

JAPANESE IMPERIAL IDEOLOGY, SHIFTING WAR AIMS AND  
DOMESTIC PROPAGANDA DURING THE PACIFIC WAR OF  
1941-1945

BY

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## Abstract

During the Pacific War of 1941-45, imperial ideology was the cornerstone of Japanese expansionism and domestic propaganda regarding “why we fight.” The “national polity” (*kokutai*), one of the most significant elements of this ideology, was closely associated with the god-like emperor and the imperial institution. While *kokutai*-centered imperial ideology remained relatively stable throughout the period under consideration, the actual war aims of the military government and the corresponding domestic propaganda were constantly changed in response to external and internal developments. This study is the first to examine Japanese wartime history in these terms in a sustained manner.

In wartime Japan, there was constant friction between branches of the military, and ongoing disagreement among the ruling elite over national war goals. In the early stages of the war, the Japanese government not only stressed the objective of “Self-Preservation and Self-Defense,” but also combined it with a number of other national war aims. By late 1943, Japan’s succession of military defeats in the Pacific resulted in the progressive scaling back of actual war goals. These changes in national orientation were clearly reflected in the domestic propaganda of the time.

By the end of the war, certain influential ruling elites identified the preservation of the “national polity” as the paramount goal, and a vigorous and successful *kokutai*-centered propaganda campaign was launched. This study argues that Japan’s decision to surrender in August 1945 with the sole condition of preserving the “national polity” was made not only in light of external factors such as the dropping of the two atomic bombs and the Soviet entry into the war, but in response to internal factors as well. Japanese leaders were genuinely concerned that worsening popular morale would eventually erupt into a mass uprising that would pose a serious threat to the continuance of the imperial institution. In the end, the *kokutai* survived both defeat and Allied occupation, and it lingers on in contemporary times as a potentially potent ideological element that could still be drawn upon in the name of (neo) nationalism.

*Dedicated to my brother and sisters*

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## Introduction

One of the enduring myths of contemporary Japan is that the Pacific War of 1941-45 was fought for the “Liberation of Asia” and/or “Self-Preservation and Self-Defense.” This implies that Japan’s war aims throughout the war were stable and consistent. In actuality, the views on war goals within military government circles were sharply polarized. The constant discord between the military branches caused Emperor Hirohito to lament soon after the conclusion of the war that one of the main reasons Japan lost was strife between the army and navy.<sup>1</sup> This ongoing conflict among the ruling elite had serious effects on national war policy, and war goals were repeatedly transformed in response to changes in the war situation. Nevertheless, the legend of consistent-war-aim lingers on in the current political landscape.

Studying the shifting war aims and domestic propaganda of the Japanese

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<sup>1</sup> Terasaki Hidenari and Mariko Terasaki Miller, eds., *Shōwa tennō dokuhakuroku—Terasaki Hidenari goyōgakari nikki* [Monologue of the Shōwa Emperor: A Diary of the Emperor’s Liaison Officer Terasaki Hidenari] (Bungei shunjūsha, 1991), 84. Throughout this dissertation, the personal names of those who reside or have resided primarily in China, Japan, and Korea are written with the surname preceding the given name, while the reverse order is followed for all others. Unless otherwise noted, all Japanese books are published in Tokyo.

government is a rich and revelatory means of understanding how national war policy was formulated and how public support was mobilized. This study examines how Japan's war objectives were formed and reformed in response to changing internal and external circumstances. Since the end of the war, numerous works have explored Japan's homefront history, including wartime imperialism and propaganda.<sup>2</sup> Yet up to now, few studies in either English or Japanese have attempted to interrogate Japan's war goals and domestic propaganda during the Pacific War in any sustained way.<sup>3</sup> As for the politics of the government's war objectives, I examined official

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<sup>2</sup> For the analysis of culture on the homefront, see Thomas Havens, *Valley of Darkness: The Japanese People and World War Two* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1978); Ben-Ami Shillony, *Politics and Culture in Wartime Japan* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981); and Kawashima Takane, *Jūgo: Ryūgen tōsho no "Taihei'yō sensō"* [Homefront: Rumor and Correspondence in the "Pacific War"] (Yomiuri shinbunsha, 1997). For Japanese imperialism, see W. G. Beasley, *Japanese Imperialism, 1894-1945* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987); Louise Young, *Japan's Total Empire: Manchuria and the Culture of Wartime Imperialism* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998); and Peter Duus and Kobayashi Hideo, eds., *Teikoku to iu gensō: Daitōa kyōeiken no shisō to genjitsu* [The Illusion of Empire: Ideology and Practice in the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere] (Aoki shoten, 1998). For the study on Japanese wartime propaganda by Western scholars, see Peter De Mendelssohn, *Japan's Political Warfare* (New York: Arno Press, 1944); L. D. Meo, *Japan's Radio War on Australia, 1941-1945* (London: Melbourne University Press, 1968); John W. Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986), 203-33; Jane Robbins, *Tokyo Calling: Japanese Overseas Radio Broadcasting, 1937-1945* (Firenze: European Press Academic Publishing, 2001); and Barak Kushner, *The Thought War: Japanese Imperial Propaganda* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2006). For the Japanese domestic propaganda in the 1930s, see chapter three in Young, *Japan's Total Empire*. For Japanese works on wartime propaganda, see Kitayama Setsurō, *Rajio Tokyo (I, II, III)* [Radio Tokyo I, II, III] (Tabata shoten, 1987-8); Yamanaka Hisashi, *Shinbun wa sensō wo bika seyo!—Senji kokka jōhō kikōshi* [The Press Should Glorify War!: A History of Wartime National Information Institutions] (Shōgakkan, 2001).

<sup>3</sup> On the study of Japan's war aims, the previous works focus mainly upon war

documents in the National Diet Library (*Kokkai toshokan*) in Tokyo, which few historians have used for the analysis of Japan's war aims and domestic propaganda policy. Furthermore, to research other related ministries, such as the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Home Affairs, and the Ministries of the Army and Navy, I investigated materials at the National Archives of Japan (*Kokuritsu kōbunshokan*), the Diplomatic Record Office of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (*Gaimushō gaikō shiryōkan*), and Library of Institute for Defense Studies of the National Defense Agency (*Boeichō bōei kenkyūjo shiryōshitsu*). The research presented here differs from previous scholarship in that it analyzes Japan's ulterior and stated war

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objectives toward China and other Asian countries or upon the famous wartime propaganda showcase of the Greater East Asian Conference (*daitōa kaigi*) of November 1943. Akira Iriye's *Power and Culture: The Japanese-American War, 1941-1945* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981) deals mainly with Japan's political developments and redefinition of war aims toward China and South Asia by arguing that both America and Japan adhered to traditional 1920s Wilsonian solutions in the formulation of their war goals. If Iriye takes a comparative approach to war objectives and peace aims between the two enemies, Hatano Sumio's *Taiheiyō sensō to ajia gaikō* [The Pacific War and Diplomacy Toward Asian Countries] (Tokyo daigaku shuppankai, 1996) examines Japan's wartime diplomacy of China and South Asia and focuses mainly upon the policies of the Foreign Ministry. The interesting works on the "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere" include: Dower, *War Without Mercy*, 262-90; Eizawa Kōji, '*Daitōa kyōeiken*' *no shisō* [The Thought of the "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere"] (Kōdansha, 1995). On the study of the history of Japan's surrender, see Yoshida Yutaka, *Shōwa tennō no shūsen-shi* [A History of Shōwa Emperor's Conclusion of War] (Iwanami shinsho, 1992); Kōketsu Atsushi, *Nihon kaigun no shūsen kōsaku: Ajia taiheiyō sensō no saikenshō* [The Japanese Navy's Struggle to Surrender: A Reexamination of the Asia-Pacific War] (Chūō kōron shinsha, 1996); Herbert Bix, *Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2000); and Tsuyoshi Hasegawa, *Racing the Enemy: Stalin, Truman, and the Surrender of Japan* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005).

objectives during the entire period of the “Greater East Asian War.” This dissertation thus fills a significant gap in Japanese wartime history.

Previous literature on the politics of Japan’s war aims and propaganda has assumed that when Japan was winning battles, the “Construction of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere” was the paramount goal, but when the tides of war began to turn, Japan’s major aim became “Self-Preservation and Self-Defense.”<sup>4</sup> This study contends that with but few exceptions, the military government failed to reach a solid consensus regarding its war goals. The task of Japan’s war leadership in this instance was fraught with difficulty, mainly because of sectionalism among Japanese political and military elites and divergent views on the nature of the war. The leaders’ failure to reach agreement and their slowness in firmly formulating Japan’s war aims prolonged a losing war and delayed surrender.

When looking at Japan’s war aims, one must note that domestic factors had a significant influence on the ruling elite’s decision-making. Japan’s leaders paid constant attention to public attitudes toward the war at home. Most of all, the state of popular morale increasingly emerged as a decisive factor in the reformation of war

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<sup>4</sup> Awaya Kentarō, *Jūgonen sensōki no seiji to shakai* [Politics and Society in the Fifteen-Year War] (Ōtsuki shoten, 1995), 245.

objectives and the decision to surrender. After the war, the statesmen and generals concerned did their utmost to hide the real reasons behind the opening of the war and the decision to conclude it in 1945. Since then, the myth that Hirohito was a “benevolent” emperor who saved his “subjects” from further suffering at the hands of Americans has been prevalent in Japan. This study maintains that the internal factors—the collapse of popular morale and fears of the effects of a domestic revolt on the imperial institution—played a significant role in inducing the Japanese ruling elite to surrender.

Toward the end of the war, Japanese elites were obsessed with the perceived threat of domestic uprising as an outcome of low morale. This helps explain the ultimate surrender aim they decided upon: the preservation of the “national polity” (*kokutai*). In the end, this became their sole condition for capitulation. Fears over the destruction of the imperial institution by a domestic revolution and concerns over the public’s susceptibility to anticipated anti-national polity agitation both from within Japan and from the invading enemy in the case of defeat precipitated a large-scale propaganda campaign centered on the *kokutai* in the last phase of the war. It was believed that the “national polity” had to be protected at all costs in order to stabilize

and rebuild Japan in the postwar era. Although Japan lost all its colonies and occupied territories in Asia when it surrendered, the “national polity” survived the war in a slightly modified form in which the emperor became the symbol of Japan and the Japanese people. This provided a much needed sense of continuity to the nation during a time of turmoil. The *kokutai* thus deserves special attention in any consideration of Japan’s empire-building, defeat, and surrender.

The ulterior war aim of many Japanese political and military elites, particularly during 1942-44, was to achieve economic and military hegemony in Asia through a “go-slow imperialism” and Japan’s imperial ideology provided compelling grounds for establishing and justifying the Cause. Ideology forms the basis of the politics of war aims, and Japan’s imperial ideology was manipulated in an attempt to realize these imperialistic objectives. While imperial ideology remained relatively stable throughout the war, war goals were constantly shifting. Thus, one cannot adequately account for Japan’s initial nationalistic dreams without first examining its imperial myths.

Before and during the Pacific War, the ruling elite emphasized that fulfilling the “divine” will of the mythical first emperor Jimmu, who was allegedly enthroned



in BC 660, was the underlying national goal, and so the Japanese people were indoctrinated regarding the “sacred” imperial mission in an attempt to explain Japan’s “historical” destiny. The mytho-history of Japan claiming that an “unbroken” line of god-like emperors had ruled for more than two thousand years made Japan “unique,” and this “uniqueness” enabled many Japanese to embrace a sense of racial superiority over other peoples that served to justify expansionism in the wars of the first part of the Shōwa period.

One of the most significant elements of imperial ideology was the “national polity.” It served as a central belief system in prewar and wartime Japan. The abstract term *kokutai*, closely associated with the emperor (*tennō*) and the emperor system (*tennōsei*), was essentially used to signify the “unique” cultural and ethnic identity of the Japanese race.<sup>5</sup> Various *kokutai*-related terms were used in official documents related to Japan’s imperial mission. The Japanese ruling elite’s claim that Japan deserved to be at the center of world events and should also be the spiritual and ethical leader of all races was often expressed in slogans such as the “Eight Corners of the World under One (Japanese) Roof” (*hakkō ichiu*) and the “Imperial

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<sup>5</sup> For Japan’s national ideology in the Meiji era, see Carol Gluck, *Japan’s Modern Myths: Ideology in the Late Meiji Period* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985).

Way” (*kōdō*).

Although the concept of the “national polity” was the ideological bedrock of expansionism upon which Japan would build its empire, before and during the Pacific War, the *kokutai* and its related terms were never clearly defined in Japanese or English. George Orwell famously wrote that the political speeches and writings of totalitarian dictatorships relied upon “euphemism...sheer cloudy vagueness.” In order to defend “the indefensible,” he argued, there is a tendency among totalitarian regimes to “[turn] as it were to...long words and exhausted idioms, like a cuttlefish squirting out ink” when the gap between ulterior and stated goals became too glaring.<sup>6</sup>

When Japan’s leaders and propagandists explained their intentions to Japanese people and other Asians, they almost always began by claiming that the Anglo-American enemy wanted to reinvade or reconquer Asia. The logic behind such rhetoric is clearly discussed in the accounts of the French propaganda theorist Jacques Ellul. He argues that a propagandist must proclaim the innocence of his own nation, while always accusing the enemy of the wrong-doing in question. The propagandist tends to blame the other for the “very intention that he himself has” or

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<sup>6</sup> George Orwell, *Essays* (New York: Everyman’s Library, 2002), 963-64.

for the “very crime that he himself is about to commit.”<sup>7</sup>

Orwell’s and Ellul’s arguments can be applied to the propagandistic use of Japanese language during the Pacific War. The true meaning of *hakkō ichiu* was never explicitly articulated in English, and was once translated as “universal brotherhood” by the former Foreign Minister and infamous pro-Axis diplomat Matsuoka Yōsuke. In prewar Japan, however, the British and Americans associated the term with Japan’s desire for world conquest. The concept of the *hakkō ichiu* was closely linked with emperor Jimmu and with the justification of Japan’s position as an “elder brother,” meaning that Japan’s role was to lead all races in the world in the construction of a “New World Order.”<sup>8</sup>

Japan’s leaders manipulated propaganda in order to mobilize the nation in support of the war effort.<sup>9</sup> It has been pointed out that the relationship between

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<sup>7</sup> Jacques Ellul, *Propaganda: The Formation of Men’s Attitudes*, trans. Konrad Kellen and Jean Lerner (New York: Vintage Books, 1973), 58.

<sup>8</sup> Gaimushō chōsabu [Investigation Department of the Foreign Affairs Ministry], “Dai nana jū go gikai ni okeru gaikō kankei shitsugi ōtō yōshi” [Questions and Answers on Foreign Affairs in the Seventy-Fifth Diet Session] (Document No. B-A-5-2-055), 37, September 1940; “Dai nana jū roku gikai ni okeru gaikō kankei shitsugi ōtō yōshi” [Questions and Answers on Foreign Affairs in the Seventy-Sixth Diet Session] (Document No. B-A-5-2-055), 26, 28, July 1941, *Gaimushō shiryō* [Records of the Foreign Affairs Ministry], Gaimushō gaikō shiryōkan [Diplomatic Record Office of the Foreign Affairs Ministry], Tokyo (hereinafter cited as MFA Records); Otto Tolischus, *Tokyo Record* (New York: Reynal & Hitchcock, 1943), 17.

<sup>9</sup> Among the contemporary scholars on propaganda studies, there exist many different definitions of propaganda. This dissertation generally follows the definition

policy-makers and propagandists is determined by war aims. Policy-makers make sure that national war objectives are served by propaganda, while the task of propagandists is to ensure that those goals are achieved in the most effective way.<sup>10</sup>

The politics of a warring state is inseparable from national war aims, and relations between the leadership and people are mediated by propaganda.

The Japanese military government was well aware of these interrelationships even prior to Pearl Harbor.<sup>11</sup> It became clear to Japanese propagandists that one of their crucial tasks was to convince the public of the legitimacy of the Cause. One of the wartime government's most essential tasks was to compellingly explain "why we fight" to the Japanese people. Foreign Minister Shigemitsu Mamoru most clearly explained the significance of propaganda in

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of propaganda theorists Garth Jowett and Victoria O' Donnell that the main and perhaps most important aim in conducting propaganda warfare is to "shape perceptions, manipulate cognitions, and direct behavior [of the target audiences] to achieve a response that furthers the desired intent of the propagandist." Garth Jowett and Victoria O' Donnell, *Propaganda and Persuasion*, 2nd ed. (London: Sage Publications, 1992), 4.

<sup>10</sup> Harold Lasswell, *Propaganda Technique in World War I* (Cambridge, MA: The M.I.T Press, 1971), xx.

<sup>11</sup> Rikugunshō [Army Ministry], "Senden jōhō kaigi kankei shorui teishutsu (sōfu) no ken" [Concerning the Document Submission on the Meeting of Propaganda and Information] (Document No. Rikugunshō—Riku-shi-mitsu-dai-nikki—S14—87—176, [no page no. available], [no page no. available], 1939, *Rikugun* [Records of the Army], Bōeichō bōei kenkyūjo shiryōshitsu [Library of the National Institute for Defense Studies of the National Defense Agency], Tokyo (hereinafter cited as Army Records).

achieving this task. Toward the end of the war, he claimed in the Diet on September 9, 1944 that the Cause was not only the “soul” (*tamashii*) of national war politics, but was also essential to mobilizing the “hearts and minds” (*kokoro*) of the people on the homefront.<sup>12</sup>

Japanese Pacific War propaganda relied upon assertions that Japan was fighting a righteous war against the corrupting influence of the Enemy, and imagery related to Japanese “purity” was prevalent throughout the war. As with other nations, however, Japan’s actual war aims were never presented explicitly to the people; instead they were veiled by layers of official myth-making. There was, of course, an abyss between the rhetoric that presented Japan as the innocent victim of Western imperialism and the reality of its long time policy of expansion and aggression in China and other Asian territories. During the Pacific War, military government propaganda repeatedly asserted that an actual political subject, an actor called the Anglo-American Enemy, was “guilty” of starting the war and that the Western enemy was bent upon Asian or world domination. In the context of the Pacific War, Japan presented itself as the “liberator” of Asia from Western influences. By

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<sup>12</sup> Gaimushō [Ministry of Foreign Affairs], “Shigemitsu gaimu daijin enzetsushū” [Speeches of Foreign Minister Shigemitsu] (Document No. B-A-1-0-016), 59, October 1944, *MFA Records*.

proclaiming that the West was a threat to both imperial Japan and Asia, Japanese propagandists variously defined the ongoing conflict with the Allied powers as a war for “Self-Preservation and Self-Defense,” “Co-Prosperity” in Asia, etc.

Although Japan had already been at war with China for more than four years prior to Pearl Harbor in December 1941, I have chosen to focus on the specific time period of 1941-1945 partly due to the continuing significance of propaganda generated during the Pacific War regarding the “Liberation of Asia” and “Self-Preservation and Self-Defense” in contemporary Japanese national discourse.<sup>13</sup>

In fact, Japanese domestic propaganda during the Pacific War was more active than in 1937-1940. Until late 1940, Japan had certain difficulties in implementing propaganda directed at the home audience, partly because the Japanese government failed to establish a central propaganda institution. But after it created the official propaganda agency and Board of Information (BI), called the “supreme agency” (*saikō kikan*) of propaganda on national policy, in December 1940, the government

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<sup>13</sup> With few exceptions, the politics of Japan’s war objectives during the period of 1937-1940 was relatively simple and consistent, partly because Japan fought with a single enemy, China. For the existing literature of Japan’s war aims during this period, See Hatano Sumio’s article, “Nihon no ‘Chin-Chitsujo’ rinen to sensō mokuteki” [Japan’s Idea of a “New Order” and War Objectives], *Shin-Bōei ronshū* [Journal of New Defense], Vol. 8 (October 1980), 26-32. However, a detailed study of imperial ideology, war aims, and domestic propaganda during the period of 1937-1941 is still needed.

was able to engage in an unprecedentedly large-scale propaganda campaign and witnessed its peak during the Pacific War.<sup>14</sup> During this period, the agency also placed more emphasis on domestic and foreign propaganda concerning America than on China.<sup>15</sup> Given these facts, we need to focus upon war aims and domestic propaganda during the Pacific War.

This dissertation consists of four chapters, each explaining the war aims and domestic propaganda of specific periods during 1941-1945. Chapter One deals with the government's inner circle discussions of Japan's war objectives from late 1941 to the end of 1942. During the first phase of the war, when the Japanese army and navy achieved a sense of battle success and when the people remained relatively confident in the military and the government, most Japanese were supportive and in good spirits. It was during 1942 that the Japanese government embraced imperialistic ambitions in Asia and beyond. The first chapter looks at the formation of war aims within the military government by examining the varied rhetoric of empire among the Japanese elite. In this section, the elites' divergent views of Japan's national

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<sup>14</sup> Hatanaka Shigeo, *Nihon fashizumu no genron danatsu* [The Suppression of Free Speech under Japanese Fascism] (Kōbunken, 1986), 47.

<sup>15</sup> Yamamoto Fumio, et al eds., *Nihon masu komyunike-shon-shi* [A History of Japan's Mass Communications], 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Tōkaidagaku shuppankai, 1981), 211.

goals from late 1941 to 1942 and how Japanese propagandists presented the Cause to the domestic population will be articulated.

Chapter Two tracks changes in both war aims and domestic propaganda during the pivotal year of 1943. Japan's defeat at Guadalcanal Island in February was a significant turning point in the war in these regards. After the "withdrawal" from the island, some Japanese intellectuals questioned the prospects of victory. Popular morale gradually began to decline, and the people in occupied areas such as China, Thailand, and the Philippines showed outright animosity toward Japan's oppressive rule. To make matters worse, in September of that year, Japan's ally Italy surrendered, signaling the collapse of the "New World Order" system each Axis signatory to the Tripartite Pact of 1940 pledged to develop in Asia and Europe respectively. How did the Japanese government respond to these shifting internal and external circumstances? An important change regarding war goals is readily apparent in the famous wartime propaganda showcase of the Greater East Asian Conference (*daitōa kaigi*) of November 1943. The second chapter argues that in 1943 the war aims among Japanese elites shifted from an emphasis on the "Establishment of a New World Order" to "Self-Preservation and Self-Defense," and that this change



was reflected in domestic propaganda of the time.

The last one and a half years of the Pacific War were marked by a worsening conflict among the Japanese ruling elite over whether to bring the war to a close or continue fighting to the last. Chapter Three is concerned primarily with the “national polity” and propaganda related to it from late 1943 to mid-1944. The collapse of Saipan in early July of 1944 was another decisive turning point of the war, because from there America could launch direct air attacks on the Japanese mainland. It was during this period when a “peace-feeler” group plotted to topple the hawkish Tōjō Hideki cabinet which it viewed as a major obstacle to peace.<sup>16</sup> This group’s main concern was that the *kokutai* would be in grave jeopardy should the war be lost. These “peace-feelers” argued that Japan must not expose the “national polity” to such danger.

In the third chapter, an analysis of Japanese popular morale is carried out, one that reveals that declining public morale was a main factor in making the “peace-feeler” group aware of the danger to the *kokutai*. The chapter then examines how the Japanese elite’s subsequent war goals were tied up with changes in the war

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<sup>16</sup> The “peace-feelers” consisted of some army and navy middle-ranking officers, retired generals, former high-ranking officials, scholars, private secretaries to senior statesmen, imperial princes, and other anti-Tōjō factions outside the government.

situation. The last part of Chapter Three presents an analysis of propaganda focused upon homeland defense and the “national polity.” The two main conclusions to be drawn from the chapter are that the collapse of the Tōjō cabinet in July 1944 resulted mainly from the “peace-feeler” group’s behind-the-scenes efforts to preserve the “national polity,” and that unlike the “peace-feelers,” other political and military elites still remained conflicted over national war goals.

Chapter Four discusses the politics of the ruling elite’s discussions of surrender during the last year of the war and reinvigorated propaganda campaigns centered on the *kokutai*. By late 1944, Germany was collapsing, and the American army was gradually pressing in on the Japanese homeland. These developments in Europe and the Pacific caused Japan’s leaders to feel that the war had become a matter of national survival. As in Chapter Three, this chapter initially looks at the trends in popular morale and suggests that during the period between the collapse of the Tōjō cabinet and Japan’s surrender, the “peace-feeler” group’s preoccupation with the “national polity” stemmed from domestic concerns, and that propaganda was aimed at preventing the Japanese people from being influenced by an anticipated communist agitation within Japan and the invading enemy in the wake of

defeat. The remaining part of the chapter discusses ongoing disagreements over the primary objective of the war in light of the shifting war situation and how they were reflected in domestic propaganda. This chapter stresses that, aided by the “peace-feeler” group’s endless efforts to bring about peace, the “national polity” was ultimately “saved” from a domestic revolution.

In the conclusion, I reflect on the significance of the protean war aim propaganda generated during the “Greater East Asian War” to contemporary nationalist discourse and articulate what it seems to suggest about the ulterior motives of Japan’s current ruling elites.

## Chapter One

### “Why We Fight” (1941-42)

In preparing for war with the Allied powers, Japanese leaders agreed that the important task of war guidance was to clarify the nation's war aims and follow the policy line through the end of the war. Although the Japanese government looked to be unified under the rule of the emperor, it failed to reach a consensus regarding war goals. Many high-ranking officers in the navy wanted to focus solely on “Self-Preservation and Self-Defense.” Others, hawkish army officers in particular, claimed that Japan should add the “Construction of a New Order in Asia” to the aim.<sup>1</sup> It has been pointed out that in the 1930s, particularly after the Manchurian Incident of 1931, the politics of Japanese military expansionism took a “go-fast imperialism” approach.<sup>2</sup> Despite the lack of overall consensus over war aims during 1942, the military government clearly pursued imperialist ambitions which intended

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<sup>1</sup> Tsuneishi Shigetsugu, *Daitōa sensō hiroku: Shinri sakusen no kaisō* [Secret Records of Greater East Asian War: Recollections of Psychological Warfare] (Tōsen shuppan, 1978), 8-9.

<sup>2</sup> John Dower, *Empire and Aftermath: Yoshida Shigeru and the Japanese Experience, 1878-1954* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979), 85; Chapter Four in Young, *Japan's Total Empire*.

to create a state that would enable Japan to establish hegemony economically and militarily in Asia. However, confronted by America, the most powerful enemy in the Pacific, the Japanese elite took a very cautious stance for the creation of empire and pursued a “go-slow imperialism” by anticipating that it would take at least fifteen years for Japan to achieve the national goal of constructing economic and military autarchy. Furthermore, the government’s appeal in propaganda messages to the public to fight the “long war” (*chōkisen*) reflected this “go-slow” strategy. Under the remarkably vague phrases of the “Construction of a Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere,” “Establishment of a New Order,” “Liberation of Asia,” and “Self-Preservation and Self-Defense,” the imperialist aspirations among the Japanese elite appeared in the early phase of the war when Japan was still on the offensive side, particularly from early to late 1942. However, this does not mean that the military government reached a consensus over Japan’s war goals.

### **The Making of Japan’s War Aims**

Several months before the Pearl Harbor attack, Japanese leaders felt the necessity of sharing their common conceptions of a forthcoming war with the Allied

powers. In early September of 1941, the Japanese government began to study Japan's war aims while its diplomats negotiated with U.S. State Department officials in Washington. At this time, high-ranking military officers, including the Army Minister Tōjō Hideki, who resented America's economic warfare against Japan, were leaning toward a war with America. In the Imperial Conference held on September 6 when the government temporarily decided to initiate war with the Allied powers, the war goals of Japan appeared as "Self-Preservation and Self-Defense of Japan" and "Construction of a New Order for Co-Prosperity in East Asia." The first aim was the fundamental objective of the war, and the latter was considered as an ideal goal. However, while the government finally decided on "Self-Preservation and Self-Defense" as the official war aim, the army's "ideal" goal of constructing a "Co-Prosperity Sphere" in Asia became one of the major war goals during the first phase of the war.<sup>3</sup>

Perhaps the term "Co-Prosperity," which appeared most frequently in the Japanese wartime master narrative, originated during World War I and explained an

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<sup>3</sup> Tanaka Shinichi, *Tanaka sakusen buchō no shōgen* [Testimonies of Operations Division Chief Tanaka] (Fuyō shobō, 1978), 200, 229-30, 237, 334-35; Sanbō honbu [Army Chief of Staff Office], ed., *Sugiyama memo (Jō)* [Liaison Conference Records of Chief-of-Staff Sugiyama (Vol. 1)] (Hara shobō, 1967), 312, 378.

unequal status between Japan and China within the treaty ports of China.<sup>4</sup> In the pre-Pacific War, it was Foreign Minister Matsuoka Yōsuke, one of the infamous pro-Nazi diplomats in the government, who first publicly expressed the scope of a “Co-Prosperity Sphere.” On August 1, 1940, he told the press that the center of the sphere was Japan, Manchukuo, and China, and the Dutch East-Indies and French Indo-China could be included in the “Co-Prosperity Sphere.” The latter two areas were indispensable to Japan, since they could supply natural resources needed for the continuation of the prolonged war with China. The situation in Europe, particularly Hitler’s victory over such powers as France and the Netherlands, gave Japan a favorable opportunity to take the formerly Western colonies in Asia under the aim of the “Construction of a Co-Prosperity sphere” in order to fulfill the ideal of the “Eight Corners of the World under One (Japanese) Roof” (*hakkō ichiu*) and the “Imperial Way” (*kōdō*).<sup>5</sup>

Although Matsuoka revealed the scope of the “Co-Prosperity Sphere,” its meaning still remained remarkably ambiguous. As foreign governments did elsewhere, the Japanese military government substituted clinical abstractions for

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<sup>4</sup> Beasley, *Japanese Imperialism*, 233.

<sup>5</sup> Quoted in *Asahi shinbun*, August 2, 1940, 1.

straightforward proper words or phrases that referred directly to Japanese expansionism while claiming that the subjugated nations in Asia must be in an “inferior” position. The hierarchical order of each country was to be determined following the Japanese-style family system: for example, on the national level, from the emperor to his “subjects,” and in the family, from father to son or daughter. The father was head of the family, and the relationship between the father and his sons or daughters remained absolutely unequal. The emperor, as head of the family state (*kazoku kokka*), occupied a position of absolute authority over his Japanese “sons” and “daughters.” Similarly, in establishing a “Co-Prosperity Sphere,” Japan would examine the other Asian nations in order to determine their exact value to the empire and would place them accordingly in the family hierarchy. In any case, the euphemistic phrase “Construction of the ‘Co-Prosperity Sphere’” was inherently associated with the unequal status between the Asian nations and Japan.<sup>6</sup>

Particularly after July 1940, when Japan pursued its imperialistic ambition toward the South Seas, the Japanese government began to stress the goal of the

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<sup>6</sup> Taisei yokusankai daijū iinkai [Tenth Committee of the Imperial Rule Assistance Association], “Daitōa kyōeiken kensetsu rinen no senmei ni kansuru chōsa hōkokusho” [A Research Report on the Clarification of the Ideal of the Construction of a Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere] (Document No. San 02837100), 1-4, March 1943, *Naikaku monjo* [Records of the Cabinet], Kokuritsu kōbunshokan [National Archives of Japan, Tokyo (hereinafter cited as Cabinet Records)].



“Construction of a Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere.” The meaning of this war aim was virtually no different from that of the “Establishment of a New Order in East Asia” which had also been used as Japan’s war goal at least since late 1938.<sup>7</sup> From mid-1940 up until the early 1940s, the Japanese government employed those two phrases interchangeably in its official documents and propaganda.

In late 1941, the Japanese war leadership’s attempt to construct a “Co-Prosperity Sphere” in Asia met with opposition from certain Japanese elites as Japan gradually leaned toward a war with Westerners. In preparation for war with the Allied powers, certain senior statesmen criticized the government’s policy of official war aims. They were suspicious of the military high command’s hidden agenda of expansionism in the “Co-Prosperity Sphere” in Asia as success in this area was heavily dependent upon Germany’s victory over the Soviet Union on the Eastern Front. As with those statesmen, Emperor Hirohito also took a cautious stance toward war with the Allied powers. On November 2, when the new premier Tōjō Hideki and other military leaders reported to the Shōwa emperor, Hirohito urged them to clarify the war aim with the most plausible rationale. “We are now working on the matter

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<sup>7</sup> Yamada Akira, ed., *Gaikō shiryō—Kindai nihon no bōchō to shinryaku* [Diplomatic Documents: Expansion and Aggression in Modern Japan] (Shin-Nippon shuppansha, 1997), 272, 283-84.

and I shall report on it later,” answered Tōjō.<sup>8</sup>

The undissolved polarization of the debate over the war Cause issue reemerged among Japanese elites, and they failed to reach a consensus regarding Japan’s war goals. At a Meeting of the Military Councilors held on November 4, 1941, the chairman and prince Kanin Kotohito, one of the chief-instigators of the Second Sino-Japanese War, indicated that the articulation of a clear war aim was a very important matter in guiding war, and therefore the government should consider with caution when it proclaimed a war Cause. Although like Hirohito, Kanin did not explicitly state that he wanted the government leaders to initiate war only when it was necessary for Japan’s “Self-Preservation and Self-Defense,” Kanin and Hirohito were just not in full agreement over the opening of a war with America. Yet the decision of an official war goal was jumbled among cabinet members. In an Imperial Conference on November 5, Foreign Minister Tōgō Shigenori emphasized that Japan should focus its war aims upon the “Conclusion of the Sino-Japanese War” and “Establishment of a Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere.”<sup>9</sup> Tōgō’s claim alluded that for the continuation of the war on Chinese soil, Japan needed to take forceful

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<sup>8</sup> Sanbō honbu, ed., *Sugiyama memo (Jō)*, 387.

<sup>9</sup> Tanaka, *Tanaka sakusen buchō no shōgen*, 355-56.

measures to “break through of the enemy’s encirclement,” ultimately preventing the Allies from supporting the Chiang Kai-shek government.<sup>10</sup> The immediate purpose of the war with the Allied powers was to secure strategic materials in the South Seas, but Japan should disguise its actual war goal with the fine-sounding rhetoric of “Establishment of a Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere.” Opposing Tōgō was Prime Minister Tōjō, who claimed that Japan should declare as its war aim “Self-Preservation and Self-Defense” against the oppression of the U.S. and Britain. Perhaps the hawkish Tōjō’s emphasis of this war goal was aimed at breaking through the emperor’s and other politicians’ opposition to expanding the war.<sup>11</sup>

At least by November 5, 1941, the reluctant emperor agreed to wage a war with the Allied powers. However, there was no consensus among Japan’s leaders on establishing a clear war objective. Unlike Hitler in Nazi Germany, in Japan no single leader could make decisions on his own due in part to factionalism between the military branches. This result came mainly from a greater diffusion of power at the top and differing war aims among the political and military elite.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Nanyōkyoku [South Seas Bureau], “Nanpōsen no seikaku, sensō mokuteki ni kansuru ichi iken” [A View on the Nature of the War in the South Seas and War Aims] (Document No. B-A-7-0-352), 1, November 19, 1941, *MFA Records*.

<sup>11</sup> Tanaka, *Tanaka sakusen buchō no shōgen*, 360.

In the course of the debate over the war aims, some Japanese leaders expressed concern that Japan might be encircled by the whole “white” race if a war occurred. This view derived in large part from a fear of Western racism against the Japanese. In an Imperial Conference of November 5, 1941, some participants raised a question over the nature of a war with Western nations. They genuinely worried about the possibility that once Japan entered the war, the “white” countries, including its ally Germany, would drag the war into a “race war” with Japan. These men believed that allowing such a situation to develop would be a great military blunder for the Japanese side. The Privy Council President Hara Yoshimichi warned the cabinet and the military high command of the matter. Hara cautioned that in launching a war, Japan should pay attention to Western racism in order “not to be encircled by the whole Aryan race,” although it was inevitable that Japan would enter the war to ensure its “Self-Preservation and Self-Defense.”<sup>13</sup> He feared that if Japan initiated war with the United States, Americans would show more animosity toward the “yellow” Japanese than the “white” Germans, ultimately leading the two “white” countries to make a peace negotiation. Japanese leaders, pro-war or not,

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 361; Yamada, ed., *Gaikō shiryō*,

<sup>13</sup> Sanbō honbu, ed., *Sugiyama memo (Jō)*, 415.

knew of Hitler and his followers' racial hatred against the Japanese. Hara thus distrusted Hitler who viewed Japanese as a "second-rate race."<sup>14</sup>

Japan's leaders had every reason to fear Nazi racism. In his book *Mein Kampf* (1924), the Nazi dictator designated the Japanese race as the "bearer of culture," meaning a "second-rate race," who was unable to create culture.<sup>15</sup> Until Pearl Harbor, the Japanese translation of Hitler's book was widely circulated among government officials and other Japanese leaders. Upon reading the book, many Japanese who viewed themselves as a master race in the world felt humiliated in the face of Aryan racism.

Knowing the Germans' racial prejudice, Hara anticipated that Germany would quit the war with Britain once Japan initiated war with America. He had insight into Hitler's mind, believing that at this time the dictator was thinking of

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 414.

<sup>15</sup> Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, trans. Ralph Manheim (Houghton Mifflin Company, 1943), 290-1. Hitler's racial prejudice against the Japanese continued even after signing the Axis Tripartite Pact of September 1940, and there was always the possibility, no matter how slight, that the Nazi chancellor would treat the Japanese as an "inferior" race if given the chance. In late March of 1941 after Hitler met the Japanese Foreign Minister Matsuoka Yōsuke in Berlin, he told his aides that Matsuoka "reminded him of a yellow ape from the primeval jungle." See Rudolf Semmler, *Goebbels—the Man Next to Hitler* (London: Westhouse, 1947), 25-26. Furthermore, Nazi racism against the Japanese extended beyond the confines of Hitler's accounts. Nazi diplomats in prewar Japan referred to the Japanese people as "monkeys" in their private talks with other Nazis. See Tolischus, *Tokyo Record*, 43.

Britain as a future ally. If such an alliance were formed, Hara warned, the military power of the whole “white” race would be concentrated on Japan. Tōjō gave his assent to Hara’s belief in “War for Self-Preservation and Self-Defense” and replied that he was “absolutely right” about the danger of a race war. Although the premier pledged to take every possible measure to avoid a race war in the Pacific, concern still lingered on in the minds of many Japanese leaders.<sup>16</sup>

The best solution to preclude the possibility that Germany and Italy would conclude either armistice or peace with Britain or the United States was to work on an Axis pact. At least by late November of 1941, Tokyo’s Foreign Ministry instructed Japanese ambassadors in the two Axis countries to start the process for a treaty.<sup>17</sup> For German leaders who launched the war with the Soviet Union in June of that year, Japan’s suggestion was attractive, in part because the Nazis were anxious to secure Japanese participation in the war. In early December, Hitler ordered the German Foreign Ministry to give Japan an affirmative answer.<sup>18</sup> The three nations

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<sup>16</sup> Sanbō honbu, ed., *Sugiyama memo (Jō)*, 415-16; Adolf Hitler, *Hitler’s Table Talk, 1941-1944: His Private Conversations*, trans. Norman Cameron and R. H. Stevens (New York: Enigma Books, 2000), 26.

<sup>17</sup> Tōgō Shigenori, *Jidai no ichimen: Taisen gaikō no shuki* [A Perspective on an Era: Memoirs of Wartime Diplomacy] (Chūō kōronsha, 1989), 403.

<sup>18</sup> Walter Schellenberg, *The Labyrinth: Memoirs of Walter Schellenberg, Hitler’s Chief of counterintelligence*, trans. Louis Hagen (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press,

finally concluded the treaty on December 11 when Germany and Italy declared war on the Allied powers. The three-power pact that none would make a separate peace was important for Japan to check a possible race war between the “white” and “colored” races.

Meanwhile, on November 26, 1941 the American State Department sent the so-called “Hull Note” to Japan, and this shocked Japan’s war leadership. The American government demanded that Japan withdraw its forces from China and Indochina, secede from the 1940 Axis Tripartite Pact, and stop supporting the Wang Jing-wei government.<sup>19</sup> The note to the Japanese government made it clear that there was no longer any hope for negotiations with America. Most Japanese military leaders and government officials viewed the note as an “ultimatum without a time limit.”<sup>20</sup> Guided by the Japanese government’s official propaganda agency and Board of Information, the newspaper headlines screeched about the obstacles raised by the American government and denounced the American “ultimatum” in a

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2000), 243-44; Carl Boyd, *Hitler’s German Confident: General Ōshima Hiroshi and Magic Intelligence, 1941-1945* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1993), 35.

<sup>19</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Peace and War: United States Foreign Policy, 1931-1941* (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1943), 811-12.

<sup>20</sup> Tōgō, *Jidai no ichimen*, 375.

tremendous outcry as if America had declared war against Japan. A secret journal of the Army Chief of Staff Office criticized on November 28, 1941 that the United States wanted to push Japan to go back to the status of the pre-Manchurian Incident era, and accused America of trying to conquer the world.<sup>21</sup> Undoubtedly, the “Hull Note” strengthened the army’s contention that nothing could be gained by future negotiations with the U.S.

Unlike the hawkish officers, senior statesmen such as former premiers Wakatsuki Reijirō and Konoe Fumimarō disagreed to the opening of the war with America. Wakatsuki, for example, was suspicious of the government’s imperial ambitions and warned cabinet members at a senior statesman-cabinet meeting on November 29, 1941 that waging war might be inevitable if it was only for “Self-Preservation and Self-Defense,” but stressed that Japan must not enter into war for any other reason.<sup>22</sup> He opposed the national commitment to the “ideal” aim for the “Establishment of Co-Prosperity in East Asia” or “Stability in East Asia.” The

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<sup>21</sup> Gunji shigakukai [Association of Military History Studies], ed., *Daihonei rikugunbu sensō shidōhan—Kimitsu sensō nisshi: Jō* [Secret Journals of the War: War Guidance Section of the Imperial Headquarters Army Department (Vol. 1)] (Kinseisha, 1998), 192.

<sup>22</sup> Tanaka, *Tanaka sakusen buchō no shōgen*, 381; Kido nikki kenkyūkai [Research Group of Kido Diaries], ed., *Kido Kōichi nikki (Gekan)* [Diaries of Kido Kōichi (Vol. 2)] (Tokyo daigaku shuppankai, 1966), 381.



former premier was convinced that the army officers were planning to continue the imperialist agenda they had hatched during the war with China starting in 1937, this time once again under the guise of a national plan for “Co-Prosperity” or “Stability.” As General Tanaka Ryūkichi, the former chief of the Military Administration Bureau in the Army Ministry, recalled, the actual meaning of “Stability in East Asia” was no different from that of the “Establishment of Co-Prosperity in East Asia.”<sup>23</sup>

Late in November 1941, the tension between Japan and the United States became intense. Right after receiving the “Hull Note,” Japanese leaders stopped negotiations with America and began writing an imperial rescript to inform the Japanese people of the declaration of war with the Allied powers. The Japanese government deliberated on what war aims should be included in the imperial rescript and just days before the attack on Pearl Harbor narrowed it down to “Self-Preservation and Self-Defense.”<sup>24</sup> This decision did not mean that the hawkish army officers completely quit pursuing their “ideal” war goal of the “Construction of

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<sup>23</sup> Tanaka Ryūkichi, *Nihon gunbatsu antō-shi* [A History of the Secret Strife Between the Japanese Military Cliques] (Chūō kōronsha, 1988), 162. Incidentally, the senior politicians who were against engaging in a war with the United States actively participated in toppling the Tōjō cabinet and bringing the fighting to a close after Japan’s position worsened in the late phase of the Pacific War.

<sup>24</sup> Hattori Kakushirō, *Daitōa sensō zenshi (2)* [The Whole History of the Greater East Asian War (Vol. 2)] (Masu shobō, 1956), 59-60.

a Co-Prosperity Sphere” or “Stability in East Asia.”

Japan’s main war aims were articulated in defensive and positive terms. The goals in the rescript remained simply as the nominal war cause of Japan in order to justify Japan’s actions as defensive and denounce the enemy as aggressive. Equally important, the drafters of the imperial rescript made an effort to portray the emperor as a “peace-lover.” The document was carefully written so as to absolve the emperor of any responsibility for the war, and any reference to the term “imperial way” (*kōdō*) was removed from the final version at the insistence of Lord Keeper of the Privy Seal Kido Kōichi. The emperor’s entourage feared that if Japan was defeated, the inclusion of such terms in the imperial document would endanger the emperor politically. Kido was thus determined to emphasize that Hirohito had little choice but to “inevitably” agree to the war. Instead of “imperial way,” the word “peace” should be included in the rescript.<sup>25</sup> Hirohito also made an effort to protect himself, ordering Tōjō to include in the rescript draft that the opening of the war was not his wish. But to some Japanese high-ranking propagandists’ eyes, emphasis of the “peace-loving” image of Hirohito looked contradictory. As Okumura Kiwao,

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<sup>25</sup> Kido nikki kenkyūkai [Research Group of Kido Diaries], ed., *Kido Kōichi kankei monjo* [The Documents of Kido Kōichi] (Tokyo daigaku shuppankai, 1966), 126.

vice-chief of the Board of Information, claimed, the imperial rescript should serve as an order calling the Japanese people to arms. If the emperor stated in it that he did not wish for war, the citizens might be confused by the rescript. Ironically, many Japanese people wanted “peace” during the late phase of the war, while the emperor ordered them to fight to the end, as noted in the following chapters.<sup>26</sup>

In an Imperial Conference on December 1, 1941, the Japanese government officially decided to wage war with the Allied powers. A week later, Japan’s Combined Fleet attacked Pearl Harbor, and the Japanese government was quick to issue the imperial rescript on December 8. The text released by the BI read:

To insure the stability of East Asia and to contribute to world peace is the far-sighted policy...It has been truly unavoidable and far from Our wishes that Our Empire has been brought to cross swords with America and Britain. More than four years have passed since China, failing to comprehend the true intentions of Our Empire, and recklessly courting trouble, disturbed the peace of East Asia...Eager for the realization of their inordinate ambition to dominate the Orient, both America and Britain, giving support to the Chungking regime, have aggravated the disturbances in East Asia...They have obstructed by every means Our peaceful commerce and finally resorted to a direct severance of economic relations, menacing gravely the existence of Our Empire...The situation being such as it is, Our empire, for its existence and self-defense has no other recourse but to appeal to arms and to crush every obstacle in its path.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Itō Masanori, et al eds., *Jitsuroku taiheiyō sensō: Dai nanakan—Kaisen zenya to haisen hiwa* [The True Record of the Pacific War: Vol. 7 (Secret Accounts of the Opening and Conclusion of War)] (Chūō kōronsha, 1960), 42.

<sup>27</sup> Quoted in *Japan Times & Advertiser*, December 8, 1941, 1.

What is interesting about the imperial document is that it represented China as a disturber of peace in East Asia, simply because the Chinese resisted on their own soil against the Japanese aggressor, while the emperor, supreme commander of the imperial armed forces which had invaded China since long before Pearl Harbor, was called a protector of stability and peace in Asia and the world. The assertion in the rescript that America, Britain, and the Chungking regime represented a combined threat to the Japanese empire became the official Japanese government view of the Pacific War. The imperial document was an important piece of propaganda in attempting to disguise Japan's actual war aims by telling the domestic audience that Japan was fighting for "the stability of East Asia," "world peace," and "its existence and self-defense."<sup>28</sup>

The imperial rescript was not intended as a pronouncement to the international community but to the emperor's "subjects." The old-style Japanese language of the document was so difficult that it is doubtful that many Japanese people could understand the rescript in its entirety. Nevertheless, Hirohito's "subjects" were required to learn the text, and in schools, principals often read the document to the students. Elementary school teachers forced sixth-grade students to

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

practice writing down the whole text of the rescript to prepare for the junior high school oral entrance exams.<sup>29</sup> Most Japanese knew the opening of the war following the issue of the imperial rescript, and the authority of the emperor's order was absolute to them. Regardless of one's opinion about the war Cause or content of the rescript, one had to follow Hirohito's order, and any complaint or resistance in public against the will of the "living god" was inconceivable. As a Japanese journalist who lived through the war expressed it, if Hirohito said that a "black crow is white," it was to be "white."<sup>30</sup>

### **The Creation of an Empire and "Go-Slow Imperialism"**

Despite the official war aims set forth in the imperial rescript, the military government failed to reach a consensus regarding war goals. Some army officers claimed that as written in the imperial document, Japan's war objective should be limited to "Self-Preservation and Self-Defense," while others wanted to pursue the "Construction of a New Order in East Asia" and the Axis common war objective of "Establishment of a New World Order." The navy side, however, consistently

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<sup>29</sup> Yamanaka, *Shinbun wa sensō wo bika seyo!*, 599-601.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 600-1; Nakajima Kenzō, *Kaisō no bungaku 5* [Recollections of Literature (Vol. 5)] (Heibonsha, 1977), 11.

claimed the goal of “Self-Preservation and Self-Defense.” This divergent view on war objectives came in part from the difference of war strategies, as discussed more below.<sup>31</sup> Despite such differing war goals and strategies, in 1942, intoxicated by its initial victories in the Pacific, Japan pursued expansionism to create an empire. As in other arenas, the army high command often took the initiative in formulating the policy of war goals.

The nature of Japan’s wartime imperialism can be explained in many ways. However, a single linear development of Japanese imperialism is almost impossible to argue, in part because the various agencies involved in Japan’s empire-building disagreed not only on the implementation of the war policy, but also on the very nature of the war. As per (military) tradition, the army placed its main interest on a northward advance and Russia became its main foe, while the navy’s main enemy was Britain and America.<sup>32</sup> There were many reasons that the Japanese government failed to reach a consensus over the war aim during the Pacific War, particularly the

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<sup>31</sup> Tokyo University professor and political scientist Yabe Teiji, who worked with the Navy Investigation Section, was unhappy with the navy’s attitude and called its stance an “insular characteristic of island people.” He saw the current strife over the war aims between the interservices as a “country of the army” and “country of the navy.” Yabe Teiji, *Yabe Teiji nikki (Ginnan no kan)* [Diaries of Yabe Teiji: Vol. Ginnan] (Yomiuri shinbunsha, 1974), 494.

<sup>32</sup> Itō Takashi, ed., *Takagi Sōkichi nikki to jōhō: Jō* [Takagi Sōkichi’s Dairies and Information (Vol. 1)] (Misuzu shobō, 2000), 236.

rivalry between the army and the navy. As Lieutenant Colonel Higurashi Takashi of the Army Press Section lamented after the war, throughout the war the Japanese army and navy had to fight with the external enemy while also engaged in an internal military power struggle.<sup>33</sup>

The rivalry within the military government was often reflected in their attempts to articulate Japan's actual war aims. The navy, for example, wanted to attack Australia while the army high command wanted to prepare for the forthcoming Anglo-American counterattack by securing strategic materials in the occupied areas.<sup>34</sup> For the navy high command, the Midway debacle in early June 1942 was a decisive blow to its future naval operations.<sup>35</sup> From this time onward, many navy high-ranking officers, though not all, gradually became pessimistic of outright imperial ambitions.

Nevertheless, between 1941 and 1942, in a general sense Japan's actual war aim was to create a state which would be able to vie with Western powers in the

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<sup>33</sup> Hiragushi Takashi, *Daihonei hōdōbu* [The Press Section of the General Headquarters] (Tosho shuppansha, 1980), 50.

<sup>34</sup> Tanemura Sakō, *Daihonei kimitsu nisshi* [Secret Journals of the General Headquarters] (Fuyō shobō, 1985), 153.

<sup>35</sup> Matsutani Makoto, *Daitōa sensō shūshū no shinsō* [The True Account of the Conclusion of the Greater East Asian War] (Fuyō shobō, 1980), 113.

postwar era by securing national defense and economic autarchy (*kōto kokubō kokka*, literally “high level national defense state”) in the currently-occupied territories and by “granting” political autonomy to some of those areas. It did not mean that Japan’s war leadership agreed to the policy of a “Co-Prosperity Sphere” in the occupied areas. Some parts of those areas which were abundant in natural resources, including Indonesia, were placed under Japan’s direct rule. In some Foreign Ministry officials’ eyes, “granting” political autonomy to some parts of the occupied territories seemed necessary to appeal to the Asian people and world opinion that Japan was fighting a war for “liberation.” But government leaders, for example, disagreed over whether Japan should “endow” political autonomy to the Java area in Indonesia. Even army officers in Tokyo and the Pacific battlefields had a different idea of the occupation policy of the occupied areas.<sup>36</sup>

Soon after the war with the Allied powers began, Japan’s leaders undertook the important task of deciding on an official name for the war. On December 10, 1941, at an Imperial Headquarters-Government Liaison Meeting the government officially decided to name the war with the Allied powers the “Greater East Asian War” (*daitōa sensō*). In the meeting, government officials, particularly between army

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<sup>36</sup> Duus and Kobayashi, eds., *Teikoku to iu gensō*, 285-86.



and navy high-ranking officers, clashed over the issue, but the final victory belonged to the army. The navy side wanted to call the war a “Pacific War” (*taiheiyō sensō*) or “War against America-Britain” (*tai bei-ei sensō*), but the army high command argued that those names did not include the war with China and a possible war with the Soviet Union. Although the government finally decided to name the war the “Greater East Asian War” to achieve the war aim of the “Construction of a New Order in Greater East Asia,” the new name did not mean to the Japanese government that the scope of military operations would be limited within “Greater East Asia.” The government’s decision implied that Japan’s advance would reach far beyond Asia. From this context, the name of the war was essentially associated with Japan’s expansionism. On December 13, 1941, the government officially announced that both the “China Incident” (the Second Sino-Japanese War starting in 1937) and the war with Britain and America would be called the “Greater East Asian War.” The new name was spread all over the country at a surprising speed.<sup>37</sup>

Despite dramatic victories in the months after Pearl Harbor, the Japanese government did not have any sophisticated plan for empire-building in the occupied areas. In the army, there were two conflicting views: one group wanted to expand

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<sup>37</sup> Tanemura, *Daihonei kimitsu nisshi*, 110-1.

Japan's territory in the occupied areas as far as possible, while the other disagreed, wanting to establish the "Co-Prosperity Sphere" and focus on maintaining the "purity" of the Yamato Race. Unlike the first group who wanted tangible possessions, the latter group objected to the direct rule of the occupied areas, but they did not disagree to an occupation policy through pro-Japanese regimes. A secret journal of the Twentieth Section of the Army Chief of Staff Office wrote on December 16, 1941 that because of the disagreement, it would take a long time to make a decision on the official policy of an empire.<sup>38</sup>

As Japan's victories continued, Japanese politicians were eager to know how far Japan would expand and asked cabinet members to clarify the exact scope and meaning of the "Co-Prosperity Sphere." However, on January 29, 1942 when Inada Naomichi, member of the House of Representatives, questioned Prime Minister Tōjō and Foreign Minister Tōgō about the exact meaning of the "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere," they bluntly replied that it was not an appropriate time to clarify it, or even to reveal the plan to the public. Since then, some government officials deliberately refrained from referring to the scope of the sphere,

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<sup>38</sup> Gunji shigakukai, ed., *Daihonei rikugunbu sensō shidōhan—Kimitsu sensō nisshi: Jō*, 203.

perhaps because they intended to conceal the fact that their imperialist designs would be extended far beyond Asia, and in part because at this point the government had no detailed blueprint of an empire.<sup>39</sup>

Japan's expressed war Cause in propaganda had repeatedly claimed that its true aim in the present war was not to gain territory, but to instead "liberate" Asia from the Western imperialists.<sup>40</sup> As the imperial armed forces engulfed the former Western colonies, however, Japan's actions during the war proved to be equivalent to Western imperialism. In the months after Pearl Harbor, Japan's imperialist designs gradually came to the fore, although the Japanese elite still had differing ideas of empire. On February 26, 1942, when the Army Chief-of-Staff Sugiyama Hajime asked the premier Tōjō of the present scope of the "Co-Prosperity Sphere," Tōjō answered that it included the areas where Japan was currently militarily engaged, such as Burma, Malay, and the Dutch East Indies and its eastern areas. Two days later, Sugiyama confirmed that if the war situation permitted, Japan should attack the Soviet territories. Some government officials in the Council for the Construction of

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<sup>39</sup> Gaimushō chōsakyoku [Investigation Bureau of the Foreign Ministry], "Dai nana jū kyū gikai ni okeru gaikō kankei shitsugi ōtō yōshi" [Questions and Answers on Foreign Affairs in the Seventy-Ninth Diet Session] (Document No. B-A-5-2-053), 95, 99, November 1942, *MFA Records*.

<sup>40</sup> "Japan's True Aims," *Japan Times & Advertiser*, January 16, 1942, 6.

Greater East Asia (*daitōa kensetsu shingikai*), which was established in February 1942 to give advice to the premier on the important agenda concerning the politics of the occupied areas, had strong imperialistic aspirations and claimed that Japan should take Australia and New Zealand or advance even to the Indus River to the east and Panama to the west. Others argued that the people in the occupied areas should not be allowed independence for the time being, since most of them had not experienced autonomy and would plunge into chaos without outside leadership.<sup>41</sup>

Sustained by the momentum of its success and determined to keep the Anglo-Americans in retreat, the Japanese government began to make plans for an empire, ultimately wanting to advance far beyond Asia to stake their claim on a larger part of the world for the glory of the emperor.

As previously mentioned, Japan followed a plan of a “go-slow imperialism” in order to achieve the national goal of creating a “high level national defense state” in Asia. By May 1942, the Japanese government developed a national plan for building its empire, but realized that a “war for construction” would take a long time to achieve its ultimate imperialistic goals. On May 4, the Imperial

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<sup>41</sup> Sanbō honbu [Army Chief of Staff Office], ed., *Sugiyama memo (Ge)* [Liaison Conference Records of Chief-of-Staff Sugiyama (Vol. 2)] (Hara shobō, 1967), 41, 44, 100-1.

Headquarters-Government Liaison Meeting approved the “Basic Plan of Economic Construction in Greater East Asia” (*daitōa keizai kensetsu kihon hōsaku*) drafted by the Council for the Construction of Greater East Asia. The plan anticipated that it would take at least fifteen years for Japan to achieve economic autarchy of major natural resources for defense. To accomplish this goal, the plan stressed, the government should encourage the people through the notion of the “national polity” and by promoting science, while discouraging individualistic, liberal economic inclinations.<sup>42</sup> Basically, Japan’s leaders believed that it was necessary to continue on the offensive in order to create a “high level national defense state” and establish the “Co-Prosperity Sphere.”

The warning against “individualistic, liberal economic inclinations” was closely associated with the diplomatic and military relations with Nazi Germany. Japan’s successful victory in the Pacific led to a fear of the “Yellow Peril” in Germany, and the “peril” in the German people caused them to react in potentially “dangerous” ways. On March 12, 1942, the German Propaganda Minister Joseph

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<sup>42</sup> Daitōa kensetsu shingikai [Council for the Construction of Greater East Asia], “Daitōa keizai kensetsu kihon hōsaku” [Basic Plan of Economic Construction in Greater East Asia] (Document No. Hensei 51009010), 2, May 4, 1942, *Henkan monjo* [Returned Documents], Kokuritsu kōbunshokan [National Archives of Japan], Tokyo (hereinafter cited as Returned Documents).

Goebbels proposed that the Foreign Ministry should tell the Japanese ambassador to Germany Ōshima Hiroshi to promise in public that Japan had no intention to monopolize the wealth and raw materials in its occupied territories. Such a public statement might “let public discussion of this unwelcome subject (German racism against Japanese) gradually die down.”<sup>43</sup> If Japan sought to use the acquired raw materials in a “capitalist and plutocratic way,” the relation between Germany and Japan would deteriorate due partly to the growing wave of “Yellow Peril” in Germany, but also due to the fact that the Germans equated the “capitalist and plutocratic way” with the Jews, Nazi Germany’s public enemy number one. Worse, Allied propagandists would, as they had done before, exploit Aryan racism against the Japanese in order to split the Japanese-German relation.

To Goebbels who had ordered his aides not to mention the “ticklish and delicate” race issue in domestic propaganda, such internal and external situations must “torpedo” Germany’s foreign and military relation with the Asian ally. In addition to the Propaganda Minister’s concern over the “Yellow Peril” in Germany, however, he felt jealous of the surprising Japanese conquest of the former Western

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<sup>43</sup> Willi Boelcke, ed., *The Secret Conferences of Dr. Goebbels: The Nazi Propaganda War, 1939-43*, trans. Ewald Osers (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1970), 218.

colonies which were abundant in strategic war materials.<sup>44</sup>

For the Nazis, however, the Japanese opening of the war with the Allied powers had benefited Germany in terms of popular morale and military strategy, and as Hitler noted on May 17, 1942, keeping the alliance with the Asian “devil” was significant to the Germans if they wanted to continue to achieve their war aims in Europe.<sup>45</sup> Just like Germany, as mentioned before, Japan desperately needed to sustain the Axis alliance in order to avoid a possible race war with the “white” countries. The Japanese government had no choice but to follow the principle that it should not pursue economic benefits in an “individualistic, liberal way” which was associated with “Anglo-American” or “Jewish” ideas.

In its effort to shed any appearance of harboring Western ideologies, the Japanese government put forward a number of programs detailing the formation of the “Co-Prosperity Sphere.” Based upon the grand plan of May 4, 1942, Japanese agencies began to make specific plans of empire. Although the government pursued the creation of a “high level national defense state” in Asia, at least by late September of 1942 the dream of Japan’s future empire, which went far beyond Asia,

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 218; Joseph Goebbels, *The Goebbels Diaries, 1942-1943*, trans. Louise Lochner (New York: Double Day & Company, Inc., 1948), 37, 51, 117, 120-21.

<sup>45</sup> Hitler, *Hitler’s Table Talk*, 489.

was reflected in the government's plan. The Asia Development Board (*kōain*), which dealt with the affairs of China and Manchukuo, drafted one of the most ambitious plans within Japanese government circles. In the “Basic Plan of the Construction in China” (*Shina kensetsu kihon hōsaku*) of September 30, the *Kōain* believed that the scope of the “New Order in Asia” did not have any limit, since the ultimate goal of Japan was to achieve the “Construction of a New World Order” based upon the principle of *hakkō ichiu*. The Asia Development Board divided the future Japanese empire into three spheres as per the following:

1. The Sphere of Self-Preservation or Core Sphere (*jisonken* or *chūkakuken*): Japan, coastal areas of Siberia, Manchuria, Inner Mongolia, and the Lower Yangtze River.
2. The Sphere of Minor Co-Prosperity or Sphere of Defense (*shō-kyōeiken* or *bōeiken*): Western part of Aleutians, Kamchatka, Eastern Siberia, Outer Mongolia, China, the Philippines, French Indo-China, Thailand, Burma, Malay, the Dutch East Indies, New Guinea, and Hawaii.
3. The Sphere of Greater Co-Prosperity (*dai-kyōeiken*): India, West Asia, Eastern coastal areas of Africa, Australia, New Zealand, and coastal areas of North-South America.<sup>46</sup>

As the *Kōain* plan clearly revealed, at least during 1942 the creation of a “high level national defense state” in Asia was not an end in itself. After it achieved military and economic autarchy in Asia, Japan in collaboration with other countries would emulate the “white” powers and rule over the entire globe. To work toward

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<sup>46</sup> Kōain [Asia Development Board], “Shina kensetsu kihon hōsaku” [Basic Plan of the Construction in China] (Document No. B-A-1-1-468), 2-3, September 30, 1942, *MFA Records*.



the ambitious goal, presumably Japan wanted to take part of the American continent as a stronghold and launching point for the next war. The abstract term of the *hakkō ichiu* in the various accounts of wartime Japan, including the Asia Development Board plan, was essentially associated with the imperialistic ambitions under which its sphere of military, economic, and cultural influences could ultimately be extended to the whole world. At the early phase of the war, however, such ambitions were not yet clearly envisioned.

Until its hold on Asia and some other parts of the world was firmly established, Japan should desperately avoid a race war with the “white” countries. Some of Japan’s leaders anticipated, however, that the next war would inevitably be a racial war, although whether Japan had to make an alliance with Germany or America was not clear. For example, the Governor-General Koiso Kuniaki (who became the premier later in 1944) told prince Higashikuni Naruhiko (the first prime minister after the war) on June 7, 1942 that a possible World War III would be a conflict between the Asian and white races.<sup>47</sup>

Meanwhile, the Japanese government detailed an occupation plan of China,

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<sup>47</sup> Higashikuni Naruhiko, *Higashikuni nikki: Nihon gekidōki no hiroku* [Higashikuni Diaries: A Secret Account of Japan during Its Turbulent Era] (Tokuma shoten, 1968), 107, 111.

which was called a “second youngest brother,” by the *Kōain*. As in Manchukuo and Japan, the Asia Development Board wanted China to adopt a monarchical system in the future, although the board realized that it would be difficult to persuade the Chinese to adopt the system right away. The *Kōain* plan claimed that the political system in China should be a central government, but that at the early stage, it would have to take a Soviet Union-style of decentralization until the Wang Jing-wei regime or Japan’s future “puppet” regime in China could strengthen its political basis. In order to effectively lead Japan’s “second youngest brother” in the political, economic, and cultural arenas, and deal with various public duties, the Asia Development Board estimated that Japan would have to send at least two million Japanese leaders and their families to China to guide the “Construction of a New Order” in that country.<sup>48</sup> As the imperial army advanced, certain Japanese elites also showed their imperialist tendencies by sending Japanese immigrants to foreign territories.

### **Toward a Racial Utopia**

Although the military government had differing ideas of war aims, certain former officials and retired military officers applied themselves to supporting

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<sup>48</sup> Kōain, “Shina kensetsu kihon hōsaku,” 7, 16-18, 22.

expansionist ideology and extending Japan's "living space" into the former Western colonies, similar to the Nazis' *Lebensraum* (literally "living space"). The "immigration method" of imperialism to establish the Yamato Race in the occupied territories and other parts of the world was popular during the early stages of the war. Some former government officials actively participated in national affairs by giving advice to the government for the future empire-building of Japan. Following the Western-style "colored" race exclusion policy, they claimed that certain territories found suitable for habitation were to be filled with Japanese immigrants in order to establish a pure Yamato Race state and prevent any others from taking up residence.

In the Japanese ideological narratives of imperialism, the purity of the Yamato Race was of the utmost importance as it was believed that blood mixing would inevitably diminish the Japanese. As the Japanese had more contact with the "inferior" races in the "Co-Prosperity Sphere," keeping the Japanese race pure would be the most important matter. Yamashita Okiie, former director of the Industrial Arts Bureau in the Ministry of Railroads and concurrently a member of the Council for the Construction of Greater East Asia, claimed in a proposal to the Japanese government on April 14, 1942 that it would be inappropriate for Japanese

commoners to migrate to areas with poor living conditions or tropical zones where the Yamato Race was particularly vulnerable to degradation. The retired official believed that only the leading class, capable of guiding the people and keeping their blood pure, should be sent to the “inferior” countries in the South Seas for the development of resources. He then suggested an idea to the government, recommending that they take a country with a mild climate to establish a colony that would later become Japan’s “second homeland.” He chose Australia as the most favorable place, believing that it was there for Japan as a “gift from heaven.” Yamashita argued that Japan should not at any cost allow the “different” races such as Koreans, Manchus, and Chinese to enter Japan’s “second homeland,” since Australia was to be constructed as a “utopia” reserved for the Yamato Race.<sup>49</sup>

However, there was a dual racial-economic threat a certain Asian race posed. Before and during the Pacific War, many Japanese officials viewed the Chinese in the occupied areas as a “formidable economic force.”<sup>50</sup> If Hitler chose the Jews as the most vulnerable group in his country, Yamashita sharpened his racial knife

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<sup>49</sup> Yamashita Okiie, “Kikakuin jichō Abe Genki kakka” [To His Excellency Abe Genki of Vice-President of Planning Board] (Document No. Hensei 66020010), [no page no. available], April 14, 1942, *Returned Documents*.

<sup>50</sup> Chihiro Tsutsui, “Our Southern Reconstruction Policy,” *Contemporary Japan*, Vol. XI, No. 12 (December 1942), 1751.

against the Chinese in particular. The successful execution of the “Co-Prosperity Sphere” thus depended on the elimination of all Chinese from Australia. Under the name of ethnic purity, the racist Matsushita wanted to keep the Chinese from entering into Japan’s “utopia,” vilifying them as “dreadful people” who used similar business practices as the Jews whom Hitler hated most. To construct a pure Japanese country, all existing races in Australia should ultimately be erased. To phase out the dominant “white” Australians from the nation, Yamashita viewed that the desirable solution was to send as many Japanese immigrants to Australia as possible, ultimately outnumbering the population of the “white” race therein. Yamashita’s ultimate goal in the “second homeland” was to create an industrial country which could provide the military-related goods Japan needed to continue pursuing its imperial agenda in the postwar era.<sup>51</sup>

Just as those Japanese elites were “guilty” of some of the same imperialist, economic ideologies as the Western nations, they were also guilty of the same racial exclusion policies as the “white” countries. Yamashita, however, was not the only who supported the “subdue Australia” plan. Other former high-ranking government officials jumped on the bandwagon led by the Western-style racial prejudice toward

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<sup>51</sup> Yamashita, “Kikakuin jichō Abe Genki kakka.”

the “colored” races. Soon after Pearl Harbor, Amau Eiji the former vice-minister of the Foreign Ministry (later chief of the Board of Information) began studying the “white Australia policy” and how the “white” Australians excluded the Japanese and other “colored” immigrants from entering the country. To Amau, the Australian exclusion policy looked like it could be helpful in learning how Japan could oust the “white” Australians from within, in case Japan included Australia as a member of the “Co-Prosperity Sphere” in the future.<sup>52</sup> Amau’s colleague and the former ambassador to Italy Shiratori Toshio had a lot to say about the “white Australia policy” and told the Japanese people in an article of the *Asahi* Newspaper on June 28, 1942 that Japan should conquer the country. “Without the seizure of it, the conclusion of the war is impossible,” claimed Shiratori. Perhaps he, too, wanted to take the mild climate country as a future economic base or a “second homeland” of Japan.<sup>53</sup>

Despite the popularity of the study on the “white Australia policy,” there was an underlying resentment toward Australia. Some Japanese viewed the country

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<sup>52</sup> Amau Eiji nikki shiryōshū kankōkai [Publishing Committee of Amau Eiji Diaries and Documents], ed., *Amau Eiji nikki shiryōshū (Dai yonkan)* [Diaries and Documents of Amau Eiji: Vol. 4] (Sōzōsha, 1982), 449.

<sup>53</sup> *Asahi shinbun*, June 28, 1942, 1.

as the root of the racial discrimination against Asian immigrants which started in the nineteenth century. Others believed that the Australian “closed-door policy” was executed in order to thwart Japan’s economic expansion, although Australia justified its actions by labeling Japan as a possible invader. Retired navy captain Konishi Tatehiko wrote in May 1942 that the “‘White Australia’ since [a] long time [ago] has been regarding Japan as its enemy...In recent times Australia’s antipathy toward Japan [has] been pronounced.”<sup>54</sup> But as they saw Japan as a potential threat long before Pearl Harbor, the Australians now viewed the Japanese armed forces as a real threat. Beginning in early 1942, Japan’s navy high command attacked Sidney Harbor and Port Darwin.

The ongoing attack on Australia made some Japanese elites feel that it was high time for Japan to take the British dominions. Konishi claimed that Australia should sever its connection with the United States and Britain and “participate in the growth of new life in the Pacific as a partner of Japan.”<sup>55</sup> He wanted Japan to take Australia and even New Zealand by force and send Japanese immigrants to the two new countries which could provide “living space” for the outlet of Japan’s

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<sup>54</sup> Tatehiko Konishi, “Australia and Co-Prosperity Sphere,” *Contemporary Japan*, Vol. XI, No. 6 (June 1942), 894.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 898-99.

overpopulation. Konishi claimed in sugar-coated words that Japan should take a leadership role in the British dominions for “common benefit” and had no intention of dominating them. He wanted to cover up Japan’s real ambitions under the name of “common benefit.” The number of Chinese immigrants should be regulated in Australia. Like Yamashita, Konishi felt threatened by the Chinese and claimed that the number of Chinese immigrants to Australia should be limited.<sup>56</sup> This idea was virtually no different than that of the “white Australia policy” in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, a policy that the Japanese had harshly denounced in their propaganda before and during the Pacific War. Nevertheless, during the early phase of the war Japanese propagandists repeatedly claimed Japanese “purity” regarding Japan’s war aims, as will be discussed in the following section.

### **Propaganda Agencies and Channels**

Japan’s war aims did not simply remain in the minds of officials. Successful campaigns to disseminate propaganda messages to target audiences tend to originate from a strong, centralized organization under unified leadership. The fact that the Japanese wartime government was extremely factional was well reflected in the

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid.



structure of propaganda institutions. Before turning to an analysis of propaganda dissemination of Japan's war objectives, we need to look at the wartime government's propaganda institutions and channels.

During the Pacific War, the strife between ministries prevented the Japanese government from establishing a single unified organization to oversee all propaganda efforts. Each ministry in the Japanese government would not permit a single agency to exercise absolute power over propaganda. After the establishment of the Japanese government's official propaganda agency and Board of Information (BI) in December 1940, the ministries still retained their own information departments on a small scale. The Japanese military in particular had become the single most powerful entity in the nation. Its privileged position was justified by the magnitude of its tasks, but the scope of its jurisdiction was never clearly defined. The Army Press Section was the principal agency that exercised control over the BI.

Despite its organizational defects, the BI played a considerable role in disseminating propaganda messages, including Japan's war aims throughout the Pacific War, to the Japanese populations. The public actually obtained many propaganda messages through the Board of Information. The agency itself issued

weekly pamphlets such as the *Weekly Report* (shūhō) and the *Pictorial Weekly Report* (shashin shūhō). These two publications reached almost every Japanese household through community councils and neighborhood associations, which passed on BI propaganda directives to the domestic audience. For example, one and a half million copies of the *Shūhō* were published at its peak and it became a text for community councils.<sup>57</sup>

On the eve of the Pacific War, Japan possessed one of the most sophisticated mass media networks in the world, which served as an important propaganda tool. The national and local newspapers had a daily circulation of about nineteen million copies: an average of more than one newspaper per household. And the national broadcasting service (NHK) reached about half the population with propaganda programmes: following America, Germany, and Britain, Japan was the fourth nation with the most radio receivers.<sup>58</sup> Once the war with the Allied powers broke out, the mass media served as the channel through which war news and

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<sup>57</sup> 'Tokyo daikūshū sensaishi' henshū iinkai [Editing Committee of the "Records of Great Air Raids in Tokyo and War Damages"], *Tokyo daikūshū sensaishi (Dai gokan)* [Records of Great Air Raids in Tokyo and War Damages (Vol. 5)] (Tokyo kūshū wo kiroku suru kai, 1974), 294.

<sup>58</sup> Shillony, *Politics and Culture in Wartime Japan*, 91; Gregory Kasza, *The State and the Mass Media in Japan, 1918-1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 253. In 1942, more than seven million Japanese households owned radio sets. See Nippon hōsō kyōkai [Japan Broadcasting Corporation], ed., *Rajio nenkan (Shōwa nijū ninen)* [Radio Year Book of 1947] (Taikūsha, 1989), 144.

government propaganda was delivered to each household.

The relationship between the government and private media was complicated. The Army and Navy Press Sections and the BI took control over the mass media. The Japan Broadcasting Corporation (NHK) and *Dōmei* News Agency were the two largest media for news dissemination, and they received detailed propaganda directives for individual propaganda programmes from the BI and often from the Army and Navy Press Sections. Although the propaganda activities of newspapers and magazines remained almost completely under the jurisdictions of these agencies, officials in the Home Ministry censored drafts before they were published. Yet the media never remained merely a passive tool for propaganda. The owners and chief-editors of the media became advisors to the BI, and journalists actively participated in government propaganda campaigns. During the Pacific War, as a wartime journalist recalled, the newspapers played a vital role as a “paper bullet” for national policy.<sup>59</sup>

The government received news on the current world situation from Japanese diplomats and *Dōmei* News Agency correspondents in the other Axis countries and

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<sup>59</sup> Takada Motosaburō, *Kisha no techō kara* [From the Notebooks of a Journalist] (Jiji tsūshinsha, 1967), 188.

in the neutral countries. Japanese propagandists learned the trends of foreign propaganda through radio monitoring posts in the Army, Navy, Foreign Office, and the *Dōmei* branch in the BI building. BI weekly meetings brought together representatives of the Army, Navy and other Ministries, and the media. Hence, all the participants were aware of the propaganda lines of other institutions. Based upon the directives of the BI, the mass media requested retired generals, journalists, professors, and other intellectuals in various arenas to broadcast or write articles for publication. Government officials, men in uniform, and intellectuals were sent as lecturers to cities and rural areas to disseminate the government's propaganda messages to the general population.

### **Propaganda Tactics and Plans**

Japanese government officials had believed even prior to the outbreak of the war with the Allied powers that Japan's real intentions were to be camouflaged with several abstract aims, and that major propaganda themes were to be repeated in domestic and foreign propaganda. Lieutenant Colonel Shimizu Moriaki of the Cabinet Information Bureau (CIB, a predecessor of the Board of Information) gave a

lecture on “thought war” in February 1938, which intended to educate middle-ranking officials and men in uniform. He emphasized that the real intention of propaganda must not be revealed to outsiders, and, referring to Hitler’s tactic, propaganda should be repeated a “thousand times.” The CIB held “Thought War Lectures” (*shisōsen kōza*) three times from 1938 through 1940 to educate the future propaganda warriors in the government and military.<sup>60</sup> Using such tactics prior to Pearl Harbor, propagandists placed Japan’s central war goals upon the “Construction of a New Order in East Asia” (from late 1940 on, the “Construction of a New Order in Greater East Asia”), and/or the “Construction of a Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere.”<sup>61</sup>

Most propaganda experts during the Pacific War were well aware of the importance of concealment and repetition, and in general this policy line was reflected in their war aims propaganda.<sup>62</sup> While during 1942 Japanese propagandists

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<sup>60</sup> Ogino Fujio, ed., *Jōhōkyoku kankei gokuhi shiryō (Dai rokkan)* [Top-Secret Documents of the Board of Information (Vol. 6)] (Fuji shuppan, 2003), 177; Naiseishi kenkyūkai [Association of Domestic Administration History], “Yokomizo Mitsuteru-shi sokkiroku (Ge)” [Stenographic Records of Mr. Yokomizo Mitsuteru’s Conversations (Vol. 2)], *Naiseishi kenkyū shiryō (Dai hyaku rokujyū ichi shū)* [Documents of Domestic Administration History (No. 161)] (Naiseishi kenkyūkai, October 29, 1973), 17.

<sup>61</sup> Yamada, ed., *Gaikō shiryō*, 272, 284.

<sup>62</sup> Yamamoto, et al eds., *Nihon masu komyunike-shon-shi*, 211.

often emphasized a brightly hopeful belief in a victorious future as long as the Japanese people maintained their fighting spirit, they also stressed the dark necessity for a long war. At this time, foreign criticism of Japan's war aims, emanating mostly from the people in the occupied areas and Allied propagandists, often influenced its domestic propaganda policy and expressed war goals. Concerned about later generations' judgment of Japan's war aims, the Japanese government justified its own actions by attributing the initial act of aggression to the enemy side, "no matter," wrote Major Nakajima Shōzō of the Army Press Section, "how one-sided and subjective a claim it [was]."<sup>63</sup> Even before the American "Hull Note" of November 1941 reached Japan, Tokyo had prepared for Japan's war aims to be announced to domestic and foreign audiences.

In preparation for war with the Allied powers, the Japanese government carefully reviewed which particular aims were appropriate for dissemination among the domestic and foreign audiences. A November 19th research plan of 1941, by the Foreign Affairs Ministry, revealed Japan's war objectives propaganda use in a most explicit way. The Foreign Office stressed in the plan that clarifying war goals was

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<sup>63</sup> Nakajima Shōzō, *Kokubō kagaku sōsho 10: Sendensen* [National Defense Science Series (Vol.10): Propaganda War] (Daiyamondosha, 1943), 67-68.

necessary in order to maintain unified public support throughout the war. The ministry viewed that the “self-defense” conception of the nation’s war goals was part of the conventional wisdom about war, because it was taken for granted that a nation would, of course, be concerned with defense. The Foreign Ministry claimed “Self-Preservation” as Japan’s most important war aim, emphasizing that the phrase expressed well the nature of the war with the Allied powers. The objective could appeal to the Japanese people’s reason and emotion. But the ministry showed a negative view of “Self-Defense,” because it was too narrowly defined to use for such a big war in the Pacific. Another problem was that Japan had frequently used the phrase for domestic and foreign audiences after the Manchurian Incident of 1931. Although one of the most effective propaganda strategies is repetition, a phrase might become meaningless if used *too* often.<sup>64</sup>

The best way to solve such problems was to mix “Self-Preservation” with a subsidiary rhetoric of “Self-Defense;” the newly combined war aim of “Self-Preservation and Self-Defense,” mixed again with various official war goals, could then be presented to domestic and foreign audiences. The Foreign Office

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<sup>64</sup> Nanyōkyoku [South Seas Bureau], “Nanpōsen no seikaku, sensō mokuteki ni kansuru ichi iken” [A View on the Nature of the War in the South Seas and War Aims] (Document No. B-A-7-0-352), 1-2, November 19, 1941, *MFA Records*.

examined the weak and strong points of war objectives and developed a set of propaganda phrases that would “protect” the primary war aim of “Self-Preservation and Self-Defense.” The Foreign Ministry recommended that the government begin using phrases such as “Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity,” “New Order,” and “Eternal Peace and Stability in East Asia.” All these phrases had been used in the war with China, so that Japan could justify striking the first blow. Foreign Ministry officials were convinced that aims such as “Construction of a New Order in East Asia” and “Establishment of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere,” which were employed in the Second Sino-Japanese War, were not appropriate justification or official aims for the Pacific War. They thought these phrases were too abstract and would not be successful in appealing to the Japanese people’s reason and emotions. Moreover, “Construction of a New Order in East Asia” in particular could give other Asian peoples the impression that Japan would meddle unnecessarily in their national affairs. For Foreign Ministry officials, the “Liberation of Asian Races” was not ideal for the primary war aim, because it might give the domestic audience an impression of Japan as altruistic. They feared that the war goal might lead foreign countries and other Asian ethnicities to misunderstand the war as a conflict between



the “white” and “colored” races. As a solution, they suggested that the “Liberation of Asian Races” should remain as an official aim, but propaganda should emphasize “War for the Self-Preservation and Self-Defense of the Empire.”<sup>65</sup> It is interesting to note that although Japan learned a lot of propaganda tactics which highly emphasized “emotion” from Nazi Germany, the Japanese Foreign Ministry stressed both “reason” and “emotion.”

Apparently, the purpose of combining such war aims was to lend a degree of flexibility to the government so that it could act according to the fluctuating military and diplomatic situations. Although “Self-Preservation and Self-Defense” served as Japan’s primary war objective for propaganda use and remained unchanged throughout the Pacific War, it should be noted that the aim of “Self-Preservation and Self-Defense” had many different meanings in Japanese wartime propaganda: for example, the protection of Japan proper, of the mainland and its colonies, of the currently-occupied areas in Asia, or of the whole of Asia. And it can also, by extension, be applied to the preservation of the *kokutai*, since a threat to Japan represented a threat to the emperor, the “divine” embodiment of the national essence or spirit.

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 3-5.

Meanwhile, when the Japanese government prepared for the propaganda plan, it never informed the public of the clear war information. The government's strict censorship prevented the people from perceiving current affairs correctly. On November 18, 1941, member of the House of Representatives Kimura Masayoshi "criticized" the premier Tōjō for the black-out of the war situation, calling it the "biggest political problem since the Sino-Japanese War [of 1937] in Japan."<sup>66</sup>

Except for only a few high-ranking officers and government officials, most Japanese people did not understand the current situation. When they listened to the radio announcement declaring the war against the Allied powers, the common Japanese citizen was apprehensive and possessed no clear idea of what the war was about. When they heard about the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the Japanese responses to the news varied. Some greeted it with excitement and even relief, believing that their uncertainty would soon be over. Others were surprised because they knew that America was the most powerful nation in the world. Even relatively well-informed politicians like Tsurumi Yūsuke who anticipated that there might soon be a war "had

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<sup>66</sup> Gaimushō chōsakyoku [Investigation Bureau of the Foreign Ministry], "Dai nana jū nana, dai nana jū hachi gikai ni okeru gaikō kankei shitsugi ōtō yōshi" [Questions and Answers on Foreign Affairs in the Seventy-Seventh and Seventy-Eighth Diet Sessions] (Document No. B-A-5-2-055), 23, January 1942, *MFA Records*.

not the slightest idea of an attack on Pearl Harbor.”<sup>67</sup>

Such differing reactions from the Japanese people caused concern among Japanese propagandists. Government propagandists feared that unless the public understood something of the important meaning of the war, they would become increasingly apathetic as the fighting dragged on. In Japanese propagandists’ eyes, civilian apathy would be very damaging to the effort to carry on a total war. To diminish the public’s worry, the propagandists emphasized the ultimate victory of Japan based upon the myth they had begun propagating after the war with China in 1937: that Japan had successfully overcome “every” national crisis throughout its history and securely safeguarded the “divine” nation under an “unbroken” imperial line. Government propaganda agencies were busy with the task of bringing public opinion at home to war pitch by using radio, newspapers, magazines, and other media. Japanese propagandists had to keep public morale high until Japan succeeded in shattering the fighting spirit of the Americans and British.

In propaganda policy-making and its implementation, Japanese propaganda experts, through police reports, were keenly aware of domestic morale and of the

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<sup>67</sup> Tsurumi Yūsuke, Diary entry for December 8, 1941, Record No. 3784, *Tsurumi Yūsuke monjo* [Tsurumi Yūsuke Papers], Kokkai toshokan kensei shiryōshitsu [Modern Japanese Political History Materials Room, National Diet Library], Tokyo (hereinafter cited as Tsurumi Yūsuke Papers).

responses to Japan's propaganda from the audience in the occupied territories in Asia. They were also aware of counterpropaganda emanating from the Allied powers and its effect on Japan's relations with the other Axis powers. All of these factors influenced the shaping of the politics of domestic propaganda and led the BI to note on December 11, 1941 that "domestic propaganda and foreign propaganda are inseparable."<sup>68</sup> There was thus no clear dividing line between domestic and foreign propaganda, although the presentation and turn of an argument was inevitably different depending on whether it was directed at the homefront or the outside world.

Upon the outbreak of the war, the Japanese government prepared a basic propaganda plan for domestic use. Based upon an army draft, on the day of Pearl Harbor the Board of Information completed the domestic propaganda plan "General Principles for Propaganda Policies for the Japan-Britain-America War" (*nichi-ei-bei sensō ni taisuru jōhō senden hōsaku taikō*), and it became the basic propaganda plan until October 1944 when the new Koiso cabinet drafted the "Outline of Policies for Public Opinion Guidance in the Phase of Decisive Battle" (*kessen yoron shidō hōsaku yōkō*). On the day after Pearl Harbor, the BI convened representatives from publishing companies to instruct them on how to best guide public opinion. The

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<sup>68</sup> Yamamoto, et al eds., *Nihon masu komyunike-shon-shi*, 211.

agency urged propaganda experts to emphasize the following three major principles for domestic propaganda: the present war was an unavoidable war for securing Japan's self-preservation and authority; the real cause of the war was the enemy's egoistic ambition of world conquest; and a new world order was to keep each nation in its proper place based upon the ideal of the "Eight Corners of the World Under One (Japanese) Roof" (*hakkō ichiu*).<sup>69</sup> These themes provided the backdrop for domestic propaganda messages about the war while concealing Japan's imperialist ambitions with the abstract terms "proper place" and "*hakkō ichiu*."

### **A Good, But Long War**

Following the basic propaganda line, BI propagandists themselves informed the public of Japan's war aims in vague, abstract ways. The conventional tactic of the dichotomous notion, a heavily slanted story of good and evil, was prevalent in Japan's propaganda messages of war goals. Propaganda experts attributed the Cause of the war to the Enemy, the Anglo-Americans most of all. Furthermore, the underlying belief among Japanese propagandists that the war would inevitably be a

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<sup>69</sup> Tsuneishi, *Daitōa sensō hiroku*, 11; Saegusa Shigeo, *Genron shōwa-shi—Danatsu to teikō* [A History of Press in Shōwa Era: Oppression and Resistance] (Nihon hyōron shinsha, 1958), 134.

long war caused them to tell the domestic audience that the war was not a rosy war.

Partly because of the lack of consensus over war aims in the military government and partly because of its propaganda tactics, Japanese propagandists told the people several kinds of war aims at the same time. The BI vice-chief Okumura Kiwao, one of the most famous government propagandists in the early phase of the war, told the people through *Radio Tokyo* on the day of Pearl Harbor that the objective of the war with the Allied powers was to construct a “New Order in Asia” based upon the ideal of the *hakkō ichiu* by ousting the “egoistic rule” of the Anglo-Saxons from Asia. In a passive sense, he continued, the war was a “War for Self-Defense” (*jiei sensō*), but it should be called a “Holy War” (*seisen*) in that Japan was fighting for the “liberation” of Asia from the “egoistic” Anglo-Americans.<sup>70</sup>

The ardent pan-Asianist later explained to his countrymen, often in abstract words, that the ultimate goal of Japan was to fulfill its “historical” destiny of extending the *hakkō ichiu* to the whole world. To fulfill Japan’s imperial mission, it must take raw materials from the South Seas, which would strengthen its national power toward “Self-Preservation and Self-Defense.” For Okumura, the strengthening of Japan by

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<sup>70</sup> Nippon hōsō kyōkai [Japan Broadcasting Corporation], *Kokusaku hōsō* [Broadcasting for National Policy], January 1942, 5, 7-8.

the acquisition of strategic war materials was not an end in itself, but a means for the ultimate “peace” and revival of East Asia. To achieve all of the goals, Japan should first crush the Anglo-Americans who had ruthlessly exploited the East for a number of years. The war thus would not end until all Western influences in the East were completely eliminated from Asia.<sup>71</sup>

Based upon the true war situation, the Army and Navy Press Sections and BI repeatedly reported the victorious news to the domestic audience. Throughout the entire nation, nationalism reached a new height and the people’s faith in ultimate victory flared ever higher. All citizens, pro-war or not, seemed caught up in the enthusiasm. Many Japanese devoted their pocket money to buying war bonds for more weapons. Prodded by the initial victory, some patriotic youths volunteered for the military and went to the front.<sup>72</sup>

Although the majority of the ordinary Japanese had no sophisticated vision of Japan’s future empire and left few records on their perceptions of Japan’s official

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<sup>71</sup> Quoted in “Significance of War of Greater East Asia,” *Japan Times & Advertiser*, January 31, 1942, 4.

<sup>72</sup> Tachikawa-city, Tokyo, “Beikoku senryaku bakugeki chōsadan chōsa jikō” [A Report for the U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey], [no page no. available], December 21, 1945, Reel #130, *U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey (Pacific): Records and Other Records, 1928-1947*, Microfilm Publications M1655, Institute of Economic Research, Hitotsubashi University, Japan (hereinafter cited as USSBS Records).

war aims, in the early phase of the war many school teachers and junior high school students nevertheless viewed Japan's war as a "holy" war for the "liberation" of Asia from the West.<sup>73</sup> More important, most Japanese people who had been indoctrinated to absolutely follow the emperor's order "had to" fight in the war, regardless of Japan's war aims. Any doubt of the emperor's "holy war" was not allowed, and there was no room to think of the war as an "aggressive war."<sup>74</sup> Yet the fundamental problem of Japan's war goals derived from their ambiguity. Even relatively well-educated college students could not understand the exact meaning of the *hakkō ichiu*, and whether the majority of the ordinary Japanese throughout the war had a clear perception of Japan's war aims seems doubtful.<sup>75</sup>

Government propagandists, also elated at the news of victory at Pearl Harbor and other islands in the Pacific, used the opportunity to take the initial step toward establishing Japan as the center of the "New World Order" by abolishing the

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<sup>73</sup> Eizawa, *'Daitōa kyōeiken' no shisō*, 200-1. According to the leading historians who spent their youth during the war, perhaps twenty percent of the Japanese truly believed in the war for the other Asian races. See Christopher Thorne, "Racial Aspects of the Far Eastern War of 1941-1945" in British Academy, *Proceedings of the British Academy (Volume LXVI, 1980)* (London: Oxford University Press, 1982), 371n.

<sup>74</sup> Nakadokoro Yutaka, *Nihon gunbatsu hishi: Sabakareru hi made* [A Secret History of Japan's Military Cliques: The Day Until They were Punished] (Osaka: Chūka kokusai shinbunsha, 1948), 212.

<sup>75</sup> Yamada Fūtarō, *Senchūha fusen nikki* [An Anti-War Diary of Yamada Fūtarō] (Kōdansha, 1985), 277.



use of the term *kyokutō* (Far East) in any official or unofficial statements. Okumura of the BI explained the danger of using the word when he encouraged the men in the mass media and the public to cooperate in boycotting the word from publications and daily conversations:

We urge that...newspapers and magazines as well as the public avoid employing the word '*kyokutō*,' which is a translation of the English word Far East. The word '*kyokutō*' arises from the conception of the British that England was the center of the world. It has its root in the old order dominated by the Anglo-Saxons. But to the Japanese and other people living in this part of the globe, '*kyokutō*' or Far East is right under our feet and is far from being Far East...The Japanese [Imperial] forces have achieved spectacular successes everywhere and it would be very inappropriate for the public to use this word that is a national disgrace. The derivation of a word should be given careful consideration. Usually it reflects some idea or world concept. We hope that the people will erase this word from the Japanese vocabulary.<sup>76</sup>

The BI's intention in banning the word *kyokutō* was to make the Japanese people feel proud of the sweeping victory of the imperial armed forces. However, Japanese propagandists perpetuated a genuinely contradictory depiction of the war. As fighting against the Allied powers continued, propagandists gave their optimistic vision of the future a physical presence in the form of the occupied territories in which Japan would begin "Construction of the Co-Prosperity Sphere" and "Establishment of the New Order." As the slogans "Construction," "Co-Prosperity

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<sup>76</sup> "Authorities Ask Word 'Kyokutō' Be Banned Because It Signifies British Anomaly," *Japan Times & Advertiser*, December 16, 1941, 1.

Sphere,” and “Liberation” often appeared in the government’s propaganda, the public became interested in the “construction” of the occupied areas. But the government told the people not to harbor any wishful thinking that the “liberation” of the former Western colonies which were rich in mineral and food resources would enrich the Japanese in the near future, because the war would be protracted. The view of a long war was also reflected in domestic propaganda. As they broadcast various accounts of Japan’s “construction” in Asia, the propagandists repeatedly admonished the public that the war would not be over soon, and the experts instead called it a “hundred-year war.”<sup>77</sup>

The government instead encouraged the people to work hard for war production, while taking pride in Japanese victories in the Pacific battlefields. In late January of 1942, the BI distributed copies of a “Rough Map of the Co-Prosperity Sphere in South Seas” (*nanpō kyōeiken yōzu*) to the Japanese people in order to educate them about the war situation and “deepen the knowledge of the South Seas areas further.” The people were encouraged to buy the map for ten-sen (equivalent to a tenth yen in the 1942 value). As the imperial army advanced, they drew a mark on

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<sup>77</sup> Quoted in Matsumura Shūitsu, “Kokuminyo hyakunen sensō no kakugo wa yoika” [Japanese People Must Prepare for a 100-Year War], *Asahi Shinbun*, July 7, 1942, 3.

the four territories total that were colored in on the map, representing the Asian colonies of the American, British, Chinese, and Dutch countries which had “encircled” Japan in the pre-Pacific War era.<sup>78</sup>

The Japanese government was convinced that the aim of the “Liberation of Asia” would make the Japanese public feel national pride as a liberator. From the very beginning, however, the government revealed disregard for its own rhetoric when it interfered with Japan’s political objectives concerning two of its colonies, Korea and Taiwan. Prime Minister Tōjō told Japanese representatives in the Diet on January 21, 1942 that Japan would in the future liberate two Western colonies, Burma and the Philippines, conditional upon their collaboration with Japan. His speech flooded newspapers and broadcasts in Japan and even reached foreign audiences in Asia. Japan, however, had to face emerging independence movements, particularly from the people in its own colonies. For example, some Korean people in Japan and Korea were influenced by the address to such a degree that they began voicing their desire for independence, believing that if Burma and the Philippines were going to be given a chance at freedom, Korea deserved the same opportunity.

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<sup>78</sup> Jōhōkyoku [Board of Information], ed. *Shūhō* [Weekly Report], No. 274, January 7, 1942, 21.

In the next month, however, the Japanese Special Higher Police arrested forty-four Koreans for the violation of the Peace Preservation Law, and from that time onwards, “considerable attention” was paid to the dangerous independence movements.<sup>79</sup> The “liberation” policy must not be applied to its own colonies on the grounds that the Koreans, for instance, had become “true Japanese” in Tōjō’s word.<sup>80</sup>

Japanese propagandists were conscious of the fact that Japan’s emphasis on the “Liberation of Asia” might incite independence movements in the occupied areas. The more they paid lip service to the aim, the more Asian people in Japan’s occupied territories would call for independence. If Japan did not free them quickly, moreover, it would confront criticism from Allied counterpropaganda for its contradiction between propaganda and actual reality. One of the possible solutions to the dilemma was to coin new phrases in order to deceive the people in Japan’s occupied territories. The government encouraged its propagandists to use the phrases “Burmese Construction for the Burmese” and “Asia for the Asiatics,” instead of referring to the word “independence,” since the latter term would “incite the tide of

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<sup>79</sup> Naimushō keihokyoku [Peace Preservation Bureau of the Home Ministry], *Tokkō geppō* [Monthly Report of the Special Higher Police], February 1942, 3, 84.

<sup>80</sup> Sanbō honbu, ed., *Sugiyama memo (Ge)*, 19.

self-determination of ethnics.”<sup>81</sup>

Meanwhile, the Japanese imperial armed forces continued to engulf the former Western colonies and were about to occupy Britain’s stronghold in Singapore. On February 11, 1942, the alleged Founding Day of Japan, the BI declared that the national policy of the *hakkō ichiu* was being embodied by the “Greater East Asian War.”<sup>82</sup> Since many people wondered about the definition of the “Co-Prosperity Sphere,” the Japanese government now explained the ideal of the “Construction of a Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere” to the domestic audience.

In explaining the “Co-Prosperity Sphere,” Japanese propagandists stressed a Japanese-style family hierarchical order. As a typical propaganda tactic, propaganda experts at first attacked the Anglo-American “old order” by contrasting it with Japan’s “new order.” On February 16, 1942, the First Division Chief of the Board of Planning Akinaga Tsukizō broadcast through *Radio Tokyo* to his listeners that until that time, the Anglo-American “old order” had made world history by using beautiful double-standards, empty slogans such as justice, humanity, and

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<sup>81</sup> Hoshino Tsutomu, *Hōdō sarenakatta nyūsu—Senji jōhō yoroku* [Unreleased News: An Additional Wartime Information] (Keyaki shuppan, 1994), 155, 158.

<sup>82</sup> Jōhōkyoku, ed. *Shashin shūhō* [Pictorial Weekly Report], No. 207, February 11, 1942, 2.

self-determination.<sup>83</sup> Vilifying Anglo-American colonialism in Asia, he asserted that the old world had been sustained by power politics, while the fundamental principle of the “Construction of a Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere” was not based upon power, but upon the Japanese-style hierarchical order. Advertising Japan’s war as a “war for construction” under the spirit of the *hakkō ichiu*, the ideal of the “construction” was based upon the notion of the hierarchical family system (*ie*) which was based upon blood ties. Akinaga made it clear that following Japan’s domestic hierarchical order, Japan must be the leader, and that it would rule and all others in the Japanese occupied areas would obey.<sup>84</sup> From the Japanese point of view, it looked logical to emphasize family hierarchy with Asian people, since many Asian nations already adhered to similar Confucian systems.

Since the Japanese elite had clarified in their secret plans of war goals that they were going to juxtapose the sanctity of the *kokutai* against the corrupting influence of Western thought, government propagandists now felt a need to explain Japan’s policies and aims to the people by employing the two subjects, the “national polity” and Western ideas. As government officials had stressed since the 1930s,

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<sup>83</sup> Nippon hōsō kyōkai, *Kokusaku hōsō*, April 1942, 12.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 13.

during the Pacific War ideological warfare focused upon a war between foreign beliefs and Japanese thoughts. For the Japanese government, as Okumura Kiwao declared, the main ideological front in the “Greater East Asian War” was a conflict between the Japanese spirits based upon the *kokutai* and Anglo-American ideologies centered on individualism, materialism, socialism, communism, etc.<sup>85</sup> To “liberate” Asia from the West, the Japanese people should first purge Western thought from their minds, while showing unwavering loyalty to the emperor. By so doing, Japan could achieve economic autarchy through “Co-Prosperity,” and culturally, it could revive authentic Asian culture and thereby contribute to the creation of a new world culture.<sup>86</sup>

The Japanese government also paid attention to the people’s responses to Japan’s war aims. A BI plan drafted on March 3, 1942 stated that the government should guide the people to understand Japan’s mission “without any question about Japan’s war aim.”<sup>87</sup> The agency wanted to prevent any possible domestic dissent

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<sup>85</sup> Okumura Kiwao, *Sonnō jōi no kessen* [The Decisive War to Revere the Emperor and Expel the Barbarians] (Ōbunsha, 1943), 38, 150.

<sup>86</sup> Nippon hōsō kyōkai, *Kokusaku hōsō*, April 1942, 14-15.

<sup>87</sup> Akazawa Shirō, et al eds., *Shiryō nihon gendaishi 13: Taiheiyō sensōka no kokumin seikatsu* [Documents: Modern Japanese History (Vol. 13): People’s Lives during the Pacific War] (Ōtsuki shoten, 1985), 192.

and criticism of Japan's ulterior war goals, although most Japanese were under strict public opinion control and were thus unable to voice any dissent. In the absence of the police, some Tokyo university students "laughed loudly" upon listening to a lecture on January 21, 1942 on a "New Order" delivered by the political scientist Yabe Teiji. He later lamented in his diary: "Indeed, Japan's university is far behind the times."<sup>88</sup>

These intelligent students did not hold any illusion that Japan could soon defeat the powerful country of America. Despite the initial optimism of Japan's war prospect, according to a wartime journalist, most Japanese took a cautious stance toward the conquest of the United States. They believed that the war-wearied Americans would eventually demand a peace compromise, an idea which derived largely from the underlying belief that Westerners were a spiritually weak people.<sup>89</sup>

During the early phases of the war, however, many intellectuals were enthusiastic about Japanese imperialism. Their discussions of a "Co-Prosperity Sphere" divided this geographic sphere into two subspheres: the inner sphere included Northeastern Siberia, Manchukuo, East Mongolia, North and South China,

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<sup>88</sup> Yabe, *Yabe Teiji nikki (Ginnan no kan)*, 493.

<sup>89</sup> Masuo Kato, *The Lost War: A Japanese Reporter's Inside Story* (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1946), 88.



French Indo-China, Burma, Malay, Thailand, the Dutch East-Indies, and the Philippine Islands; the outer sphere consisted of Australia and India. The scope of a “Co-Prosperity Sphere” had expanded according to the progress of the war.<sup>90</sup>

The Japanese government remained cautious about encouraging such enthusiasm. They felt that Japan’s imperialistic dreams should not be openly discussed by intellectuals and propagandists in particular, due to counterpropaganda emanating from the enemy. From the beginning of the war, the Japanese government knew that Anglo-American propagandists were listening to Japanese domestic and foreign broadcasts, as well as reading newspapers and magazines. The BI warned its propagandists in the March 3<sup>rd</sup> plan of 1942 that they should “strictly exclude” any word from propaganda messages that would lead the Japanese people to think of Japan’s economic reorganization in the occupied territories as an egoistic measure which merely replicated the policies and attitudes of Anglo-Americans.<sup>91</sup> If Allied counterpropaganda continued to expose Japan’s imperialistic designs to the people in its occupied territories, who had been told by Japanese propagandists that Japan was fighting only for the “liberation” of Asia, the occupied might not believe Japanese

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<sup>90</sup> Nishimura Shinji, *Daitōa kyōeiken* [Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere] (Hakubunkan shuppan, 1942), 53.

<sup>91</sup> Akazawa Shirō, et al eds., *Shiryō nihon gendaishi 13*, 192.

propaganda any more. Any carelessly constructed propaganda messages could be turned into Anglo-American counterpropaganda aimed at foreign audiences in Asia.<sup>92</sup>

Yet Japanese propagandists continued to appeal to a future vision of construction in the occupied areas by holding special events for the Japanese public. To achieve its imperialist ambitions, first of all, Japan needed to educate the public and the future leaders who would be sent to the “Co-Prosperity Sphere.” The Japanese government knew that the key to successful empire-building was in gaining the full support and interest of the common people. Toward this end, the *Fukuoka nichichi* Newspaper, supported by the BI, held the Exhibition of the Greater East Asia Construction in Fukuoka-city from September 20 to November 8, 1942. The exhibition booths were filled with items related to the future vision of the acquisition of natural resources in Asia, and scenes of the Asian peoples cooperating with

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<sup>92</sup> Since Pearl Harbor, American propagandists had labeled the Japanese slogans “Co-Prosperity Sphere” and “Asia for the Asiatics” simply as the “Co-Poverty Sphere” and “Asia for the Japanese” and broadcast the American version to the people in the Japanese occupied areas. U.S. government experts in collaboration with the British Information Ministry repeatedly appealed to the Asian audiences that the Japanese slogan “*hakkō ichiu*” was a falsehood. “While the Japanese allege that it means ‘all the world living as one family under one (Japanese) roof,’ it is actually a slogan of world domination by Japan.” Ironically, each belligerent across the Pacific Ocean vilified the other as being bent upon world conquest. Political Warfare (Japan) Committee, “Joint Anglo-American General Policy Outline for Japan and Japanese Occupied Territories,” 5, November 25, 1942, Box 600, Entry 381, RG 208, *Records of the Office of War Information*, National Archives, Maryland (hereinafter cited as OWI Records).

Japan's leadership. However, the BI attempted to establish some sense of reality to the exhibition and admonished the newspaper company not to give the people an impossibly optimistic vision which could not be fulfilled soon.<sup>93</sup>

As the war economy worsened, the growing tendency at home was that many Japanese people wanted the materials in the occupied areas. Government propagandists repeatedly warned the public that they should not hope to acquire the materials in the South Seas right away. In a September 1942 article of the popular magazine *Hi no de*, Shimono Nobuyasu of the Fourth Division in the BI told his countrymen that if they had such wishful thinking at the present, it would be an unpatriotic idea.<sup>94</sup>

In addition to eradicating the people's desire for raw materials, the Japanese government also saw the need to "reeducate" them on the issue of racial hierarchy. Japanese officials realized that the Japanese should be a respectful people in the

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<sup>93</sup> Fukuoka nichichi shinbunsha [Fukuoka Daily Newspaper Company], "Jōhōkyoku shidō daitōa kensetsu daihakurankai" [Information Board Guided Great Exhibition of Greater East Asia Construction] (Document No. I-1-6-3-002), 1, 3, May 19, 1942, *MFA Records*; Jōhōkyoku daigobu daiikka [First Section of the Fifth Division, Board of information], "Fukuoka nichichi shinbunsha shusai daitōa kensetsu hakurankai shidō yōkō" [Guidance Outline of Exhibition of Greater East Asia Construction Hosted by the Fukuoka Daily Newspaper Company] (Document No. I-1-6-3-002), 1, May 20, 1942, *MFA Records*.

<sup>94</sup> Shimono Nobuyasu, "Jikyoku hayawakari montō" [Questions and Answers for the Quick Understanding on Current Affairs], *Hi no de* [Sunrise], Vol. 11, No. 9 (September 1942), 98-99.

occupied areas. If Japan opted for “hard” over “soft” power, it would eventually meet enmity from the occupied people.<sup>95</sup> While there was little doubt in their minds of Japanese racial superiority, many Japanese had used their higher status to exploit local people in the colonies and occupied areas such as Korea, Manchuria, and China. If Japan wanted to be the leader of the “Co-Prosperity Sphere” in Asia, the Japanese should not be continuing the practice of exploitation and abuse previously established by Western imperialists.<sup>96</sup> The Japanese people as future leaders of all Asian peoples should not be viewed as another exploiter. The ability to attract the occupied was thus crucial to Japan’s national interest and victory.

To accomplish its ambitious goals in the occupied areas, Japan should defeat the Allied powers and keep the public in a high fighting spirit. By late 1942, however, the Japanese imperial army gradually became deadlocked with the powerful American troops in the Pacific. The American landing on Guadalcanal in August 1942 was the first step of an American offensive, but the Imperial Headquarters made no announcement of the news until mid-November. Thanks to

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<sup>95</sup> The term “soft power” was coined by Joseph Nye, the former dean of the Kennedy School of Management at Harvard University. For his interesting analysis of soft power, see Joseph Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004).

<sup>96</sup> Itō Takashi, ed., *Takagi Sōkichi nikki to jōhō: Ge* [Takagi Sōkichi’s Dairies and Information (Vol. 2)] (Misuzu shobō, 2000), 652.

the disinformation, the public remained optimistic about the war. However, they began to show that they were lacking the proper war spirit.<sup>97</sup> Aware that the exaggerated war reports could lessen the people's desire for the "war for construction," the navy high command now intervened by cautioning its official spokesman Captain Hirahide Hideo, who had become something of a national hero for his exaggerated reports of Japanese victories, to be "careful of [his] words" after he continuously announced in radio broadcasts that Japan was planning a naval review off New York Harbor.<sup>98</sup>

To alleviate the anxiety of the worsened war economy and make the people feel pride in their role as leaders of Asia, the Japanese government continued to encourage Japanese writers to write on Japan's leadership in Asia. Since late 1942, however, the claim of leadership confronted severe criticism from its "little brothers" in the "Co-Prosperity Sphere." The Japanese government could not help but to tone down the use of the slogan "Japan as Leader of Asia" in domestic and foreign propaganda. Relations between Thailand and Japan became particularly aggravated. For Thailand, as a sovereign nation, Japan's leadership in Asia was intolerable.

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<sup>97</sup> Higashikuni, *Higashikuni nikki*, 112.

<sup>98</sup> Kato, *The Lost War*, 88.

Because of the worsening war economy in Thailand, moreover, its people showed hatred against Japan, and Anglo-American propagandists capitalized on Thai sentiments for a propaganda attack against Japan, stressing that the current war economy in Thailand was due to Japan's exploitation of the country.<sup>99</sup> The Japanese government ordered its propagandists to drop the outright expression of Japanese leadership in future publications. Matsushita Masatoshi, a professor at St. Paul's University (now Rikkyō University in Tokyo), wrote in December that Japan would "not necessarily" remain the leader of its neighboring nations, and that Japan had already declared that it would "grant" independence to the Philippines and Burma in due course. The shrewd Matsushita, however, emphasized the inevitability of Japan's leadership in the constructional stage:

It is well known that an epochal task cannot be accomplished unless it is directed by a leader...During the constructional stage, it is necessary that Japan should exert its utmost to lead other nations toward the goal of common prosperity...Japan has no other alternative but to assume the role of a leader-nation in this part of [the] globe. This does not mean that it regards its partners as inferior to itself; on the contrary, it recognizes them as equal contributors in the growth of interdependence, which is rapidly crystallizing.<sup>100</sup>

Matsushita's justification meant that until Japan's imperial ambitions were

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<sup>99</sup> Hoshino, *Hōdō sarenakatta nyuusu*, 39.

<sup>100</sup> Masatoshi Matsushita, "Greater East Asia International Law," *Contemporary Japan*, Vol. XI, No. 12 (December 1942), 1715, 1717-18.

accomplished, relations between Japan and the other members of the “Co-Prosperity Sphere” were not to be governed by the principle of national equality. Such a dominant and controlling position could continue for a long time, as the Japanese government itself had frequently declared that the war could continue even for a “hundred years.” The military situation in the Pacific would force Japan to gradually concede a more equal footing to all Asian nations as it increasingly needed their aid in the struggle against the Anglo-American powers. From late 1942 onward, criticism from Japan’s “brothers” forced Japanese propagandists to further tone down the claim of Japan’s leadership over other Asian nations.<sup>101</sup>

Worse, the United States had launched its counteroffensive, attacking Japanese-controlled islands one after another, and sinking and disabling Japanese battleships, which were of vital importance as carriers of goods and manpower. The Japanese forces in the Pacific were now on the defensive. As Colonel Matsutani Makoto of the Army Chief of Staff Office recalled, the period between late 1942 and early 1943 was a significant turning point for Japan’s war tide.<sup>102</sup> Given the swift and successful American counteroffensive, Japan had no choice but to change both

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<sup>101</sup> Akazawa, et al eds., *Shiryō nihon gendaishi 13*, 171-72.

<sup>102</sup> Matsutani, *Daitōa sensō shūshū no shinsō*, 30.

its war objectives and propaganda tactics.

### **Conclusion**

From late 1941 and 1942, the view on Japan's war objectives among the Japanese ruling elite was polarized due in large part to the differing ideas of the nature of the war and war strategies. Nevertheless, Japan's dramatic victory in the Pacific gave its war leaders and other elites confidence in pursuing expansionism. As seen in the official war name of the "Greater East Asian War," some Japanese elites envisioned that Japan's advance would reach far beyond Asia. One of the most attractive countries for conquest, according to certain elites outside the government, was Australia, where they wanted to create a racially pure state only for the Yamato Race. Tokyo's propaganda line was central to the aims "Self-Preservation and Self-Defense," "Establishment of a New Order," and "Construction of Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere" in order to camouflage Japan's actual war objectives. Japan's ultimate goal was to achieve the "Construction of a New World Order" based upon the principle of *hakkō ichiu*.

However, Japan's war leadership took a tremendously cautious stance and



avored “go-slow imperialism,” believing that the war would inevitably be a long war. In order to create a “high level national defense state” in Asia, Japanese propagandists repeatedly warned the public that they should not have any wishful thinking of quickly gaining ownership and access to the materials in the occupied territories. The Japanese people were instead told that they should purge Western thought from their minds while showing unconditional loyalty to the *kokutai*. The attack upon Anglo-American ideas was intended to counter the “corrupted-self” image of the Japanese people who wished for the loot from the South Seas. Such propaganda was also aimed at preventing counterpropaganda from Anglo-American countries and “reeducating” the egoistic, individualistic Japanese people to be leaders of Asia. In achieving the national goal of creating a “high level national defense state,” the up-grade of “morality” among the Japanese people became a significant, urgent task for the Japanese government. By emphasizing their morality, the Japanese could act as leaders of the world when Japan achieved its ultimate goal of the *hakkō ichiu* in the future.

## Chapter Two

### **Redefining War Aims and the “Pacific Charter” (1943)**

As Japan continued to lose in the Pacific, the Japanese government realized that its initial imperialist dream to advance far beyond Asia would be difficult to achieve. As early as the defeat at Guadalcanal Island in February 1943, the scope of Japanese imperialistic ambitions was gradually restricted to the currently-occupied territories. More emphasis was placed on the defense of Asia under the slogans of “Self-Preservation and Self-Defense” or “Liberation of Asia” than on the pursuit of an imperialist policy under the name of the “Establishment of a New World Order.”

In order to continue pursuing such imperialistic ambitions in the occupied areas, however, the military government held the Greater East Asian Conference in November in an attempt to garner domestic unity, consolidate the people in occupied territories, and counter perceived Anglo-American war aims such as world domination. It has been said that Japan’s claims of “mutuality, cooperation, economic development, prosperity, autonomy, and self-determination” at the

conference reflected “ideals that went back to the shared Wilsonian internationalism of the 1920s.”<sup>1</sup> But whether such ideals can be taken at face value remains a question for further historical investigations. Despite having supported principles at the conference that were outwardly similar to the Wilsonian ideal of an open world, the discussions in Japanese government circles in preparation for the Greater East Asian Conference in fact revealed Japan’s intention to create a “high-level national defense state” emulating the position Western powers had held in Asia. Japan continuously sought to secure important war materials in the occupied areas and prevent them from going to the outside world. This chapter examines the Japanese government’s reformation of war goals from early to late 1943 and its war aim propaganda directed at the Japanese people. The debacle on Guadalcanal caused the government to adopt a total war system, just as did Nazi Germany after the defeat in Stalingrad in February of that year. Chapter Two will articulate mainly how such internal and external war situations influenced the politics of Japan’s war goals and how the change was reflected in domestic propaganda. In achieving Japan’s war objectives, the military government was increasingly aware that the Japanese people should remain in a high war spirit. Before turning to the subject of strategic war aims,

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<sup>1</sup> Iriye, *Power and Culture*, 120-1.

we need to briefly look at how the government tried to unite the public who lacked much hatred of the enemy.

### **Withdrawal from Guadalcanal and the Anti-Western Culture Campaign**

Within a year after the opening of the war with the Allied powers, Japanese war spirit began to decline. After the Midway debacle in early June of 1942, Imperial Headquarters continued to manufacture war reports and disseminated them to the Japanese people on the theory that no information should be given out which was unfavorable to Japan or favorable to the enemy. Although the American landing on Guadalcanal Island made some intellectuals, who learned about it through various informal channels, question Japan's prospects of victory, most Japanese remained almost completely ignorant of the current war situation, mainly due to the black-out of war information.<sup>2</sup> To many Japanese people, moreover, the war front was still far from the homeland. The Japanese lack of vigilance in the midst of the war looked extraordinary even to foreigners in Japan. The French journalist Robert Guillain, who lived in Japan throughout the war, recalled the general Japanese attitude toward

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<sup>2</sup> Niigata-ken keisatsu buchō [The Police Chief of the Niigata Prefecture], "Beikokugun senryaku bakugeki chōsa shiryō sōfu ni kansuru ken" [A Report for the U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey], 1-2, November 28, 1945, Reel #126, *USSBS Records*.

the war: “The war? Japan had been waging it and talking about it for ten years without ever seeing it. It was something that happened far away, that was always successful and that one never [experienced at] the Japanese homeland.”<sup>3</sup>

Such public attitudes toward the war and the military situation in the Pacific battlefields sounded alarms to the Japanese government. In order to unify the public and foster hatred toward the enemy, the government launched a large-scale anti-Western campaign. On December 4, 1942, the press released the news that in the vice-ministers’ meeting on the previous day, the BI vice-chief Okumura Kiwao denounced the Japanese people for their lack of animosity toward the enemy.<sup>4</sup> As was often the case, artificial harmony was the prerequisite for a uniform, authoritarian state propaganda backed up by force and coercion.

Such apathetic public attitudes toward the war were hurdles that must be overcome if Japan wanted to fight in a long war. The main emphasis of propaganda was now concerned with current popular morale at home. Determined to intensify “thought warfare” on January 11, 1943, the BI vice-chief Okumura declared in a

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<sup>3</sup> Robert Guillain, *I Saw Tokyo Burning: An Eyewitness Narrative from Pearl Harbor to Hiroshima*, trans. William Byron (New York: Doubleday and Company, 1981), 55-56.

<sup>4</sup> Quoted in “Tekigaishin wo kōyō seyo” [Lift Animosity against the Enemy], *Asahi shinbun*, December 4, 1942, 1.

vice-ministers' meeting that there was every indication that the war was becoming a thought war. On the next day, newspapers painted their front pages with Okumura's emphasis on thought warfare which was closely related to anti-Western feelings and culture.<sup>5</sup>

Japanese propaganda experts were truly concerned about the "pro-American" sentiments at home. As an American POW in Japan observed in January 1943, unlike Japanese POW guards, most Japanese civilians and even soldiers did not show much hostility toward him.<sup>6</sup> Almost everyday, the press complained about the "sentimental" attitude shown by many Japanese toward Allied prisoners of war. In response to such pro-American sentiments, Army Press Section Lieutenant Colonel Akiyama Kunio asked in a February article of the *Hi no de* magazine, "How can we hereafter continue to fight in a hundred-year war?"<sup>7</sup> By repeatedly insisting that pro-Western feelings were a barrier to Japan's war efforts, the Japanese government was laying the groundwork for domestic unity in order to

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<sup>5</sup> "Bei, hisshi no sendensen ni" [America is All in Propaganda War], *Asahi shinbun*, January 12, 1942, 1.

<sup>6</sup> Frank Grady and Rebecca Dickson, *Surviving the Day: An American POW in Japan* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1997), 102-5.

<sup>7</sup> "Bei-ei no bōryaku senden wo abaku" [Discloses Anglo-American Propaganda], *Hi no de*, Vol. 12, No. 2 (February 1943), 42.

fight in a long war.

Not surprisingly, Anglo-American culture came under attack. To Japanese officials, the enemy culture was the hotbed of pro-Western sentiments among the Japanese people. Yet another important cause of anti-Western culture was that whenever a military campaign failed, the military government needed to search for a scapegoat, and foreign culture came in handy. By blaming Western culture, Japan's war leaders also tried to distract the people's attention from the worsened war economy at home. The BI and Home Ministry jointly forbade the people to listen to American and British music, particularly American jazz. On January 27, 1943, the government compiled a list of one thousand songs to be banned from Japan in order to "resolutely sweep away Anglo-American color."<sup>8</sup> On the same day, the BI's weekly propaganda pamphlet *Shūhō*, which was circulated throughout the country, assured the Japanese people that the current war was not simply a war fought with physical weapons, but a war of the mind where the ultimate goal was the annihilation of Anglo-American thought. But the Japanese government was realistic, as well as opportunistic. If something was considered beneficial to popular morale, it survived the prohibition. A few English tunes such as *The Last Rose of Summer* and

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<sup>8</sup> Jōhōkyoku, ed. *Shūhō*, No. 328, January 27, 1943, 16, 19.

*Home, Sweet Home* were permitted as long as they were sung in Japanese, since they had been familiar to the Japanese for so long that no harm could come from these songs of Western origin.<sup>9</sup>

Even the English language came under attack. The army, through the Education Ministry, forced book publishers to revise English textbooks. Any content that praised the enemy or was unfavorable to the wartime situation was deleted. For example: “Great” from “Great Britain” and “Franklin was a wise man.” The sentence “Englishmen have four meals a day” disappeared from textbooks, since such a statement might discourage the Japanese who were suffering from food shortages. Although there was no national prohibition against English lessons in the schools, the hours of teaching were drastically reduced. Yet some army officers kept speaking certain military terms in English, and the students in the military academies continued to learn English up to the end of the war. In theory, English classes in other schools were never abolished. What Japanese leaders wanted was not the elimination of English, but elimination of Anglo-American thought from the Japanese mind.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ōmura Kiyoshi, et al eds., *Eigo kyōiku-shi shiryō (Dai nikan)* [Documents on the



As the war situation deteriorated, one way of maintaining civilian morale was to attack the symbols of the Anglo-American nations. To foster animosity against Anglo-Americans, from February 1943 onward the army poster with the phrase “Until the Enemy is Crushed” (*uchite shi yamamu*) was displayed throughout the country in welcoming the 38th anniversary of the Army Day. The colored poster showed a Japanese soldier grinding the American and British flags into the dust and charging forward to bayonet any and all enemies that stood in his way. Newspapers and magazines reprinted the poster, and the slogan on it was spread at a high speed throughout the country.<sup>11</sup> Under the direction of the government, various methods of making the people step on the Star Spangled Banner and Union Jack appeared in Tokyo and rural areas. Large American and British flags were painted at the intersections of Ginza, Tokyo’s Broadway, so that the enemy colors were trampled under foot by all who passed. When children bought toy guns, as a Chinese student in Japan witnessed, some shops would give them wooden statues of Winston

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History of English Education (Vol. 2)] (Tokyo hōrei shuppan, 1980), 831; Ikejima Shinpei, *Zasshi kisha* [A Magazine Journalist] (Chūō kōronsha, 1977), 126; Inamura Matsuo, *Kyōkasho chūshin shōwa eigo kyōiku-shi* [On Textbooks—A History of English Education in Shōwa Era] (Kairyūdō, 1986), 25, 33.

<sup>11</sup> Quoted in *Nippon Times*, February 24, 1943, 1.

Churchill and Franklin Roosevelt for target practice.<sup>12</sup>

In addition, atrocity stories which were allegedly or actually committed by the enemy troops in the Pacific were widely circulated in Japan. One of the atrocity campaigns claimed that deceased Japanese soldiers in Guadalcanal were rolled under an American tank, intending to inscribe American cruelty in the minds and hearts of the Japanese who were trying to honor their war dead. In a March article of the *Hi no de* magazine, the *Dōmei* News Agency reporter Nakajima Yoshiharu vilified those American soldiers as “wild beasts in arms.”<sup>13</sup>

Such hate campaigns were not so popular among the Japanese elite and some ordinary people.<sup>14</sup> Having heard of the violation against the enemy colors, retired admiral Yamamoto Eisuke expressed concern about the negative effects of the hate propaganda in a letter to Lord Keeper of the Privy Seal Kido Kōichi on March 13, 1943. Yamamoto urged Kido to tell the authorities to stop such campaigns as soon as possible, saying that unless violations against Anglo-American flags were

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<sup>12</sup> “Japanese Picture American, Rascal Who Fears Death,” *Times Record*, February 24, 1944, 8.

<sup>13</sup> Nakajima Yoshiharu, “Kichiku bei-ei no kamen wo hagu” [Strips a Mask of Anglo-American Devils], *Hi no de*, Vol. 12, No. 3 (March 1943), 77.

<sup>14</sup> Satō Shinichi, “Senjika no hyōgo” [Wartime Slogans], *Senden* [Propaganda], Vol. 54 (April 1956), 28; Yoko Matsuoka, *Daughter of the Pacific* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1952), 181.

stopped right away, the enemy countries would also utilize similar tactics against the “divine” emperor in an attempt to foster their people’s animosity toward Japan.<sup>15</sup>

Witnessing such hate campaigns, the famous diplomatic critic and “liberal” writer Kiyosawa Kiyoshi merely wrote off the Japanese propagandists as a people with “feudal ideas” and said on March 22: “The aim of the war must be much higher than such emotions. It is impossible to achieve the construction of a new world order with the old thoughts of revenge.”<sup>16</sup> Perhaps Kiyosawa did not know that the government was in the process of shifting emphasis from the “Construction of a New World Order” to a new war goal.

### **Collapse of the System of a “New World Order”**

By early 1943, the Japanese government determined that the ideal aim of a “New World Order” should be changed into a realistic war goal. This shift was in large part due to the aggravated war situation in Europe and the Pacific. True, Japan’s war planners believed that the military could achieve victory by the end of 1942, but this depended heavily on Nazi Germany’s triumph in Europe. Japan’s

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<sup>15</sup> Kido nikki kenkyūkai, ed., *Kido Kōichi kankei monjo*, 594.

<sup>16</sup> Kiyosawa Kiyoshi, *Ankoku nikki (I)* [A Diary of Darkness (Vol. I)] (Hyōronsha, 1976), 51, 54.

original plan following Pearl Harbor was to bring Britain to its knees by cooperating with the other two Axis nations, thereby causing America to lose its will to fight to the end of the war.<sup>17</sup> But such ambitions now looked difficult to achieve, in part because Britain (and Russia) continued to resist the Nazis. This situation in Europe made Japan's leaders feel that the establishment of a "New World Order" was virtually impossible.

Equally important, the negative reactions to the Japanese rule from the occupied areas made the Japanese government change its national war policy and propaganda. Japan found itself on the defensive, as Asian people in the Japanese occupied territories showed outright criticism of the Japanese. The current oppressive rule by the Japanese troops was in no way reassuring to the occupied territories whose citizens observed that like former Western colonists, the new rulers were not beneath hubris and self-interest. The price of the oppressive and exploitative policy in those areas was Asian enmity against Japan. For example, the Thai people often argued that the Japanese would "gain something in the Greater East Asian War, but what would Thailand get?" Such Asian sentiments might influence their attitude toward Japan's propaganda, and not surprisingly, Japanese

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<sup>17</sup> Tanaka, *Nihon gunbatsu antō-shi*, 168-69.

movies had already lost popularity in China and Thailand.<sup>18</sup> The occupied often criticized Japan for its sugar-coated slogans. In Indonesia, for instance, the people began to interpret Japan's catchphrases "Asia for Asia" and "Leader of Asia, Japan" as "Asia for Japan" and "Exploiter of Asia, Japan."<sup>19</sup> Perhaps the reactions of the people in those areas influenced Japan's domestic (and foreign) propaganda.<sup>20</sup> The claim of establishing a "New World Order" gradually disappeared from internal propaganda. Claude Buss, former U.S. diplomat of the High Commissioner's Office in the Philippines who was interned in Japan from January through September 1943, was eager to know the trends of Japan's domestic propaganda. He recalled in early 1944: "It is seldom that one reads in Japan about [its] former grandiose schemes for a New World Order."<sup>21</sup>

The change in domestic propaganda on the aim of establishing a "New World Order" had an impact on Japan's claim to leadership in Asia. The previous chapter argued that the growing criticism against Japan's oppressive rule in occupied

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<sup>18</sup> Kiyosawa, *Ankoku nikki (I)*, 75.

<sup>19</sup> Machida Keiji, *Aru gunjin no shihi—Ken to pen* [A Paper Monument of a Soldier: Sword and Pen] (Fuyō shobō, 1978), 213-14.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Claude Buss, "Inside Wartime Japan," *Life*, January 24, 1944, 93.

territories forced the Japanese government to gradually tone down the claim. Propaganda supporting the “New World Order” was now seldom heard at home, although it did not completely disappear. In February 1943, the Greater Asia Affairs Ministry (which was equivalent to a colonial ministry) ordered its officials not to publish the article “Theory of the New World Order” (*sekai shin-chitsujoron*), written by political scientist Yabe Teiji, on the grounds that it was closely associated with Japan’s leadership in Asia. It looked to the ministry that the claim was no longer acceptable to the Asian people in the occupied areas, who had been exploited by the Imperial Army.<sup>22</sup>

Interestingly enough, on February 15 the German Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels instructed his aides not to describe the German leadership in Europe on the grounds that the claim might give the people in the occupied territories the impression that Nazi Germany wanted to keep them in a “state of permanent subjection.”<sup>23</sup> Since the opening of the Pacific War, Japan had sometimes followed Germany’s example in formulating propaganda policy and was perhaps once again borrowing tactics for domestic use. However, the main reason for

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<sup>22</sup> Yabe, *Yabe Teiji nikki (Ginnan no kan)*, 595.

<sup>23</sup> Boelcke, ed., *The Secret Conferences of Dr. Goebbels*, 332.

adopting the current German propaganda policy resulted from Japan's own behaviors in its occupied areas.<sup>24</sup>

Aware that the Asian people were not willing to cooperate with the Japanese, the Japanese government concluded that Japan should take action. The government, which had been promising independence for Burmese and Filipinos for a year, was now pressured into "granting" Burma and the Philippines nominal independence in the summer and fall of 1943, respectively. At the Imperial Headquarters-Government Liaison Meeting of January 14, 1943, the Japanese government confirmed that, despite its "lip service" about independence for the two nations, Japan would still control them militarily and economically while "recognizing" their sovereignty.<sup>25</sup>

Beyond the government's decision, there were in fact some political and military intentions. The main goals of "granting" independence to Burma and the Philippines were to consolidate the people of Asian countries to fight against the Allied powers, demoralize Anglo-Americans at home by giving independence to

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<sup>24</sup> Amau Eiji, "Suumitsu komonkai ni taisuru naigai jōhō senden ni kansuru hōkoku" [The Report on Domestic and Foreign Propaganda in the Privy Council Meeting], 27, May 24, 1944, *Amau Eiji monjo* [Amau Eiji Papers], Kokkai toshokan kensei shiryōshitsu [Modern Japanese Political History Materials Room, National Diet Library], Tokyo (hereinafter cited as Amau Eiji Papers).

<sup>25</sup> Sanbō honbu, ed., *Sugiyama memo (Ge)*, 349. Japan "granted" independence to Burma on August 1 and the Philippines on October 14, 1943, respectively.

their Asian colonies, incite an independence movement in India, and more important, appeal to the Japanese audience by countering the purported war aims of Britain and America for reconquest of Asia and the world. The Japanese government wanted the domestic population to have pride in Japan as a liberator of Asia, but it instructed its censors to be careful not to reveal to the domestic and foreign audiences that the countries had been granted independence in name only. This implied that the government did not want the Japanese people to notice Japan's ambivalence toward the independence of Burma and the Philippines.<sup>26</sup>

Judging the war situation in Europe and the Pacific in early 1943, it was clear to the Japanese government that it would take a long time to realize the goal of a "high level national defense state" in Asia. A more realistic plan designed to deal with the concerns of the current war situation soon appeared within the Japanese government. For example, on April 17, 1943 the Council for the Construction of Greater East Asia that had been involved from the beginning in formulating the policy of constructing a "Co-Prosperity sphere," drafted a top-secret plan called the "Basic Policy of the Construction of Greater East Asia" (*daitōa kensetsu kihon*

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<sup>26</sup> Jōhōkyoku, "Biruma' dokuritsu ni kansuru senden shidō yōryō" [The Points of Propaganda Guidance on Burmese Independence] (Document No. San 02833100), 5, July 28, 1943, *Cabinet Records*.



*hōsaku*), which was approved on May 20 at the Imperial Headquarters-Government Liaison Meeting. The main emphasis of the plan was to create a highly-independent economic autarchy for Japan by securing important resources in the occupied territories in order to “protect” Asia from the Western powers. The council stressed that Japan should take the initiative in constructing the economic sphere in Asia and prevent the materials in those areas from going to the outside world. Basically, Japan still adhered to the policy of “go-slow imperialism.” Reflecting the current war situation, it was expected that it would take at least fifteen years to build a “high level national defense state.”<sup>27</sup> However, such war goals now confronted criticism from certain Japanese groups.

### **In Defense of War Aims**

Some intellectuals were critical of Japan’s war aims propaganda, particularly after early 1943. The distinct characteristic of wartime Japanese propaganda was that the government paid close attention to the intellectuals’ response to propaganda, believing that they could influence public opinion and

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<sup>27</sup> Daitōa kensetsu shingikai dai yon buhai [Fourth Group of the Council for the Construction of Greater East Asia], “Daitōa kensetsu kihon hōsaku” [Basic Policy of the Construction of Greater East Asia] (Document No. Rikua mitsu dai nikki Shōwa jū shichi nen-S17-49), 1-2, 5, April 17, 1943, *Army Records*.

morale. This does not mean, though, that the ordinary Japanese were not also targets of propaganda. Japanese experts stressed the significance of propaganda on the masses after learning the tactic from Hitler's *Mein Kampf*. Hitler and his Propaganda Minister Goebbels found nineteenth-century French sociologist Gustave Le Bon's study on the manipulation of the public in modern mass society quite important. In his book *The Crowd* (1895), Le Bon was seemingly contemptuous of the common people, saying that they were "credulous and readily influenced by suggestion."<sup>28</sup> A 1939 Japanese army document on propaganda alluded that Le Bon's elitist view on the manipulation of the masses indirectly influenced, through Hitler's book, Japanese propagandists.<sup>29</sup> Nevertheless, during the Pacific War the Japanese government tried to defend against criticism from intellectuals, fearing that they, as leaders of public opinion, would cause the people to doubt the war aims.

To counter the intellectuals' criticism of Japan's war goals, the BI ordered the press to tell the domestic audience that at the present, "no single Japanese

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<sup>28</sup> David Welch, *The Third Reich: Politics and Propaganda*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2002), 25-26; Gustave Le Bon, *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 2002), 10.

<sup>29</sup> Rikugunshō, "Senden jōhō kaigi kankei shorui teishutsu (sōfu) no ken" [Concerning the Document Submission on the Meeting of Propaganda and Information] (Document No. Rikugunshō—Riku-shi-mitsu-dai-nikki—S14—87—176, [no page no. available], 1939, *Army Records*).

entertains the slightest doubt” concerning Japan’s war aims.<sup>30</sup> In an April 1943 article of the magazine *Hi no de*, which was widely read by intellectuals, the BI vice-chief Okumura Kiwao determined to counteract such criticisms by telling his readers that the government’s propaganda was based upon the truth. While he characterized British propagandists in World War I as liars, the ardent Pan-Asianist countered domestic complaints about Japan’s war objectives. He assured his readers that Japanese propaganda did not include any falsehoods, and that there was no unrealistic war aim in Japan.<sup>31</sup> Okumura was unpopular particularly among intellectuals, many of whom would turn off their radios when he made speeches over *Radio Tokyo*.<sup>32</sup>

Okumura’s propaganda tactic of contrasting Japan with Anglo-American nations was striking. This method was intended to justify Japan’s Cause by emphasizing a negative image of the Enemy. One of the characteristics of propaganda since late April of 1943, when Amau Eiji, former vice-minister of the

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<sup>30</sup> “The Genron Hokoku Kai,” *Nippon Times*, March 12, 1943, 6.

<sup>31</sup> Okumura Kiwao, “Bei-ei wo tettei gekimetsu made” [Until Vanquishing America-Britain Thoroughly], *Hi no de*, Vol. 12, No. 4 (April 1943), 19.

<sup>32</sup> U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey, “Interview with Kusuyama Yasutarō, President of the Nippon Times,” 15, December 15, 1945, Reel #128, *USSBS Records*; Kiyosawa, *Ankoku nikki (I)*, 27.

Foreign Ministry, replaced Tani Masayuki as the BI chief, was that the government employed experts on Anglo-American society, despite the fact that many of them were still branded as pro-Anglo-American. In a May article of the *Hi no de* magazine, the Diet member Tsurumi Yūsuke and the former *Mainichi* Newspaper correspondent in London Kudō Shinichirō criticized that from the beginning of the war, America had no consistent war goal. This particular claim was contrary to the opinions of other propagandists who had asserted that America was bent upon world domination. But the ultimate intention of Japanese propagandists lay in the assertion that unlike America, Japan had consistent non-imperialistic war aims.<sup>33</sup>

To pursue the creation of a “high level national defense state,” the Japanese government continued to mouth slogans such as “Liberation” and “Construction.” One of the ardent advocates of such claims within government circles was the Foreign Minister Shigemitsu Mamoru. In a memo written in May 1943, Shigemitsu claimed that Japan’s war aims should be the “Liberation, Construction, and Development of Asia.” The minister now determined to present his war goals to intellectuals. On May 11, in his address at the Institution of the Pacific, an institution

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<sup>33</sup> “Teki bei-ei no shinsō wo tsuku” [Reveals the True Story of the Enemy, America-Britain], *Hi no de*, Vol. 12, No. 5 (May 1943), 28, 31.

which mainly worked on relations between Japan and America, Shigemitsu insisted that Japan's mission was not for military, economic, or territorial gain, but only for the "liberation" and "construction" of Asia.<sup>34</sup> Several days later, he participated in approving the April 17th plan of the Council for the Construction of Greater Asia, which wanted to create Japan's economic sphere in Asia. Unlike Shigemitsu's rhetoric, during the preparation of the Greater East Asian Conference of November 1943, in which his ministry was deeply involved, internal discussions within Japanese government circles revealed that Japan wanted to continue to pursue its imperialist designs in Asia.

### **The Formation of a "Pacific Charter"**

Japan continued to lose its occupied territories to the American forces. On April 18, 1943, the commander of the Combined Fleet Yamamoto Isōroku, a national hero of the Pearl Harbor attack, was killed by U.S. aircrafts near Bougainville in the Pacific. On May 12, American troops landed on Attu Island, and Japanese troops, rather than face surrender to the enemy, fought to the death. While this was the first

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<sup>34</sup> Shigemitsu Mamoru, *Shigemitsu Mamoru shuki* [Memoirs of Shigemitsu Mamoru] (Chūō kōronsha, 1986), 329, 332-33.

time during the war with America that mass suicides (*gyokusai*) occurred, it would not be the last. The defeat at Attu shocked the army high command. It was said that the premier Tōjō “cried loudly” after receiving the final telegram from the island informing the army headquarters that the imperial troops there intended to commit mass suicide.<sup>35</sup>

As Japan’s military setbacks continued, the Japanese government needed more assistance from the Japanese people. But as a BI report on May 20 noted, some Japanese were still unaware of the severity of the situation due to the government block on war information and hoped that the war would end soon.<sup>36</sup> Such worsened internal and external situations forced Japanese leaders to take certain measures. On May 29, the Japanese government decided to hold a big political propaganda showcase, known later as the Greater East Asian Conference, in Tokyo in the fall of 1943, which consisted of six top-leaders from both Japan and its “puppet” regimes, and which issued a so-called “Pacific Charter.” The conference was intended to show the Allied powers Japan’s firm solidarity with its occupied nations and also sought to

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<sup>35</sup> Sejima Ryūzō, *Sejima Ryūzō kaisōroku* [Memoirs of Sejima Ryūzō] (Sankei shinbunsha, 1995), 199.

<sup>36</sup> Doi Akira, et al eds., *Shōwa shakai keizai shiryō shūsei: Vol. 19 (Kaigunshō shiryō)* [Documents of Social and Economic History in Shōwa Era: Vol. 19 (Documents of the Navy Ministry)] (Daitō bunka daigaku tōyō kenkyūjo, 1994), 406-7.

unify the Japanese public to support the war. After gaining victory in a major battle, Japan wanted to close the war through a peace negotiation that would leave Japan in an advantageous position, with the military and economic autarchy of the “Co-Prosperity Sphere” essentially intact.

Before examining the “Pacific Charter,” we need to briefly look at how Japanese propagandists viewed their enemy’s charter, because their criticism against the latter shows a “corrupted-self” image of the Asian charter. Since the Pacific War started, Japanese experts had criticized the Anglo-American Atlantic Charter, a precursor to the “Pacific Charter,” which was issued by Churchill and Roosevelt on August 14, 1941. The two countries in the charter clarified their postwar vision, and during the war it became one of their important propaganda themes. In Japanese propagandists’ eyes, the enemy charter looked contradictory in the sense that the principle of national self-determination in it was not applied to Asia, with Britain and America still keeping their colonies in Asia.

Such Anglo-American colonialism had been targeted by Japanese propaganda experts. On the first anniversary of the Western charter, *The Japan Times & Advertiser*, the mouthpiece of the Japanese Foreign Ministry, charged the

principles in the charter as “empty promise[s]...selfish motives that go counter to its [the charter’s] professed goodwill.”<sup>37</sup> The Japanese denouncement of the Atlantic Charter continued during the preparation for the Greater East Asian Conference. On October 7, 1943 BI spokesperson Iguchi Sadao, former Japanese diplomat to Washington, branded the charter as mere propaganda for camouflaging the “inordinate Anglo-American ambition of world domination.”<sup>38</sup> The fact that the principle of national self-determination in the Atlantic Charter had not been put into practice in Asia was in reality quite beneficial for the Japanese. It provided the government leaders with a powerful propaganda weapon with which they could attack the war aims of both Britain and the United States.

Japan committed its time and energy to preparing for the Greater East Asian Conference and the drafting of the “Pacific Charter.” Japan’s imperialist ambitions were hidden beneath layers of government rhetoric in the charter, and an examination of the discussions prior to its drafting reveals such actual war objectives. The important ideas of a joint-declaration had appeared in embryonic form as early as the summer of 1943. In the first meeting of the Research Group of War Aims

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<sup>37</sup> “Anglo-American Atlantis,” *Japan Times & Advertiser*, August 14, 1942, 6.

<sup>38</sup> “Japan’s East Asia Policy,” *Nippon Times*, October 7, 1943, 4.



(*sensō mokuteki kenkyūkai*) in the Foreign Ministry held on August 20, Andō Yoshirō, Treaty Bureau Director of the ministry, lamented that domestic interest in the war aim of the “Construction of a Co-Prosperity Sphere” had already cooled off and therefore it was no longer useful for boosting the fighting spirit at home. The original idea of Japan’s leadership in the “Co-Prosperity Sphere” was to be reconsidered. Andō explained that in theory the political relationship between the Asian countries and Japan was equal, but in practice Japan would act as a “father of one family.” From this perspective, the declaration should not be made in a legal form, because it would undermine both the actual leadership of Japan and the exercise of its sovereignty in the sphere. Undoubtedly, the “non-legal” format would not bind Japan’s actual exercises of leadership and sovereignty. Economically, the group members claimed that the term “reciprocity” should mean “guidance by Japan.” In actual propaganda, however, the “opening of resources in Asia to the outside world” should be emphasized.<sup>39</sup>

Not surprisingly, some members of the research group were concerned

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<sup>39</sup> Sensō mokuteki kenkyūkai [Research Group of War Aims], “Dai ikkai kanjikai gijiroku” [Minutes of the First Organizers’ Meeting] (Document No. IMT-383), 2-4, 7-9, 12, August 20, 1943, Reel# WT 52, *Gaimushō shiryō* [Records of the Foreign Affairs Ministry], Gaimushō gaikō shiryōkan [Diplomatic Record Office of the Foreign Affairs Ministry], Tokyo (hereinafter cited as RFM Records).

about terminology. “Reciprocity” looked problematic to them, not only because its meaning was never in line with actual reality in the occupied areas, but also because the use of the word in propaganda might meet criticism from the outside world. In the second meeting of the research group held on September 2, the former special envoy to America Kurusu Saburō pointed to problems in the draft. He feared that foreign audiences would not believe Japanese rhetoric using such terms as “not closed” and “not exclusive,” since Japan had already exploited the people in the “Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere.” To avoid criticism from the outside world, the economic system in the sphere should be expressed in the charter as “mutual cooperation” between other Asian countries and Japan. However, the vice-minister of the Foreign Ministry Matsumoto Shunichi argued that the “national character” of the other Asian countries did not favor the Japanese-style economic system which was controlled by the central government. Matsumoto thought that a Soviet-style decentralized economic system was preferable to the Japanese style, perhaps due to the divergent political, racial, and other aspects in the Japanese occupied areas. Therefore, the future economic system in the sphere was to be a Soviet Union-style planned economy, but it should be guided by Japan. Upon listening to Matsumoto’s

explanation, Kurusu bluntly said that such options in the draft would not be acceptable to the domestic and foreign audiences. Kurusu's claims foreshadowed criticism from them.<sup>40</sup> Nevertheless, the Foreign Ministry dismissed Kurusu's warning and continued to prepare for the conference.

In preparation for the conference, the concern over a race war reappeared among Japanese officials. Most middle-ranking officials in the Army, Navy, and Foreign ministries were opposed to inserting a clause for the "abolition of racial discrimination" into the joint-declaration. If the war turned into a racial war, the nature of the war might become more complex and thereby the conflict between Japan and the Allied powers could be prolonged. Fearing that the war might metamorphose into a race war, many Japanese officials observed that if Japan claimed racial equality in the declaration, the very clause would become a major stumbling block in peace negotiations with the Allies in the future, in part because Japanese officials thought that the Anglo-American nations in particular might reject Japan's suggestions.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Sensō mokuteki kenkyūkai, "Sensō mokuteki kenkyūkai dai nikai kaigō gijiroku" [Minutes of the Second Meeting of Study Group of War Aims] (Document No. IMT-383), 4, 11-12, September 2, 1943, Reel# WT 52, *RFM Records*.

<sup>41</sup> Satō, *Satō Kenryō no shōgen*, 437.

Such concerns influenced the politics of propaganda, including the “Pacific Charter,” as the government desperately tried to avoid a race war. Perhaps Japanese government officials also dealt carefully with the race issue in part because they had to consider Germany’s racial policy. If Japan publicly advocated for racial equality, it would possibly conflict with Germany’s Jewish exclusion policy.

However, General Satō Kenryō, director of the Army Ministry Military Affairs Bureau, did not abandon hope for success and claimed that the present war was not a racial conflict between the “white” and “colored” races. What Satō had in mind was to “reeducate” the Japanese people. He argued that the government should include the clause “abolition of racial discrimination” in the declaration due to the current Japanese racial discrimination toward other Asian peoples.<sup>42</sup> In the midst of the war, Japanese feelings of racial superiority over the other Asians were hindering the effective execution of Japan’s occupation policy. The oppressive rule in those areas was the same as that in Korea and Manchuria. Miki Kiyoshi, a Kyoto School philosopher, who had just returned from the Philippines, said on January 12, 1943: “There is no reason to expect any differences [from those in Korea and Manchuria],

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

because the same people of the same quality are ruling.”<sup>43</sup> Even Burmese Premier Ba Maw, the infamous wartime collaborator, blamed Japan’s egoistic policy and racism on the Asian people after the war. He said that Japanese imperialists had “only [one] goal and interest, the Japanese interest... [N]o nation has been so misunderstood by the very peoples whom it has helped either to liberate or to set an example to in many things. Japan was betrayed by her militarists and their racial fantasies.”<sup>44</sup>

To avoid such criticism, it was decided that policies and attitudes of Japanese racial superiority over other Asian races should be decreased in order to achieve Japan’s imperialistic goals in the occupied territories. In the Imperial Headquarters-Government Liaison Meeting on October 21, 1943, Satō insisted that the government should insert an article of racial equality into the joint-declaration, because Japanese racism had become a critical barrier in constructing a “Co-Prosperity Sphere.”<sup>45</sup> Two days later, Foreign Minister Shigemitsu supported Satō’s proposal and the government officially approved the text of the Greater East

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<sup>43</sup> Kiyosawa, *Ankoku nikki (I)*, 36.

<sup>44</sup> Ba Maw, *Breakthrough in Burma: Memoirs of a Revolution, 1939-1946* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), 185.

<sup>45</sup> Satō, *Satō Kenryō no shōgen*, 437; Sanbō honbu, ed., *Sugiyama memo (Ge)*, 503-4.

Asian Joint-Declaration, which included the racial equality clause. The declaration, which was issued in November 1943, consisted of five provisions:

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 discrimination, the promotion of cultural exchange and the opening of resources throughout the world, and contribute thereby to the progress of mankind.<sup>46</sup>

From late 1943 through mid-1944, the declaration was one of the most popular propaganda items presented to domestic and foreign audiences. For domestic use in particular, the principles in the joint-declaration were intended to give the Japanese people a clearer sense of war goals.

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<sup>46</sup> Sanbō honbu, ed., *Sugiyama memo (Ge)*, 504. The joint-declaration was signed by Tōjō Hideki (Prime Minister of Japan), Wang Jing-wei (President of the Nationalist China), Jose Laurel (President of the Philippines), Ba Maw (Chief of the Burmese Administration), Wan Waithayakon (Prince of Thailand), and Subhas Chandra Bose (Head of the Provisional Government of Free India).

### **Leaning toward the War Aim of “Self-Preservation and Self-Defense”**

During the preparation for the Greater East Asian Conference, there was a debate within Japanese government circles about whether or not Japan should limit its war aims to “Self-Preservation and Self-Defense.” This move had much to do with the worsening war situation in Europe and the Pacific. The fact that Italy surrendered in September 1943 and that Germany would almost definitely collapse in the future influenced Japan’s war policy. Japan was also facing serious military setbacks in the Pacific battlefields. Confronted by the worsening war situations, Japan’s war leadership made a move to reduce Japan’s war aims to a single one.

By mid-September of 1943, the idea that Japan should limit its war goals to “Self-Preservation and Self-Defense” came from the Army Chief of Staff Office. By this time, however, there were some concerns that prevented the Japanese government from easily reducing its war goals to “Self-Preservation and Self-Defense.” On September 13 when he met with the Foreign Minister Shigemitsu, Colonel Matsutani Makoto of the Army Chief of Staff Office urged the minister that the government should emphasize “Self-Preservation and Self-Defense” for its war aim, as written in the imperial rescript of December 1941. Shigemitsu disagreed with

Matsutani, but promised not to emphasize slogans such as a “New Order” and “Proper Place.”<sup>47</sup>

Japanese high-ranking officials including Shigemitsu were obsessed with Anglo-American counterpropaganda. To Japanese officials who had repeatedly criticized America for its frequent change of war aims, as Shigemitsu noted, the abrupt shift of Japan’s war objectives would incur Anglo-American counterattack.<sup>48</sup> It might thus discredit the value of Japan’s war goals. Although the Japanese public had been forbidden to listen to enemy propaganda, Japanese experts on propaganda genuinely feared it. These experts, who had “mistakenly” believed in Germany’s claim that enemy propaganda attacks on the German public were the reason for the country’s defeat in World War I, were understandably preoccupied with foreign propaganda.<sup>49</sup>

Another difficulty of reducing Japan’s war aims to a single one also had to do with Germany. The alliance with Nazi Germany was helpful in showing Axis

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<sup>47</sup> Shigemitsu Mamoru, *Zoku: Shigemitsu Mamoru shuki* [Sequel: Memoirs of Shigemitsu Mamoru] (Chūō kōronsha, 1988), 168.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Yano Makoto, “Kessenka kaigai hōsō no shimei” [The Mission of Foreign Broadcasting during a Decisive Battle], *Hōsō kenkyū* [Broadcasting Studies], Vol. 3, No. 9 (September 1943), 14.



solidarity to the Allied powers, but Japan's ally now became a hurdle in shifting to the central war objective of "Self-Preservation and Self-Defense." Japan needed to reach a consensus on war aims with its allies. One of the main reasons that Japan had to stick to the Axis cause of "Establishment of a New World Order" was due to the articles in the Tripartite Pact of 1940. Although since early 1943 the Japanese government seldom employed Axis aims in its domestic propaganda, it could not easily reduce the war objective to "Self-Preservation and Self-Defense" unless Germany officially agreed to change the shared Axis war goals.

On September 20, 1943 when he met the German Ambassador to Japan Heinrich Stahmer, Shigemitsu told him that Japan was now fighting for its "Self-Preservation and Self-Defense."<sup>50</sup> For the two remaining Axis powers, however, it was not an easy matter to issue a declaration in part because Germany was indifferent to it. Since the debacle at Stalingrad in February of that year, in fact, the struggle against Bolshevism had been dominant in Germany's national policy, including its propaganda.<sup>51</sup>

In the meantime, Japan's battleships in the Pacific were under heavy attack

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<sup>50</sup> Shigemitsu, *Zoku: Shigemitsu Mamoru shuki*, 174-75.

<sup>51</sup> Hosokawa Morisada, *Hosokawa nikki* [Hosokawa Diaries] (Chūō kōronsha, 1978), 70; Boelcke, ed., *The Secret Conferences of Dr. Goebbels*, 330.

by the American navy, and the Japanese navy high command thus lost confidence in victory. Under these circumstances, at least by mid-October the Japanese government officially agreed to reduce its war aims to “Self-Preservation and Self-Defense.” In the five hour long September 30th Imperial Meeting in front of the emperor to review the future war policy, the Navy Chief-of-Staff Nagano Osami expressed his lack of confidence in victory over the United States and Japanese leaders felt quite uneasy due to his predictions regarding the war.<sup>52</sup>

The army, however, continued to believe that a Japanese victory was possible. Prime Minister Tōjō and army high-ranking officers countered Nagano’s pessimism and claimed that Japan should continue to fight to the last, since it had entered into the current war for “Self-Preservation and Self-Defense.”<sup>53</sup> This episode shows that the army high command was in favor of limiting Japan’s war aims to “Self-Preservation and Self-Defense,” and by mid-October, the Foreign Office made its decision. The document “Our Current Foreign Policy,” written on October 11, clarified that Japan was fighting for “Self-Preservation and

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<sup>52</sup> Hattori Kakushirō, *Daitōa sensō zenshi (4)* [The Whole History of the Great East Asian War (Vol. 4)] (Masu shobō, 1956), 149-50.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

Self-Defense.”<sup>54</sup>

While the Japanese government reduced its war aims to the official war goal of “Self-Preservation and Self-Defense,” the underlying purpose of the war objective was still based upon an inherently expansionist idea. By late 1943, the goal had various meanings which could be changed, narrowly or broadly, according to changes in Japan’s military and political situations. The current meaning of the war aim appeared in the account by Yabe Teiji, Tokyo University professor and one of the main contributors to writing the Greater East Asian Joint Declaration. Basically, Yabe viewed the present war as a conflict for survival against the Anglo-American nations bent upon world conquest. The only possible way Japan could survive such Western domination was to construct a “Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere.”<sup>55</sup>

On November 21, 1943, Yabe asserted that, as was clarified in the imperial rescript of 1941, “Self-Preservation and Self-Defense” should be Japan’s immutable war objective. He firmly held the belief that in order to achieve this war aim, Japan should establish a “Broad Economic Sphere” (*kōiki keizaiken*) in Asia that could sustain the nation for national defense and economic autarchy. In accomplishing this

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<sup>54</sup> Hoshino, *Hōdō sarenakatta nyūsu*, 220-22.

<sup>55</sup> Yabe Teiji, *Shin-Chitsujo no kenkyū* [A Study on a New Order] (Kōbundō, 1945), 14-15.

goal, it would be inevitable for Japan to keep the currently-occupied areas in order to secure a wide sphere of economic influence, since the three nations of Japan, China, and Manchukuo alone were not enough for Japan to survive in the postwar era.<sup>56</sup> Yabe's idea demonstrated that securing the currently-occupied territories was a precondition for national "Self-Preservation and Self-Defense." In order to achieve the imperialistic aim in the imperial rescript, the Japanese government now launched a large-scale propaganda campaign regarding the "Pacific Charter."

### **Wielding the "Pacific Charter"**

The Japanese government was confident that the Greater East Asian Joint-Declaration would be the best chance to once again stir the people into a high fighting spirit. To Japan's war leadership, popular morale was an important part of achieving the ulterior war objectives identified in Yabe's account. Until Japan realized these aims, the government had to avoid any inflammatory comments in its propaganda that might drag Japan into a race war.<sup>57</sup> In explaining the meaning of the

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<sup>56</sup> Hosokawa, *Hosokawa nikki*, 42.

<sup>57</sup> Jōhōkyoku, "Kikugō senden jisshi yōkō" [Outline of Propaganda Operation Chrysanthemum] (Document No. IMT-383), 1-4, October 31, 1943, Reel# WT 52, *RFM Records*.

“Pacific Charter” to the domestic audience, moreover, Japanese propaganda experts also steered away from any overt words or slogans that had been criticized by the people in occupied territories and by Anglo-American propagandists.

A week before the Greater East Asian Conference, the government approved the “Outline of Propaganda Operation Chrysanthemum” (*kikugō senden jisshi yōkō*) which would be the basic plan for the conference. The term “morality” was very significant in domestic and foreign propaganda rhetoric in explaining the five principles of the “Pacific Charter.” The articulated war objectives in the plan read: “The war aims of the Greater East Asian War are to secure Self-Preservation and Self-Defense by defending Greater East Asia from Anglo-American aggression and constructing a New Order in Greater East Asia based upon morality, thereby contributing to the Establishment of World Peace.” Although the Japanese government agreed to the official war aim of “Self-Preservation and Self-Defense,” the two war goals, “Construction of a New Order in Greater East Asia” and “Establishment of World Peace,” were emphasized again.<sup>58</sup>

Based on the “Outline of Propaganda Operation Chrysanthemum,” on December 1, 1943, the Board of Information convened representatives of publishing

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

companies and cautioned them not to deal with articles which “explicitly” referred to Japan’s position as a leader of Asia and Japanese superiority over other Asian races. Regarding writing on Japan’s leadership, the agency instead instructed its propagandists and other writers to cite articles which were written by people in the occupied areas.<sup>59</sup> As a result of these measures, by late 1943, the overt claim of Japan’s leadership in Asia disappeared from domestic media. The “nominal” abandonment of the half-century long Japanese assertion in this regard proved that propaganda and criticism from foreign countries had indeed influenced Japanese propaganda directed at its domestic audience. The disappearance of references to Japan’s leadership of Asia from official rhetoric was soon followed by the renunciation of the “Co-Prosperity Sphere,” because the term was inherently associated with Japan’s exploitative policy in the occupied territories and its role as leader of Asia. The government thus ordered the press and radio not to refer to the phrase “Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere” any more.<sup>60</sup>

Meanwhile, soon after the Greater East Asian Conference, what caused Japanese leaders a great deal of concern was the fact that most Japanese showed

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<sup>59</sup> Saegusa, *Genron shōwashi*, 148; Hatanaka, *Nihon fashizumu no genron danatsu*, 113-14.

<sup>60</sup> Kiyosawa, *Ankoku nikki (I)*, 213.

little enthusiasm for the war. The Japanese government now held public rallies to show domestic unity. The “Greater Asian Mobilization Rally” (*daitōa kokumin kesshū taikai*) was held in Tokyo on November 7, and representatives of the other six Asian countries addressed the crowd.<sup>61</sup> However, as the BI chief Amau noted, many of the 100,000 Japanese walked out on the rally.<sup>62</sup>

The Japanese government wished for the people to support the war effort with a sense of purpose and enthusiasm commensurate with the grand ideals of the nation as formulated by the propaganda machine. After the closing of the conference, the film company *Nichiei* made the special newsreel “The Meaning of the Greater East Asian Joint-Declaration” (*daitōa kyōdō sengen no igi*) under the guidance of the BI. The newsreel, highlighting political events during the Greater East Asian Conference, was featured in movie theaters throughout the country and emphasized the five principles of the “Pacific Charter.”<sup>63</sup> In its weekly propaganda pamphlet

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<sup>61</sup> The speakers were Tōjō Hideki (Prime Minister of Japan), Wang Jing-wei (President of the Nationalist China), Jose Laurel (President of the Philippines), Ba Maw (Chief of the Burmese Administration), Wan Waithayakon (Prince of Thailand), and Subhas Chandra Bose (Head of the Provisional Government of Free India).

<sup>62</sup> Amau Eiji *nikki shiryōshū kankōkai*, ed., *Amau Eiji nikki shiryōshū (Dai yonkan)*, 758.

<sup>63</sup> Jōhōkyoku, “Daitōa kaigi narabini daitōa kyōdō sengen ni kansuru senden jisshi gaikyō” [Outline of Propaganda Disseminations on Greater East Asian Conference and Greater East Asian Joint-Declaration (Document No. Jō 00062100), 1-3, November 18, 1943, *Cabinet Records*.

*Shūhō*, moreover, the Board of Information told the domestic audience that the declaration was a “great charter” which “strongly” appealed Asian countries’ view of the war to the world.<sup>64</sup> By presenting the ideals of the nation and Asia to their countrymen, government propagandists hoped to elicit their full energies for the war.

BI propagandists themselves were determined to present the ideal of the Joint-Declaration to the Japanese people. Since one of the main purposes of drafting the “Pacific Charter” was to counter the Atlantic Charter, Japanese experts once again attacked the Western charter by contrasting it to the Asian charter. The BI chief Amau Eiji told representatives of newspapers from Japan and its puppet countries on November 17, 1943 that, unlike Anglo-American principles of “aggression, exclusionism, and egoism,” the “Pacific Charter” was the “most remarkable document ever written since the dawn of history.”<sup>65</sup> Major Japanese newspapers printed Amau’s speech so his words could reach the Japanese people. The spokesperson of the BI Iguchi Sadao, in a January 1944 article in the government’s propaganda magazine *Contemporary Japan*, told his readers that all six of the nations that participated in the conference would not be deceived by the

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<sup>64</sup> Jōhōkyoku, *Shūhō*, No. 369, November 10, 1943, 2.

<sup>65</sup> Quoted in *Asahi shinbun*, November 17, 1943, 1.



fine-sounding propaganda in the Atlantic Charter. Iguchi criticized America and Britain, saying that they had forced more than twenty countries to sign the charter with the intention of pursuing political and economic dominance in those nations. Dismissing the Western charter as an instrument of propaganda, Iguchi claimed that it could not be put into practice in Anglo-American colonies in Asia. Not surprisingly, in the article Iguchi never mentioned Japan's own ambivalence toward its colonies, Korea and Taiwan.<sup>66</sup>

The Board of Information also encouraged members of the government-created associations to present the meaning of the "Pacific Charter" to the domestic audience. Members of the BI-created propaganda institution and Japanese Journalism Patriotic Association (JJPA) actively participated in explaining the principles of the Asian charter to the Japanese people. Sakuda Sōichi, economist and advisor to the JJPA, told his countrymen in the propaganda book *Daitōa kyōdō sengen* (Greater East Asian Joint-Declaration), co-authored by several members of the JJPA, that it was a good idea not to use the term "inequality" of race, and claimed that Japan's "concession" should be attributed to its "benevolent national

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<sup>66</sup> Sadao Iguchi, "World Angle In Joint Declaration," *Contemporary Japan*, Vol. XIII, No. 1 (January 1944), 8-10.

character.”<sup>67</sup>

One of the most interesting arguments in domestic propaganda of this period that ran counter to the above-mentioned propaganda efforts, was that human beings were created unequal. In the JJPA propaganda book, the ultranationalist Saitō Kō gave his own take on the meaning of “racial equality” in the “Pacific Charter” for his countrymen. He harbored a harsh racial view of the people in the occupied areas. Playing to the deeply-rooted belief in racial purity among the Japanese, Saitō told his readers that notions of racial equality did not justify intermarriage between the Japanese and other Asians. Japan, he went on, sought to abolish racial discrimination only by “power and law,” since there “intrinsically” existed superiority and inferiority both between individuals and between races.<sup>68</sup> Saitō’s account revealed his resentment toward Westerners’ negative racial views of the Japanese. Undoubtedly, the phrase “discrimination by power and law” referred to the American Immigration Exclusion Act of 1924 and other discriminatory laws against Asian immigrants including the Japanese. For Saitō, other Asian races should remain in an

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<sup>67</sup> Dai nippon genron hōkokukai [Japanese Journalism Patriotic Association], ed., *Daitōa kyōdō sengen* [The Greater East Asian Joint-Declaration] (Dōmei tsūshinsha, 1944), 215-16.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 150.

inferior position, but not in the legal form of what Americans did towards Japanese immigrants in the United States.

This concept of racial equality was not Saitō's alone; it was the government's official view. The clause of "abolition of racial discrimination" in the "Pacific Charter" did not imply blanket equality for all races and classes, as Home Minister Andō Kisaburō told representatives of the Japanese Diet on January 26, 1944: "I do not think the abolition of racial discrimination means that all races should be considered absolutely equal."<sup>69</sup>

Andō's view of racial inequality had in fact another important purpose for domestic use. The Japanese government wanted to counter the public's complaint against domestic social inequality, mainly resulting from the corruption prevalent among government officials and men in uniform. There was such wide-spread corruption that, prodded by the people's criticism of the emperor's servicemen, on February 29, 1944 the police authorities had to close high-grade restaurants, which became meeting places among military men and big businessmen.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Kokkai toshokan [National Diet Library], *Teikoku gikai: Shūgiin iinkai kaigiroku—Shōwa hen 149* [Imperial Diet: Stenographic Records of the Committees of the House of Representatives in Shōwa Era (Vol. 149)] (Tokyo daigaku shuppankai, 1999), 181-82.

<sup>70</sup> Kiyosawa Kiyoshi, *Ankoku nikki (II)* [A Diary of Darkness (Vol. II)] (Hyōronsha,

However, government officials associated the idea of “absolute equality” with communism and revolution, which were the opposite of the imperial system that was based on an unequal status between the imperial family and its “subjects.” Not only did Andō believe that every race should be in its “proper place,” he also believed that each individual within the same race had his or her own “proper place.” In the domestic order, social privileges should be based upon the “subjects” proximity to the emperor—those Japanese with a blood tie to the imperial family and those with access to him in an official capacity held a higher status than the average citizen. As long as the imperial system existed, the structure of inequality at home would always be there. Japan’s view of racial inequality could not logically be changed without first changing the domestic order, and since the emperor and all he stood for was “sacred and inviolable,” the unequal system remained intact.

Meanwhile, after the Greater East Asian Conference was over, the Japanese government paid great attention to the Allied powers’ response to the “Pacific Charter.” Since the conference, Anglo-American propagandists launched a counterattack against Japan’s war aims, ultimately resulting in the Allies’ Cairo Declaration of November 27, 1943 and the Tehran Declaration of December 1 of that

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1976), 55.

year. Of the two declarations, the Japanese government was most concerned with the Cairo Declaration, which stipulated that after the war ended, Japan would be stripped of all Pacific island holdings it had gained since 1914, all territories taken from the Chinese would be returned to them, and in due course Korea would become free and independent.

The Japanese government craftily used the Cairo Declaration for domestic benefit, believing that the Japanese people should not be kept in the dark about the seriousness of the current war situation. The Allied declaration became an instrumental propaganda weapon for telling Japanese people to be vigilant in their defense of the homeland. Following the government's order, on December 2, 1943 newspapers denounced the Allies for conspiring toward the annihilation of Japan from the earth. The *Yomiuri hōchi* Newspaper alarmed the Japanese people by stating that the three Allied nations (America, Britain, and Chiang Kai-shek's China) wanted to "make Japan's status that of a third-rate country."<sup>71</sup> On the same day, the *Asahi* Newspaper told its readers that the main objective of the Cairo Declaration was a "humiliating resolution" to the war, namely, Japan's surrender. This article, like the one in the *Yomiuri hōchi* Newspaper, also warned the Japanese population

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<sup>71</sup> *Yomiuri hōchi*, December 2, 1943, 1.

that the nation's status would be degraded to that of its colonies. This particular line of propaganda appealed to the Japanese sense of racial superiority and pride to make the public realize the terrible consequences of defeat.<sup>72</sup>

### **Conclusion**

This chapter has analyzed the redefinition of Japan's war goals and its reflection in the reformulated aims of domestic propaganda during the year of 1943. The defeat at Guadalcanal made Japan's leaders realize that they could not pursue imperialist ambitions extending beyond Asia. In order to achieve the ulterior war objective of creating a "high level national defense state" in Asia, the Japanese government made an effort to consolidate ideological unity by purging Western influences from Japan.

As the war economy became aggravated from early 1943, however, many Japanese lost interest in establishing a "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere," and Japan's oppressive rule in the occupied areas made the people there turn against Japan. By the end of 1943, both internal and external situations ultimately led Japan to abandon its public claims of leadership in Asia and the "Co-Prosperity Sphere."

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<sup>72</sup> *Asahi shinbun*, December 2, 1943, 1.

The failure of Italy and Germany to defeat Britain and the Soviet Union led Japan's war leaders to change their current war politics, including their use of propaganda. Japanese leaders felt that it was impossible for Japan to achieve the "Establishment of a "New World Order" without the victory of the Germans in Europe. As a result, its war goal was to be shifted to "Self-Preservation and Self-Defense," although that did not mean that Japan completely abandoned its imperialist designs within Asia. Japan's revised war aim during this period now concentrated on attaining and holding hegemonic status in postwar Asia, as manifested in the government's internal discussions over the "Pacific Charter." In order to conceal these imperialist intentions, Japan in its propaganda inevitably continued to claim that the Japanese were fighting for "Self-Preservation and Self-Defense," "Construction of a New Order in Greater East Asia," or "Establishment of World Peace."

As the war situation worsened, these revised war goals, which mixed the primary war aim of "Self-Preservation and Self-Defense" with several official war objectives, met with opposition from some Japanese elites who urged the government to clarify a single war objective for the Japanese people. They believed

that the only way to end the war was to negotiate peace with the Allies, claiming that Japan should limit its war goal to the preservation of the “national polity.” Lieutenant General Sakai Kōji, then the advisor to the Army Chief of Staff Office, said on November 18, 1943 that clarifying the war aim would allow Japan to pursue a decisive battle that would bring the war to a close. Sakai, who distrusted the ability of the current army officers, objected to the fact that men in uniform tended to take the lead in dealing with Japan’s war aims. For him, the clarification of Japan’s war objectives was an “important political issue.”<sup>73</sup> Since Tōjō had forbidden the Japanese from discussing the impending conclusion of the war in public, Sakai and other leaders secretly began to search for a way to end the war. After early 1944, these men actively, albeit from behind the scenes, participated in toppling the Tōjō cabinet.

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<sup>73</sup> Hosokawa, *Hosokawa nikki*, 24.



### Chapter Three

#### **A Tug of War between “Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere” and “National Polity” (From Late 1943 to Mid-1944)**

After the Greater East Asian Conference ended in November 1943, the Japanese ruling elite still found themselves in disagreement over war aims. Between late 1943 and mid-1944, they engaged in a tug of war between maintaining the imperialistic gains in the occupied areas and preserving the “national polity” (*kokutai*). Many high-ranking army officers and Foreign Office officials wanted to pursue the ideal of the “Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere,” the establishment of which depended upon Japan winning the war. But a “peace-feeler” group, such as some army and navy middle-ranking officers, retired generals, former high-ranking officials, personal secretaries to senior statesmen, imperial princes, and other anti-Tōjō factions outside the government, placed greater weight on a war for the *kokutai* and claimed that Japan should seek a conditional peace compromise, the primary goal of which was to preserve the “national polity.” Of these men, Prince

(and former Prime Minister) Konoe Fumimarō and his entourage were the major figures. The underlying belief among the “peace-feelers” that Japan should preserve the imperial institution was based upon the theory that a monarchy rarely survives defeat, particularly when an internal revolution follows in its wake. Despite the legitimacy of their concerns, the role of this group in the politics of Japan’s war aims has been largely neglected by scholars and has not received proper attention.<sup>1</sup> At least from late 1943 the “peace-feeler” group conspired to make peace and greatly contributed to the collapse of the Tōjō cabinet in July 1944. This chapter examines why the “peace-feelers” wanted to end the war, why most high-ranking officials in the Army and Foreign ministries stubbornly continued to support the war, and how this disagreement over war policy among the ruling elite was reflected in domestic propaganda. As discussed in the previous chapters, this chapter also pays attention to trends in popular morale which greatly concerned the Japanese authorities, as well as the “peace-feeler” group.

### **The *Kokutai* and the Emergence of the “Peace-Feeler” Group**

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<sup>1</sup> For the role of the “peace-feelers” in the Japanese navy, see Kōketsu, *Nihon kaigun no shūsen kōsaku*.

Before and during the Pacific War, the “national polity” or *kokutai*, the bedrock upon which the nation was founded, explained both the Japanese sense of themselves as a racially and ethnically superior people and their belief that their actions at home and abroad were “divinely” sanctioned and ordained. The emperor, as a “living god” (*arahito gami*), was a political, social, and spiritual ruler and served as Supreme Commander of the Imperial Army and Navy (*riku-kaigun dai-gensui*). The military government began employing the notion of the *kokutai* in order to unify the nation and achieve its imperialist agenda in China. From the mid-1930s, the significance of the “national polity” was increasingly emphasized until it became of ultimate importance during the Pacific War. By early 1944 when the war turned against Japan, the “peace-feeler” group felt that the “national polity” must be preserved during and after the war, and believed that preserving it would help Japan in stabilizing and rebuilding after peace.

Perhaps the first emergence of the word *kokutai* in legal documents was found in the Peace Preservation Law of 1925. Under this law, the Japanese police could punish any person for any action or thought contrary to the “national polity” with up to seven years in prison. The revised Peace Preservation Law of 1928 could

deliver even the death sentence to a person who committed a crime against the *kokutai*.

The Ministry of Education was the first government agency to attempt to define the meaning of the *kokutai*. Prodded by the National Polity Clarification Movement (*kokutai meichō undō*), which began as early as 1935, the ministry strengthened propaganda campaigns for the *kokutai*. In May 1937, the Education Ministry printed the pamphlet “Fundamentals of the National Polity” (*kokutai no hongī*) to reinforce the practice of emperor-worship among school students. The publication explained the *kokutai* as the continuation of the emperor system, stating that “The Great Empire of Japan is to be eternally ruled in accordance with the divine orders of the unbroken blood lineage of the emperor and his other imperial ancestors.”<sup>2</sup> In other words, the “national polity” was closely associated with the continuation of the imperial line, and the ultimate purpose of the pamphlet was to indoctrinate the spirit of the *kokutai* and emperor-worship into the Japanese mind.

To Emperor Hirohito who was officially enthroned in 1928, the “national polity” referred to everything during his reign that he would bequeath to his

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<sup>2</sup> Monbushō [Ministry of Education], ed., *Kokutai no hongī* [Fundamentals of the National Polity] (Naikaku insatsukyoku, 1937), 9.

successors. For him, the *kokutai* was closely linked to the three imperial regalia (mirror, jewel, and sword) of sovereignty, which had allegedly been bestowed by the gods and handed down through the ages to the imperial family. They were so important that, in theory, no emperor could ascend the throne without them in his possession. The reigning emperor must preserve the three “sacred” objects at any cost, which Hirohito was actually determined to do during the last stage of the Pacific War.<sup>3</sup>

Despite such efforts to preserve and promote the *kokutai*, however, its exact meaning remained abstract and varied.<sup>4</sup> The sense of this term also changed throughout the Pacific War. The understanding of the “national polity” among many of the “peace-feelers” during the last phase of the war, particularly in 1945, was that Japan must be “continuously reigned in the postwar period by the unbroken imperial line.”<sup>5</sup> This position allowed Emperor Hirohito to abdicate the throne for his war responsibility if necessary, as long as there was a member of the imperial line to

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<sup>3</sup> Kido nikki kenkyūkai, ed., *Kido Kōichi nikki (Gekan)*, 1220.

<sup>4</sup> Even among Japanese experts, there is no consensus over the definition of the “national polity.” See Satomi Kishio, *Nihon kokutai gaku (Dai ichikan): Kokutai gaku sōron* [The Study on the *Kokutai* (Vol. 1): The General Study on the *Kokutai*] (Tentensha, 2005), 97.

<sup>5</sup> Yoshida, *Shōwa tennō no shūsen-shi*, 24.

succeed him.

A striking characteristic of national policy during the war was that informal or private powers intervened in public affairs to assist in the preservation of the “national polity.” The “peace-feelers,” as one of those private powers, held frequent meetings to discuss the future of the *kokutai* and its relationship to the nation’s war aims. Such intervention into the redefinition of Japan’s war goals in a private or unofficial capacity became striking particularly after Italy’s surrender in September 1943.<sup>6</sup> What worried the “peace-feelers” most was the collapse of the emperor system, which allowed them to sustain their privileged status in Japanese society. As long as the imperial institution remained intact, their present and future status could be guaranteed. Moreover, without the system, Japan would not be able to recover in the wake of defeat. The “peace-feelers” thus felt the need to negotiate an end to the war that would leave the emperor system intact. Because the Tōjō cabinet was not in favor of negotiating an early end to the war, the “peace-feeler” group began plotting to overthrow the Tōjō cabinet, despite strict surveillance by Tōjō’s military police. Some of them emerged as major political players, serving as prime ministers or cabinet members in the early postwar government.

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<sup>6</sup> Itō, ed., *Takagi Sōkichi nikki to jōhō: Ge*, 686, 694, 686.

While many of the major figures in the “peace-feeler” group had originally been opposed to war with the Anglo-American powers, and all of them were anti-communists, the ideological backgrounds and views of national policy among them were nevertheless complicated and diverse. In order to better understand their diverse national strategies, we need to briefly examine the internal factions in the army and the power struggle between the army and navy. There was a serious rift over the national policy between the *kōdō* (literally “imperial way”) and *tōsei* (“control”) factions in the army. Basically, members of the *tōsei* faction such as General Tojō Hideki wanted to establish an authoritarian state by controlling domestic industry and modernizing the military, with the creation of a “high level national defense state.” Unlike this faction, many members of the *kōdō* group had claimed that Japan should be directly ruled by the emperor (*tennō shinsei*). After the Second Sino-Japanese War starting in 1937, such major figures in the *kōdō* faction as generals Obata Toshishirō and Mazaki Jinzaburō claimed that Japan should end the war with China rather than entering into a war with Britain and America. The faction’s traditional number one enemy was the Soviet Union, and they thus objected to a “careless” war with Anglo-Americans.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Tomita Kenji, *Haisen nihon no uchigawa: Konoe-kō no omoide* [Inside Stories in

Although the *kōdō* faction members were not happy with the now dominant *tōsei* faction generals, including the Army Minister Sugiyama Hajime, who wanted to form an alliance with Germany and Italy and fight against America and Britain, they might not simply be classified as “pro-Anglo-American.” In this respect, there was a similarity between the leading *kōdō* faction members and some former premiers from the navy such as Yonai Mitsumasa and Okada Keisuke, admirals who opposed the Axis alliance and did not want to clash with America.<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, not all “peace-feelers,” including some navy admirals, were opposed to the alliance with the European Axis nations or war with the Anglo-Americans.<sup>9</sup> Almost all of them wanted to secure China for Japan’s benefit and could thus be considered merely imperialists. As the Pacific War turned against Japan, the “peace-feeler” group began to make plans to overthrow the hawkish Tōjō cabinet. Under the name of “anti-Tōjō-ism,” some members of the *kōdō* faction and some navy generals cooperated with several imperial princes and senior statesmen in an effort to preserve the *kokutai*. In formulating a plan for the preservation of the “national

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Defeated Japan: Reminiscences of Prince Konoë] (Kokon shoin, 1962), 67.

<sup>8</sup> Kōketsu, *Nihon kaigun no shūsen kōsaku*, 52-53.

<sup>9</sup> Tanaka, *Nihon gunbatsu antō-shi*, 167.



polity,” they paid attention to the trends in popular morale at home and American sentiments toward the emperor, which will be detailed in the following section.

### **The Decline of Popular Morale and American Criticism of the Emperor**

Beyond the “peace-feeler” group’s commitment to the *kokutai*, there was growing concern over collapsing popular morale and the public’s attitude toward the emperor. Since it did not have reliable scientific methods to gauge the public mood and morale, the Japanese government had difficulties figuring out what the people actually thought. Furthermore, propagandists were seemingly unable to design propaganda messages that would appeal to the public. As a result, Japanese authorities attempted to measure the current popular morale with surveys and by monitoring and censoring telephones and letters. For example, they often listened in on leaders of opinion such as intellectuals and National Diet members in order to gain insight into ordinary people’s attitudes toward the war and military men.<sup>10</sup>

In addition, the food shortage became gradually worse, particularly from early 1943 onward, and many people frequently accused military and government

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<sup>10</sup> Osaragi Jirō, *Osaragi Jirō haisen nikki* [Osaragi Jirō’s Diaries in Defeat] (Sōshisha, 1995), 101.

officials of corruption. The combination of slow starvation and feelings of being betrayed by their leaders caused a decline in popular morale, which alarmed the Japanese elite. Worse, the American criticism of the emperor, which was mainly a result of the Japanese atrocities against the Allied POWs in the Pacific, discouraged them in their peace efforts. Yet their main concern was the decline of popular morale at home.

In wartime Japan, where group solidarity was so highly valued, sanctions against publicly voicing any complaint were striking. The police did not allow the people to talk about “surrender,” “defeat,” or “peace,” and anyone who referred to such “dangerous thoughts” in public could be reported by the members of neighborhood associations to the Special Higher Police. Any person who voiced a protest or criticism could be—and in many cases was—branded not only a “defeatist” (*haisen shugisha*), “pro-Anglo-Americanist” (*ei-bei shugisha*), or “communist (*aka*),” but even a “traitor” (*hi-kokumin*). It was nearly impossible for ordinary Japanese to publicly broach the subject of defeat, even when it looked obvious that Japan was about to lose the war. Fushimi Hagino, who sent her four sons to the battlefields and lived in Tōda county of Miyagi prefecture, recalled that

“I was really afraid of being called a ‘traitor’” by the neighborhood.<sup>11</sup> On the surface, the nation’s morale appeared unaffected, but as the war continued, its decline became apparent.

By early 1943, Prime Minister Tōjō was also concerned about public sentiment. When he decided to start the war with America, he assessed that there were three main factors which could lead Japan to defeat in the war: the rift between the army and navy; the Soviet Union’s attack on Japan; and internal disorder. All these things actually happened during the war. On January 7, 1943 when Tōjō met with the former premier Konoe Fumimarō and Prince Takamatsu Nobuhito (emperor Hirohito’s second youngest brother), he admitted frankly, “The most critical thing at present is to bring public sentiment together. This is my first priority right now.”<sup>12</sup> The premier knew that the Japanese war spirit had already declined due to internal disorder, which resulted partly from the “unfair” rationing system.

The people’s resentment at the officials reached to a high degree, although they could not express their sentiments in public. If this situation continued, Japan

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<sup>11</sup> Sōka gakkai seinenbu hansen shuppan iinkai [Publishing Committee of Anti-War Movement, Youth Department of Value Creating Society], *Tonarigumi to Sensō: Fuminijirareta minshū no kokoro* [Neighborhood Associations and War: Trampled People’s Soul] (Daisan bunmeisha, 1978), 23-26, 73.

<sup>12</sup> Takamatsu Nobuhito, *Takamatsunomiya nikki (Dai gokan)* [Diaries of Prince Takamatsu (Vol. 5)] (Chūō kōronsha, 1996), 426-27.

would be unable to fight a prolonged war with the Allied powers. Such low popular morale now warned them to take action. On August 25, 1943, the BI in its weekly propaganda pamphlet *Shashin shūhō* urged the people to address the matter of, “Where and who is your real enemy?”<sup>13</sup> For many Japanese people, the real enemy existed among the Japanese rather than the “invisible” foreign enemy. Hatred of cruel police officers’ despotic rule overwhelmed the public’s animosity toward the foreign enemy. As a wartime propagandist recalled, “between the two [the Allies and the corrupt and cruel Japanese officials and police officers] they hated their own [domestic] betrayers more.”<sup>14</sup> Prime Minister Tōjō saw a problem with the corruption and oppressive rule by government officials, as well as men in uniform, and the situation made him deliver a speech to address the public’s complaints. In the address before the Eighty-Fourth Session of the Diet on January 21, 1944, Tōjō told his countrymen:

The importance of maintaining the food supply in wartime, especially when war becomes protracted, is clear in light of military history and particularly in light of the experience of World War I. The government devotes its attention to securing and increasing the distribution of foodstuff...In parallel with these measures, the Wartime Government Service Ordinance has been promulgated as a measure for the management of food supplies. In view of the unprecedentedly grave war situation, the

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<sup>13</sup> Jōhōkyoku, ed., *Shashin shūhō*, No. 286, August 25, 1943, 2.

<sup>14</sup> Kato, *The Lost War*, 227.

manner in which we officials perform our duties will be directly reflected in the nation's morale and affect the activities of the people, thereby directly influencing the course of the war.<sup>15</sup>

The Wartime Government Service Ordinance of January 1944 was enacted primarily to admonish officials and men in uniform who resorted to black marketeering and other corrupt actions. Despite Tōjō's pronouncement, few were punished for getting supplies and rations from the black market, or for selling them on the black market for gain.

By early 1944, many Japanese in the cities had to live off the black market and attributed the cause of the worsened war economy to officials. The highly respected historian Irokawa Daikichi, while he was a student at the History Department of Tokyo University, wrote with admirable candor in his diary entry for February 4: "The Japanese motherland is endangered by internal economic disorder resulting from the people's degraded ethical and moral sense... How could it be possible to call such an egoistic Japan a leader of Asian peoples?"<sup>16</sup> The frequent sumptuous banquets among men in uniform near Irokawa's lodging house infuriated

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<sup>15</sup> Nippon seifu [Government of Japan], "Dai hachijū yonkai teikoku gikai ni okeru naikaku sōri daijin enzetsu" [Premier's Address Before the Eighty-Fourth Session of the Imperial Diet] (Document No. B-A-5-2-012), 7-8, January 21, 1944, *MFA Records*.

<sup>16</sup> Irokawa Daikichi, *Aru Shōwa-shi: Jibunshi no kokoromi* [One Man's History of the Shōwa Era: An Attempt at a Self-History] (Chūō kōronsha, 1975), 137.

him. He attributed the public's unwillingness to speed up war production and its lack of active service for the country to distrust in government leaders and anger over corruption. This official corruption greatly undermined the Japanese people's fighting spirit.<sup>17</sup>

As a result of their dissatisfaction with corruption, black marketeering, and the state of domestic affairs during the Pacific War in general, the Japanese people committed crimes of "Great Treason" against the emperor more frequently than at any other time in prewar Japan. As the Home Ministry indicated in a report, rumors about the emperor and the imperial family had steadily increased since at least early 1943.<sup>18</sup> Although the majority of the Japanese people still showed loyalty to the emperor, authorities were surprised at the increased incidents of *lèse majesté*. During the period between September 1943 and February 1944, the police found evidence of forty-eight instances of *lèse majesté* and arrested thirty-eight people. Some people sent anonymous letters about the emperor to police offices. Others scribbled criticisms of the imperial family on factory and rest room walls. Police records reveal that not all imperial Japanese "subjects" gave unconditional loyalty to the

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 136.

<sup>18</sup> "Tokyo daikūshū sensaishi" henshū iinkai, ed., *Tokyo daikūshū sensaishi (Daigokan)*, 254.

emperor.<sup>19</sup> It is worthwhile to note some examples of the largely unvoiced grassroots protests. A mother in Tochigi prefecture discussed the conscription of her sons with her friend: “We never received even one penny from His Majesty the Emperor for raising children, but he snatched away our sons.” A farmer of the Kōchi prefecture complained about the suffering of daily life: “How can a farmer live after rice is taken away? How can we win the war with such a policy? They said that every soldier at the battle front dies with the cry, ‘Long Live His Majesty the Emperor,’ but it is a lie. I am sure that they die holding grudges.” All these remarks violated the revised Peace Preservation Law of 1928 and other laws of public opinion control, and, as an example, the two “criminals” were immediately indicted by the police authorities. *Lèse majesté* rhymes were popular among the national school (elementary school) students in Tokyo. One of them went: “The first bridge collapses/ The second bridge collapses/ The Double Bridge (*nijūbashi*) of the Imperial Palace collapses/ Finally, the Imperial Palace collapses from fire.”<sup>20</sup> These young students did not, of course, spend all their time at school; undoubtedly they

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<sup>19</sup> Naimushō keihokyoku [Peace Preservation Bureau of the Home Ministry], “Saikin ni okeru fukei, hansen, hangun, sono hoka fuon gendō no gaiyō” [A Summary of the Recent Affairs of *lèse majesté*, Anti-War, Anti-Militaristic, and Disorderly Behavior], 1, Spring 1944, Reel #142, *USSBS Records*.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 5, 7, 10-1.

picked up these sentiments from their parents at home and expressed them through the schoolyard rhymes.

To the Japanese authorities' eyes, such public attitudes indicated the decline of the people's loyalty to the *kokutai*. The military police now warned the people that they were not allowed to think anything unfavorable about the emperor. Knowing that the "bridge rhyme" was being spread, on March 11, 1944 Major Miyazaki Isamu of the Military Police Headquarters urged schools and households to listen for the *lèse majesté* popular rhyme and discipline children if they sang it.<sup>21</sup>

The authorities' concern over the current public sentiments continued. In spring 1944, the Home Ministry, in reference to trends in popular morale, wrote that "great attention must be given to the increase in malicious and refractory cases." The ministry anticipated that there was a possibility that *lèse majesté* sentiments would increase if the war situation and food shortage problems worsened. The Home Ministry thus urged the government to take immediate measures, and the police authorities strengthened the surveillance of the people's attitude toward the war and their leaders.<sup>22</sup> Yet the frequency of crimes of Great Treason had not increased so

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<sup>21</sup> *Mainichi shinbun*, March 11, 1944, 4.

<sup>22</sup> Naimushō keihokyoku, "Saikin ni okeru fukei, hansen, hangun, sono hoka fuon



dramatically during the last phase of the war that people could form nation-wide organizations capable of toppling the emperor system. Nevertheless, the Japanese authorities were extremely sensitive to the current tendency toward *lèse majesté*.<sup>23</sup>

One of the most important indicators of popular morale was the number of anti-war “crimes” and anti-emperor slogans. In 1944, the government indicted 1,029 persons for violating laws on public opinion control. The number of criminals that year increased about three times as compared to 1942 (363 persons) and reflected the worsening public opinion of the war itself, the war economy, food shortages, and anti-military sentiments.<sup>24</sup> The rumor that life could not get any worse even if Japan surrendered was often heard, and some citizens even anticipated that Japan’s leaders, the ones responsible for the current miserable conditions, might be killed by the victors. During early 1944, such sentiments were voiced throughout the fifteen prefectures and some of the people involved were arrested by the police.<sup>25</sup> In mid-1944, some Japanese cried, “Give me rice, no more war,” “Sentence Tōjō to

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gendō no gaiyō,” 2-3, *USSBS Records*.

<sup>23</sup> Ikō Toshiya, ed., *Taiheiyō sensōki naimushō chian taisaku jōhō (Dai nikan)* [Security Measures and Information of the Home Ministry during the Pacific War (Vol. 2)] (Nihon tosho sentā, 1995), 323, 326.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 320.

<sup>25</sup> “Tokyo daikūshū sensaishi” henshū iinkai, *Tokyo daikūshū sensaishi (Dai gokan)*, 261.

death,” and even, “Overthrow the boss of public servants, the emperor.”<sup>26</sup>

Under the abysmal economic circumstances resulting from total war mobilization, most Japanese people could not afford to think about national affairs. As the war economy and war situation gradually became worse, many Japanese wanted the war ended. A public opinion survey conducted by the police authorities in early 1944 demonstrated that the majority of the Japanese did not identify the 1941 imperial rescript’s official war aim of “Self-Defense and Self-Preservation” as Japan’s current war cause. Rather, most respondents among more than twenty thousand Japanese answered that Japan’s war objective was for “peace in the world” or for “peace in Asia.” Although they could not explicitly refer to the forbidden word “peace” under the strict surveillance of the police, it seemed, nonetheless, that many Japanese wanted “peace.”<sup>27</sup>

The current economic situation affected their attitudes toward Japan’s official war aims such as the “Liberation of Asia.” At least by early 1944, many Japanese had a critical view of domestic propaganda concerning Japan’s “altruistic” treatment of the other Asian nations. In the public opinion analysis of February 5, the

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<sup>26</sup> Naimushō keihokyoku, *Tokkō geppō*, June 1944, 26-27.

<sup>27</sup> *Mainichi shinbun*, March 11, 1944, 4.

Navy Ministry assessed the current public sentiments as follows: “This war, after all, will only benefit other Asians in Thailand, the Philippines, Burma, and Indonesia, not us.”<sup>28</sup>

In addition to the concern over the lack of the Japanese war spirit at home and their perception of war objectives, American criticism of the emperor alarmed Japan’s leaders. By late January of 1944, they learned that American public opinion was strongly opposed to the future continuation of the emperor’s reign. Prior to 1944, American propagandists in the official U.S. propaganda agency and Office of War Information had refrained from derogatory accounts of the emperor, out of fear that an attack on the “living god” would “unify the people of Japan.”<sup>29</sup> American experts stressed instead that the militarists had betrayed the emperor and entered the war against his will.<sup>30</sup> The treatment of the emperor in the American media was relatively moderate compared to that of the other Axis leaders. But Japan’s own

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<sup>28</sup> Doi, et al eds., *Shōwa shakai keizai shiryō shūsei: Vol. 23 (Kaigunshō shiryō)* [Documents of Social and Economic History in Shōwa Era: Vol. 23 (Documents of the Navy Ministry)] (Daitō bunka daigaku tōyō kenkyūjo, 1997), 264.

<sup>29</sup> Pacific Operations Bureau of the Office of War Information, “From Director of Pacific Operations Owen Lattimore to Section Chiefs and Writers,” 1, November 13, 1943, Box 600, Entry 381, RG 208, *OWI Records*.

<sup>30</sup> See Hal Brands, “Who Saved the Emperor? The MacArthur Myth and U.S. Policy toward Hirohito and the Japanese Imperial Institution, 1942-1946,” *Pacific Historical Review*, Vol. 75, No. 2 (May 2006), 271-305.

atrocities against Allied POWs in the Philippines now kindled widespread indignation toward Hirohito among the American public. Late in January 1944, the U.S. government released detailed American POW accounts of the fall of Bataan (early 1942), and of the Japanese POW camps in the Philippines.<sup>31</sup>

The American mass media were quick to disseminate the stories of Japanese atrocities against American war prisoners. Upon learning of the “Bataan Death March,” American politicians and journalists often remarked on the harsh treatment of Allied prisoners of war, believing that it was sanctioned by the emperor. The *New York Times* reported on January 29, 1944 that Fiorello LaGuardia, mayor of New York City and a fierce opponent of Nazism and Italian fascism, said that the “time for ‘trying to be nice to the Emperor’ has passed...They [the Japanese] are just savage barbarians and should be told that each and every one of them will be held responsible.” Chairperson Sol Bloom of the House Foreign Affairs Committee was of the same opinion, saying, “We will hold the rats—from the emperor down to the lowest ditch-digger—responsible for a million years.”<sup>32</sup> Claims that Hirohito and

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<sup>31</sup> Bartlett Kerr, *Surrender and Survival: The Experience of American POWs in the Pacific, 1941-1945* (New York: William Morrow and Company, INC., 1985), 162.

<sup>32</sup> “La Guardia Calls Hirohito One of Japan’s ‘Monkeys’,” *New York Times*, January 29, 1944, 1-2, 4.

Japan's war leaders should be included in America's list of war criminals, in combination with such phrases as "ruin Japan" and "revenge on the emperor," flooded the American mass media.<sup>33</sup> These criticisms of the emperor and Japan were critical enough for certain Japanese elites to take action.

### **"Peace-Feelers" in Action**

The year 1944, as a secret journal of the Army Chief of Staff Office observed on January 1, 1944, would be one of unprecedented severity in terms of the war situation. At first, a serious concern was raised among some "peace-feelers" in the Army Chief of Staff Office as to what the future of the emperor and the imperial institution would be. Following Tōjō's order of December 30, 1943 urging the Army Chief of Staff Office to prepare a new military strategy in the case of Germany's defeat, in early January of 1944 the office recommended to the premier that the two most urgent matters should be to clarify Japan's war aims and to be ready for a decisive battle.

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<sup>33</sup> On March 4, Senator Claude Pepper, Democrat, of Florida, urged the American government to participate fully in formulating and executing plans of the Allied powers for the trial and punishment of Japan's war guilty and called for a resolution introduced in the Senate. *See* "U.S. Asked to Join War Guilt Trials," *New York Times*, March 4, 1944, 7.

Colonel Matsutani Makoto and his staff in the Army Chief of Staff Office, who had studied war trends in Europe since November 1943, viewed Germany's current military situation as critical. These officers analyzed Japan's capabilities and found that the nation would be unable to achieve victory if the Nazis surrendered in the spring or summer of 1945 or if the Soviet Union invaded Japan prior to the spring of that year. In either case, Japan would be in grave danger unless it negotiated an end to the war, and negotiations should be predicated on only one condition: the preservation of the "national polity."<sup>34</sup> It looked obvious to those officers in the Army Chief of Staff Office that America would soon be able to concentrate its whole military power on Japan. Like these men in uniform, other "peace-feelers" were also seriously concerned over the current war situation and the future of the imperial institution, and they began to take action against the hawkish Tōjō cabinet, a major obstacle to peace.

Such negative perspectives on the war derived partly from a fear of Western racism, a recurring concern since 1941 when Japan prepared for war with the Allied powers. In early 1944, the fear of a racial war was prevalent among certain Japanese

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<sup>34</sup> Gunji shigakukai [Association of Military History Studies], ed., *Daihonei rikugunbu sensō shidōhan—Kimitsu sensō nisshi: Ge* [War Guidance Section of the Imperial Headquarters Army Department: Secret Journals of the War (Vol. 2)] (Kinseisha, 1998), 471-72, 684.

elites. Their biggest concern should Germany collapse was that the war would inevitably turn into a race war between the “white” and “yellow” races where American racism toward the Japanese would be put to full use. The emperor’s two followers, Lord Keeper of the Privy Seal Kido Kōichi and Kido’s chief secretary Matsudaira Yasumasa, noted on January 16 that the “colored” country of Japan would be encircled in an “all-out attack” (*sō-kōgeki*) by the “white” countries. Allowing such a situation would be a major obstacle to ending the war. The two men felt that after the collapse of Germany, Japan should take immediate measures to end the war.<sup>35</sup>

Meanwhile, growing American criticism toward Japan and the emperor caused some concern in the “peace-feeler” group over the future of the *kokutai*. Upon seeing the American backlash against the emperor, they assessed that if the Allies won the war, the future of the emperor system would be uncertain. These “peace-feelers” outside the government began to discuss how they could protect the emperor system by ending the war. On February 7, 1944, for example, the former BI President and Foreign Ministry official Itō Nobufumi worried about American public

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<sup>35</sup> Hosokawa, *Hosokawa nikki*, 72-73, 98-99; Kido nikki kenkyūkai, ed., *Kido Kōichi nikki (Gekan)*, 1078-79.

sentiments toward Japan and the emperor. He told his colleague Tomita Kenji, former premier Konoe Fumimaro's brain trust, that considering that Americans portrayed the Japanese as little more than beasts, they might use such inhumane weapons as poison gas. Since "beasts" would certainly have no need for an organized government, they might also destroy the emperor system.<sup>36</sup>

Hosokawa Morisada, personal secretary and son-in-law of prince Konoe, received the same news from general Sakai Kōji in the Army Chief of Staff Office and told Konoe on February 16 that his group should consider working on the preservation of the "national polity." Ten days later, upon reading a translated American article saying "Hang the Emperor," which was distributed by the news service company *Dōmei*, Itō told Hosokawa and his colleagues that Japan must take the current situation seriously. Then, after numerous warnings and indications that some action was necessary, these men began to discuss a plan for leaders such as princes Konoe and Takamatsu to initiate an end to the war.<sup>37</sup>

Feeling that worsening public attitude toward the emperor in America would be of critical importance in determining the future of the imperial family, the

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<sup>36</sup> Hosokawa, *Hosokawa nikki*, 121.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 122, 127, 131, 143.



“peace-feelers” now decided to urge cabinet members to take the situation seriously. On March 16 when Hosokawa, at prince Takamatsu’s request, met with Foreign Minister Shigemitsu Mamoru, the minister opined that Japan did not have to worry about the *kokutai*, saying that the foreigners were trying to vilify the imperial family just as Japanese Communists had done. As far as Shigemitsu was concerned, the emperor system could be most aptly protected by military victory. But at this time, the majority of the “peace-feelers” did not trust Shigemitsu as they believed that he was under the influence of premier Tōjō and his henchmen.<sup>38</sup>

Although the “peace-feelers” were temporarily concerned about American public opinion of the emperor, they were increasingly convinced that the most serious threat to the *kokutai* was internal rather than external. Major figures in the “peace-feeler” group had access to the police reports on Japanese popular morale and they were eager to know whether deep-seated wartime resentment toward Hirohito would threaten the postwar social order. Undoubtedly, as seen before in this chapter, the ongoing *lèse majesté* incidents looked to the “peace-feelers” a threat to the “national polity.”

In the meantime, the “peace-feelers” continued their efforts to bring the war

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 151-52, 158-59.

to a close by making a specific plan for the preservation of the *kokutai*. Directed by Konoe, on March 18 Hosokawa finished a report on whether Japan should end the war before or after the anticipated air raids by the American bombers and their landing in Japan. For Hosokawa, the best solution to save the “national polity” was to surrender by issuing an imperial rescript before the enemy landed. If Americans invaded the homeland, a rescript for closing the war might be ineffective. It appeared, to Hosokawa, that unless Hirohito took quick action at an appropriate time, it would be difficult for the Japanese government to control a defeated Japan, ultimately resulting in a domestic chaos incited by communists or ultranationalists. In this case, the preservation of the *kokutai* would not be guaranteed, and the Japanese people might hold a grudge against the imperial family for all their sufferings during the war and for Japan’s defeat.<sup>39</sup>

In preparation for the preservation of the “national polity” after surrender, the “peace-feelers” frequently met with members of the emperor’s entourage such as Lord Keeper of the Privy Seal Kido Kōichi and his chief secretary Matsudaira Yasumasa. Undoubtedly, the ideas of the “peace-feelers” appealed to the two men. But at least until late June of 1944 when the battle of Saipan looked desperate, Kido

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 161-63.

was not in a position to force the premier Tōjō out of his current post, in part because the Lord Keeper had recommended Tōjō as premier to Hirohito in October 1941, despite the fact that some senior statesmen opposed the appointment. For the time being, Kido had to advocate for the premier's policy and could hardly take the initiative in toppling the Tōjō cabinet in order to end the war.<sup>40</sup>

During the war, Japan's leaders had tried to make the premier Tōjō a sacrifice. By 1944, the "peace-feelers," who had constantly monitored the public opinion trends in America and Britain, had now concluded that Tōjō and Hitler were the most-hated men in those countries. In order to avoid war responsibility, which the Allied powers might demand of them or the emperor if Japan was defeated, some "peace-feelers" believed they needed to find a convenient scapegoat. Furthermore, because of the current public sentiment against militarists, Hirohito's close association with Tōjō might endanger the *kokutai* if hatred toward the premier was transferred to the emperor. In an effort to avoid this eventuality, the "peace-feeler" group, including Konoe, began formulating a secret plan to sacrifice Tōjō in place of the emperor on the issue of war responsibility. On April 11, 1944, Konoe told the

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<sup>40</sup> Matsutani, *Daitōa sensō shūshū no shinsō*, 112; Tomita, *Haisen nihon no uchigawa*, 211.

prince Higashikuni Naruhiko, Hirohito's uncle, that Americans did not understand the notion of the Japanese imperial system, and as a result they might demand that Hirohito take responsibility for the war. In this case, Konoe went on, Japan should place the whole responsibility for the war on Tōjō's shoulders by keeping him in the premiership for the time being. Konoe was convinced that if they changed the premiership two or three times, they could confuse the Americans as to the identity of the "real" war criminals. After the war was over and responsibility duly assigned to the premier, Higashikuni would then take over the position. He agreed to Konoe's idea on the spot.<sup>41</sup>

During the spring months of 1944, the Japanese elite became increasingly aware that an American air attack on the Japanese mainland was possible in the near future. There was the frequently expressed feeling that the continued American bombardments would undoubtedly harm popular morale. Some "peace-feelers" in the navy were leaning toward the conclusion of the war. The news on June 16 that American bombers had launched the first attack on the Japanese mainland was enough for the navy captain and prince Takamatsu to determine to find the best way

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<sup>41</sup> Hosokawa, *Hosokawa nikki*, 163, 180-1. Imperial princes, including Higashikuni, were prevented from holding the post of prime minister during the war, obviously because the Japanese people might blame the imperial family for all of their wartime suffering.

to close the war. Takamatsu told Hosokawa on June 29 that Japan should discard the ideal of the “Construction of a Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere.” In the prince’s opinion, the government’s continued commitment to the imperialistic ambitions in the occupied areas might prolong the war and thereby put the *kokutai* in jeopardy.<sup>42</sup>

Late in June 1944, the American forces were about to occupy Japanese-held Saipan. To Japan’s war leadership, withdrawal from the island meant the collapse of the absolute defense line (*zettai kokubōken*). Premier Tōjō was not happy with the political maneuvers of the “peace-feelers” and tried to purge some of them from the Army Chief of Staff Office. On June 29, Colonel Matsutani reported the current war situation to Tōjō, but the premier did not express any opinion and just sat “with an unpleasant face.” On July 3, Tōjō dismissed the “peace-feeler” Matsutani from his post and sent him to the China Expeditionary Force. But at this point, the fortune of the premier too became ominous.<sup>43</sup>

On July 7, the Japanese imperial forces lost Saipan. Though untrue, the news provided by the government that all Japanese troops and civilians had

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 183, 214, 254.

<sup>43</sup> Matsutani, *Daitōa sensō shūshū no shinsō*, 82-83.

committed suicide on the island shocked the Japanese at home. American capture of the strategically located Saipan meant that American B-29s could now approach Japan more easily, ultimately bringing the enemy close enough to launch massive bombings on the Japanese mainland.

Under such war conditions, it seemed obvious, particularly to the “peace-feelers,” that as long as Tōjō remained in his current position, the immediate conclusion of the war was impossible. Once again, a plot to overthrow the Tōjō cabinet was formulated. Prince Konoe and other senior statesmen such as Hiranuma Kiichirō, Okada Keisuke, and Wakatsuki Reijirō took the initiative in inciting an anti-Tōjō movement. Clearly, the collapse of Saipan looked like the perfect opportunity to end the war and at the same time preserve the “national polity” by placing the responsibility for the military debacle in the Pacific entirely on Tōjō and his henchmen.

After “saving” the *kokutai* from the threat of the emperor’s war responsibility, some “peace-feelers,” including Konoe and his entourage, firmly believed that protecting the imperial institution from a leftist revolution was the next urgent matter. The Konoe group’s fear of an internal revolt was mainly based upon

the worsened popular morale and increased Great Treason affairs, which, if allowed to continue, might put the imperial institution at stake.<sup>44</sup> Right before Saipan was lost, Konoe sent a memorandum, perhaps based upon Hosokawa's research of March 18, 1944, to Lord Keeper of the Privy Seal Kido on July 2 stating that Japan should immediately close the war to preserve the "national polity." Konoe asserted that Japan must quit the war immediately by issuing an imperial rescript. The imperial document should detail how Hirohito had no choice but to call an end to the war in order to save the Japanese people from further sacrifices. The prince firmly believed that the manufactured image of the "benevolent" emperor would protect the person of the emperor and the imperial institution from a domestic revolution in the wake of defeat.<sup>45</sup>

For Konoe, there was danger of a revolution everywhere, since everything within Japan looked "red" (*aka*) or "left" (*sayoku*) to him. He even believed that some army officers, government officials, and converted right-wingers had been leaning toward communism and that they would undoubtedly support the people in a

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<sup>44</sup> Yabe Teiji, ed., *Konoe Fumimarō (Ge)* [A Biography of Konoe Fumimarō] (Kōbundō, 1952), 501.

<sup>45</sup> Kyōdō tsūshinsha 'Konoe nikki' henshū iinkai ["Konoe Diary" Editing Committee of Kyōdō News Agency], ed., *Konoe nikki* [Konoe Diaries] (Kyōdō tsūshinsha, 1968), 35-37, 92-93; Kido nikki kenkyūkai, ed., *Kido Kōichi nikki (Gekan)*, 1125.

domestic revolt if Japan were defeated. His fear of a communist revolution was presented to the senior statesmen on July 18 when they met to recommend Tōjō's successor to the emperor. Konoe revealed in the meeting that defeat would not necessarily lead to the collapse of the *kokutai*, but an internal revolution would guarantee it.<sup>46</sup>

Whether a revolution was imminent or not, the statesmen agreed that Tōjō's removal from his post was necessary to protect the "national polity" at present. Because of the "peace-feeler" group's behind-the-scenes collaboration with senior statesmen and Lord Keeper of the Privy Seal Kido, the Tōjō cabinet collapsed on 18 July, 1944, and four days later the Governor-General of Korea, Koiso Kuniaki, succeeded Tōjō. Despite such "peace-feeler" group's efforts, the politics of war goals in the military government remained sharply polarized.

### **The Split over War Aims in the Military Government Continues**

By late December of 1943, Japan's leaders perceived that Germany's victory on the Eastern Front would be impossible. They began to think that if their only remaining ally failed, Japan's goal of creating a "high level national defense

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid.



state” in the “Co-Prosperity Sphere” would be unreachable. At this time, the prevailing belief within the Japanese government that, as the war dragged on, the American public would demand a peace negotiation, now proved to be a miscalculation. The Japanese government learned from some Japanese people who returned to Japan from the United States that popular morale in America was virtually untouched by the war, and hatred of the Japanese was very great.<sup>47</sup> The Tōjō cabinet, still intact at this time, nevertheless was not in full agreement over the politics of war aims.

This split over war goals met with criticism from certain elites. Early in 1944, the main concern among Japanese intellectuals and opinion leaders was what would happen to Japan if Germany was defeated.<sup>48</sup> National Diet members now urged the government to redefine Japan’s war aims in order to bolster the Japanese war spirit. They were inclined to believe that the most urgent matter for Japan should be the preservation of the “national polity,” and they overtly “berated” Japanese leaders for their slowness in reformulating war goals. On January 23, 1944, at the Budget Committee Meeting of the House of Representatives, Tsurumi Yūsuke and

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<sup>47</sup> Hoshino, *Hōdō sarenakatta nyūsu*, 202-3.

<sup>48</sup> Kiyosawa, *Ankoku nikki (II)*, 10.

his colleagues asked BI President Amau Eiji, former vice-minister of the Foreign Ministry, and other government high officials to articulate Japan's war objectives. As they had done in the past, however, government leaders at first attacked Anglo-American war aims in order to justify Japan's war goals.<sup>49</sup>

General Satō Kenryō, Director of the Military Affairs Bureau in the Army Ministry, criticized that America was bent upon world domination, and that President Franklin Roosevelt's war aims "change like a cat's eye."<sup>50</sup> However, Hirohito's cat had many eyes. The Japanese government and military leaders repeated that Japan was fighting against the Allies for "Self-Preservation and Self-Defense," "Liberation of Asia," "Stability in Asia," and "World Peace" by ousting Western imperialists from Asia.<sup>51</sup>

During early and mid-1944, such failure to voice a unified national goal came in part from disagreement over national war policy between the military branches. There was evidence of the military split almost everywhere. For instance, the widely divergent views between the army and navy over both military strategy

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<sup>49</sup> Kokkai toshokan, *Teikoku gikai: Shūgiin iinkai kaigiroku—Shōwa hen 149*, 106.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 61, 91, 107.

and division of material supplies were striking. As the war dragged on, such conflicts became increasingly intense. It was navy policy to fight for strategic islands and to place more and greater strength in airplanes for the defense of these islands, keeping the enemy as far away as possible. In opposition to this, the army placed its main strategy on the so-called decisive battle for the homeland (*hondo kessen*) and did not put any great importance on the retention of island bases.<sup>52</sup>

The constant discord between the two branches was one of the main reasons that Emperor Hirohito called the retired army general Koiso Kuniaki and the former premier and retired admiral Yonai Mitsumasa together soon after the collapse of the Tōjō cabinet in July 1944 and ordered them to cooperate in organizing a new cabinet.<sup>53</sup> Such an extraordinary order had never been given before. On the surface, the army and navy appeared to be unified around Hirohito, but in reality their in-fighting continued up until the very last days of the war.<sup>54</sup>

Not surprisingly, the politics of war aims within the military branches was likewise polarized. The navy had not been happy with the government's war goals,

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<sup>52</sup> Nakadokoro, *Nihon gunbatsu hishi*, 143-45.

<sup>53</sup> Kido nikki kenkyūkai, ed., *Kido Kōichi nikki (Gekan)*, 1128.

<sup>54</sup> Tanemura, *Daihonei kimitsu nisshi*, 285.

and least of all with the Army Ministry's policy of fighting to the last to maintain imperial gains in the occupied areas. In early 1944, the army's confidence in victory came in part from the fact that to that time, many army troops remained intact. In contrast to the army, the navy had no confidence in victory in part because it had sustained heavy losses as many Japanese battleships in the Pacific had been sunk by American bombers and submarines. At this time, the navy had another reason to be dissatisfied with the current war objectives, because, as noted in Chapter One, they had claimed since Pearl Harbor that Japan's war should be a war for "Self-Preservation and Self-Defense." Early in 1944, the navy side persistently claimed that the war aim should once again be restricted to "Self-Preservation and Self-Defense."

Equally important as the divide between the military branches, the lack of war spirit among the Japanese public alarmed the navy high command in particular (although that does not mean that the army did not worry about the matter at all). The Navy Ministry, in a public opinion analysis of February 5, 1944, saw that the public's attitude toward the war was optimistic mainly due to the black-out of negative war information. This optimistic attitude and certainty of eventual victory

caused the people to feel apathetic about the war effort, and the Navy Ministry concluded that if the current trends in popular morale continued, Japan itself would be at stake.<sup>55</sup>

The navy also attributed such optimism to the government's propaganda policy of war aims, saying, "When the government interprets the aim of the Greater East Asian War, it tends to emphasize a 'War of Liberation for Asian Races' rather than a 'War for Self-Preservation and Self-Defense of the Empire.'"<sup>56</sup> The Navy Ministry urged the government not to disseminate the aim of the "War of Liberation for Asian Races" to the domestic audience, even though it could still be used in propaganda directed at other Asian peoples. The navy frankly admitted that the government's claim that Japan was fighting for other Asians was simply lip service: "Does any country in the world fight for other races at the sacrifice of its own country?"<sup>57</sup>

However, high-ranking army officers had no intention of following the view of the navy. Since September 1943, they had made an effort to make an alliance

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<sup>55</sup> Doi, et al eds., *Shōwa shakai keizai shiryō shūsei: Vol. 23 (Kaigunshō shiryō)*, 265.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

between Germany, Japan, and the Soviet Union in order to continue the fight against the Allied powers. Although the two European countries did not show any interest in Japan's suggestion, the Japanese government continued to try to persuade them. To the Soviet Union in particular, however, the two weak Axis powers had little to offer, and what they did have was steadily decreasing as the war continued.<sup>58</sup>

The Foreign Ministry, which was almost completely under the army's control, continued to seek the ideal of the "Co-Prosperity Sphere." However, despite being an "instrument" of the army, the ministry did pay attention to the trends in American public opinion concerning the emperor and Japan. In a memorandum written on February 15, 1944, the ministry took note of Hanson Baldwin's January 30th *New York Times* article on poison gas.<sup>59</sup> The Foreign Office document recommended that the Japanese government treat the Allied POWs humanely in order to avoid a "political mess" in the wartime and postwar era. Undoubtedly, the "mess" meant a war crime trial of Japan's war atrocities against American war prisoners. Surmising that America would use its occupied territories in the current

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<sup>58</sup> Sanbō honbu [Army Chief of Staff Office], ed., *Haisen no kiroku* [Records in the Phase of Defeat] (Hara shobō, 1967), 44-45; Semmler, *Goebbels*, 148-49.

<sup>59</sup> On January 30, the *New York Times* reporter and military expert Hanson Baldwin wrote an article advocating the use of a certain method of warfare against Japan: poison gas. Hanson Baldwin, "A War Without Quarter Forecast in Pacific," *New York Times*, January 30, 1944, E3.

war as military bases in order to dominate the world in the postwar era, the ministry claimed that Japan should continue to pursue the spirit of the Greater East Asian Joint-Declaration. This implied that the Foreign Office had no intention of changing Japan's war aims and wanted to maintain the imperialistic gains in the currently-occupied areas.<sup>60</sup>

Both the Navy and Foreign ministries' accounts clearly reveal that the government's agreement in late 1943 to limit Japan's war aims to "Self-Preservation and Self-Defense" was only for show. Despite the supposed consensus, the military government, high-ranking officials of the Army and Foreign ministries in particular, continued to seek the ideal of the "Co-Prosperity Sphere" in the occupied areas under the rubric of "Self-Preservation and Self-Defense" which still had various connotations. Perhaps the actual meaning of these two official war aims was associated with securing the currently-occupied territories. Unlike the "peace-feelers," high-ranking officers and diplomats who were obsessed with imperialist ambitions in Asia did nothing to bring about a compromise peace.

Like the Tōjō cabinet, the virtually army-led Koiso regime was also

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<sup>60</sup> Gaimushō, "Sensō no shinkokuka to bei-ei" [Seriousness of War Situation and America-Britain] (Document No. B-A-7-0-117), 4, 10, 16-17, February 15, 1944, *MFA Records*.

preoccupied with imperial gains in the currently-occupied areas. In fact, Prime Minister Koiso was unable to bring the army under his full control and confronted resistance from Tōjō's entourage. Former Premier Tōjō's followers such as Vice Minister Tominaga Kyōji, Chief of the Military Affairs Bureau Satō Kenryō, and Tōjō's secretary Colonel Akamatsu Sadao, continued to rule the people with the power of the military police and became an obstacle to the new cabinet's leadership.

The Koiso cabinet continued to believe that Japan could gain final victory by making an alliance with Germany and the Soviet Union, and accordingly the government, through the Japanese ambassadors in each of those nations, approached the two countries with the proposal. The Japanese ambassador to Germany Ōshima Hiroshi tried to persuade Hitler to accept Japan's suggestion, but the chancellor had no interest in the subject, in part because he had been engaged in an all-out war against the Soviets.<sup>61</sup>

Confronted by Hitler's negative response to Japan's offer, on September 2, 1944, Ōshima now contacted the Third Reich Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels. Although the minister was interested in the proposal, Goebbels hesitated to give an

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<sup>61</sup> Goebbels, *The Goebbels Diaries, 1942-1943*, 181.



answer on the grounds that he was not sure of Joseph Stalin's view on an alliance.<sup>62</sup> Considering the two European countries were fighting in a life-or-death-struggle, Japan's suggestion looked virtually impossible to achieve. At this time, Japan too entered into a decisive homeland battle. In order to continue to pursue the imperialistic agenda, the Japanese government needed to strengthen domestic unity and thereby launched propaganda campaigns in support of the new war objectives, as well as of home defense.

### **Propaganda for a Decisive Battle**

Soon after the downfall of the Tōjō cabinet, Japan's war leadership learned that on July 20, 1944, there was an attempt on Hitler's life in Germany. As a result, some officers in the Japanese Army Chief of Staff Office felt that Nazi Germany was a weak ally upon which Japan could no longer depend.<sup>63</sup> Worse, the victorious American forces in the Pacific were gradually pressing in on the Japanese homeland. The Japanese army's war leadership, while trying to maintain its imperialistic gains in the occupied areas, worked toward the total mobilization of the general population

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<sup>62</sup> Semmler, *Goebbels*, 148.

<sup>63</sup> Tanemura, *Daihonei kimitsu nisshi*, 229.

for a decisive homeland battle. The main task of Japanese propagandists in this plan was to urge the public to fight for Japan's war aims and for home defense by appealing to domestic unity and unconditional loyalty to the *kokutai*. This propaganda line came partly from fear of a domestic revolution.

The whole temper of the remaining war years was virtually set by the collapse of Saipan. The Board of Information assured the people that if Japan did not meet the challenge of the war, its efforts to construct a Greater East Asia and "liberate" Asia from the West would end in vain. The BI told the Japanese people on July 7, 1944 that if they failed to fight to the death, Anglo-Americans would invade and exploit Asia again.<sup>64</sup>

Japanese propagandists once again deployed the Allied Cairo Declaration of December 1943 in order to threaten the people with the possibility that the enemy would return Japan to its Tokugawa status with no military or economic power. Propaganda experts told the Japanese people that in order to know the meaning of the war and what they should do at present to ensure victory in the future, they must again read the imperial rescript of 1941, which informed the Japanese people of the

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<sup>64</sup> Akazawa, et al eds., *Shiryō nihon gendaishi* 13, 202.

opening of the war with the Allied powers and Japan's war aims.<sup>65</sup>

The BI urged the people to protect the *kokutai* with one hundred-million lives by recalling that "Great Japan is the nation of a god and the unbroken line of the *kokutai* is based upon the will of a god."<sup>66</sup> If the Japanese fight to the death, the agency claimed, the "divine wind" would finally defend the "national polity" and "holy" land, as in the previous wars with Mongolia, China, and Russia.<sup>67</sup> At this time, however, the Japanese government gradually highlighted the gloomy reality in its propaganda that, if the current situation continued, Japan would lose the war and the imperial institution would be dismantled.

Indeed, such change was closely linked to concerns about a revolution within Japan. Like the "peace-feelers," certain Japanese intellectuals observed that food shortages, coupled with the worsened war situation, would eventually result in a communist revolution. The famous Marxist economist Arisawa Hiromi bought land he could farm and live on, fearing that a revolution would come in the near future.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> "Teki beikoku no jittai wo tsukame" [Know the Nature of the Enemy, America], *Hi no de*, Vol. 13, No. 8 (August 1944), 12, 15, 19.

<sup>66</sup> Jōhōkyoku, ed., *Shūhō*, Nos. 403-4, July 19, 1944, 4.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>68</sup> Kiyosawa, *Ankoku nikki (I)*, 66, 76, 87.

The worsened food shortage was at the core of discussions among the common people. The current situation reminded intellectuals of the situation in some European countries during the last stage of World War I. The retired Lieutenant General and *kōdō* faction member Obata Toshishirō observed on December 4, 1943 that the current economic situation at home looked very similar to that of the last phase of Czarist Russia as the domestic war economy had become worse.<sup>69</sup>

To some intellectuals' eyes, a leftist tendency had already appeared at home. The "liberal" writer Kiyosawa Kiyoshi wrote on May 10, 1944 that the socialist tendency in Japanese society was "growing more and more."<sup>70</sup> In short, Japanese elites and intellectuals felt that the most dangerous issue was not the external enemy, but the people's complaint about and unrest over the food shortage.

Growing concerns over the leftist tendency forced Japanese propagandists to launch another anti-Western campaign, although leftist ideology and Western culture were not considered the same thing. The main target of the propaganda was "liberal" intellectuals and pacifists, since they might incite the public and lead them

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<sup>69</sup> Hosokawa, *Hosokawa nikki*, 60.

<sup>70</sup> Kiyosawa viewed that the future revolution in Japan would develop as follows: The deepening of the war—food shortages—disturbance—changes in cabinet—the continuing mayhem—the rise of peace discussions—revolutionary changes. Kiyosawa, *Ankoku nikki (I)*, 76; *Ankoku nikki (II)*, 52, 99, 171.

to a communist revolution. In a February 1944 article of the *Genron hōkoku* (Journalist's Patriotism), a propaganda magazine of the BI-created Japanese Journalism Patriotic Association (JJPA), Tokyo University professor and lawyer Noma Kaizō warned his readers that, judging from historical events in Europe, a communist nation would inevitably be defeated. Noma believed that some Japanese leaders and intellectuals were imbued with Western-origin liberalism and anti-war sentiments. Perhaps by “leaders” he meant the “peace-feelers.”<sup>71</sup>

Not surprisingly, the authorities tried to expunge Western music and musical instruments. After April 1944, any music played on the steel guitar, banjo, or ukulele was banned, and the use of the saxophone was strictly prohibited. It seemed that the last measure against Western influences was to ban the use of the Western-style microphone. In early September, the officers in the Tokyo Metropolitan Police Bureau forbade the Japanese people to use it on the grounds that, as the famous wartime comedian Furukawa Roppa wrote on September 3, the “mic is Anglo-Americanistic.”<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Noma Kaizō, *Shisōsen to jiyūshugi* [Thought War and Liberalism], *Genron hōkoku* [Journalist's Patriotism], February 1944, 31, 33.

<sup>72</sup> Itō Masanori, et al eds., *Jitsuroku taihei'yō sensō: Dai rokukan—Jūgo hen* [The True Record of the Pacific War: Vol. 6 (Part of the Homefront)] (Chūō kōronsha, 1960), 210; *Shōwa sensō bungaku zenshū* henshū iinkai [Editing Committee of “Complete

Just like the elites and intellectuals, Japanese propaganda experts were also obsessed with historical events in Europe, particularly the fact that the German monarchy was doomed by internal factors. The claim by Hitler and other German nationalists that Germany was defeated by a collapse in domestic morale, or was “stabbed in the back” by its own citizens, due to British propaganda against the Germans, was imported to Japan and precipitated propaganda campaigns supporting the *kokutai*.

On July 13, 1944, the famous anti-Semitist and former ambassador to Italy Shiratori Toshio warned the Japanese people to remember that during World War I, Anglo-American propagandists plotted to cause rife between Kaiser Wilhelm II and the German military and the public. Shiratori then urged the Japanese public to have confidence in the “peerless” *kokutai* and to always give unwavering loyalty to the emperor.<sup>73</sup>

## Conclusion

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Wartime Literary Works of the Shōwa Era”], ed., *Shōwa sensō bungaku zenshū 14: Shimin no nikki* [Complete Wartime Literary Works of the Shōwa Era (Vol. 14): City Residents’ Diaries] (Shūeisha, 1965), 248.

<sup>73</sup> Shiratori Toshio, “Jūdai senkyoku ni chokumen shite” (2) [Faces a Critical War situation (2)], *Mainichi shinbun*, July 13, 1944, 1.

This chapter has examined the “peace-feeler” group’s tireless efforts beginning in late 1943 to defend the “national polity” and its subsequent contribution to the downfall of the Tōjō cabinet. The “peace-feelers” were unhappy with the government’s commitment to imperialistic gains in the occupied territories as the war situations in the Pacific and Europe looked increasingly doomed. Worse yet, the military government never found itself in agreement over war aims and this split was reflected in war aims propaganda. These circumstances led the “peace-feelers” to the conclusion that if Japan did not try to sue for peace soon, the imperial institution would be doomed. In pondering the preservation of the *kokutai*, moreover, the “peace-feelers” main concern was placed more upon internal matters, including worsening popular morale, than upon external factors. Like the “peace-feeler” group, the government’s propaganda line emphasized the significance of preserving the *kokutai* and claimed that the Japanese people should show unconditional loyalty to the emperor, while purging any Western ideas or culture from within Japan. Propaganda experts were concerned with domestic matters and repeatedly assured the people that Germany was defeated by the collapse of popular moral due to Allied propaganda during the last world war.

However, recent research suggests a different reason. During the war, most Japanese elites remained in almost complete ignorance of the real reason for the Second Reich's collapse. A recent study has claimed that the decline of morale in Germany in 1918 was not due to the authorities failing to effectively subdue anti-Germany propaganda, but was due rather to the fact that they did not pay sufficient attention to the Germans' "wishes for political and economic reforms to compensate for the hardship and sacrifices endured over four years."<sup>74</sup> As we have seen in this chapter, during the Pacific War the Japanese government had a similar experience in that the oppressive rule by the military police and the worsened war economy led the Japanese public to gradually turn against the militarists. The failure to improve such domestic problems precipitated the collapse of popular morale. The next chapter examines in detail Japan's political backdrop prior to surrender in August 1945.

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<sup>74</sup> David Welch, *Germany, Propaganda and Total War, 1914-1918: The Sins of Omission* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2000), 7.



## Chapter Four

### **Preserving the *Kokutai* (From Mid-1944 to August 1945)**

By late 1944, the future of Nazi Germany under the bombs of the Allied powers looked desperate, and America gradually concentrated its military power on Japan. From the collapse of the Tōjō cabinet in July 1944 up until the last days of Japan's surrender in 1945, the political struggle between the “peace-feelers” and high-ranking military officers over Japan's surrender aims continued. As a result, until the very last months of the war, the military government failed to reach a consensus over ultimate objectives and this ongoing disagreement delayed the surrender. Traditional studies have focused mainly upon the role of the emperor Hirohito and his entourage in the Imperial Palace in deciding Japan's surrender in August 1945.<sup>1</sup> According to the Meiji Constitution, Hirohito was the only person in Japan who could bring the war to an end, and he made his final decision based largely on the continued efforts of the “peace-feelers,” who believed that Japan

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<sup>1</sup> For example, see Yoshida, *Shōwa tennō no shūsen-shi*; Bix, *Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan*.

should take active steps to end the war in order to preserve the “national polity” (*kokutai*). Based upon careful analysis of this context, I argue that more emphasis should be given to the “peace-feeler” groups’ role in Japan’s decision to surrender. Although many high-ranking government officials had yet to reach a consensus on surrender aims, fear of a domestic revolt, coupled with worsening popular morale, prompted the government to launch a large-scale propaganda campaign for the *kokutai*.<sup>2</sup> This campaign was intended to lift popular morale and prevent the Japanese public from being influenced by an anticipated anti-*kokutai* agitation from within Japan and by the invading enemy at the end of and after the war. This chapter examines the effects of popular morale on the politics of decision-making, the discord among the elites, and their final decision on surrender aims, and the propaganda surrounding the “national polity” during the last year of the war.

### **Popular Morale during the Last Year of the War**

To many Japanese people, as well as contemporary historians of Japan, the

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<sup>2</sup> Thomas Havens has argued that whether popular morale among the Japanese had much influence on closing the war seemed doubtful. Havens, *Valley of Darkness*, 187. The people’s opinions and attitudes towards the war, however, had significance as an important factor in the Japanese elite’s considerations of surrender. Past scholars have paid little attention to wartime propaganda for the *kokutai*, asserting that the Japanese propagandists seldom discussed the emperor-related theme in propaganda and focused more upon “mundane issues.” See Kushner, *The Thought War*, 20.

Japanese people in wartime fought “fanatically” to the last.<sup>3</sup> Although the military morale remained relatively high, such myths of the civilian “fanaticism” on the homeland were actually invented by wartime Japanese mass media and have been repeated to this day. Contrary to this manufactured image of the Japanese people, during the last year of the war popular morale had almost completely collapsed. As the corruption and despotic rule of the military officers and government officials deepened, the people’s distrust toward their leaders resulted in nearly complete indifference to the “Greater East Asian War.”<sup>4</sup> As a wartime journalist recalled, “‘Don’t you know there’s a war on?’” was a popular voice during the last year of the war.<sup>5</sup> Like the previous regime, the following Koiso cabinet sought to counter public dissatisfaction by sustaining the fighting spirit with an iron fist.

The military police established a special unit in Tokyo to round up Japanese people opposed to the war effort. On August 1, 1944 when Secretary-General of the House of Representatives Ōki Misao heard the news from one of his friends, he criticized the army for acting as if Japan was preparing for a domestic war on its own

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<sup>3</sup> For the claim by historians that the Japanese people on the homefront remained in a relatively high fighting spirit until the war ended, for example, see Kawashima, *Jūgo*, 191.

<sup>4</sup> Higashikuni, *Higashikuni nikki*, 148-49.

<sup>5</sup> Kato, *The Lost War*, 192.

people rather than concentrating on fighting against an external enemy.<sup>6</sup> The militarists' own behaviors, coupled with the worsening war economy, perpetuated the collapse of popular morale that caused most Japanese leaders to fear a national crisis. In deciding surrender aims, the Japanese ruling elite, as they had been doing before, paid great attention to trends in popular morale which will be analyzed below.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the concern over popular morale was largely a reflection of the prevailing claims among the Japanese elite that, like some European countries in the early twentieth century, Japan might undergo a leftist revolution by the enraged masses. The leftist tendency, however, was a moderate threat to the military government. By the early 1930s, almost all communists, the government's public enemy number one, had been sent to prison or fled to foreign countries including America, China, and Russia. During the Pacific War, the military police and quasi-government organizations such as neighborhood associations and community councils gave the people virtually no room to protest against the authorities.<sup>7</sup> As the chief of the Tokyo Military Police Ōtani Keijirō observed,

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<sup>6</sup> Ōki Misao, *Ōki nikki—Shūsenji no teikoku gikai* [Ōki's Diaries: The Imperial Diet during the Conclusion of the War] (Asahi shinbunsha, 1969), 72.

communist movements at home never constituted a serious threat to the military police, in part due to the harsh restrictions on the people. Under strict surveillance by the (military) police, it was nearly impossible for the public to organize any subversive organizations.<sup>8</sup> In a sense, fears of internal revolt among Japanese ruling elites were almost paranoiac. To them, who had brutally been suppressing the public, any leftist tendencies, no matter how small, were seen as a threat to their existing social and political status.

Opinion leaders repeatedly raised a warning about the worsening popular morale, and the government continued to face criticism on surrender aims particularly from Diet members. Their main concern was that the Japanese public might rebel so fully that they would side with the enemy after the war. Some leaders foresaw this situation leading to the collapse of the imperial institution. For example, Diet member Tsurumi Yūsuke worried about how Japan could protect the “national polity” once the enemy landed in Japan. Tsurumi had argued since Koiso Kuniaki’s appointment as premier in July 1944 that the new cabinet should give highest priority to the preservation of the imperial institution. Realizing that public sentiment

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<sup>7</sup> Ikō, ed., *Taiheiyō sensōki naimushō chian taisaku jōhō (Dai nikan)*, 277.

<sup>8</sup> Ōtani Keijirō, *Shōwa kenpei-shi* [A History of the Military Police in Shōwa Era] (Misuzu shobō, 1966), 487.

toward the government was filled with complaints against its “excessive oppression,” Tsurumi warned the cabinet of the need to unite the people in support of the emperor.<sup>9</sup> Tsurumi now urged cabinet members to reduce the war aims to the preservation of the *kokutai*.

On September 9, 1944, he urged Prime Minister Koiso and Foreign Minister Shigemitsu Mamoru to articulate a concrete war goal in order to strengthen Japanese fighting spirit, claiming that Japan’s only strategy against an impending Allied invasion should be “Self-Preservation and Self-Defense.” As discussed in the previous chapters, the official war objective of “Self-Preservation and Self-Defense” had many connotations, depending upon the individual and the times. For Tsurumi, the war aim at this point meant the preservation of the imperial institution. His concern over the *kokutai* was relatively similar to that of the “peace-feelers” concerned about worsening popular morale.<sup>10</sup>

Popular morale had been increasingly worsened by American bombings. In the spring of 1945, the American air force began to change from its tactic of

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<sup>9</sup> Tsurumi Yūsuke, “Shin-naikaku ni taisuru kokumin no kitai to yōbō” [The People’s Hope and Desire Toward the New Cabinet], 1, July 20, 1944, Record No. 787; Diary Entry for August 24, 1944 (1938), Record No. 3780, *Tsurumi Yūsuke Papers*.

<sup>10</sup> Kokkai toshokan, *Teikoku gikai: Shūgiin iinkai kaigiroku—Shōwa hen 153* [Imperial Diet: Stenographic Records of the Committees of the House of Representatives in Shōwa Era (Vol. 153)] (Tokyo daigaku shuppankai, 1999), 224.

day-time air raids to night-time attacks. It began conducting extensive fire bombing attacks over highly vulnerable Japanese cities and other military targets in March. From this time onward, the air raids became massacres. From late night on March 9 through the early morning of the 10<sup>th</sup>, several hundred American B-29s hit Tokyo's *shitamachi* (the southern part of the city), one of the most densely-populated areas in the world. After such air raids on Tokyo, the military government feared there would be riots and doubled the number of military police in Japan.<sup>11</sup>

Under such circumstances, the Cause in general lost its meaning among ordinary Japanese, and their criticisms in private were directed at the militarists who had initiated the war. In his diary entry for March 11, Tamura Tsunejirō, an ordinary civilian in Kyoto, sharply blamed the militarists and politicians for starting the war.<sup>12</sup> However, such private criticism of the war leadership must not be confused with active agitation against the military government. In general, it can be said that the people remained docile under military rule, though certain profound cracks in morale were noticeable in private.

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<sup>11</sup> Ōtani, *Shōwa kenpei-shi*, 505.

<sup>12</sup> Oka Mitsuo, ed. *Shinsan: Senchū sengo kyō no ichi shomin no nikki—Tamura Tsunejirō* [Bittersweet: The Wartime and Postwar Diaries of a Kyoto Commoner—Tamura Tsunejirō] (Minerubā shobō, 1980), 72.

During the last few months of the war, government documents reflected more clearly the concerns and attitudes of the people themselves. Concern over popular morale was found in a great variety of reports issued by the police authorities. Police reports demonstrated that because of the intensified American air raids and food shortage problems, many people had already entered into a defeatist mood. A Home Ministry report revealed on July 10, 1945 that the majority of the Japanese public was not shocked by the news of the defeat in Okinawa. Some even said: "It is better to be a territory of America."<sup>13</sup> The ministry and police authorities worried that the relatively downtrodden and passive attitude of the public was merely the "calm before the storm" and remained at constant vigilance for any threat against the *kokutai* and especially any left-wing movement inspired by the Soviet Union. The Home Ministry paid close attention to the current popular morale, because the citizenry would be the main foundation of home defense in the event of an invasion.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> 'Tokyo daikūshū sensaishi' henshū iinkai, ed., *Tokyo daikūshū sensaishi (Dai gokan)*, 365, 367.

<sup>14</sup> Naimushō, *Shisō junpō*, No. 31(Document No. Hensei 35010010), July 20, 1945, 8, 13, 15, *Returned Documents*.



### **“Peace-Feeler” Group’s Struggle Continues**

The “peace-feelers” in and out of the military government believed that the people’s criticisms of their leaders and their attitudes toward the war were a serious enough threat to the *kokutai* to warrant surrender. As the war dragged on, the “peace-feeler” group’s continuing fear of leftist maneuvering, particularly their fear of communism, exacerbated their obsession with protecting the “national polity” from destruction. The “peace-feelers” now attempted to persuade government leaders including the emperor Hirohito that the only way to avoid the eventual destruction of the *kokutai* in an internal revolution was to stop the war immediately.

After the Koiso cabinet was formed, some men in uniform began making a peace plan. In November 1944, Colonel Matsutani Makoto became the secretary of the new Army Minister Sugiyama Hajime. Matsutani later rounded up government officials and intellectuals to secretly study the possible course the conclusion of the war would take. They feared in their surrender plan that upon Japan’s defeat, the “white” American occupation officials who viewed the Japanese as barbarians would flood Japan with Black American, Chinese, and Korean soldiers in order to “dilute” the blood of the Yamato Race. To protect the chastity of Japanese women from the

victors, the Matsutani group suggested establishing “entertainment facilities” once the “horny” enemy soldiers landed in Japan. The group agreed to the idea that the sole condition of surrender was the preservation of the *kokutai*.<sup>15</sup>

If Colonel Matsutani was the main army figure who contributed to the conclusion of the war, his navy counterpart was Rear Admiral Takagi Sōkichi. Takagi had thought after October 1943 that Japan would not win the war. Since then, he had frequently met with other “peace-feelers” such as Prince Takamatsu Nobuhito and Hosokawa Morisada, Prince Konoe Fumimaro’s secretary.<sup>16</sup> Takagi, in agreement with most of the “peace-feelers,” believed that if the war was prolonged, the public would undoubtedly attribute all their sufferings during the war to the government and they would even question the *kokutai*. Under the active support of Navy Minister Yonai Mitsumasa and former premier Okada Keisuke, Takagi began to make a plan for ending the war and met with government leaders to get some advice.<sup>17</sup>

Yet certain Japanese leaders whom Takagi met genuinely saw that American

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<sup>15</sup> Matsutani, *Daitōa sensō shūshū no shinsō*, 295, 307-8.

<sup>16</sup> Tomita, *Haisen nihon no uchigawa*, 211-13.

<sup>17</sup> Takagi Sōkichi, *Takagi kaigun shōshō oboegaki* [Memoirs of Rear Admiral Takagi] (Mainichi shinbunsha, 1979), 68.

racism toward the Japanese would be an obstacle to Japan's surrender. On September 27, 1944, Takagi met the Health Minister Hirose Hisatada, and the latter warned that even though Japan wanted to negotiate a surrender with America, the enemy would not respond to Japan, because, Hirose thought, the United States would want to exterminate the whole Japanese race more than they would want peace. In addition, many Japanese had learned of American racism from various domestic propaganda campaigns and intercepted American broadcasts in which the Japanese were frequently called "beasts" or "apes." One of the famous Americans who appeared in the Japanese mass media was Admiral William Halsey. His favorite pejorative for the Japanese was "yellow monkeys."<sup>18</sup> For Hirose, such American dehumanization of the Japanese people was associated with the potential for harsh treatment of Japan in the postwar era.

Upon hearing Hirose's concern, Takagi studied American attitudes and policies and found sufficient enough evidence to conclude that the "white" Americans would not destroy the Yamato Race, but, as he was under the influence of traditional Japanese racial prejudice, Takagi felt that the "colored" races in Asia and

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<sup>18</sup> For example, see "Lick Hun First,' ADM. Halsey Says," *New York Times*, January 16, 1944, 13.

America would pose a threat. He wrote: “If the [occupation] forces which land on the homeland consist of Chinese, Koreans, and Negroes, that will undermine our ethnic pride.” According to Takagi, only “white” Americans should be allowed into the country if occupation was inevitable.<sup>19</sup>

In the “peace-feeler” group’s eyes, one of the effective ways to surrender right away was to appeal directly to the emperor Hirohito. To prevent the destruction of the “national polity” in the case of defeat, Prince Konoe, whose access to the emperor had been restricted by General Tōjō Hideki and Lord Keeper of the Privy Seal Kido Kōichi since Pearl Harbor, met with Hirohito on February 14, 1945. Konoe said to the emperor that, considering the growing movement toward a communist revolution within the country, Japan must find a way to lay down arms right away.<sup>20</sup>

In fact, Konoe had a “great interest” in the Allied powers’ postwar treatment of Japan and worked with his entourage to outline how the occupation forces would treat the emperor and the imperial institution.<sup>21</sup> His optimistic view on the

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<sup>19</sup> Itō, ed., *Takagi Sōkichi nikki to jōhō: Ge*, 767, 791, 829, 897.

<sup>20</sup> Kido nikki kenkyūkai, ed, *Kido Kōichi kankei monjo*, 495, 497-98; Hosokawa, *Hosokawa nikki*, 360, 364-65.

<sup>21</sup> Tomita, *Haisen nihon no uchigawa*, 216.

preservation of the *kokutai* derived largely from the firm belief that Joseph Grew, former American ambassador to Japan and incumbent Under-Secretary of the State Department in Washington, had no intention of destroying the imperial system. Grew had confidence that the imperial institution could be an “asset” for the American occupation policy in the postwar era. Without it, postwar Japan would end in “only chaos.”<sup>22</sup>

Yet Hirohito rejected Konoe’s recommendation for surrender on the spot. The emperor did not trust Konoe’s assurances that America would not harm the imperial institution and instead listened to his loyal Army Chief-of-Staff Umezu Yoshijirō who told him on February 9, 1945 that the United States might change the “national polity.” The prince countered Hirohito and said that the military high command asserted the destruction of the *kokutai* in an attempt to lift the people’s fighting spirit. The advice simply fell on deaf ears as the emperor had no intention to close the war and determined instead to make a last stand at Okinawa and on the homeland against the Allies.<sup>23</sup> After the meeting with Hirohito, the prince and his

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<sup>22</sup> Yoshida, *Shōwa tennō no shūsen-shi*, 36; Joseph Grew, *Turbulent Era: A Diplomatic Record of Forty Years, 1904-1945 (Vol. II)* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1952), 1411.

<sup>23</sup> Kido nikki kenkyūkai, ed, *Kido Kōichi kankei monjo*, 497-98; Hosokawa, *Hosokawa nikki*, 365; and Matsutani, *Daitōa sensō shūshū no shinsō*, 133.

entourage were placed under even closer surveillance by the military police. On April 15, Konoe's brain trust and former Japanese ambassador to Britain Yoshida Shigeru, who participated in writing Konoe's report for the emperor, was arrested by Hirohito's military police.<sup>24</sup>

### Delayed Surrender

Despite the "peace-feeler" group's tireless efforts for peace, the military government continued to fight to the last on the homeland. There are many reasons that Japan did not end the war earlier, before enduring further devastating American air raids and the atomic bombs at Hiroshima and Nagasaki.<sup>25</sup> The Axis power pact of December 1941, declaring that none would make a separate peace, was helpful for Japan to avoid a possible race war between the "white" and "colored" races. But as the former premier Tōjō frankly revealed on February 16, 1945, the very treaty hindered Japan's war leaders from searching for an earlier peace.<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, Japan's leaders saw that the preservation of the imperial institution would not be

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<sup>24</sup> Ōtani, *Shōwa kenpei-shi*, 504.

<sup>25</sup> For Emperor Hirohito's delay to surrender, see Chapter 13 in Bix, *Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan*.

<sup>26</sup> Tanemura, *Daihonei kimitsu nisshi*, 263.

guaranteed due in part to the Anglo-American demand for the unconditional surrender of Japan; this was one of the reasons that Japan tried to contact the Soviet Union for a peace negotiation after the new Suzuki Kantarō cabinet was formed in April 1945.

Like the previous cabinets, the Suzuki cabinet also failed to reach a consensus over earlier surrender. Why was the new cabinet, called the “war-closing cabinet” (*shūsen naikaku*), unable to end the war during the last months of the Pacific War? To better understand what most hindered the Japanese government from closing the war earlier, this section takes a different approach from the conventional interpretations of Japan’s capitulation by looking at Japan’s leaders’ fear of a domestic uprising. It was actually Japanese leaders including high-ranking officers who had low morale, because they knew the current war situation well. In fact, there was a tremendous gap between the leaders’ actual thoughts and their official positions in deciding to end the war. Like the “peace-feelers,” those leaders were also concerned about internal chaos, particularly a revolt by young military officers. In their private thoughts, many government leaders in the cabinet, and army and navy high-ranking generals in Tokyo as well, wanted to bring the war to an end

as soon as possible, but they did not show their thoughts of surrender in public. During the last few months of the war, the fear of an uprising prevented Japan's leaders from discussing peace openly, and this prolonged the war.

In part, the fear that anyone who claimed peace might be assassinated by hard-liners caused the cabinet members to put off a surrender based upon the sole condition of the preservation of the *kokutai* and imperial lands. Japanese authorities, particularly since the Manchurian Incident of 1931, allowed ultranationalists to attack anyone who resisted Japan's expansionist policy. Incumbent and former prime ministers, including Inukai Tsuyoshi, Saitō Makoto, and Takahashi Korechiyo, were assassinated by young officers or right-wingers, in part due to their differences of opinion. The trend backfired on the government now when Japan was in a national crisis. When more than two persons met, Japanese leaders did not reveal their actual thoughts. The "liberal" writer Kiyosawa Kiyoshi, who was now working for the Foreign Ministry, knew that senior statesmen and cabinet members did not show their actual thoughts on politics and wrote on June 28, 1944 that not telling their private thoughts to others in public was the "distinctive characteristic of Japan since



prior to the Greater East Asian War.”<sup>27</sup>

One good example was the Army Minister Anami Korechika. He was one of the hard-liners in the Suzuki cabinet, who stubbornly argued against surrender until the war ended. Before and during the Pacific War, Army and Navy ministers could—and at times actually did—topple any government merely by withholding their support. Anami knew that the Suzuki cabinet wanted to end the war sometime in 1945. If the Army Minister really wanted to fight to the last, he could have toppled the cabinet by resigning his position. But Anami did not. His decision not to resign implied that he was not, in actuality, opposed to ending the war.

Although Anami and other cabinet members privately believed that Japan had already lost the war, they publicly displayed a will to fight to the last in government meetings. The Navy Minister Yonai, who participated in a government meeting on May 22, was unhappy with certain cabinet members’ dissimulating stance on the conclusion of the war, and revealed his thoughts to Rear Admiral Takagi on the same day: “There is a considerable difference between when they talk in front of other people (more than two people) and when only two persons talk.”<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Kiyosawa, *Ankoku nikki (II)*, 126.

<sup>28</sup> Takagi, *Takagi kaigun shōshō oboegaki*, 253.

During his inspection trip on the homeland from May 19 to 22, Army Minister Anami revealed his private thoughts of surrender. When Colonel Matsutani, now secretary to Prime Minister Suzuki, told the Army Minister on May 21 that Japan should surrender with the sole objective of preserving the *kokutai*, Anami agreed to Matsutani's idea. But Anami cautioned Matsutani that the government should pay special attention to the domestic situation, namely political maneuvering by left-wing, right-wing, and middle-ranking officers in the military. What worried the minister was the possibility of his own assassination by hawkish young officers or political hardliners should they learn of his ideas.<sup>29</sup> Like the "peace-feelers," though from a slightly different perspective, the army high-ranking officers' concern about a revolt at home delayed their decision to negotiate for peace. It looked clear to those officers that as soon as Japan surrendered, the Allied troops would come to the homeland, and they were afraid of the possible chaos that might ensue.

Many Japanese government and military leaders perceived the current situation as a supreme crisis for the imperial institution. If the war was impossible to win, they must negotiate a conditional surrender, keeping the emperor and emperor system intact. In an Imperial Meeting of June 8, 1945, the Japanese government

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<sup>29</sup> Matsutani, *Daitōa sensō shūshū no shinsō*, 159, 202-3, 205.

officially decided Japan's surrender aims as the "preservation of the *kokutai* and imperial lands."<sup>30</sup> Behind the government's decision was a fear of the collapse of popular morale. A report called the "Present State of National Power," submitted at the meeting, revealed that public criticism of the military and government had steadily increased. The report recommended that the government should pay great attention to trends in popular morale.<sup>31</sup> It looked obvious to those leaders that the exhausted public would be susceptible to a domestic revolt in the event of defeat and official surrender. Although the Japanese people were not in a position to decide national policy, their attitudes toward the war obviously influenced the government's drafting of the surrender aims.

Despite the fact that in private many of them wanted peace, in the June 8 meeting government and military leaders decided to fight to the last. Particularly, Prime Minister Suzuki strongly urged the government to fight to the death. An apprehensive Suzuki, who had barely survived an assassination attempt by young army officers in 1936, would not express his actual thoughts of surrender in the official meeting. Upon hearing about Suzuki's attitude in the meeting, Prince Konoe

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<sup>30</sup> Sanbō honbu, ed., *Haisen no kiroku*, 266; Matsutani, *Daitōa sensō shūshū no shinsō*, 140, 173.

<sup>31</sup> Sanbō honbu, ed., *Haisen no kiroku*, 268.

was disappointed with the Prime Minister and went to Lord Keeper of the Privy Seal Kido to discuss Suzuki's beliefs. Kido said that Suzuki had told him in person: "Actually, I am also considering ending [the war]." <sup>32</sup> Considering the worsened war situation and popular morale, Suzuki privately wanted to stop the war, but he was unwilling to show his thoughts to others in public.

Foreign Minister Tōgō and Navy Minister Yonai based their arguments on the necessity of ending the war on internal factors rather than on external enemies. Anxiety over past revolutions in Europe during and after World War I moved the two major figures in the Japanese cabinet to opt for early surrender. Yonai personally witnessed the collapse of Czarist Russia in 1917, when he served as a navy officer in the Japanese embassy to Russia. He soon began researching the course of the Soviet Revolution, as well as the one in postwar Germany. <sup>33</sup> Tōgō, whose view was similar to Yonai's, feared that the Japanese monarchy would disintegrate due to public discontent with the government after a long total war. On July 19, 1945, the Foreign Minister told the general Tanaka Ryūkichi, Tōjō's former political rival, that due to

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<sup>32</sup> Hosokawa, *Hosokawa nikki*, 400-1.

<sup>33</sup> Sanematsu Yuzuru, ed., *Kaigun taishō Yonai Mitsumasa oboegaki* [Memoirs of Admiral Yonai Mitsumasa] (Kōjinsha, 1978), 198, 210; Sanematsu Yuzuru, *Yonai Mitsumasa* [Recollections of Admiral Yonai Mitsumasa] (Kōjinsha, 1966), 194.

the collapse of popular morale and the decreased production of war supplies, Japan stood no chance of winning.<sup>34</sup> From this time onward, Yonai and Tōgō, aided by “peace-feelers” such as Matsutani and Takagi, actively participated in ending the war for preserving the *kokutai* and began to persuade the other cabinet members to end the war.<sup>35</sup>

In the meantime, the Japanese government had secretly tried to contact the Soviet government, hoping for a negotiated peace with the Allied powers, with the Soviet Union as a mediator. The Japanese government recommended that the emperor send Prince Konoe as Hirohito’s special envoy to Moscow. At this point, the emperor intervened into the envoy issue. On July 12, Hirohito demanded that Konoe accept the suggestion, and the prince agreed to it on the spot.<sup>36</sup>

Prince Konoe and other “peace-feelers” including Itō Nobufumi, Sakai Kōji, and Tomita Kenji then began to draw up specific plans for negotiations with the

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<sup>34</sup> Tanaka Ryūkichi, *Gunbatsu senō no jissō: Haiin wo tsuku* [The True Accounts of the Tyrannical Military Cliques: Reveals the Cause of Defeat] (Sansuisha, 1946), 224.

<sup>35</sup> Tōgō, *Jidai no ichimen*, 452-53.

<sup>36</sup> Kido nikki kenkyūkai, ed., *Kido Kōichi nikki (Gekan)*, 1216-17. Initially, who would go to Russia was kept secret from the Army Minister Anami, because if he knew about it, a serious problem might occur: that is, his young army officers might assassinate cabinet members such as Suzuki and Yonai. See Yabe, ed., *Konoe Fumimarō (Ge)*, 555.

Soviet Union. A plan called the “Outline of a Peace Negotiation,” drafted mainly by Sakai and Konoe, explained the role of the *kokutai* as a safeguard of divine authority. What was interesting about this “definition” was that Hirohito, if necessary, could voluntarily abdicate.<sup>37</sup> The term “voluntarily” implied that the emperor could not be forced to step down. This meant, however, that the “peace-feelers” outside the government distinguished between the person of the emperor and the imperial institution.

With no way to clearly forecast the Soviet government’s reactions to Japan’s proposed peace plan, Prince Konoe decided to take several of the “peace-feelers” such as Matsutani, Takagi, Tomita, and Sakai to Moscow with him.<sup>38</sup> But all attempts at diplomacy with the USSR were fruitless. Japanese leaders could not know that in the Yalta Conference of February 1945, the Soviet Union had promised Britain and the U.S. to enter a war against Japan and had no intention of helping Japan. The Japanese government, as BI chief Shimomura Kainan recalled, was in almost complete ignorance of the Soviet Union plan.<sup>39</sup> From the Soviet leaders’

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<sup>37</sup> Itō, ed., *Takagi Sōkichi nikki to jōhō: Ge*, 921; Tomita, *Haisen nihon no uchigawa*, 230-2.

<sup>38</sup> Matsutani, *Daitōa sensō shūshū no shinsō*, 164-65.

<sup>39</sup> Shimomura Kainan, *Shūsen hishi* [A Secret History of the Conclusion of War]

perspective, Japan's suggestion never looked attractive, since the benefits that the relatively weak Japan could offer the Soviet Union were too small. Even before the Nazis surrendered, the Soviet Union started to move its troops from Europe to Asia.

On July 26, the Allied powers issued the Potsdam Declaration which demanded that Japan surrender unconditionally. Despite having already decided that the war needed to end, two days later the Japanese government permitted the mass media to declare that Prime Minister Suzuki would “ignore” (*mokusatsu*) the Allied declaration. Japan's leaders dismissed the Potsdam Declaration as typical enemy propaganda and urged the people to fight to the end, claiming that the consequences of the “unconditional surrender” would be even more severe than in defeated Germany. Japanese officials whipped the people into a “fatalistic and frenzied desire” to fight to the death under such slogans as “One Hundred Million People Die in Honor.”<sup>40</sup>

However, the “divine wind” that the Japanese militarists had been promising never blew for Japan. American B-29s dropped atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki on August 6 and 9, respectively, and flattened the two cities.

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(Kōdansha, 1950), 45.

<sup>40</sup> Kato, *The Lost War*, 229.

On the 9<sup>th</sup>, the Soviet Union declared war on Japan.

At this time, the “peace-feelers” in the cabinet kept persuading Army Minister Anami to surrender. On August 7, in a cabinet meeting, Foreign Minister Tōgō urged Anami to accept the conditions of the Potsdam Declaration, claiming that the emergence of the new bomb would “give the military side an excuse for ending the war.”<sup>41</sup> But the Army Minister did not listen to the suggestion. In a cabinet meeting at 14:30 on August 10, Navy Minister Yonai also told the cabinet members that it was impossible to continue the war but cited domestic situations as the reason, rather than the atomic bombs and Soviet entry into the war. Yonai knew that in light of the current material situations and popular morale, there was no possibility of Japan winning the war against America and the Soviet Union.<sup>42</sup>

On August 10, the Japanese government accepted the articles of the Potsdam Declaration under the condition that none of them “comprise any demand which prejudices the prerogatives of His Majesty as a sovereign ruler,” and sent a telegraph through the Swedish and Swiss governments to the four signatories of the

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<sup>41</sup> Gaimushō [Foreign Ministry], ed., *Shūsen shiroku* [Historical Records of the Conclusion of War] (Shinbun gekkansha, 1952), 535.

<sup>42</sup> Shimomura, *Shūsen hishi*, 82.



declaration.<sup>43</sup> The Navy Minister's justification for the government's decision to surrender was that the "atomic bombs and Soviet entry into the war were, in a sense, gifts of the gods. We do not have to say that we quit the war due to domestic circumstances."<sup>44</sup> As a wartime NHK broadcasting company announcer recalled, domestic factors were a major reason that the "peace-feelers" in the cabinet decided to end the war.<sup>45</sup> The point thus has to be made that the domestic state of affairs contributed significantly to the Japanese government's decision to surrender.

After spending several days on formulating conditions of surrender among cabinet members and military leaders, Hirohito himself recorded an imperial rescript for the conclusion of the war and on August 15 *Radio Tokyo* beamed his voice to the people. It should be noted that the rescript was in fact signed by Hirohito at night on August 14, 1945, but it was not pronounced to the Japanese people on the same day on the grounds that the government feared a domestic revolt by hawkish young officers. In other words, if the news of the surrender had been broadcast at night and a riot ensued, it would have been more difficult for the government to put down than

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<sup>43</sup> Gaimushō, ed., *Shūsen shiroku*, 604-5.

<sup>44</sup> Takagi, *Takagi kaigun shōshō oboegaki*, 351.

<sup>45</sup> Yanagisawa Yasuo, *Kenetsu hōsō—Senji jyānarizumu shishi* [Censored Broadcasting: A Personal History of Wartime Journalism] (Keyaki shuppan, 1995), 94-95.

if it occurred during the day.<sup>46</sup>

Army Minister Anami now “politely” apologized to Prime Minister Suzuki for his attitudes toward surrender and revealed his private thoughts to Suzuki on the night of August 14, saying that he too had been in favor of ending the war in order to preserve the “national polity.”<sup>47</sup> Soon after that, Anami committed suicide. If the Army Minister, who held one of the most powerful positions in the cabinet, had honestly expressed his thoughts about ending the war in June of 1945, when the preservation of the *kokutai* was officially decided as national policy, Japan might have been able to lay down its arms before suffering nuclear attack.

In the meantime, having learned that the emperor had recorded a surrender announcement, from the night of August 14 through the next morning, young army officers attempted a coup in the Imperial Palace and some parts of Tokyo in order to prevent Hirohito from ending the war. Although the August 14-15 riot was put down right away, lingering concerns over a domestic uprising were clearly reflected in the 1945 imperial rescript, and the document emphasized that the Japanese people

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<sup>46</sup> Sakomizu Hisatsune, *Kikanjū ka no shushō kantei: Ni ni roku jiken kara shūsen made* [The Prime Minister’s Residence Under Machine Guns: From 2.26 Military Coup to Surrender] (Kōbunsha, 1964), 302.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 303.

should preserve the *kokutai* in the wake of surrender.<sup>48</sup> The fear that if the enraged people, as a result of the worsened economy and war weariness, were susceptible to a domestic revolution, the imperial institution would be doomed, was clearly shown in the account of the rescript.

If the 1941 imperial rescript announcing the war with the Allied powers included official war aims such as “Self-Preservation and Self-Defense” in order to disguise Japan’s actual war objective of creating a military and economic hegemony in Asia, the goal of preserving the *kokutai* in the 1945 rescript served as a postwar objective. Initially, the “national polity” corresponded to an expansionist vision for the ruling elite, but it became a means to preserve themselves in the wake of surrender. Both imperial rescripts thus were significant documents for empire-building during the war and for preserving the imperial institution in the aftermath of defeat.

Since Japan, upon surrender, would undoubtedly lose all of its colonies (Korea and Taiwan) and occupied territories in Asia, the ruling elite needed to carry the imperial institution through into the postwar period in order to rebuild and stabilize the nation under the rule of the emperor. For those elites, the institution

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<sup>48</sup> Quoted in *Nippon Times*, August 15, 1945, 1.

must also be maintained if they wanted to keep their privileged status intact and rule once again in postwar Japan. Given this, every possible effort was made in the propaganda campaign for preserving the “national polity” during the last year of the war, which will be analyzed below.

### **“Know Your Enemy”**

Since preserving the “national polity” was central to the politics of the Japanese government during the last year of the war, emperor-related themes became increasingly important in domestic propaganda efforts to bring about domestic unity. To the government, such topics were simultaneously useful in rousing the public to fight against the invading enemy. Sigmund Freud argued in his book on totem and taboo that if a ruler is worshiped as a god among his subjects, he should be their protector. But if he fails, the “devotion, the religious homage which they had hitherto lavished on him cease and are changed into hatred and contempt,” ultimately leading his subjects to turn against him.<sup>49</sup> Freud’s observation can be said to have anticipated the Japanese elite’s concern during the last phase of the war. “If the God

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<sup>49</sup> Sigmund Freud, *Totem and Taboo: Some Points of Agreement between the Mental Lives of Savages and Neurotics*, trans. James Strachey (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1950), 44.

Emperor Hirohito failed to protect his subjects, what will happen?” was a common concern among Japanese propagandists.

It was Professor Kōyama Iwao who most clearly recognized the current crisis of the imperial institution. The German and Russian experiences during and after World War I that eventually led to revolution in the two nations gave him great insight into the possible fate of Japan. As an advisor to the Navy Investigation Section and member of the BI-created propaganda institution and Japanese Journalism Patriotic Association (JJPA), Kōyama was concerned that social unrest and the public’s disloyalty to the emperor would undoubtedly develop into a communist revolution in the wake of defeat.<sup>50</sup> Worse, if America tried, through propaganda, to incite the Japanese people to destroy the “national polity,” they would be susceptible to the agitation. Furthermore, Japanese propagandists worried that if the public questioned the emperor’s war responsibility, the *kokutai* could be destroyed from inside Japan. Such fears, mostly emanating from domestic scenarios, eventually caused Japanese propaganda experts to launch a large-scale propaganda campaign for the “national polity” during the last year of the war.

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<sup>50</sup> Ōkubo Tatsumasa, et al eds., *Shōwa shakai keizai shiryō shūsei: Vol. 29 (Kaigunshō shiryō)* [Documents of Social and Economic History in Shōwa Era: Vol. 29 (Documents of the Navy Ministry)] (Daitō bunka daigaku tōyō kenkyūjo, 2003), 394, 396-97.

As the war dragged on, government leaders too realized that the Japanese devotion to the “national polity” had weakened, and made a decision that they needed to draft a basic propaganda plan for the *kokutai*. In an Imperial Conference held on August 19, 1944, Prime Minister Koiso lamented that popular morale was low, and that, more importantly, the people, “thoughtless of the future,” were not fully committed to the “national polity.”<sup>51</sup> Japanese leaders began to doubt the people’s loyalty to the emperor. The lack of fighting spirit, coupled with the public’s relatively indifferent attitudes toward the “national polity” and the critical situation in the Pacific battlefields, finally made the slow-moving Koiso cabinet decide that subsequent propaganda efforts should center on the *kokutai*. On October 5, the “Outline of Policies for Public Opinion Guidance in the Phase of Decisive Battle” (*kessen yoron shidō hōsaku yōkō*), approved by the Supreme War Leadership Council made up of major cabinet members and high-ranking officers, placed its main emphasis in the guidance of public opinion upon fostering animosity toward the enemy by “thoroughly” instilling the “national polity” in the Japanese people. All possible propaganda measures were directed at unifying the general population behind the emperor. Any media account of the current war situation perceived to

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<sup>51</sup> Sanbō honbu, ed., *Haisen no kiroku*, 40.

undermine the people's belief in the *kokutai* was expressively forbidden. The plan emphasized that propagandists should keep a vigilant eye on the people's desire for "absolute equality," which was associated with communism. This policy was a preemptive measure against a domestic communist tendency, which could damage the solidarity of the nation and might ultimately lead to the collapse of the imperial institution.<sup>52</sup>

Anticipating an imminent attack on Tokyo by American B-29s from Saipan, the military government determined to wage a decisive homeland battle for the preservation of the *kokutai* and tried to use the emperor's authority to boost the war spirit of the people. In an October 14th meeting of the Supreme War Leadership Council, Prime Minister Koiso suggested that the government should ask Hirohito to both visit the Ise Shrine and issue an imperial rescript to raise the fighting spirit among the public. As Foreign Minister Shigemitsu stated in the meeting, the emperor's visit to the shrine must serve as a catalyst for the Japanese fighting spirit.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Uchikawa Yoshimi, ed., *Gendaishi shiryō (41): Masu media tōsei (Ni)* [Documents of Modern History (Vol. 41): Mass Media Control (No. 2) (Misuzu shobō, 1975), 521-22.

<sup>53</sup> Itō Takashi and Takeda Tomoki, eds., *Shigemitsu Mamoru saikō sensō shidō kaigi kiroku/shuki* [Shigemitsu Mamoru Records and Memoirs of the Meetings of the

However, the promulgation of a rescript presented a dilemma. Like the “peace-feelers,” the government paid attention to the emperor’s vulnerability to war responsibility. It was Emperor Hirohito himself who refused to accept the proposal.<sup>54</sup> If an imperial rescript asked the people to support the war, suggesting that the emperor wanted to continue the war, this would, in turn, make him directly responsible for all the wartime suffering. More important, in order to evade a possible indictment for his war responsibility, it was decided that Hirohito should not give any impression to the occupation forces that he actively participated in the war.<sup>55</sup>

Instead of issuing the rescript, the Japanese government employed atrocity propaganda to foster the Japanese fighting spirit. Perhaps the most widespread propaganda tactic during World War II was the focus on atrocity in order to discredit the enemy, a tactic which had been used frequently since World War I. Atrocity propaganda usually followed a form of hyperbole. The barbarically exaggerated image of the enemy was common to all major belligerent nations, particularly where

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Supreme War Leadership Council] (Chūō kōronsha, 2004), 146-47.

<sup>54</sup> Terasaki and Mariko Terasaki Miller, eds., *Shōwa tennō dokuhakuroku*, 83.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 118-19.



the racial superiority of their own race was a dominant issue. In a desperate attempt to raise morale, the Japanese government stepped up its propaganda of hate and fear against the enemy who would be landing in Japan. Atrocity stories of the enemy were designed to make the Japanese people fight to the last man by creating a horrifying image of defeat such as rape and enslavement.

While in the early phases of the war, American domestic propaganda directed at the Japanese used such themes as “This is the Enemy” and “Know the Nature of the Enemy,” Japan employed many of those same tactics, particularly during the last phase of the war. Japanese propagandists believed that young Japanese women who were imbued with pro-American sentiments would be susceptible to seduction by the victors once they landed in Japan.

With such problems in mind, the Japanese government launched a major propaganda campaign based upon gloom and fear of racial corruption. Japanese women were frequently told that if the occupation forces landed in Japan, the invaders would rape all Japanese women. Unless they fought to the last, all the imperial daughters would become “whores” for the “lewd” foreign soldiers. Many army men frequently visited factories to spread horror stories to Japanese women

workers. To protect the women's chastity and the *kokutai*, the Japanese people should fight to the end. Such anxiety among men in uniform was due in part to the Japanese army's experiences in China. Japanese military men, who had been "unable" to fight on Chinese soil without "comfort women," believed that the conquerors would undoubtedly look for Japanese women for "comfort."<sup>56</sup> Japanese propagandists made their own darkest fears visible by juxtaposing "pure" Japanese women with the "lewd" foreign invaders. Enemy soldiers were portrayed as a menace that could contaminate the purity of the Yamato Race, which was intrinsically linked to the "unbroken" and "pure" bloodline of the imperial family, and by extension, to the *kokutai*. Against this threat, Japanese experts persuaded the people that they should kill the invading enemy.

Confronted by the American air attack on Tokyo, in November-December 1944, Japanese propagandists portrayed the war as a "matter of life or death." The Board of Information was convinced that the Japanese press should refrain from using any propaganda messages which belittled the enemy. There was no reason to portray the enemy leaders as "small," since the war had already reached to a "life or death" struggle. The increasingly fanatical tone of hate campaigns was particularly

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<sup>56</sup> Osaragi, *Osaragi Jirō haisen nikki*, 63.

prevalent in women's magazines. Under the title of "This is the Enemy: Beast Nation America," the December edition of the *Shufu no tomo* (*Housewife's Friend*) magazine, which was mainly read by housewives, appealed to its female readers that the current war was a struggle for survival. Pointing at a picture of Franklin Roosevelt, the magazine wrote: "This is the ringleader of the war! Who killed your fathers, sons, brothers? This man! This devil! Beat the devil to death!"<sup>57</sup>

African-Americans, who had previously been portrayed as victims of "white" American racism in Japan's domestic propaganda, were now turned into sexual abusers of imperial daughters. The *Shufu no tomo* article warned Japanese women that if Americans occupied Japan, all Japanese women would become the wives of "Negroes." The magazine urged the Japanese, backed by the "peerless" *kokutai*, to take up arms and fight against America.<sup>58</sup> The Japanese people reacted as desired, but there was a limit to their tolerance of such virulent atrocity stories. Upon reading the accounts, the novelist Osaragi Jirō wrote on November 18 that "Japan's best selling women's magazine" should be "ashamed" for printing the article.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> "Kore ga tekida!: Yaju minzoku amerika" [This is the Enemy: Beast Nation America], *Shufu no tomo* [Housewife's Friend], Vol. 28, No. 12 (December 1944), 5, 15.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

The hard-liners in the Publications Section of the BI ordered magazine editors to warn the Japanese people that Americans would undoubtedly enslave the whole Japanese population. In a December article of the woman's magazine *Fujin kurabu* (*Women's Club*), the infamous anti-Semitist and member of the Japanese Journalism Patriotic Association (JJPA) Mutō Teiichi told his readers that if Japan was defeated, America would load all the workable Japanese men and women onto cargo ships, separated by sex, and send them to the United States or Canada as slaves, where they would be killed when they were unable to work any more.<sup>60</sup>

As the war entered its final year, the military government attempted to use an unprecedented propaganda theme by issuing accounts of American air raids on the sacred Imperial Shintō shrines and imperial palaces. The Army Chief of Staff Office ordered the press to write articles about the January 14, 1945 American bombing on the Great Ise Shrine in the city of Ise. The shrine housed the sacred mirror, the most revered of the three imperial regalia. The American bombing on the shrine was likened to an attack on the imperial family to demoralize the Japanese and Hirohito. During the next several days, newspapers devoted articles and

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<sup>59</sup> Osaragi, *Osaragi Jirō haisen nikki*, 79.

<sup>60</sup> Mutō Teiichi, "Beikoku no gyakusatsu seisaku" [America's Policy of Atrocity], *Fujin kurabu* [Women's Club], Vol. 25, No. 12 (December 1944), 9.

editorials to the air raid on the shrine with titles such as “The Extremity of the Enemy’s Tyrannical Barbaric Behavior” and “One Hundred Million Explode in Anger at the Desecration of Sacred Grounds.” Newspapers covered Prime Minister Koiso’s apology to the emperor and Home Minister Ōdachi Shigeo’s visit to Ise Shrine to apologize to the gods enshrined there.<sup>61</sup>

Such hate propaganda campaigns related to Imperial sites were not as successful as Japanese propagandists had expected. In public, most Japanese showed indignation toward the enemy, and the mass media wrote that all Japanese were angry at Americans. And some Japanese of course hoped for retaliation against the Americans, due in part to the indiscriminate bombings of Japanese cities. But to government officials’ surprise, the people’s anger against the American bombing of the Ise Shrine was never intense. Upon reading the accounts on the shrine in newspapers, many people were generally indifferent to the bombing of this sacred place. The writer Kiyosawa Kiyoshi listened to public attitudes toward the bombing and summarized in his diary entry for January 16, 1945: “Aren’t the factories more important than the shrines?”<sup>62</sup> Instead of criticizing the “invisible” Americans, they

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<sup>61</sup> *Yomiuri hōchi*, January 16, 1945; *Asahi shinbun*, January 16, 1945.

<sup>62</sup> Kiyosawa Kiyoshi, *Ankoku nikki (III)* [A Diary of Darkness (Vol. III)] (Hyōronsha,

turned against their own leaders and officials for not considering the people's concerns.<sup>63</sup>

In addition, many people attributed the bombings on Imperial sites to their leaders' inability. When he read the newspaper articles on the shrine, Matsunami Seitarō, who lived in Tokyo and worked at the Yoshida Electric Company, blamed the militarists for their incompetence on January 15, 1945: "I want to know what General Tōjō Hideki, who left the Mariana Islands to the enemy, is thinking [of the current war situation at home] now."<sup>64</sup> The anger of the people was directed at inadequate military defense and the government's failure to protect the people from suffering. Nevertheless, the government continued to engage in hate campaigns against the American violations of sacred Imperial sites. However, Japanese propagandists simultaneously frankly admitted the failure of such propaganda campaigns. Colonel Sasaki Katsumi of the BI recalled in late 1945:

Contrary to expectations, however, the people in general...remained indifferent and it was virtually impossible to arouse the "Don't forget Pearl Harbor!" sentiment. This state of mind continued even after both fire-bombings of [some parts] of the Imperial Palace and Meiji Shrine...On the contrary, the blame, resulting from the fear of the

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1976), 19.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 20.

<sup>64</sup> Aoki Masami, ed., *Taiheiyō sensō: Jūgo no enikki* [Pictorial Diaries on the Homefront] (Tokyodō shuppan, 1995), 269-70.

devastation and the tragedy which befell them, were turned for the greater part against the air defense corps and the government officials for their unreliability and incompetence in carrying out the duties of relief and protection, which was an unfavorable and contrary effect.<sup>65</sup>

Despite such indifferent attitudes and criticism, the government determined to make every effort to mobilize the very last citizen forces for the war. In the absence of genuine unity, Japanese propagandists sought to settle the national crisis by selling the *kokutai* to the public. The Japanese public must be made to realize that they must continue to fight to the end for the “national polity.”

Meanwhile, disturbing news on the proposed postwar treatment of Japan and the emperor reached the Japanese government. Japanese officials learned that the Ninth Conference of the Institute of Pacific Relations (IPR) was held in Hot Springs, Virginia from January 6-17, 1945, to discuss postwar policy toward Japan. During the conference, the IPR, which consisted of scholars from the Allied countries and Japan’s colonies, actively debated the future of postwar Japan. Some members of the Allied countries at the conference demanded that the emperor system be dealt with harshly in the postwar period. Owen Lattimore, former political advisor to Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek, claimed: “Remove the Emperor.” Other

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<sup>65</sup> Sasaki Katsumi, “Kūshū no yoron ni oyoboshi taru eikyō oyobi sono taisaku nado” [Effects of Bombings on Public Opinion and the Policies Taken], 14-16, 1945, Reel #128, *USSBS Records*.

participants took the firm stance that after the war the Allied powers should send the emperor to China and keep him there until his future would be decided.<sup>66</sup>

On January 30, the Board of Information reflected the IPR discussions in its propaganda plan “Principles for Public Opinion Guidance in the Present Stage of the Greater East Asian War” (*daitōa sensō no gendankai ni sokuō suru yoron shidō hōshin*). The BI sought to strengthen domestic unity to cope with the critical situation by instilling Japan’s war aims and the consequences of defeat in the people.

The following propaganda methods were to be employed to guide public opinion:

Our war aims and their righteousness should be clarified and emphasized, and at the same time, it should be emphasized that the ambitions of the enemy are to conquer the Japanese race and to dominate the world...In order to let the people realize more thoroughly that the war was started for the self-preservation and self-defense of our country, appropriate diplomatic documents made prior to the Greater East Asian War which have not so far been published should be made public...In order to instill in the people more hostility toward the enemy, the enemy’s plan for the postwar treatment of Japan, and its demand of unconditional surrender, and the atrocities committed by the enemy in this war, should be made known.<sup>67</sup>

Although for the time being the government refrained from directly referring to the IPR discussions of the emperor system, Japanese propagandists

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<sup>66</sup> Institute of Pacific Relations, *Security in the Pacific: A Preliminary Report of the Ninth Conference of the Institute of Pacific Relations* (New York: The Comet Press, 1945), 40; Subcommittee to Investigate the Administration of the Internal Security Act and Other Internal Security Laws of the Committee on the Judiciary, United States Senate, *The Amerasia Papers: A Clue to the Catastrophe of China, Volume II* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1970), 1278.

<sup>67</sup> Uchikawa, ed., *Gendaishi shiryō (41): Masu media tōsei (Ni)*, 528-29.



continued to engage in hate propaganda.

The press carried out a daily “die-for-the-emperor” campaign to protect the *kokutai* and painted their pages with stories concerning the threatened American postwar treatment of Japan. On February 19, 1945, American marines landed on Iwōjima and this meant the imminent invasion of the Japanese mainland. The Japanese government was now grasping at straws. It tried to create hatred toward the invading American enemy by introducing a new variation on the “national polity” propaganda theme. Government propagandists believed that such propaganda might have a good effect on the debilitated people and take the wind out of the sails of critics who were concerned about the lack of war spirit among the general populace. The government made newspapers run page after page covering the IPR discussions on the *kokutai*, which had been completely concealed from the public until then. This was an extreme measure in the sense that in prewar Japan, as the revised Peace Preservation Law of 1928 stipulated, any person who referred to changing the “national polity” could be sentenced to death. Referring to the IPR’s debates over the imperial family, for example, *Mainichi* Newspaper reported on February 19, 1945 that the enemy was trying to “destroy and devastate the three-thousand year old and

inviolable *kokutai*.”<sup>68</sup>

The internal and external situations looked extremely desperate for Japan. On April 1, American troops landed at Okinawa, and both sides began to wage bloody ground warfare. To make matters worse, on April 5 the Soviet Union declared not to extend their Neutrality Pact with Japan. The war situation in Europe clouded the face of Japanese leaders. Late in April, the two Axis heads disappeared from the world: Benito Mussolini was found dead, the victim of Italian guerrillas, and Adolf Hitler committed suicide.

Under these circumstances, in April 1945 the Japanese government was forced to abandon the war aim of “liberating” Asia. On April 30 when Nazi Germany was about to collapse, Japanese officials prepared an official statement for the new Prime Minister Suzuki, which was to be announced upon Germany’s surrender. The statement repeated that, as written in the Imperial Rescript of December 8, 1941, Japan’s war goal was the “Self-Preservation and Self-Defense of the Empire.”<sup>69</sup> The Suzuki statement made it clear that Japan had officially abandoned the mission of “liberating” Asia from the West. In other words, Japan’s abandonment of “liberating”

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<sup>68</sup> *Manichi shinbun*, February 19, 1945.

<sup>69</sup> Sanbō honbu, ed., *Haisen no kiroku*, 256.

Asian countries from Western imperialists was attributed to Germany's collapse.<sup>70</sup>

Meanwhile, because of paper shortages, all daily newspapers shrank to crude, two-page editions and magazines virtually ceased publication. At this point, the Americans began a large-scale propaganda attack on the Japanese people, and this psychological warfare alarmed Japanese propagandists. Particularly from the spring of 1945 onward, American planes intensified the propaganda warfare on the Japanese homeland. Propaganda leaflets from the sky and radio broadcasts from Hawaii and Saipan repeatedly claimed that America was not fighting against the Japanese people but solely against the militarists. Japanese propagandists took preventive measures against enemy propaganda, believing that it mainly wanted to incite defeatism, anti-war sentiment, and pacifism. Interestingly enough, Japanese experts told the Japanese people in advance about the anticipated content of the American propaganda. But this propaganda line looked contradictory in that, for example, the BI's weekly propaganda pamphlet *Shūhō* told the people on April 4 that relating the content of American propaganda to other Japanese would only benefit the enemy.<sup>71</sup> Although the American propaganda warfare produced no results at

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Jōhōkyoku, ed. *Shūhō*, Nos. 439-440, April 4, 1945, 9, 11.

first,<sup>72</sup> Japanese propagandists believed that the public might be vulnerable to enemy propaganda which, as the *Mainichi* Newspaper wrote on May 22, was “aimed at the domestic disintegration” of Japan.<sup>73</sup> The next day, the *Yomiuri hōchi* Newspaper threatened the Japanese public with the exaggerated claim that Germany had been defeated by British propaganda just as it had been in World War I.<sup>74</sup>

The fear that Japan might meet the same fate as Germany made the Japanese government take drastic measures against American propaganda. Japanese officials strictly forbade the Japanese people to listen to enemy broadcasts or pick up leaflets dropped by the enemy planes. As the “liberal” writer Kiyosawa Kiyoshi, who had eagerly read newspapers, wrote in his diary on April 2, the government “pays considerable attention” to American propaganda.<sup>75</sup> Various comments that referred to the annihilation of the entire Japanese race flooded the domestic media. Japanese propagandists saw the brutal air raids as sufficient enough proof of American “beastliness,” and they appealed to the Japanese nation to recognize that all

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<sup>72</sup> Naimushō [Home Ministry], “Kyokutō bōkūgun shireibu fissha taii kaiken kaiken [*sic*] shiryō” [The Report to the American Far East Command for Interview with Captain Fisher], [no page no. available], October 25, 1945, Reel #128, *USSBS Records*.

<sup>73</sup> *Mainichi shinbun*, May 22, 1945.

<sup>74</sup> *Yomiuri hōchi*, May 23, 1945.

<sup>75</sup> Kiyosawa, *Ankoku nikki (III)*, 112.

conciliatory phrases in American propaganda were mere camouflage designed to drive a wedge between Japanese leaders and the Japanese public. On June 1, the *Mainichi* Newspaper warned the Japanese public to remember that there was a tremendous distance like that between “heaven and earth” between the content of the propaganda leaflets and American postwar plans for Japan.<sup>76</sup>

The fear of a possible anti-*kokutai* propaganda campaign from America was officially raised by some senior statesmen in front of the emperor, and the government took action. In an Imperial Conference held on June 8, the former Prime Minister and current Privy Council President Hiranuma Kiichirō, seriously concerned by American propaganda which had attempted to incite the Japanese people to revolt, warned the government that it should take measures to protect the imperial institution from a civil war. It looked obvious to the ultranationalist Hiranuma that if an internal conflict occurred, the “national polity” would be in danger.<sup>77</sup> On July 2, the BI once again issued instructions to Japanese propagandists to warn the people that if they did not fight to the last, the *kokutai* would be destroyed. The agency demanded more sacrifices of the people and differentiated

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<sup>76</sup> *Mainichi shinbun*, June 1, 1945.

<sup>77</sup> Sanbō honbu, ed., *Haisen no kiroku*, 264.

Japan from Germany. Japanese propagandists told them that the “fundamental” difference between the Germans and Japanese was that Japan possessed the “peerless” *kokutai* and special attack forces (suicide bombers), and convinced the Japanese people that this difference would be enough for Japan to win in the end.<sup>78</sup>

During the period between the surrender and the arrival of the occupation forces, Japanese propagandists continued to spread stories of the anticipated enemy atrocities. Some, in these late days, realized that such propaganda showing enemy atrocities was hypocritical. The famous novelist Osaragi Jirō analyzed Japanese psychology in his diary on August 20, saying that the stories of the coming atrocities mirrored “what they [the Japanese] had done in China.”<sup>79</sup> The BI, which had been engaged in anti-American campaigns, now decided to assist with the American occupation. The opportunistic agency instructed its propaganda experts to work for America. Upon hearing this news, on August 22 Takami Jun, Director of the Investigation Department of the Japanese Literature Patriotic Association, criticized the agency for its opportunism.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Akazawa, et al eds., *Shiryō nihon gendaishi* 13, 206.

<sup>79</sup> Osaragi, *Osaragi Jirō haisen nikki*, 313.

<sup>80</sup> Takami Jun, *Takami Jun nikki (Dai gokan)* [Diaries of Takami Jun (Vol. 5)] (Keisō shobō, 1965), 63; Osaragi, *Osaragi Jirō haisen nikki*, 317.

## Conclusion

This chapter has analyzed the “peace-feeler” group’s gradual realization that the imperial institution would be vulnerable to revolution in times of crisis and their resultant fear that internal revolt would be more damaging than an American occupation. Influenced by the history of the collapse of monarchies in Europe, the “peace-feelers” wanted to surrender before Japan met with the same fate. In the last year of the war, the Japanese government, through propaganda campaigns attributing atrocities to American forces, sought to prevent the populace from being susceptible to possible anti-*kokutai* agitation and propaganda during the war and after defeat. During the period, as Colonel Matsutani wrote, the government poured its every effort into internal affairs.<sup>81</sup>

Since internal disorder might put the *kokutai* itself in danger, the government had to prevent the defeated nation from falling into social and political chaos. The potential for the emperor and the government to “stab itself in the back” played a significant role in persuading Hirohito to surrender. This key reason for surrender was hidden behind the rhetoric that claimed that Hirohito’s decision was

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<sup>81</sup> Matsutani, *Daitōa sensō shūshū no shinsō*, 161.

based on his desire to prevent the further loss of Japanese lives in enemy bombings.

While the Japanese government was aware that Japan's defeat was due in large part to internal weakness, the Japanese people had to remain oblivious to this fact. In this way, the government could preserve the imperial system by presenting Hirohito as a "peace-loving" leader whose "sacred" decision for surrender saved the Japanese people from further suffering at the hands of the external enemy. The myth-making of Hirohito's decision had been carefully plotted through tireless behind-the-scenes efforts since 1944 by the "peace-feelers" who wanted to preserve the *kokutai* from domestic chaos in the wake of defeat.



## Conclusion

After the Pacific War ended, an Army Chief of Staff Office document evaluating war strategy lamented that Japan's purported war aims had been inconsistent, vacillating particularly between "Self-Preservation and Self-Defense" and the "Construction of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere." Referring to surrender objectives, the office observed that each individual had a different concept of how the "national polity" (*kokutai*) should be preserved.<sup>1</sup> As argued in this dissertation, although the government repeatedly asserted in propaganda that Japan's war aims were clear, for most of the war the ruling elite failed to agree upon or clearly define even amongst themselves a unified national war objective.

Of course, long before Pearl Harbor, differing views regarding war aims and the nature of the war itself appeared among the Japanese elite. Some, the navy high command in particular, prioritized "Self-Preservation and Self-Defense" and continued to do so throughout the war. Reflecting their Pan-Asiatic aspirations, others, including some army officers, insisted that Japan should fight for both

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<sup>1</sup> Sanbō honbu, ed., *Haisen no kiroku*, 396, 408.

“Self-Preservation and Self-Defense” and “Construction of a Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere.” Yet regardless of such dissent, in the early phase of the Pacific War the Japanese government clearly sought to pursue imperialist ambitions and create a powerful state which could vie with Western nations for hegemony in Asia. Thus, at the very outset, Japan’s primary war aim was to fulfill its “historical” destiny by bringing all nations in the “Eight Corners of the World under One (Japanese) Roof” (*hakkō ichiu*).

In order to conceal these imperialist intentions, the Japanese government spoke in terms of “Self-Preservation and Self-Defense” and the “Construction of a Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere” while combining them with a number of other goals. Domestic propaganda was deployed to convince the people that the war was for the “Liberation of Asia,” “Stability in East Asia,” “Peace in East Asia and the World,” and for the “Establishment of a New Order in Asia and the World.” Japan’s mission would not be complete until all Western influences in Japan and Asia were totally eliminated.

Domestic propaganda for ideological unity characterized the war as one between the “divine” *kokutai* and “corrupt” Western ideologies centered on

individualism, materialism, socialism, communism, etc. Japanese propagandists urged the people to embrace unlimited loyalty to the emperor, while purging their minds and lives of Western thought. The consistent emphasis on the “national polity” versus Western ideas was intended to mobilize the public for a long war in which Japan would realize its national ambitions through a “go-slow imperialism.”

To attain the ideal of the *hakkō ichiu*, Japan in wartime needed to increase its presence and strengthen its influence in Asia to acquire the raw materials necessary for the creation of a new empire. To this end, Japan first of all had to defeat the Allied powers which stood in its way. At the same time, Japan desperately needed to prevent the conflict from becoming a racial war, because Japanese leaders feared that this might result in a military and diplomatic deadlock with “white” countries, including its ally, Nazi Germany. On the surface, the two Axis nations looked unified under the expressed Axis cause of the “Establishment of a New World Order,” but particularly after early 1943, they privately began to dream two different dreams. In late 1943, Japan’s leaders temporarily reached a consensus on “Self-Preservation and Self-Defense” as the primary objective of the war, but as seen in the Foreign Office discussions for preparation of the Greater East Asian

Conference of November 1943, this did not mean that they intended to relinquish what Japan had gained through imperialist expansion.

As the war situation worsened and popular morale declined, some Japanese elites in and out of the military government, profoundly influenced by the communist revolutions in early twentieth century Europe and fearing that Japan too could face a domestic revolt, became increasingly concerned with preserving the imperial institution. Popular morale had worsened to the extent that many Japanese privately criticized government officials and men in uniform for their oppressive rule and corruption, and the “peace-feelers” were especially alarmed by escalating public criticism of the emperor. In their eyes, such worsening public sentiments, coupled with the people’s relative indifference to the war, could eventually constitute a serious challenge to the imperial institution as the war dragged on. But among the ruling elite, there was a rift over whether Japan should surrender before the Allied invasion or fight to the last. This disagreement ultimately delayed the armistice. The perceived domestic crisis facing the “national polity” led them to preempt and counter the domestic threat in their propaganda campaigns, calling on the Japanese people to fight to the last in defense of the “sacred” nation and imperial institution.

The Japanese leaders' fear of the consequences of internal chaos played a significant role in their decision to surrender in August 1945.

Just as the “peace-feeler” group was concerned over domestic matters, so too was the military high command. At least from May 1945, high-ranking officers gradually leaned toward peace, and in June they officially agreed on the surrender aim of preserving the “national polity” and imperial lands. Germany’s defeat had a profound psychological impact on the military high command, in part because success in the “Greater East Asian War” was premised upon Nazi victory. Developments in Europe and the inability to defeat America gave these officers ample reason to lay down their arms, but fears of a coup by young officers or ultranationalists kept them from openly initiating peace talks. Since the Manchurian Incident of 1931, the military government had permitted hard-liners to attack those at home who disagreed with its aggressive policies, but now this tactic backfired just when Japan was in the midst of a national emergency. The delayed surrender, which resulted in the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, was in large part the consequence of the militarists’ tacit support of terror politics.

Here, it needs to be emphasized that during the last few months of the war,

most high-ranking military officers who opposed surrender were not necessarily against the preservation of the “national polity.” The distinctive difference between the “peace-feelers” and these hard-core hawks is attributable to divergent views not on whether to preserve the *kokutai*, but on how to do so. The “peace-feelers” felt that American occupation would probably not harm the imperial institution, and that quick surrender would provide the best defense against the threat of an internal revolution which might destroy it. It became clear to these men that even after Japan lost all of its military power, the nation could still revive under the direction of the “unbroken” imperial line.

Like the “peace-feelers,” the high-ranking officers also wanted Japan to continue to be ruled by the emperor. Their attitude in this regard was manifest in their commitment to and support of the *kokutai* propaganda in the last phase of the war. Given the military-controlled government, this propaganda line could not have been implemented without the explicit approval of the military high command. In the event of surrender, they at least wanted to secure the “national polity.” Given Allied occupation and disarmament, high-ranking military officers viewed that it seemed possible for Japan to retain the imperial institution and thereby rebuild the

country in the aftermath of defeat. This uncertainty also dragged on a losing war and delayed surrender.<sup>2</sup>

### **Continuities of Wartime Propaganda on War Aims and Postwar Objectives**

More than sixty years after the end of the Pacific War, a number of wartime objectives and propaganda lines still seem to linger in contemporary political discourse. The most important of these were contained in the imperial rescript of August 1945, which informed the Japanese people of the conclusion of the war. Yanagisawa Yasuo, a wartime radio propagandist, wrote in his memoirs in 1995 that the main thoughts expressed in the rescript were still alive in Japan.<sup>3</sup> In this respect, the imperial rescript can be understood as the ideological basis for the postwar elite's ongoing attempts to justify and legitimize Japan's Cause in the Pacific War. With this "sacred" document, the Japanese government assured the people that Japan had never pursued any imperialist ambitions, but rather had been working to "liberate" Asia from the West, and bring about and maintain "peace." By emphasizing the "consistent cooperation" of other Asian nations, the government sought to reaffirm

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 408.

<sup>3</sup> Yanagisawa, *Kenetsu hōsō*, 123.

Japan's "sacred" mission of "liberation" while openly denying any intentions of "territorial aggrandizement."<sup>4</sup> By characterizing the conflict as a war of "liberation," the drafters of the imperial rescript wanted to have the Japanese people remember it as an essentially moral undertaking.

In the rescript, Emperor Hirohito urged his "subjects" to preserve the "national polity" in order to enable the "divine" nation to "continue as one family from generation to generation."<sup>5</sup> The disturbing legacy of this rescript was that the *kokutai* survived defeat and occupation—albeit in a somewhat different form—and Hirohito and his successor Akihito continued on as symbols of the nation.

Such continuities can also be found among the ruling elite. "Peace-feelers" such as Prince Higashikuni Naruhiko and Yoshida Shigeru became postwar prime ministers. A more problematic continuity is the fact that some of the high-ranking government officials who were purged, indicted and/or convicted in the Tokyo War Crimes Trials of 1946-48 returned to politics after 1952 when the occupation "ended," and these wartime/postwar ruling elite remained in power. Their descendents and followers, moreover, have not only retained a nationalistic mentality

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<sup>4</sup> Quoted in *Nippon Times*, August 15, 1945, 1.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.



but also harbor a sense of having been victimized by Western imperialism. The primary objectives of what historian Ivan Hall has aptly named the “New Old Right” are: to revise the postwar constitution of 1947 so that Japan can once again become a “normal” country which is closely associated with a “war-fighting” nation; revive “patriotic” education by incorporating the revisionist historical view of the war; make Japan a strong military state under the name of “international contributions” (*kokusai kōken*); and resuscitate symbols related to the imperial institution.<sup>6</sup> Some of these issues were already raised in 1973 when young conservative politicians in the ruling Liberal Democratic Party formed the policy-making group, “Fresh Wind Society” (*seiran-kai*).<sup>7</sup>

These reactionary movements have been accompanied by the reemergence of certain themes in wartime propaganda. In postwar Japan, imperialist ambitions were carefully expunged from collective memory and the ruling elite came to emphasize only “positive” intentions such as “Self-Preservation and Self-Defense” and “Liberation of Asia.” The former BI vice-chief Okumura Kiwao, one of the

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<sup>6</sup> Ivan Hall, *Bamboozled!: How America Loses the Intellectual Game with Japan and Its Implications for Our Future in Asia* (New York: M. E. Sharpe, 2002), 68-69..

<sup>7</sup> Brian McVeigh, *Nationalisms of Japan: Managing and Mystifying Identity* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, INC., 2004), 40.

officials who embraced the objective of *hakkō ichiu*, stated in 1960 that the “true” reason the Japanese government, including the emperor and the army and navy, entered the war in 1941 was for the “Self-Defense and Self-Preservation” of Japan.<sup>8</sup> Thus, while avoiding the historical reality that Japan pursued imperial ambitions under this slogan, the war was deliberately recalled in terms of noble intentions and victimization, and the obedient media aided and abetted in the creation of “victim-consciousness” by frequently emphasizing Japanese wartime suffering and ignoring the terrible suffering inflicted by Imperial soldiers on people throughout the Asian-Pacific countries they colonized, invaded, and occupied.

From the 1960s up to the present day, the Liberal Democratic Party and Ministry of Education have tried to justify and legitimize the official wartime objectives of the Pacific War through the textbooks officially approved for use in junior and senior high schools. As historian Ienaga Saburō has noted, as a result of this ongoing indoctrination effort, by the 1960s many students believed that the Pacific War was “unavoidable.”<sup>9</sup> In order to present only the bright side of the war, the government also downplayed or deleted accounts of Japanese aggression. The

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<sup>8</sup> Itō, et al eds., *Jitsuroku taiheiyō sensō: Dai rokukan—Jūgo hen*, 42.

<sup>9</sup> Saburō Ienaga, *The Pacific War, 1931-1945: A Critical Perspective on Japan's Role in World War II* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), 256.

Education Ministry's attempts in the 1980s to require textbook writers to change the term "invasion" (*shinryaku*) to "advance" (*shinshutsu*) reflects both prewar and wartime nationalistic thinking.

If Japan's two main enemies were Britain and America during the Pacific War, China, its foe in the Second Sino-Japanese War, has once again become its rival in Asia. As this neighboring country progressively emerges as an economic and military power in Asia, many Japanese are being encouraged to view China as a potential threat to Japan. This growing "fear" of China has been noted by the Japanese media, and some articles explicitly describe China as aiming to create a "Greater Chinese Economic Sphere."<sup>10</sup> To cope with the "Chinese Peril," the Japanese government has recently been seeking to unify and mobilize the nation more tightly than before. Specific issues have helped rekindle nationalism at home: high-ranking Japanese politicians' visits to the Yasukuni Shrine where the spirits of the war dead—including those of fourteen convicted Class A war criminals—are enshrined; the "kidnapping problem" (*rachi mondai*) involving North Korean secret agents forcing some Japanese nationals to their country over the past several decades; and the North Korean nuclear weapon program.

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<sup>10</sup> *Sankei shinbun*, November 5, 2002; *Mainichi Daily News*, December 1, 2005.

Chinese and South Korean criticism of Japanese prime ministers' and other politicians' visits to Yasukuni Shrine has allowed the Japanese government to incite national indignation by claiming that these two countries are trying to "intervene" in Japan's domestic affairs. In recent years, through government manipulation of public opinion and media self-censorship, articles about the "kidnapping problem" have flooded the mass media and currently, one can not pick up a Japanese newspaper or magazine without coming across criticism of North Korea. Kamei Jun, former assistant editor of the weekly magazine *Shūkan shinchō*, noted in 2002 that Japan's present-day mass media is "becoming more and more" like the mass media "before and during" the Pacific War.<sup>11</sup>

Through the strengthening of nationalistic education and domestic propaganda, Japan seems to be vying with China in the "Establishment of a New Order" in Asia. During the Pacific War, the *kokutai* was central to ideology, and it served as the spiritual foundation of both empire-building and domestic propaganda. At least publicly, "national polity" discourse has not yet been prominent in postwar Japan. Perhaps one of the most important tasks for realizing Japan's contemporary

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<sup>11</sup> Quoted in Adam Gamble and Takesato Watanabe, *A Public Betrayed: An Inside Look at Japanese Media Atrocities and Their Warnings to the West* (Washington, DC: Regnery Publishing, INC., 2004), 291.

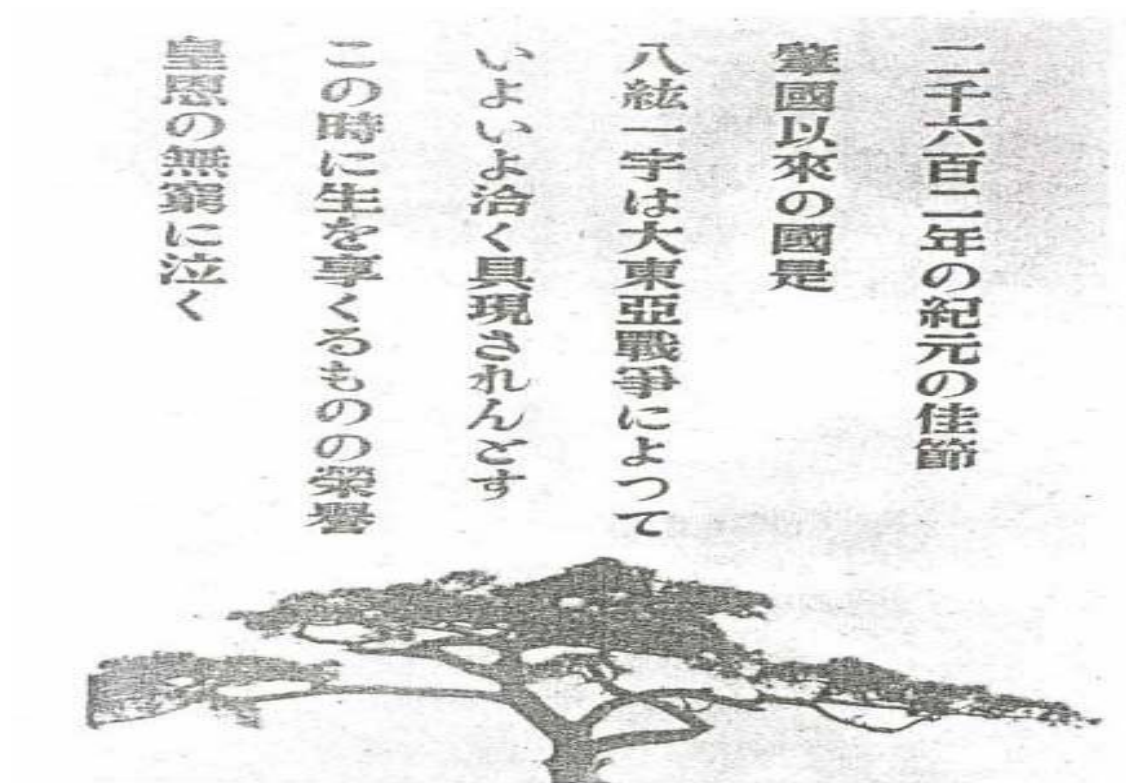
national objectives will be finding new ways of making use of the *kokutai* which the “peace-feelers” worked so desperately to defend and preserve at war’s end with an eye to rebuilding and reviving the postwar nation.

## Appendices



The famous wartime cartoonist Katō Etsurō depicted Japan as the liberator of Asians from the Anglo-American shackles. It is interesting to note that influenced by the Japanese sense of racial superiority over other Asian peoples during the period, the cartoonist drew the Japanese man very much in the image of a “white” Western figure while painting the “Peoples of Greater East Asia” as a “colored” man. This propaganda picture reveals the Japanese notion that the “dark” Asian races were not equal to the “superior” Yamato race.

Source: *Japan Times & Advertiser*, January 18, 1942, 6.



This poster, issued by the Japanese government on February 11, 1942 (the alleged Founding Day of Japan), told the Japanese people that the imperial ideal of *hakkō ichiu*, “Eight Corners of the World Under One (Japanese) Roof,” was about to be realized by the “Greater East Asian War.”

Source: Ōzorasha, ed., *Senjika hyōgoshū* [A Collection of Wartime Catchwords] (Ōzorasha, 2000), 357.

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