

Japan's New Deal for Asia, 1943-1945

Date: Tuesday, 5 March 2013

Time: 16:00 - 17:50

Venue: AS4/03-28

Speaker: Dr Jeremy A. Yellen, Harvard University,
Edwin O. Reischauer Institute of Japanese Studies

Abstract

In November 1943, Japan convened a Greater East Asia Conference, during which leaders from the “independent” nations in Japan’s new order assembled in Tokyo to discuss the nature of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. Whereas earlier visions of the Co-Prosperity Sphere emphasized Japanese regional domination, Japan’s new internationalist vision, outlined during the conference, stressed values of mutual cooperation, equality, independence, autonomy, and friendship. The Greater East Asia Conference thus gave birth to a new vision for Japan’s international order. This new vision, however, had a mixed reception at the conference. Some Greater East Asia Conference participants were enthusiastic supporters. Others were more reserved, and were willing to use Japanese rhetoric to criticize the realities of Japanese rule. Japan’s internationalist rhetoric thus cut both ways. Although articulated to build support for Japanese aims, it became part of a common language that weaker states could use to advance their own interests.

About the Speaker

Jeremy A. Yellen, a historian of modern Japan, earned his Ph.D. in history from Harvard University in 2012. Prior to his doctoral work, he studied at Northwestern University (B.A., History) and the University of Washington (M.A., International Studies). He is currently a Postdoctoral Fellow at Harvard University’s Reischauer Institute of Japanese Studies.

He has numerous research interests, from political and diplomatic history to broader issues of empire, decolonization, international order, and war termination. His book project, *The Two Pacific Wars: Order and Independence in Japan's Wartime Empire*, examines the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, Japan’s ambitious attempt to create a new order in East Asia. He has also recently published an article in *The International History Review*, entitled “The Specter of Revolution: Reconsidering Japan's Decision to Surrender.”

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