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### THE GREATER EAST ASIA CO-PROSPERITY SPHERE

Japanese spokesmen have variously described the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere (GEA) as "an international order based upon common prosperity" and as a device for "the development of the Japanese race." These expressions of high idealism and frank opportunism represent the range of motivation behind the establishment and administration of the GEA. Japanese scholars, businessmen, and Army leaders have injected into the GEA both the traditional Japanese symbolism of *hakko ichiu*, "the eight corners of the world beneath one roof," and the militarists' pragmatic policy of armed expansion. This fusion of motivations finds its fullest expression in the present war in the Pacific, which the Japanese have named the "holy war," or the "Greater East Asia War." Through their insistence that Japanese soldiers are fighting for the establishment of a new order in Greater East Asia, the official spokesmen have linked success for the GEA with victory for the Japanese Army. Japan's military defeat will necessarily involve the immediate failure of the GEA program, the effectiveness of which already had been limited by the underlying divergence of purpose between its idealistic and opportunistic supporters. If, however, the Japanese have had even fragmentary success in establishing a political, economic, and cultural union in Greater East Asia, and if the people of Asia do not gain security and stability in the postwar settlement, there is a possibility that a similar plan for a Pan-Asia will emerge in the future.

Insofar as it involves continental conquest the GEA is merely the latest manifestation of the centuries-old Japanese expansionist tradition. In the late nineteenth century Japanese patriotic secret societies were formed in order to promote Japanese expansion and imperialism through mobilizing Japanese finance and trained personnel for espionage and propaganda work in Asia. Early in the twentieth century, greatly under the influence of the secret societies, the expansionist tradition was transformed into the Great Asia doctrine. Although the supporters of this doctrine differed among themselves concerning the nature and the degree of desired Japanese domination in a Pan-Asia, they agreed that European and American interests in the Orient were responsible for reducing Asiatic countries to semi-colonial status. Agreeing upon a theory of regionalism not unlike that underlying the Monroe Doctrine, they created the slogan, "Asia for Asiatics." Many aspects of this doctrine were incorporated into the official foreign policy of Japan by the Konoye Cabinet in 1938. The policy was named "New Order in East Asia." When the fall of France and the Netherlands in 1940 opened to the Japanese the possibility of easy expansion into European holdings in the Orient, this policy was restated as the "New Order in Greater East Asia." Later, in

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order to incorporate into this policy ideas of economic cooperation in Asia, the title became the "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere." In November 1942 the policy was given even fuller sanction when the Greater East Asia Ministry was established and its first minister, Kazuo Aoki, was charged with the administration of political, economic, and cultural affairs in China, Manchuria, Thailand, French Indochina, Burma, the Philippines, and the Celebes.

The GEA Ministry was established in 1942 by the dominant Army group in a maneuver designed to eclipse the power of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In a year of military successes ranging geographically from Kiska to New Guinea, the Japanese Army leaders were confident of successfully completing Japanese expansion in Greater East Asia, and they were impatient of the less militant policies of the career diplomats in the Foreign Affairs Ministry. They appointed Aoki, known to be an Army supporter, an expansionist, and a Greater Japan enthusiast, as GEA Minister. The new ministry was given jurisdiction over matters formerly directed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, excepting only "purely diplomatic" concerns. Both the GEA Ministry and the subsequently reorganized Foreign Affairs Ministry were staffed largely by undistinguished bureaucrats who could be counted upon to support the military in establishing a New Order in Greater East Asia by conquest.

With the fall of the Tojo Cabinet in July 1944, following a series of American military successes culminating in the capture of bases in the Marianas less than 1500 miles from Tokyo, the career diplomats of the Foreign Affairs Ministry regained a considerable portion of their lost power and prestige at the expense of an independent GEA administration. Mamoru Shigemitsu, who had served as Minister of Foreign Affairs in the Tojo Cabinet, was retained in that post in the new Koiso Cabinet and was appointed GEA Minister concurrently. Again in the Suzuki Cabinet, established in March 1945, Shigenori Togo—another career diplomat—was given both posts. The appointment of Togo, who had resigned as Minister of Foreign Affairs in 1942 when the establishment of the GEA Ministry stripped his position of its powers, indicated that the career diplomats had completely regained their former position.

Because of its dominance by Army leadership at the time of its inception, the fundamental aims of the GEA Ministry were to provide ideological support for the conquest of the Asiatic continent and the southern regions, and to set up administrative machinery for the conquered areas. Despite this role as an adjunct to conquest, the leaders of the GEA presented their objectives in terms of the highest idealism. Even later, when the ardor of both the militarists and the more moderate GEA idealists had been cooled somewhat by the menace of increased Allied military power, the professions of idealism continued. Many Japanese, both inside the GEA movement and outside it, probably believe sincerely in working towards Asiatic cooperation, equality, and prosperity under benevolent Japanese leadership.

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The fullest statement of GEA ideals is the Joint Declaration adopted by the Assembly of Greater East Asiatic Nations in November 1943. This five-point declaration, following a preamble announcing the hope of the countries of Greater East Asia of liberating themselves from "the yoke of British-American domination," reads as follows:

1. The countries of Greater East Asia through mutual cooperation will ensure the stability of their region and construct an order of common prosperity and well-being based upon justice.
2. The countries of Greater East Asia will ensure the fraternity of nations in their region, by respecting one another's sovereignty and independence and practicing mutual assistance and amity.
3. The countries of Greater East Asia by respecting one another's traditions and developing the creative faculties of each race, will enhance the culture and civilization of Greater East Asia.
4. The countries of Greater East Asia will endeavor to accelerate their economic development through close cooperation upon a basis of reciprocity and to promote thereby the general prosperity of their region.
5. The countries of Greater East Asia will cultivate friendly relations with all the countries of the world, and work for the abolition of racial discriminations, the promotion of cultural intercourse and the opening of resources throughout the world, and contribute thereby to the progress of mankind."

Within the framework of this announcement of intentions, the GEA Ministry set up political, economic, and cultural programs which were designed to secure the maximum cooperation from the conquered populations of Greater East Asia.

The GEA Ministry is organized in accord with the regional theory that supports the entire GEA concept. The Ministry is divided into five bureaus: the Secretariat, the General Affairs Bureau, the Manchurian Affairs Bureau, the China Affairs Bureau, and the Southern Affairs Bureau. Each bureau is charged with the administration in its own region of all GEA functions, which are defined as the execution of political affairs other than purely diplomatic affairs, the protection and supervision of Japanese commerce and Japanese nationals, the supervision of colonization, the administration of colonial enterprises, and the direction of cultural programs. GEA embassies and consulates in the various regions implement the authority of the bureaus.

In establishing the political administration of Greater East Asia the GEA Ministry gave the outward appearance of observing Article 2 of the Joint Declaration which promised mutual respect of "one another's sovereignty and independence." China, Burma, and the Philippines were "declared independent" by October 1943, and puppet governments were established. French Indochina was "declared an autonomous province." To present the appearance of respecting the political autonomy of those regions where "independence" was not granted, the GEA Ministry made a point of appointing a number of native administrators. In Java, for example, several native officials were made mayors of their municipalities. Also, the Ministry established institutes both in Japan and in the

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GEA areas for training natives to be "leaders of their people." Behind this facade of autonomy and independence, however, the GEA Ministry has steadily maintained firm control of the political administration of the regions under its jurisdiction. The puppet regimes of China, Burma, and the Philippines were amenable to this control because of their dependence upon the Japanese Army for their security. The GEA Ministry in 1942 dispatched approximately 100,000 Japanese government officials to the southern regions to administer local governments. Furthermore, a number of institutes were created for the purpose of training Japanese officials "to direct local inhabitants." Somewhat less directly, Japanese already living in the southern regions were indoctrinated with the necessity for gaining the confidence and respect of the native populations. Finally, political associations modeled upon the Japanese pattern, such as the East Asia Assistance Association in North China, were established to aid in maintaining political control of the GEA areas.

Article 4 of the Joint Declaration promised that the nations of the GEA would "endeavor to accelerate their economic development through close cooperation upon a basis of reciprocity." The GEA Ministry interpreted this article to mean that the economy of the GEA should be centralized under the control of the Japanese. Accordingly, plans were made to divide the GEA into three industrial zones. The central or chief zone, comprising the Japanese Home Islands, was planned to engage in the manufacture of light machinery, precision instruments, chemical production, and the bulk of heavy industrial production. The second zone, including China and Manchuria, was to engage in certain heavy industries, mining, light metal production, and the production of power. The third zone, including all of the occupied territory of Southeast Asia, was primarily to deliver raw materials to the industrial areas but was to be permitted to engage in such manufacture as would benefit from proximity to raw materials, such as crude iron production and aluminum production. Fiscal policy was to make the Japanese yen the standard of all GEA currencies and the basis for all financial transactions. Under the direction of the GEA Ministry Japanese banks established over 200 branches in the southern regions, and 60 percent of all bank deposits in the area were deposited in Japanese-owned banks. Furthermore, the Special Wartime Corporation was established to finance and control the development of resources in the Philippines, Malaya, Borneo, the Celebes, East Indochina, and Burma.

The cultural program of the GEA Ministry has been diversified and energetic. Although lip service was paid to the policy of respecting the various cultures of the GEA, in actual practice the Ministry worked steadily to impose a considerable degree of Japanese culture upon the other members of the GEA. From the very beginning strenuous efforts were made to establish Japanese as the official language of the GEA. Large numbers of Japanese school teachers were sent overseas "to educate the younger generations of the southern regions through the guidance of Japanese culture." The GEA Ministry also arranged for the education in Japan of college and university students from the GEA. It

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was estimated in September 1943 that there were 3,000 such students in Japan. At the same time the purpose of this educational program was made clear by the statement that in obtaining future foreign students "excellence in scholarship is important, but selection must also depend upon the suitability of the students to become leaders in the construction of the GEA."

In addition to formal classroom teaching, the GEA Ministry instituted a highly diversified program of cultural instruction. Cultural "institutes" and cultural "museums"—some of them, such as the one in Bangkok, luxurious and elaborate—were established for the purpose of displaying "correct" Japanese culture through exhibits, lectures, and motion pictures. Cultural "missions" made up of representatives from the GEA countries made three-month investigation tours of Japan. A *History of Greater East Asia*, a thousand-page volume requiring two years to write and edit, undertook to clarify "the position of Japan as leader of the GEA." Annual GEA Literary Conferences were held with the announced purpose of considering "practical" means for blotting out the influence of Anglo-American culture in East Asia. A GEA Musical Association, indicating the political possibilities of the cultural program, sponsored two new musical compositions, "The Burma Independence March," and "The Philippines Independence March."

The religious policy of the GEA Ministry was "to recognize all religions of Southeast Asia as they are, for the time being at least, and give them every possible aid and protection... while exercising constant efforts to guide them along a healthy path step by step." The goal to which this "healthy path" was to lead, according to one spokesman, was a common GEA "primitive religion" which would embrace Shintoism. For the benefit of the Buddhists in the GEA, the Japanese have emphasized that Buddhism is widely practiced in Japan. An East Asia Buddhist Research Institute was established in Tokyo and missions were sent abroad "to study the affairs of Buddhism in all parts of the GEA." The nonreligious aspects of these missions were emphasized by the announcement that one mission was to spend a year in Burma, Thailand, and the southern regions "to increase amity and cooperation among the natives."

The racial policy of the GEA Ministry was based upon the portion of Article 5 of the Joint Declaration which called for "the abolition of racial discriminations." The Ministry announced that this was to be "not mere mechanical equality," but a plan enabling "all peoples to live in contentment and peace." The dynamic idea expressed in this statement of intention, however, was put into practice on a relatively small scale. In Shanghai the foreign YMCA, formerly closed to Japanese and Chinese, was renamed "The GEA Home" and opened to "all GEA peoples." But the policy remained implicit in the entire GEA program aimed at "liberating the region from the yoke of British-American domination."

Despite the grandeur of the vision of a GEA, the popular appeal of the slogan "Asia for Asiatics," and the energy and diversity with which

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the Japanese have sought to establish the GEA, the plan for joining nearly one billion people into a political, economic, and cultural union has been a failure. The most obvious source of this failure is the decline of Japanese military fortunes. Aside from the prospect of ultimate defeat, the necessity for fighting a bitter hemispheric war while attempting to establish the Pan-Asiatic ideal has been an impossible handicap for the Japanese. Military security prevented them from permitting any genuine autonomy among native populations; military necessity prohibited the establishment of any genuine economic reciprocity; military urgency interfered with their attempts to attain cultural understanding with the peoples of the GEA.

Another source of failure perhaps equally important was the lack of a unified motivation behind the GEA Ministry. The Ministry was dominated from its inception by Army leaders determined to exploit the ideology of Pan-Asia for immediate advantages. Its policy was inevitably two-sided. This dichotomy of purpose was perhaps reflected in the behavior of Japanese businessmen overseas who, despite the cautions of the GEA Ministry to be careful in their treatment of the people with whom they lived, saw in the GEA only an opportunity for economic exploitation. Also, despite their indoctrination, Japanese officials sent to administer GEA regions displayed a tendency to disregard the sensibilities of native peoples. Repeated warnings were sent out to these officials "not to show superiority even when they know they are superior." Japanese soldiers were even worse offenders in this respect and won a particularly bad reputation in Burma, where they desecrated religious shrines and mistreated Burmese ecclesiastics. Part of this misbehavior may be attributed to the inability of the average Japanese to perform the intellectual juggling necessary to see that in conquering vast portions of the Asiatic continent and the South Seas he was fighting "a holy war" and establishing "an order of common prosperity and well-being based upon justice."

What future the plan for a GEA holds may well rest upon the degree of security and economic stability achieved in Asia after the war. The Japanese have recently been pleading that the exigencies of war forced them to exact certain requirements from the GEA member nations, but that the war had to be won in order to free the whole GEA from western imperialism. They have maintained that in the postwar world, regardless of Japan's victory or defeat, Japanese leadership in the GEA would assure independence, security, and economic stability. Although the peoples of the GEA who have been antagonized by Japanese domination during wartime may reject these promises now, they may turn to Japanese leadership at some future time if something approaching these promises is not forthcoming in the postwar settlement. Life in the GEA under Japanese supervision may seem less grim in retrospect, particularly when viewed in context with the Japanese promise of better things in the postwar world. Whether or not the Japanese are ever able to make another attempt at establishing a GEA, the dream of a Pan-Asia, an "Asia for Asiatics," will undoubtedly hold a potent appeal for the people of Asia.

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