tokyo, 1943), pp. 304-5.
- ³¹ Ōta, pp. 499-501, 'Sangyo'
- ³² Iwai Sangyo K.K., *Iwai 100-nen Shi* [100 years history of Iwai Sangyo], p. 217, cited in, Hikita Yasuyuki, ed., 'Nanpō Kyōeiken' *Senji Nihon no Tōnan Ajia Keizai Shihai* ['Southern Co-Prosperity Sphere' Japan's wartime rule over Southeast Asian economies] (Tokyo, 1995), p. 80.
- ³³ Mori Dai-7800 Butai, *Biruma Gunsei-shi* [History of Japanese Military Occupation in Burma] (Tokyo, 1943), pp. 309-10.
- ³⁴ Ōta, pp. 570-71. 'Kigyō Tantō Shōsha Ichiranhyō, Sangyō-bu Kankei [List of Industrial Companies engaged in Business in Burma]
- ³⁵ *ibid.*, p. 502, 'Hayashi Shūdan Gunsei Jisshi Yōryō, Sangyō no Bu', April 1942.
- ³⁶ *ibid.*, p. 488, 'Hayashi Shūdan Senryō-chi Tōchi Yōkō', Article 3-1-7.
- ³⁷ Mori Dai-7800 Butai, pp. 304-310.
- ³⁸ PRO FO371/31759, from Mr. K. G. Grubb (Ministry of Information) to Sir Maurice Peterson,

Development of publicity and propaganda in the Far East, undated.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, FO371/31787, 'General background for propaganda to the occupied countries on the Japanese Co-prosperity-Sphere', 22 April 1942.

⁴⁰ John Dower, *War without Mercy - race and power in the Pacific War* (London, 1986), p. 5

⁴¹ PRO, FO371/31770, F560/560/61. H. C. Walsh to Foreign Office, 'Japanese propaganda', 12 January 1942. *Italic by author.*

⁴² *Ibid.*, FO371/31759, from Grubb to Peterson, undated.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, FO371/31774, from Gent to Ashley-Clarke, 'Foreign Research and Press Service paper on Britain's post-war prospects in the Far East', 7 August 1942.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, FO371/31786, F2000/2000/61, Draft memorandum by Gallop, Foreign Office, 'Political Warfare in the Far East', 10 February 1942.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, F2615/2000/61, Foreign Office memorandum, 28 March 1942.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, FO371/31790, F5505/2000/61, Note on the establishment and function of the Political Warfare (Japan) Committee, 3 August 1942.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, FO371/31789, From de la Vallette to Foreign Office, 8 July 1942.

⁴⁹ The British Library, Oriental and India Office Collections, Burma Office Files (Hereafter cited as OIOC), M3/861, F6601/71/61, 'Psychological Warfare in Burma', author unknown, 8 December, 1943.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, L/PO/9/6, From Dorman-Smith to Amery, 9 February, 1943.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, R/8/4, from Dorman-Smith to Monteath, 9 December, 1942, and R/8/3, Dorman-Smith to Wavell, undated.

⁵² *Ibid.*, L/PO/9/6, From Amery to Sir Kingsley Wood, Chancellor, 13 February 1943.

⁵³ PRO, CAB66/27, W.P. (42) 346, Policy in Regard to Reconstruction in Burma after Reoccupation, 7 August 1942.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 34-5.

⁵⁵ PRO, PREM 4/50/3, Memorandum from Secretary of State for War to Prime Minister, 7 April 1943.

⁵⁶ OIOC, L/PO/9/6, Dorman-Smith to Amery, 29 December 1942.

⁵⁷ PRO, CAB66/27, W. P. (42) 346, 7 August 1942.

⁵⁸ OIOC., L/PO/9/6, Amery to Wood, 13 February 1943.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, Kingsley to Amery, 22 February 1943.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, R/8/8, C. F. B. Pearce 'Note on the Re-establishment of Trade in Burma', 19 December 1942.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, R/8/10, note of discussion on 17 February between the Secretary of State for Burma and the following representatives of European firms operating in Burma, 17 February 1943.

⁶² PRO, CAB66/35, W. P. (43) 131, 29 March 1943.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, CAB66/34, W. M. (43) 54, 14 April 1943.

Chapter 5

Redefining War Efforts: Japan's New Policy towards the GEACPS and British Policy Planning for the future of Burma, April 1943 – December 1943.

By the beginning of 1943, the Japanese war efforts against the Allied powers had entered the defensive phase. Having recovered from the shock brought about by the initial Japanese military campaigns, the Allied Powers were now more adequately equipped with troops and material and embarked on a strategy to target the Japanese strongholds in the Pacific Ocean. One of the vital turning points came when the Japanese navy was decisively defeated by the U. S. Navy and lost four of their large aircraft carriers at the battle of Midway in May 1942. The Japanese Navy was never to recover from this defeat and also lost a major naval engagement in the Bismarck Sea in early March 1943. The situation was no less difficult for the Army. A British attack on Arakan was repelled and a drive from Manipur into Burma in early months of 1943 failed to bring expected result for the Allied powers. Yet Japan was less fortunate in other parts of the vast theatre of war. The Americans recaptured Guadalcanal in the Solomons on 8 February 1943 as a result of a sanguinary battle which lasted for half a year. In spite of their ferocious effort to defend themselves, the Japanese were unable to prevent the Allied forces from slowly closing down on them and penetrating deeper into their territory. In June the first landing was effected on the northern coast of Papua New Guinea, initiating a laborious campaign for the re-conquest of the island. Moreover, the Solomon Archipelago became the theatre of a series of intensive naval and air battles from July to November, which resulted in the eventual elimination of Japanese power in this area. In November, two of the Gilbert Islands fell under American control and towards the close of the year the Allied forces posed a direct threat to the Japanese major bases at Rabaul and Truk, as well as to the Marianas. The strategic perimeter that connected Japan with its vassal states in Southeast Asia was endangered as a result of these serious defeats.

The economic situation was also deteriorating rapidly. The study in the previous chapter revealed that Japan faced an immense task as the leading nation of the Co-prosperity Sphere. As a result of the outbreak of the war and the following Japanese occupation, the economy of Southeast Asia was now entirely removed from the international markets. Prior to the war, the regional economy was largely dependent on the supply of consumer and industrial products from colonial powers in exchange for commercial crops and raw materials. Now that the region had become part of an isolated fortress which was confronting with almost the entire world, Japan needed to perform the dual functions of supplying Southeast Asia with consumer goods and providing markets for its products as the industrial nucleus of the Co-Prosperity Sphere. In practice, however,

Japan failed completely to fulfil such a role.

For one thing, Japan failed to function as the provider of markets for the staple exports of Southeast Asian territories. The Japanese attempt to import those commodities was seriously hampered by several factors such as the general war circumstances and Japan's inability to provide adequate transport. Nevertheless, the primary cause for its failure to absorb the product of the region was the self-oriented and unrealistic economic scheme of the Japanese government. In principle, Japan's economic planning was designed to make Southeast Asia a vital part of the Co-Prosperity Sphere in line with its ideological pledge to remove Western influence from the region. What it actually wanted to achieve was to restructure the Southeast Asian economy in accordance with Japanese interests and intensify the exploitation of the region's natural resources. As a result, it discouraged the production of the items - such as sugar, tea, and coffee – for which 'Greater East Asia' had no real use, while it concentrated on products including food and mineral resources that were vital for the prosecution of the war.¹ Excessive exports of various resources were ordered by the Japanese for its domestic consumption and this led to a scarcity in Southeast Asia of almost all commodities, which was most apparent in clothing and food. The situation was exacerbated further by the Japanese measure to introduce new crops or utilise existing products for purposes other than their customary use. Consequently both export production and the traditional cultivation of subsistence crops showed an abrupt decline all over the region.

Moreover, Japan's economic base was far too small to undertake the role as the exclusive provider of the goods that the occupied territories required.² This was especially so as the country was waging a total war. With most of its industrial capacity being diverted to war production, Japan could hardly afford to spare manufactured goods such as textiles, chemicals and machinery for consumption in Southeast Asian territories. Although Japan provided a certain amount of commodities according to its planning, Japanese exports to the region barely redressed the adverse effect of the termination of trade with the Western colonial powers. Consequently, all countries under the Japanese control suffered a critical shortage of commodities.³ Accordingly, Japan resorted to the excessive issuance of paper money in order to provide and finance its extraction of war resources from Southeast Asia. However, this brought a serious counter-effect - inflation. These factors combined together to bring about a disastrous effect on the economy of Southeast Asia. Now the region was caught in a vicious circle of serious supply shortage and rapidly declining productive capacity.

Japan's New Policy towards the GEACPS

In the face of these ominous indications, the Japanese policy planners came to realise the need for a re-consideration of overall strategy. One of the characteristics of the Japanese design for the initial war effort was the absence of any careful strategic planning for the conclusion of the war. Japan's view on how to terminate its conflict with the Allied Powers was indicated in the policy document titled '*Tai-Bei Ei Ran Shō sensō shūmatsu sokushin ni kansuru fukuan*' [Policy Draft on the promotion of the termination of the war against the United States, Britain, Netherlands and China] which was sanctioned by the Liaison Conference on 15 November 1941. The document, which was regarded as the master plan of Japan's initial war effort, stated that the country would pursue the conclusion of the war by forcing Nationalist China to defeat Britain in collaboration with the other Axis powers. The Japanese optimistically predicted that the surrender of China and Britain would make the United States, the most formidable Allied power, lose its will to continue its war effort against Japan.⁴ Nevertheless, the war situation was now turning increasingly against Japan in spite of its initial military success. This made it virtually impossible for the Japanese to follow the script it had written at the beginning of the conflict and conclude the war purely by military means. In the face of the deterioration of the military position, showing solidarity with the Asian nations and winning the assistance of occupied countries became an important element in the revitalising of Japan's war effort. Decision-makers in Tokyo thus began to redefine their overall war objectives and came to focus more on the importance of political strategy as a means to end the conflict as well as to secure the assistance of the countries within the Co-Prosperity Sphere. It was against this background that Japan began to execute a set of measures utilising its slogan of 'Asian Liberation'.

An apparent sign of this reorientation emerged on 14 January, 1943, when the Liaison Conference adopted a policy plan '*Senryō-chi Kizoku Fukuan*' [Policy Draft on the Future Status of Occupied Territories]. The policy draft divided the occupied territories in Southeast Asia into two categories. The first category included countries that had vital strategic importance for the defence of 'Greater East Asia' or where the native population 'still lacked the ability for self-government'. Despite the fact that the Army and Foreign Ministry supported early independence, the Dutch East Indies remained under Japanese direct control due to opposition from the Navy, the General Staff and the Greater East Asia Ministry. The second category comprised of countries that the Japanese government deemed appropriate to receive the status of independent territories within the Co-Prosperity Sphere. Burma, along with Philippines, was included in this category. The independence of the self-governing countries would be granted on the condition that they

would provide open access to their military facilities as well as 'ensuring stronger diplomatic and economic co-operation' with Japan.⁵ This was a reflection of the growing sense shared within the Japanese government by the latter half of 1942 that the independence of occupied territories should be proclaimed at the earliest possible timing in order to strengthen Japan's political standing and to induce voluntary support from the native populations for the conclusion of the war.

It has to be noted that Japan's foreign policy during this period has been viewed by many scholars predominantly as a series of measures designed to obscure the exploitative nature of the Japanese rule. In this context, the development of the strategy to extend the degree of autonomy granted to the occupied territories has been interpreted as a mere propaganda manoeuvre to disguise Japan's real intentions under the overwhelming influence of the Imperial Forces.⁶ Nevertheless, the implication of the emerging policy was more than a mere propaganda manoeuvre, as Iriye Akira and Hatano Sumio have argued in their works.⁷ The beginning of the attempt to readjust the war strategy was in part a reflection of important changes within the Japanese Government. In the face of the deteriorating military situation, political considerations, which had been subordinated to military needs, came to be regarded as an increasingly important factor in Japan's policy towards the Co-Prosperity Sphere. Thus, the correlation between the decline of Japan's military fortunes and the increasing need for political support necessitated bureaucrats and non-government figures working out a new political strategy towards Asia.⁸ In particular, the Foreign Ministry was one of the organisations within the government that sought to devise a strategy strengthening Japan's political position vis-à-vis the subject countries in Southeast Asia.

It is also important to note that the military and the Foreign Ministry were not necessarily in conflict over the value of the slogan that Japan was fighting for the 'Liberation of Asia'. Indeed, the notion of 'Asian Liberation' was actively endorsed by most Japanese leaders, both from the military and civilian segments of the government, as a vital part of the justification of the war. The difference of opinion was rather over how the vision should be interpreted and implemented as an actual set of policies. This was clearly revealed by the dispute in July 1942 over the establishment of the Greater East Asia Ministry, which was to absorb the Foreign Ministry, Colonial Ministry, Manchurian Affairs Board and Asia Development Board into one body and undertake the formulation of diplomatic, economic and cultural policies for the Co-Prosperity Sphere except for the military occupation territories.

The proposal to establish the new ministry, which had been proposed by Army and Navy Ministries with the support of Prime Minister Tōjō, was a reflection of the view that

regarded the occupied territories primarily as a source for strengthening Japan's war capabilities. While the Imperial General Headquarters endorsed Japan's advocacy of 'Asian Liberation', it was based almost exclusively on its desire to rationalise Japan's attempt to occupy the colonial territories and obtain the collaboration of the countries under its control for the war against the Allied powers. The overriding priority of the Japanese policy was to win the current war and the whole of Greater East Asia, whether independent countries or newly occupied territories, had to be integrated under the leadership of Japan to achieve this foremost goal. While regular diplomatic relations would have to be preserved as a matter of formality, overall planning of the Co-Prosperity Sphere as a whole, Tōjō advocated, had to be conducted by the nucleus nation, Japan under the newly established Greater East Asia Ministry. It would require an increasing concentration of actual power in Japanese hands and each member country would contribute its own strength for the sake of Japan.⁹ Although the implementation of a political strategy more in line with the Japanese propaganda was endorsed, such a measure was interpreted solely as a means of indicating Japan's good faith and was acceptable only so long as it would not weaken the actual Japanese control over the subject nations. In other words, it would consider granting concessions as a part of war strategy only if it was consistent with Japan's interest in preserving its control over the affairs of the countries within the Co-Prosperity Sphere.

The Foreign Ministry's active support of the policy to grant early independence was not motivated solely by its sectionalist motives. While the ministry's concern to regain its influence within the government played a certain part, it was also a reflection of its belief that Japanese propaganda could be utilised more effectively to formulate coherent political strategy to counter the Allied offensive. If Japan was to deal with the countries in the sphere as an extension of domestic affairs and control them as the supply source of Japan's war effort through the Greater East Asia Ministry, it would only antagonise the Asian people and pose a serious obstacle to the conclusion of the conflict in Tokyo's favour. In order to obtain the assistance of the Asian people for its war effort, Japan would need to develop actual policies that substantiated its slogan of 'Asian Liberation' and accommodate the growing nationalist aspirations of the former colonial subjects. From the *Gaimushō's* point of view, more concrete measures were needed to encourage the autonomy of the territories under Japanese control and establish a relationship with the rest of Asia based on the principles of mutuality and equality.¹⁰ Japan would be able to obtain the support of Chinese people and other Asians only by a visible demonstration of its pan-Asian credentials.

In devising a new political strategy towards the countries in the Co-Prosperity Sphere,

the role played by Shigemitsu Mamoru, who was appointed the new Foreign Minister in April 1943, was important. Shigemitsu's initiative for the new policy started in China when he assumed the position of the ambassador to the Nanking government. On the eve of 1942, Shigemitsu, along with Aoki Kazuo, the Greater East Asia Minister, persuaded decision-makers within the government to revoke the privileges Japan enjoyed under the unequal treaty system and reduce its control over internal Chinese affairs in areas under Nanking's jurisdiction. Moreover, they argued that Japan should not only relinquish its concessions and settlements in China but also desist from interfering with its administration, domestic politics and civil affairs, while military and strategic issues concerning China would remain under Japanese control. These measures were designed to demonstrate Japan's commitment to the independence of China as a vital part of the war effort and as an alternative to Japanese military domination. With Nanking Government's declaration of war against Britain and the United States on January 1943, Shigemitsu sought through these strategic concessions to win the support of the Chinese people and induce a political settlement of the Chinese war. The Foreign Minister's new policy initiative towards Southeast Asia was an extension of this strategic re-orientation towards the Nanking government.

On his appointment as Foreign Minister, Shigemitsu submitted a document titled '*Nikka Dōmei Jōyaku An*' [a Draft of Japan-China Treaty and the Greater East Asia Charter] on 19 April 1943 which revealed the blueprint of his policy towards the countries within the Co-Prosperity Sphere. The policy draft stated that Japan should induce the voluntary co-operation of subject nations and political solidarity of the Greater East Asia by publicly pronouncing the just cause of Japan's war effort. Shigemitsu envisaged the establishment of a co-operative coalition comprised of the member countries, which would convene meetings among the leaders on a regular basis to co-ordinate the war strategy and form a blueprint for the post-war order in Asia. This regional order would be based on a pro forma principle of equality and mutuality while Japan's position as the leader of the Co-Prosperity Sphere was presupposed.¹¹ In other words, Shigemitsu advocated the announcement of 'Greater East Asia' on the basis of the existing alliance treaty between Japan and China, and sought to establish a regional order as a foundation of wartime and post-war international system in Asia. A new vision for a post-war Asia was considered as a measure that would bring Japan's war aims to a different dimension and counter the political manoeuvres of the Allied powers and deprive them of the means to devise an effective political warfare strategy.

Shigemitsu also tried to incorporate his vision into the treaty of alliance between Japan and Burma, whose independence had been approved by the Liaison Conference on

14 January. The draft treaty pledged strategic, political and economic co-operation for the war effort and that the two countries would work together 'for the autonomous development of the East Asian countries on the basis of co-prosperity and for the construction of a rising greater Asia'. As the author of the draft treaty, the Foreign Minister insisted on including the words 'mutual benefit' and 'reciprocity' and opposed the military's attempt to preserve the phrase 'co-existence' and 'co-prosperity' that reflected its desire to adhere to the existing policy framework of securing Japanese domination in Asia. Shigemitsu's draft also contained a provision which stated that Japan and Burma were to consult the representatives of other governments in Greater East Asia when required. This was part of the Foreign Minister's effort to broaden the framework of Japan's relationship with the rest of Asia and pledge that the independence of Burma was more than mere military expediency.¹²

The Greater East Asia Conference held on 5 November 1943 was the culmination of Shigemitsu's initiative for a new policy towards East Asia. Attended by representatives of the countries in Greater East Asia, including Ba Maw of Burma, José Laurel, the President of the Philippines, and Wang Ching-wei of the Nanking government, the declaration of the conference enunciated five doctrines:

1. The countries of Greater East Asia will co-operate to secure the stability of East Asia and establish an order based on the principle of co-existence and co-prosperity.
2. They will respect their mutual autonomy and independence, extend aid and friendship to each other, and establish an intimate relationship throughout East Asia.
3. They will respect their respective traditions, promote each people's creativity, and enhance the culture of the whole East Asia.
4. They will closely co-operate according to the principle of mutuality, plan their economic development, and promote the prosperity of East Asia.
5. They will maintain friendly relations with all nations, abolish systems of racial discrimination, undertake extensive cultural exchanges, voluntarily open up their resources, and thus contribute to the progress of the entire world.

For many Japanese military and political leaders, the primary objective of this conference was to provide visible evidence of pan-Asian co-operation against the enemy for war-time propaganda purposes, as well as securing the support of Asian allies for Japan's war effort in the face of the approaching large-scale counter-offensive by the Allied powers. However, for Shigemitsu and his aides, the implication of the policy of encouraging the independence of Asian countries was not confined to obtaining support for Japan's war effort. They

believed that Japan could have a significant impact on the neighbouring colonies and encourage movements against the Western colonialism: if successful, the Japanese measure towards Burma and Philippines could mark the beginning of a new relationship between Japan and other Asian countries.¹³ Projecting the current war as a struggle to create an order in which Japan and the rest of Asia would work as equal partners in the creation of stable, prosperous, interdependent Asia, the Foreign Ministry sought to contrast Japan's 'justifiable' war objective with that of the Allied powers which were trying to recover their colonial possessions in the region.

Motives behind Japan's new policy towards the GEACPS: policy of 'Asian Liberation'?

The arguments presented by Hatano Sumio and Iriye have successfully provided new perspectives on Japan's foreign policy towards Southeast Asia during this period. In particular, Hatano has referred to the existing work of Iriye Akira and pointed out the importance of the Foreign Ministry as an influential political force that was aware of the vital implication of the theme of 'decolonisation' in the post-war international order. He has described Shigemitsu and his aides' attempt to reorient Japan's foreign policy and to adopt the principle of 'Asian Liberation' as the mainstay of its new political strategy. Also his work has demonstrated, with the support of abundant historical sources, that Shigemitsu's vision was by no means a political disguise and that it was widely shared among his aides in *Gaimushō* through the meetings of the '*Sensō Mokuteki Kenkyū-kai*' [War Aim Study Group] that was established as an internal committee in August 1943.¹⁴ Thus, Hatano's work makes important points about the nature and development of the Japanese foreign policy during the latter half of the war period. Nevertheless, one has to raise questions about his views on the motives and objectives behind Shigemitsu and his aides' effort to develop the new policy initiative.

Why were Shigemitsu and his advisers in the *Gaimushō* such devoted adherents of the principle of 'Asian Liberation'? What were the motives that drove them to confront the hard-line elements within the government and to struggle to grant independence to the occupied territories in Southeast Asia? Hatano has argued that the *Gaimushō* tried to advocate the using ongoing conflict as a means to materialise the principle of self-determination ahead of time and to leave the independence of Asian countries as a legacy of the Japanese war for 'liberation'.¹⁵ However, he appears to have left some questions unanswered by being too emphatic in illustrating *Gaimushō's* effort as a consistent and somewhat altruistic endeavour to respond to the growing aspirations for

'self-government'.

One of the problems inherent in his argument is the discrepancy between the *Gaimushō*'s stance towards the Asian countries' aspiration for 'national self-determination' during the pre-war years and the wartime view of the ministry. It has to be noted that, as this study has demonstrated in the first two chapters, the Japanese aspiration for a new Asian order developed during the pre-war years within the context of its growing antipathy to the existing international order dominated by the Western colonial powers rather than being motivated by the ideal of 'Asian Liberation'. This emerging vision that envisaged Japan's dominance in Asia as the key for its strategic and economic security was widely supported by the Japanese leaders prior to the war. The key figures of the Foreign Ministry were by no means an exception of this pattern. Furthermore, it has to be remembered that the Foreign Ministry was the very first official advocate of the vision of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. The ideology of '*Dai Tōa Kyo-ei-ken*', vigorously advocated by Matsuoka Yōsuke, the incumbent Foreign Minister, was characterised by its proclamation that the subject countries should assume their proper place and take appropriate responsibilities under the Japanese leadership. The hierarchical nature inherent in this rhetoric directly contradicts with the image of the wartime Foreign Ministry as an ardent advocate of 'Asian Liberation' and a new regional order based on equality and mutuality. This therefore casts some doubts on the validity of the argument that portrays the Foreign Ministry as motivated by the desire to bring about the liberation of Western colonies in the region.

Furthermore, it is evident from the existing Japanese sources that the *Gaimushō* did not necessarily believe that the policy of granting independence should be applied to all territories within the Co-Prosperity Sphere. The ministry's view on the future status of the subject countries immediately after the outbreak of the war was revealed by its policy planning '*Nanpō Chiiki Shori Yōkō-an*' drafted in the Liaison Conference held on 20 November, 1941. While endorsing the independence of Philippines and some areas in Netherlands East Indies, the policy outline suggested that Japan would preserve the direct control over the strategically vital territories such as Singapore and Malaya as well as Dutch Borneo, New Guinea and Timor, that were considered as 'incapable of self-government'.¹⁶ The idea of directly controlling territories vital for the construction of the 'Greater East Asia' and prosecution of the war was maintained through the later stage of the war. There is a notable gap between the image of the *Gaimushō* as an advocate of 'Asian Liberation' and its actual policy planning. The Foreign Ministry's dualism cannot be simply dismissed as a result of the compromises it had to make with the Imperial Army and Navy in the process of policy formulation. As is evident from the remarks of wartime

Foreign Ministers, the *Gaimushō*'s understanding of subject countries' independence was consistently presupposed on the leadership of the Japanese and would only be granted if such a measure would best serve Tokyo's interest. For instance, Tōgō Shigemori, an advocate of the autonomous policy, revealed his view in his conversation with Prime Minister Tōjō Hideki on 11 July 1942. The successor to Matsuoka as Foreign Minister agreed that the nature of the independence granted to the territories within the 'Co-Prosperity Sphere' would be fundamentally different and that a significant number of restrictions were to be imposed on their autonomy.¹⁷ This was a presupposition that was widely shared within the Foreign Ministry.

It is also important point to note that, as the previous chapters also indicate, Japan's aspiration for establishing an economic sphere of influence in East and Southeast Asia was a vital factor leading to the emergence of the concept of the GEACPS prior to the war. As a developing imperial power, Japan tried to increase its economic presence in Southeast Asia during the 1930s by removing trade restrictions through measures such as opening bi-lateral negotiations. While the western imperial powers accepted the Japanese expansion as long as it did not go against their economic activities, Japan's rapid advance gradually produced disagreements and conflicts of interest among them. Thus it would ultimately lead to the emergence of a more confrontational vision that opted for controlling the regional economy under the leadership of the Japanese. Japan's desire to establish a self-sufficient economic sphere was a more important element which accounts for the Japanese motives to form the '*Dai-tōa Kyōei-ken*' than its proclamations in support of the liberation and independence of the Southeast Asian colonies.¹⁸

The shift of Japan's economic policy towards the occupied territories in 1943 illustrated that its underlying principle was still to capitalise on the resources in the region for the war effort. On 12 June 1943, the Japanese government endorsed a new economic policy document titled '*Nanpō Kō-chiku Keizai Taisaku Yōkō*' [the Outline of the economic policy for the district A]. Originally drafted by the Liaison Committee of the Greater East Asia Ministry and approved by the Liaison Conference, the policy plan outlined the principles behind Japan's economic policy towards the occupied territories in Southeast Asia. One of the important characteristics of the planning was that Japan came to emphasise the development of self-sufficient economies and the stabilisation of peoples' livelihood in the occupied territories of the region. The document stated that 'Japan is to provide the subjects of Greater East Asia with opportunities for their own economic activities, and strengthen local industries designed for supplying products to satisfy demand of the people in occupied territories'. In particular, the development of textile and shipbuilding industries was regarded as the foremost priority of the planning.¹⁹ One of the

important reasons why the self-sufficiency of Southeast Asian countries emerged as a vital theme of Japanese economic policy was the deterioration of economic conditions and the disintegration of the trade structure in the region. The export of war materials from Southeast Asia was conducted without a commensurate return supply of Japanese products and exceeded the economic capacity of the subject countries. This led to an acute shortage of consumer goods and, in turn, caused a serious decline in exports from the Southeast Asian territories.²⁰ In spite of its façade to extend the degree of economic autonomy, the policy actually set its eyes on reducing Japan's economic burden and maximising the amount of war materials Japan could secure from the occupied territories. In contrast to its professed support for an Asian order based on 'equality' and 'mutuality', the Foreign Ministry showed little sign of opposition to the idea of making the occupied territories serve Japan's requirement within the framework of a strictly controlled economy under Japanese leadership. All these elements run counter to the image that the Foreign Ministry's new policy was driven by its unfluctuating fervour for the principle of national sovereignty.

These issues being taken into account, one faces a difficulty in trying to portray, as Iriye and Hatano do, Foreign Ministry and Shigemitsu's new policy initiative as something beyond a strategic measure aimed at boosting co-operation between the occupied Asian countries and justifying the Japanese rule under the ideology of the 'Co-Prosperity Sphere' vis-à-vis the Allied powers. Shigemitsu and his aides' attempt to develop a new form of Asian order during the latter half of the war period was not based on their idealism to endorse the principle of self-determination for weaker nations in Southeast Asia. But it was largely motivated by their pragmatic calculation that the policy of encouraging independence of the Southeast Asian territories would best serve Japan's national interest by fortifying its presence in the region as the leading nation of the Co-Prosperity Sphere.

Iriye and Hatano have argued that the declaration announced at the end of the Greater East Asia Conference was designed to function as a counterstatement to the Atlantic Charter enunciated by Roosevelt and Churchill in 1941. The statement promulgated that the war was being fought to 'liberate Greater East Asia from the thrall of the Anglo-American powers' who had oppressed and exploited the people of the region in pursuit of their own national prosperity. It committed the nations of the region to building a Greater East Asia based on 'coexistence and co-prosperity,' 'mutual respect for sovereign independence,' 'mutual co-operation and assistance,' 'the development of each people's creativity,' 'economic development,' and the 'abolishment of the system of racial discrimination.'²¹ Thus, it is suggested that the universal language of the declaration considerably resembled that of the Atlantic doctrine which had functioned as the model for

the statement.

Nevertheless, it is important to note that important political figures in pre-war Japan, such as Shigemitsu and Konoe Fumimaro, had been consistently criticising the West on the grounds that its rhetoric to justify the existing international order did not live up to its actions in practice, which simply safeguard its vested interests in the region. The Foreign Minister, Shigemitsu, was known during pre-war years not as a figure who envisaged the liberation and independence of western colonies in the region, but as an ardent advocate of the vision to make Japan the leading power in East Asia that would secure political and economic stability of the region.²² Since the mid-1930s he had argued that Japan should outbid the West in Asia, specifically in relation to China, by asserting the country's special position in the region. Just as the United States sought to exempt the Americas and the Monroe Doctrine from the stipulations of the League Covenant, he maintained his scepticism about the idea of controlling international relations in East Asia through Western-centric peace treaties or organizations. In order to safeguard the Japan's responsibility for guaranteeing peace and security of the region, he indicated, that the Japanese must resolutely take any measures, if necessary, to expel the Western powers whose semi-colonial political and economic policies dominated the region.²³ This long-term antipathy to Western duplicity and his misgivings about international arrangements led by the Anglo-American powers certainly influenced Shigemitsu's thinking towards the Atlantic Charter. In contrast to his emphasis on 'equality and mutuality' in the Greater East Asia declaration, it is evident from his remarks immediately before assuming the portfolio in the Foreign Ministry, April 1943, that Shigemitsu viewed Japan's ruling position within the Co-Prosperity Sphere as the 'de facto principle' of Japan's Asian policy, even while he envisaged the policy of accommodating colonial subjects' nationalist aspirations.²⁴ Indeed, an examination of the new policy initiative in this context reveals the picture that echoes more with the Foreign Ministry and Shigemitsu's pre-war vision of an Asian order.

These considerations point to an important motive behind Japan's proclamation of the regional order: the Greater East Asia Declaration also functioned as a very effective ideological platform to justify Japan's special position in Asia. As Peter Duus has pointed out, the Japanese vision of regional unity stressed commonalities of political and economic interest as well as ethnic or cultural similarities. It became axiomatic for many Japanese by the late 1930s that their country was a 'have-not' nation in a world economy dominated by 'have' nations like Britain and the United States. In this respect the interests of the Japanese could be identified with those of the colonial peoples in Southeast Asia. The rhetoric of the new policy would help Japan to establish a political and economic symbiosis between Japan and its neighbours, and its benefits would redound to all. Such rhetoric

about a regional order greatly appealed to Asian people because of the racial similarity and their 'have-not' nation status.²⁵

Furthermore, it was an ideological platform that was increasingly difficult for the Western powers to oppose openly, because the principles at its core, such as national sovereignty, formed the proclaimed rationale of the Allied effort to defeat the Axis powers. Denial of such principles would only mean an admission that the Western powers were pursuing two-faced policies and actually trying to fortify their regime of domination. Thus, the proposition of a regional order based on principles that could not be challenged by the Western colonial powers was the policy that best served Japan's national interest at that time of defending the country's foothold on East and Southeast Asia. Indeed, Shigemitsu's objective was not to pursue the ideal of 'Asian liberation' but to establish a regional order that would secure Japan's special position in East Asia.

Britain and the future of Southeast Asia

By the middle of 1943, it became increasingly evident that it was now the turn of the Allies to move over to the offensive against the Axis Powers in many theatres of the war. The Western Allies were now subjecting Germany to round-the clock bombing and overcoming the menace of the U-boat, while the Soviet forces dealt the Germans heavy blows on the eastern front. In the face of the fall of Sicily in July, Mussolini was deposed and this was followed by the surrender of Italy in September. As has been examined at the beginning of this chapter, the gathering pace of success was also apparent in Asia, where the Allied powers were gradually closing in on the Japanese line of defence. It was in the light of this declining military standing in the region that Japan undertook the new political strategy that was designed to revitalise its position as the leading nation of the 'Co-Prosperity Sphere'. Reflecting the rapidly improving military position, Britain did not, however, indicate any keen interest in the latest Japanese manoeuvre and reacted to its new policy initiative towards Southeast Asian territories in a rather nonchalant manner.

Dorman-Smith, the Governor of Burma, observed for instance that Tōjō's promise of independence in January 1943, although based on misrepresentation, was likely to have a powerful effect at first on the Burmese people's attitude towards the Japanese. He, however, went on to say that 'against universal conviction that the United Nations will win the war and drive the Japanese from Burma ...' 'The mere fact of Japan playing her trump card at this stage suggested', he concluded, that 'Burmans have not hitherto been co-operating satisfactorily from Japanese point of view.'²⁶ With a view to the

independence of Burma enforced on 1 August, the Governor of Burma noted further that:

"The little comedy enacted last week-end, while produced with the usual care given by the Axis to such performances whether in Europe or Asia, makes not the smallest difference to the realities of the situation nor to the British attitude towards it. It is part of a conciliation offensive by Japan towards her occupied territories, is done purely for propaganda, and the Burmese statement is proof of greater, not less, subservience to Japan. The Japanese have changed the administrative façade while maintaining Ba Maw, the chief "collaborator", but, especially while the Japanese army is in occupation in Burma, there is no more real freedom of action for her than for Manchuria or Siam or any of the other satellite states ruled by the Great East Asia Ministry in the name of "Co-Prosperity". ... ²⁷

The Greater East Asia Conference led to even less response from the Allied powers. It was generally dismissed as a sign of Japan's desperation which forced it 'to use rose-scented words and political promises for her deceit' in an attempt to soothe the growing unrest and to present the image of a harmonious Greater East Asia.²⁸

This nonchalance was in part a reflection of the relative lack of interest in the Far Eastern theatre of war that was widely shared among British officials as well as general public. Officials dealing with East and Southeast Asian affairs were concerned that events in region drew little attention, if they were not completely neglected, by officials and public alike. Even in Whitehall itself, there were still very few who took an interest in Asia, which one Foreign Office official sourly described as 'largely ignored or forgotten except by the depressed classes whose business it is to deal with that region.' Sir Maurice Peterson, an Assistant Under-Secretary, also noted that 'no section of H[is] M[ajesty's] G[overnment] is at present very much interested in, or very much linked up with, operations [against Japan].'²⁹

Nevertheless, Britain was by no means in a position to stay indifferent and sanguine about the prospect of its war effort and future political standing in the region. It indeed became increasingly vital for Britain to take a greater interest in the Far Eastern conflict for two reasons. For one thing, the gradual turn of the Allied powers' military fortunes in the Far East meant that operations to recapture the colonial territories in Southeast Asia became imminent and Britain would have to formulate a coherent strategy designed not only to recover them militarily but also to re-establish its position as a regional power. As Ashley Clarke observed in his memorandum on 4 January 1943, there were 'beginning to be signs within Japan of a realization that the Axis (including Japan) cannot win this war' and Japan was beginning to be vulnerable to political warfare.³⁰ There was a good opportunity to be seized for developing a counter-offensive against Japan in the political sphere. However, as has been examined in the previous chapter, the political warfare

against Japan was an element that had been contributing not so much advantages as problems for the British war effort. Even at this stage, Britain had not come up with any concrete ideas about how to present its former colonies in the region with a convincing reason as to why the return of British rule had to be accepted besides historical precedence. Now that Japan had granted actual independence to Burma and the Philippines, Britain could not merely go back and impose the existing colonial structure but would have to justify its return to the region. It was imperative for Britain to clarify its stance on the future status of colonial possessions in Southeast Asia.

There was another strong reason why Britain needed to elucidate its design on the future status of colonies in Southeast Asia. That is that Britain's handling of colonial issues in the region was a factor that considerably affected its relationship with its most vital ally, the United States, on which Britain was heavily reliant in undertaking a counter-offensive against the Japanese. It has to be noted that Britain's stance on the future of its former colonies in Southeast Asia was one of the issues that consistently caused strains in the relations between the two countries throughout the conflict. Having had a tradition of deep-rooted anti-imperialist sentiment, Washington was critical of the colonial rule Britain imposed in various parts of the world. While some officials in Washington had a degree of sympathy for the aims and existence of the British Empire, the climate of American opinion regarding existing colonial structures was in general hostile. There was prevailing suspicion shared among American critics that imperial concerns lay at the heart of British actions and ideas. The British war effort, many Americans believed, was dominated by its imperial interests to recover all pre-war colonial territories in contrast to America's handling of the Philippines, which was due to receive independence in 1946. In American minds, its policy in the Philippines was, in Cordell Hull's words, 'a perfect example of how a nation should treat a colony or dependency in cooperating with it ... in making all necessary preparations for freedom.'³¹ Ideas such as these were frequently accompanied by the belief that Britain was unfortunately less enlightened in these matters and should follow the American example. In actuality, Roosevelt believed that a period of 'repair and readjustment' would probably be required for the Philippines and that the date of 1946 for its independence had to be adhered to even if the war ended well beforehand. This was not radically different from the way the Governor of Burma, for example, was approaching the question of Burma's post-war prospects.³² However, the idea that only the American approach would help to ensure a better future for Asia retained a wide currency. Conversely, British observers believed that American criticism of British colonial practices was unreasonable and uninformed, or, even worse, a ruse to conceal intentions in Washington to supplant pre-war European imperialism with a post-war American version.³³

With the Japanese invasion at the outset of the conflict, the issue of the future of Britain's colonial possessions became a major source of friction between these two leading Allied powers as it touched on the very core of the whole anti-totalitarian struggle. Now that the Japanese granting of independence towards Burma and Philippines added further complexity to the problem, at no time during the war would this potential discord be more likely to explode.

Various levels of the government in London were aware of Washington's mistrust of its intentions and the inherent danger that such mutual suspicions could seriously undermine the effectiveness of the coalition. The Prime Minister, Churchill, acknowledged his concern that there was an urgent need to deal with the considerable criticism which was heard from the United States in an acute form regarding British colonial policy.

'It is clear that there is a widespread and rooted feeling in the United States which regard the British Colonial Empire as equivalent to the private estate of landlord preserved for his own benefit. Clearly, this view is unreasonable, but it is no use ignoring its existence. Moreover, we must, if we can, endeavour to get the United States to express their willingness to enter some general defence scheme which would include the defence of Colonial areas. Their assistance, however, will not be forthcoming unless we can secure their general goodwill.'

With this in view, it was, he wrote, essential that Britain should act now 'to convince United States opinion that our Colonial policy is not a danger and an anachronism, as certain quarters in that country are inclined to regard it.'³⁴

Nevertheless, by the beginning of 1943, Britain saw an intensification of the American criticism and pressure to clarify the British stance on the future of its colonial possessions in Southeast Asia. The American dissatisfaction with Britain's imperialist designs was, for instance, revealed in the form of an open letter to the British government that contained a number of questions about British policy in the Far East. In order to deal with the American criticism and discuss how it could best be countered, representatives of various offices, including the Foreign Office, Ministry of Information and Colonial Office, were invited under the chairmanship of Ashley Clarke. The British response to the questions posed by American critics revealed the wide gap between the view of the United States and that of Britain on colonial issues, and illustrated that the colonial mindset of British officials was largely unaffected by the course of the war.

One of the questions candidly put by the United States was why did Britain fail to evoke the support of the inhabitants of Hong Kong, Malaya, Borneo and Sarawak, and Burma, as the U.S.A. had evoked the support of the Filipinos. The India Office suggested replying to the question by arguing that the Burmese people did not possess considerable fighting quality and were 'largely self-governing'. The India Office observed, the Burmese

'are strict Buddhists and do not readily take life. Nor are they adventurous or easily disciplined. But certain Burma races such as Chins and Kachins have marked fighting qualities and are understood to have done well in the 1942 campaign.' No true comparison was therefore 'possible between pleasure-loving, easy-going peoples of S.E. Asia with Filipinos who are of European descent and Catholic religion.'³⁵ The American questions also extended to the pre-war British colonial policy. Washington contrasted its measures towards Philippines with the 'less advanced' stance of London and inquired why Britain had 'done so little to prepare the inhabitants of her Far Eastern dependencies' for democratic institutions and for self-government 'whereas the U.S.A. has already instituted democratic government, and will in 1946 grant full self-government, in Philippines?'³⁶ To that, the Whitehall responded:

'Burma enjoyed from 1937 a constitution in advance of that in India. Apart from defence and foreign affairs, she was ruled by Burman ministries responsible to a House of Representatives elected on a broad franchise. This was a purely democratic constitution and H.M.G. had undertaken to discuss the question of defence and foreign affairs after the war.'

The most critical question presented by the American was whether Britain would accept the Atlantic Charter as applying to the Pacific and the Far East, and support the independence of colonial territories in the region. The Foreign Office responded that His Majesty's Government had never contested the universal application of the Atlantic Charter and were equally determined to see the Four Freedoms established in their Far Eastern and Pacific territories as elsewhere. However, this end, it claimed, could not be attained by the mere act of granting a self-government.

'The British Empire is like a laboratory where experiments are continually in progress, but at any given moment in varying degrees of fruition. An attempt, in defiance of the laws of nature and in the light of experience, to precipitate the experiment or set an arbitrary time limit for its completion, is to invite an explosion. His Majesty's Government's prime responsibility is to ensure and promote the social, economic and political well being of the peoples under the British flag. They consider they would not be discharging this responsibility by granting full freedom to peoples who are not yet sufficiently advanced to use it wisely. But they have tried and will continue to try to develop the social and political institutions of all their peoples so as to prepare the way for eventual self-Government.'³⁷

The view presented by the Ministry of Information was even more blunt in supporting Britain's continuing presence in the region following the conclusion of the war. It commented 'Cannot we point to the obvious truth that there are among the peoples of the world those whose introduction to modern ideas of democracy and self-govt. is so recent

that they will be far from ready for self-govt. so soon as immediately after the war?' 'It is our intention', it went on to say, 'to lead these people as far and as fast in the direction of self-govt. as we can' and 'to preserve to them all that the Atlantic Charter implies in practical freedom'. The Ministry of Information reasoned that it 'will necessitate their remaining to a greater or less degree dependent on us for years and possibly for generations.'³⁸

As these British responses to the colonial questions revealed, growing American criticism and the tide of nationalist movement did not radically alter the mindset of policy-makers in London on the colonial structure in Southeast Asia and how the post-war order in the region should be formed. Against this background, it was a reflection of the view generally shared among officials in London when the Secretary of State for War, Sir James Grigg, wrote to the Prime Minister that 'I have always believed that the future welfare of Burma as of India depends on the British retaining quite unashamedly the ultimate authority there and I have hoped that one result of the war would be that we could openly claim this ultimate authority and exercise it openly so long as there was no agreement with the Indian or Burma political parties which we could accept without fear and without shame.'³⁹ Such thinking was envisaged even by those who were in a position to deal with colonial affairs directly and had first-hand exposure to the growing tide of nationalist aspirations for national independence. Leo Amery, the Secretary of State for India and Burma, noted in his diary on the post war order in Southeast Asia that:

'My own conviction is that in the course of the next generation small countries generally will realise the impossibility of living by themselves and that, in a sense, the period is going to be one not of Atlantic charter liberty but of an increasing imperialism, that is to say of general control of foreign defensive policy. On the other hand I am all for encouraging the sentiment of self-government now and letting them feel their own feet and the façade of independent status. In other words it may well be that the position of countries like Burma and Ceylon will in practice be much more like that of Egypt and Iraq than that of the Dominions, of equal independence but one effectively modified by treaty and by the lease of bases. That may be that way in which the British Empire will continue to grow in the next half century.'⁴⁰

As illustrated above, the actual motives of the British operations in Southeast Asia did not necessarily conform with the core principle of the Allied war effort that portrayed it as a democratic struggle. In spite of the lofty pronouncement of war aims in the Atlantic Charter, the real objective of Britain in the coming offensive against the Japanese was to recapture the former colonial territories and preserve them within its sphere of influence in the framework of the 'Commonwealth of Nations'.

Britain's pledge to commit itself to recapturing its colonial territories following the

conclusion of the war did not necessarily originate from the sense that it had an obligation to compensate for the devastation brought by the war. It was rather motivated by its desire to restore and safeguard the political and economic interests that Britain had possessed in the pre-war years. In one sense, it was only natural that a country should envisage the recovery of lost territories as its ultimate objective, as no country would be willing to fight a war only to lose its territories. Nevertheless, explicit acknowledgement of Britain's intention to maintain its colonial structure did not have any appeal to American critics in Washington or Burmese nationalists who envisaged 'independence' as an ultimate goal. This posed London with a fundamental problem in how to undertake effective political warfare. Britain needed a sound basis for its political policy which would not only convince the United States that it was not involved in this theatre of the war simply to resuscitate its imperial structure but also would persuade Burma that the return of the British would lead to a better future for the country. In reality, Britain failed to build firm foundations of a positive and long-term political policy and this cast a shadow on its attempt to formulate effective political warfare.

In November 1943, the Political Warfare (Japan) Committee gathered and held discussions on the planning of political warfare for Burma. The committee set two objectives: to hasten the Japanese defeat by enlisting the support of the peoples of Burma against the Japanese and to restore and maintain goodwill and confidence towards the British Commonwealth among the peoples of Burma, so that friendly co-operation could be achieved both immediately after re-occupation and in the years after the war. In order to achieve these two objectives, Britain, the committee concluded, would have to present convincing cases to the Burmese people from several angles. First, Britain needed to convince Burma that Britain and the United Nations would be the party to win the war and indicate the solidarity of the Allied powers. The memorandum wrote that 'it is important to ensure effective presentation of the United States war effort in conjunction with our own, and to point out, with regard to our other allies, that we are in a stronger position to win the war now that the nations of almost the entire civilized world are lined up on our side against the enemy.'

Second, it was essential that the population of Burma should be 'mentally conditioned to assume an attitude of hostility to Japan' as well as to accept the fact that the re-occupation of Burma by British forces was inevitable. The re-occupation of Burma was an essential part of the Allied military strategy, in order to bring help to China, safeguard India, and recapture bases for the main offensive against Japan. In order to prepare an environment that would ensure the smooth recapture of Burma and its following co-operation, Britain needed to project an unfavourable picture of Japan and denounce the

Japanese measure to grant Burma independence as irresponsible, baseless and temporary. The promise and shows of independence by the Japanese had to be portrayed as 'a political trick introduced in order to keep the country quiet and serve as bait for India.'

Thirdly, and most importantly, the committee viewed it as critical that Britain had to convince the peoples of Burma that they would benefit greatly by the victory of the Allied powers and by Britain's return. As short-term advantages, the memorandum stressed that the victory of the Allied powers would bring peace and that essential material supplies would be brought in for the civil population once the Japanese were driven out of the territory. Taking a long-term view, it pledged that Britain should proceed to give the Burmese positive assurances regarding the future. The committee wrote:

'Britain's future intentions towards Burma are implicit in her whole relationship with Burma during the past twenty years, and in the great material benefits which she brought to Burma. The war has unfortunately retarded Burma's previous steady development, but Britain will be at hand to help in the necessary period of reconstruction and recovery; having shouldered the responsibility of restoring Burma prosperity, she will not forget her promise that the goal is full self-government for Burma as soon as practicable.'

Thus the memorandum reasoned that the Burmese must themselves make positive efforts to help the Allies rid their country of the invader as there would be no future for a free and prosperous Burma under Japanese rule, and no peace or progress until the Japanese were driven out.⁴¹

No matter how sound this seemed to policy-makers in London, this agenda lacked fundamental appeal to the Burmese people as the proposed strategy was devoid of any clear declaration about the timing and form in which Burma was to be granted its independence by the British. The British officials dealing with the political warfare towards Burma responded to the draft with a cautionary tone. In response to the planning, B. O. Binns of the Burma Office commented that the proposal was devoid of the two essential prerequisites necessary for successful political propaganda in this theatre of war: local victories against the Japanese and a clear policy on the part of the British government as to the future of Burma. The Burmese civil service official wrote that victories in Europe over the Germans would be quite 'useless' as propaganda and have no effect on Burmese feeling whatsoever. 'Victories over the Japanese in the S.W. Pacific, if we can cause them to be believed, will be more effective, but what is really wanted is victories over the Japanese in Burma.'

Binn's criticism was even sharper regarding the absence of a clear British policy for the future of Burma. 'It is quite obvious', he wrote, 'that we must have something to put in the scales against the Japanese grant of independence, and nothing less than a promise of

self-government to the Burmese after our reconquest, not in the uncertain future but after some reasonably short and definite period, is likely to be effective.' Until one or both of these necessities was achieved, political propaganda would be 'mainly a waste of time and energy', and must at least be very limited in scope. With these points in mind, Britain was critically disadvantaged in its handling of political warfare against the Japanese in Burma. Thus he concluded,

'It is probably true that most thoughtful Burmans would prefer self-Government under the aegis of Britain to self-government under a paramount Japan; it is certainly true that all Burmans would prefer even an inefficient Burmese Government to the best and most efficient British administration.'

He was also critical of the fundamental basis of the British approach to the political warfare towards Burma. 'It is customary in this country', Binns pointed out, 'to talk of the advantages of British colonial administration as though these were self-evident to the ordinary inhabitants of colonial territories. I do not believe so.' Most of the nation-building improvements which Britain could offer had already been promised by Dr. Ba Maw's government, and 'many of [these] things are things which the Burman does not yet realise that he needs and in some cases indeed does not even realise the advantage.' Thus he concluded that 'it would be possible to elaborate this idea that the advantages of British administration are not evident to the ordinary Burman, but it is not necessary to do so because all that has been or can be promised by us has equally been promised by the existing Government.'⁴² M. E. Dening of the Foreign Office echoed this view and observed that it was doubtful whether either the oppressed Burmese people or American critics would be much stimulated by the picture of the future drawn by the Governor of Burma. He wrote that 'for the very reason that the proposals are ... sound and sober, they are lacking in emotional appeal.'⁴³ Thus, as the year entered 1944, Britain saw no explicit sign that the fundamental problem in British political warfare against the Japanese in Burma was likely to be improved.

Conclusion

In spite of Japan's effort to devise a new policy, its endeavours did not bring the desired impact in terms of both co-operation from the countries within the Co-Prosperity Sphere and propaganda against the Allied power. Actions in the occupied territories did not always match the pronounced idealism. The brutal Japanese suppression of the resulting unrest only turned it into an armed resistance movement. The frustration of nationalist hopes in

Burma and Indonesia was also bound to prompt discontent, which made the Japanese only a little more acceptable in some circles than the British and Dutch had been. As Ba Maw later wrote in his memoir, what Japan ought to have been doing was 'seeking an understanding of the Asian peoples' aspirations for freedom and liberation'.⁴⁴ What it actually did instead was to make them part of the Japanese war effort. The new political initiative of the Tōjō government during 1943, in which the Foreign Ministry played an important part, was not immune from this tendency. Thus the tide of the war gradually weakened Japan's military and economic standing as the year entered 1944, and engendered the development of resistance movements in the Japanese-occupied territories in Southeast Asia.

While the Japanese political manoeuvring towards the former British territories in Southeast Asia had a limited effect, this did not, however, necessarily help Britain to strengthen its ideological foothold or justify its reoccupation of the former colonial territories vis-à-vis the United States. London also did not succeed in devising an effective strategy for political warfare to convince the nationalist elements in those territories, such as Burma, that the return of British rule was a better option than Japanese control. These immediate problems were already foreshadowing the arrival of wider and more difficult ones. In Burma and other territories in the region, further questions were bound to arise about what political line Britain should take regarding such potentially difficult allies, and what promises for the future could or should be made in order to win and retain their support against the Japanese. As is going to be examined in the next chapter, these questions were to force their way to the front before the war was over. Whatever views might be held in Whitehall, there could be no comfortable return to the status quo for Britain in Southeast Asia.

Notes for Chapter 5

- ¹ Jan Pluvier. *South-East Asia from Colonialism to Independence*. London: Oxford University Press, 1974, p. 395.
- ² Kobayashi Hideo. *Dai-Tōa Kyōeiken No Keisei to Hōkai [the Formation of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere and Its Fall]*. Tokyo, 1978, pp. 393-394.
- ³ *Ibid.*, p. 517.
- ⁴ Hatano, Sumio. 'Nihon no 'Shin Chitsujo' Rinen to Sensō Mokuteki.' *Shin Bōei Ronshū* 8, no. 3, p. 41. The importance of the policy document was also examined in: Ikeda Kiyoshi. 'Nihon no Sensō Shidō Keikaku.' *Hōgaku* 43, no. 2: 1979.
- ⁵ Sanbō Honbu [The Army General Staff], Ed. Sugiyama Memo - *Dai-nihon seifu renraku kaigi tou hikki* [The Memoranda by Sugiyama - Notes on the Liaison Conferences and Others]. Vol. 2, Tokyo, 1967, pp. 352-53.
- ⁶ See, for example, Beasley, W. G. *Japanese Imperialism, 1884-1945*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987, pp. 241-242, and Ienaga Saburō, *Sensō Sekinin*. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1985, pp. 118-123.
- ⁷ Hatano, Sumio. *Taiheiyō Sensō to Ajia Gaikō* [Japan's Asia Policy and the Pacific War]. Tokyo: Tokyo Daigaku Shuppan-kai, 1996. and Iriye Akira, *Power and Culture*. Cambridge, Mass., 1981.
- ⁸ Iriye, p. 98.
- ⁹ Baba, Akira. *Nicchū Kankei to Gaisei-Kikō No Kenkyū*. Tokyo, 1985, pp. 416-17.
- ¹⁰ Hatano, p. 71.
- ¹¹ Diplomatic Record Office, Foreign Ministry, Tokyo, A.7.0.0.9-41-2 'Nikka Dōmei Jōyaku / Dai-Tōa Kenshō', 18 April 1943.
- ¹² Iriye, p. 114
- ¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 112
- ¹⁴ Hatano, pp. 161-172.
- ¹⁵ Hatano, p. 183
- ¹⁶ 'Kyokutō Kokusai Gunji Saiban Sokki-roku' [Stenographic Record of the International Military Tribunal for the Far East] vol. 3, Tokyo 1968, p. 377.
- ¹⁷ Baba, P. 203.
- ¹⁸ Shimizu, Hajime. 'Japanese Economic Penetration into Southeast Asia and the "Southward Expansion" School of Thought.' In, Shinya Sugiyama and Milagros C. Guerrero eds., *International Commercial Rivalry in Southeast Asia in the Interwar Period*, pp. 11-39. New Haven, Conn.: Yale Southeast Asia Studies, 1994, pp. 33-34.
- ¹⁹ Bōei-chō Bōei Kenkyū-jo, Senshi Henshū-bu. *Shiryō-Shū Nanpō No Gunsei*. Tokyo: Asagumo Shinbun-sha, 1985, pp. 176-182.
- ²⁰ Kobayashi, Hideo. *Dai-Tōa Kyōeiken No Keisei to Hōkai* [the Formation of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere and Its Fall]. Tokyo, 1978, pp. 528-29.
- ²¹ DRO, A.7.0.0.9-48 'Dai-tōa Kaigi Kankei'.
- ²² Taura Masanori. 'Shōwa Jūnen-dai Gaimushō Kakushin-ha no Jōsei Ninshiki to Seisaku' *Nihon Rekishi* vol. 493, 1989.
- ²³ Usui Katsumi, The Role of the Foreign Ministry, in Pearl Harbor as History - Japanese-American Relations, 1931-41. D. Borg and O. Shunpei (New York, 1973), pp. 136-7. See also, James Crowley, *Japan's quest for autonomy: national security and foreign policy, 1930-1938*. (Princeton, N.J., 1966), pp. 188-190.
- ²⁴ Hatano, p. 130.
- ²⁵ Peter Duus. "Introduction / Japan's Wartime Empire: Problems and Issues." In *The Japanese Wartime Empire, 1931-45.*, edited by Peter Duus, Ramon-H. Myers and Mark R. Peattie, Princeton, N. J., 1996, p. xxvii.
- ²⁶ PRO, FO371/35916, F1286/783/61, 1 March 1943, From Dorman-Smith to Amery.
- ²⁷ PRO, FO371/35892, F4169/71/61, 9 August 1943, from A. F. Morley to Denning.
- ²⁸ PRO, FO371/35892, F4169/71/61, 24 August 1943, From Bowes-Lyon to Denning.
- ²⁹ PRO, FO371, F2446/25/10 and F2637/11/10, cited in, Christopher Thorne, *Allies of a Kind – the United States, Britain and the war against Japan, 1941-1945*, London 1978, p. 290.
- ³⁰ *Ibid.*, FO371/35878 F71/71/G61, memorandum by Ashley Clarke, 4 January, 1943
- ³¹ Hull Papers, box 62, Hull to Roosevelt, 11 August 1942, cited in, Thorne, p. 160.
- ³² FRUS, 1942, I, p. 906, cited in, Thorne, p. 214.
- ³³ John Sbrega, *Anglo-American Relations and Colonialism in East Asia, 1941-1945*. New York, 1983, p. 3.
- ³⁴ PRO, CAB66/33, W.P.(43)6, Telegram to Governments of Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa, 4 January 1943.
- ³⁵ *Ibid.*, FO371/35192 F1543/277/61, Questions about Britain and the Far East: United States

criticisms, undated.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*, F277/277/61, United States criticism of British Far Eastern Policy, undated.

³⁸ PRO, FO371/31774, F8172/623/61, from Mr. Darvell (Min. of Information.) to Mr. Evans, 23 Oct 1942.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, PREM4/50/3, P.13/43, From Secretary of State for War to Prime Minister, 7 April, 1943.

⁴⁰ Churchill Archive Centre, University of Cambridge, Amery Paper AMEL/291 – 1943, 5 March 1943.

⁴¹ PRO, FO371/35903, F6004/71/61, No. 440B, 'Plan of Political Warfare for Burma', 16 November

1943.

⁴² *Ibid.*, FO371/41704, F1290/1/61, Political Warfare to Burma, undated 1944.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, FO371/35883, F1886/71/G101, Future policy in Burma, 29 March 1943.

⁴⁴ Ba Maw, *Breakthrough in Burma*.

Chapter 6

Struggle for Independence Continued: Japanese Policy towards Burma and British Policy of Reoccupation, January 1944 – August 1945.

At 11:20 a.m. on 1 August 1943, the independence of Burma was proclaimed by Dr. Ba Maw, who was duly installed as the Head of State and immediately recognised by the Axis Powers. Burma finally became an 'independent' state as well as the first Western colony in Southeast Asia to achieve independence during the war, marking the formal termination of three generations of British rule. However, the independence that Burma obtained did not mean the end of actual Japanese control over the country. The independence package that the Burmese secured from Japan did not include the sovereignty for which they had vigorously struggled for such a long time. Despite the appearance of independence, the Burmese government, consequently, had very little power to influence key decisions on vital areas of policy making.

On the day of independence, Japan and Burma signed three major agreements: a Treaty of Alliance between Japan and Burma, a Japan-Burma Secret Military Agreement, and a Detailed Agreement describing the Japan-Burma Secret Agreement. The Treaty of Alliance, signed by Dr. Ba Maw and Sawada Renzō, the Japanese Ambassador to Burma, stated that the signatory governments would be committed to co-operate with each other in military, political and economic affairs for the purpose of successfully prosecuting the Greater East Asia War.¹ In reality, the Burmese government was subordinated to the Japanese Army Commander who made virtually all important political, economic, military and diplomatic decisions. Japanese control was ensured by the secret military agreement in which Burma pledged to provide the Japanese forces 'with every necessary assistance in order to execute successful military operations in Burma.' Such an agreement was reinforced by the 'Detailed Agreement' which committed Burma to provide the Japanese with all necessary assistance requested. Furthermore, Japanese advisors were posted in all the important offices in the government ostensibly for the purpose of 'advising' but in reality directing their Burmese counterparts. Under these circumstances, the Burmese officials in reality never had the power to formulate their own national policy by themselves. The foreign affairs of the country, for instance, were entirely controlled not by the Burmese Foreign Minister, U Nu, but by the Japanese Ambassador, Sawada, who was delegated the ultimate authority in the field. While the Burmese officials indicated their resentment about the excessive intervention of the Japanese, they had no other alternative but to follow Japanese directives. It was in this context that anti-Japanese resentment gradually came to grow among the Burmese nationalists.

The way in which Japan handled Burmese independence is conventionally considered as one of the prime elements that accounts for the subsequent rise of anti-Japanese sentiment among the Burmese nationalists. In particular, the fact that the Japanese Army considerably influenced the form of Burmese government and the extent of Burma's autonomy after the 'independence' was denounced as a major accelerator for the growth of the Burmese resistance movement. As a corollary of this view, it is often suggested that, as Won Z. Yoon wrote in one of his articles, Japan could most probably have retained continued support from the Burmese for the war effort, and consequently such a large-scale Burmese resistance movement could have been averted, if the Japanese had granted the Burmese real independence instead of establishing the military administration, and sincerely played the role of the 'liberators' as they had professed themselves to be.² Could that have been the case? A close examination of the process in which Japan formulated policy of independent Burma reveals that it is questionable hypothesis.

Japan's master planning on Burma's independence emerged through the consideration of two policy documents titled '*Biruma Dokuritsu Shidō Yōkō*' [Guiding Principles for the Independence of Burma] and '*Biruma oyobi Nichi-Men Kankei no Kihon Keitai*' [The Basic Structures for Burma and Japan-Burma Relations]. Examination of the policy drafts prepared within the central government is interesting because they reveal the different views envisaged by policy makers within the central government. In particular, the Army and Foreign Ministry were the parties whose views came into conflict on a number of aspects.

One of the points in dispute was over the diplomatic relations to be established between Burma and other countries including Japan. With regard to the question of how Burma's foreign relations should be conducted, a policy draft created by the Army on 20 February 1943 simply stated that the diplomacy of the country should be administered under the 'virtual control of the empire'.³ The Army Ministry envisaged that the post of ambassador should be assumed concurrently by the commander of the Japanese army in Burma and insisted on establishing a line of command so that the Army Minister could issue direct orders to the military ambassador. Similarly, the Army Headquarters was adamant that any order or directive issued by the central government had to go through the General in Command.⁴ On the other hand, the Foreign Ministry believed that it was important to appoint a full-time civilian ambassador in Burma, partly in order to avoid the precedent case of Manchukuo, where the commander of the Kwantung Army acted as the ambassador. As a result of intensive debate, the appointment of a civilian ambassador was decided after vigorous protest from the Foreign Ministry to the Army's plan. However, the

ambassador's powers were greatly restricted due to the provision that the supreme commander would continue to exert authority over the affairs previously within the jurisdiction of military actions and military administrations.⁵

The views of the two ministries were also in conflict over the form of the Burmese government. The draft policy created by the army claimed that the national constitution and the form of government should be determined as much as possible by the Burmese themselves. However, it advocated that Burma would only be permitted to adopt an authoritarian form of government, and that the establishment of a parliament or political parties with legislative authority should not be approved.⁶ Thus the army draft envisaged a regime with centralised authority to be led by the head of the state who would control the reins over the state's legislative, administrative and judiciary power. This highly centralised state structure was designed to enable the head of state to administer affairs of state swiftly in order to respond to the needs of the military operations defending the Co-Prosperity Sphere. It was also aimed at preventing the recurrence of the fragmented political system that had characterised pre-war Burma and at strengthening the authority of the head of the state. The Foreign Ministry was not entirely in agreement with the army's blueprint and in particular was opposed to the abolition of the Burmese congress and political parties. It advocated that Burma should retain a form of parliamentary body with certain legislative functions and establish a powerful single political party functioning as a 'support organisation' for the Burmese government.⁷

Another major point in dispute was regarding the extent of Japanese control over political and economic affairs in Burma following the termination of the conflict. As a memorandum by the Policy Affairs Bureau of Foreign Ministry stated, the *Gaimushō* believed that Japan's substantial control over the country should only be 'a provisional measure to enable the empire to implement closely co-ordinated policies for the purpose of winning the war'. While Japan was required to provide the country 'guidance' during the war and the early stage of its independence, it was 'imperative to make the Burmese people believe that the country will be granted complete autonomy once the current conflict comes to an end.'⁸ The Foreign Ministry was also alarmed that the army's over-interpretation of its exclusive authority and control over military affairs in Burma would lead to excessive intervention in the affairs of independent Burma. It cautioned that it was essential to formulate a policy towards Burma that went beyond only fulfilling the overall requirement of Japanese military operations in the area. In other words, Japan should also grant some benefits of independence to Burma as long as they did not obstruct the military affairs of the Empire which would 'make the Japanese control more acceptable for the Burmese'.⁹ The discussion held by various ministers at the 138th Liaison Conference on

10 March reveals that Navy Minister and the Greater East Asia Minister were also critical of the interventionist approach of the Imperial General Headquarters. Aoki Kazuo, the Greater East Asia Minister, was particularly insistent that Burma should be allowed to exert certain influence on the matters outside the jurisdiction of military affairs and diplomacy.¹⁰ Nevertheless, these views did not have much impact on the general policy statement on Burma's independence.

On the matter of diplomacy, 'the Basic Structures for Burma and Japan-Burma Relations' vaguely stated that the Burmese government would be encouraged towards close co-operation with Japan in conducting foreign relations. The appointment of an Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to Burma was approved, but it came with the proviso that 'the Japanese authorities in Burma shall particularly consider military requests and shall take proper measures according to the actual situation'. Furthermore, the Japanese policy statement approved the establishment of a parliamentary body only on the condition that political factions and conflicts were avoided and that such a body would not 'interfere with the Head of State and his execution of the affairs of state'. While Burma was allowed to maintain its own army and navy for essential defence purposes, Japan was in reality to direct any decisions as to the size and manner of organising the Burmese forces. The Burmese national forces were also subordinated to orders from their respective supreme commander of the Japanese army and navy regarding the tactics of handling the armed forces in military operations. No comment was made on the extension of the country's degree of autonomy in the event of the termination of the war.¹¹

Thus, Japan issued the directive to the Burmese Prime Minister, Ba Maw, and indicated the direction of Japanese policy towards Burma's independence with the above two policy documents. What emerged from the Committee's proceedings were plans for a totalitarian regime with all powers concentrated on the head of state thus fulfilling the Japanese demand to form a simple and efficient system to meet Japan's wartime needs. With its considerable restrictions and lack of autonomy, the independence of Burma granted by the Japanese ended up closely resembling what was known under British rule as 'Ministerial Burma'.¹²

In examining the Japanese policy towards Burma's independence, one might be tempted to concentrate on the Foreign Ministry's attempts to resist the manoeuvres of the Imperial General Headquarter to impose substantial control over the Burmese government. Nevertheless, it is misleading to portray the *Gaimushō* as a staunch advocate of the policy to grant Burma maximum autonomy as an independent state. The above consideration has indicated the difference of opinions between Foreign Ministry and certain sections within the government, the army in particular. However, it is important to note that the two parties'

disparity was not over whether Japan should award Burma autonomy or not, but as to the extent of control Japan would exert over Burma. While the *Gaimushō* believed that Burma should be given a degree of autonomy, it was in agreement with other segments of the central government that the ultimate aim of the Japanese policy towards Burma was to gain the support of the Burmese people and utilise its available resources for the completion of the war.

For instance, as has been examined above, the Foreign Ministry advocated the extension of the Burmese government's control on diplomatic affairs and insisted on the appointment of a Japanese civilian ambassador to the country. However, this opposition did not necessarily originate from its concern for the autonomy of the newly independent state in that area. The *Gaimushō*'s view on the issue was indicated in '*Biruma Dokuritsu Shidō Yōkō ni kansuru jakkan no kōsatsu*' [a memorandum on 'the Guiding Principles for the Independence of Burma'], drafted by the Policy Affairs Bureau on 24 February. This document stated that for the purpose of enabling the Empire to preserve the actual control, it was worth considering whether to 'facilitate something conspicuous' that would provide the Burmese government with the appearance of autonomy over the country's diplomatic affairs. It suggested that 'measures such as an exchange of diplomatic envoys with Burma would be sufficient to serve that purpose.'¹³ Thus, the ministry concurred in the principle that the actual control of Burma's foreign affairs should be preserved in the hands of the Japanese and merely suggested giving Burma a semblance of sovereignty.

Furthermore, the *Gaimushō* advocated an identical line of argument as to the form of Burma's political system following its independence. The same policy document proclaimed that 'it is the most imperative objective of the Japanese policy to attract wide-ranging national support for the Burmese government in order to complete the current total war. It is therefore desirable for that purpose to maintain some form of parliamentary body. However, such a body does not have to be empowered with extensive authority. A one-chamber system that consisted of a number of government-selected assembly members should be able to serve for that objective.'¹⁴

It is also interesting to note that the existing documents indicates little sign of opposition by Shigemitsu, who took over the portfolio of foreign affairs in April, on the issues surrounding the independence of Burma. Shigemitsu's view was indicated in the discussion to prepare a treaty of alliance between Japan and Burma that was progressing in parallel with the independence of Burma. In this discussion, he advocated that two separate clauses should be prepared on the bilateral co-operation for the purpose of completing the war and the relations of the two nations following the termination of the conflict. Furthermore, the *Gaimushō* envisaged that the treaty should be concluded in the

form of an alliance standing on equal footing.¹⁵ The Foreign Minister's view was also indicated in the record of the 150th Liaison Conference on 19 July that discussed the content of the treaty of alliance. The final draft of the treaty included a clause stating 'Japan and Burma will endeavour to maintain close co-operation for the purpose of establishing a prosperous Greater East Asia'. The record of the conversation suggests that Shigemitsu advocated that the clause should include the sentence 'for that purpose, the representatives of both countries are, if necessary, to hold discussions together with other head of states within the Co-Prosperity Sphere.' Furthermore, he also proclaimed the insertion of the word 'mutual benefit' in the introductory clause of the treaty. Shigemitsu's suggestions were both declined in the face of the Navy Minister's rejection on the ground that 'inclusion of the wording that reflects the idea of the League of Nations is inappropriate.'¹⁶

While the above illustrates the approach that the *Gaimushō* took towards putting Burma on a more equal footing, its opposition to the policy of the army was largely confined to limited areas that did not fundamentally alter the Japanese supremacy in their relationship with the Burmese. As another draft memorandum, produced on 3 March, bluntly acknowledged, the Foreign Ministry believed that the ultimate objective of the Japanese policy of granting Burma independence was to help to bring about the successful completion of the Greater East Asia War. The independence of Burma should not be considered as Japan's ultimate policy goal, but it was a means to make the war situation favourable for the Empire by winning the support of the people in Burma, as well as countries like China, Philippines, and India.

Thus it was not only the Imperial Army and Navy that conceived of a new Asian order based on the sense of Japanese superiority. The civilian elements of the Japanese government were also instrumental in developing policy plans that led the member countries of the Co-Prosperity Sphere to serve the maximum political, economic, and military advantage of the leading nation, Japan. Even after the granting of independence, the Japanese policy towards Burma was founded on the same way of thinking which was shared by the civilian elements of the decision making in Tokyo, including the Foreign Ministry. Thus, it was not only the particularly arrogance of the Japanese Army but also the stance of the Japanese as a whole that alienated the nationalists in Burma and engendered the gradual development of the anti-Japanese revolt.

The rise of the Burmese Resistance Movement against Japan

Prior to the outbreak of the war, General Aung San, then serving as the Defence Minister of the 'independent' Burmese Government, envisaged Burma-Japan relations based on mutual co-operation. He emphasised the importance of Japanese assistance for the establishment and development of an independent Burma. In one of his pre-war memoranda, Aung San envisaged that Burma would require from the Japanese 'technical assistance, loan of capital for the development of new industries and the extension of the old ones, the exchange of mutual goods such as Japanese manufactured goods for our raw materials and rice, initial financial assistance to establish new currency, etc ...' Thus, 'Japanese investment in Burma, preferential treatment for Japanese goods, joining the yen bloc', he advocated, would be a vital part of Burma's 'new economic life.'¹⁷ He went on to say,

'To reconstruct and maintain an independent Burma, ... we shall have to build powerful Army, Navy and Air Forces, and here the help of Japan is imperative. In the process of our building Japan must help us with technical and military advice and assistance... after we have have [*sic.*] built up our own defence forces, Burma shall be responsible for the western defence of the Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere while Japan will guard over the East Asiatic Bloc from the last side.'¹⁸

What Aung San envisioned at the beginning of the conflict was to seek Japanese assistance for the purpose of achieving Burma's independence through mutual consultation and co-operation. Nevertheless, his expectation quickly turned into disappointment as the Japanese completely ignored its initial promises and bluntly established a military administration. It was now evident to the Burmese that the Japanese were intending to rule Burma like their former colonial rulers and that they were experiencing merely an exchange of old masters for new ones. Thus the Burmese nationalists began to regard the Japanese as 'conquerors' and ceased to call them as the 'liberators'. The relationship between the Japanese and the Burmese further deteriorated when Japan decided to dissolve the Baho government, in which the Thakins and other nationalist elements played a major role, and to disband the Burma Defence Army. The Japanese gesture of granting the Burmese limited independence only confirmed that appeasing the disgruntled Burmese and obtaining their maximum co-operation in Japan's war effort were the ultimate goals of Japanese policy.

Furthermore, the Japanese economic policy and its outcome in Burma indicated a completely different picture from what Aung San and other nationalist leaders envisaged as being the merits of Burma's 'economic partnership' with Japan. The Japanese exploited the country's economy for their own purposes under the slogan of constructing the 'Co-Prosperity Sphere'. Moreover, the economic situation in Burma turned from bad to

worse by the beginning of 1944, in spite of Japan's new policy to encourage the development of a more self-sufficient economy that aimed at reducing Japan's economic burden. The loss of export markets under Japanese rule was one of the factors that had a major impact on the Burmese economy. While Burma was known to be one of the major exporters of rice prior to the war, there was no longer any export market other than to Japan which required the stock of rice as supplies for the Japanese Army in Burma. Consequently, Burma saw a drastic decrease in sown acreage with every year of occupation. In the year 1943-44, sown paddy acreage, for instance, shrunk to barely 60 per cent of that for 1940-41 and decreased further in 1944-45 due to the destruction brought by the British military campaign against the Japanese in Burma.¹⁹

The effect of the above factor, combined with the serious shortage of labour, brought serious problems for the Burmese economy. A large portion of the Burmese workforce was forced to engage in Japanese construction projects. Casual labour was required by the Japanese to build and maintain roads, railways and airfields as well as other services. One of the most notorious examples of forced labour was the construction of the Burma-Siam Railway that extended approximately 416km from Thanbyuzayat in Burma to Banpong in Thailand and was put into operation in December 1943. For the completion of the project, about 330,000 Asian labourers and 16,000 Allied war prisoners were mobilised and a considerable number of the workforce died through starvation, disease and ill-treatment. The exact figure has not been confirmed but the number of Burmese who lost their lives on the construction of the 'Death Railway' was estimated to be about 80,000 according to a Burmese source.²⁰ The various forms of forced labour brought a destructive impact on the Burmese economy and society.

Labour conscription caused a devastating draining off of agricultural and other forms of labour that led to a marked reduction in production activity. In spite of attempts by Japanese firms to increase domestic production, especially of cotton and jute, as a part of its effort to make Burma self-sufficient, production remained extremely poor. While encouragement schemes were introduced that provided people with advances, seeds and free gifts of ploughs, the pressures of the circumstances and the shortage of draft animals made it impossible even to maintain the previous year's output. Agricultural plans were formulated and greater efforts were made by both the Burmese Government and voluntary organisations such as the Youth League, but the deterioration of economic and social conditions was simply too extensive to cope with. Thus Burma faced the breakdown of its local economy by the end of 1944 and Japan's long-term policy calling for a restructuring of the economic system to utilise Burma's economic resources within its imperial system turned out to be a complete failure. These appalling economic and social conditions in

Burma caused by maladministration only served to provoke the Burmese further. It was under these circumstances that the Burmese nationalists started to conceive a resistance movement against the new ruler.

There were various anti-Japanese organisations within Burma, including civilian resistance elements that started to take shape at the earliest stage around the leadership of Thakin Soe, the founder of the Burmese Communist Party. Positioning himself as anti-Japanese from the start of Japan's rule in Burma, Thakin Soe, along with his comrades such as Thakin Thein Pe, began to develop an informal organisation and programmes which could eventually be used as the nucleus for an uprising against the Japanese. Following the failure of their attempt to seek co-operation from Nationalist China, they went to British India to secure the Allied assistance for organizing their anti-Japanese underground activities.²¹

Those who were collaborating with the Japanese also set out to form resistance organisations. Among them were the members of the Burma Defence Army – now renamed as the Burma National Army following the country's 'independence' - who were referred to as 'the Young Officers' underground cell. During 1943, the Young Officers slowly and quietly maintained their effort to make contacts and establish cells within and outside the Army. By the time Burma's independence was declared, the group incorporated almost all officers in command of infantry battalions and the pioneer (field engineer) within the B.D.A.²² Nevertheless, this network suffered from two problems, lack of identity and decisive planning. This was the result of the reluctance of the top Army leaders to accept the idea of forming a body that was overtly anti-Japanese.

By December, the young Officers' Underground had decided to start a revolt as early as February 1944, but they found that no national leader of standing was willing to lead such resistance against the Japanese. The leaders of the Burmese army, including Aung San, were not receptive to the idea primarily due to the lack of preparation and shortage of arms at their disposal. While Aung San was aware of the need to take measures against the declining popularity of the B.N.A. as puppet of the Japanese rulers, he wanted to avoid destroying the national army with a premature uprising against Japan. The infantry units of the Army, the only forces allowed by the Japanese, were still in the process of development and they had no heavy equipment to spare except the heavy anti-aircraft guns left behind by the British.²³ Thus anti-Japanese resistance movement gradually took shape behind the scenes by the beginning of 1944, but it had not yet reached the stage where it could take drastic action and it still lacked co-ordination among various organisations.

However, the cautious stance of the Burmese national leaders within the B.N.A. drastically changed in July 1944. One of the decisive factors that led to the marked shift of

the leaders' attitude was the Japanese forces' ill-fated pre-emptive offensive against the Northern Indian towns of Imphal and Kohima before the onset of the monsoon, which aimed at preventing Allied attacks from the important British forward bases in the area. As the crushing defeat of the Japanese became apparent, a Burmese uprising against the current rulers of the country emerged as a viable option for nationalist leaders such as Aung San. Aung San calculated that if he did not make public his anti-Japanese stance and remained a silent onlooker of the development, it would jeopardise not only his stature as an important nationalist leader but also Burma's bargaining position vis-à-vis Britain for its long-term pursuit of independence following the return of the old suzerain power. It was against this background that a decision was made to form a united front of all anti-Japanese resistance groups within Burma.

In September 1944, the leaders of various resistance groups, including the B.N.A., the Burma Communist Party (B.C.P.), and the Burma Revolutionary Party (B.R.P.), held a meeting in the home of U Nu, concurrent Foreign Minister, to organise the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League (AFPFL), whose immediate goal was to fight against the Japanese.²⁴ At the meeting, the B.N.A. was represented by Aung San, Ne Win and Let Ya, and the B.R.P. by Kyaw Nyein, Ba Swe, Mya, and Chit, while the B.C.P. sent Thakin Soe, Than Tun and Ba Hein as its delegates.²⁵ The meeting selected Aung San as Chairman and Than Tun as the Secretary of the AFPFL. The resistance leaders decided that immediately following the meeting they would establish resistance networks and prepare for an armed uprising against the Japanese. One of the urgent tasks for the organisation was to procure arms and ammunition from the Japanese. In November, Aung San managed to secure permission from the Japanese Army Commander in Burma to move the B.N.A. to the front where it could ostensibly join up with the Japanese troops to fight against the Allies. The Japanese not only approved Aung San's scheme but also supplied the B.N.A. with the necessary arms.²⁶ The Japanese Army's eagerness to equip and send the Burmese troops to the front for combat duties was primarily prompted by its military set-backs in the Burma-India theatre which had culminated in the defeat in the Imphal-Kohima battle. Now that the tide of war was decisively turned against the Japanese and the Allies opened a counter offensive into Burma, Japan desperately needed the support of the Burmese forces.

At the same time, the A.F.P.F.L. made strenuous efforts to obtain arms from the British. During 1943, Thakin Thein Pe and Tin Shwe, two of the leading figures in the Burmese Communist Party, had been seeking co-operation from Britain in their efforts to form an anti-Fascist alliance but initially this ended in failure. However, the Allies became increasingly interested in the support of the Burmese communist leaders as the Allied

planning for the reoccupation of Burma proceeded. Britain had begun to develop networks of information in northern Burma. Yet a lack of intelligence about political conditions and military formations in southern Burma emerged as one of the key problems in British planning, despite the fact that the Karen community had been providing limited intelligence from the area.²⁷ The British thus decided to use the Communist-led underground in Burma as a source of intelligence and as a pro-Allied resistance force by recognising Thein Pe as the official anti-Fascist representative in India. By January 1945, Britain began to supply the arms necessary for resistance activities from Force 136, the British secret service organisation known as Special Operations Executive.

Now fully equipped with the arms supplied both by the Japanese and the British, the resistance groups were finally prepared for an armed uprising against the Japanese. On 17 March, Aung San was interviewed by *Greater Asia*, the official English language newspaper sponsored by the Japanese. In the conversation with the Japanese interviewer, he vaguely hinted at his determination to part with the Japanese and rise against the present occupier of the country:

'Our army will fight for the benefit of the country and if needs be, we will offer ourselves as the very bulwarks against the attacks of the enemy. We will fight the enemy with all the strength in our possession. Unless we can drive the enemy away from our country, and unless we can beat him decisively, our freedom will always be in jeopardy.'²⁸

Thus Aung San and members of the A.F.P.F.L. brought the resistance movement out into the open and vigorously engaged the Japanese in combat under the banner of the new organisation. During the five-month period following the 27 March uprising, the B.N.A., now the military arm of the AFPFL, attacked isolated Japanese garrisons and lines of communications, thereby inflicting heavy losses on the Japanese. The Burmese continued their fight against the Japanese until 15 August 1945, when Japan finally surrendered to the Allies.

When the Burmese Army paraded out of Rangoon and it became evident that they had ended their collaboration with the Japanese, Captain Takahashi, the Japanese liaison officer with Aung San, went after him. While there was no question of bringing him back by force, he hoped to persuade him to change his mind. Being asked his intentions by the liaison officer, Aung San replied that he wanted to avoid the destruction of Burma which would accompany its continuous collaboration with the Japanese. 'What kind of deal have you made with the British?' Takahashi asked. He declared 'Our deal is total independence for Burma'. As is illustrated by this conversation, the Burmese nationalist leader was not prepared to accept anything but the complete independence of the country as his ultimate goal. However, it was a goal that the Japanese policy makers, in no way, considered a

viable option. Even after the granting of limited independence to Burma in 1943, there was no indication that any segment of the Japanese government envisaged the further extension of the country's autonomy. While the approach of the Foreign Ministry, for instance, was different to a certain degree, its way of thinking shared the concept of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere as its foundation, which was premised on the predominant role of the Japanese. Thus, the goals of the Japanese and the Burmese nationalist leaders were fundamentally incompatible and Aung San's breaking away from the Japanese was an unavoidable outcome of the ill-fated collaboration.

Britain and Burmese Nationalism

The uprising of the AFPFL against the Japanese was a blessing for the British which was setting out on its own military campaign to recapture Burma. The new political forces growing out of the changing political condition presented a favourable opportunity for the British to ease the process of re-establishing their own position in the country. Nevertheless, the British instead found themselves confronted by the mass movement, the AFPFL, that claimed that Burma had liberated itself and which possessed a mobilised military force at its disposal.

One of the causes of the failure to develop a potentially constructive partnership between the two parties was the antipathy of a host of British officials, especially the Governor and the Civil Affairs Service (Burma) of the British Military Administration (CAS(B)), to the Anti-Fascist Organisation and the Burma National Army as its military wing. Having called the BNA as 'Burma Puppet Troops' even in official documents, they were deeply suspicious of the Anti-Fascist Organisation whose important members had actively collaborated with the Japanese before the tide had turned in favour of the Allied powers. Firmly believing in the legitimacy of the return of British authority to Burma, they were particularly concerned about the political implications of the development of the resistance movement.

Dorman-Smith, the Governor of Burma, was one of the figures who was deeply alarmed by the problems that the resistance might pose for the British, as he noted in a telegram to Leo Amery, the Secretary of State for Burma, in mid-December 1944. The governor reported that most of the resistance leaders were from the Thakin Party with organisations in every district and they had a strong nationalist tendency, which was anti-Japanese but not necessarily pro-British. He noted particularly the great popularity of Aung San as the leader of the resistance and the role of the BNA as the resistance's main

medium of propaganda.²⁹ He was wary of the possibility that the AFO would want to establish a provisional government and ultimately demand independence in the immediate future if the resistance was successful. This was an unacceptable scenario to the governor who tenaciously clung to the legal fiction that his government was the only legitimate authority in the country. He therefore believed that the British would have to make it clear to the Thakins that they were suspect because of their past behaviour and would have to 'work their passage' back to legality.³⁰

Sir John Wise, the Deputy Governor of Burma, also viewed the development with great alarm. Wise, who was serving as acting governor while Dorman-Smith was in London, warned in a telegram in March 1945 that he was 'disturbed' by the character and record of 'this organization which is merely THAKINS under different name.' He noted that the 'most dangerous aspect of situation which has led to requests for doubling police force and for security troops is reported by local C.A.S. officers to be presence of large body of so-called National Front or A.F.O.' If these conditions were repeated in Lower Burma, Wise noted, Britain 'must expect process of pacification and possibly indeed of resumption of civil government to be seriously retarded.' He denounced the AFO 'comprising all worst elements in population' and as a 'truculent and standing menace from point of view both of violent crime and of concerted action against the government.'³¹

From his point of view, the early adherence of Thakins to the Japanese was an act of rebellion. The political implication of the policy to support the AFO, who were conceived as a result of encouragement it had received, was therefore more hazardous than the security threat posed by the organisation. 'On any view except present operational view', he reasoned, 'only hope of orderly progress to point of self government lies in efforts of more respectable elements which admittedly have been inactive under Japanese. ... Our position will be difficult indeed if by policy opportunism in early stages we alienate more stable political elements and priesthood and find ourselves politically in hands of THAKINS', whose political consciousness was 'the crudest.' Thus he saw no escape from the conclusion that the 'movement should be controlled as far as we can control it', and that Britain must be wary of the implications of recognising the rising sponsored and led by the anti Fascist organization.

Based on similar assumptions, the CAS(B) indicated its vigorous opposition, when the Force 136 and the AFO reached an agreement that the latter would co-operate where possible with Allied troops by receiving Allied arms and ammunition but that it would not accept orders from Force 136. When the commander of CAS(B) learnt of the terms for co-operation with the resistance that Force 136 had established, he protested that this implied Allied recognition of the AFO as an organisation and would prejudice the

re-establishment of British control. The CAS(B)'s protest considerably limited the scope of the British assistance to the Burmese nationalists at the time of the uprising against the Japanese in March. The instructions issued by the British officer in command, General Leese, on 8 March pledged that weapons would be issued to a limited number of AFO members on an individual basis and these arms had to be recovered after use. This brought very little help to the Burmese nationalists.³² Thus, by the time of the AFO uprising, the battle lines for political conflict had emerged clearly between the Burma Government and CAS(B) on one hand and the AFO and the BNA on the other.

On the other hand, the Supreme Allied Commander, Admiral Mountbatten, along with Force 136, viewed the development of the anti-Japanese rising and the role of the AFO from a different perspective. He considered that the active support of the Burmese resistance movement would best serve any British military campaign to recapture the country. Hearing the news of the imminent Burmese rising, Mountbatten responded with a proposal that sought to provide arms and ammunition to the AFO and prevent punitive actions against the Burmese leaders for political offences. In his telegram sent to London and Simla on 27 March, he mapped out how Britain should deal with the AFO leaders and argued that 'while the assistance we may expect from such a rising was not an essential part of my plans there is no doubt that it will provide a welcome bonus which may well help to speed the capture of Rangoon.' The Supreme Allied Commander was particularly apprehensive about the position of Aung San and defended the nationalist leader:

'Aung San himself is known to be guilty of treason in the past by virtue of his collaboration with the Japanese. He is one of those whose political convictions led them to suppose that the true interests of their country lay in getting the Japanese to grant them political freedom. They were mistaken, and their present course of action shows that they know it. In supporting their rising against the Japanese we shall be doing no more than what has been done in Italy, Romania, Hungary and Finland in turning people who were satellites of a power that has let them down and not fulfilled its promises to them into co-belligerents on our side. We shall then be leaving the civil Government a legacy of having assisted the Burmese to take steps themselves to liberating their country and this seems to be a very important political consideration.'

Mountbatten also reacted to the criticism of the Burma Office that Britain's excessive reliance on the Thakins, who led the AFO, would cost it the support of other respectable elements in Burma and defended his policy of extending a degree of recognition to the rising. His telegram argued that 'there is some danger from civil affairs point of view that such recognition will give offence to the more respectable elements of the population. But it must be remembered that the more respectable elements have been inactive while the

elements who are about to undertake this action comprise the active politically conscious and organised elements in the country – those in fact who are in a position to give trouble or not to give it depending on our present decision.' Thus Mountbatten considered it essential to avoid any policy which might lead Britain into a position where it was obliged to suppress the movement by force. For such a situation would involve an extra commitment of troops and have a grave effect on the civil re-organisation of the country.³³

Mountbatten perceived that the imperial power of Britain had passed its peak with decline soon to follow, and therefore recognised the urgency for the British to establish friendly relations with the younger generation of Asian nationalists. Apart from his liberal attitude towards the colonial peoples, Mountbatten saw a genuine military need to employ unconventional forces, specifically the AFO and the BNA, in order to reinforce his operations against the Japanese. He was very conscious that the task of driving the Japanese out of Southeast Asia had only just begun and needed a secure base for the hazardous assault upon Malaya. Moreover, the AFO resistance forces, assisted by Force 136 and other spontaneously developed resistance groups, were militarily important because of the confusion they created within the Japanese lines of communication, the effect they had on the morale of the Japanese Army and the intelligence they provided in areas behind the battle front. 'If it became known that we had refused to allow them to fight their common enemy and liberate their own country', he reasoned, 'it would have repercussions in liberal circles in the United States and at home which I think it would be unwise to precipitate at the present juncture.'³⁴ It was against this background that the Supreme Allied Commander tried to promote his policy line on the treatment of the AFO and the BNA, and prevent it from being sabotaged in India and London by those who were alarmed by the growing importance of the organisations.

In spite of Mountbatten's effort to accommodate the current anti-Japanese uprising by the Burmese nationalists as a vital part of the British operations, an urgent policy decision on Britain's dealings with the rising, was made by the India Committee of the War Cabinet on 29 March, which was markedly more cautious and reflected the line of thinking expressed by Dorman-Smith, Wise and the CAS(B). The discussion at the Committee meeting, in which the Governor of Burma also took part, illustrated a strong antipathy to the BNA and the AFO and warned against allowing 'the collaborationist leaders' giving the impression of being 'liberators of the country' to the Burmese people. They considered the uprising a 'relatively unimportant Assistance' and were concerned with the possibility of subsequent Burmese demands for 'political control and possibly for immediate political concessions which HMG would not be prepared to contemplate.'³⁵

The Committee reasoned that the respectable elements of the community had, as yet,

been inactive, but that the section which now contemplated action was led by persons who had previously been actively pro-Japanese and actively hostile to Britain. Such action would be 'by way of retaliation against the Japanese who have let them down and not at all on our behalf.' Support of this element by Britain, therefore, might well be misunderstood by and give offence to less active but more dependable elements. For this reason, the document went on to say,

'it is important that any support that we give to the collaborationist leaders should not give the Burmans the impression that we are regarding these leaders as in any sense the liberators of their country; or that we are asking other elements to give their allegiance to these leaders. It is essential, therefore, that we do not attach any great importance to their contribution, and that they should be reminded more clearly than you propose that they have a lot of lee-way to make up as ex-collaborators with Japanese both in our eyes and in the eyes of their co-patriots who have suffered at the hands of the Japanese. There is grave risk that if they are not treated with caution the leaders and supporters of the resistance movement will, on the return of normal government, build on the relatively unimportant [*sic*] assistance rendered, a claim for political control and possibly for immediate political concessions which HMG would not be prepared to contemplate.'³⁶

Against this background, the War Cabinet proposed the policy line to be taken in regard to Aung San and the other leaders of the resistance movement. It approved Mountbatten's policy of passing on Britain's appreciation to the assistance of the Burmese resistance leaders and acknowledged that their service to the Allied cause would be taken into account when their past offences against HMG government were examined. However, it declined the Supreme Allied Commander's request to make a declaration that no arrests for political offences committed prior to re-occupation of Burma were to be made until the re-establishment of civil government. This decision was justified on the grounds that sufficient inducement towards the resistance leaders, who had collaborated with the Japanese, was already afforded by accounting their assistance to the Allied forces as a merit for remission. The Committee also directed that SEAC should make it plain that members of the resistance movement would have to give up their arms when instructed by British authorities and that Mountbatten should decline to discuss any political issues surrounding British intentions for the future Government of Burma with Aung San and other leaders of the movement.³⁷ All in all, the War Cabinet did not consider the resistance leaders of the AFO and the BNA as an important political force to co-operate with in drawing up a blueprint for Burma following the termination of the conflict, but as mere supporting units to be taken advantage of in its operations to recapture the country.

The stance of the War Cabinet was in sharp contrast to the agenda of the Burmese

nationalist leaders as revealed in the statement made by the Supreme Council of the AFPFL on 25 May. In the document clarifying its policy for the immediate future as well as long-term purposes, the General Secretary of the organisation, Than Tun, pledged that the final objective of the AFPFL was 'the attainment of the right of self-determination for Burma' and that it desired, in concrete expression, to determine its 'own constitution by means of a Constituent Assembly elected on universal adult suffrage.' For these purposes, the organisation would 'continue to contribute our maximum share in the war against Japanese Fascism until the world has been completely purged of its last vestige.' The League, it stated, was also prepared to and would certainly offer its hearty co-operation to the Allied authorities in the rehabilitation and reconstruction of the country. Thus, it demanded the establishment of a national government sufficiently representing the democratic sections of public opinion in the country by reasoning that this would be the best way to achieve the tasks of national reconstruction and nation-wide mobilisation for the anti-Japanese war effort. The widening gap in the views of the British and the Burmese nationalists only served to antagonise the AFO leaders and gradually engendered confrontation between the two parties.³⁸

The tension between the Burma government and the Burmese nationalist leaders increased even more when Britain indicated its long-term blueprint towards the country in 'the White Paper on Burma'. In the White Paper issued on 17 May 1945, the British Government outlined three stages for Burma's political future. First, the country was to be administered directly by the Governor in association with a small Council which would not be subjected to the popular legislature. The popular legislature was to be completely suspended during the first period. While a representative assembly was to be summoned subsequently, it was merely aimed to consult the Burmese people without immediately according a political status that would allow them to frame the future constitution for themselves.

Britain justified the Governor's direct rule on the basis that Burma – which had rapidly been approaching a normal democratic form of Government – had been seriously disorganised by the Japanese invasion and because of the ravages of war the conditions did not exist for the rapid functioning of democracy. A duration of three years was set for this phase without any possibility of bringing it to an early end. The British Government's proposal in the second stage was that when conditions permitted and the economy was sufficiently restored Burma would then return to its pre-war political status. There was no definite statement that it would attain its legitimate aspiration of a Dominion status when the country was restored to its pre-war political status. The White Paper in its third stage recommended rather vaguely that the future constitution would establish in Burma full

self-government and confer Dominion status. In the document, the task of economic and social reconstruction was given priority over the establishment of a government led by Burmese. This was a reflection of the British view that transformation of power to the Burmese and the independence of the country should be negotiated only after its recovery and the stabilisation of Burma's social and economic conditions.

The Governor of Burma, Dorman-Smith, wrote to Leo Amery following the release of the statement that one of the problems Britain was facing in Burma was 'how to prevent very active and politically minded leader[s] of AFO and BNA from suffering from such a sense of frustration.' The object of the British policy was therefore to 'harness enthusiasm of even the most ardent nationalist leaders and their followers.' In order to fulfil that policy goal, Dorman-Smith advocated, 'it will be necessary to demonstrate to them that it is intended that genuine opportunity will be given to Burmans of all shades of political opinion to play a real part in the rehabilitation and government of their country as soon as civil administration is resumed.' At the same time, he went on to say that Britain needed to 'give them an authoritative explanation of HMG's policy and to persuade them that their active cooperation in carrying out the programme laid down therein will in fact bring full self government to Burma in shortest possible time.'³⁹ If these were the policy goals Britain sought to attain through the announcement of 'the White Paper', it not only failed to achieve the objectives completely but also antagonised the Burmese leaders by underestimating their nationalist aspirations.

Even though the White Paper represented practical and sound planning from the British point of view, the Burmese nationalist leaders were bitterly disappointed by this proposal which was in principle identical to the obscure statement made by Sir Archibald Cochrane, then-Governor of Burma, in November 1939 on the promise of Burma's future independence. The discontent of the Burmese was clearly reflected in a memorandum issued by the Burma Association on 30 May in response to the British government's issuance of the White Paper. Its criticism of the announcement was the most vehement on Britain's imposition of a direct rule as a first step to 'reconstruct' the country. It denounced the suggested direct rule as a measure that, far from being democratic, 'would literally throw back the political status of the country far back beyond that which existed before the last war.' The British government's reasoning that the economic and social destruction of the country necessitated a period of direct rule did not convince the Burmese nationalists. Devastation due to the war existed, the document retorted, in every freed European country, and the Philippine Islands had been just as much devastated. Yet in none of these cases, were elections 'held up for a period which might extend to three years or that there should be so long a delay to a return to self-government or to a constitutional

advancement.' 'On this consideration alone,' it went on to say, 'the announcement has not the remotest chance of obtaining the acquiescence of the Burmese people, to say nothing of their collaboration.'⁴⁰

Also apparent was the sense of disenchantment towards Britain's lukewarmness about clarifying the exact timing and form of Burma's independence in the White Paper, which vaguely stated that the establishment of full self-government and the granting of Dominion status would follow the completion of the reconstruction process. Referring to the Japanese granting of independence on August 1943, the memorandum stated that, though independence under Fascism was 'a mockery' and 'nominal', it had an appeal to 'a country which had been denied freedom and opportunity and only treated as an "overseas territory of the British Crown".' While the White Paper in its third stage recommended that the future constitution would establish in Burma full self-government and confer Dominion status, similar assurances had often been given in the past, in fact since 1921-1923, when the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms Scheme was first put into operation. Under these circumstances, the time allowed to pass since had been 'unduly long' and the Burmese people 'frankly doubt whether the promise of full self-government will ever be translated into action if it is not fulfilled now.'⁴¹

Thus the document concluded that the effect of this proposal would no doubt increase the mistrust of Britain's intentions towards that country to a disastrous degree. 'It is illusory to suppose that the reconstruction of Burma can be accomplished without the full and eager co-operation of the Burmese people... The suspension of popular legislature as proposed in the White Paper will not make for their full co-operation. On the other hand it is bound to give them an impression that they are being gagged while the British Government re-establishes itself with a bureaucratic power.' Burma was the first British territorial possession to be liberated and had been looked upon as a test case. The British treatment of Burma indicated in the White Paper, it declared, 'will damage the prestige of the British Government's profession for democracy and for the general welfare of the British subjects of Asiatic races within the Empire.'⁴² As is illustrated by the tone set by the document, Britain faced an unexpected degree of criticism from the Burmese nationalists which posed London the threat of a potential anti-British rising. That was precisely what the British administration needed to avoid in the light of the military campaign to drive out the Japanese forces from the country and its effort to re-establish its presence in Burma as a 'liberator'. Dorman-Smith observed that the Burmese reaction to the White Paper's suggested programme was too indefinite and contained many loop holes which would allow HMG to delay matters at every stage. However sound the policy might prove to be, 'we are liable to get into a first class mess in Burma unless we can deal definitely both with

policy and with Aung San.⁴³

In the light of the rising tension between the British and the Burmese nationalists, Mountbatten arranged a meeting in HMS *Cumberland* on 20 June at which the Governor of Burma would interview representatives of the Burmese leaders and explain the British policy as regards the granting of Dominion status. All the Burmese politicians present came up with a unanimous demand for 'the inauguration of a new Provisional Government to be nominated by AFPFL', and the governor's powers to be 'minimized in every field except defence'. A Constituent Assembly should meet within a year and a new constitution to replace the White Paper scheme introduced. It was made clear that the pre-war leaders were fully behind the AFPFL proposals. Dorman-Smith tried to put the statement in the best light he could by minimising its negative aspects and setting forth its vague promises for the future as if independence was an imminent possibility. However, the two parties followed a parallel course of action without reaching an agreement.

The AFPFL Supreme Council called an urgent meeting during 16-18 August in the face of pressure from the British Army and CAS (B) to disband the BNA and thus reduce the bargaining power of the nationalist forces for constitutional advances. The AFPFL had already rejected the White Paper as a retrograde step for Burma's political future. The Burmese leaders now set about to produce the first nationalist response, discussing the ways in which their various organisations could work together in a single, unified programme to gain independence under the banner of the AFPFL.⁴⁴ To these ends, three resolutions were passed: (1) to form a new Burma Army, with the existing Burma National Army as its nucleus; (2) to set up an all-party, representative, provisional government, which would organise an election with universal adult suffrage for a national constituent assembly to draw up a constitution for an independent Burma; (3) a call for unity among all political parties and the people to achieve these ends. To this reorganised leadership there now came a steady stream of established politicians and community leaders of every political stripe, including many who had been closely associated with the British. Thus by the time the governor resumed his rule over Burma on 16 October 1945, the AFPFL had become a well organised force to frustrate the British civilian officials' effort to return to political manoeuvring in the pre-war mode.

Conclusion

While the termination of the Japanese military administration was declared in August 1943, the new independent government actually functioned as an instrument of Japanese control of Burma. The Burmese therefore decided to fight the Japanese to achieve their ultimate

goal of independence. In fact, the Japanese attempt to placate the Burmese by granting nominal independence only resulted in provoking the Burmese and significantly facilitated the growth of the resistance movement. Thus it can be asserted that Japan's failure to fulfil her promise was the decisive factor that turned the Burmese against Japan and prompted a nation-wide armed uprising of the BNA and the AFPFL on 27 March 1945.

This outcome was due mainly to the inability of the Japanese to appreciate the firmness of the Burmese nationalists' aspirations for independence. Greatly obsessed with achieving their own military and political goals, the Japanese strategists underestimated the strong political convictions of the Burmese nationalists. Such a lack of understanding led the Japanese to break their promise or they indeed never considered a complete transfer of the power to the Burmese hands as a policy option. Civilian policy-makers in Tokyo, such as those in the *Gaimushō*, were often portrayed as defenders of the country's independence, yet they were not entirely free from that tendency. The rise of the resistance movement and the fall of 'the Co-Prosperity Sphere' was therefore the inevitable consequence of the Japanese occupation in Burma.

In the light of the imminent Japanese downfall, the BNA leadership had thus to search for a means not only of redeeming their political popularity in Burma but also of making themselves acceptable to the Allies if they were to have a role in the post-war campaign for Burma's independence. When the army marched out of Rangoon on 27 March 1945, to fight the Japanese as the armed force of the AFO united front, it helped to guarantee itself a role in the future of Burma. In so doing it demonstrated its patriotism to the population and its power to the British.

Nevertheless, it soon became evident that the policy of 'Reconstruction' produced by the Simla and Burma Office planners actually meant restoration of the status quo *ante bellum*. From the beginning of the dispute over recognition of the BNA, Whitehall encouraged Dorman-Smith's opposition. Mountbatten's struggle to promote a more conciliatory policy as the basis for the future of Britain's relationship with Burma had helped to secure the collaboration of the Burmese army. Yet it was soon at odds with the thrust of the White Paper. The statement reiterated vague promises for a constitutional advance and its future status as an autonomous member of the 'Commonwealth' with the condition that it would have to ensue a period of direct rule and 'proper democratic development'. It was equally as hypocritical as Japan's ideological claim to 'liberate' the country and replace the Western imperialism with an Asian new order under the tutelage of the Japanese. In that sense, Burma's departure from the British Empire was as inevitable.

Notes for Chapter 6

- ¹ DRO, A.7.0.0.9.39-2
- ² Won Z. Yoon, 'Military Expediency: a determining factor in the Japanese policy regarding Burmese independence', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* vol. 9, no. 2 (1978), p. 267
- ³ *Ibid.*, 'Biruma Dokuritsu Shidō Yōkō' [Guiding Principles for the Independence of Burma] (Army Draft), 20 February 1943.
- ⁴ *Kimitsu Sensō Nisshi*, 20 February 1943.
- ⁵ *Ibid.*, 4 March 1943.
- ⁶ Trager, p. 146. Separate Document: The Basic Structures for Burma and Japan-Burma Relations
- ⁷ DRO, A.7.0.0.9.39-2, the 5th section, Policy Affairs Bureau, Foreign Ministry, 'Biruma Dokuritsu Shidō Yoko ni kansuru jakkan no Kōsatsu' [a memorandum on 'the Guiding Principles for the Independence of Burma'], 24 February 1943.
- ⁸ *Ibid.*
- ⁹ *Ibid.*, Policy Affairs Bureau, Foreign Ministry, 'Nichi-Men kan no Kihon-teki Kankei ni tsuite' [On the basic structure of Japan-Burma relations], 3 March 1943.
- ¹⁰ Sugiyama memo, pp. 386-387.
- ¹¹ *Ibid.* pp. 388-390.
- ¹² U Maung Maung, *Burmese Nationalist Movements 1940 - 1948*. (Edinburgh, 1989), p. 80.
- ¹³ DRO, A.7.0.0.9-32, 'Biruma Dokuritsu Shidō Yōkō ni kansuru jakkan no Kōsatsu'.
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 'Biruma Dokuritsu ni kansuru Jōyaku Teiketsu Yōryō (an)'
- ¹⁶ Sugiyama Memo, pp. 440-442.
- ¹⁷ Josef Silverstein ed., *The Political Legacy of Aung San – Revised Edition* (Ithaca, New York, 1993), p. 21.
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*, [italic by author]
- ¹⁹ *Season and Crop Report for 1941, 1943, 1944 and 1947*, cited in, *ibid.*, p. 95
- ²⁰ Nemoto Kei, *Aung San – Fūin sareta dokuritsu Biruma no Yume* (Tokyo, 1997), p. 125
- ²¹ Robert H. Taylor, 'Burma in the Anti-Fascist War', in, A. W. McCoy ed., *Southeast Asia under the Japanese Occupation* (New Haven 1980), pp. 169-171.
- ²² Maung Maung, pp. 116-117.
- ²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 118-119.
- ²⁴ U Nu, *Burma under the Japanese: Pictures and Portraits* (London, 1954), p. 104
- ²⁵ Richard Butwell, *U Nu of Burma* (Stanford, Calif., Stanford Univ. Press: 1969), p. 44
- ²⁶ Ba Maw, pp. 333-35
- ²⁷ Taylor, *Marxism and Resistance in Burma*, p. 20
- ²⁸ Silverstein, p. 28
- ²⁹ OIOC, L/WS/1/1511, telegram from the Governor of Burma to the Secretary of State for Burma, December 16 1944, cited in, Taylor, *Marxism and Resistance in Burma*, p. 29
- ³⁰ *Ibid.*
- ³¹ OIOC, R/8/20, John Wise to Dorman-Smith, 29 March 1945.
- ³² Taylor, *Burma in the Anti-Fascist War*, p. 177
- ³³ OIOC, R/8/20, Mountbatten to Britain chiefs of staff, 27 March 1945.
- ³⁴ *Ibid.*
- ³⁵ *Ibid.*, the Chiefs of Staff to Mountbatten, COSSEA 225, 30 March 1945.
- ³⁶ *Ibid.*
- ³⁷ *Ibid.*
- ³⁸ *Ibid.*, 'Policy and immediate Programme of the Anti-Fascist Peoples' Freedom League', 25 May 1945.
- ³⁹ *Ibid.*, Dorman-Smith to Amery, 1 June 1945.
- ⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, M/3/1607, Comment by the Burma Association on the White Paper issued by His Majesty's Government, 30 May 1945.
- ⁴¹ *Ibid.*
- ⁴² *Ibid.*
- ⁴³ OIOC, Eur E215/8, From Dorman-Smith to Amery, 22 May 1945.
- ⁴⁴ *The Weekly Thunderer*, 25 August 1945, pp. 4 and 25, cited in Maung Maung, p. 180.

Epilogue and Conclusion - 'Co-Prosperity' or 'Commonwealth'?: Fall of the GEACPS and End of British Rule in Burma.

Epilogue

The period from September 1944 onwards witnessed a series of major triumphs for the Allied forces in the Far East. United States submarines rapidly reduced Japan's capacity to wage the war by effectively destroying its lines of communication. Despite the suicide, so-called *kamikaze*, attacks by Japanese planes which began in October, the Allied amphibious advance continued. On 21 October, General MacArthur went ashore on Leyte in the Philippines which was followed by the immense naval-air battle of Leyte Gulf and resulted in a decisive Japanese defeat with the loss of 4 aircraft carriers, 3 battleships and 10 cruisers. The bombing of Japan by B 29 aircraft based in the Marianas added to the process of enfeeblement from November 1944 onwards. Further north, the American forces closed in on Japan itself. The island of Iwo Jima, only 750 miles from Tokyo, fell after a bitter struggle between February and March 1945, and an even greater blow was struck when landings were made on the island of Okinawa in April which severed the last of Japan's communications to the south and provided a base for final assault on its home islands.

It was under these circumstances that Japan convened *Dai-Tōa Taishi Kaigi* [the Greater East Asia Ambassadors' Conference] following the formation of the cabinet led by Suzuki Kantarō, a retired admiral who had served as lord privy seal, in April 1945. Originally planned as a sequel to the Greater East Asia Conference of 1943, it was designed to strengthen the solidarity of the nations within Greater East Asia in view of the coming 'decisive battle' and to develop a political counter-measure against the San Francisco United Nations Conference held by the Allied powers.¹ Contrary to Japan's intentions, it resulted in revealing the disunity within Greater East Asia and aggravating the struggle against the Anglo-American powers. Originally, the Japanese government planned to invite the national leaders of Indonesia and of the three countries of Indochina which had just thrown off French rule in addition to the attendees of the previous Greater East Asia Conference. However, it turned out to be physically impossible for the Asian heads of state to participate largely due to the worsening war situation. Thus the conference was held for a day on 23 April and was attended just by the ambassadors of five countries, Manchukuo, Thailand, Philippines, the Nanking Government in China, and the representative of the Free India government as an assessor.²

As was the case with the 1943 conference, the second meeting completely failed to

enunciate anything that ideologically distinguished Japan from its opponents and to make any actual impact on the course of the war. Tōgō Shigemori, the newly appointed Foreign Minister, stated that the war had been initiated for the purpose of securing 'self-defence and self-existence' and of emancipating Asian colonial subjects from the West. He also called for the establishment of a world order which would be based not on imperialism but on 'justice' in his keynote address.³ The conferees made this idea more specific by adopting a seven-part declaration that affirmed their adherence to the following principles. It stated that the international system should be founded on the principle of political equality and economic reciprocity. All nations were to be given equal opportunity for development regardless of their size. All the countries under colonial rule should be liberated and occupy their own proper places. Economic inequality should be redressed and all the barriers that prevented free distribution of natural resources and trade must be removed. Together with the use of force, acts of provocation through the imposition of economic restriction should be prohibited. International security should not be pursued through an international system under the dominating influence of major powers and based on monolithic principles applied universally but with more emphasis on the maintenance of order at the regional level.⁴

It has been argued by scholars such as Hatano and Iriye that this statement with its undercurrent of universal idealism went beyond the enunciation of immediate war issues and marked a 'complete return to Wilsonian internationalism'.⁵ However, the statement was more complex than this because, in essence, its demands were those that Japan had persistently made during the pre-war years, rather than an attempt to assimilate Japan's claims with those of the Allied powers. Throughout the inter-war period, Japan had viewed the current international system, based on Wilsonian idealism, as a means to preserve the status quo of the Western colonial powers. The universally applied principles of the pre-war international order also neglected the particular conditions of the region and Japan's call for its special rights and interests in the region to be recognised. Japan felt that, under these circumstances, it had been politically discriminated against by the Western powers and faced unfair economic restrictions which blocked Japan's access to natural resources and markets. It was in this context that Japan developed its antipathy to the international system and saw the growth of Pan-Asian sentiment during the pre-war years. These ideas were at the very root of Japanese leaders' minds and underpinned the emergence of the GEACPS and Japan's confrontation with the Allied powers. Thus it was not a mere act of self-vindication when Tōgō Shigemori stated that these principles were the crystallization of his concept of 'Japan's war aims'.⁶ Rather than being an attempt to envisage Wilsonian idealism, these principles can be interpreted as the reiteration of Japan's case for changing the international system.

Nevertheless, if one reflects on the course and outcomes of Japan's quest for a new order as a whole, the idealism and the justifiable causes in these claims lose their appeal due to Japan's own inability to abide by these principles. Moreover, no matter how lofty these claims sounded, this announcement completely lacked substance in the face of Japan's increasingly weakening position in the 'Greater East Asia'. In reality, the declaration did not serve any practical strategic purpose to fortify the Japanese war effort or to strengthen political ties between Japan and its subject nations. In a sense, the content of the declaration was full of idealism because Japan had little to lose by embracing these principles now that the fall of the GEACPS was increasingly imminent. The only role it played, if any, was probably to provide an insubstantial basis of argument for post-war revisionists that Japan had fought a war of 'Asian liberation'.

On 15 August, Japan surrendered after two American nuclear bombs had wiped out the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The Allies had finally triumphed over the last of the Axis powers. In Britain, joyful crowds instantly took to the streets to celebrate the news, and the government declared a special two-day holiday. Nevertheless, the termination of the conflict was by no means the end of Britain's problems. In Southeast Asia, London was soon confronted with a number of completely unexpected problems. As the headline of *Pacific Post*, the daily newspaper of the British Pacific Fleet in the Far East, rightly pointed out on 16 August 1945: 'War is over – the job isn't'.⁷

When Mountbatten had visited Germany for the Potsdam Conference in the previous month, he had been informed of a highly important decision to extend the operational boundaries of the Southeast Asia Command [SEAC]. Since its establishment in 1943, SEAC's operational boundaries had included Burma, Malaya, Singapore and the northern Indonesian island of Sumatra. Under the agreement between the American and British Chiefs of Staff, the southern half of Indonesia and Thailand were now transferred from the American-led South-West Pacific Area Command [SWPA] to Mountbatten's command. This decision reflected Washington's acceptance of Britain's desire to re-establish its pre-war position in Southeast Asia after Roosevelt's untimely death in April.⁸

Thus, when Labour came to power in 1945, the geographical extent of Britain's power and influence had never been greater. Its empire stretched from Africa and the Middle East to large parts of Southeast Asia. However, Britain found it increasingly difficult to shoulder its immense international commitments. One of the major problems the Labour government suffered was that the country was close to bankruptcy as a result of the war. Britain entered the war with debts of just under 500 million pounds, a burden that had been offset by massive reserves of gold and dollars, and by substantial foreign investments. But by 1945 most of these reserves had all but disappeared, and the country's debts had

increased to the amount of 3.5 billion pounds.⁹ It soon became clear that Britain's economic weakness would have a significant effect on its standing as the leading nation of the vast empire. Britain's problem was not confined to the economic area. It was indeed facing a more serious problem in the political sphere: lack of understanding of the changing political situation in Southeast Asia after the war.

As has been illustrated in the chapters of this thesis, the British tended to underestimate the importance of Southeast Asia both for the security of the empire and its worldwide trade prior to the outbreak of the war. As a Foreign Office paper pointed out in 1946, Southeast Asia was regarded as an 'unimportant and little-known area' before the war and its political, economic and strategic importance had only been realised after the Japanese had captured its colonies in the region.¹⁰ Following the loss of these territories, the British sought to re-conquer them from the Japanese in order to resume their pre-war position in the region and their vital trade with Malaya and Burma. Nevertheless, it became apparent by the end of the war that London had little understanding of the degree to which the conflict had fundamentally altered the political situation in the region and Britain's prestige was greatly undermined as a result.

In the changing political climate that the British faced in Southeast Asia, the rise of the nationalist movements was an issue of paramount importance that required careful handling. However, Britain completely underestimated the significance of the growth of Southeast Asian nationalism that had been brought about as a result of the war. There were, for sure, a few figures among British policy-makers who were aware of the explosive nature of the nationalist aspirations in the region. Esler Dening, who would become the chief architect of Britain's regional policy planning, warned at the beginning of October 1945:

'These independence movements in Asia must be treated with sympathy and understanding. Otherwise they will become really serious. As I have indicated, they are half-baked and treated the proper way they should not be very terrifying. But treated the wrong way, they may well, in the end, spell the end of Europe in Asia.'¹¹

However, the British policy towards Burma following the termination of the war demonstrated that his ideas were by no means shared by all at the centre of decision-making.

The defeat of the Japanese in Burma between February and late May 1945, three months before the surrender of the imperial Japanese government, created an illusion for individuals and groups attached to the colonial state that the return of the British would lead to a restoration of the political *status quo ante bellum*.¹² Based upon this assumption, what

the British government devised for Burma during the period between 1945 and 1946 was a holding policy which was intended to restore law and order and gradually prepare the way for the introduction of new constitutional arrangements as a prelude to ultimate full self-government. Failing to grasp the extent to which Burma had changed as a consequence of the Japanese occupation, Dorman-Smith, restored as the governor of Burma, and his advisers sought to secure acceptance of British authority once more and suppressed Burmese nationalist elements. The governor set up the Executive Council with only 11 seats, 4 seats less than originally stated, and appointed old-line Burmese politicians to the portfolios which were only advisory, not 'executive'.¹³ Dorman-Smith insisted that, in line with the recommendations of the Burma White Paper, his administration would have emergency powers for three years, thereby reducing the influence of Burmese politicians in the government to a level less than the pre-war period. When he declared to the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League [AFPFL] that 'the door is still open', if they should change their attitude, he merely fuelled the hostility of the Burmese people.

The AFPFL grew in strength as a sizeable political power between May 1945 and October 1946. The major internal political groups in Burma gathered together under the umbrella of the AFPFL and maintained sufficient cohesion to apply pressure on the British. When Dorman-Smith called in Ba Pe and Aung San and offered them seats in the Legislative Council, which was due to set up in accordance with the White Paper, the AFPFL leaders refused to accept the offer. The league was not interested in minor positions under the terms of the White Paper, but only in the establishment of a Constituent Assembly and the country's independence. The governor refused to make concessions to Aung San and his powerful AFPFL, which demanded full self-government and independence of Burma. Aung San and the AFPFL soon embarked on a collision course with the British, organising mass protests which destabilised the precarious political and economic situation in the country. Dorman-Smith talked of arresting Aung San on the charge of murder committed during the war and added further fuel to the dispute. Thus Britain lost important opportunities for reaching an accord with the rising tide of Burmese nationalism and convincing them of the desirability of remaining within the British Commonwealth.

In May 1946, the Supreme Council of the AFPFL passed an 'Independence' resolution which was proposed by Aung San and called for a prolonged struggle until this goal of the League was achieved. In the resolution, the AFPFL demanded that the British government call an immediate conference of all political parties for the purpose of forming a Provisional National Government or, alternatively, hold a general election within six

months under the environment in which the Defence Rules and all other law of suppression were withdrawn.¹⁴ When the situation in Burma threatened to get out of control, Clement Attlee, the Prime Minister, intervened in June 1946 and replaced Dorman-Smith with Sir Hubert Rance, who was formerly in charge of part of SEAC policy relating to Burma.

This decision marked the turning point in Burma's struggle for independence. Rance was shrewd and progressively minded and respected by Burmese politicians. He aimed to restore the smooth functioning of the government and to advance with reasonable speed towards independence. Following widespread strikes in September, the governor appointed five AFPFL members to important posts in the country's executive council. Aung San was appointed as the council's vice-president.¹⁵ Aung San emerged as the most important political leader in Burma who was capable of keeping the amorphous AFPFL together and of providing inspirational enthusiasm for the new Burma. In December 1946, Attlee invited a Burmese delegation, headed by Aung San, to London with a view to discussing Burma's future. The successful conclusion of the talks resulted in the signing of the Aung San-Attlee agreement on 27 January 1947, which would give Burma independence within the next year. During the months following his return to Burma, Aung San achieved, in rapid succession, a series of successes. He won the support of the ethnic minorities for a united and independent Burma and led his party to an overwhelming election victory for the Constituent Assembly. Aung San also played an important role in devising the principles on which the new Constitution would be based and convening a national conference on the economic future of the country.

Nevertheless, he and other members of the council were assassinated on 19 July while attending a meeting of the executive council. With his death, Burma lost the one man who held the nation's confidence and could have led the country through a peaceful transition from colonial to independent rule.¹⁶ Hubert Rance dealt with the challenging crisis effectively and appointed Aung San's colleague U Nu as the new prime minister. Burma was formally granted independence on 17 October under the premiership of U Nu. On 1 January, Burma formally became an independent republic and the only part of the former British Empire to opt out of the Commonwealth. Once independence was achieved, the energies of all the political groups in Burma turned to an internecine struggle for power in the new order. Nationalist unity now became secondary to their own political advantage. This foreboded Burma's chaotic and rapidly changing political situation which would characterise the history of the country during the following decades.

Conclusion

In trying to understand the rise and fall of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere from 1940 to 1945, one can assess this complex and ultimately tragic story from three dimensions: origins, nature and impact. In understanding the origins of the vision of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, it is important to note the growth of Pan-Asianist ideas as an increasingly substantial ideological force since the early 1930s. While maintaining continuity with its antecedents developed since the Meiji-era, its early idealism was gradually replaced by the more practical economic and political concerns that Japan faced during the period. What had originally been a doctrine advocating the liberation of Asian peoples transformed itself into a Japanese version of 'Monroe Doctrine' in East Asia which was characterised by a strong resentment towards the international status quo dominated by the Western colonial powers. This concept was gradually developed by its ardent advocates including Konoe Fumimaro and the members of the Shōwa Research Association so that it became the ideological basis of the actual Japanese policy to establish a new order in East Asia. The Pan-Asianist origins of the vision of the GEACPS helps to explain why it appealed to a wide range of Japanese leaders with such rapidity. It gained extensive support from Japanese leaders both within and outside the government who envisioned Japan's dominance of Asia as the key to its strategic and political security. Konoe recognised the appeal of Pan-Asianist ideas and took advantage of the vision to make it the political foundation of his quest for Japan's special position in the region. This development of Pan-Asianism during the 1930s provided a setting against which the concept of the GEACPS took shape with a wider geographical scope at the beginning of the 1940s.

The timing and manner in which this ideological construct emerged was also influenced by the growth of Japan's actual economic and strategic interests in Southeast Asia. The need for strategic resources and the recognition that those resources existed in abundance in Southeast Asia provided the impetus for the surge in Japan's imperial ambitions. It was also an opportunistic move. Japanese advance into Southeast Asia in the summer of 1940 was the result of a swift and cataclysmic change in pattern of global power balance. Despite its long held interest in Southeast Asia, the Japanese government's attention to the region was on the material and strategic aspects and very little consideration was given to a possible occupation prior to the outbreak of the war. Once tensions increased, priority was given to Japan's seizure of the strategic resources of the region and to the maximisation of the local economies' contribution to the self-sufficiency of

the Japanese war economy. In this regard, it is important to note that the views of three key players in Japan's foreign policy making, the Army, Navy and the Foreign Ministry, were not as different as has often been portrayed by many studies. By the summer of 1940, all of them had developed a conviction based on their own particular perspective that a policy of southern expansion would best serve the country's national interest. The differences existed not over the policy goal itself but over the means to achieve it. The vision of the GEACPS functioned as a means to fuse the different and often conflicting views of the Japanese leaders by providing an over-arching rationale.

Reflecting the strong influence of Japan's actual strategic considerations, the concept of the GEACPS was fairly ambiguous about its specific goals as well as the means to achieve them. It changed its emphasis and goals in accordance with Japan's strategic position and policy priorities during the period. Throughout the initial phase of the Japanese southern expansion, the concept of the GEACPS aimed at the establishment of a loose sphere of influence largely in the economic field. This form of regional order was premised on commercial intercourse with the other regions and did not exclude the involvement of other regional powers in the activities within the 'Greater East Asia'. Nevertheless, the GEACPS came to have a much more exclusive character which aimed at establishing Japan's predominant strategic and economic position over the region. It began to justify the Japanese expansion in Southeast Asia as a means to ensure its self-existence and self-defence and exert wider economic and political influence over the region. The vision became an autarkic regional bloc that pursued the termination rather merely the reduction of the Western influence from the region.

It has to be emphasised that this Japanese expansion was by no means motivated by its early idealism of 'Asian Liberation'. In this pattern of pre-war Japanese expansion into Southeast Asia, the role played by the idea of 'Asian Liberation' was rather marginal as an ideological component in the emerging concept of the GEACPS. During the course of development in the 1930s, the idealism of early years had lost its place as Pan-Asianism gradually transformed itself into a concept that more adequately suited Japan's practical strategic concerns. For policy-makers in Tokyo, the notion of liberation was useful as a pretext and as incendiary rhetoric to ignite the tinder of Southeast Asian nationalism, but even the most ideological among them primarily supported the policy of southern expansion because of the material advantages that the region could offer to Japan. Thus in the process of development, the vision of the GEACPS ceased to be the embodiment of Pan-Asian idealism and became merely a justification for Japan's call for the restructuring of the existing international order.

It is important to note that this transformation of the character of the concept was not

simply the result of growing Japanese ambitions but also the consequence of the interactions between the Powers in the region. In determining the characteristics of the vision of the GEACPS, the role played by Britain was of vital importance. For one, London's inability to make economic concessions and its tightening of trade restrictions underlined the latter's need to expand into Southeast Asia which had natural resources and vast market for products the Japanese were desperately seeking for. The incompatibility of the Japanese and the British interests in the Far East became a major obstacle to the two parties' effort to frame an understanding that would allow co-existence. Their conflict of interests was so extensive that, ultimately, they could reach an agreement only if Britain accepted Japanese predominance over the region or Japan abandoned its quest for the establishment of a new order in the region. Furthermore, Britain's apparent weakness in the region made it appear to the Japanese that they held a great opportunity to expand their influence through the application of diplomatic pressure and the threat of force without actually needing recourse to war. The policy interactions between the British and the Japanese thus functioned as an incitant factor that helped to provoke the change in the character of the GEACPS from a loose economic sphere of influence to a more exclusive and autarkic economic and defensive bloc.

Britain's role in the emergence of the GEACPS was not confined to the economic area. Its intransigent approach in dealing with the Southeast Asian nationalists' call for extended autonomy induced the radicalisation of nationalist movements in the region, which is especially apparent in Burma's case. During the period of colonial rule before the outbreak of the war in Asia, Britain introduced a number of measures that gradually extended the degree of autonomy given to the Burmese. This culminated in November 1939 in the British government's pledge to consider the colony's future dominion status in the Empire. Yet there was a significant gap between the speed and extent to which Britain was prepared to grant autonomy and Burmese people's expectation. The British stance in regard to these issues became even clearer when Winston Churchill and Franklin Roosevelt announced the Atlantic Charter on 14 August 1941, which appeared to imply that Britain had publicly committed itself to encourage self-government throughout the Empire. However, Whitehall's double standard was revealed by its acknowledgement that the principles stated in the Charter were not designed to cover the British colonies in Southeast Asia. Thus, by severely underestimating the force of the growing nationalist aspiration and failing to come to terms with it, the British provided a vital background for Japan's involvement as an external power to assist the Burmese nationalist movement.

Japan's interest in the Burmese independence movement began as a small-scale intelligence missions and developed into a complex propaganda and espionage campaign

designed to foster anti-British sentiment. In spite of the general image of the *Minami Kikan* as the originator of Japan's full-scale commitment, Japanese activities to support Burma's nationalist aspirations were already underway on a considerable scale by the latter half of 1937. Through the Japanese consulate and other organisations, Japan was actively involved in various forms of activities which helped nationalist aspirations in the country to develop as a sizeable political force. However, like Japanese activities in other part of the region during the pre-war period, it was largely driven by Japan's practical economic and strategic considerations rather than by pure Pan-Asianist idealism. In this context, the *Minami Kikan* should not be regarded as an example of Japan's involvement with Asian liberation movement. The organisation was established to meet specific strategic requirements in the changing international circumstances which were basically irrelevant to liberation aims, while Asian idealism only existed at the personal level. *Minami Kikan's* call for Burma's independence was possible because the Japanese policy planning towards the region paid very little attention to the possibility of an actual Japanese occupation of Burma. As was revealed immediately after the outbreak of the war, Japan chose to be a ruler rather than a liberator when the choice had to be made.

Despite Japan's pre-war rhetoric of co-prosperity and its denunciations of colonialism, its plans for the economic exploitation of Southeast Asia revealed an imperialism that was far more rapacious than that of its Western counterparts. Instead of devising a scheme that would ensure the member countries' 'co-prosperity', Japanese policy-makers revealed their intention to centre occupation planning around Japan's economic and strategic requirements. The privileges that the Japanese planned for themselves in Southeast Asia were fairly extensive: they included close control of trade, mining concessions, domination of transportation and communication systems, supervisory authority over regional financial structures, and the political arrangements to ensure these privileges. Japan had virtually no intention of sharing its gains with neighbouring countries and the welfare of the indigenous populations was hardly at the top of the Japanese agenda.

The ideology of co-prosperity and the rhetoric of support for national independence in Southeast Asia were hardly visible in Japan's policy planning. While a few oblique references were made to indigenous institutions and national aspirations, they were rather dismissive and secondary to Japan's strategic concerns. Japan was undeniably reluctant to encourage native independence movements prematurely and maintained its ambiguous stance towards the future status of the occupied territories. Any allusions to Pan-Asianism and to the racial affinities between the Japanese and Southeast Asian peoples were abandoned. Thus Japan's policy planning towards Southeast Asia was insufficiently buttressed by an ideological approach to the peoples of the region that could have induced

their long-term support for an expanded and extended Japanese presence there.

It is important to note in this regard that any argument that accredits Japan's failure of ensuring native support to the paramount influence of the military services within Japanese decision-making has to be treated with serious scepticism. As has been illustrated by the discussions of the Japanese policy-makers in the *Dai-tōa Kensetsu Shingikai*, the questions which preoccupied the minds of civilian leaders in Tokyo were by no means different from those of the military policy planners. Throughout the process of the initial war-planning, Japan's political and business leaders were actively involved in making the Japanese blueprint to rule the Co-Prosperity Sphere. The key questions that attracted their attention were how the country could make maximum use of the resources in the newly acquired territories and how such measures could be fitted into the ideological framework of Japan's 'new order'. The civilian members of the Council were equally instrumental in devising the policy that ignored the economic well-being of the subject peoples in Southeast Asia and justified Japan's political and economic domination with the ideological reasoning of 'Liberation of Asia from the Western exploitation'.

In the face of the decline of Japan's military fortunes and the deteriorating economic situation in the Greater East Asia, Tokyo was confronted by an urgent need to re-organise its war strategy. For the first time since the emergence of the vision of the GEACPS, Japan now began to consider a set of policies which would substantiate its claim of 'Asian Liberation'. The Japanese idea of granting independence to occupied territories in the region had primarily existed only in its policy statements and policy-makers in Tokyo paid little attention to the notion as an actual policy option. However, in the face of the changing strategic position, the idea of 'Asian Liberation' resurfaced as an important theme in the vision of the GEACPS which would rationalise the Japanese presence in the region. Shigemitsu and the Foreign Ministry played an important role in devising this new policy initiative. This shift in the Japanese policy was, however, not motivated by their idealism to endorse the principle of self-determination for weaker nations in Southeast Asia. Nor was it an effort to assimilate Japan's war aims to those of the Allied powers. Driven by pragmatic necessity, it was a calculation that the policy of encouraging the independence of the Southeast Asian countries would best serve Japan's national interest and fortify its presence in the region as the leading nation of the Co-Prosperity Sphere.

The superficiality of Japan's new ideological policy became increasingly apparent when the Japanese granted autonomy to some of the occupied territories including Burma. After much unwillingness on the part of the Japanese, especially its Southern Area Army, Burma achieved independence in August 1943 under a very firmly held Japanese umbrella. In spite of the Japanese claim that Burma was granted 'independence', the new

government headed by Dr. Ba Maw was a totalitarian regime with all powers concentrated in the hands of the head of state who was expected to fulfil Japan's wartime needs. With considerable restrictions on its powers, independent Burma ended up closely resembling what was known under the British rule as 'Ministerial Burma'. In devising this policy, which led subsequently to the rise of anti-Japanese sentiment, the Army has generally been considered as the party which holds the main responsibility for this disastrous outcome. However, the civilian elements of the Japanese government, including the *Gaimushō*, were also instrumental in developing a policy plan which was based on a presumption that the Burmese people had an obligation to serve the interests of the Japanese, which was in turn founded upon the Japanese sense of supremacy vis-à-vis their Burmese subjects. Less than two years of Japanese-style independence was enough to make Aung San and other Burmese leaders decide they had better look elsewhere. Once it became clear that the British were coming back in force, and that the Japanese were powerless to prevent them, Aung San changed sides.

It is, however, premature here to conclude that Japan's ideological endeavour had no effect on the course of the events. The impact of the Japanese propaganda is apparent in the area of its political warfare against the Allied powers, in particular the British. It unveiled an explosive issue that had been inherent in the long Western rule over Southeast Asia. Japan's ideological claims and the initial success of its expansion into the region not only strengthened Tokyo's position in its war effort against the Allied Powers, but also forced the latter to confront this explosive ideological issue. The Japanese had occupied colonial outposts that the westerners had dominated for generations, taking their superiority over their Asian subjects for granted. Japan's belated emergence as a dominant power in Asia called the very existence of the colonial system into question and therefore challenged the entire mystique of white supremacy on which centuries of European and American expansion had rested.

Indeed, Britain completely failed to respond to the ideological challenge posed by the Japanese enunciation of the ideals of the GEACPS. London was devoid of an adequate organisation in the government to execute a well-concerted political strategy in the Far East. From the outbreak of the war, extensive efforts were made to co-ordinate the allied military effort in the Far East and build up strength for an eventual offensive against the Japanese. However, Britain largely neglected the need for devising an effective machinery for political warfare that would supplement and facilitate the military effort. The establishment of the Political Warfare (Japan) Committee [PWJC] in March 1942 did not help to improve the situation drastically. It was intended to function as an organ to provide policy guidance to the existing organisations involved in political warfare against the

Japanese occupied territories and co-ordinate the formulation of effective policies that would reinforce the Allied military strategies in the region. However, it suffered from lack of executive power and inherent structural problems.

The absence of any machinery to engage in political warfare against the Japanese was not the only reason for Britain's failure to hit back at Japan's propaganda. More importantly, the British government found very little room of manoeuvre to formulate effective counter-propaganda. Britain's inability to protect the peoples of its colonial possessions, combined with naval and military disasters of considerable magnitude, had shaken the faith of its subjects in its ability to offer any effective resistance to Japanese aggression. Besides the success of the British counter-offensive, one way to face the Japanese slogan of 'Asian Liberation' was to induce the resistance to rejoin the Allied war effort by convincing the former colonial subjects that the British intended to present them with a better future. Nevertheless, Britain was in no position to commit itself to clarify the future status of former colonial possessions following the termination of the conflict. Indeed, London consistently indicated its reluctance to make such an assurance throughout the period.

This British inclination was particularly apparent in its dealings with the Burmese during the war. Of the many problems the British faced in Southeast Asia during the war, the question of how to deal with nationalist aspirations in the region was the most difficult. One of the first Southeast Asian countries in which Britain was confronted with the new brand of nationalism was Burma. However, London paid little attention to the question of what promises for the future could or should be made in order to win Burmese support for the British war effort against the Japanese. Being motivated by its desire to restore and safeguard the political and economic interests that it had possessed in the pre-war years, the British stance towards Burma's status following the conclusion of the war continued to be ambiguous. In spite of growing criticism by the United States, Britain maintained its position that Burma's independence could only be considered as a real option after a period of rehabilitation. No matter how sound this seemed to policy-makers in London, this agenda lacked fundamental appeal to the Burmese people as the proposed strategy was devoid of any clear declaration about the timing and form in which Burma was to achieve independence.

The uprising of the AFPFL against the Japanese was a blessing for the British which was setting out on its own military campaign to recapture Burma. The new political forces growing out of the changing political conditions presented a favourable opportunity for the British to ease the process of re-establishing their own position in the country. Nevertheless, it soon became clear that the Burmese nationalists were in no way prepared

to accept the restoration of the status quo *ante bellum* which London envisaged. The White Paper reiterated vague promises for a constitutional advance and its future status as an autonomous member of the 'Commonwealth' following a period of direct rule and 'proper democratic development'. For the Burmese leaders, this was as hypocritical as the Japanese propaganda to liberate the country and replace the Western imperialism with a new order under the tutelage of the Japanese. Both Japan and Britain presented its own version of imperialist regional order under the disguised slogans of 'Co-Prosperity' and 'Commonwealth'. The answer of the Burmese nationalists was 'No' to both of them.

Before concluding the thesis, it has to be pointed out that the findings of this study contradict some of the arguments provided by those involved in the current revisionist tide in Japan. The author of the thesis wishes to make some points by referring to Ba Maw's famous statement in his memoirs, which have been quoted by many with implicit assent:

'The case of Japan is indeed tragic. Looking at it historically, no nation has done so much to liberate Asia from white domination, yet no nation has been so misunderstood by the very people whom it had helped either to liberate or to set an example to in many things. Japan was betrayed by her militarists and their racial fantasies. Had her Asian instincts been true, had she only been faithful to the concept of Asia for the Asians ..., Japan's fate would have been very different.'¹⁷

The nature of the Japanese policy of southern expansion and the concept of the GEACPS as its ideological mainstay, which have been examined in this study, reveals that his argument has to be treated with some serious scepticism. To start with, Japan's contribution to the post-war independence of former Asian colonies has to be accepted with some reservation as this had never been the goal of Japan's quest for a new Asian order. Japan, in a sense, did Southeast Asia a service by quickening the end of the colonial rule and thus obliging the Western powers to come to terms more speedily with the rise of Asian nationalism. However, this had never been the end goal of Japan's endeavours but was rather merely its by-product. What Japan pursued throughout the period under scrutiny of this study was not so much the destruction of the colonial system in the region as to a re-distribution of colonial interests in which Japan sought to secure its share.

Despite that the idealism of 'Asian liberation' that existed in early Pan-Asianism, it ceased to be a core element of the ideal as soon as it came to be embraced as the ideological basis for Japan's actual policy planning. In this sense, Japan had never been faithful to the concept of 'Asia for the Asians'. There were, for sure, those who believed that 'Asian Liberation' was Japan's mission and that this was the reason why they were

engaged in fighting a war against the Western powers. Yet they were never a sizeable political force in Japan's decision making. There were also those who came to envisage the independence of Asian nations from a more pragmatic point of view. However, Japanese policy was never driven by this desire as an idealistic goal in itself.

Nor was Japan simply betrayed by its own militarists. As has been demonstrated by a number of times in this study, Japanese ambitions for control over East and Southeast Asia were widely shared among the Japanese leaders of various backgrounds. The civilian leaders within the Japanese government were as enthusiastic as the militarists to pursue a policy that would fulfil the nation's economic and strategic requirements. The difference between them existed over means, not goals, and none of them were free from the sense of racial superiority vis-à-vis other Asian peoples. There was a widely shared assumption that Japan had an obligation to enlighten the backward peoples of the region and that, in return, it had a natural right to demand that Asian subjects serve Japan's purposes. Taking these facts into consideration, it is difficult to accept Ba Maw's statement as a fair summary of the rise and fall of Japan's GEACPS. If the current Japanese historical revisionism shares his view and bases its argument upon such naïve assumption, the validity of its interpretation of modern Japanese history has to come under serious criticism.

This is not, however, to suggest that this research is designed as a vehicle to shift all the blame to the Japanese and portray the country as the exclusive villain of the war. To put these issues into a wider perspective, one has to note the arrogant assumption of the British during the inter-war period that the international system which gave it prosperity was the natural, moral order of things. The British looked askance at Japan's efforts and regarded them as out of place in the modern world, from which the former benefited probably more than any other state. They had very little realisation that interesting oneself in positive reforms, and not obstinate adherence to the preservation of *status quo*, would be the only way to prevent others from undermining peace.¹⁸ These conservative attitudes had the unfortunate effect of stirring Japan's aggressive expansionism. This is the mindset which still afflicts *status quo* powers today as does Japan's sense of superiority to other Asian peoples.

More importantly, this mentality is still affecting the study of the war in Asia and Pacific, too. The orthodox Allied interpretation of the war, which views the conflict as a noble defence of liberal civilisation, is casting a long shadow over the historical research of this pivotal event, let alone the image of the conflict projected by a number of Hollywood films. The so-called 'good-war' mythology is still far from dying away while academic historians are making considerable efforts to gradually undermine the orthodox position. It is, for instance, evident from a general reluctance to undertake any radical reconsideration

of the factual and ethical foundations of the Allied orthodoxy or to revisit the Japanese case against Western hegemony from that context. This is not to suggest the re-establishment of the imperial Japanese point of view or to offer quarter to the advocates of Japan's 'holy' war. The war ended in defeat of Japan and rightly so. Yet any study failing to take the moral hypocrisy of Western imperialism into account, along with that of Japanese expansionism, as a vital cause of the war cannot lead us to a balanced account and further understanding of the war. It is important to give that side of the story its due consideration in order to transcend the growing limitations of historical research based on the Allied interpretation of the war.

Thus, in both Japanese and Western perspectives, there is a compelling need for further studies that revisit this controversial phase of modern history and examine the complex and intertwined events of the period with openness to rethink 'established orthodoxies'; which is especially the case in light of the growing influence of historical revisionism which appears to be backed by the conservative political tide in Japan. Further understanding of the war in Asia and Pacific is possible only through continuous stream of such works and open-minded intellectual debate, not through imposition of single-minded and monotonous version of the historical interpretation. The author of the thesis hopes that this study will make a contribution to renewed historical dialogue by providing an alternative understanding of some vital issues surrounding the confrontation.

Notes for Epilogue and Conclusion

¹ DRO, A7.0.0.9-53 'Dai Tōa Taishi Kaigi kaisaino kei' [Background on convening the Greater East Asia Ambassadors' Conference], undated.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Iriye Akira, *Power and Culture - the Japanese-American War, 1941-45*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981, pp. 240-41. Sumio Hatano. *Taiheiyō Sensō to Ajia Gaikō* [Japan's Asia Policy and the Pacific War]. Tokyo: Tokyo Daigaku Shuppan-kai, 1996, p. 209.

⁶ Tōgō Shigemori, *Jidai no Ichimen*. Tokyo: Hara Shobō, 1985, p. 323.

⁷ Tilman Remme. *Britain and Regional Cooperation in South-East Asia, 1945-49*. London: Routledge, 1995, p. 27.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

¹⁰ PRO, FO371/54017, F1933, memorandum for the Foreign Secretary, 31 January 1946.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, FO371/46353, F9497, Dening to Sterndale Bennett, 5 October 1945.

¹² Robert H. Taylor. *The State in Burma*. London, Hurst: 1987, p. 230.

¹³ U Maung Maung, *Burmese Nationalist Movements 1940-1948*. Edinburgh, Kiscadale Publications: 1989, pp. 193-94.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 209.

¹⁵ Peter Lowe. *Britain in the Far East - a Survey from 1819 to the Present*. New York: Longman, 1981, p. 210.

¹⁶ Joseph Silverstein. *The Political Legacy of Aung San*. New York, Ithaca: 1993, pp. 4-5.

¹⁷ Ba Maw. *Breakthrough in Burma: Momoirs of a Revolution, 1939-1946*. New Heaven: Yale University Press, 1968, p. 185.

¹⁸ Antony Best. *Britain, Japan and Pearl Harbor: Avoiding War in East Asia, 1936-41*. London: Routledge, 1995, pp. 200-201.

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A.1.0.0.6 *Teikoku no Zaigai Seisaku Kankei Ikken*
A.1.0.0.7 *Teikoku Nanpō Seisaku Kankei Ikken*
A.1.0.0.8 *Kokusai Jōsei to Teikoku no Tachiba ni kansuru Arita Gaishō Hōsō kankei Ikken*
A.1.0.0.11 *Gaimu Daijin Sonota no Jōsō-shū*
A.1.0.0.12 *Gaimu Daijin (Sonota) no Enzetsu Seimei-shū*
A.1.1.0.30 *Shina Jihen Kankei Ikken*
A.1.3.4.1 *Nichi-ei Gaikō Kankei Zassan*
A.2.0.0.X1 *Shigemitsu taishi no Ōshū Seikyoku Hōkoku*
A.2.0.0.X1 *<Matsumoto Kiroku> Shigemitsu taishi no Ōshū Seikyoku Hōkoku*
A.2.1.0 B/UI *Ei-bei Gaikō Kankei Zassan*
A.4.6.1 F/SI-1 *Taikoku-Futsuryō Indoshina kan kokkyō funsō ikken'*
A.6.6.0.1-1-7 *Biruma Kankei*
A.7.0.0.9 *Dai-tōa Sensō Kankei Ikken*
B.1.0.0 J/B7 *Nihon Biruma Tsūshō Jōyaku Kankei Ikken*
B.2.0.0.J/N 2-2 *Nichi-Ran Tsūshō Jōyaku kankei ikken: Shōwa 10 nen ikō 15 nen made no Nichi-Ran kan kōshō kankei*
B.2.0.0.J/N 2-3 *Nichi-Ran tsūshō jōyaku kankei ikken: shōwa 15 nen 16 nen Nichi-Ran kaishō kankei*
E.0.0.0.3 *Dai-tōa Sensō no Keizai, Bōeki, Sangyō ni oyoboseru Eikyō Kenkei Ikken: Shina Jihen oyobi Daijini Ōshū Sensō o fukumu*
E.0.0.0.5 *Dai-tōa Sensō-chū no Teikoku no Tai-Chūgoku Keizai Seisaku Kankei Zakken*
E.0.0.0.8 *Dai-tōa Sensō-chū no Teikoku no Tai-Nanpō Keizai Seisaku Kankei Zakken: Shina Jihen oyobi Dainiji Ōshū Sensō o fukumu*
E.1.1.0.2-4 *Kakkoku Zaisei oyobi Keizai Seisaku Kankei Zakken: Eikoku no bu (zokuryō-chi o fukumu)*
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