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THE JAPANESE PLAN TO DOMINATE EAST ASIA – THE GREATER EAST ASIA CO-PROSPERITY SPHERE

INTRODUCTION

The Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere (大東亜共栄圏 – Daitōa Kyōeiken) was a pan-Asian concept of the political and economic order in East Asia, implemented by the government of the Empire of Japan. This ideology is closely connected with the expansionist policy of Japan in 1931–1945 and an attempt to subjugate other Asian nations, including those that were under the colonial rule of the Western powers. Despite many comparisons to the parallel development of the Nazi concept of the *Lebensraum*, Daitōa Kyōeiken was a doctrine of completely different ideological assumptions and methods of accomplishment. Both ideas were to be abandoned in 1945 when the Axis powers were finally defeated in the greatest conflict of the 20th century.

INTELLECTUAL ROOTS OF JAPANESE IMPERIALISM AND THE GREATER EAST ASIA CO-PROSPERITY SPHERE

The forerunner of the Japanese thought of the unification of East Asia under the Empire of Japan was Nobuhira Satō (1769–1850). Satō's interests were mainly focused around economics, agronomy, tactics, internal and foreign policy issues. In his works, he strongly supported the westernisation of Japan and adopting a modern absolute government, which would be able to provide rational management of state resources.¹ His previews of the necessity of adopting a Western political and technological model significantly outpaced the era in which he lived. Satō's ideas were presented over 30 years before the end of the official isolation policy (*sakoku*).

¹ N. Satō, *Keizai Yōroku* [Main records of the economy], vol. 1–7, Tōkyō 1877.

In addition to political and economic reforms, Satō was also a supporter of Japan's expansion in East Asia. In 1823, he published *Kondo hisaku* (*Secret expansion plan*), in which he argued that the whole world should be turned into 'provinces and districts' of Japan. The first blow was to be directed towards Manchuria, which was seemingly 'easy to attack and maintain'. Subsequently, Satō envisioned an invasion on China, creating a detailed plan for the conquest of the giant mainland empire. Taking advantage of its organisational superiority, the Japanese government was to take appropriate measures to colonise the islands of Taiwan and Hainan. Hereafter, Japanese were to carry out a landing operation on Luzon and invade Java and the rest of Indonesia after the unexpected occupation of the Philippines. General Satō ended with the general idea of "adopting an annexation policy" in order to "secure the national interest".² Although in the first half of the 19th century Japan was unable to pursue this policy, clear similarities between the work of Satō and the later doctrine of Daitōa Kyōeiken are apparent. Japanese historian S. Ienaga noted that between 1890 and 1910, the Japanese cabinet had already justified its aggressive actions towards other states to protect own interests. The government tended to treat Koreans as a backward nation unable to reform themselves.³

Another representative of Japan's expansionist doctrine in East Asia was S. Yoshida, a young middle-class samurai who advised a prominent member of the shogun council. He publicly expressed radical views on the country's security issues, indicating that the only way to guarantee its territorial integrity is to expand.⁴ In order not to lose any land, Japan was supposed to conquer the neighbouring countries and increase its own sphere of influence at all costs. As he pointed out, it was necessary to "take advantage of favourable circumstances, take Manchuria, thus standing face to face with Russia; having regained Korea, keep an eye on the Chinese; take over the islands in the south and head for India."⁵ The common elements of Satō's and Yoshida's concepts were the need to take control over Korea and Manchuria, as well as expansion towards the Southern Seas. Such a broad definition of the "defensive zone" was the most important feature of the doctrine of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere.

The vision of Japanese rule in the region also appeared in works of advocates of democratisation and liberalisation of political life in Japan. Being the observers of the power struggle for the division of East Asia based on the criterion of national interests, the need to use force to guarantee dominance over neighbours was postulated by the well-known and respected writer Sohō Tokutomi. Although the final goal was only to guarantee security, international respect and economic stability, Tokutomi did not hide that Japan should civilise other nations under its own protection.⁶

The views presented above were not isolated examples of the propagation of the chauvinistic and expansionist concepts. The conviction about the superiority of Japanese

² N. Satō, *Kondō hisaku* [Secret strategy of uniting all things], Tōkyō 1888.

³ S. Ienaga, *Taiheiyō sensō* [The Pacific War], Tōkyō 2002, p. 3–4.

⁴ S. Tokutomi, *Yoshida Shōin*, Tōkyō 1893.

⁵ D.M. Earl, *Emperor and Nation in Japan. Political Thinkers of the Tokugawa Period*, Seattle 1964, p. 173–174.

⁶ J.D. Pierson, *Tokutomi Sohō 1863–1957. A journalist for modern Japan*, Princeton 1980, p. 229–236; I. Tokutomi, *Ōyamoto bōchōron* [The Expansion of Yamato], Tōkyō 1894.

over the other East Asian peoples was symptomatic among intellectual and political elites. Successful policy from 1853 to 1905 was accepted as the basis for this claim. From all Asian states, only the Empire of Japan carried out successful modernisation and westernisation process. Moreover, the Japanese army and navy defeated one of the major European powers, thereby breaking the complex of inferiority. The victorious war against the Russian Empire gave the Japanese a sense of power with weak foundations. Many factors stood behind the campaign of 1904–1905, including the weakness of Russia and a favourable alliance with the United Kingdom. Until 1945, the Empire of Japan was suffering from 'victory disease' (*senshōbyō*), which prevented a real assessment of the international situation and the abandonment of plans for the domination of East Asia. A typical manifestation of the lack of political realism was shown in the postulates of Satō, Yoshida, and Tokutomi.

THE JAPANESE COLONIAL EMPIRE

The origins of Japanese imperialism can be dated back to 1895. Under the Treaty of Shimonseki (*Shimonseki jōyaku*), which ended the First Sino-Japanese War, the Empire of Japan took control over Taiwan, Pescadores, and the western part of the Liaodong Peninsula along with all fortifications, arsenals and public property. The most important condition, however, concerned the guarantee of Korea's independence. Due to its location on the map, according to German advisors in Tokyo, the Korean Peninsula was a natural dagger aimed at Japan.⁷ This conviction was later a geopolitical dogma of Japanese governments wishing to prevent any power from interfering in Korea's affairs.

The Treaty of Shimonseki, notably Japan's first great diplomatic success, was crucial for the entire region and soon led to the intervention of France, Russia, and Germany. European powers shared the same anxiety of breaking the balance in Northern China. In April 1895, they forced Japan to relinquish the Liaodong Peninsula in return for appropriate compensation.⁸ This interference also had a negative impact on the Japanese plans to establish a protectorate in Korea. In June 1895, the pro-Japanese cabinet of Hong-jip Kim collapsed.⁹ Hitherto, concerning the Korean policy, the Japanese negotiated all questions with the Russians who had their own interests in neighbouring Manchuria.

Although the primary goal of the First Sino-Japanese War was to resolve the issue of supremacy over Korea, the brilliant victories over the Chinese army and navy opened the possibility for the creation of a Japanese colonial empire in East Asia, which could follow the British, French or Dutch example.¹⁰ Particular attention was paid by

⁷ P. Duus, *The Abacus and the Sword: The Japanese Penetration of Korea*, Berkeley 1998, p. 124–125.

⁸ The issue of returning the Liaodong Peninsula was regulated by a separate Sino-Japanese treaty which was signed in Beijing on 8 November 1895. *Hōten Hantō kampu jōyaku* [Treaty for returning the Liaodong Peninsula], (jacar.go.jp/english/nichiro/laiodong.htm, access: 19 December 2018).

⁹ S.Ō, *Kankoku heigō e no michi* [The Road to Annex Korea], Tōkyō 2012, p. 163–165.

¹⁰ There is no evidence that at the time of the war's declaration the Japanese government directly aimed at conquering any Chinese territory. The annexation of Taiwan and other lands was encouraged by the weakness of

the Japanese government to cede Taiwan. After carrying out appropriate industrial investments, administrative, economic and agricultural reforms and the adoption of Japanese culture, the island was supposed to be a model example of effective management of dependent territories and integration with the metropolis.¹¹ The transition to the model of the colonial empire would not be possible without the previous three decades of intense modernisation and extension of power over 'no man's land' lying in the close neighbourhood – Hokkaidō, Kuril, Ryūkyū, and the Ogasawara (Bonin) Islands. The subjugation of lands traditionally belonging to the Japanese cultural sphere and the determination of ethnic boundaries was, according to M.R. Peattie, a process similar to the formation of national consciousness in Europe in the 19th century.¹²

Western historians agree that Japanese imperialism began when the Japanese moved beyond the ethnic boundaries of their own state and extended their rule over Korea and Taiwan. However, the process and causes of the creation of the Japanese colonial empire were not identical with analogous examples of the activities of Great Britain, France or the Netherlands. In the case of Europeans, the driving force of 19th-century colonialism was mainly providing markets for goods produced in the metropolis. The motives for Japan's expansion remain much more complex. In addition to the security of the market for the growing industry, it is also necessary to consider the international prestige for the modernising state, as well as an attempt to solve the overpopulation problem. Observing the high birth rate in Japan, J.H. Richards predicted that: "(...) At the present rate of increase, there will, before the middle of this century, be a hundred million people to provide for. It is this prospect which is leading Japanese statesmen to make such frantic efforts to secure opportunity for colonisation. Being practically shut off from going to other foreign countries, and Formosa being already largely occupied, Japan would naturally look to Korea and Manchuria; but of these places Korea would afford only partial relief, both because of its limited area and of its present population. The northern region of Manchuria, however, is still almost as much in a state of nature as were the prairies of the Mississippi Valley when the Indians roamed freely over them."¹³

Victory over China did not solve the problem of supremacy over Korea. The Japanese-Russian peculiar 'dual power' over the peninsula did not satisfy both nations. In March 1898, the Russians obtained the consent of the Chinese government for a 25-year lease of the Liaodong Peninsula along with Port Arthur and Dalien, which became the first ice-free ports of the Russian navy in the Far East¹⁴. It was a clear blow to Japan, which

the rival and lack of opposition from the European powers. The Japanese press also had a significant influence on the final shape of the Treaty of Shimoneki. Newspaper journalists put pressure on the most favorable conditions for Japan, relaying news of great victories on the battlefield. See W.G. Beasley, *Japanese Imperialism 1894–1945*, Oxford 1999, p. 55.

¹¹ E. Pastreich, *Sovereignty, Wealth, Culture and Technology: Mainland China and Taiwan Grapple with the Parameters of 'Nation State' in the 21st Century*, HAOL 7/2005, p. 59.

¹² M.R. Peattie, *The Japanese Colonial Empire 1895–1945*, in: *The Cambridge History of Japan*, Vol. 6, Cambridge 1988, p. 224.

¹³ *The Nation*, vol. 74, New York 1902, p. 187.

¹⁴ "Russko-kitayskaya konventsia", in: *Sbornik dogovorov Rossii s drugimi gosudarstvami* ["Russian-Chinese Convention"], in: *Collection of Treaties of Russia with Other States. 1856–1917*, Moscow 1952, p. 309–312.

was removed from these lands less than three years ago by the Tripartite intervention. The Japanese-Russian agreement signed in April 1898 confirmed the status quo in Korea only for a few years.¹⁵ The formula proposed by Prime Minister Hirobumi Itō to delimit Manchuria in Russian and Korea in the Japanese sphere of influence (*Mankan kōkan*) was not very popular.¹⁶ The Russian decision-makers did not intend to hand over Korea to the Japanese, fearing to cut off the bases on the Liaodong Peninsula. Tokyo's ambitions also went much beyond Korea. During that time, the United States annexed the Philippines and Hawaii inhabited by a large Japanese minority. Those events put an end to dreams about the domination of Japan in the Pacific Ocean.¹⁷

The tension associated with Japan's policy in Korea finally led to the outbreak of war with Russia, which was decisive for the future of the region. Between 1904 and 1905, the Japanese managed not only to achieve a series of land and sea victories, but also to expose the weakness of the Eastern-European Empire, which plunged into an internal revolution. The Treaty of Portsmouth signed in September 1905 proved to be the greatest success of Japanese diplomacy in history. In addition to the small territorial acquisitions in Sakhalin, the Japanese have managed to extend their sphere of influence over the entire Korea, enforce the demilitarisation of Manchuria, obtain an additional zone for fisheries and establish military bases on the Liaodong Peninsula. On October 14, the Russian Empire ratified the treaty and until 1939 it did not contest the Japanese actions in the Far East.¹⁸

The alliance with Great Britain was the driving force for further foreign policy of Japan. With the protection of London and the consent of the United States, in 1910 the cabinet led to the annexation of Korea, which, along with Formosa, became an integral part of the Japanese colonial empire.¹⁹ The outbreak of the First World War was another opportunity for the Japanese to expand its sphere of influence. Although the army only played a secondary role during the conflict, the Japanese diplomats participated in the Versailles negotiations as one of the five victorious powers. The contribution applied to the management of the Mandate of the South Pacific (Nan'yō), which consisted of several thousand civilisationally backward islands, however, their strategic position could not be ignored. The Navy understood the significance of naval bases in the Pacific Ocean in the scope of a potential conflict with the United States. Therefore, throughout the inter-war period, the Japanese government carried out extensive colonisation.²⁰ The arrival

¹⁵ *Nishi-Rōzenkyōtei* [Nishi-Rosen Agreement], (jacar.go.jp/nichiro/incident.htm, access: 17 December 2018).

¹⁶ *Nihon gaikō – 1853–1972* [Japanese Diplomacy – 1853–1972], ed. S. Shinobu, Tōkyō 1975, p. 205; H. Kuroiwa, *Nichiro sensō: Shōri no ato no gosan* [The Russo-Japanese War. Wrong Calculation after the Victory], Tōkyō 2005, p. 10.

¹⁷ J. Stephan, *Hawaii under the Rising Sun. Japan's Plans for Conquest after Pearl Harbor*, Honolulu 2002, p. 18.

¹⁸ M. Inoki, *Gunkoku Nihon no kōbō: Nisshin sensō kara Nichū sensō e* [The Rise and Fall of the Japanese Army: From the First to the Second Sino-Japanese War], Tōkyō 1995, p. 56–64.

¹⁹ *Kankoku heigō ni kansuru jōyaku* (Korea Annexation Treaty), (archives.go.jp/ayumi/kobetsu/m43_1910_01.html, access: 12 March 2019).

²⁰ The population of Micronesia increased from 4,000 in 1920 to over 80,000 in 1933, while the Japanese population itself in 1935 was over 50,000. See M.R. Peattie, *Nan'yo: The Rise and Fall of the Japanese in Micronesia, 1885–1945*, Hawaii 1988, p. 155. The census of December 1939 proved 129,000 inhabitants, including 77,000

of settlers was accompanied by numerous investments in agriculture, infrastructure, education, health care, and military facilities. In the 1930s, the economy of Micronesia was based on sugar cane, which accounted for approximately 60% of the income of the whole colony.²¹ Some islands in the Pacific also had extremely valuable phosphates which were used to produce fertilisers.

In the years 1868–1919, the Empire of Japan from the feudal state became one of the most important colonial powers in the world. Territorial gains acquired by Tokyo were internationally recognised and treated as the natural sphere of influence. When assessing Japanese foreign policy, it seems important that the cabinet was not only seeking broad acceptance but also be consistent the interests of the United Kingdom and the United States in the Far East. In 1930, the Japanese Empire included not only proper Japan, but also Korea, Taiwan, South Sakhalin and the Pacific Islands. Emperor Shōwa ruled over a vast territory inhabited by over 91 million people.²² By comparison, in 1867, when Emperor Meiji took the throne, Japan did not secure its administration even on neighbouring Hokkaidō and the Ryūkyū Islands.

In 1931, a new era in the history of the Empire of Japan began. On September 18, the Kwantung Army (Kantōgun) provoked an incident in Mukden, which led to the escalation of military operations outside the barracks of Chinese border guards. By the end of February 1932, the Japanese managed to occupy all of Manchuria and soon established the puppet government of Manchukuo. The aggression was condemned throughout the world and resulted in the fading of the policy of an open door to China. The Tokyo cabinet did not condemn action of the Kwantung Army, accepted the policy of *fait accompli*, and established an official administration over conquered land. The Lytton Commission, established by the League of Nations, published a report in October 1932, which pointed to the unlawfulness of the Japanese army's operations.²³ Japan's foreign ministry attempted to convince the international community but failed to obtain the recognition of the armed occupation of Manchuria. In response to the relentless attitude of the colonial powers, on 27 March 1933, the Empire of Japan left the League of Nations as part of the protest. According to the cabinet, it was the right step that allowed for the unhampered achievement of its own strategic plans in East Asia.

The conquest of Manchuria would not have been possible without China's weakness resulting from the civil war. The ambitions of the Japanese, however, went much further. In the mid-1930s, the dominant ideological concept in foreign policy was based on the conviction about the superiority of Japan over other Asian countries. China was to be completely subordinated and included in the Japanese sphere of influence as part of a larger political and economic bloc. Every nation of East Asia was to recognise Japanese leadership. This view is more widely known in the form of the *hakkō ichiu* doctrine,

Japanese. 9. *Kai Nan'yō chō tōkeinenkan, Shōwa 14-nen*. [*Shōwa 14-year Nan'yō Governmental Census*], <https://www.digital.archives.go.jp/das/image/M2006033121452945009>, access: 20 March 2019.

²¹ R.H. Myers, M.R. Peattie, *The Japanese Colonial Empire, 1895–1945*, Princeton 1984, p. 194.

²² Calculations based on censuses carried out in individual territories of the empire.

²³ *The Report of the Lytton Commission*, Columbia 1932.

which literally meant “the collection of the eight horns of the world under one roof”.²⁴ This idea was especially popular among the younger officers of the Kwantung Army, who were keen supporters of the independent solution by the armed forces of the ‘Chinese problem’. The final clash with the Chinese, however, was to take place under completely different circumstances. The tense situation between the two countries remained over the years. When the Japanese managed to gather the appropriate forces for the next actions on the border, the skirmish on the Marco Polo bridge turned into a conflict that lasted for the next eight years.²⁵

THE NEW ORDER

The outbreak of The Second Sino-Japanese war in July 1937 and the escalation of land operations against Chiang Kai-shek’s troops forced the imperial cabinet to justify the policy of aggression in front of masses.²⁶ When it turned out that the Imperial Japanese Army (Nippon Rikugun) will not terminate the war with China in a few months, on 3 November 1938 Prime Minister Prince Fumimaro Konoe announced a public declaration entitled *New Order in Greater East Asia* (Tōa Shinchitsujo).

In ideological terms, it was primarily a document of anti-communist and pan-Asian character.²⁷ Although the text did not directly refer to any specific state, it is transparent that the main enemy of Japan was not the Republic of China, but the Soviet Union and all political parties based on communist doctrine, especially the Chinese Communist Party. As indicated in the New Order, the strategic goal of Japanese foreign policy was to ensure the unification of Japan, China and Manchuria. All states were supposed to establish close political, economic and cultural cooperation. The imperial cabinet promised the Chinese people to bring the internal order and universal prosperity that could only be achieved by establishing a new order. Each country was responsible for implementing the political and economic order but the most important role in this process was to be attributed to the strongest Japan. The document also stresses that only the combined Japanese-Chinese-Manchurian forces will be able to exert an appropriate influence on the development of the international community.²⁸

The publication of The New Order did not have a major impact on the ongoing military operations in China. The good will declared by the imperial cabinet contrasted with the crimes that Japanese soldiers committed on Chinese civilians. The real attitude of the Japanese to the Chinese and cooperation on an equal footing was brutally demon-

²⁴ K. Chisaka, *Sekaikakumei to shite no hakkō ichiu, Shissō to shite no fashizumu*, Tōkyō 2015.

²⁵ Office of Strategic Services Research and Analysis Branch, *The Greater East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere*, 10 August 1945: Current Intelligence Study Number 35.

²⁶ K. Yoshii, *Tōa Shinchitsujo Seimei no myakuraku*, Jim'mon Kagaku Kenkyū, vol. 129/2011, p. 20–21.

²⁷ M. Nakao, *Daitōa Kyōeiken kōsō no naritachi to kokueki* (*The Concept of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere and the National Interests*), Nihon Daigaku Daikagui Sōgō Shakai Jōhō Kenkyūka 9/2008.

²⁸ *Tōa Shinchitsujo*, *Tōa Shinchitsujo Yoron* (dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/1274449, access: 03 March 2019).

strated in Nanjing with the massacre committed on the residents of the capital.²⁹ With the conquest of other cities, the Japanese army faced the problem of the occupation and organisation of political life in China, which according to the *hakkō ichiu* doctrine were to become one of the countries belonging to the Japanese sphere of influence. The limited resources of Japan, however, prevented the simultaneous military operations and effective control over the Chinese lands. Until the end of 1938, the Japanese engaged in China about 1.5 million soldiers who in less than eighteen months conquered an area of over 1.8 million square kilometres inhabited by about 170 million people – almost three times more than proper Japan at that time.³⁰ The actual control of the Japanese army over China was limited to the most important cities, railway lines and junctions. The situation was completely different in Manchuria. Despite some attacks of Korean and Chinese armed groups, the Kwantung Army effectively guaranteed internal security, as reported in the police reports.³¹

The German victory in the French campaign in June 1940 opened a whole spectrum of new opportunities for expansion in East Asia for the Japanese cabinet. Although the Dutch queen and government evacuated to London, from where they continued the war with the Reich, the formation of Vichy's government completely changed the political situation on the Indochina Peninsula.

Originally Japan did not intend to take over the French colony, but the total war in China forced the army to seek an alternative strategy. Chiang Kai-shek's forces in the southern provinces were to be subjected to additional pressure by air strikes and army raids from bases in North Indochina. The opening of the French military facilities for the Japanese army was secured by the Matsuoka-Arsène-Henry Agreement concluded on 30 August. The Japanese government recognised French sovereignty in Indochina and committed itself to respect their territorial integrity. Following this fact, France acknowledged the domination of Japan in the Far East and agreed to lease military facilities to the Japanese army in order to solve the 'Chinese incident'. Military facilities were to be made available only in provinces along the border with China. The 'lending' of these bases was not meant to be a military occupation.³²

On 22 September, the French also signed the military part of the agreement. The Japanese obtained the right to use three airports in Tonkin and deploy 6,000 soldiers in the vicinity of military facilities. Due to the insubordination of some officers, the Japanese army launched an uncontrolled advance to Lang Son in Northern Indochina. Until 25 September, the imperial cabinet, however, completely mastered the crisis. The

²⁹ The dispute over the actual number of victims of the Nanking massacre and the official recognition of it as genocide continues to this day. Depending on the source, the victims of Japanese soldiers were from 27,000 to 300,000 civil inhabitants of Nanjing. See B.T. Wakabayashi, *The Nanking Atrocity, 1937–38: Complicating the Picture*, New York 2008, p. 362; the Chinese point of view: Z. Sun, *Lünnánjīng dàtúshā yùnnàn rénsù rěndìng de lishiyǎnbìan*, „Jianghai Academic Journal” 2001 (6); the Japanese point of view based on combat logs of individual units of the army: Nankin Senshi Henshū Iinkan, *Nankin Senshi: Sōho kaiteihan*, Tōkyō 1993, p. 342–343.

³⁰ H.P. Willmott, *Empires in the Balance: Japanese and Allied Pacific Strategies to April 1942*, Annapolis 2008, p. 53–55.

³¹ JACAR Ref. B13081260200, *Manshū ni okeru kyōsan undō kinjō* [Present communist activities in Manchuria].

³² J. Valette, *Indochine 1940–1945: Français contre Japonais*, Paris 1993, p. 63–65.

Lang Son incident eventually ended with the normalization of Japanese-French relations, the introduction of both treaties, and the purge among officers involved in military aggression.³³

The Japanese Foreign Ministry also attempted to secure the Dutch East Indies against British and American occupation. By the end of May, the Japanese navy had moved strong task force to Palau to prevent unrestrained US Navy intervention. The cabinet also made efforts to tighten the economy of the Dutch colony with Japan. In October, Kobayashi's mission was sent to Batavia to sign a trade treaty that guarantees supplies of at least 3.1 million tons of crude oil per year. The local government replied with only 1 million and the Japanese delegates returned to Tokyo without any agreement.³⁴

THE OFFICIAL DECLARATION

On 1 August 1940, the Japanese press published the Official Declaration of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. Its author and an ideological advocate was the Minister of Foreign Affairs Yosuke Matsuoka.³⁵ The declaration was based in large part on the document adopted by the Konoe's cabinet on 26 July, which was entitled *The fundamental basis of national policy (Kihon kokusaku yōkō)*.³⁶ In addition to close adoption of the kokutai policy, the declaration emphasised the creation of a single political and economic bloc including Japan, Madura and China.³⁷

The announcement of the Official Declaration of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere was in line with the policy of the cabinet, which informed the public about the most important goals in the mass media. For editorial and ideological reasons, the Declaration was divided into the introduction and two main sections, which were specific program guidelines.

The introduction of the Declaration was a doctrinal outline to the idea of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. The author made a reference emphasising the ongoing formation of new forms of government, economic system and cultures, which was to be dictated by the rapid economic growth of some countries. Japan was supposed to be at a crossroads for the first time in its history. Thanks to the beneficial economic growth, the Japanese government assumed a fundamental reform of the system of governance and state structures in order to implement the policy of 'national defence'.

The establishment of world peace in the spirit of the *hakkō ichiu* concept, which, according to the author of the declaration, was the basis for the creation and existence of Japan, was indicated as the most important priority of the official policy. The new

³³ L. Sobolewski, *Indochiny Francuskie w polityce Japonii w latach 1940–1945*, Warszawa 2011, p. 100–119.

³⁴ H.J. van Mook, *The Netherlands, Indies and Japan: Their Relations 1940–1941*, New York 2011, p. 44–46.

³⁵ JACAR Ref. C12120084200, 1. Kihon koku saku yōto 26.07.1940–01.08.1940 Nichi Shimbun Happyō [The general outline of state policy from 26 July 1940 to 01 August 1940 Nichi Shimbun Publication].

³⁶ JACAR Ref. B02030544700, 15. Kihon kokusaku yōtō (26 July 1940 Kakugi Kitei).

³⁷ M.A. Piegzik, *U źródeł japońskiego nacjonalizmu i militarizmu: doktryna kokutai w życiu politycznym Cesarstwa Japonii w latach 1867–1945*, "Studia nad Autorytaryzmem i Totalitaryzmem" 2018, 40/2, pp. 27–58.

order in Great East Asia was to function based on solidarity between Japan, China and Manchukuo. Carrying out these assumptions, the Japanese was to fully mobilize and create an organism that would allow to take up new challenges in the internal and foreign affairs.

The second section, titled “National defence and foreign policy”, contained several guidelines which were to enable the formation of a Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. The cabinet was to strive primarily for: (1) repletion of armaments adequate for the execution of the national policies, by taking into consideration the new developments both at home and abroad, and constructing a state structure for national defence, capable of bringing into full play the total strength of the nation; (2) the national defence, capable of making full use of the nation’s potential. Japanese foreign policy, whose main goal was described as “the construction of a new order in Great East Asia”, was to set towards a complete settlement of ‘China Affair’ and promoting Japanese interests, considering the international situation and using all available means.

The government was to take the following steps to fully implement the Asian policy as well as promote national interests:

a) complex education reform in line with the basic principles of national policy, establishing the ethical principles of the nation, emphasising the service to the state and the eradication of all selfish and materialistic thoughts;

b) the establishment of a new political system and uniform control over government affairs in three levels:

– the establishment of a new social structure based on cooperation between the government and people,

– reform and adjustment of the parliament as a supporting institution for the emperor,

– fundamental changes in administrative offices in order to unite and increase their efficiency.

The development of the economy of Japan, Manchukuo and China was to be based on the following measures with Japan as the centre:

a) Establishment of a sphere of co-operative economies, with the Japan-Manchoukuo-China group as one of the units.

b) Inauguration of a planned economy through the co-operation between the government and the people, and especially the perfection of a unitary control system covering the production, distribution and consumption of important commodities.

c) Establishment of a financial scheme and reinforcement of banking control, directed toward the development of the nation’s total economic power.

d) Renovation of the foreign trade policy so as to adapt it to the new world situation.

e) Establishment of the measures for self-sufficiency in the people’s daily necessities, especially in the principal foodstuffs.

f) An epoch-making expansion of the vital industries – especially heavy, chemical and machine industries.

g) An epoch-making promotion of science, and rationalisation of production.

h) Perfection and extension of the communication and transportation facilities to adapt them to the new developments at home and abroad.

i) Establishment of land development plans, aiming at the enhancement of the total national strength.

j) Inauguration of permanent measures concerning the promotion of the stamina and physical strength of the nation, and especially the fundamental measures concerning the security and development of agriculture and agricultural communities.

k) Rectification of the inequality in individual sacrifices incident to the execution of national policies; full operation of various welfare measures, and renovation of the living mode of the nation, and the maintenance of such standard of living as will enable the nation to lead a plain, solid and vigorous life and to surmount the national crisis by persevering truly through years of hardship.

The implementation of the assumptions of the Official Declaration took place on two levels. On 30 November 1940, the Japanese government concluded the Basic Cooperation Treaty with Wang Jingwei (the President of the Reorganized National Government of the Republic of China).³⁸ The treaty aimed at reviewing the existing arrangements (primarily the Maritime Trade Treaty of 1896) and legitimising the deployment of Japanese troops on the Chinese territory. Both parties agreed to the need to maintain friendly relations, close economic cooperation and, above all, to fight the communist movement.³⁹ On the same day, the government of Manchuria, the observer of the talks, signed the Declaration of Cooperation, which confirmed all the above-mentioned principles, which were considered the most important goals of all three countries. Establishing a new political and economic body in East Asia, however, did not solve the two most important problems of the Empire of Japan: the prolonging war with Chiang Kai-shek and the lack of strategic natural resources that guaranteed independence from the Western powers.⁴⁰

In January 1941, the cabinet sent Yoshizawa's mission to the capital of the Dutch East Indies trying to settle the agreement to supply the crude oil. In fact, the Japanese insisted not only on increasing the scope of trade, but also on granting special mining concessions to Japanese companies, exemption from tax, opening territorial waters for fishing and establishing a free air transport with Japan. Even though the Dutch were willing to agree to some of the points, the advanced talks were interrupted in June for political reasons.⁴¹ Failure in diplomacy convinced the cabinet that the only way to pursue their own economic interests is using military force.

The Japanese predicted many successes in the military and political affairs, but the following months did not bring the expected end of the conflict with China. According to the army, the reason for this was insufficient involvement in the isolation of Chiang Kai-shek's forces on the southern front. On 2 July 1941, during the conference in front of the Emperor, the Japanese adopted an action plan that assumed the establishment of

³⁸ The government was established in March 1940 in order to attract all the opponents of Chiang Kai-shek regime and the weakening of Chinese resistance by promising the future equality of both countries.

³⁹ Nihon Koku Chūkamin Koku aida kihon kankei ni kansuru jōyaku [Treaty of basic relations between Japan and China] (dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/2960671/1, access: 03 March 2019).

⁴⁰ Nichimanka Kyōdō Sengen [Joint Japanese-Manchurian-Chinese Declaration] (dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/2960671/1, access: 03 March 2019).

⁴¹ H.J. van Mook, *The Netherlands...*, pp. 46–66.

the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere and 'world peace' (sekai heiwa) regardless of any political obstacles. The plan provided for obtaining permission from France to enter Japanese troops into Southern Indochina.⁴² Moreover, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs took initiative to bring Thailand into its own sphere of influence.

On 14 July, the Japanese ambassador in the Vichy state Sotomatsu Katō presented the requests to accept the entry of Japanese troops into Southern Indochina and the provision of eight airport and sea bases in Saigon and Camrahn to the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, admiral François Darlan. On the other hand, Japan committed to maintain the territorial integrity of the French colony and its defence in the event of the British-inspired unrest supporters of general De Gaulle. On 21 July, Darlan took the demands of the Japanese under great pressure. Both parties had clarified all details of the agreement that was officially signed on 29 July.⁴³

Even before publishing a public statement about the Darlan-Katō agreement, the American press informed that with the consent of the Vichy state, the Japanese would land in Saigon by the end of the week and occupy the most important naval and air bases in the southern part of the French Indochina. This event was directly described establishing the protectorate over the French colony. In response to the 'agreement' between Vichy and Tokyo, the United States officially stated that they would not take military steps until the other party goes beyond the points covered by the contract. The American administration, however, did not exclude economic sanctions and in the evening, it froze all Japanese assets in the US market. A day later, all Japanese assets were either frozen by Canada and the Philippines, on 27 July by the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand, and on 28 July by the Dutch East Indies, while simultaneously imposing an embargo on the export of oil, aluminium and rubber. Ignoring the clear warning from the Allies, in the evening of 28 July, the soldiers of the Japanese 25th Army landed in Nha Trang, and 24 hours later in Saigon what was well ahead of the agreed time schedule.

Due to the lack of any response in the Indochina case and their ongoing 'occupation', on 1 August, the United States imposed an embargo on oil exports to Japan. Four days later, the British parliament also approved a ban on the sale of fuels of various types to Japan. The Japanese, treating the Allies' decision as an attack aimed at the sovereignty of their country, also froze all assets of the United States, Great Britain, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, the Philippines and the Dutch East Indies. It was only a symbolic response. At the turn of July and August 1941, the armed forces and the economy of Japan were completely cut off from supplies of strategic raw materials and found themselves in a situation that required immediate reaction.

The negotiations held in autumn did not bring any solution in the relations with the United States. The imposed trade embargo revealed the greatest weakness of the Japanese colonial empire, which was the dependence on the supply of strategic raw materials, in particular, crude oil, rubber and steel. Without finding an additional source of supply,

⁴² JACAR Ref. C12120183800, Jōsei no sui'i ni tomo teikoku kokusaku yōtō 02.07.1941 [General Outline of the Change of the Current State Policy from 02 July 1941].

⁴³ P. Franchini, *Les mensonges de la guerre d'Indochine*, Paris 2005, p. 22.

the Japanese economy was to collapse, while the army and navy would be completely immobilised in the next two years.⁴⁴ Most of these problems could be solved by conquering the Dutch East India and Malaysia, which then produced the raw materials essential for the Japanese economy. Opting for a war with the United States, the main goal of the cabinet was planning to secure the so-called 'Southern area' (Nampō) and form Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. It was a common belief that the region is rich in oil, rubber, tin, coal, iron ore, bauxite, copper, manganese, lead, zinc, chrome, tungsten, mercury, bismuth, and antimony, which should be exploited.⁴⁵ The Japanese have also strongly emphasised the ideological aspects of the future war, promising to Asian nations the removal of the influence of Europeans and Americans and set the right to free development.

The early successes of the Japanese army and navy in the first months of the conflict encouraged the cabinet to declare the ideological goals of the ongoing war. On 21 February 1942, the Japanese published an act entitled *The Council for the Construction of Great East Asia (Daitōa Kensetsu Shingikai)*. It consisted of twelve points and established a body responsible for implementing the concept of Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. Its chairman was the Prime Minister General Hideki Tōjō.⁴⁶ Despite the clearly declared will to immediately set up a new bloc of states under the leadership of Japan, the implementation of the plan largely depended on the outcome of operations on the Pacific War. However, this did not prevent Japanese decision-makers from planning the future division of the world and extensive colonisation.⁴⁷ In December 1941 the cabinet approved a document entitled *Land Disposal Plan in the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere*, which assumed the creation of the Great Empire of Japan and several puppet states.⁴⁸ The Great Empire of Japan was to include Government-General of Formosa, South Seas Government Office, Melanesian Government-General or South Pacific Government-General, Eastern Pacific Government-General, Australian Government-General, New Zealand Government-General, Ceylon Government-General and Alaska Government-General. Some countries were supposed to get the limited sovereignty: Manchukuo, Mengjiang (Outer Mongolia), Republic of China, East Indies Kingdom, State of Burma, Kingdom of Malaya, Kingdom of Cambodia, Kingdom of Annam and Empire of Vietnam. The Ministry of War in its plans was acting accordingly to the agreement with the Nazi Germany in which both parties delimited zones of influence along the 70th meridian east longitude.⁴⁹

⁴⁴ H.P. Willmott, *Empires in the Balance...*, p. 69–71.

⁴⁵ J. Mimura, *Japan's New Order and Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere: Planning for Empire*, "The Asia-Pacific Journal" 9/2011, pp. 1–12.

⁴⁶ JACAR Ref. A03022699500, Daitōa Kensetsu Shingikai Kansei [Organisation of the Counsel Building Greater East Asia]; JACAR Ref. C12120393500, Daitōa Kensetsu Kihon Hōsaku [Basic Policy of Building Greater East Asia].

⁴⁷ C.A. Fisher, *The Expansion of Japan: A Study in Oriental Geopolitics: Part II. The Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere*, "The Geographical Journal" 1950, vol. 115, no. 4/6, pp. 179–193.

⁴⁸ I. Hata, *Nichibeisensō shidō 1941–1943* [Leadeing the American-Japanese War in 1941–1943], (nids.mod.go.jp/event/forum/pdf/2009/03.pdf, access: 20 March 2019).

⁴⁹ G.L. Weinberg, *Visions of Victory: The Hopes of Eight World War II Leaders*, Cambridge 2005, p. 27–35.

By the end of May 1942, Japan had conquered vast areas of Southeast Asia including Hong-Kong, the Philippines, the Dutch East India, the Malaysian Peninsula with Singapore, most of Burma, and the part of the Australian New Guinea. The Japanese fleet and army were advancing in all directions, but their resources proved insufficient to defeat the Allies. The Japanese have introduced the military administration, which supervised the exploitation of natural resources. The army was not interested in cooperating with local independence activists, who were treated only instrumentally. The concept of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere meant in practice the change of colonial administration over the conquered nations. The population of the Dutch East Indies and the Malaysian Peninsula has particularly felt the rabble policy and in 1942 both countries became an integral part of the great war machine.

THE GREATER EAST ASIA CONFERENCE

The unfavourable events of the war forced Japan to change its policy towards the conquered nations of East Asia. The occupation of former European colonies proved to be short-sighted and led to the involvement of enormous resources to ensure the unhampered exploitation of valuable natural resources. In the second half of 1943, the idea of granting strictly limited sovereignty to some Asiatic nations became popular and supported by the cabinet ministers. The price for the own governments was close collaboration with Japan and subordination to its war objectives. In August 1943, a formally independent State of Burma was formed, and more than two months later, the Second Republic of the Philippines. In fact, both countries were still completely controlled by the Japanese army, whose representatives participated in all decision-making processes. Formal independence was intended to be used as a propaganda on the frontline of the ideological struggle.

Between 5 and 6 November 1943, the Conference of Great East Asia (*Daitōa Kaigi*) was held. Since it took place in Tokyo, it is also known as the Tokyo Conference (*Tōkyō Kaigi*). The immediate reason for calling an official meeting at international level was the need to maintain order in the occupation sphere that resulted from the clearly deteriorating situation of the Empire of Japan on most fronts of the Pacific War.⁵⁰ Although the main goal of the Greater East Asia Conference was only to strengthen the current pan-Asian policy of Japan, puppet states treated it as a unique opportunity to gain autonomy in internal affairs.

The representatives of Asian nations landed at specially shared Haneda airport. After being transported to the city centre, they were accommodated in the exclusive Imperial Hotel and treated with extraordinary respect. The government hired the famous actress

⁵⁰ The decision on the organisation of the conference with representatives of conquered Asian states was made on 31 May 1943 at a conference in front of the emperor. JACAR C12120193700, *Daitōa Seiryaku Shidō Taikō* [Fundamental Principles of Leading the Greater East Asia], T. Fuwa, *Koko ni „Rekishi kyōkasho” mondai kakushin ga aru*, Tōkyō 2001, p. 22.

and singer, Mieko Takamine, who took part at the first joint meeting in the evening. Although the Conference was scheduled to start only on 5 November, the day before the representatives took part in an audience at the Imperial Palace, where they probably met Hirohito for the first time. The next day, at 10 a.m., the Daitōa Kaigi talks were officially opened in the main parliament building.

The imperial government was represented in the conference by the Prime Minister general Hideki Tōjō, supported by a team of translators headed by Masakatsu Hamamoto. The Empire of Manchukuo delegated the Prime Minister, Zhang Jighuia, who had been in office since May 1935 and was a politician trusted by the Japanese. The Reorganised National Government of the Republic of China was represented by President Wang Jingwei. The State of Burma sent its highest representative to Tokyo, Ba Mawa, who took office on 1 August 1943. The Provisional Government of India was represented by Radom Subhas Chandra Bose, the former President of the Indian National Congress, and an advocate of close cooperation with the Axis. Bose, however, participated in the meeting as an observer, because India was the only collaborating state that was not under Japanese occupation.⁵¹ The second Philippine Republic was represented by its president, an acclaimed lawyer and senator, José P. Laurel. The Kingdom of Thailand, which only recognised the leading role of the Empire of Japan and formally remained an independent state, sent Prince Wan Waithayacon. His diplomatic mission to Tokyo was extremely difficult, because he could not make Bangkok completely dependent on Tōjō's policy but also had to avoid any conflict with the Japanese.⁵²

Of all the territories conquered in 1941–1942, no representative of Malaysia or the Dutch East Indies took part in the Greater East Asia Conference. The British and Dutch colonies could not expect partial independence as lands of strategic importance and directly occupied by the Japanese army. In the case of the French Indochina, the Japanese cabinet strictly adhered to the terms of the Darlan-Katō agreement of July 1940, which guaranteed access to the most important military facilities but on the other hand respected the administration of the Vichy in the colony. The Greater East Asia Conference also confirmed the total control over Korea and Taiwan which were treated as an integral part of the Empire of Japan and their interests were represented directly by general Tōjō.

The Greater East Asia Conference concluded with the signing of the so-called Joint Declaration (Daitōa Kyōdō Sengen). Already in the first sentence, the basic principle of cooperation and help was established in order to establish 'world peace' that would enable every nation to live in the right environment, as well as to benefit from the prosperity. The United States and the United Kingdom were indicated as the greatest enemies, and their colonial policy was described as the uncontrollable aggression, economic exploitation of the Eastern Asian nations. The parties agreed that British and Americans

⁵¹ In November 1943, the Japanese army controlled only the Andaman Islands and Nicobar Islands. Most of India's territory was under British administration.

⁵² On 2 December 1941, Japan and Thailand signed an alliance treaty. The Japanese policy towards Thailand (in relation to the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere) was established on 29 September 1942. See W.L. Swan, *Japan's Intentions for Its Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere as It is an Indicated in Thailand Policy*, "Journal of Southeast Asian Studies" 1996, vol. 27, no. 1, pp. 139–149.

shook the stability of the entire continent and were responsible for the outbreak of the Pacific War. All puppet states pledged to cooperate closely to end the war and liberate Great East Asia from Anglo-American domination. The combined actions were to be based on five fundamental principles: (a) a multifaceted cooperation that would ensure stability in the region and allow the establishment of an order based on justice and prosperity; (b) maintaining brotherhood and equality of nations with mutual respect for the sovereignty and guarantee of assistance and friendly relations; (c) tolerance for all traditions and development in the science that will enable to enrich of the civilization of Great East Asia; (d) intensified efforts to achieve rapid economic development through close cooperation and promotion of welfare policy; (e) maintaining friendly relations with other countries in the world, fighting for the abolition of racial discrimination, promoting inter-racial cooperation and open access to natural resources, and contributing to the development of the human species.

The joint declaration essentially contained the political program of the Empire of Japan, and thus the creation of a separate bloc of Asian states, which were to be linked primarily economically, but also ideologically. The United Kingdom and the United States, which at that time had the largest resources of natural resources in the world, were declared as the main enemy. The declaration deliberately omits mention of the dominant role of Japan, which was supposed to create a fiction of partner relations between all countries belonging to Great East Asia. In fact, the whole text of the agreement was previously carefully prepared by the Japanese. The provisions were so general that they did not grant any specific rights to the dependent states but on the other hand they obliged them to cooperate closely with Tokyo. Even the use of the word 'sovereignty' (*jishu dokuritsu*) had its specific context, because it was combined with a guarantee of help and friendly relations. According to general Tōjō, the creation of puppet states (formally separate and having their own private offices) was a sufficient concession from Japan. The real power over the conquered territory was in the hands of the commanders of the Japanese army.

The Greater East Asia Conference should also be assessed in the context of the Ministry of Health and Welfare report published on 1 July 1943. The publication was entitled *An Investigation of Global Policy with the Yamato Race as Nucleus* and had a total of 3,127 pages divided into six volumes. The report included an in-depth analysis of the pan-Asian ideology and postulated the creation of a living space for the Japanese (Yamato people) not only in East Asia, but also in Australia and New Zealand. Although the document did not directly name the Japanese the master race, through numerous metaphors it tried to prove the necessity of submitting all Asians to the emperor of Japan and acknowledging his global leadership. *An Investigation...* distinguished between the concept of race and nationality in a fashion of the Nazi ideology.⁵³ Presenting such views on the future of East Asia, any agreement with puppet states was only a propaganda. The real opinions on the equal cooperation of the nations of East Asia could be illu-

⁵³ *Yamato Minzoku o Chūkaku to suru Sekai Seisaku no Kentō* (*An Investigation of Global Policy with the Yamato Race as Nucleus*), vol. 1–3 (dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/3459892, access: 20 March 2019).

strated by the statement of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, S. Tōgō, who believed that Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere should be understood as the Empire of Japan.⁵⁴

THE FALL OF GREATER EAST ASIA CO-PROSPERITY SPHERE

Starting from 1943, the Japanese army and navy found themselves in a defensive role on all fronts of the Pacific War. The advantage of the Allies was so overwhelming that even an attempt to seek a decisive clash at sea ended in a spectacular defeat in the battle of the Philippine Sea in June 1944. The unavoidable approach of the front to the lands occupied by Japan caused further changes in policy towards occupied nations. On September 7, 1944, the new Prime Minister, Kuniaki Koso, issued a public declaration in which he promised independence of Indonesia in the near future.⁵⁵ In October, the US Navy finally crushed the Nippon Kaigun at the Battle of Leyte and it became clear the American troops will approach the Japanese islands. The Japanese have tried at all costs to prevent the enemy from breaking up the unity in East Asia. On 9 March 1945, the troops stationing in French Indochina broke the terms of the agreement and occupied the entire colony (Operation Bright Moon). Moreover, the eighth year of struggle in China did not bring a definitive solution to the 'Chinese problem'. After a decisive defeat on Okinawa the Japanese began the preparations to repel the enemy's landing on Kyūshū. The main goal of the Ketsu-gō operation was to protect the country from the scenario of unconditional surrender, however, the cabinet gradually grew into the conviction that war must be ended on the most favourable terms. The hopeless international situation was sought through the mediation of the Soviet Union. The lack of response to the Potsdam Declaration led to the Soviet invasion of Manchuria and the dropping of atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. On 15 August, emperor Hirohito officially announced the surrender of Japan. The idea of Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere was abandoned.

After the Second World War, the concept of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere met with consistent criticism. Western and even Japanese historians have emphasised that its only purpose was to ensure the political and economic domination of the Empire of Japan in East Asia. Despite the declared will to build prosperity, in most of the colonies occupied by the army, the situation of the local people significantly deteriorated and led to numerous cases of famine and epidemics.⁵⁶ The reason for this was the plundering policy of the occupation authorities, which was focused on the

⁵⁴ A. Iriye, *Pearl Harbor and the Coming of the Pacific War: a Brief History with Documents and Essays*, Boston 1999, p. 6.

⁵⁵ K. Gotō, *Shoki Indonesia dokuritsu kakumei to Nihon gaikōkan – Saitō Shizuo "Hōkokusho" o megutte* [The Indonesian Revolution as Seen by Japanese Diplomat Saitō Shizuo], "Ajia Taiheiyō Kyōyō" 6/2004, p. 73–85; Y. Tanigawa, *Taiheiyō sensō to Tōnan Ajia minzoku dokuritsu undō* [The Pacific War and South-Eastern Asia Independence Movements], "Hōsei Kenkyū" 3/1987, p. 1–38.

⁵⁶ S. Ara, *Food Supply Problem in Leyte, Philippines, During the Japanese Occupation (1942–44)*, "Journal of Southeast Asian Studies" 39/2008, pp. 59–82; F.K. Danquah, *Japan's Food Farming Policies in Wartime Southeast Asia: The Philippine Example, 1942–1944*, "Agricultural History" 64/1990, pp. 60–80.

war economy and unlimited use of natural resources. In contrast to the studied development strategy of Manchuria and Taiwan, Japanese investments in the Philippines, the Malay Peninsula and in Dutch East India were short-termed and did not improve the living conditions of the local population. Another effect of the occupation was the forced Japanisation of the occupied states whose national cultures were considered as backward and harmful to the general pan-Asian concept⁵⁷.

A slightly more positive assessment of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere was expressed by the Asian independence activists who decided to collaborate with the Empire of Japan. For many of them it was the only chance for an international discussion about the independence of some states of East Asia or even a partial autonomy. The President of the State of Burma, Ba Maw, did not criticise the idea itself, but instead its performers. He blamed the Japanese army officers, who expected from all blind obedience and looking at all problems from the Japanese point of view and thus they led to the collapse of this unconventional doctrine. The Co-Prosperity Sphere could not only fulfil the aspirations of the Japanese at the expense of the of the other nations who were to submit themselves completely to the foreign policy. Ba Maw believed that if the cabinet and the army officers managed to follow the slogan 'Asia for Asians', support for the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere would be much greater⁵⁸. Some authors even suggest that Japan has lost the unique chance to become the 'British Empire of the Far East'⁵⁹.

Regardless of the disputes over the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, it should be noted that the events of 1941–1945 had far-reaching consequences for East Asia. In the end of 1945, the Allies regained control over most of their colonies, but a return to the political situation from before 1941 was not possible. The fierce fight for independence has begun and, inspired by the Japanese pan-Asian doctrine, it turned into the final victory.

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⁵⁷ The populations of Korea, Taiwan, Manchuria and North China have been particularly intensively Japanised, because in the Japanese point of view those lands formed the core of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. See A.J. Grajdanzev, *Japan's Co-Prosperity Sphere*, "Pacific Affairs" 1943, vol. 16, no. 3, pp. 311–328.

⁵⁸ J.C. Lebra, *Japan's Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere in World War II: Selected Readings and Documents*, Kuala Lumpur 1975, p. 157–160.

⁵⁹ C.A. Fisher, *The Expansion of Japan...*

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Japoński plan podbicia Wschodniej Azji – wielka strefa wspólnego dobrobytu we Wschodniej Azji

Artykuł przedstawia rozwój japońskiej doktryny panazjatyckiej zakładającej utworzenie wielkiej strefy wspólnego dobrobytu we Wschodniej Azji. Po okresie izolacji państwa, likwidacji szogunatu Tokugawy i dogłębnych reformach Cesarstwo Wielkiej Japonii wyrosło na głównego gracza na arenie międzynarodowej. Wchodząc w okres rewolucji przemysłowej, Japonia zaczęła rywalizować z mocarstwami kolonialnymi o wpływy we Wschodniej Azji, co doprowadziło w ostateczności do otwartego konfliktu w latach 1937–1945. Ze względu na złożone założenia ideologiczne, gospodarcze, społeczne i kulturowe leżące u podstaw koncepcji utworzenia niezależnego bloku wyzwolonych państw azjatyckich pod przewodnictwem Cesarstwa Wielkiej Japonii idea ta nie doczekała się kontynuacji w najnowszej historii Dalekiego Wschodu, wywierając znaczący wpływ na dalszy proces dekolonizacji.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE

wielka strefa wspólnego dobrobytu we Wschodniej Azji, imperializm Japonii

The Japanese Plan to Dominate East Asia – the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere

The article presents the historical evolution of the Japanese pan-Asian doctrine in the form of Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. After breaking the state isolation, overthrowing the Tokugawa shogunate and thorough reforms, the Empire of Japan has become a major player in the international arena. Entering the era of the industrial revolution, the Japanese started the rivalry with the colonial powers for domination in East Asia, thus finally leading to open hostilities in 1937–1945. Due to complicated ideological, legal, economic, social and cultural foundations of the concept of creating an independent bloc of liberated Asian countries under the leadership of the Empire of Japan, it was a unique idea in the modern history of Far East that had a huge impact on further decolonialisation.

KEYWORDS

Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, Japanese imperialism

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