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PRIDE AND PREJUDICE: RACE, ETHNICITY, AND THE POST-GREAT WAR WORLD.

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Pride and Prejudice: Race, Ethnicity, and Nationalism in the Post-Great War World.

Synopsis:

In the aftermath of World War I, race and ethnicity - sometimes expressed in those terms and sometimes in the guise of nationalism - became major factors in the diplomatic and economic failures of nation states leading to the next international conflict less than twenty years later.

Pride and Prejudice:

Race, Ethnicity, and Nationalism in the Post-Great War World

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In historical analyses of the factors that led to World War II, a lack of earnest diplomacy and the collapse of the world economy – or some combination thereof — frequently are cited as the primary causes. There is good reason for this approach: Diplomacy and economics in the post-Great War world are the most quantifiable and easily traceable evidence in the records of that era. Most of those records have been studied assiduously and continue to fascinate for the insights they provide into the minds of those responsible for the decisions that created the atmosphere after World War I that led to another international conflict. However, seldom is the role of race in any of its many manifestations considered as a significant reason that a second world war began less than two decades after the armistice was signed to end the first Great War. The reason for this is relatively simple: The role of race, ethnicity, and nationalism are difficult to trace and even more difficult to quantify when it comes determining why events transpired as they did or did not, or why things were or were not accomplished. And while race cannot be given a singular role among the reasons the world went to war in Europe and the Pacific, this paper will demonstrate it must be considered as a major influencing factor in the causes of the war. Race and ethnicity, sometimes expressed in those terms and sometimes under the guise of nationalism, played a key role in the diplomatic and economic failures of nation states not only in the years before World War I, but in the crucial interwar years from 1919-1939.

Any argument that racial considerations played a role in diplomatic and economic affairs after World War I cannot be attributed solely to Germany, Italy, and Japan, the so-called aggressor nations, as has so often been done. The blame for race being a component in the jockeying for position and power in the interwar years must be shared by Allied and Axis powers alike. As the British historian Robert Boyce writes in his recent book *The Great Interwar Crisis and the Collapse of Globalization*:

[R]acism influenced the behavior of *all* [italics in original] the powers in the interwar years...[and] it arguably had a greater effect upon the course of world affairs by its influence within the liberal democratic powers in the period leading to the great interwar crisis than by its influence within the authoritarian, aggressor powers in the 1930s.¹

The Hungarian sociologist Frank Furedi concurs with Boyce's assessment. It is Furedi's contention that "race was a central element in the composition of Western identity. It shaped the wider definition of Western culture as well as influencing individual psychology."² This "sense of race" had a pervasive influence among the Western, Anglo-Saxon nations when it came to their dealings with other countries.³ Alexander DeConde, a historian who specializes in diplomatic history, writes that "ethnic, racial, and religious loyalties are part of a broad pattern in the making of foreign policy."⁴ Yet with only a few notable exceptions - primarily the American John Dower with his *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* - historians and sociologists have tended to poke only tentatively at the question of race and racism and the role they played in the years after World War I. It is as if they are unwilling to stir up the hornets' nest of denial and vituperative backlash that any such discussion is likely to engender.

The evidence to support this thesis is largely circumstantial and is drawn primarily from the backgrounds and diaries of the main participants in international affairs, and their close associates, plus news accounts of the day, and historical analyses. This evidence, however circumstantial it might be, is of sufficient quantity and quality that the subject needs to be examined in greater detail. The racial attitudes of the aggressor nations is well-trod ground and will be touched on only briefly here and then done so primarily to show the influence those

¹ Robert Boyce, *The Great Interwar Crisis and the Collapse of Globalization*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 21.

² Frank Furedi, *The Silent War: Imperialism and the Changing Perception of Race*, (Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1998), 1.

³ *Ibid*, 29.

⁴ Alexander DeConde, *Ethnicity, Race, and American Foreign Policy: A History*, (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1992), x.

attitudes had on individuals making key political and economic decisions. The majority of the focus will be on the Allies, the non-aggressor nations, whose racial issues have largely been ignored as a result of the stark evidence of Japan's brutality in China and Southeast Asia and the almost incomprehensible industrialized race-based death machine created by the Nazis that produced the Holocaust in Europe. Boyce notes that race consciousness was ubiquitous across a spectrum of journalists, diplomats, political scientists, and academics in the Western, liberal nations in interwar years to the extent that they "frequently employed racial categories in their discourse [that] allowed them to influence their thinking on international affairs."⁵

Establishing the Parameters

The terms "race," "racism," and "racist" have, since the start of the Civil Rights movement in the United States during the mid-twentieth century, been used so frequently and with such casual disregard that they have lost much of their true meaning. Those words now often are used when it would be more appropriate and more accurate to describe actions or individuals as "bigoted" or "prejudiced" rather than "racist." For the purposes of this paper, the terms "race," "racism," and "racist" will be based on the strict definition offered by the British historian Hugh Tinker in his book *Race, Conflict and the International Order: From Empire to United Nations*. According to Tinker:

We have a *racial* [italics in original] factor when one group of people, united by their own perception of inherited and distinctive qualities, are set apart from another group with (supposedly) separate inherited and distinctive qualities. We have a *racist* factor when one group claims a dominant position, justified by the supposed inferiority of the other group.⁶

⁵ Boyce, 18.

⁶ Hugh Tinker, *Conflict and the International Order: From Empire to United Nations*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 197), 2.

That is, “racism” in its purest form is the belief in the genetic superiority of one race over another. This type of thinking was not uncommon in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, especially among the white, Western, Anglo-Saxon nations that took to heart Rudyard Kipling’s “White Man’s Burden” to civilize nations largely populated by people of color. As Füredi writes: the “foreign policy elites of Britain and the United States had no inhibitions about expressing their view of the world in the language of race. Assumptions about the superiority of the white races were rarely contested in Europe or the United States.”⁷

The problem with looking back at that era and trying to get a firm grasp on the role played by these racial attitudes in foreign policy is that the terminology shifted as it suited the purpose of various individuals. Race could have a biological meaning as well as a regional or national meaning. Race could be expressed in any number of configurations. The elite and the power brokers would speak of the “French race” or the “British race” or the “American race. They might also refer to race in terms of “Anglo-Saxon,” “Latin,” “Slav,” or “Oriental.” Race could be expressed as “Oriental” or “Occidental” or as “Western civilization vs. Eastern Civilization.” Then there were the frequently used colors when talking of race – white, black, brown, and yellow. Race in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries could have any number of meanings or code words to denote it, depending on who was doing the speaking and the context in which the speaking, or writing, was done. Specificity of race definition was sorely lacking and even the most educated and erudite employed what now can only be considered racist language in which “race, nation and people [were used] in a loose, interchangeable and frequently inconsistent way.”⁸ As late as 1940 the concepts of race and racial identify were a confusing mish-mash of terms that today seem to have absolutely little, if any, connection. One

⁷ Füredi, 1.

⁸ Boyce, 18-19.

1939 study showed that “two-thirds of typical American public school and university textbooks ‘misused[d] the concept of race’ and 20 percent taught ‘what amounts to Nazi doctrines about superior and inferior races.’”⁹ And a 1940 survey of sociology textbooks found that many were referring to “Anglo-Saxons, aliens, Negroes, Jews, and Canadians as races.”¹⁰

The British saw themselves as being of the Anglo-Saxon “race,” and thus felt themselves more closely tied to the Americans (also Anglo-Saxon) and the Germanic or Teutonic people (Anglo-Saxons as well) than they did to the French, whom they considered “Latin,” or the Russians, whom they considered “Slavic.”¹¹ The French looked at the Germans as being little more than “barbarians with inherently dangerous proclivities”¹² and the Americans as a mere “jumble of people, [a] human hodge-podge” and a “cosmopolitan dreck.”¹³ The Americans, meanwhile, were wary of old Europe and the class system still in place there but their concerns since the late nineteenth century were focused on the Far East and the so-called “Yellow Peril” emanating first from China and then to Japan.

One of the more influential books in the interwar years regarding race was published in 1927 by Ernest Barker, a British political scientist. In *National Character and the Factors in Its Formation*, Barker writes that not only was England concerned about racial mixing, but so was the United States, which in that decade had passed a series of laws that were considered anti-immigrant, except for those immigrants that were of Nordic or Northern European stock. Barker warned that “There are...elements which it is better not to mix, because they are so unlike that their offspring, with its ill-assorted mixture of discrepant qualities, will be ill-balanced and

⁹ Michelle Brattain, “Race, Racism, and Antiracism: UNESCO and the Politics of Presenting Science to the Postwar Public,” in *The American Historical Review*. Vol. 112, Issue 5. Retrieved February 7, 2012 from <http://www.historycooperative.org/journals/ahr/112.5/brattain.html>, 6.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Boyce, 19-20.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Phillippe Roger, *The American Enemy: The History of French Anti-Americanism*, tr. Sharon Bowman, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005), 178.

unharmonious.” Race mixing, he declared, “has its perils.”¹⁴ The result was a concentrated effort by a number of countries and their political elite to limit immigration by people of color. The fears of miscegenation and the “mongrelization” of the white race were of considerable concern.

This race-based thinking was not confined to the pre-World War I era. It was in full flower during that period and persisted through the war, continuing well into the 1930s when “racial thinking was an accepted part of the intellectual climate,” according to Füredi.¹⁵ Part of this was due to the rise in popularity in the 1920s and 1930s, particularly in the United States, of the pseudo-science of eugenics. Eugenicists believed that through careful selection and breeding, and the elimination of the weaker and less intelligent members of society, a biologically superior race could be produced. This would “gradually wipe away the existence of all inferior strains.”¹⁶ Americans who came to believe this were of the opinion that the human race, through miscegenation, had become “a biological cesspool. After purifying America from within, and preventing defective strains from reaching U.S. shores, they planned to eliminate undesirables from the rest of the planet.”¹⁷ By the 1920s, eugenics had gone global and “affected the way that national identities were constructed and represented in many countries” and eventually was the justification used by Adolf Hitler and the Nazis for their territorial expansion in Eastern Europe and the murder of millions of Jews and other ethnic groups.¹⁸

Among the early proponents of eugenics (pre-Hitler and the Nazis) was Winston Churchill, later the Prime Minister of England during the crucial years of World War II. Wilfred Scawan Blunt, a friend of Churchill’s, noted in a diary entry dated October 20, 1912 that during a

¹⁴ Ernest Barker, *National Character and the Factors in Its Formation*, (London: Methuen & Co., Ltd., 1927), 39.

¹⁵ Füredi, 5.

¹⁶ Edwin Black, *War Against the Weak: Eugenics and America’s Campaign to Create a Master Race*, (New York: Four Walls Eight Windows, 2003), 270.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 235.

¹⁸ Susan Currell, “Introduction,” in *Popular Eugenics: National Efficiency and American Mass Culture in the 1930s*, ed. Susan Currell and Christina Cogdell, (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2006), 2.

lunch Churchill announced that as a relatively new member of Parliament he had drafted a bill “which is to give power of shutting up people of weak intellect and so prevent their breeding. He thought it might be arranged to sterilize them” through the use of Roentgen rays. “Without something of the sort the [white] race must decay. It was rapidly decaying, but would be stopped by some such means,” Blunt wrote.¹⁹ This was not new territory for Churchill. Nor would it be his only foray into the arena of racial politics. His service in Africa and the Sudan had left indelible impressions on him regarding race, especially as it pertained to the British and how they should deal with people of color. These views will be explored in more detail in the next section of this monograph. Suffice it to say that Churchill, by any account, was an ardent and unrepentant racist who believed wholeheartedly in the superiority of the white, Anglo-Saxon (and British) race. How much those views factored into his relations with other world leaders can only be surmised. But they cannot be dismissed out of hand as being irrelevant in Churchill’s world view or his view of European power politics at a crucial period in international relations.

The European Problem

The men of Western Europe and America who came of age in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and would lead their respective countries through World Wars I and II did so at a time when “White Man’s Burden” constituted the basis of international *Realpolitik*. They firmly believed that their presumably white, Anglo-Saxon God had imbued them with the intellectual, economic, religious, and cultural tools that made it incumbent on them to re-make the less fortunate members of the world - that is primarily people of color – in their own image.

¹⁹ Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, *My Diaries: Being a Personal Narrative of Events 1888-1914, Part Two (1900-1914)* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1921), 399. For a more detailed analysis of Churchill’s views on Eugenics see also Martin Gilbert’s “Churchill and Eugenics,” The Churchill Centre and Museum at the Churchill War Rooms, London, May 31, 2009. Retrieved April 2, 2012 from <http://www.winstonchurchill.org/support/the-churchill-centre/publications/finest-hour-online/594-churchill-and-eugenics>. Andrew Roberts’ *Eminent Churchillians* (London: Weidenfield & Nicolson, 1994), also goes into this issue of Churchill’s racial politics, 211-215.

The idea of Western racial superiority was foremost in their minds not only in their dealings with their colonies, but with one another. This idea of “racial superiority guided the informal and formal actions of white diplomats and politicians.”²⁰ While some of his biographers have glossed over Churchill’s views on race and color, Andrew Roberts’ *Eminent Churchillians* delves into this controversial subject in some detail. Roberts, a British historian, writes:

Churchill’s racial assumptions occupied a prime place both in his political philosophy and in his views on international relations. He was a convinced white - not to say Anglo-Saxon - supremacist and thought in terms of race to a degree that was remarkable even by the standards of his own time.²¹

Churchill frequently referred to blacks as “niggers” or “blackamoors,” except for South African tribes, which were “Hottentots.” The Chinese were “chinks or pigtails.”²² He once said the people of India were “the beastliest people in the world, next to the Germans.”²³ Unlike many of his fellow Britons, who favored the Germans over the French because of their Anglo-Saxon ties, Churchill was something of “a life-long Francophile” who had worn a French helmet in the trenches during World War I, spoke French (although not particularly well), admired the French Prime Minister Georges Clemenceau, and often vacationed on the French Riviera.²⁴ Even the estimable Franklin D. Roosevelt was not above using language with Churchill that today would be considered highly prejudicial, if not racist. In a letter to Churchill dated April 16, 1942, Roosevelt warned of growing unrest in Burma among the nationalists there, particularly by their putative leader, U Saw, who was believed to have been negotiating with the Japanese. Roosevelt wrote that “I have never liked Burma or the Burmese! [exclamation in original] ... Thank the

²⁰ Füredi, 5.

²¹ Roberts, 211.

²² *Ibid.*, 213.

²³ W. Roger Lewis, *In the Name of God, Go! Leo Amery and the British Empire in the Age of Churchill*, (New York: W.W. Norton, Co., 1992), 166, quoted in Roberts, 213.

²⁴ Robert and Isabelle Tombs, *That Sweet Enemy: The French and the British from the Sun King to the Present*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007), 571.

Lord you have HE-SAW, WE-SAW, YOU-SAW under lock and key. I wish you could put the whole bunch of them into a frying pan with a wall around it and let them stew in their own juice.”²⁵

These attitudes were not considered unusual for men of the generation of Roosevelt and Churchill. While most did not express it with the virulence of Churchill, for whom these ideas “had a special salience and force [and who] believed in the civilizing mission of the British race,”²⁶ they nevertheless cannot be ignored when analyzing the economic and political decisions made by these men leading up to World War I and through the interwar years. “Racism has been the powerful ideology of imperialistic policies since the turn of the [twentieth] century,” according to Hannah Arendt, the eminent German-American political theorist of the early 1900s.²⁷ This idea of “race-thinking,” Arendt continues, “rather than class-thinking, has been the ever-present shadow which accompanied the development of the comity of European nations, until it finally grew to be the powerful weapon for the destruction of those nations.”²⁸ The historian Corelli Barnett notes that “between 1870 and 1914 there was beating against the confining channels of social and technological reality a boiling tide of national and racial feeling.”²⁹

Among these world leaders for whom race played a key role was Woodrow Wilson. Even though his Presidency was rather unremarkable from an American standpoint, it is noted primarily for two major events, one a victory, the other a dismal failure. The victory was his

²⁵ Franklin D. Roosevelt, “Letter to Churchill,” as cited in Francis L. Lowenheim, Harold D. Langley, and Manfred Jonas, *Roosevelt and Churchill: Their Secret Wartime Correspondence* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1975), 206.

²⁶ Paul Addison, “The Political Beliefs of Winston Churchill,” in *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Fifth Series, Vol. 30 (1980): 40. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3679001>.

²⁷ Hannah Arendt, “Race-Thinking Before Racism,” in *The Review of Politics*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (January, 1944): 36. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1404080>.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 42.

²⁹ Corelli Barnett, *The Swordbearers: Supreme Command in the First World War* (London: Cassell & Co., 2000), 12.

decision to go to Congress in 1917 and request that it declare war on Germany, leading to the United States' involvement in a war to save France, England, and all of Western Europe. The failure was his inability to convince Congress to join the post-World War I League of Nations, a body he believed could forestall the type of wholesale carnage that the fighting in Europe had produced. Wilson often is portrayed as a somewhat Quixotic character whose Americanized idealism never fit into the gritty and frequently seamy reality of European politics. What is of particular interest regarding Wilson for the purposes of this paper are his views on race and class, which were the result of his Southern heritage and appear to have played into his decisions as governor of New Jersey and later as President, decisions that had a direct impact on international affairs well into the 1920s and 1930s.

Whether Wilson was a racist in the present meaning of the word is questionable, although some historians believe he “nurtured strong racial prejudices his entire life.”³⁰ Born in Staunton, Virginia, in 1856, he was only a year old when his family moved to Georgia. His father, Joseph Wilson, was a minister but also owned slaves and was a staunch defender of the practice. The younger Wilson was a witness to Union General William T. Sherman's march through Georgia, when his father's church was turned into a makeshift hospital for Confederate soldiers. Wilson's early writings when he was a student at Princeton University indicate he was rankled by Northerners who presumed to know what was best for what he termed “the Southern Question.”³¹ In an exchange of letters with his father in 1879, the elder Wilson admonished his son about what he perceived to be an air of superiority to others that the young Wilson had adopted. Joseph Wilson wrote that “So influential upon my life has been the belief that *I* [italics

³⁰ Michael L. Krenn, *The Color of Empire: Race and American Foreign Relations* (Herndon, VA: Potomac Books, Inc., 2006), 64.

³¹ Woodrow Wilson, *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson, Vol. 1, 1856-1880*, ed. Arthur S. Link (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), 192 and 232.

in original] had no special claims to superiority - that I am anxious to see you escape this practical blunder, - [sic] I would rather have you think too much than too little of yourself and your mental forces.”³² Wilson, in a biographical essay about John Bright, the English social reformer, published in the *Virginia University Magazine* on March 6, 1880, wrote that “I yield to no one precedence in love for the South. But *because* [italics in original] I love the South, I rejoice in the failure of the Confederacy.”³³ He argued that the South never would have been able to exist on its own as an independent nation. Wilson wrote that “Even the damnable cruelty and folly of reconstruction was to be preferred to helpless independence.”³⁴

Wilson, according to his biographer Arthur S. Link, “inherited and retained the upper-class affection for the Negro and the belief that the black man should remain segregated and not aspire toward so-called social equality with the whites.”³⁵ While serving as president of Princeton University, Wilson encouraged all blacks to withdraw their admission applications. “To Wilson’s mind, the paramount issue in this matter was not the admission of Negroes, but rather the social peace of the university which, he feared, would have been disturbed by it. He did not want to create complications for the many Southern students who attended Princeton.”³⁶

In 1911, as governor of New Jersey, Wilson signed into law a bill that created a “Board of Examiners of Feebleminded, Epileptics and Other Defectives” that would determine whether a person was fit to have children. It was a board independent of and not answerable to the court system of New Jersey.³⁷ The following year, 1912, Wilson was elected President of the United

³² Ibid., 476.

³³ Ibid., 618.

³⁴ Ibid., 619.

³⁵ Arthur S. Link, “Portrait of the President,” in *The Philosophy and Policies of Woodrow Wilson*, ed. Earl Latham (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 9.

³⁶ Henry Blumenthal, “Woodrow Wilson and the Race Question,” in *The Journal of Negro History*. Vol. 48, No. 1 (January, 1963): 2. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2716642>.

³⁷ Black, 68.

States. During his campaign he sided with Californians who supported strict anti-Japanese immigration laws. He regarded the Japanese as “inassimilable foreigners.”³⁸ Once he took up residence in the White House, Wilson on more than one occasion had the blatantly racist film *Birth of a Nation* shown. The idea of “social Darwinism” was growing in popularity among Wilson’s contemporaries and his “cultural background made him particularly receptive to such theories.”³⁹ It was not surprising then that one of the more controversial decisions Wilson made concerning the League of Nations and its members dealt with race. And although that decision can be interpreted in a number of ways, it was a decision that exacerbated racial tensions between Japan and the Western nations for years.

Racial tension in Europe, often in the guise of nationalism, was common. There was little love lost among the French and British before or during World War I, even though ostensibly they were fighting on the same side. English poet and novelist Robert Graves, who survived fighting on the Western Front, found a distinctly anti-French feeling among English veterans of the war when he enrolled in Oxford in 1919. He wrote in his memoirs that the feeling “among most ex-soldiers amounted to almost an obsession” and that one fellow officer told him that he would absolutely refuse to go to war against anyone “‘Except against the French. If there’s a war with them, I’ll go like a shot.’”⁴⁰ Graves wrote that other veterans told him “that we had been fighting on the wrong side; our natural enemies were the French.”⁴¹ Charles Hardinge, the British ambassador to France after World War I, made no effort in his memoirs to disguise his contempt for the French. He saw them as being ungrateful for the sacrifices of England during the war and because of that strongly opposed a post-war alliance. “I mistrusted all French Governments...as

³⁸ Arthur Walworth, *Woodrow Wilson* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1958), I-353.

³⁹ Krenn, 64.

⁴⁰ Robert Graves, *Good-bye to All That; An Autobiography* (New York: Blue Ribbon Books, 1930), 349.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 349-350.

being extremely imperialistic in their aims,” he wrote.⁴² The French, meanwhile, remained solidly anti-American despite the assistance the United States gave them during and after the war. “In France, there was nothing as useful for discrediting a public figure as making him out to be a friend of America.”⁴³

It was into this milieu of mistrust, condescension, and nationalistic rivalry in the guise of racial thinking that Wilson, a relative novice in international diplomacy, confidently strode after the war, thinking he could forge a lasting peace through a body of cooperating countries, the League of Nations. In addition to being one of the strongest proponents of the League of Nations, Wilson had expressed his sympathy for nationalist leaders in Eastern Europe who sought self-determination following the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. However, he was not so inclusive of nationalist leaders from other countries that were still part of the European colonial system, especially those in which people of color made up the majority of the population. A young Vietnamese nationalist, Ho Chi Minh, was so taken with Wilson’s rhetoric on self-determination that he went to Paris seeking an audience with the American president, thinking Wilson might be the savior of the third world. Wilson refused to meet him and a disillusioned Ho quickly slipped into the Parisian socialist orbit and later turned to Marxism.⁴⁴ Wilson was intent on keeping race from becoming an issue in the League of Nations by not drawing attention to the smaller countries seeking self-determination, but it was not to be. “He had dealt with, or ignored, race relations at home in this manner, and his approach was not working any better now in the international arena.”⁴⁵

⁴² Charles Hardinge, *Old Diplomacy: The Reminiscences of Lord Hardinge of Penshurst* (London: John Murray, 1947), 264.

⁴³ Roger, 269.

⁴⁴ D. R. SarDesai, *Vietnam: The Struggle for National Identity* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1992), 50.

⁴⁵ John Milton Cooper, Jr., *Woodrow Wilson: A Biography* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2009), 489-490.

Wilson's closest confidante, right-hand man, and frequent negotiator on his behalf during efforts to create the League of Nations was Texas-born and bred Edward M. House. Although House had never served in the military, he was known to Wilson and others as "Colonel House." Wilson occasionally dispatched House to Europe before and during the war to meet with the heads of the countries that would be the major players in the conflict. His diary entries of those meetings are particularly illuminating of the role played by the racial thinking that those leaders held at that time and carried through the war. In a diary entry for June 1, 1914, House writes about a meeting he had with Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany:

...to discuss the European situation as it affected the Anglo Saxon race. He spoke of the folly of England forming an alliance with the Latins and Slavs, who had no sympathy with our ideals and purposes and who were vacillating and unreliable as allies. He spoke of them as being semi-barbarous, and of England, Germany and the United States as being the only hope of advancing Christian civilization. His idea was that in the first place the Anglo Saxons should stand together as against the Latins and Slavs in Europe, but all western civilization should stand together as against the Oriental races.⁴⁶

Although House professed to be without prejudice against any race or religion,⁴⁷ he nevertheless occasionally let slip some of those prejudices. When writing about a proposal to give the Polish people their own nation, he wrote that "They are a fine, chivalrous race, but have many of the qualities of the Irish, therefore caution must be observed."⁴⁸ So, when the Japanese, who had been invited to join the League as one of the few non-white nations, sought inclusion in the League's Covenant a clause calling for equality among all races, Wilson and many of the Western European powers balked. The Japanese effort to include this clause stemmed from a series of anti-Japanese laws that had been passed in the United States in the years prior to World

⁴⁶ Edward Mandell House Papers, MS 466, Series II, Vol. 2, 90-91, Yale University Library. Accessed online on various dates at <http://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/mssa.ms.0466>, hereafter "House Papers."

⁴⁷ Ibid., Series II, Vol. 7, 34.

⁴⁸ Ibid., Series II, Vol. 5, 192.

War I that essentially prevented the Japanese from gaining full citizenship.⁴⁹ Japan's delegates to the peace conference offered several versions of the clause, none of which were acceptable to a number of the mostly white, Anglo-Saxon delegates. On February 6, 1919, House wrote in his diary that "The one brought today will not be accepted either by our people or the British Colonies. The Japs are making the adoption of a clause regarding immigration a sine quo non of their adhesion to the League of Nations."⁵⁰ Wilson and House knew any equality clause would not pass muster with the leaders of former British colonies, particularly South Africa and Australia, the latter which had a "White Australia" policy, or with Congress back home.⁵¹

The vote on the final version of the equality clause was 11-6 in favor of it, with Wilson abstaining. At that point, House hastily scribbled a note to Wilson, warning him that "The trouble is that if this commission should pass it, it would surely raise the race issue throughout the world."⁵² Despite the favorable vote, Wilson ruled against the motion, saying it had not been a unanimous vote, even though none of the votes on previous issues had required unanimity. One of Wilson's biographers believes that while he did not want to upset the Japanese or the smaller nations, he also did not want to endanger the League because he knew that passage of any such measure "would bring outcries not just from the British and their dominions, but from his own countrymen."⁵³ The rejection did not play well in Japan. According to the historian DeConde, "In failing to grasp the intensity of feeling on this issue, American policymakers appeared obtuse or racist."⁵⁴ The Japanese saw it as another in a long line of racial slights by the Anglo-Saxons.

⁴⁹ Godfrey Hodgson, *Woodrow Wilson's Right Hand: The Life of Colonel Edward M. House* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006), 210. See also Charles Seymour, *The Intimate Papers of Colonel House* (Cambridge, MA: The Riverside Press, 1926), Vol. 4, 324.

⁵¹ Hodgson, 210. See also Arthur Walworth, *Wilson and His Peacemakers: American Diplomacy at the Paris Peace Conference, 1919* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1986), 310.

⁵² Quoted in Walworth, 310-311.

⁵³ Cooper, 489. See also Walworth, *Wilson and the Peacemakers*, 311.

⁵⁴ DeConde, 93.

Walworth, one of Wilson's biographers, wrote that "Japanese opinion of the League of Nations was cynical, suspecting that the English-speaking peoples wished to make the new organization an instrument for dominating the world. Almost all the Japanese press was anti-American."⁵⁵

Continuing with its long-held distrust of old Europe, and fearing it would somehow subvert the Monroe Doctrine, Congress rejected the League and thus Wilson and his many months of diplomatic maneuvering. Anti-American feeling surged in France as a result of Congressional rejection of membership in the League. Wilson became the new whipping boy and the target for relentless French vitriol that continued through the interwar years in the 1920s and 1930s.⁵⁶ Clemenceau, the French prime minister, remained bitter about the United States' failure to ratify the treaty long after the end of the war. In his memoirs, published in 1929, he wrote "American comrades, you arrived on the battlefield when the War was nearing its end. But in the discussion of the Peace Treaty yours was a deciding share."⁵⁷

Race-based thinking was commonplace among European intelligentsia, including diplomats, through the post-World War I years, according to Boyce. While the French viewed the Americans, that "Yankee race," with ill-disguised contempt, they looked at Germany as being "still controlled, directly or indirectly, by Prussians, whose belligerent character and base ethics derived from their nature, their blood."⁵⁸ The British regarded the French fear of Germany as a major cause of insecurity on the continent and resigned themselves to an understanding that "the British and French were two different races who would never fully understand one another or bury their differences...[T]he French were an inherently self-interested, short-sighted, aggressive

⁵⁵ Walworth, 310.

⁵⁶ Roger, 264.

⁵⁷ Georges Clemenceau, *Grandeur and Misery of Victory*, tr. F.M. Atkinson (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1930), 296.

⁵⁸ Boyce, 140.

people.”⁵⁹ As one writer noted: “What the French took for British machiavellianism was mostly wishful idealism. What the British took for French militarism was a fearful sense of vulnerability.”⁶⁰ Even Americans got into the act. Herbert Hoover, who had had a successful career in mining and had become a multi-millionaire prior to World War I, ran a private food relief agency out of London during the early years of the war. In 1917, after America entered World War I, he was appointed by Wilson to head the U.S. Food Administration with the task of overseeing food distribution in Belgium and later in Germany. His first visit to Germany provoked this notation in his memoirs: “The Germans had been a militant, aggressive race since Caesar’s time. They were the Spartans of Europe.”⁶¹

During the interwar years, the British were of the opinion that the key to recovery on the continent was a democratic Germany with a strong economy, no matter what the French thought. Europe, the British believed, “could be made prosperous only by making Germany prosperous.”⁶² As a result, Germany continued during the interwar years and before the rise of Hitler to press for relief from the harsh economic restrictions imposed on it by the Treaty of Versailles.⁶³ The Americans, meanwhile, adopted a hands-off policy regarding Europe and its problems. Boyce, the British historian, believes that in those years between World War I and II, America’s retreat into relative economic and diplomatic isolation was fueled by race prejudice. Prior to the Great Depression the United States was in a position to help the developing countries of the world, and those that had suffered economically as a result of World War I, but chose not to do so because of that race prejudice directed at the Europeans that reflected “the fears of

⁵⁹ Ibid., 74.

⁶⁰ Tombs, 519.

⁶¹ Herbert Hoover, *The Published Writings of Herbert Hoover: Volume 1, Years of Adventure, 1917-1920*, Herbert Hoover Presidential Library and Museum, 166. Accessed online at on various dates at <http://www.ecommcode.com/hoover/ebooks/browse.cfm>.

⁶² A.J.P. Taylor, *The Origins of the Second World War* (New York: Atheneum, 1966), vi. Also Tombs, 519.

⁶³ Boyce, 141.

small-town America.”⁶⁴ American leaders believed they could influence international events through their economic policies, but only from a distance, so they would not be drawn into another war on the European continent. Franklin D. Roosevelt supported that idea when he became President in 1933. Besides, the prospect of raising controversial foreign policy decisions in the middle of a severe domestic crisis was not something that would be looked on with favor by the American public.⁶⁵

The racial theories and practices of Hitler and Nazi Germany have been mined assiduously since before the end of World War II, so only brief mention of them will be made here. But it is interesting to note the point at which Hitler began to see the practitioners of Judaism not as a religious group, but as a biological species. In his autobiography *Mein Kampf*, he notes that while in prison for the ill-fated Munich beer hall *putsch* of 1923, he began to understand that “I could no longer very well doubt that the objects of my study were not Germans of a special religion but a people in themselves.”⁶⁶ Hannah Arendt believes that “German race-thinking was invented in an effort to unite the people against foreign domination. Its authors did not look for allies beyond the frontiers but wanted to awake in the people a consciousness of common origin.”⁶⁷ Making Jews the enemy of the German people was as simple as indoctrinating German children. A pamphlet widely used to accomplish this in German schools prior to World War II was titled *Der Giftpilz*, translated into English as “The Poisonous Mushroom.” In it, the author tells a series of stories designed to demonize Jews and convince

⁶⁴ Ibid., 429.

⁶⁵ David F. Schmitz, *The Triumph of Internationalism: Franklin D. Roosevelt and a World in Crisis, 1933-1941* (Dulles, VA: Potomac Books, 2007), 20-21. See also Andrew Williams, *Failed Imagination: The Anglo-American New World Order from Wilson to Bush* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), 86.

⁶⁶ Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, tr. Ralph Manheim (New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1998), 56.

⁶⁷ Arendt, 47.

German children they are the scourge not only of Germany, but of the world. At the bottom of the first page the author writes:

German youth must learn to recognise the Jewish poison-mushroom. They must learn what a danger the Jew is for the German *Volk* and for the whole world. They must learn that the Jewish problem involves the destiny of us all. The following tales tell the truth about the Jewish poison-mushroom. They show the many shapes the Jew assumes. They show the depravity and baseness of the Jewish race. They show the Jew for what he really is: The Devil in human form.⁶⁸

According to *Mein Kampf*, Hitler was intent on remaking the world in the Aryan image of his own design. Just what constituted a true Aryan, however, proved problematic for those Germans responsible for sorting out the differences between race, religion, and nationality. There was wide discretion given to those making decisions and the criteria for racial determination more often fell along cultural, political, and nationalistic lines, except for the Jews.⁶⁹ So it was somewhat curious that Hitler would draw Benito Mussolini and the Italians into his orbit, since they were considered “Latins” in the racial language of the day and were not true Aryans. While the Germans proclaimed Nordic, Aryan superiority, the Italians believed their race had been chosen to rule the Mediterranean.⁷⁰ But among young Germans that racial distinction was not of any great concern. Hitler’s entreaties to them as being of true Germanic stock were so mesmerizing that they willingly allowed themselves to be propagandized by the leaders of the Third Reich and came to believe that they were invincible and were doing God’s work in the destruction of lesser mortals.⁷¹ As one Austrian who served in the German army on the Eastern Front later wrote in his memoirs: “All we heard about the Russian soldiers was that they were not

⁶⁸ Ernst Hiemer, *The Poisonous Mushroom* (Noontidepress.com), 1. Accessed March 21, 2012 at <http://ia600404.us.archive.org/34/items/ThePoisonousMushroom/PoisonousMushroom.pdf>.

⁶⁹ Mark Mazower, *Hitler’s Empire: How the Nazis Ruled Europe* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2008), 183.

⁷⁰ Tinker, 41.

⁷¹ For detailed accounts of how this propaganda played out among German soldiers, see Omer Bartov’s *Hitler’s Army: Soldiers, Nazis, and War in the Third Reich* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992) and Christopher R. Browning’s *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1998).

educated enough to understand their predicament, and that they were all ‘*Untermenschen*,’ or sub-humans.”⁷² Even years after the war, some soldiers clung to their beliefs about the racial inferiority of their enemies. Wrote one Swedish volunteer in the German army, who also served on the Eastern Front: “The fruits of Nordic-Germanic colonisers, after thousands of years of hard work, and after steadfast struggle against the barbaric, ravaging expeditions of the Asian hordes, had now been destroyed.”⁷³

‘The Yellow Peril’ and other Anglo-Saxon Fears

The specter of the “Yellow Peril,” the fear that the Oriental people of the world would rise up and overwhelm the white races of the world, was first promulgated by Kaiser Wilhelm II in about 1895. He painted (or commissioned a painting; the record is a bit unclear on this), a vision he had of Europe being menaced by the “Yellow Peril.” In the painting, Germany is depicted as the Archangel Michael, looking to the countries of Western Europe (all portrayed as frightened women), with the Christian cross shimmering above them. Michael/Germany is gesturing to the East, where a menacing Buddha is rising out of smoke and fire. The caption reads: “Nations of Europe: Guard Your Most Sacred Possessions.”⁷⁴ This was a theme the Kaiser would repeat numerous times through the years to whoever would listen. A 1905 story in *The New York Times* under the headline “Kaiser Says Japan Will Control China” quotes Wilhelm as saying “that it is necessary for the white nations to stem the yellow peril by uniting.”⁷⁵ In a 1908 interview with journalist William Bayard, which was heavily censored by the German Foreign

⁷² Alfred Novotny, *The Good Soldier: From Austrian Social Democracy to Communist Captivity With a Soldier of Panzer-Grenadier Division ‘Grossdeutschland’* (Bedford, PA: The Aberjona Press, 2003), 39.

⁷³ Erik Wallin, *Twilight of the Gods: A Swedish Waffen-SS Volunteer’s Experiences with the 11th SS-Panzergrenadier Division ‘Nordland’, Eastern Front 1944-45*, ed. Thorolf Hillblad, tr. Jackie Logan (West Midlands, UK: Helion & Company, 2004), 29.

⁷⁴ Kaiser Wilhelm II, “Kaiser Wilhelm, From Doorn, Warns White World of Color Peril,” *The San Antonio Light*, October 18, 1925, sec. 4.

⁷⁵ “Kaiser Says Japan Will Control China,” *The New York Times*, September 6, 1905, sec. A.

Office and not released in its entirety until 1934, the Kaiser warned that war between East and West was inevitable. The Japanese, Wilhelm told Bayard, “hates the white man worse than he hates the devil. The Japanese are devils, that’s a simple fact. They are devils.”⁷⁶ Even after he abdicated and fled to exile in Holland near the end of World War I, the Kaiser continued to raise fears of the “Yellow Peril.” A 1925 article he wrote that was published in William Randolph Hearst’s newspapers in the United States ran under the headline: “Kaiser Wilhelm, From Doorn, Warns White World of Color Peril.” In it the Kaiser references his painting and argues that “I clearly foreshadowed the danger. The Yellow Peril I predicted is taking form.”⁷⁷

According to the historian John Dower, it was after 1882, when the number of Japanese emigrating to the U.S. surpassed the Chinese, that the idea of a “Yellow Peril” began to emerge, particularly on the West Coast. This “did not however, simply shift the focus of Yellow Peril fears from China to Japan. Rather it multiplied those fears.”⁷⁸ While the threat was ill-defined for most Americans, it nevertheless seemed quite real because the Oriental or “yellow race” was relatively unknown and very much a mystery. The fear was that these Asiatic hordes would come to recognize their mutual Asianism, decide to unite, and by their sheer numbers threaten the Western world and the supremacy and superiority of the Anglo-Saxon race, like Chingghis Khan’s Mongols had centuries earlier. The fear of an invasion from the East was not limited to the Chinese and Japanese.⁷⁹ In 1896 the Ethiopian army defeated the Italians at the Battle of Adwa, securing their sovereignty but raising serious concerns among the Western, Anglo-Saxon elite. The British historian Sir Alfred Lyall wrote of that battle that it was “the first decisive

⁷⁶ Homer McCoy, “Kaiser’s Famous Indiscreet Interview, Lost Since 1908, Is Published for First Time,” *Oakland Tribune*, April 20, 1934, sec. D.

⁷⁷ Wilhelm, sec. 4.

⁷⁸ John Dower, “Yellow, Red, and Black Men,” in *Race and U.S. Foreign Policy from 1900 through World War II*, ed. Michael L. Krenn (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1998), 224.

⁷⁹ Vincent, 240.

victory gained by troops that may be reckoned as oriental over a European army in the open field for at least three centuries.”⁸⁰ It was not just the Ethiopians defeating the Italians; it was the Orientals, the Easterners, beating up on a Western power. The implications for Western Europe and the white race were quite clear. Little more than a decade later, the Japanese were victorious in the Russo-Japanese War, a military milestone that “was widely presented not as a local triumph of one nation over another, but as a victory with global implications, of the Mongolian people over the European.”⁸¹

The Russo-Japanese War produced a sense of unease in Washington, D.C., and on the West Coast. President Theodore Roosevelt was something of an evolutionist, if not a Social Darwinist. The imperialism of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries appealed to him because he saw it as nation vs. nation competition, with the strongest and most vibrant emerging with the spoils. Imperialism contrasted “superior and backward peoples, white and non-white, European and non-European...producing what most western observers insisted was progress for mankind.”⁸² The threat to world domination by the white, Western races was in danger with this Japanese victory over Russia. In 1906 the U.S. Attorney General ordered that Japanese immigrants were no longer to be naturalized. In California the San Francisco Board of Education made it mandatory for Japanese children to attend what were called the “Oriental School.”⁸³ In 1907, anti-Oriental riots broke out in California and the U.S. government began to put together

⁸⁰ Quoted in Füredi, 29.

⁸¹ R.J. Vincent, “Racial Equality,” in *The Expansion of International Society*, ed. Hedley Bull and Adam Watson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), 240.

⁸² David H. Burton, “Theodore Roosevelt’s Social Darwinism and View on Imperialism,” in *Race and U.S. Foreign Policy*, 2.

⁸³ Battle, 233.

“War Plan Orange,” a highly secret document that became the blueprint for an American war against Japan.⁸⁴

Anti-Japanese sentiment continued in the years prior to America’s entry into World War I. In 1913, California made it illegal for aliens not eligible for citizenship - meaning Japanese and Chinese - to own property in the U.S. The Japanese government lodged a formal protest and anti-American demonstrations erupted throughout Japan.⁸⁵ By that year the California legislature had considered forty anti-Japanese bills.⁸⁶ Newspapers throughout the U.S., particularly those in the Hearst chain, stoked the fires of anti-Japanese racism. Hearst’s *San Francisco Chronicle* wrote that “The California problem was but a part of a pressing worldwide issue as to whether the high standard Caucasian races or the low standard Oriental races would dominate the world.”⁸⁷ In 1900, in one of the first mentions of “Yellow Peril” in an American newspaper, the *Newark Daily Advocate* of Newark, Ohio, had a story that appeared in a number of other newspapers headlined simply “Yellow Peril.” In it the unnamed author argued that “All the facts of history and of sociology point to the certainty that if Japan conquered China the early result would be an amalgamation of the yellow race against the white.”⁸⁸ A headline in the July 12, 1908 edition of *The New York Times* proclaimed: “Banzai - How Japan Fought the U.S. and Lost.”⁸⁹ All this despite a “Gentleman’s Agreement” in 1907 in which the Japanese agreed to voluntarily limit the number of immigrants to the U.S.⁹⁰

⁸⁴ Edward S. Miller, *War Plan Orange: The U.S. Strategy to Defeat Japan, 1897-1945* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1991), 21.

⁸⁵ Battle, 234.

⁸⁶ Michael R. Auslin, *Pacific Cosmopolitans: A Cultural History of U.S.-Japan Relations* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), 125.

⁸⁷ Quoted in Akira Iriye, “The Genesis of American-Japanese Antagonism,” in *Race and U.S. Foreign Policy*, 194.

⁸⁸ “The Yellow Peril: Startling Possibilities of an Awakening of the Stolid Millions of the Orient,” *Newark Daily Advocate*, August 13, 1900, 3.

⁸⁹ “Banzai - How Japan Fought the U.S. and Lost,” *The New York Times*, July 12, 1908, 5.

⁹⁰ Auslin, 127.

By the time the Japanese negotiators got to Versailles for the peace talks in 1919, the racial animosity directed at their country from the U.S. had been forced into the background by concerns over what was transpiring in Europe. In Japan, despite the growing nationalistic fervor engendered in part by the country's success in the Russo-Japanese war, the civilians still held the balance of power in the government; the military had not yet come to the fore in the political arena. The relations with the U.S. "were still primarily economic. America was an ever-expanding market for Japanese silks and an increasingly important supplier of capital."⁹¹ The snub of the racial equality clause offered by the Japanese at Versailles was humiliating in its own right. But two years later, at the Washington Naval Conference, came another loss of face for the Japanese. A limit on the construction of warships was a prime topic and the Japanese were forced to accept a significantly lower number than they had sought. The conference "marked another in the string of what the Japanese perceived as racist slights from the West."⁹² Three years later came a turning point in Japanese-American relations. Congress passed what was commonly known as the Johnson Act. Essentially, it barred entry into the U.S. of anyone not eligible for citizenship, meaning anyone not white. It was in the eyes of some "an internationally embarrassing example of American xenophobia guiding policy."⁹³ Demonstrations broke out in major Japanese cities, "unleashing outrage...over the American insult."⁹⁴ It was, for many Japanese, the final humiliation by the West. They had played by Western rules and "had done all they could to allay the Western fear of a yellow peril...No matter how hard they tried to

⁹¹ Iriye, "The Genesis of American-Japanese Antagonism," 193.

⁹² Krenn,
The Color of Empire, 65.

⁹³ Craig M. Cameron, *American Samurai: Myth, Imagination, and the Conduct of Battle in the First Marine Division, 1941-1951*

(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 91.

⁹⁴ Auslin, 127-128, 131.

minimize the racial question, no matter how desperately they clung to an image of East and West harmonized through Japan, Western prejudice did not seem to abate.”⁹⁵

Not that the Japanese were free from their own prejudices and racial animosity. According to Dower, the Japanese believed they were a superior race of people, calling themselves the “leading race,” or *shido minzoku*.⁹⁶ They were contemptuous of the Chinese and the Koreans. After a 1923 earthquake in Japan, police killed six thousand Koreans for reasons historians are still trying to sort out.⁹⁷ And “while they preached Pan-Asianism and devoted much energy and propaganda to glorifying the ‘common culture’ of the East, in actual practice they could hardly conceal their contempt for other Asians.”⁹⁸ The Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere was little more than a rationalization for the Japanese to engage in imperialism in East Asia, a practice for which they condemned the European powers. Like the Anglo-Saxons and other Western Europeans, the Japanese believed that as the superior race it was their duty “to lead and enlighten the inferior ones,” which they considered everyone but themselves.⁹⁹

The diplomatic snubs by the West, and the continued anti-Japanese sentiment in the U.S., reinforced the belief of ardent Japanese nationalists that they were alone in the world, that it was the world against Nippon. Their country would have to fend for itself and “only her own strength and resources would guarantee the future.”¹⁰⁰ Japanese nationalism had been on the upswing since 1854, when Commodore Matthew Perry and the U.S. Navy, using gunboat diplomacy, had forced the country out of its self-imposed, centuries-long isolation. But with that emergence came consequences that angered the traditionalists - the gradual erosion of Japanese culture and

⁹⁵ Iriye, “The Genesis of American-Japanese Antagonism,” 190-191.

⁹⁶ John Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986), 30.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 285.

⁹⁸ Dower, “Yellow, Red, and Black Men,” 248.

⁹⁹ Dower, *War Without Mercy*, 217.

¹⁰⁰ Richard Overy and Andrew Wheatcroft, *The Road to War: The Origins of World War II* (New York: Random House, Inc., 1989), 231.

the encroachment of Western influences.¹⁰¹ The more ardent nationalists believed war between the East and the West was inevitable. In 1914, Yamagata Aritomo, considered the father of the modern Japanese army, wrote a letter to the emperor expressing his view that all warfare was racial in nature and would become even more so after World War I. He urged rapprochement with China “to instill in China a sense of abiding trust in us” because once the war in Europe was over, “the rivalry between the white and the non-white races will become violent, and who can say that the white races will not unite with one another to opposed the colored people?”¹⁰² The leading pan-Asianist proponent in Japan during the interwar years was Shûmei Ôkawa. In the mid-1920s he predicted a “clash of civilizations” in which Japan and the U.S. would battle one another militarily.¹⁰³ He wrote that “It is my belief that Heaven has decided on Japan as its choice for the champion of the East. Has not this been the purpose of our three thousand long years of preparation?”¹⁰⁴ That document later was presented during his prosecution for war crimes. Shûmei saw Asia as being the beneficiary racially, economically, and politically of the fighting in Europe during World War I. That destructive “civil war” in Europe shattered “the myth of the racial superiority of the whites...signaling the end of European hegemony in Asia.”¹⁰⁵

American officials began expressing concerns about Japan’s influence on China after World War I. A Report of the Committee on Public Information, which provided details about American propaganda efforts during and shortly after the war, noted that the efforts to get the word out to China was being slowed by language issues and the Japanese, who were providing

¹⁰¹ Auslin, 4.

¹⁰² Yamagata Aritomo, “Racial Conflict and Japan’s Foreign Policy,” in *Sources of Japanese Tradition, Volume II*, ed. Ryusaku Tsunoda, William Theodore deBary, and Donald Keene, (New York: Columbia University, Press 1958): 206-209.

¹⁰³ Cemil Aydin, *The Politics of Anti-Westernism in Asia: Visions of World Order in Pan-Islamic and Pan-Asian Thought*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 112.

¹⁰⁴ Ôkawa Shûmei, “The Way of Japan and the Japanese,” in *Sources of Japanese Tradition*: 288-289.

¹⁰⁵ Aydin, 119.

their own version of events and the role played by Japan. According to the report: “Japanese views are given the widest publicity in China, while American opinions are learned here only after they have been edited in London.”¹⁰⁶ The concern was that the Chinese were getting a version of events that downplayed the role the U.S. had played in the war and the subsequent peace agreement, while elevating the contributions of the Japanese.

Throughout the interwar years, American public opinion about Japan and China went through a number of cycles, prompted in part by stereotypical media portrayals. There were the preternaturally evil villains such as Fu Manchu and the obsequious but crafty heroes such as Mr. Moto or Charlie Chan.¹⁰⁷ Newsreels of Japanese people shown in the United States “commodified and demonized exotic people as spectacle and encouraged self-righteous rhetoric.”¹⁰⁸ Meanwhile, the idea of race mixing and the problems it presented continued to be a subject for vigorous debate, especially on the West Coast and especially as it pertained to whites marrying Chinese or Japanese. One of the more popular anti-miscegenation, eugenics-based books of that decade was Lothrop Stoddard’s *The Rising Tide of Color Against White World-Supremacy*, published in 1920. Although Stoddard included all races in this polemic, he was especially vituperative when it came to Orientals. He wrote that “What is absolutely certain is that any wholesale Oriental influx would inevitably doom the whites, first of the Pacific coast, and later of the whole United States, to social sterilization and ultimate racial extinction.”¹⁰⁹ If the trend was not reversed, he warned, “we whites are all ultimately doomed.”¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁶ *Complete Report of the Chairman of the Committee on Public Information: 1917:1918:1919* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1920), 275.

¹⁰⁷ Cameron, 92-93.

¹⁰⁸ Sumiko Higashi, “Melodrama, Realism, and Race: World War II Newsreels and Propaganda Film,” in *Cinema Journal*, Vol. 37, No. 3 (Spring, 1988): 39. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1225826>.

¹⁰⁹ Lothrop Stoddard, *The Rising Tide of Color Against White World-Supremacy* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1920), 289.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 304.

The stock market crash of 1929 and subsequent international economic depression changed the thinking of Japanese leaders as it pertained to economic affairs. What had been international economic cooperation of the industrial nations appeared to have failed. Instead of looking to revive that internationalization of the economic order, the Japanese focused on regionalism, which for them was pan-Asianism.¹¹¹ They knew they had to bring the Chinese into their orbit to make this successful, but that meant waging war on another Oriental nation that had been greatly influenced in the previous century by American missionaries and a reliance on American goodwill. The Japanese wanted to create a new Asian order that would toss aside Western ideas and ideals, replacing them with more traditional Asian virtues that the West could not understand or accept.¹¹² Thus, “the Sino-Japanese War was seen in part as an inner war to cleanse the Japanese mind of Western influences and modes of thought, not just as an action to bring the recalcitrant Chinese to their senses.”¹¹³ By the time the Japanese invaded Manchuria in 1931, its military and much of its population had largely been convinced that pan-Asianism was necessary for survival of the East, China and Japan in particular, “since the West was not understanding of their intentions and interests.”¹¹⁴ Pan-Asianism became the mantra in Japanese schools. “It was as if the Japanese believed they could bring Asia into being if they talked about it long and loud enough.”¹¹⁵

After the Japanese invasion of Manchuria, the American press responded with another wave of “Yellow Peril” hysteria. Typical were the headlines “China, A Warning for the U.S.”

¹¹¹ Akira Iriye, *Power and Culture: The Japanese-American War 1941-1945* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), 34.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 5-6.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴ Akira Iriye, “The Asian Factor,” in *The Origins of the Second World War Reconsidered: The A.J.P. Taylor Debate After Twenty-Five Years*, ed. Gordon Martel (Winchester, MA: Allen & Unwin, Inc., 1986), 231.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 233.

and “Japan Plans to Conquer United States”¹¹⁶ in a 1932 edition of *The San Antonio Light*, a Hearst newspaper. The race-based stereotyping continued on both sides. The Japanese looked at Americans as “soft, self-indulgent, and incapable of serious sacrifice; therefore, Americans would tire and withdraw from a contest with the far tougher and committed Japanese.”¹¹⁷ The Americans and the British looked at the Japanese as being malevolent and militaristic but not particularly bright. The British naval attaché in Tokyo told his superiors in 1935 that “the Japanese have particularly slow brains” while the British commander in China in 1937 referred to the Chinese and Japanese as “these inferior yellow races.”¹¹⁸ The Americans came to believe that the Japanese thought and acted in a manner that was “incomprehensible or barbaric.”¹¹⁹ By the time the U.S. entered the war in 1941, the racial animosity between the Japanese, the British and Americans, and much of the rest of East Asia and the Pacific Islands, was well-entrenched among those who did the fighting. Although nominally aligned with the Japanese, Hitler recognized the problems they presented for his world view of Aryan supremacy. In a private conversation in December 1941, less than three weeks after the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor, Hitler remarked to lunch guests that “The Japanese are occupying all the islands, one after the other. They will get hold of Australia, too. The white race will disappear from those regions.”¹²⁰

Conclusion

Unlike the war in Europe, in which Americans felt they were fighting against a people with whom they could easily identify, the war in the Pacific was as much about race as it was

¹¹⁶ “China, A Warning for U.S.” and “Japan Plans to Conquer United States,” *The San Antonio Sunday Light*, June 19, 1932, sec. 4.

¹¹⁷ Lynn, 237.

¹¹⁸ Quoted in Christopher Thorne, *Allies of a Kind: The United States, Britain, and the War Against Japan, 1941-1945*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 4.

¹¹⁹ Lynn, 241.

¹²⁰ Norman Cameron and R.H. Stevens, tran. *Hitler's Table Talk 1941-1944: His Private Conversation* (New York: Enigma Books, 2000), 150. Retrieved March 19, 2012 from <http://www.vho.org/aaargh/fran/livres10/HTableTalk.pdf>.

about territory. It was a war “powered by mutual hatreds and stereotyping,” according to the historian Ronald Takaki.¹²¹ The war in the Pacific “drew upon a deeply ingrained racist ideology that has characterized America’s expansion since the earliest colonial times.”¹²² Veteran war correspondent Ernie Pyle spent much of World War II in Europe, but in 1945 went to the Pacific, where he found a different war and a different mindset among the troops fighting there. In Europe, he noted, the Germans, no matter how horrible they might have seemed “were still people. But out here I’ve already gathered the feeling that the Japanese are looked upon as something inhuman and squirmy - like some people feel about cockroaches or mice.”¹²³ After seeing a group of Japanese prisoners he wrote that “they gave me a creepy feeling and I felt in need of a mental bath after looking at them.”¹²⁴ Admiral William “Bull” Halsey, commander of the American fleet in the Pacific, was an unabashed Japanese hater before, during, and after the war. In a 1942 speech at the U.S. Naval Academy he called the Japanese “yellow-bellied sons of bitches.”¹²⁵ He was no less politically incorrect when his memoirs were published in 1947, referring to Japan as “no better than a class-C nation. After that one successful sneak attack, however, panicky eyes saw the monkeymen as super men. I saw them as nothing of the sort, and I wanted my forces to know how I felt. I stand by the opinion that the Japs are bastards.”¹²⁶

This type of racial rhetoric did not emerge full-blown without precedence once World War II started. The thinking that produced the racial animosity that was a significant part of that war in Europe and the Far East was manipulated and refined over decades of class and race struggles. It was forged by the times and how people perceived themselves and other races. It

¹²¹ Ronald Takaki, *Double Victory* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2000), 168.

¹²² Cameron, 89.

¹²³ Ernie Pyle, *Ernie’s War: The Best of Ernie Pyle’s World War II Dispatches*, ed. David Nichols (New York: Random House, 1986), 367.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ E.B. Potter, *Bull Halsey*, (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1985), xii.

¹²⁶ William F. Halsey, and Joseph Bryan III, *Admiral Halsey’s Story* (Washington, D.C.: Zenger Publishing Co., Inc., 1947), 142.

was a product of culture, environment, and education. To believe that the men who were world leaders after the Great War were able to put aside their long-held and deeply ingrained racial biases when making diplomatic and economic decisions is to say they were shallow and lacked the full faith of the principles that had guided them through their lives. To ignore the impact of race and racial biases during years after the Great War is to ignore the personalities and beliefs of the men who made those decisions. Decisions are not made in a vacuum. They are the progeny of any number of factors, not the least of which are the beliefs and principles of the decision makers. As the historian Arthur Boyce argues of these men, conventional history “encourages the impression that their failures were due to imperfect information and occasionally poor judgment, not irrational likes and dislikes” as so often seemed to be the case.¹²⁷

¹²⁷ Boyce, 428.

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