Grenades and Land Mines, Japanese

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Recommended Citation
This conference presented a belated justification for the Pacific war. Part of the Joint Declaration of the Greater East Asia Conference read:

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.

(For some reason the French imperialists were not included in this bill of indictment.) Angered by this exploitation, the Japanese had risen up and repelled the Caucasian exploiters, “liberating their region from the yoke of British-American domination, and ensuring their self-existence and self-defense.” The slogan “Asia for the Asians” neatly summed up the role of Japan as supposed liberator.

Although the Japanese insisted that the sphere was not an empire, they did feel racially superior to their fellow Asians. Along with Thailand, Japan was the only Asian nation which had not been colonized or defeated by the Western powers. The Japanese language was taught in the schools of the newly conquered territories, and new textbooks were introduced. The arrogance of some Japanese soldiers also served to turn the natives away from their propaganda. And, always serving as a grim reminder, there was the example of Japan’s atrocious treatment of the Chinese. Within the new territories the economies were administered by the Japanese in ways that contributed to the war effort but not necessarily to the well-being of inhabitants. Military purchases were paid for in military scrip, which led to inflation later in the war. At least the former colonialists had paid in dollars, pounds, or francs for what they took out of the area.

Neglect by the Imperial Japanese Navy of convoy duty resulted in heavy losses of Japanese freighters and tankers to U.S. submarines. Thus the maritime sinews that were to bind the sphere to Japan were almost severed. Rice exports to Japan from Indochina, Thailand, and Burma were reduced from 1.4 million metric tons in 1942 to 74,000 tons in 1944. Iron ore from the Philippines dropped to a mere 10 percent of prewar levels. Of the 50 million barrels of oil produced in 1943, only 10 million barrels of crude and 5 million barrels of refined actually reached Japan. In 1944, those figures had dropped to 1.6 million barrels of crude and 3.3 million barrels of refined. This shortage of raw materials and fuel meant that Japanese factories were idle or only partly productive and that new military pilots could receive only the most rudimentary training.

In the end, the sphere did not serve the purpose either of uniting East Asia against the Allies or of harnessing the region’s economy to the Japanese war effort. By the end of the war, the economy of East Asia was devastated not only from war damage and the dislocation of markets but also from the effects of Japanese oversight, which was focused solely on the war effort.

Despite the eventual defeat of Japan, the Japanese occupation did speed the dissolution of the great European colonial empires—although the British, French, and Dutch were hardly aware of this development. In Vietnam a resistance movement under Ho Chi Minh was organized and bloodied against the Japanese occupiers. In Burma and Indonesia, local forces were trained and nationalist leaders were encouraged, leading directly to later independence movements. Although India was never occupied by Japan, the Indian National Army and the Free India Provisional Government helped inspire the Indian population on their quest for independence. Korea was liberated from Japanese occupation, and Formosa (Taiwan) was returned to Chinese control.

Overall, the utter failure of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere did serve to discredit Japanese imperialism. Since the war, Japan has demonstrated its conviction that the path to a sphere of economic influence and prosperity in East Asia is through trade and economic expansion, not military conquest.

FURTHER READINGS
Lebra, Joyce C. Japan’s Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere in World War II (1975).

John E. Moser

Grenades and Land Mines, Japanese

Two forms of infantry weapons—grenades and land mines—complemented the small arms used by Japanese army and naval landing forces in World War II. These forces employed numerous types of hand grenades, which generally ranged in weight from about 10 to 20 ounces. The Model 91 (1931) fragmentation hand grenade was identified by its black, serrated, cast-iron body; brass safety cover; and perforated base-propellant container. Its fuse had an 8- to 9-second burning time.
The Model 91 was thrown by hand or launched by means of a rifle adapter via a special tail assembly. Although it could also be launched by either the Model 10 (1921) or the Model 89 (1929) 50-mm grenade discharger via the base-propellant charge, the heavier Model 89 discharger was used almost exclusively. The Model 97 (1937) fragmentation hand grenade was almost identical to the Model 91 except that it had no base-propellant charge, so that it could not be launched or discharged, and it had a 4- to 5-second delay. The Model 97 was issued to all frontline Japanese troops and could also be used as a booby trap.

The Model 99 Kiska (1939) hand grenade had a smooth cylindrical body with a flange at either end. This grenade was armed by removing the safety pin and striking the head of the fuse assembly against a hard object; the grenade was then immediately thrown, and it exploded in four to five seconds. The Model 99 was also launched by means of a rifle-type or cup-type Model 100 rifle adapter; when launched, it had a range of about 100 yards. The Model 23 grenade (year of origin unknown) was both thrown and used as a booby trap. It looked somewhat like the Model 97 but had lugs and rings attached to its side so it could be anchored in place. It was filled with granular TNT; its fuse was ignited by a pull string and had a 5-second delay.

The Japanese also used a high-explosive stick hand grenade with a "potato-masher" shape that had been used by German forces in World War I. It had a wooden handle and a metal cap, and its 4- to 5-second fuse was armed by removing the metal cap so that the pull ring inside the handle could be reached. Two forms of incendiary grenades also existed. One was a white-phosphorus-filled ½-kg grenade which was thrown or projected from the Model 89 discharger. The other was an incendiary stick hand grenade; it had curved rather than flat ends, which differentiated it from the high-explosive stick hand grenade. This grenade was filled with forty scatterable rubber pellets impregnated with a solution of phosphorus carbon disulphide. One variant had a phosphorus smoke filling. This grenade was armed by removing the safety pin and then striking the percussion cap against a hard surface.

The Japanese also employed a "Molotov cocktail" incendiary grenade filled with a mixture of oil and gasoline. This glass-bottle grenade had an impact-driven fusing device and exploded on contact. There was also a frangible smoke grenade, composed of a flat-bottomed, 3-inch-diameter glass flask filled with either titanium tetrachloride or a mixture of titanium and silicon tetrachloride. Also evident were two different types of frangible hydrocyanic acid grenades and a special hollow-charge antitank grenade, based on the German model, utilizing a cup-type rifle adapter.

The Japanese military employed three basic types of land mines and a standardized type of Bangalore torpedo (described below). The Model 93 (1933) mine was called the "tape-measure mine" because it looked like the case of a tape measure. This pressure-sensitive mine was painted yellow or olive drab and weighed about 3 pounds. It was used for both antipersonnel and antitank purposes. The Model 99 (1939) armor-piercing mine was referred to as the "magnetic antitank bomb" or the "magnetic armor-piercing grenade." Four magnets were attached to this flat, disc-shaped mine, which allowed it to be placed onto a tank or against the iron door of a pillbox. These mines were filled with TNT and weighed 2 pounds, 11 ounces. They were usually coupled together for a penetrative effect of up to ¼ inches of armor plate.

The Model 96 (1936) mine was used both on land and under water. It looked like the top half of a standard spherical naval mine, weighed about 106 pounds, and had two projecting lead-alloy contact horns. Detonation occurred as a result of pressure applied to either horn; the pressure crushed a glass vial of electrolytic fluid contained within the horn, which triggered a chemical electric fuse.

The Bangalore torpedo was olive drab in color and consisted of a common piece of 2-inch pipe, about 40 to 46 inches long, which was packed with TNT and cyclonite. Threaded ends on these 10-pound pipe bombs allowed for an indefinite number of them to be linked together. The Bangalore was activated by pulling a lanyard, which fired a friction primer, and was commonly used to destroy barbed-wire entanglements. One variant was filled with 6 pounds of picric acid and was employed as an antitank mine.

**FURTHER READINGS**


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**SEE ALSO** Army, Japanese

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**Grenades and Land Mines, U.S.**

For U.S. Marine Corps and Army units, the hand grenade was one of the most useful weapons in the Pacific war. After the pin was pulled to release a safety mechanism, the grenade was detonated by a timed fuse. U.S. troops typically threw their grenades at enemy positions and in