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Wartime Wilsonianism and the Crisis of Empire, 1941–43[*]

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Abstract

One striking feature of the Pacific War was the extent to which Wilsonian ideals informed the war aims of both sides. By 1943, the Atlantic Charter and Japan's Pacific Charter (Greater East Asia Joint Declaration) outlined remarkably similar visions for the postwar order. This comparative study of the histories surrounding both charters highlights parallels between the foreign policies of Great Britain and Imperial Japan. Both empires engaged with Wilsonianism in similar ways, to similar ends. Driven by geopolitical desperation, both reluctantly enshrined Wilsonian values into their war aims to survive a gruelling war with empire intact. But the endorsement of national self-determination, in particular, gave elites in dependent states a means to protest the realities of both British and Japanese rule and to demand that both empires practise what they preach. This comparative analysis of Britain and Japan thus sheds light on the part Wilsonian ideology played in the global crisis of empire during the Second World War.

Introduction

One striking aspect of the Second World War is how it gave rise among enemy nations to similar war aims. On 9–12 August 1941, as war raged in Europe and the Atlantic, American President Franklin Delano Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Winston

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Churchill had their dramatic encounter at sea off the coast of south Newfoundland. They hammered out what is now known as the Atlantic Charter—a Wilsonian-inspired vision for the postwar order. Publicized on 14 August, the charter served as a sober call for peace by means of free trade, national self-determination, economic cooperation, disarmament, and collective security. Two years later, Japanese leaders articulated a similar vision for the future—one that reflected the visions found in the Atlantic Charter. On 5–6 November 1943, at the height of the Pacific War, Japan convened an international conference at the Imperial Diet Building in Tokyo. Forty-six participants from seven Asian nations, representing nearly 1 billion people, gathered to discuss the construction of Japan's Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. The conference's climax came with the decision to adopt the Greater East Asia Joint Declaration—a 'Pacific Charter' drafted in response to the Atlantic Charter. Adopted formally on 7 November, the charter called for a new Asian spirit of independence, autonomy, equality, prosperity, and cooperation. Thus, by late 1943, despite the mutual hatred and savagery with which the war was being waged, both the Allies and Japan claimed to be fighting for the same principles and end goals.

This historical convergence has been noted by scholars of Japanese history, who have outlined the similarities between Japan's Pacific Charter and the Atlantic Charter.[1] They emphasize that the drafters of Japan's Pacific Charter referred to the Atlantic Charter when drawing up the document in 1943, and show how the Pacific Charter was seen as a way to end the war in as expedient a manner as possible. Such research offers an important window into the politics and policies of wartime Japan, but it only tells part of a more global story. A comparative focus on the histories surrounding both charters, however, allows historians a direct window into the nature and dynamics of imperialism and anti-imperialism during the Second

[1] The best scholarship on the topic can be found in Hatano Sumio, *Taiheiyō sensō to Ajia gaikō* (Tokyo: Tokyo Daigaku Shuppankai, 1996), 161–244. Other excellent works include A. Iriye, *Power and Culture: The Japanese-American War, 1941–1945* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), 112–21; Yasuda Toshie, 'Dai tōa kaigi to dai tōa kyōdō sengen wo megutte', *Hōgaku kenkyū* 63:2 (Feb. 1990), 369–422; and J. Abel, *The International Minimum: Creativity and Contradiction in Japan's Global Engagement, 1933–1964* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2015), 194–217. Authors of British and American international history, conversely, have tended to focus on the Atlantic Charter alone, in particular its influence on Anglo-American relations, decolonization, and the postwar revolution in human rights.

World War. This article reads the histories of the Atlantic Charter and Pacific Charters side by side, placing direct focus on the British empire and Imperial Japan. This comparative study of the histories surrounding both charters highlights a remarkable convergence: both Britain and Japan employed similar rhetoric in support of their respective empires; and both found that this new rhetoric mobilized anti-imperialist forces against the empires they strove to preserve.

Stated differently, a comparative focus on British and Japanese war aims calls attention to how both foreign policy establishments acted in similar ways, to similar ends. Driven by geopolitical desperation, both reluctantly endorsed the liberal internationalism of the 1920s, or what we can call wartime Wilsonianism. That is, both enshrined Wilsonian values into their war aims to survive a gruelling war with empire intact. In this sense, internationalism was employed in the service of empire. Yet the turn to liberal internationalism had impacts with which neither empire was prepared to contend. The principle of national self-determination energized anti-imperialist forces, giving dependent states like Burma and the Philippines a means to protest the realities of both British and Japanese rule and to demand that both empires practise what they preach. By reading the histories of the Atlantic and Pacific Charters side by side, this article highlights the important linkage between Wilsonian visions of self-determination and the global crisis of empire during the Second World War. For a brief historical moment, wartime Wilsonianism served to support and undermine empire at the very same time.

The Atlantic Charter and the British empire

Scholars, novelists, and biographers have told and retold the historic summit in August 1941 between Prime Minister Winston Churchill and American President Franklin Delano Roosevelt.[2] For Churchill, this meeting could not have happened soon enough. The war, after

[2] For representative works that deal with the Atlantic Charter, see T. A. Wilson, *The First Summit: Roosevelt and Churchill at Placentia Bay, 1941* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1969); W. R. Louis, *Imperialism at Bay, 1941–1945: The United States and the Decolonization of the British Empire* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977); C. Thorne, *Allies of a Kind: The United States, Britain, and the War Against Japan, 1941–1945* (London: H. Hamilton, 1978); D. Reynolds, *The Creation of the Anglo-American Alliance, 1937–1941: A Study in Competitive Co-operation* (Chapel Hill: North Carolina University Press, 1981); D. Brinkley and D. R. Facey-Crowther, eds., *The Atlantic Charter* (New York: Palgrave

all, was not going well. British forces retained superiority in the skies, dealing defeat to Hitler's *Luftwaffe* in the Battle of Britain. But Great Britain still struggled to shoulder the demands of fighting Nazi Germany. Nazi submariners devastated shipping across the Atlantic sea routes—Britain's lifeline to foodstuffs and critical raw materials. In fact, between September 1939 and April 1941, the British had lost 2,000 ships and around 8 million tons of shipping. Making matters more complex, German armies were deep in Soviet territory, throwing into doubt the survival of the Soviet regime. And the Japanese occupation of French Indochina threatened the future of British holdings in Southeast Asia. It was a time of crisis for the British empire.

Churchill secretly hoped that, during the summit, he could help bring about an American declaration of war against Nazi Germany. But no such declaration would be forthcoming. Instead, he travelled to Placentia Bay, on the coast of south Newfoundland, to confirm what was tantamount to an informal alliance with the United States of America. At his first dinner meeting with Roosevelt aboard the *Augusta* on 9 August, the American president indicated a desire to 'draw up a joint declaration laying down certain broad principles which should guide our policies along the same road'.[3] Roosevelt saw the conference primarily as a vehicle to sign a Wilsonian statement of peace aims for the postwar world. Churchill agreed and, after a flurry of drafting, the two sides created the Atlantic Charter, which was publicized on 14 August 1941.[4] The charter announced to the world that Great Britain and the United States of America would join together in creating a more secure, equitable, and moral postwar order.

In public, Churchill lauded the Atlantic Charter as charting a new course for world politics. He stated in a broadcast on 24 August 1941

Macmillan, 1994); and E. Borgwardt, *A New Deal for the World: America's Vision for Human Rights* (Cambridge: Belknap/Harvard University Press, 2005).

[3] See War Cabinet Memorandum, 20 August 1941, CAB 121/149, The National Archives of the UK (henceforth TNA); see also W. S. Churchill, *The Second World War*, Vol. 3 (London: Cassell, 1955), 385.

[4] The full text can be found in *Foreign Relations of the United States*, Diplomatic Papers, 1941, Vol. 1 (Washington, 1958), 368. Henceforth, all volumes in this series will be referred to as FRUS. See also *The Avalon Project: Documents in Law, History and Diplomacy* at Yale Law School, 'Atlantic Charter', http://avalon.law.yale.edu/wwii/atlantic.asp (accessed 24 October 2018). British Permanent Undersecretary for the Foreign Office Sir Alexander Cadogan wrote the first draft at Churchill's insistence. Cadogan did so on 10 August, after his first discussion with US State Department Under Secretary Sumner Welles.

that the Charter 'symbolizes something even more majestic—namely, the marshaling of the good forces of the world against the evil forces which are now so formidable and triumphant and which have cast their cruel spell' over much of Europe and Asia.[5] In his memoirs, Churchill lauded the document as 'astonishing'. Its reference to the final destruction of Nazi tyranny, after all, 'amounted to a challenge which in ordinary times would have implied warlike action'. And he further noted his excitement with the American commitment to 'join with us in policing the world until the establishment of a better order'.[6]

But, in private, Churchill was more critical. As David Reynolds reveals, the declaration 'went down like a lead balloon' in London, and Churchill decried the declaration in his unpublished diary as 'a flop'. Churchill had participated in the conference with the hopes of securing from the United States of America a declaration of war, not a declaration of war aims. 'Our object,' he had noted in February 1941, 'is to get the Americans into war.' But, once it became apparent that Roosevelt remained unwilling to declare war, Churchill recognized that a press release was the best that he could get.[7] The British chiefs of staff, too, were 'restrained rather than euphoric' about the conference.[8] Indeed, in January 1945, Minister of State at the Foreign Office Richard Law referred to the Atlantic Charter as 'mainly a dodge to get the U.S. a little bit further into the war'.[9] The Atlantic Charter, which is now celebrated across the world as the harbinger of a human rights revolution, was thus ironically regarded in London as a grand disappointment.[10]

[5] Sir W. S. Churchill, *Winston S. Churchill: His Complete Speeches, 1897–1963*, Vol. 6 (New York: Chelsea House, 1974), 6473.

[6] Churchill, *The Second World War*, Vol. 3, 394.

[7] See D. Reynolds, 'The Atlantic "Flop": British Foreign Policy and the Churchill-Roosevelt Meeting of August 1941', in Brinkley and Facey-Crowther, eds., *The Atlantic Charter*, 129–50. The quotation is found on p. 135.

[8] P. Haggie, *Britannia at Bay: The Defence of the British Empire against Japan, 1931–1941* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), 202. The British chiefs of staff noted that they 'neither expected nor achieved startling results'. This owed to their recognition that the United States of America remained unprepared for war and focused only on 'the defence of the Western Hemisphere'. See 'British-American Chiefs of Staff Discussions, 9–12 August 1942', CAB 121/49, TNA.

[9] Reconstruction File No. 5. FO 371/50659, TNA. Also quoted in Thorne, *Allies of a Kind*, 102.

[10] International law scholar Edwin Borehard saw the Atlantic Charter as 'eight platitudes'. See T. A. Wilson, 'The First Summit: FDR and the Riddle of Personal Diplomacy', in Brinkley and Facey-Crowther, eds., *The Atlantic Charter*, 19. For the human rights impact of the charter, see Elizabeth Borgwardt, *A New Deal for the World*.

It was the third clause—that of national self-determination—that led to their biggest headaches. It is likely that Churchill failed to understand the explosive potential of this principle, preoccupied as they were with the European war.[11] Churchill's aid, Permanent Undersecretary for the Foreign Office Sir Alexander Cadogan, penned this clause with Europe in mind, to appease American concerns that Britain wanted to carve up Europe in the aftermath of war.[12] More likely, however, he simply did not see it as important as protecting the economic privileges of the imperial preference, which he pursued to great American opposition during the summit. The biggest conflict in drawing up the Atlantic Charter, after all, had to do with the principle of free trade found in the draft's fourth clause. The British side successfully watered down the commitment to free trade by making it contingent on 'due respect for their existing obligations'. The imperial preference was so important that arch-imperialist Secretary of State for India Leo Amery rejoiced at 'the comparatively innocuous character' of the economic clauses.[13] British leaders were preoccupied with economics, not self-determination.

Whatever the case, with the third clause, Churchill committed Britain to assure 'the right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they will live' and to restore 'sovereign rights and self government to those who have been forcibly deprived of them'. The inclusion of the phrase 'sovereign rights and self government' represented a feeble attempt to make the principle inapplicable to Britain's colonies. But words take on a life of their own, and this clause constituted a promise to uphold the right of national self-determination. Leo Amery privately fulminated against this promise. In his diary on 14 August 1941, he grumbled that Burmese ministers had already approached the Governor General of Burma and demanded that Britain live up to its word. Amery wrote: 'We shall no doubt pay dearly in the end for all this fluffy flapdoodle.'[14]

[11] Wm. Roger Louis called the third clause 'perhaps the most explosive principle of all'. See Louis, *Imperialism at Bay*, 123.

[12] Reynolds, 'The Atlantic "Flop"', 146.

[13] L. S. Pressnell and S. V. Hopkins, 'A Canard Out of Time? Churchill, the War Cabinet, and the Atlantic Charter, August 1941', *Review of International Studies* 14:3 (Jul. 1988), 223–35.

[14] 14 August 1941 diary entry, L. Amery, *The Empire at Bay: The Leo Amery Diaries 1929–1945* (London: Hutchinson, 1988), 710, henceforth referred to as *The Leo Amery Diaries*.

True to Amery's words, Britain would pay dearly; and nowhere would it pay as high a price as in colonial Burma. The strongest reaction to the Atlantic Charter happened in Burma, where nationalists seized on it to call either for independence or for a constitutional advance. When British officials proved unwilling to give immediate assurances, Burmese nationalists would turn to Imperial Japan, in the hopes that an Asian partner would help them secure the independence Britain refused to offer.

Burma had witnessed by the late 1930s the rise (especially in Lower Burma) of a fierce political nationalism and desires for independence.[15] There was no more vocal proponent of this new nationalism than Ba Maw, who served as Burma's first premier from 1937 to 1939. As recounted in his memoirs, Ba Maw saw the Second World War as a great opportunity for Burma. 'The Axis victories,' he wrote, 'had changed the entire picture for us. I was convinced that, however the war might eventually end, British power in Asia would never be the same again, and our liberation was nearer and surer than ever.'[16] Ba Maw's chief political rival, U Saw, also pushed for complete self-government.[17] Both leaders saw the war as a unique opportunity to seize a greater degree of independence. And both no doubt believed that bringing independence to Burma would put their position of power above reproach.[18] The oft-spoke mantra 'Britain's difficulty is Burma's opportunity' served national, political, and personal ends.[19]

From September 1939, Ba Maw worked to exploit the war to restore Burma to Burmese hands. First, he courted Japan. Ba Maw anticipated

[15] This nationalism was championed by an emergent ethnic Burmese middle class—a group who felt besieged by Indian immigration and dependence on Indian capital and hoped for a constitutional advance, whether in the form of outright independence or Dominion status. Other ethnicities across Burma (especially in Upper Burma) did not share this fierce political nationalism.

[16] Ba Maw, *Breakthrough in Burma* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), 49.

[17] For a good understanding of U Saw, see Robert H. Taylor, 'Politics in Late Colonial Burma: The Case of U Saw', *Modern Asian Studies*, 10:2 (1976), 161–93.

[18] Leo Amery believed that U Saw worked primarily for the interest of U Saw. He wrote that Saw is 'intensely ambitious' and aimed to 'become a dictator in Burma' in the wake of complete self-government. See 11 October 1941 diary entry, *The Leo Amery Diaries*, 738. Similar arguments were made against Ba Maw.

[19] D. H. Guyot, 'The Political Impact of the Japanese Occupation of Burma' (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1966), 22; J. Bečka, 'The National Liberation Movement in Burma During the Japanese Occupation Period, 1941–1945', *Dissertationes Orientales*, Vol. 42 (Prague: Oriental Institute in Academia, 1983), 54. See also R. H. Taylor, 'Burma in the Anti-Fascist War', in A. W. McCoy, ed., *Southeast Asia Under Japanese Occupation* (New Haven: Yale University Southeast Asia Studies, 1980), 163.

that Japan would enter the war, and hoped Tokyo could provide aid to Burma's independence campaign. In September 1939, he sought out the Japanese consul in Rangoon. After a set of meetings, the consul suggested a trip to Tokyo for Dr Thein Maung, Ba Maw's closest friend and president of the Burma-Japan Association. Thein Maung agreed, and travelled to Japan in November 1939. Although ostensibly a trip to sell rice, inspect schools, and sightsee, the mission's true intention was to secure Japanese support for a peaceful Burmese independence movement. Thein Maung stayed for a month, during which he hammered out an initial agreement. As Ba Maw wrote, Thein Maung 'brought back a firm assurance that financial help would be given [to] us in the campaign for independence that we proposed to start'.[20]

Ba Maw also utilized the Freedom Bloc to exploit the global crisis to demand political emancipation. The Freedom Bloc, which formed in late 1939, was an amalgamation of Ba Maw's Sinyetha Party, Thakin leaders Aung San, Nu, Ba Swe, Hla Ba, and Mya of the Dobama Asiayone, and other affiliated groups. Ba Maw was designated the president-dictator (*Anashin*) and Thakin Aung San was appointed as general secretary.[21] On the whole, the Freedom Bloc pushed for complete independence. To many of its members, Dominion status was unacceptable, as it would lock Burma within a political and economic structure dominated by imperial Britain.[22] In a tense 23 February 1940 meeting of the House of Representatives, the U Tun Aung tried to pass an amendment to have Britain make good on past promises 'by immediately recognizing Burma as an independent nation with the right to frame her own constitution'.[23] He further condemned the British as evoking bitter antagonism in Burma and, quoting author H. G. Wells, decried the British Raj. 'In Burma as in India,' he insisted, 'the British raj never explains. In effect, it has nothing to explain. It is there a brainless incubus.'[24] The House of Representatives ultimately

[20] Ba Maw, *Breakthrough in Burma*, 62–63.

[21] U Maung Maung, *Burmese Nationalist Movements, 1940–1948* (Edinburgh: Kiscadale Publications, 1989), 17; J. Cady, *A History of Modern Burma* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1958), 416.

[22] R. Butwell, *U Nu of Burma* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1963), 33.

[23] Taken from *Extract from the Proceedings of the First House of Representatives, Volume VII, No. 7, at a Meeting Held on Friday, the 23rd February 1940*, 16. In Burma Office Records, IOR: M/3/1112, Asia, Pacific and Africa Collections, British Library (henceforth BL). See also Burma Office Records, IOR: M/5/19, BL.

[24] U Tun Aung took this from H. G. Wells, *Travels of a Republican Radical in Search of Hot Water* (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 1939), 85. U Tun Aung's statement can be found in IOR: M/3/1112, BL, and in Ba Maw, *Breakthrough in Burma*, 77–78.

rejected the amendment. In response, members of the Freedom Bloc shifted to more overt antiwar propaganda in May and June. In a dramatic move, Ba Maw resigned from the House of Representatives in late July. He then began delivering scathing attacks on Prime Minister U Pu's policy of supporting the war, and was arrested for sedition on 6 August 1940. British officials in Burma viewed him as 'the most dangerous "Quisling"', likely to enter into intrigues with the Japanese.[25]

The activities of the Freedom Bloc prompted U Saw—Ba Maw's rival, who became prime minister in September 1940—to press for a constitutional advance. Yet, whereas the Freedom Bloc demanded complete independence, Saw sought to attain Dominion status. He took his cue from Governor of Burma Sir Archibald Douglas Cochrane, who signalled in November 1939 that Dominion status should be seen as the natural endpoint of Burmese governmental progress.[26] Throughout 1940 and 1941, Saw embarked on a quest for a clear, unequivocal statement from London that Burma would be granted Dominion status by the end of the war.

The Atlantic Charter emboldened U Saw, who, by August 1941, saw Dominion status as within Burma's grasp. After all, the third clause implicitly committed Britain to grant self-government throughout the empire. Obsessed by the opportunity dangling before him, Saw visited London with his secretary, Tin Tut, in October and November 1941. Their goal was to meet with Churchill and Secretary of State for India and Burma Leo Amery to pry out a promise of political emancipation. Saw found a willing ally in the Governor General of Burma Sir Reginald Hugh Dorman-Smith—an Irishman who sympathized with Burmese aspirations for independence, but wanted it to be a peaceful, if drawn-out, process. Although he did not think Saw would meet with success, Dorman-Smith believed that the trip might boost morale and ease tensions in Burmese politics.[27] Saw nonetheless remained hopeful. Britain, after all, was engaged in war in Europe and needed the full support of its empire. What better way to get support than by showing that London could live up to its promises? Saw cherished the idea of becoming the hero who pressured Burma's colonial master

[25] Burma Office Records, IOR: M/3/897, BL. This is also described in Ba Maw, *Breakthrough in Burma*, 94–102.

[26] 'Policy in Burma' (May 1945 War Cabinet Report), Burma Office Records, IOR: M/3/1573, BL.

[27] See Dorman-Smith Papers, Mss EUR E.215.32A, Asia, Pacific and Africa Collections, BL.

into offering the gift of Dominion status.[28] So he played up Burma's constitutional advance. He proclaimed:

> What Burma wants to know is whether, in fighting with many other countries for the freedom of the world, she is also fighting for her own freedom. Does victory by the democracies, mean full self-government to Burma? The demand for complete self-government is a unanimous demand of the Burmese people, and it was made incessantly long before the Atlantic Charter.[29]

Indeed, this was by no means the first time Burmese leaders took up the issue of a constitutional advance with London. Since 1929 (even before the separation from India), Burma's British overlords issued multiple statements asserting that the goal of political development would be 'the attainment of Dominion Status'.[30] But this remained a distant dream before the outbreak of war in Europe. The war gave Burmese nationalists an opportunity to demand a greater level of self-government. On 29 February 1940, Senator U Kyaw Din moved a resolution calling upon London to grant Dominion status.[31] Hard on the heels of this, on 22 June, Prime Minister Maung Pu sent a letter asking for 'a Constitution which will enable [Burma] to take at once her due place as a fully self-governing and equal member of any Commonwealth or Federation of free nations that may be established as a result of the war'.[32] London, however, deflected this call, sticking to its policy that Dominion status would be considered in the future. But the Atlantic Charter gave Burma's demands further relevance and power. And Saw was more than happy to use the charter to demand a greater degree of self-government.

U Saw found some sympathy, but overall London remained cool to the Burmese request. On 9 September 1941, Churchill had repudiated the commitment to self-government, stating in the House of Commons that the Atlantic Charter referred only to 'European nations now

[28] According to Leo Amery, British confidential reports highlighted that U Saw's chief interests were 'drink, pretty ladies and, above all, U Saw'. See Leo Amery, 11 October 1941 diary entry, *The Leo Amery Diaries*, 738. See also IOR: M/3/1113, BL, for British reports on Saw.

[29] U Saw, 'Self Government in Burma', *The Times*, 16 October 1941.

[30] The first statement was made by on 1 November 1929, by the Governor General of India on behalf of the British government. Burma Office Records, IOR: M/3/733 and IOR: M/3/734, BL.

[31] Of course, the resolution was weakened by phrases like 'as soon as practicable' and 'in so far as it is possible in the immediate present'. See Burma Office Records, IOR: M/3/730, BL.

[32] CO 54/973/15, TNA.

under the Nazi yoke'.[33] Moreover, Amery refused to clarify Britain's policy, insisting that it was 'not the time to enter upon constitutional controversies'. He only issued ambiguous and cautiously worded replies hinting that Dominion status would be granted 'as a process of natural growth'.[34] His clearest reply came in a letter to U Saw on 3 November 1941. Amery stated that only after 'the war is brought to a victorious end' would London 'be willing to discuss the problems to be solved in Burma'.[35] Such guarded statements failed to resonate with Saw, who expressed his dissatisfaction to the press. On 3 November, he lamented:

> I have not been able to get an assurance to take back to Burma. I know that the Government and the British people are very busy at the moment with the war; I only want a definite assurance that Burma will be placed on the same level as other parts of the British Empire. There is no immediate prospect of that coming about.

Saw even placed his complaints in the context of the Atlantic Charter and Britain's war aims of freedom and liberation: 'My only request to the British Government and people is that before they free the countries under Hitler let them free the countries which are in the British Empire.' But, he continued, the situation does not look promising: 'No one knows when Burma will get self-government.'[36] In a last-ditch effort, Saw requested on 11 November that Burmese affairs be transferred to the Dominion Office. This, he argued, could be taken as a sign that Burma was on the road to self-government. But Churchill and Amery refused, insisting that it was 'not practicable' to discuss independence or Dominion status while still engaged in a global war.[37]

U Saw would leave London disappointed. After all, he had not gone to London 'simply to kiss Mr. Churchill'.[38] Yet, in the end, kissing

[33] FRUS, *1941*, 3: 182. See also Burma Office Records, IOR: M/3/734, BL.

[34] See Burma Office Records, IOR: M/3/732, BL. In his 4 November statement, Amery qualified the offer of eventual Dominion status by stating 'it is out of the way to give a categorical assurance of such a nature as might result in gross misunderstanding and disappointment', *The Times*, 5 November 1941.

[35] Burma Office Records, IOR: M/3/734, BL.

[36] U Saw in a press interview on 3 November 1941. See Papers of Sir John Clague, Mss E.252.45, Asia, Pacific and Africa Collections, BL. See also Burma Office Records, IOR: M/3/733, BL; *The Times*, 4 November 1941; and FRUS, *1941*, 3: 183.

[37] Burma Office Records, IOR: M/3/732, BL. For Churchill's statement, see IOR: M/3/18, BL.

[38] Burma Office Records, IOR: M/3/1113, BL.

Churchill is all he accomplished. Far from receiving Dominion status, Saw had won only the reiteration of a hazy old promise to consider self-government after the war. This is unsurprising. As Christopher Bayly and Tim Harper have noted, Burma in 1941 'was so far down the list of political priorities as to be invisible'.[39] And the Churchill government remained unwilling to consider granting independence within Britain's Asian empire. Even so, disgruntled as Saw was, he still admitted his commitment to working with Britain. He insisted that Burma 'would rather trust the devil we know than the devil we don't'.[40]

But his faith had been shaken. Upon leaving, Saw stated ominously: 'I cannot foresee what the attitude of my people will be when I explain the response of the British Government to my request.'[41] As it turned out, Saw would not make it back to Burma until after the war, and his tale would remain untold. Unwilling to go home empty-handed, Saw spent several weeks in a failed attempt to drum up support in the United States of America. In Washington, he hoped to persuade President Roosevelt to intercede with Churchill to apply the Atlantic Charter to Burma. Roosevelt, however, brushed aside discussions with Saw on Burmese independence. And discussions with ranking officials made it clear that the American interest in Burma only related to the flow of supplies to China through the Burma Road.[42] On his way back to Burma, however, opportunity knocked. He reached Hawaii on 8 December 1941, the day after the Japanese surprise attack on Pearl Harbor. The Japanese assault on Hawaii and Hong Kong, the landing on the Malay peninsula, and the sinking of the 'unsinkable' British flagship HMS *Prince of Wales* revealed to Saw the frailties of Allied power. Halted at Hawaii, Saw was forced to retrace his journey home via the United States of America and Europe. At Lisbon, Saw courted a Japanese embrace. He contacted the Japanese Legation and offered Burmese support should the Japanese decide to invade.[43] Unfortunately for Saw, however, the British had cracked Japan's

[39] C. Bayly and T. Harper, *Forgotten Armies: The Fall of British Asia, 1941–1945* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 103.

[40] 'U Saw's Bet', *Time*, 26 January 1942, Vol. 39, Issue 4. See also 'The Devil We Know', *New York Times*, 20 January 1942.

[41] FRUS, *1941*, 3: 183.

[42] Taylor, 'Politics in Late Colonial Burma', 190; Burma Office Records, IOR: M/3/1111, BL.

[43] After his detention, U Saw continued to deny any wrongdoing. He protested that he sought out the Japanese consul to ask him 'to look after Burmese students in Tokyo'. See FO 371/31776 and PREM 4/50/2, TNA. British records state that 'Saw's

diplomatic and naval cipher messages and were well aware of his overtures. The British police arrested U Saw upon his arrival in Egypt on 19 January 1942 and kept him prisoner in Uganda for the following four years.[44]

Governor Dorman-Smith secretly rejoiced. He had been worried that, upon his return, Saw might rally public sentiment against Great Britain. In a letter to Amery in October 1944, he hinted that Japan's invasion of Burma had perhaps saved Britain from a political disaster. He wrote:

> Had it not been for the Japanese entry into the war and the invasion of Burma, political Burma would have continued in a state of resentment which would undoubtedly have been intensified had Saw been able to tell his version of his London negotiations, a story which would have lost nothing in the telling.[45]

Dorman-Smith further emphasized this point in his unpublished memoirs. 'The lesson which I learnt arising out of the U Saw mission,' he wrote, 'was that it is possible to lose a country by haggling over a phrase.'[46]

The Atlantic Charter thus resonated throughout the British empire. It was produced owing to the exigencies of war, and accepted by Churchill as a consolation prize after failing to obtain an American commitment to enter the war against Nazi Germany. From Churchill's perspective, the Atlantic Charter represented part of a charm offensive to pull the United States of America into a formal alliance. In this sense, it was two parts propaganda, one part diplomacy, one part grandiloquence, and one part vision for the future. Churchill signed the charter in part because he hoped that American assistance in defeating Nazi Germany would preserve the British empire. British leaders, however, never intended to follow through with all included principles. By June 1943, the Foreign Office had distanced Britain from the universal application of the charter. In a confidential document (which was not sent to the Dominions), the Foreign Office

statements of his visit to the Japanese Consul at Lisbon and his movements at San Francisco are unconvincing'. See Private Office Papers of Sir Anthony Eden, Earl of Avon, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, FO 954/1B/474, TNA.

[44] British authorities kept him imprisoned (without trial) to maintain secrecy over the fact that they had cracked Japanese diplomatic codes. See PREM 4/50/2, TNA. Tin Tut, however, was cleared of any wrongdoing and eventually made his way back to the Burmese government in exile in Simla.

[45] R. Dorman-Smith to L. S. Amery, 17 October 1944, IOR: L/PO/9/7 (ii), Asia, Pacific and Africa Collections, BL.

[46] Dorman-Smith Papers, 'Unfinished Memoirs', 186, Mss Eur E.215.32b, BL.

noted that the charter merely 'enunciates certain principles', but does not commit its adherents to realize them 'in every single case' or to '[treat] all cases alike'.[47] Moreover, Churchill remained steadfast in his opposition to self-determination throughout the empire. As Leo Amery privately noted, Churchill 'has an instinctive hatred of self-government in any shape or form and dislikes any country or people who want such a thing or for whom such a thing is contemplated'.[48] By 1945, as Churchill himself insisted: 'The Atlantic Charter is a guide, and not a rule.'[49]

Nonetheless, the charter provided colonial elites with intellectual ammunition to protest the reality of British rule. As *The Japan Times and Advertiser* noted on 3 November 1941: 'The Atlantic Charter has given Burma a new weapon to wield against Britain.' The article further argued that 'the promise of Dominion Status fell far short of the legitimate aspiration of the people' and of the ideals of the Atlantic Charter.[50] Even American commentators argued that Burmese resistance to London swelled 'not only because it was fashionable to oppose everything bearing the British stamp but because of Britain's failure to offer any definite political bait'.[51] The failure to receive any such 'political bait' would drive the Thakins and Ba Maw into a firm Japanese embrace. In this manner, wartime Wilsonianism strengthened pressures against Britain's imperial project.

The Pacific Charter and Imperial Japan

Ba Maw and other disaffected Burmese leaders felt a sense of euphoria as Japanese forces swept through Burma between January and April 1942. This euphoria was strengthened by Japan's insistence that it would oust Western imperialism and create an 'Asia for the Asians'. As Ba Maw noted in his memoirs, Japan's message 'was direct and emphatic: Japan would win the war, she would give us our independence, she would lead us to future prosperity and

[47] 'Legal Effect of the "Atlantic Charter"', File U 232, FO 371/34349, TNA.

[48] Amery to Dorman-Smith, 15 April 1943. Dorman-Smith Papers, Mss Eur E.215.3, BL.

[49] FO 371/50778, TNA.

[50] 'Burmese are Seen as Unwilling Ally', *The Japan Times and Advertiser*, 3 November 1941.

[51] See, for instance, V. Thompson, 'What U Saw Saw in Japan', *Far Eastern Survey* 11: 4 (23 Feb. 1942), 56.

greatness'.[52] In August 1942, Ba Maw, who escaped Mogok jail three months earlier, agreed to head a new Burmese government in the belief that a partnership with Japan would lead to an independent Burma. His collaboration would ultimately be rewarded. Japan offered independence (albeit nominal) in August 1943 and followed up by issuing a Pacific Charter in November 1943 that shadowed the Wilsonian values of the Atlantic Charter. To Burmese leaders like Ba Maw, then, Japan appeared to be positioning itself as the only empire that would provide for self-determination.

As with the British case, however, Japan's Pacific Charter was a product of geopolitical desperation. Despite a wild rush across Asia, by 1943, the war was not going well for Japan. The Battle of Midway in June 1942 resulted in the Imperial Navy's loss of the four aircraft carriers that formed the core of its power-projection capabilities. Moreover, the six-month Guadalcanal campaign, which ended in a full-scale Japanese evacuation in February 1943, placed Japan on the defensive in the Pacific. Guadalcanal also weakened Japanese forces across all fronts owing to Tokyo's consistent attempts to reinforce failing defenders with fresh supplies and troops. A perhaps more powerful, psychological shock came in April 1943 when Admiral Yamamoto Isoroku, the architect of the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor, was shot down over Bougainville in the South Pacific. One could guess the shock and dismay of navy leader Yoshida Zengo, who called Yamamoto's death 'an irrecoverable loss'.[53] Japan, in short, faced as great a crisis as the one that confronted Great Britain two years earlier.

The declining war situation led Japanese leaders to rethink wartime strategy. No man was more instrumental in this shift than Shigemitsu Mamoru. From 1942, while still ambassador to the Chinese Nanjing Regime, Shigemitsu produced a number of widely circulated position papers that were harshly critical of the one-sided, military-first nature of Japan's war. Shigemitsu continually insisted that victory did not depend solely on fortunes met at the field of battle. 'Military force,' he asserted, 'must be met with military force, and diplomacy must be countered with diplomacy.'[54] Shigemitsu called for a revitalized diplomacy to counter the Allied propaganda of the Atlantic Charter

[52] Ba Maw, *Breakthrough in Burma*, 283–84.
[53] File 4-1, *Yoshida Zengo kankei monjo*, National Diet Library, Japan (NDL).
[54] Shigemitsu Mamoru, *Shigemitsu Mamoru: Gaikō ikenshoshū*, Vol. 2: *chū Ka taishi, gaimudaijin jidai* (Tokyo: Gendai Shiryō Shuppan, 2007), 302.

and to secure Asian support for the war effort. Smart foreign policy, he argued in mid-1942, 'has the same effect as military affairs in deciding victory or defeat'.[55]

Victory in Asia depended on whether Japan could win the hearts and minds of occupied territories. But Japanese policymakers consistently failed to consider how to win sympathy and support from Asia. Shigemitsu believed that Japan paid mere lip service to issues of Asian liberation, but geared war aims to secure autarky and regional hegemony. Political discussions failed to focus on how Tokyo could uplift the region. Rather, they revolved around how Asia would serve as a material supply post and subservient political partner. This was anathema to Shigemitsu. He argued:

> Japan's war aims—the building of the new order—are vainly bound only to securing material goods such as resources and commodities, and therefore cannot be effective. Asian liberation must be an expression of true friendship toward the Asian peoples. Victory or defeat in this war will likely be decided by this point. Today our weak point is ... our policy toward the peoples of Asia. As the leader Asian peoples, whether Japan is victorious or not depends on success in our nationalities policy.[56]

Without friendship and true liberation, Japan's new order would not amount to much. Shigemitsu thus called for a nationalities policy of high ideals. To draw in supporters, he argued, Japan must create an Asia policy lauded by friend and foe alike. Failure to do so would further isolate Japan. Shigemitsu wrote:

> To firm up the Greater East Asian front, we must grab and concentrate the sentiments of the peoples in the Greater East Asia region. To do so, the first necessity is that of establishing political equality among all countries. If the countries in Greater East Asia are dependencies or colonies, then they will not show a spirit of cooperation. As countries standing equal to each other, they must be given the authority of independence and autonomy that will allow them to manage their national affairs.[57]

But Japan had to support *actual* independence and equality. Superficial propaganda—accompanied by exploitative policies—would not bolster Japan's faltering international position. Instead, the Japanese empire would benefit more by taking direct action against Anglo-American propaganda. Shigemitsu, in short, called for pragmatic measures that

[55] Ibid., 119.
[56] Ibid., 124.
[57] Ibid., 268.

would promote Japan as the moral leader of the region and crush Anglo-American propaganda. He insisted:

> If we display a policy of aggression and exploitation abroad where we cry wine and sell vinegar, then our [vision] will be meaningless both during wartime and peacetime. Externally, we will claim the position of freedom-lover that Anglo-America professes and crush their propaganda, and conversely this will become advantageous; we will use it as our weapon. If a voluntary East Asian union is realized then this will become during wartime the biggest weapon, and in the postwar era will become the greatest foundation of the empire's expansion.[58]

As a first step toward advancing Japan's moral leadership, Shigemitsu called for the promotion of the New China Policy and the New Greater East Asia Policy. The New China Policy resulted from the overarching need to make peace with the Chiang Kai-shek regime in Chongqing. This, Shigemitsu argued, was the basic premise for peace in Asia. The policy called for the revision of the unequal treaties, respect for Chinese sovereignty, and the eventual withdrawal of troops from Chinese territory. Shigemitsu broadened these ideas to encompass much of East Asia. The extension of independence and autonomy to former European colonies, he argued, would set Japanese policy apart from that of the Allied powers, which preached high ideals but controlled far-flung empires. Such ideas were part of Shigemitsu's broader wish to bring about 'the liberation and rebirth of Asia'.[59]

These views do not imply that Shigemitsu was an anti-imperialist, committed to the end of empire in Asia. Far from it—Shigemitsu was a consummate political realist who recognized the importance of power in international relations. 'The world has always been a world of power,' he would write shortly after war's end. 'International relations have always been policies of power. But it is only the content of that power that changes with both the time and place.'[60] Shigemitsu had in fact supported the Manchurian Incident in 1931 and the formation of Manchukuo. Moreover, while vice minister for foreign affairs between May 1933 and April 1936, he called for something akin to an Asian Monroe doctrine, noting that Japan 'is in the position to maintain peace in the Far East' and 'has the determination to do so'.[61] But,

[58] Ibid., 245–46.
[59] Shigemitsu Mamoru, *Shōwa no dōran*, Vol. 2 (Tokyo: Chūō Kōronsha, 1952), 171.
[60] Shigemitsu Mamoru, *Shigemitsu Mamoru shuki*, Vol. 2 (Tokyo: Chūō Kōronsha, 1988), 335.
[61] Usui Katsumi, 'Gaimushō: hito to kikō', in Hosoya Chihiro, Saitō Makoto, Imai Sei'ichi, and Rōyama Michio, eds., *Nichi-Bei kankeishi: kaisen ni itaru 10-nen (1931-*

by 1942, with Japan's empire teetering on the precipice of disaster, Shigemitsu now counselled a diplomacy of reconciliation. Building a voluntary East Asian union would serve as the 'biggest weapon' in Japan's fight for Asia. In this sense, Shigemitsu is best understood as a child of Machiavelli—one who sought victory in diplomacy over defeat in war.

Shigemitsu's ideas struck a chord with Prime Minister Tōjō and other members of the ruling elite in Tokyo. Facing a string of military failures, even members of the high command began to pine for diplomatic successes. Japan began to forge a new strategy from January 1943 that mimicked policies that Shigemitsu had been advocating since 1942. The New China Policy, which gave greater independence and legitimacy to the Wang Jingwei regime in Nanjing, represented the first link of this new strategy. Tokyo announced the end of extraterritorial rights and allowed the Nanjing regime to declare war on Britain and the United States of America, thus eliminating most vestiges of overt political control. This was part of a naïve attempt toward peace with the Nationalist government in Chongqing. Japanese leaders hoped the new policy would, on the one hand, show the sincerity of their intentions toward China. More importantly, however, Japanese leaders hoped this new policy would facilitate peace talks with Chongqing, to be initiated through the Nanjing government.[62] To help with the implementation of this policy, on 20 April 1943, Prime Minister Tōjō invited Shigemitsu to join his administration as foreign minister. Shigemitsu agreed only after gaining Tōjō's consent to enact his new strategy for Asia; he joined the Cabinet the same day.[63]

The extension of independence to other parts of the Co-Prosperity Sphere—a limited version of Shigemitsu's New Greater East Asia Policy—constituted the second aspect of Japan's reformulated regional strategy. The willingness to do so actually predated Shigemitsu's return to Tokyo, but was no doubt influenced by his position papers. On 21 January and again on 28 January 1943, Prime Minister Tōjō made statements in the Imperial Diet calling

41-nen), Vol. 1: seifu shunō to gaikō kikan (Tokyo: Tōkyō Daigaku Shuppankai, 1971), 119–23.

[62] Iriye, *Power and Culture*, 96–112.

[63] Shigemitsu Mamoru, *Shigemitsu Mamoru shuki* (Tokyo: Chūō Kōronsha, 1986), 321–23, 328–29. See also Itō Takashi, Hirohashi Tadamitsu, and Katashima Norio, eds., *Tōjō naikaku sōridaijin kimitsu kiroku* (Tokyo: Tokyo Daigaku Shuppankai, 1990), 175. Henceforth referred to as *Tōjō naikaku sōridaijin kimitsu kiroku*.

for the extension of independence to Burma and the Philippines.[64] A 10 March Liaison Conference followed up on this call, agreeing to grant independence to Burma and calling for the country's leadership under Ba Maw.[65] Shortly after, Japanese leaders decided to grant independence to the Philippines—with José P. Laurel as president. This decision was solidified in a 31 May Imperial Conference. Japanese authorities also took steps in support of the Indian independence movement. These initiatives culminated in Burmese independence on 1 August, Philippine independence on 14 October, and the creation of the Provisional Government of Free India (Azad Hind) under Subhas Chandra Bose on 21 October 1943.

One should be careful to avoid overstating the extent of this independence. As Takeshima Yoshinari has argued, Filipino and Burmese independence on the one hand represented conciliatory measures toward the local populace. They did not, however, imply national self-determination. Instead, independence was enacted in a way that would preserve Japanese leadership and control.[66] On the same day they received their independence, both Burma and the Philippines signed agreements that gave the Japanese military wide leeway to intervene in their domestic affairs.[67] Japan could mark nearly all demands for aid, facilities, infrastructure, or territory as 'military necessities'—demands that neither government was able to refuse. Thus, Japan merely provided what is best understood as the Manchukuo model of 'dependent independence'.

Offering 'dependent independence' to Burma and the Philippines constituted a Machiavellian strategy in another sense as well. Japanese leaders did not view either country as politically important, and did not covet their natural resources as much as those in Malay or the

[64] Bōeichō Bōei Kenshūjo, Senshishitsu, *Daihon'ei rikugunbu*, Vol. 7 (Tokyo:, 1973), 361. Henceforth, all volumes in this series will be referred to as *Daihon'ei rikugunbu*.

[65] Sugiyama Hajime, *Sugiyama memo: Daihon'ei seifu renraku kaigi tō hikki*, Vol. 2 (Tokyo: Hara Shobō, 1967), 386–88; Hattori Takushirō, *Dai tōa sensō zenshi* (Tokyo: Hara Shobō, 1965), 452; and 'Kanpō', Gōgai, 22 January 1942, NDL (http://teikokugikai-i.ndl.go.jp/ (accessed 24 October 2018)).

[66] Takeshima Yoshinari, *Nihon senryō to Biruma no minzoku undō: Thakin seiryoku no seijiteki jōshō* (Tokyo: Ryūkei Shosha, 2003), 190–91. See also Hatano Sumio, *Taiheiyō sensō to Ajia gaikō*, 103–04.

[67] Bōeichō Bōei Kenshūjo, Senshishitsu, *Biruma kōryaku sakusen* (Tokyo: Asagumo Shinbunsha, 1967), 544–45; for the Philippine case, see 'Memorandum on Questions between Japan and the Philippines arising from The Philippine Independence', October 1943. Taken from T. A. Agoncillo, *The Fateful Years: Japan's Adventure in the Philippines*, Vol. 2 (Quezon City: R.P. Garcia Publishing Co., 1965), 977–82 (Appendix C).

Netherlands Indies. Tokyo had little choice but to grant independence to the Philippines, which had already been set to receive independence from the United States of America in 1946. But the promise of independence to Burma had subtler designs. Tokyo viewed it as a useful tool for generating anti-British nationalism in South Asia. As early as 1941—before the outbreak of the Pacific War—policymakers discussed the political impact of granting Burmese independence. A 15 November 1941 Liaison Conference adopted a draft plan that sought 'to hasten Burmese independence and use that to spur on Indian independence'.[68] Burma's importance, then, rested on its effect on India. From the outset, independence was always tied to pragmatic concerns.

Finally, Japan decided to hold a Greater East Asia Conference in November 1943 to build moral and political support for the war. To this end, Japan invited only the independent nations of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere to declare their support for the war and for the establishment of Japan's new order.[69] A 2 October Liaison Conference formalized the conference details. Participation would be limited to Japan, Manchukuo, China, Thailand, Burma, and the Philippines. The Provisional Government of Free India would attend as an observer. To lend the conference legitimacy, heads of government were to serve as representatives for each country. Policymakers also settled on other particulars of the conference, solidifying the date and time, the venue, and the seating arrangement and order of speeches (which would be arranged in Japanese alphabetical order, *iroha jun*). Most importantly, they formalized the topic for discussion as 'clarifying to the world both the firm resolution to prosecute the war to a successful conclusion and the policy of establishing the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere'.[70]

The decision to hold the conference represented a convergence of two different visions of Japanese foreign policy. Prime Minister Tōjō

[68] The 15 November 1941 Liaison Conference is in the *Sugiyama memo*, 1: 523–24. See also 'Tai Ei-Bei-Ran-Shō sensō shūmatsu sokushin ni kan suru fukuan', at JACAR, Reference Code: B02032969200.

[69] *Daihon'ei rikugunbu*, 6: 536, 538. *Sugiyama memo*, 2: 411, 414. Inviting only independent nations was Foreign Minister Shigemitsu's idea. He stated: 'Gathering representatives from people of all areas is undesirable for relations with independent countries. A conference with representatives from all peoples is something to consider, but at this time we should limit it to independent countries.' See *Daihon'ei rikugunbu*, 7: 382.

[70] *Sugiyama memo*, 2: 497–98.

and the Imperial High Command, on the one hand, envisioned the conference as a practical means of galvanizing Asian support for Japan's war. Tōjō also hoped that evidence of a unified Asia would undermine Allied morale. Foreign Minister Shigemitsu, on the other hand, saw the conference as a means to create a 'Greater East Asia Confederation'—a group of independent states that would provide for cooperation in the postwar international regime.[71] Shigemitsu and other Foreign Ministry bureaucrats also viewed the drafting of an idealistic joint declaration—modelled after the Atlantic Charter—as a means to create a more positive image of Japan's war aims in both Britain and the United States of America.[72] Even though Tōjō and Shigemitsu differed in motives, both leaders shared an understanding of conference goals. The conference, they believed, would rally Asian nations to fight and convince Britain and the United States of America to make peace.

The Greater East Asia Conference formally convened at 10 a.m. on 5 November 1943. Each delegation filed into the Imperial Diet Building and took their seats. The following leaders headed each delegation: Prime Minister Tōjō, Japan; President of the Executive Yuan and former Guomindang leader Wang Jingwei, the China Nanjing Regime; Prime Minister Zhang Jinghui, Manchukuo; Prime Minister Ba Maw, Burma; President José P. Laurel, the Republic of the Philippines; Deputy Prime Minister Prince Wan Waithayakon, Thailand; and Head of State Subhas Chandra Bose, the Provisional Government of Free India. The full attendance of the event was nothing short of miraculous. Both Ba Maw and Prince Wan's planes crashed on the way to Tokyo. Ba Maw's plane crash-landed on some thatched huts, which cushioned the fall and saved him from certain death. And Prince Wan survived a plane crash upon takeoff, only to be hit by a fever of 40

[71] This is apparent in his policy papers. Others have also argued this point as well. See Yasuda, 'Dai tōa kaigi', 373, 382; also see Hatano Sumio, 'Shigemitsu Mamoru to dai tōa kyōdō sengen', *Kokusai seiji* 109:5 (May 1995), 40.

[72] Yasuda, 'Dai tōa kaigi', 373–74; and Hatano, 'Shigemitsu Mamoru', 42. Shigemitsu even recognized that it would send an equally strong message to Asian nations. He hinted at this in a 27 October 1943 speech before the Lower Diet. The war, he argued, 'is a war of liberation to defend East Asia, our home, and to redeem it from exploitation, to establish peace and stability and to bring about common prosperity throughout the vast region of East Asia. We strive for construction, while our enemy aims at destruction. This is the reason why the kindred nations of East Asia, confident of final victory, are firmly resolved to fight to the last man', JACAR, Reference Code: B10070190000.

degrees Celsius after arriving in Tokyo. Prince Wan felt well enough, however, to attend the afternoon session of the first day.

The climax of the conference came on 6 November, with the unanimous decision to approve Japan's 'Pacific Charter'—the Greater East Asia Joint Declaration. This declaration, adopted formally the following day, articulated the principles that would undergird the new order.

It is the basic principle for the establishment of world peace that the nations of the world have each its proper place, and enjoy prosperity in common through mutual aid and assistance.

The United States of America and the British Empire have, in seeking their own prosperity oppressed other nations and peoples. Especially in East Asia, they indulged in insatiable aggression and exploitation, and sought to satisfy their inordinate ambition of enslaving the entire region, and finally they came to menace seriously the stability of East Asia. Herein lies the cause of the present war.

The countries of Greater East Asia, with a view to contributing to the cause of world peace, undertake to cooperate toward prosecuting the War of Greater East Asia to a successful conclusion, liberating their region from the yoke of British-American domination, and assuring their self-existence and self-defense, and in constructing a Greater East Asia in accordance with the following principles:

1. The countries of Greater East Asia through mutual cooperation, will ensure the stability of their region and construct an order of common prosperity and well-being based upon justice.
2. The countries of Greater East Asia will ensure the fraternity of nations in their region, by respecting one another's sovereignty and independence and practicing mutual assistance and amity.
3. The countries of Greater East Asia by respecting one another's traditions and developing the creative faculties of each race, will enhance the culture and civilization of Greater East Asia.
4. The countries of Greater East Asia will endeavor to accelerate their economic development through close cooperation upon a basis of reciprocity and to promote thereby the general prosperity of their region.
5. The countries of Greater East Asia will cultivate friendly relations with all the countries of the world, and work for the abolition of racial discriminations, the promotion of cultural intercourse and the opening of resources throughout the world, and contribute thereby to the progress of mankind.[73]

[73] The original draft, which was written in English, can be found in Ministry of Greater East Asiatic Affairs, *Addresses Before the Assembly of Greater East Asiatic Nations* (Tokyo: Ministry of Greater East-Asiatic Affairs, 1943), 63–65. The Japanese versions that accompanied the English original can be found in *Shūhō* No. 369 (10 November

These points can be condensed into the following: (1) mutual cooperation; (2) sovereignty, independence, and friendly relations; (3) the enhancement of cultures and civilizations; (4) economic development and prosperity; and (5) the abolition of racial discrimination and contribution to the progress of mankind. Strikingly, the new language of cooperation, independence, and friendship sits uncomfortably next to older ideas of 'every nation taking its proper place'.

The Joint Declaration was, in fact, an amalgamation of two documents—one drafted by the Greater East Asia Ministry and the other by the Foreign Ministry.[74] This accounts for the document's inconsistencies, where older rhetoric of 'every nation taking its proper place' existed alongside the new liberal internationalist language. The details concerning the Greater East Asia Ministry draft are unclear. But Japanese General Staff leaders did not feel the Greater East Asia Ministry draft to be a satisfactory document. On 14 October 1943, the General Staff offered a strong critique:

> The Greater East Asia Ministry mobilized famous intellectuals to prepare a draft. But their draft is not satisfactory. At times it is crammed full of ideology (*rinen ni hashirite*) and distant from reality, and at other times it uses expressions like 'spirit of the Imperial Way,' so it will not generate common understanding among the peoples Greater East Asia.[75]

Much more is known about the Foreign Ministry drafts, most of which were drawn up and discussed by the War Aims Research Association from August to October 1943. The Foreign Ministry drafts sponsored, in a variety of forms, the main principles included in the final declaration: political equality and autonomy, respect for culture, economic prosperity, and contributions to mankind.[76] Both drafts were combined on 20 October and adopted, with subtle

1943); *Sugiyama memo*, 2: 504; Gaimushō, *Shūsen Shiroku*, Vol. 1 (Tokyo: Hokuyōsha, 1977), 99.

[74] For a detailed discussion of the creation of the declaration, including earlier Foreign Ministry drafts, see Hatano, *Taiheiyō sensō to Ajia gaikō*, 161–86; and Yasuda, 'Dai tōa kaigi', 402–11. For the full Foreign Ministry drafts and discussions about them, see Gaimushō Jōyakukyoku, *Gaimushō shitsumu hōkoku*, 2: *Shōwa 14-nen ~ 18-nen* (Tokyo: Kuresu Shuppan, 1995), 137–72.

[75] Gunjishi Gakkai, *Daihon'ei rikugunbu sensō shidōhan kimitsu sensō nisshi*, Vol. 2 (Tokyo: Kinseisha, 1999), 440–41.

[76] Some drafts went so far as to include principles against threats or military invasions. See, for instance, the Andō draft and the Committee on Special Problems in International Law (*kokusai hōgaku tokubetsu mondai iinkai*) draft. Gaimushō Jōyakukyoku, *Gaimushō shitsumu hōkoku*, Vol. 2, 159, 170.

changes, at a Liaison Conference three days later. This resulted in an ideologically inconsistent document. The introductory statement outlined the official position of the Greater East Asia Ministry, while the five points—the essence of the declaration—constituted that of the Foreign Ministry.

The Joint Declaration represented Japan's answer to the Atlantic Charter. So it is no surprise that the drafters of the Foreign Ministry's five principles referred to the Atlantic Charter when drawing up the document and that there are strong similarities between the two documents. The Joint Declaration's emphasis on 'sovereignty and independence' is equivalent to the Atlantic Charter's stress on national self-determination and 'sovereign rights and self-government'. Both documents call for similar measures in the economic realm. In particular, both sought to advance international cooperation for economic development, to promote economic prosperity, and to guarantee equal access to markets and resources. And the Joint Declaration's stress on regional stability, coexistence, and co-prosperity parallels the Atlantic Charter's promotion of 'peace which will afford to all nations ... safety within their own boundaries' and 'freedom from fear and want'.

The similarity between the two documents was not lost on contemporaries. Some Japanese evening newspapers on 7 November declared the declaration a 'Pacific Charter' written in opposition to the Atlantic Charter.[77] Foreign Minister Shigemitsu Mamoru, writing after the war, stated that the Joint Declaration 'includes many ideas common to the Atlantic Charter'.[78] Further, liberal critic Kiyosawa Kiyoshi dryly noted: 'It is Japan's tragedy that it had to draft a declaration that resembles the Atlantic Charter, granting independence and freedom to all peoples.'[79] Kiyosawa was criticizing the promotion of universal over pan-Asian values. The shift away from pan-Asian rhetoric, he no doubt felt, negated the notion that Japan was fighting for Asian solidarity.[80] Even Filipino President José P. Laurel and Burmese Prime Minister Ba Maw noted similarities

[77] Kiyosawa Kiyoshi, *Ankoku nikki* (Tokyo: Hyōronsha, 1995), 179. The *Asahi* labelled it a 'Greater East Asia Charter'. See 'Sekai ni rui naki kaigi', *Tōkyō Asahi Shinbun*, 7 November 1943, 2.

[78] Shigemitsu, *Shōwa no dōran*, 2: 179. Even the Foreign Ministry's official history states that the Joint Declaration 'is of precisely the same spirit as the Atlantic Charter'. See Gaimushō, *Gaimushō no hyakunen*, Vol. 2 (Tokyo: Hara Shobō, 1969), 638.

[79] Kiyosawa, *Ankoku nikki*, 180. Also quoted in Iriye, *Power and Culture*, 119.

[80] Iriye, *Power and Culture*, 119.

between the two documents. 'The idea of co-prosperity,' Laurel stated in his memoirs, 'is found in the Atlantic Charter no less than in the Pacific Charter. Fundamentally, they (charters) coincide in the enunciation of many vital principles!'[81] And Ba Maw, who was shown a copy of the declaration a week before the conference, immediately recognized that the declaration was meant in opposition to the Atlantic Charter. He then argued to the Japanese ambassador in Burma that the Joint Declaration should not be limited to the region. It should be a worldwide call for the support from all peoples who hold negative views of Britain and the United States of America, including Arabs, Egyptians, and Palestinians.[82] Although the ambassador recognized the merit in this critique, Tokyo had no intention of changing the declaration.[83]

There is good reason why the two documents shared such similarities, and why Foreign Ministry officials referred to the Atlantic Charter when drafting the Joint Declaration. Japanese authorities had struggled to forge an ideology that would win the hearts and minds of political elites in the region. This resulted from longer-term trends in Japanese political culture. Foreign policy since the late Meiji period operated as a realist pursuit of national power. Ideology played a mostly negligible role in the attainment of empire. From the 1930s, however, pan-Asianism took a stronger foothold among Japanese political elites owing to Japan's intellectual and political revolt against the West.[84] Japanese leaders used pan-Asianism as part of a propaganda campaign in support of war in China and the new order. But pan-Asianism never had a defined ideological programme or systematic doctrine, and it lacked a positive programme that Japanese

[81] J. P. Laurel, *War Memoirs of Dr. José P. Laurel* (Manila: José P. Laurel Memorial Foundation, 1962), 60.

[82] Ōda Ichirō and Ikeda Chikata, eds. *Nihon gaikōshi, Vol. 24: Dai tōa sensō, senji gaikō* (Tokyo: Kajima Heiwa Kenkyūjo, 1971), 478. Henceforth *Nihon gaikōshi*, 24.

[83] The Greater East Asia Minister demonstrated this unwillingness to modify the Joint Declaration in a telegram sent out to the region's ambassadors. This telegram stated, in regard to opinions the region's leaders might have with the draft declaration, 'we do not mean to act as an empire, forcing the document upon the region. But as you can see from the above explanation, we created the document taking into serious consideration the perspectives of all countries. So we simply seek each nation's consent. Should the countries wish to state their opinions, they will have the opportunity to do so at the conference'. See *Nihon gaikōshi*, 24: 475.

[84] T. Najita and H.D. Harootunian, 'Japan's Revolt Against the West', in B. T. Wakabayashi, ed., *Modern Japanese Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 207–72.

leaders could use to gain allegiance in the region.[85] The urgency of forging a compelling ideology—particularly as the war turned against Japan—led the drafters of the declaration (at least those in the Foreign Ministry) to Anglo-American internationalist language. They no doubt found in Wilsonian language a way to resolve Japan's crisis of legitimacy. Borrowing Wilsonian language does not suggest, as Akira Iriye argues, a return to values held in the 1920s.[86] Instead, it reveals the pragmatism of Japanese elites. They were willing to utilize values known to have broad appeal to rally Asian support for Japan's imperial project.

This pragmatic attitude led Tokyo to accept the greatest difference between the two documents: the clause abolishing racial discrimination. At its core, this clause appears extremely idealistic (more Wilsonian than Wilson!)—more so than the Atlantic Charter, which lacked provisions for racial equality. But conflict within leadership circles over whether to include the clause reveals the pragmatic aims behind the use of such language. According to Lt General Satō Kenryō, Tōjō's protégé and director of the Army Ministry's powerful Bureau of Military Affairs, assistant secretaries in the Foreign, Army, and Navy Ministries expressed opposition to the racial-equality clause. They thought that its inclusion would prove an obstacle to reaching a separate peace with the Allied powers. The Allied powers, after all, had opposed the inclusion of a racial-equality clause at the Paris Peace Conference of 1919. The Navy Ministry came up with a revision plan that changed the phrase 'abolish racial discrimination' to 'devotion to mutual love among mankind'.[87] But Satō insisted that, since Japan was fighting with the very 'conquerors' that opposed the clause, Japan ought to call for the abolition of racial discrimination. Moreover, Satō added that this would both 'win public sentiment' and breed fear among the Allied powers that the war would

[85] For excellent works on pan-Asianism, see C. Aydin, *The Politics of Anti-Westernism in Asia: Visions of World Order in Pan-Islamic and Pan-Asian Thought* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2007); E. Hotta, *Pan-Asianism and Japan's War, 1931–1945* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); and Matsu'ura Masataka, *Dai tōa sensō' wa naze okitanoka: pan-Ajia shugi no seijikeizashi* (Tokyo: Nagoya Daigaku Shuppankai, 2010).

[86] See Iriye, *Power and Culture*.

[87] The Navy Ministry's plan also wanted to change 'voluntarily open up their natural resources' to 'provide for natural resources to be widely shared'. See *Nihon gaikōshi*, 24: 473–74.

devolve into a race war.[88] Satō's arguments held the day and the clause remained unchanged. The lack of idealism behind this revolutionary clause is telling. Japanese leaders enshrined it in the declaration to provide Tokyo with sufficient leverage to prosecute or end the war on favourable terms.

The Joint Declaration thus served as a formidable weapon for ideological warfare. And Japanese intellectuals jumped on the bandwagon, quickly dismissing the Atlantic Charter as mere propaganda. After all, many argued, Churchill refused to return self-rule to India and other small countries across Africa and Asia. Making matters worse, the Allied powers provided the Soviet Union with postwar hegemony in Finland, the Baltic States, Poland, and Romania. Moreover, Japanese intellectuals argued that free trade and the Open Door might be splendid principles, but they only served to undergird British and American domination of global economic life. The Atlantic Charter, then, sugar-coated a status quo beneficial to Anglo-American national interests. It epitomized the negative aspects of 'Anglo-Saxon' culture: national self-interest, individualism, liberalism, plutocratic capitalism, and imperialism. Tokyo Imperial University Professor Kamikawa Hikomatsu, who marshalled the strongest arguments for the hypocrisy of Allied propaganda, declared that the Atlantic Charter established an international society in which the wolves ruled the sheep.[89] To most intellectuals like Kamikawa, the Joint Declaration offered an authentic morality in opposition to the duplicity of the Atlantic Charter.

Unlike the British Foreign Office, Japanese Foreign Ministry officials never distanced themselves from the Joint Declaration. It never made any sense to do so. The declaration was a tool of ideological warfare—one that could help Japan gain legitimacy in the region and create a positive image abroad. Even though the

[88] Satō Kenryō, *Satō Kenryō no shōgen* (Tokyo: Fuyō Shobō, 1976), 437; Satō Kenryō, *Dai tōa sensō kaikoroku* (Tokyo: Tokuma Shoten, 1966), 319. Satō also states in *Dai tōa sensō kaikoroku*: 'The elimination of racial discrimination is not an ideal but reality. I thought that there was no reason not to call for this.' On the surface, this appears to add an element of idealism to the promotion of racial equality. Satō's book, however, is an apologia for Japan's war in Asia (as well as his role in it) and this statement should be read as such.

[89] Kamikawa Hikomatsu, 'Dai tōa kaigi to dai tōa kyōdō sengen', *Kokusaihō gaikō zasshi* 43:1 (Jan. 1944), 77. For his most powerful critiques of the Atlantic Charter and affirmations of Japan's Pacific Charter, see Kamikawa, 'Dai tōa kaigi', 72–81; and Kamikawa Hikomatsu, 'Asia Declaration and Atlantic Charter', *Contemporary Japan* 12:12 (Dec. 1943), 1554–62.

military in occupied territories trampled over ideas of independence, autonomy, and cooperation, the Foreign Ministry could still argue that these principles would be implemented upon war's end. Japan's new idealistic language, furthermore, was reinforced for pragmatic ends. Giving Asians a stake in Japan's new order, after all, might help Japan survive its gruelling global war.

Needless to say, Greater East Asia Conference representatives were ecstatic that Japan committed these new principles to paper. Whether or not they believed in Japan's ability to practise what it preached was immaterial. Ba Maw publicly expressed his appreciation for the racial-equality clause. He further stressed that the declaration should be seen as applicable to the whole world.[90] Subhas Chandra Bose, who represented the Provisional Government of Free India, noted that the Joint Declaration was a 'charter for liberty'—one intended for the 'suppressed nations of the whole world'.[91] And Wang Jingwei, the leader of the Chinese Nanjing regime, saw the racial-equality clause as setting the Joint Declaration apart from America, which practised racial prejudice within its own borders (Wang labels this 'Monroe-ism'). 'The spirit of the Greater East Asia Joint Declaration,' Wang declared, 'is in the liberation of the East Asian sphere from the oppression of Britain and America. The spirit of the Greater East Asia Declaration is the realization of coexistence and co-prosperity through our independence and autonomy.'[92]

Filipino President José P. Laurel, however, maintained the most conflicted view. On the one hand, he acknowledged the progressive nature of the document and, even after returning to the Philippines, declared the Joint Declaration a 'great human charter'. Laurel further stressed his respect for the provisions guaranteeing freedom and equality to all, and that these provisions convinced him to cast his vote in favour of the document.[93] But, owing to his experience with

[90] *Tōjō naikaku sōridaijin kimitsu kiroku*, 335–36.

[91] Ministry of East Asiatic Affairs, *Addresses Before the Assembly*, 60.

[92] *Tōjō naikaku sōridaijin kimitsu kiroku*, 333. Still, Wang's emphasis on 'independence and autonomy' might have resulted from frustrations his nominally independent regime felt under Japanese rule. In all, he repeated the phrase 'independence and autonomy' as many as 20 times during his three conference speeches. See *Tōjō naikaku sōridaijin kimitsu kiroku*, 310–14, 331–33, 344.

[93] The 13 November 1943 statement can be found in Republic of the Philippines, *Official Gazette*, 1:2 (November 1943), 162; see also J. P. Laurel, 'Fair and Equal Treatment to All', 'A New Code of International Relations', and 'Most Historic and Most Significant Conference', in *His Excellency José P. Laurel, President of the Second*

Japanese occupation forces, Laurel privately doubted the willingness of Japan to enforce such principles. He stated in his memoirs:

> Personally, however, I did not believe that the avowed lofty purposes therein embodied could be realized with Japan's militaristic and economic plan of expansion, her background and experience in colonial adventures, and with Japan as 'the centripetal power.' But a small country is a small country and a weak people is a weak people. We had no choice and everything depended on the result of the war. My duty was to tide our people over to better times and lead them to national survival.[94]

Memoirs should, of course, be read with caution. But this postwar statement is consistent with his private views on Japanese policies. He laid bare his resentments toward Japan-sponsored independence in February 1944 with Dr Victor Buencamino. 'I am faced with many tremendous difficulties,' Laurel complained. 'This independence we have is an independence which is not independence. You have the [Japanese] Navy on one side, the [Japanese] Army on the other, the guerrilla, the Embassy and my own government. Five in all!'[95] Such being the case, it is not a far stretch to suggest that Laurel saw the Joint Declaration as mere propaganda. But, since this propaganda formed the new language of Co-Prosperity Sphere international relations, he recognized that it could be used to the advantage of the region's weaker states. And, in a 20 November 1943 speech meant for the people of Japan, Laurel did just that. He stressed that he voted to approve the declaration owing to its guarantee for 'free and equal treatment to all members of the Co-Prosperity Sphere, irrespective of size or strength'.[96]

In fact, Laurel later used the Joint Declaration to protest Japanese infringements on Philippine industry. On 26 July 1944, he objected to Japan's use of the Alabang Biological Laboratory, located on the outskirts of Manila. The Japanese appropriation of the laboratory inhibited the Philippines' ability to produce biological products, serums, or vaccines necessary to nurture scientific industries. Strikingly, Laurel appealed to both the Greater East Asia Joint Declaration and the Pact of Alliance in making his case. He argued:

Philippine Republic: Speeches, Messages & Statements, October 14, 1943 to December 19, 1944 (Manila: Bureau of Printing, 1997), 26–31.

[94] Laurel, *War Memoirs*, 60.

[95] M. Garcia, ed., *Documents on the Japanese Occupation of the Philippines* (Manila: The Philippine Historical Association, 1965), 190–91.

[96] Laurel, *His Excellency José P. Laurel*, 31.

The fundamental as well as the practical need is collaboration, not absorption. If the important activities of the Republic are absorbed or taken over fully by the Imperial Japanese Government, then the Republic will be placed in a position of being obligated to collaborate without the means of effecting that collaboration, and collaboration then becomes purely academic.[97]

Laurel insisted that Japan should provide the republic with the opportunity to produce goods, even military necessities, for the Japanese army. Only through actual production would the quality of serums and vaccines improve at Alabang. Nonetheless, there is no evidence that Japan budged on the matter.

The Ba Maw regime also found Japan's Pacific Charter useful in similar ways. Upon his return to Burma, Ba Maw extensively publicized the aims of the Joint Declaration.[98] But, when the opportunity arose, he also used the Pacific Charter to protest violations of Burmese sovereignty. His government, for instance, tried to gain control over shipping by demanding the registration of all vessels with the Burma government. This order was aimed at Japanese firms, which had seized Burmese ships or procured them under the New Order Demand Request system. Burmese leaders hoped to utilize these vessels in the interest of local industry. They pointed out to Japanese staff officers the iniquities of this system, which prevented Burma's ability to safeguard civilian interests. Such a 'special exemption of Japanese civilian firms', they argued, 'was not in keeping with the Greater East Asia Declaration'. But Japan refused to budge. Once the issue reached the highest levels of Burmese and Japanese governments, it was swept under the rug. A scapegoat was found in the Director of Civil Transport, on whom sole blame was laid.[99]

No doubt in response to such demands, in November 1944, Lt General Kimura Heitarō, commander-in-chief of Japan's Burma Area Army, spoke in Rangoon to caution restraint. He urged Burmese to 'trust implicitly in Nippon's sincerity' and argued that full independence would be promoted as part of a gradual process, to be completed after war's end. For now, however, Burma needed 'to harmonize the civilian and military needs of the country'. This would require sacrifices, as Burma needed to go through 'war time quasi-civil

[97] José P. Laurel Papers, Series 3: Japanese Occupation Papers, Box 7, José P. Laurel Memorial Library, Manila.

[98] See Burma Office Records, IOR: M/3/864, Asia, Pacific and Africa Collections, BL.

[99] U Hla Pe, 'U Hla Pe's Narrative of the Japanese Occupation of Burma', Data Paper Number 41, Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University, (Mar. 1961), 59.

administration' before finally reaching 'the normal peacetime form of government' after war's end.[100] Kimura's comments underlined the fact that the Imperial Japanese Army viewed the Pacific Charter as worth less than the paper on which it was written. Burmese would have to 'trust implicitly' in Japan to practise what it preached after war's end.

Given time, Japan's Pacific Charter might have proved as explosive as the Atlantic Charter. After all, like the Atlantic Charter, it gave subordinate countries a rhetorical means to protest the realities of Japan's empire of 'dependent independence'. And it gave other directly controlled territories a means to demand their independence from Japan. And it gave further cause to resist Japan's war effort. By 1944, Japan had lost any remaining support in Burma and the Philippines. This highlights an important irony behind Japan's adoption of Wilsonian language. Although done in the service of empire, as with Britain, wartime Wilsonianism became a thorn in the side of Japan's imperial project.

Conclusion: Britain, Japan, and Wilsonian empires in Asia

The Atlantic and Pacific Charters thus had important points in common. Both documents shared Wilsonian internationalist language. They were so similar, in fact, that one intellectual architect of Japan's new order complained: 'But we too are fighting for the same principles!'[101] The issue at hand, then, was which side *upheld* those principles, and which side used them as mere propaganda. Japanese pundits and government officers predictably championed the authentic morality of the Pacific Charter versus the hypocrisy of the Atlantic Charter. Cabinet Information Bureau section manager Isono Yūzō, for instance, laughed off the Atlantic Charter as 'extremely farcical' (*kokkei kiwamaru mono*). Despite having 'a weighty name', he maintained, the charter constituted little more than an arbitrary means to preserve American and British hegemony in global affairs.[102]

[100] Burma Office Records, IOR: M/5/88, BL.

[101] Yabe Teiji, 'Ei-Bei sensō mokuteki oyobi sengo keieiron no hihan', 9, *Yabe Sadaji kankei monjo*, Document 4103, Folder 24–46, Seiji Kenkyū Daigakuin Daigaku (GRIPS). This was written between 1943 and 1944, and was ultimately published in 1945 as part of a collection of Yabe's essays. See Yabe Teiji, *Shin chitsujo no kenkyū* (Tokyo: Kōbundō shobō, 1945).

[102] 'Shōsatsu su taiseiyō kenshō', *Yomiuri shinbun*, 27 March 1943.

For their part, the Allied media considered Japan's Pacific Charter as unworthy of comment. The few articles that did appear summarily dismissed the Greater East Asia Conference as a meeting of 'Asiatic puppets' and none paid attention to the Joint Declaration.[103] Such an emphasis highlighted the Allied view of the conference as a smokescreen to divert attention from Japanese policies of domination.

For both Britain and Japan, the charters were products of geopolitical weakness. Key British and Japanese leaders saw them as a pragmatic means to deal with their gloomy war situations. Churchill, on the one hand, saw the Atlantic Charter as part of a charm offensive to pull the United States of America into a more formal alliance. Broader cooperation with the United States of America, he recognized, would help preserve the British empire and its colonial holdings during the time of crisis. This was but one reason why the popular Guatemalan newspaper *Nuestro Diario* would later criticize the Atlantic Charter as having 'no connection with reality'.[104] Shigemitsu and Tōjō, on the other hand, agreed to produce the Pacific Charter to help Japan escape its painful fight for Asia with empire intact. It would thus be a mistake to view this as a story of Japanese hypocrisy versus Allied sincerity. High-sounding rhetoric on both sides of the Pacific War sailed free of real-world constraints, often serving the goals of realpolitik and empire. When viewing wartime tensions between Wilsonian internationalism and realpolitik, the wartime British and Japanese empires appear remarkably similar. In both empires, internationalism served imperial ends.

In fact, a majority of British and Japanese elites cared little for the explosive principles of 'self-government' or 'independence'. Whether by word or action, both policy establishments downplayed their respective charters. British diplomat Richard Law argued that 'the Atlantic Charter has got us into difficulties mainly, I think, because as far as I can make out, nobody at any time believed in it'.[105] And Governor of Burma Dorman-Smith derided the decision to endorse the Atlantic Charter. Whitehall, he wrote in his unpublished memoirs, 'should have known that no Imperial Power can possibly subscribe to anything like the Atlantic Charter and hope to get away with a

[103] 'Asiatic Puppets Confer', *The Citizen*, 5 November 1943; and *The Nottingham Evening Post*, 5 November 1943. See also '5 Jap "States" Adopt World Peace Program', *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 7 November 1943; and 'Meeting of Greater East Asia Puppets', *New York Times*, 6 November 1943.

[104] *Nuestro Diario*, 26 May 1944. See also FO 371/37964, TNA.

[105] Reconstruction File No. 5. FO 371/50659, TNA.

caveat that the freedoms therein mentioned apply to the whole world excepting those countries which have the honour to belong to the British Empire'.[106] The Japanese side was little different. Although Foreign Ministry leaders clung to the Pacific Charter like a diplomatic life preserver, the Imperial Japanese Army routinely trampled over its principles with impunity. The demands of war, after all, clashed with any desire to allow local governments to control their domestic affairs. It would thus have been the height of naivety for colonial elites to trust in either empire to practise what it preached, and those who had survived the political battlefields of prewar Rangoon and Manila were anything but naïve. They, too, understood that imperial desires lay behind the veil of internationalism.

There was one major difference, however, in both rhetoric and reality. First, the British were less interested in employing Wilsonian internationalism than were the Japanese. Churchill, after all, saw the Atlantic Charter as a consolation prize after failing to convince the United States of America to join the fight against Nazi Germany. Yet, in the process of acquiring this consolation prize, Churchill unwittingly produced a powerful critique of the very empire he was passionately determined to preserve. In this sense, the Atlantic Charter fuelled anti-colonial opposition without changing British policy. The Japanese side, conversely, made the Pacific Charter the focal point of a decisive change in policy. Shigemitsu imagined the charter as an enticement to rally Asia behind Japan, and was excited to see the impact Wilsonian principles would have across the region. Extending the Manchukuo model of 'dependent independence' to the Philippines and Burma in advance of the conference was intended to make it appear as if Japan, unlike Britain, practised what it preached. Whereas Churchill settled for wartime Wilsonianism, Shigemitsu embraced it. Whereas British leaders worked to forestall constitutional advances while in the midst of war, Japan promoted 'dependent independence', albeit for the pragmatic end of surviving the war with empire intact. Herein lies a major irony of the Second World War: the United States of America had a greater impact on the imperialist policies of its enemy than its ally.

In the end, the turn to Wilsonian language gave subordinate states additional weapons to wield against their imperial masters. With self-determination now enshrined as an essential aspect of the

[106] Dorman-Smith Papers, 'Unfinished Memoirs', 185, Mss Eur E.215.32b, BL.

postwar order, colonial elites now had a more powerful tool to push for independence. U Saw used the Atlantic Charter to demand a promise of Dominion status. The British refusal to make any definitive statement on the subject perhaps gave greater claims of legitimacy to the Thakins and Ba Maw when they decided to embrace Japan. Likewise, from 1944, 'independent' Filipino and Burmese leaders employed the Pacific Charter to protest the realities of Japan's military occupation. What, they questioned, did the charter's new-found stress on 'sovereignty and independence' really mean if Japan continued to infringe on local industry? The Atlantic and Pacific Charters alike thus gave elites in the colonial capitals powerful means to criticize the realities of imperial rule.

British and Japanese efforts to save their empires, in this sense, constrained their future freedom of action.[107] Once announced, principles—abstract 'platitudes' they may be—tend to take on a life of their own. First and foremost, the support for self-determination served as a confession of weakness upon which nationalist leaders could pounce. Moreover, such principles became part of a language of international relations available to strong and weak states alike. Once self-determination became entrenched as a key building block of the postwar order, any attempt to reassert colonial control was likely to meet with resistance, if not open rebellion. Burdened by the millstone of their Wilsonian rhetoric, both Britain and Japan (had Japan survived the war with empire intact) faced an uphill battle to return to the glory days of empire. Such was a major irony of the Second World War. Measures taken for the preservation of empire played a part in empire's ultimate demise.

[107] The biggest difference is that Britain had one more constraint on its freedom of action: its relationship with the United States of America. American policymakers were not interested in saving the British empire or in saving the existing system of formal imperialism. Instead, they were more interested in building a client–state system of 'free nations' under informal hegemony. Japan had no equivalent restraint. This means that, had both nations survived the war with empire intact, the British might have faced greater pressures (from *both* the colonies and its superpower ally) to honour its Wilsonian rhetoric.