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The Color of Threat: Race, Threat Perception, and the Demise of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance (1902–1923)

ZOLTÁN I. BÚZÁS

Race is understudied in International Relations generally and International Security specifically. To mitigate this omission, this article provides a racial theory of threat perception. It argues that, under certain conditions, racial prejudices embedded in racial identities shape threat perceptions and generate behavioral dispositions. In the first step, racial similarity deflates threat perceptions, while racial difference inflates them. In the second step, deflated threat perceptions facilitate cooperation among racially similar agents, while inflated threat perceptions facilitate discord among racially different agents. Using extensive archival and secondary sources, the article illustrates the explanatory value of the theory in the case of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance (1902–23).

Race is understudied in International Relations (IR) despite its historical prominence in international politics, its prevalence in cognate disciplines, and its pervasiveness in everyday life. This is particularly true in the case of International Security. Although scholars provide seminal accounts of how religion, gender, culture, and ethnicity affect security, they pay less attention to race.¹ This omission is unfortunate because there is considerable historical evidence that race can have security implications. For instance, John

Zoltán I. Búzás earned his PhD at the Ohio State University in 2012 and is currently a post-doctoral fellow in the Department of History and Politics at Drexel University. For helpful comments many thanks to Bentley Allan, Kevin Duska, Erin Graham, Marcus Holmes, Ted Hopf, Josh Kertzer, Xiaoyu Pu, Randall Schweller, Alexander Wendt, and the editors and anonymous reviewers of *Security Studies*, as well as to participants of the Research in International Politics workshop at the Ohio State University.

¹ Ron E. Hassner, “To Halve and to Hold’: Conflicts over Sacred Space and the Problem of Indivisibility,” *Security Studies* 12, no. 4 (Summer 2003): 1–33; Monica Duffy Toft, “Getting Religion? The Puzzling

Dower's influential study documents how racial prejudices fueled mutual hatred between Japan and the United States during World War II, resulting in a "war without mercy."² Matthew Jones traces the effect of race on US nuclear policy in Asia during the first two decades following Hiroshima.³ In IR, Christopher Hemmer and Peter Katzenstein argue that, in addition to economic and security reasons, variation in racial identity helps explain why post-World War II transatlantic security cooperation took a multilateral form (NATO), while the transpacific one took a bilateral hub-and-spoke form.⁴

This study develops a two-step racial theory of threat perception to explore one way in which race matters in international security. It proposes that, once activated, prejudices embedded in racial identities "color" threat perceptions and generate behavioral dispositions. In the first step, racial difference inflates threat perceptions and racial similarity deflates them. In the second step, deflated threat perceptions predispose racially similar agents toward cooperation, while inflated threat perceptions predispose racially different agents toward discord. The theory is particularly well suited to circumstances in which no more than two different racial identities are involved, states have dominant racial groups, agents hold activated threat-relevant prejudices, and threats are ambiguous.

The explanatory value of the theory is illustrated in the case of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance's demise (1902–23). Racial difference inflated British and American threat perceptions of Japan, transforming the latter into a "Yellow Peril." In contrast, racial similarity deflated Anglo-American mutual threat perceptions and transformed them into "Blood Brothers." Deflated threat perceptions predisposed these "Blood Brothers" toward cooperation, while inflated threat perceptions of the Japanese "Yellow Peril" predisposed them toward discord with Japan. The result was Anglo-American cooperation against Japan to terminate the alliance at the 1921 Washington Conference.

Case of Islam and Civil War," *International Security* 31, no. 4 (Spring 2007): 97–131; Special issue, "Security Studies: Feminist Contributions," *Security Studies* 18, no. 2 (April 2009); Valerie M. Hudson and Andrea Den Boer, "A Surplus of Men, A Deficit of Peace: Security and Sex Ratios in Asia's Largest States," *International Security* 26, no. 4 (Spring 2002): 5–38; Peter J. Katzenstein, ed., *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996); Alastair Iain Johnston, "Thinking about Strategic Culture," *International Security* 19, no. 4 (Spring 1995): 32–64; Barry R. Posen, "The Security Dilemma and Ethnic Conflict," *Survival* 35, no. 1 (Spring 1993): 27–47; Michael E. Brown, ed., *Ethnic Conflict and International Security* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993). For some exceptions, see Shampa Biswas, "'Nuclear Apartheid' as Political Position: Race as a Postcolonial Resource?" *Alternatives* 26, no. 4 (October–December 2001): 485–522; Srdjan Vucetic, *The Anglosphere: A Genealogy of a Racialized Identity in International Relations* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011).

² John W. Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986).

³ Matthew Jones, *After Hiroshima: The United States, Race, and Nuclear Weapons in Asia, 1945–1965* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

⁴ Christopher M. Hemmer and Peter J. Katzenstein, "Why Is There No Nato in Asia? Collective Identity, Regionalism, and the Origins of Multilateralism," *International Organization* 56, no. 3 (Summer 2002): 584–85.

The article proceeds with a brief review of the threat perception literature in IR. Drawing on this and the race literature, the next section articulates a racial theory of threat perception. The third section discusses methodological issues pertaining to case selection, operationalization, and observable implications. Using extensive archival and secondary sources, the fourth section applies the theory to the Anglo-Japanese Alliance case. I then consider alternative explanations and demonstrate that they are incomplete without race. The paper concludes with a summary of the argument and a discussion of future research avenues.

THE COLOR OF THREAT: A RACIAL THEORY OF THREAT PERCEPTION

Do similar states perceive each other as more threatening than different states? Despite neorealist skepticism, an increasing number of scholars suggest that unit similarity and difference shape threat perception. Sophisticated realists like Stephen Walt argue that when threats are modest or there is uncertainty about intentions, ideology shapes threat perception.⁵ Ideological difference increases threat perception as agents infer malign intentions from it, whereas ideological similarity decreases threat perception as agents infer benign intentions from it.⁶ Social identity theory provides robust micro-foundations for this in-group favoritism and out-group discrimination, based on universal cognitive limitations and motivations of self-esteem.⁷ It also suggests that the dynamics are broadly applicable to various aspects of unit similarity and difference.

Liberals and constructivists refine these insights and demonstrate their empirical purchase in a wide variety of cases. Perhaps the most popular version is offered by democratic peace theory, which argues that liberal democracies perceive each other as less threatening and perceive non-democracies as more threatening.⁸ Mark Haas extends this argument to all political ideologies. He contends that independent of the specific “ideological content,” the greater the “ideological difference” among decision makers of any two

⁵ Stephen M. Walt, “Alliance Formation and the Balance of Power,” *International Security* 9, no. 4 (Spring 1985): 27; Stephen M. Walt, *Revolution and War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996), 6.

⁶ Walt, *Revolution and War*, 6, 30, 33, 334.

⁷ Rupert Brown, “Social Identity Theory: Past Achievements, Current Problems and Future Challenges,” *European Journal of Social Psychology* 30, no. 6 (2000): 745–78; Jonathan Mercer, “Anarchy and Identity,” *International Organization* 49, no. 2 (Spring 1995): 229–52.

⁸ Thomas Risse-Kappen, “Democratic Peace-Warlike Democracies? A Social Constructivist Interpretation of the Liberal Argument,” *European Journal of International Relations* 1, no. 4 (December 1995): 491–517; John M. Owen, “How Liberalism Produces Democratic Peace,” *International Security* 19, no. 2 (Fall 1994): 87–125.

states, the more likely they are to perceive each other as a threat.⁹ John Owen finds that the argument is pertinent to dynamics in the sixteenth century Holy Roman Empire, where the threat perception and the alliance choices of Protestant and Catholic estates were shaped by religious similarity.¹⁰ Constructivist approaches to threat rely on a similar theoretical logic, but they emphasize the importance of identity rather than ideology.¹¹ Others apply the insight to non-state actors, such as ethnic groups, demonstrating that shared ethnicity can encourage intra-ethnic cooperation, while ethnic difference can encourage interethnic conflict.¹²

This literature suggests that, all else being equal, unit similarity decreases threat perception and facilitates cooperation, while unit difference increases threat perception and facilitates discord. However, because all else is rarely equal in international politics, there is an important qualification to the argument. When shared ideologies or identities are divisive, their ability to decrease perceived threats and encourage cooperation may be undermined. The Sino-Soviet rift during the Cold War and frictions among Arab states illustrate the point.¹³ The literature acknowledges that ideational content can moderate the impact of ideational similarity on threat deflation and cooperation but suggests that these cases remain the exception to the rule.

Building on this literature, I develop a racial theory of threat perception. Walt recognized the importance of perceptions but stopped short of providing a theory of threat perception. Mainstream IR offers theories of threat perception based on various ideologies and identities, yet it has largely neglected racial identities. Below I contend that under certain conditions states' threat perception is colored by race. In such cases we can talk about the color of threat.

Racial Identity as a Lens of Perception

I begin with the premise that identities function as lenses of perception, or what Ted Hopf calls "axes of interpretation" and Linda Alcoff labels "interpretive horizons."¹⁴ Identities are cognitive heuristics that allow us, cognitive

⁹ Mark L. Haas, *The Ideological Origins of Great Power Politics, 1789–1989* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005).

¹⁰ John M. Owen, "When Do Ideologies Produce Alliances? The Holy Roman Empire, 1517–1555," *International Studies Quarterly* 49, no. 1 (March 2005): 73–99.

¹¹ David L. Rousseau, *Identifying Threats and Threatening Identities: The Social Construction of Realism and Liberalism* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006).

¹² David A. Lake and Donald Rothchild, "Containing Fear: The Origins and Management of Ethnic Conflict," *International Security* 21, no. 2 (Fall 1996): 41–75; Janet Tai Landa, *Trust, Ethnicity, and Identity* (Ann Arbor: Michigan University Press, 1995).

¹³ Walt, "Alliance Formation and the Balance of Power," 33; Michael N. Barnett, "Identity and Alliances in the Middle East," in *The Culture of National Security*, ed. Peter J. Katzenstein (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 409.

¹⁴ Linda M. Alcoff, *Visible Identities: Race, Gender, and the Self* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006); Ted Hopf, *Social Construction of International Politics: Identities and Foreign Policies, Moscow, 1955 and 1999* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002), 5.

misers, to cope with the complexity of the world. Identity “makes threats and opportunities, enemies and allies, intelligible, thinkable, and possible.”¹⁵ It shapes agents’ perceptions, which in turn influence how they respond to what they perceive. This insight has proved fruitful for various theories, from democratic peace to image theories of foreign policy.¹⁶ I apply the lens of perception approach to racial identity. This section defines racial identity and distinguishes it from adjacent identities.

Defining racial identity is difficult because much of its political power comes from its connotative poverty and denotative ambiguity.¹⁷ Yet historical use, scholarly definitions, and the ordinary concept of race suggest that racial identity is not devoid of content but is based on beliefs of common descent and shared physical markers.¹⁸ Historically racial identities emerged in response to European voyages of discovery, which brought whites in contact with nonwhites. Thus, the markers of common origin tended to be visible, phenotypic traits. Later in the nineteenth century racial identity was broadly applied to a wide variety of groups. This loosened, but did not sever, the link between racial identity and phenotypic markers of common origin. Blue eyes and blond hair were invented as the phenotypic markers of the Aryan race. Phrenology and craniology claimed to have discovered systematic physical differences among European nations and categorized them into different racial groups.¹⁹ Sometimes phenotypic markers were imputed through negative physical stereotypes such as the Irish “Africanoid skull” or the Jewish hooked nose.²⁰

Reference to common origins and phenotype is also widespread in social scientific definitions of race and racial identity. A recent *International Studies Perspectives* symposium defines race as “a group of people who are socially defined on the basis of phenotypically similar (and dissimilar) characteristics.”²¹ Similarly, a survey of the literature defines race as a “symbolic category, based on phenotype or ancestry and constructed according to

¹⁵ Hopf, *Social Construction of International Politics*, 16.

¹⁶ John M. Owen, *Liberal Peace, Liberal War: American Politics and International Security* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997), 18; Richard Herrmann and Michael P. Fischerkeller, “Beyond the Enemy Image and Spiral Model: Cognitive-Strategic Research after the Cold War,” *International Organization* 49, no. 3 (Summer 1995): 415–50.

¹⁷ David T. Goldberg, *Racist Culture: Philosophy and the Politics of Meaning* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1993), 80. By connotation I mean the set of attributes that define the concept, whereas by denotation I mean the entities in the world that the concept refers to.

¹⁸ For a definition based on naturalization, see Etienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein, *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities* (New York: Verso, 1991).

¹⁹ Gustav Jahoda, “Intra-European Racism in Nineteenth-Century Anthropology,” *History and Anthropology* 20, no. 1 (March 2009): 37–56.

²⁰ Thomas McCarthy, *Race, Empire, and the Idea of Human Development* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 8; Ali Rattansi, *Racism: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 39 n13.

²¹ Tilden Le Melle, “Race in International Relations,” *International Studies Perspectives* 10, no. 1 (February 2009): 77.

specific social and historical contexts, that is misrecognized as a natural category.”²² The ordinary concept of race also treats phenotype as a necessary component of race.²³

If identities function as lenses of perception and racial identity is based on beliefs of common descent and phenotype, then *we can define racial identity as a lens of perception based on beliefs of common descent, the markers of which tend to be phenotypic*. I emphasize *beliefs* of common descent and phenotype because they are often only imaginary, and when they contain a kernel of truth they still do not objectively delimit racial groups. Even when racial identity is built on real physical markers, what is important about it is not these skin-deep biological aspects but the meanings associated with them and the social heritage they imply. As W. E. B. Du Bois put it, phenotype serves only as a badge of race and it does not stand for socially relevant essential features.²⁴ As gender cannot be reduced to biology, racial identity cannot be either. This does not mean that race is an illusion. It is socially constructed but real, just as the state and money are.

Racial identities are constructed through a combination of three practices: (1) racial labeling or the ascription of racial identity to a group; (2) the institutionalization and enforcement of specific roles, norms, and expectations attached to racial identity; and (3) acceptance of the ascribed racial identity by members of the group.²⁵ As a result, racialized groups acquire a new status as races. Since the construction of race on phenotype is a social choice, race can be constructed on various real or imagined biological traits. The nature of racial identity and the relative importance of phenotype and descent in defining it also vary across space and time. Racial identities emphasize descent and are more dichotomous in North America (one was white or black), whereas they emphasize phenotype and are more continuous in South America.²⁶ This discussion implies neither that all racial groups are objectively different in terms of phenotype, nor that all phenotypically different groups are necessarily socially constructed as races.²⁷

Racial identity significantly overlaps with adjacent identities such as gender, class, nationality, and ethnicity.²⁸ Much interesting work examines their

²² Matthew Desmond and Mustafa Emirbayer, “What Is Racial Domination?” *Du Bois Review* 6, no. 2 (2009): 336.

²³ Michael O. Hardimon, “The Ordinary Concept of Race,” *Journal of Philosophy* 100, no. 9 (September 2003): 442.

²⁴ W. E. B. Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn: An Essay toward an Autobiography of a Race Concept* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1940).

²⁵ Ronald R. Sundstrom, “Race as Human Kind,” *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 28, no. 1 (2002): 95–104; Anthony K. Appiah, “Race, Culture, Identity: Misunderstood Connections,” *Tanner Lectures on Human Values*, UCSD, 27–28 October 1994, 110.

²⁶ Peter Wade, *Race and Ethnicity in Latin America* (London: Pluto Press, 1997).

²⁷ I thank an anonymous reviewer for this point. For conditions under which social groups are constructed as races see Goldberg, *Racist Culture*, 76–77.

²⁸ Naoko Shibusawa, *America's Geisha Ally: Reimagining the Japanese Enemy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006); Michael McIntyre, “Race, Surplus Population and the Marxist Theory of

interaction, but there is also value in isolating their independent effect, difficult though this may be.²⁹ Gender may be based on physical markers, but it does not imply beliefs of common descent. Class is more closely linked to factors of production than to beliefs of common descent and phenotypic markers. Race cuts across class, which is why Marxists worry that race masks class inequality, weakens class consciousness, and sustains exploitative capitalism.³⁰ Although they may all share beliefs of common descent, national and ethnic identities emphasize their cultural markers (language, dress, and customs), while racial identity emphasizes their physical markers (phenotype).³¹ These distinctions are imperfect, but they can be analytically useful. The next section turns to how racial identities can shape threat perception.

Racial Identities Shape Threat Perceptions: Two Mechanisms

Racial identity shapes threat perception through the specific prejudices it contains. I define threat perception broadly, as the anticipated outcome of A's (intended future) activities as perceived by B, which would result in B's loss of something it values.³² Prejudices are primarily the consequence of our being cognitive misers, but they may also be reinforced by needs of self-esteem and status quo interests. Although their strength varies across region, education, age, gender, or income, they are surprisingly widespread and resilient. Prejudices typically have a kernel of truth, but they nonetheless distort perceptions. Based on our limited experiences we form categories of others, attach various attributes to them, and then over-generalize these attributes to all members of the category.³³ Prejudices can be positive or negative depending on the specific imputed attributes.

Because agents have multiple identities, the activation of racial prejudices embedded in racial identities is necessary in order to perceive others through a racial lens. Activation is a cognitive process that can occur automatically in response to particular events or cues provided by opinion leaders. The "race card" literature documents this phenomenon in detail.³⁴

Imperialism," *Antipode* 43, no. 5 (November 2011): 1489–515; Anthony W. Marx, *Making Race and Nation: A Comparison of South Africa, the United States, and Brazil* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Jorge J. E. Gracia, *Race or Ethnicity?: On Black and Latino Identity* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2007).

²⁹ For work examining the interaction of these adjacent identities see, for instance, Geeta Chowdhry and Sheila Nair, eds., *Power, Postcolonialism and International Relations: Reading Race, Gender and Class* (New York: Routledge, 2002).

³⁰ Alex Callinicos, *Race and Class* (Chicago: Bookmarks, 1993).

³¹ Paul C. Taylor, *Race: A Philosophical Introduction* (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2004), 54.

³² David A. Baldwin, "Thinking About Threats," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 15, no. 1 (March 1971): 72; Klaus Knorr, "Threat Perception," in *Historical Dimensions of National Security Problems*, ed. Klaus Knorr (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1976), 78.

³³ Gordon W. Allport, *The Nature of Prejudice* (New York: Anchor Books, 1958 [1954]), 147.

³⁴ Tali Mendelberg, *The Race Card: Campaign Strategy, Implicit Messages, and the Norm of Equality* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001).

For example, the close connection in the American mind between crime and African Americans can activate racial perception if one is exposed to images or statements about crime, even if no explicit racial reference is made. Similar activation can occur regarding foreign racial groups. Much of the American politics literature emphasizes the instrumentalism of manipulative elites and the media in activating racial prejudices, but the logic of activation does not require instrumentalism. It is often the manipulative elite and the media that provide racial cues, but sometimes they provide racial cues automatically, without being motivated by self-interest maximization. Insofar as prejudices can be seen as cognitive habits, the phenomenon resembles the logic of habit.³⁵

Racial prejudices embedded in identities can be activated by any event or automatic cue that resonates with them. These events or cues share two characteristics, which can be seen as conditions of activation: (1) they depict racial others as powerful, and (2) they depict one's racial group as vulnerable. Drawing on Tilly's work on activation, Owen incorporates ideological activation or "polarization" in his theory of regime promotion. He identifies two types of events for ideological activation or "polarization": regime crises or great power wars.³⁶ Racial activation can also occur in response to wars by racially different agents against racially similar agents. In addition, immigration that brings racially different agents in close proximity can also serve racial activation.

Once activated, prejudices embedded in racial identities shape threat perceptions. This paper focuses on two categories of racial prejudice: related to the body and related to intentions. Racial prejudices related to the body comprise beliefs that racial others are fundamentally different. Phenotypic markers create the illusion that racial identity is natural and fixed, rather than social and changeable. Racially similar groups are by definition seen as fundamentally similar and easy to assimilate. Racially different groups are perceived as fundamentally different, if not inferior, and a threat to one's ostensibly natural racial identity. The assimilation of racial others is seen as either impossible because the difference is too great or undesirable because it threatens the superiority or purity of one's racial group.

Prejudices related to the body shape threat perceptions most when racially different actors are in close proximity. The proximity of racial difference is perceived as threatening because it heralds the transgression of fixed racial boundaries, posing an existential threat. In the context of this type of prejudice, racially different foreign groups pose a threat primarily

³⁵ Ted Hopf, "The Logic of Habit in International Relations," *European Journal of International Relations* 16, no. 4 (December 2010): 539–61.

³⁶ For activation, see Charles Tilly, *Identities, Boundaries, and Social Ties* (Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2005), 144; for conditions of "polarization," see John M. Owen, *The Clash of Ideas in World Politics: Transnational Networks, States, and Regime Change, 1510–2010* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), 5, 32, 40.

through immigration (“the peril of migration”). We can now formulate the first mechanism through which racial prejudices shape threat perception:

Mechanism 1 (Peril of Migration). Prejudices related to the body inflate threat perceptions of racially different immigrants, because they are perceived as fundamentally different and non-assimilable. Prejudices related to the body deflate threat perceptions of racially similar immigrants, because they are perceived as fundamentally similar and assimilable.

Racial prejudices related to intentions posit that racial others are threatening not because of their proximity but because of their aggressive intentions. An example is the prejudice that African Americans (especially young men) are violent and crime-prone. John Dollard’s fascinating ethnography draws attention to the tendency of whites to readily impute aggressive intentions to African Americans, which then increases whites’ threat perception.³⁷ An oft-cited experiment shows that whites interpret the same ambiguous shove as violent when performed by blacks and friendly when performed by whites.³⁸ As recently as 1992 the American National Election Studies (ANES) found that 50.5 percent of respondents thought that blacks were violent, results corroborated by a 1998 study.³⁹

Prejudices of aggressive intentions inflate fears of conflict with racial others, producing what I call the “peril of arms.” War with aggressive racial others may seem not only possible but also probable and even inevitable. Racial prejudices related to intentions will shape threat perceptions most when threats are uncertain. In particular, the more uncertain agents are about others’ intentions, the more likely that they will infer aggressive intentions from racial difference and peaceful intentions from racial similarity. If racially similar agents pose unambiguous threats or racially different agents do not have the capability to pose a threat, then the ability of racial prejudices to shape threat perception will be limited. This does not imply epiphenomenalism but only recognizes that prejudices must have a kernel of truth. Prejudices shape threats, rather than create them out of thin air.

Mechanism 2 (Peril of Arms). Prejudices related to intentions inflate threat perceptions of racially different agents, because they are perceived as having aggressive intentions. Prejudices related to intentions deflate threat perceptions of racially similar agents, because they are perceived as having benign intentions.

³⁷ John Dollard, *Caste and Class in a Southern Town* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday 1957 [1949]), 288.

³⁸ Birt L. Duncan, “Differential Social Perception and Attribution of Intergroup Violence: Testing the Lower Limits of Stereotyping Blacks,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 34, no. 4 (1976): 590–98.

³⁹ Mark Peffley and Jon Hurwitz, “Whites’ Stereotypes of Blacks: Sources and Political Consequences,” in *Perception and Prejudice: Race and Politics in the United States*, ed., Jon Hurwitz and Mark Peffley (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), 62, 90.

While the argument above focuses on how identities influence threat perception, threat perception also influences identity.⁴⁰ An impressive body of race literature evinces how racial identities and prejudices are shaped by (perceived or real) threats to the material or ideational resources of dominant racial groups by subordinate ones.⁴¹ The causal arrow between racial identity and threat perception runs both ways. My contribution lies in the less studied aspect of this relationship: the impact of racial identities on threat perception.

Racially Shaped Threat Perceptions Generate Behavioral Dispositions

The previous section explained how racial prejudices embedded in racial identities shape threat perceptions. This section specifies the behavioral dispositions created by racially shaped threat perceptions. In a nutshell, racial similarity decreases threat perception and facilitates cooperation, while racial difference increases threat perception and facilitates discord. Racial identities influence international behavior through the state. I adopt a widely used approach where the state represents and acts on the preferences of its dominant domestic group.⁴² I assume that the state's racial identity is determined by its dominant racial group. This is not necessarily the majority racial group but the one that has the most influence over the state's decision-making apparatus. This assumption is not always valid, but more often than not it is.

Racial identities can influence state behavior by shaping the threat perceptions of decision makers and of the public. Despite the common assumption that decision makers are exempt from the prejudices of the public, this is not always the case.⁴³ For instance, Richard Nixon thought that he was not prejudiced: "I've just recognized that, you know, all people have certain traits." Then he went on to discuss the traits that different ethnic and racial groups supposedly have.⁴⁴ By coloring the perceptions of decision makers, racial identities can exert a direct influence on state behavior. When decision makers are less subject to prejudices than the general public, racial prejudices can shape patterns of state behavior indirectly. Influential segments of the public can constrain decision makers to act upon racially induced public fears.

⁴⁰ David Campbell, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998).

⁴¹ Herbert Blumer, "Race Prejudice as a Sense of Group Position," *Pacific Sociological Review* 1, no. 1 (Spring 1958): 3–7; Lincoln Quillian, "Prejudice as a Response to Perceived Group Threat," *American Sociological Review* 60, no. 4 (1995): 586–611.

⁴² Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 19; Andrew Moravcsik, "Taking Preferences Seriously: A Liberal Theory of International Politics," *International Organization* 51, no. 4 (Autumn 1997): 518.

⁴³ Hopf, *Social Construction of International Politics*.

⁴⁴ Adam Nagourney, "In Tapes, Nixon Rails about Jews and Blacks," *New York Times*, 10 December 2010.

Racial difference predisposes states toward discord, but it does not make interracial cooperation impossible. When more than two racially different agents interact, one is more likely to cooperate with the less threatening racial other.⁴⁵ Adolf Hitler initiated the alliance with Japan against what he saw as the greater racial-ideological threat of Judeo-Bolshevism posed by a Slavic race contaminated with Semitic elements. The alliance was also facilitated by Hitler's conviction that Germany and Japan were both threatened by an international Jewish conspiracy.⁴⁶ Although racial difference did not prevent the German-Japanese alliance, it caused friction between the allies, decreased popular support for the alliance, and contributed to making it a "hollow alliance" that involved little cooperation.⁴⁷

Since the theory is probabilistic, identifying its scope conditions is important. First, prejudices embedded in racial identities shape threat perceptions if agents hold activated racial prejudices that associate racial others with danger. If activated threat-relevant prejudices are absent, either alternative collective identities will shape perceptions or race will do so in a way not captured here. Second, racial prejudices related to intentions will shape threat perceptions most when threats are uncertain. If racially similar agents pose unambiguous threats or racially different agents do not have the capability to pose a threat, then racial identity's ability to shape threat perception will be limited. Third, the theory will be most useful when states have one dominant racial group and no more than two racially different states interact. In more complex cases a more nuanced theory is required.

To summarize, in the first step, activated prejudices embedded in racial identities serve as lenses of perception. Racial prejudices pertaining to the body and aggressive intentions color threat perceptions through two mechanisms: the peril of migration and the peril of arms. As a result, agents perceive those with shared racial identity as less threatening, and they perceive racially different agents as more threatening. In the second step, racial similarity predisposes agents toward cooperation, whereas racial difference predisposes them toward discord. It is worth noting that this theory is built not only on difference and similarity in racial identity but also on the specific content of racial identity. Threat perception is not simply a function of racial identities but of racial prejudices embedded in racial identities. This should

⁴⁵ For a similar argument applied to ideology, see Haas, *Ideological Origins of Great Power Politics*, 107.

⁴⁶ Ernst L. Presseisen, *Germany and Japan: A Study in Totalitarian Diplomacy* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1969), 4.

⁴⁷ Presseisen, *Germany and Japan*, 7, 17–18, 66; Harumi Shidehara Furuya, "Nazi Racism Toward the Japanese: Ideology vs. Realpolitik," *News of the Society For Nature And People Of Eastern Asia* (NOAG) 157–158 (1995): 17–75, esp. 57; Johanna Meskill, *Hitler and Japan: The Hollow Alliance* (New York: Atherton Press, 1966); Hugo Dobson, "The Failure of the Tripartite Pact: Familiarity Breeding Contempt between Japan and Germany, 1940–45," *Japan Forum* 11, no. 2 (1999): 185–89.

mitigate the problem faced by ideational theories of threat perception, reviewed earlier, which is that sometimes similar identities contain peculiar content that facilitates conflict (think of the Sino-Soviet discord) rather than cooperation.

Methodology

To illustrate the explanatory value of the theory, I rely on a longitudinal case study of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance (1902–23). The case satisfies the scope conditions discussed above. It also contributes to the race literature by showing that race matters not only in asymmetrical power relations but in more symmetrical great power politics as well. The alliance case offsets the disadvantages of selecting on the dependent variable because it exhibits large within-case variance and is sufficiently rich in data to allow detailed process tracing.⁴⁸

Determining whether a threat is deflated or inflated poses a challenge to all studies of threat perception since no objective baselines exist. I employ four indicators to deal with this challenge. First, I look at the gap between levels of threat perception and facts pertaining to immigration and material capabilities. Based on archival and secondary sources I reconstruct the level of threat perception of the public and decision makers. If threat perceptions are inflated or deflated, the gap between the level of perceived threat and facts should be considerable. For example, if I find that the American public and decision makers worry about Japanese immigration in states with a negligible Japanese population, it is reasonable to suggest that threat perceptions are inflated. Second, I also compare levels of threat perception in similar cases involving different racial identities. If Americans welcome British immigration but perceive the smaller Japanese immigration as threatening, we have reasons to suspect that US threat perceptions of Japanese immigrants are racially inflated. Third, the sheer magnitude of perceived threats, such as war scares, may indicate inflated threat perceptions. Finally, if a wide variety of decision makers and independent observers at the time or in retrospect agree that threat perceptions were deflated or inflated, we have reasons to believe them. Together these indicators should reliably capture racially inflated or deflated threat perceptions.

If the theory is correct, a number of specific observable implications follow (see Table 1 below). We should be able to identify key events that activated racial prejudices. In the case of the first mechanism (the peril

⁴⁸ Stephen Van Evera, *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997), 47.

TABLE 1 Observable Implications

Mechanisms	Empirical Indicators
General Expectation: Once activated, racial difference inflates threat perception and facilitates discord, whereas racial similarity deflates threat perception and facilitates cooperation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do we see activation of racial prejudices embedded in racial identities? Do racial differences inflate and racial similarities deflate threat perceptions? • Do we see discord among racially different agents and cooperation among racially similar agents?
M1 (The Peril of Migration)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do elites and the public express concern about racially different immigrants in terms of non-assimilability and biological difference? Are such concerns absent with regard to racially similar agents? • Do racial minority groups' and individuals' threat perceptions correlate with prejudices related to the body?
M2 (The Peril of Arms)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do elites and the public express concern about war with racially different agents in terms of innate aggressiveness? Are such concerns absent with regard to racially similar agents? • Do racial minority groups' and individuals' threat perceptions correlate with prejudices related to intentions?

of migration), elites and the public should express their fears of racially different immigrants in terms of non-assimilability and biological difference. Such concerns should be absent regarding racially similar immigrants. For the second mechanism (the peril of arms), elites and the public should express their fears of war with racially different agents in terms of high probability of conflict due to the innate aggressiveness of racial others. Racially similar agents should see each other as peaceful and should see war as highly unlikely or even unthinkable.

I also rely on indirect evidence because agents may be unaware of the influence of prejudice on their perception and behavior. If we find that racial prejudices and identities correlate across various groups and individuals according to my theoretical expectations, our confidence in the theory improves. Although racial minorities may sometimes internalize the prejudices of the majority, all else being equal, they should hold them to a lesser extent. Therefore, we expect them to hold exaggerated fears based on these prejudices to a lesser extent as well. We should see similar correlation between racial prejudices and threat perception across individuals belonging to racial majority groups too. The more one holds a racial prejudice, the more it should shape one's threat perceptions.

RACE AND THE DEMISE OF THE ANGLO-JAPANESE ALLIANCE (1902–23)

At the end of the nineteenth century Britain's relative power waned, but its interests remained global. Thus, the grand strategy of "splendid isolation" became more isolating than splendid. Because the United States was uninterested in "entangling alliances," Britain approached Germany and Russia in search of an agreement.⁴⁹ Only when these attempts failed did Britain, as *The Economist* put it at the time, "quit decidedly . . . that unwritten alliance of all White Powers against all coloured races."⁵⁰ Japan, isolated in a white-dominated international order, could not refuse the opportunity. Racial difference impeded the creation of an alliance, but necessity forced the allies' hands and in 1902 they formed the Anglo-Japanese Alliance.⁵¹

The alliance served both parties well, providing benefits beyond its *raison d'être* of countering a potential Russian threat. Britain gained cheap security for its Far Eastern imperial possessions, a useful ally against Germany, and control over a potentially dangerous "Oriental" power, Japan.⁵² Japan received prestige from its first European alliance, protection against another Triple Intervention, and extensive imperial interests in Korea.⁵³ When in 1921 the alliance was up for renewal, Britain and the United States cooperated against Japan to terminate it. Below I show that racial prejudices embedded in racial identities contributed to this outcome.

The empirical section starts with tracing the activation of racial prejudices embedded in racial identities. Next, it discusses how Anglo-American racial similarity decreased mutual threat perceptions, while racial difference between Japan and the Anglo-Saxon states increased threat perceptions. Britain and the United States saw each other as "Blood Brothers," and they saw Japan as a "Yellow Peril." This encouraged Anglo-American cooperation against Japan and undermined the alliance. The section ends with showing how racially shaped threat perceptions and behavior contributed to the demise of the alliance at the 1921 Imperial and Washington Conferences.

⁴⁹ Zara S. Steiner, "Great Britain and the Creation of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance," *Journal of Modern History* 31, no. 1 (March 1959): 27–36.

⁵⁰ Quoted in Gordon Daniels, "The Anglo-Japanese Alliance and the British Press," in *Studies in the Anglo-Japanese Alliance (1902–1923) STICERD-International Studies Paper Series, LSE*, no. IS/03/443 (January 2003): 1–12.

⁵¹ For an excellent study of the alliance, see Ian H. Nish, *The Anglo-Japanese Alliance: The Diplomacy of Two Island Empires, 1894–1907* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966); Ian H. Nish, *Alliance in Decline: A Study in Anglo-Japanese Relations, 1908–1923* (New York: Athlone Press, 1972).

⁵² Nish, *Alliance in Decline*, 297; see also *British Documents on Foreign Affairs: Reports and Papers from the Foreign Office Confidential Print* (BDFA), pt. II, From the First to the Second World War, ser. E, Asia, 1914–1939, vol. 3 (Bethesda, MD, University Publications of America, 1991), doc. 2.; BDFA, pt. II, ser. E, vol. 3, doc. 7.

⁵³ In 1895, Germany, France, and Russia forced Japan to forego the spoils of her victory in the 1894–95 Sino-Japanese war.

The Activation of Racial Prejudices

As racial identities emerged and spread due to fundamental economic, scientific, and social transformations, the United States and Britain were socially constructed as white Anglo-Saxon states, while Japan gradually came to be seen as yellow.⁵⁴ Through the activated prejudices embedded in them, racial identities had an important impact on this trilateral relationship.

Japanese immigration activated prejudices related to the body. Thus, the allegedly non-assimilable yellow race was perceived as an existential threat. The prejudice initially developed in response to mid-nineteenth-century Chinese immigration but became latent when immigration restrictions slowed Chinese immigration. It was then activated at the beginning of the twentieth century by rising Japanese immigration.⁵⁵ Racial traits were viewed as fixed, foreclosing the possibility of assimilation: "the Oriental always remained an Oriental."⁵⁶

Japan's victory in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–5 activated prejudices related to aggressive intentions.⁵⁷ President Theodore Roosevelt became worried about "Japanese hostility to the white race in general and especially to Americans."⁵⁸ He saw Japan as so "warlike" that "there can be none more dangerous in the entire world."⁵⁹ Captain Richmond P. Hobson, a national hero of the 1898 Spanish-American War, drew attention to Japan's innate "war habit."⁶⁰ British Admiral Sir John Fisher wrote of Japanese "ruthless" mining operations that were "repugnant to men of our own race." The British diplomat in Japan, J. H. Gubbins, considered the Japanese "a naturally warlike people," while Vice Admiral Sir Cyprian Bridge wrote of the Japanese as a "martial race."⁶¹

⁵⁴ Reginald Horsman, *The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981); Michael Keevak, *Becoming Yellow: A Short History of Racial Thinking* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011); Rotem Kowner, "Skin as a Metaphor: Early European Racial Views on Japan, 1548–1853," *Ethnohistory* 51, no. 4 (Fall 2004): 751–78. Much of this racialization process started at the end of the eighteenth century, when natural anthropology became influential, and continued throughout the nineteenth century.

⁵⁵ Raymond Leslie Buell, "The Development of Anti-Japanese Agitation in the United States," *Political Science Quarterly* 37, no. 4 (December 1922): 605–38.

⁵⁶ Richard A. Thompson, *The Yellow Peril, 1890–1924* (New York: Arno Press, 1978), 224.

⁵⁷ Edwin O. Reischauer, *The United States and Japan* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1951), 20; Payson J. Treat, *Diplomatic Relations between the United States and Japan, 1895–1905* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1938), 270; Charles E. Neu, *An Uncertain Friendship: Theodore Roosevelt and Japan, 1906–1909* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967), 20.

⁵⁸ Quoted in Raymond A. Esthus, *Theodore Roosevelt and Japan* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1966), 54.

⁵⁹ Akira Iriye, *Pacific Estrangement: Japanese and American Expansion, 1897–1911* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972), 111.

⁶⁰ Thompson, *The Yellow Peril*, 54.

⁶¹ Philip Charrier, "The Evolution of a Stereotype: The Royal Navy and the Japanese 'Martial Type,' 1900–1945," *War and Society* 19, no. 1 (May 2001): 28, 30.

Pro-Anglo-Saxon racial prejudices were activated by the 1895 Venezuela Crisis and were strengthened by the 1898 Spanish-American War.⁶² The activation was made possible by the spread of Anglo-Saxonist racial ideas at the end of the nineteenth century. On the eve of the Venezuela Crisis US Navy officer and geostrategist Alfred T. Mahan signaled that “a common tongue and common descent are making themselves felt, and are breaking down the barriers of estrangement which have separated too long men of the same blood.”⁶³ Erik Goldstein elucidates how Anglo-American elites consciously built on shared elements of this racial identity to bring rapprochement about.⁶⁴ During the Spanish-American War James Bryce, a future British ambassador to the United States, wrote of a “race consciousness” produced by what he saw as a racial rivalry between the Anglo-Saxons and the Latins. Sir Edward Grey, British foreign secretary between 1905 and 1916, argued that the conflict must “make us conscious of the ties of language, origin, and race.”⁶⁵ Once these prejudices were activated, they deflated American and British threat perceptions of each other and inflated their threat perceptions of Japan.

The “Yellow Peril”: Racial Difference Inflates US Threat Perceptions of Japan

Racial difference inflated US threat perceptions of Japan and undermined the alliance. Inflated threat perceptions were initially the strongest on the Pacific Coast, but after 1913 they became national phenomena and shaped the country’s Japan policy.⁶⁶ In Congress, anti-Japanese states enjoyed the support of the South, forming a powerful racial alliance. Congressman Ted Burnett (D-Alabama) asked: “We have suffered enough already for one race question and now will we fly to a conflict with another?”⁶⁷ Regions varied not so much in whether they held prejudices but which prejudices were held stronger. In the West and the South, regions with higher concentrations of racial minorities, prejudices related to the body were stronger. In the Midwest

⁶² Stuart Anderson, *Race and Rapprochement: Anglo-Saxonism and Anglo-American Relations, 1895–1904* (East Brunswick, NJ: Associated University Press, 1981), chaps. 5–6.

⁶³ Quoted in H. C. Allen, *Conflict and Concord: The Anglo-American Relationship since 1783* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1959), 176.

⁶⁴ Erik Goldstein, “Origins of the Anglo-American Special Relationship, 1880–1914,” in *Peacemaking, Peacemakers and Diplomacy 1880–1939*, ed. Gaynor Johnson (Newcastle, UK: Cambridge Scholars, 2010), 3–16.

⁶⁵ Paul A. Kramer, “Empires, Exceptions, and Anglo-Saxons: Race and Rule between the British and United States Empires, 1880–1910,” *Journal of American History* 88, no. 4 (March 2002): 1320–21.

⁶⁶ Roger Daniels, *The Politics of Prejudice: The Anti-Japanese Movement in California and the Struggle for Japanese Exclusion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), 46; Carey McWilliams, *Prejudice: Japanese Americans: Symbol of Racial Intolerance* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1944), 12.

⁶⁷ Eleanor Tupper and George E. McReynolds, *Japan in American Public Opinion* (New York: MacMillan, 1937), 31.

and the East prejudices related to aggressive intentions were stronger. I look at two Japanese-American crises (in 1913 and 1920) to show how racial prejudices embedded in racial identities exaggerated US threat perceptions through the two hypothesized mechanisms.

Based on prejudices related to the body, racial difference inflated nationwide fears of non-assimilable Japanese immigrants (the peril of migration). I focus on California because the intensity of the fear was strongest there and it pioneered discriminatory legislation in response to this peril, which later served as a model for Arizona, Arkansas, Delaware, Idaho, Kansas, Louisiana, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Texas, and Washington. In 1913 Californians militated for stricter racially discriminatory legislation, worried about what they saw as an existential threat posed by Japanese immigrants. As hypothesized above, the peril of migration was expressed in terms of fundamental difference and non-assimilability. Congressman William Kent (R-California) wrote to Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan that “there are such things as racial lines that cannot be crossed except with peril and irritation.”⁶⁸ Already the 1912 presidential campaign was saturated with anti-Japanese legislation promises, with Woodrow Wilson himself promising that

in the matter of Chinese and Japanese coolie immigration, I stand for the national policy of exclusion. The whole question is one of assimilation of diverse races. We cannot make a homogenous population of a people who do not blend with the Caucasian race . . . Oriental coolieism will give us another race problem to solve and surely we have had our lesson.⁶⁹

In response to these racial fears, the Webb-Heney Alien Land Act was signed into law in 1913, limiting the right of the Japanese to own agricultural land in California. For the next year the Japanese government complained to no avail to the US government that the measure was “unfair and intentionally racially discriminatory.”⁷⁰ The actual number of Japanese immigrants and their land ownership suggests that threat perceptions were racially inflated. In 1913 the Japanese represented at most 2 percent of California’s population of 2.5 million and operated less than 1 percent of its 28 million acres of farmland. The fast growth of Japanese immigrants and their concentration in

⁶⁸ Quoted in Roy Watson Curry, *Woodrow Wilson and Far Eastern Policy, 1913–1921* (New York: Bookman Associates, 1957), 49.

⁶⁹ Quoted in Lothrop Stoddard, *The Rising Tide of Color Against White World-Supremacy* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1920), 286.

⁷⁰ Japanese Ambassador to the Secretary of State, 9 May 1913, *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States*, United States Department of State, file 811.52/164 (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1913), 629 [hereafter FRUS]; Japanese Ambassador to the Secretary of State, 4 June 1913, FRUS, file 811.52/165, 633; Japanese Minister for Foreign Affairs to the Japanese Ambassador, 23 August 1913, FRUS, file 811.52/190, 651; Protest of Japan Against Certain Land Laws of the State of California, FRUS, file 811.52/292, 426–29.

TABLE 2 Japanese in the United States, 1880–1920⁷¹

Census Year	No. of Japanese in Continental US	Japanese as % of Total US Population	% Increase of Japanese in US	% of Japanese in US Residing in California	Japanese as % of Total California Population
1890	2,039	0.003	1,277.0	56.2	.095
1900	24,326	0.030	1,093.0	41.7	.680
1910	72,157	0.080	196.6	57.3	1.730
1920	119,207	0.110	65.2	58.8	2.040

California understandably amplified these fears. Yet at their peak Japanese immigrants amounted to no more than .08 percent of the US population and 2.04 percent of California's, too low to warrant serious concerns (see Table 2).

In 1920 another crisis occurred as many pushed for a stricter alien land law. California's governor, William D. Stephens, expressed hope that Japan would "understand our attitude and recognize that it is prompted solely by that inherent desire of every race and type of people to preserve itself."⁷² Senator James D. Phelan (D-California) claimed that Japanese assimilation was biologically impossible.⁷³ Chris R. Jones, president of the real estate board in Sacramento, stated during congressional hearings that there would be "no objection" to Japanese immigrants "if they were assimilable white people."⁷⁴ Not surprisingly, California adopted a stricter Alien Land Law in December 1920. The US ambassador to Japan, Roland S. Morris, told the Japanese ambassador to the United States, Baron Kijūrō Shidehara, that the law "was not primarily economic but that it arose from the fear of the people of California that the presence of a large body of unas-similable people would threaten them with a serious and persistent race problem."⁷⁵

Prejudices related to aggressive Japanese intentions also inflated fears of Japanese-American war (the peril of arms). Such a war seemed not only possible but also probable, and even inevitable. War scares erupted in 1913 and

⁷¹ T. Iyenaga and Kenoske Sato, *Japan and the California Problem* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1921), 92–94; www.census.gov/history/www/through_the_decades/fast_facts/.

⁷² Governor of California (Stephens) to the Secretary of State, 19 June 1920, FRUS, file 811.5294/57, vol. 3, 9.

⁷³ *Japanese Immigration, Hearings before the Committee on Immigration and Naturalization*, House of Representatives, 66th Cong., 2nd sess., 12–14 July 1920, pt. I, 1921, 25, 342 [hereafter *Japanese Immigration*].

⁷⁴ *Japanese Immigration*, 314.

⁷⁵ Memorandum by the Ambassador in Japan (Morris), temporarily in the United States, 22 July 1920, FRUS, file 811.5294/94, vol. 3, 12.

1920 throughout the nation.⁷⁶ Newspapers carried alarmist stories about the inevitable war with Japan. Some, like Captain Hobson, argued that Japanese immigrants were undercover soldiers.⁷⁷ To be sure, Japanese imperialist behavior did provide some reason for concern, but as one British official memorandum put it, these “apprehensions are often exaggerated.”⁷⁸ Prejudices of aggressive intentions provide part of the explanation.

The 1913 Alien Land Law brought a serious war scare. The *Los Angeles Examiner* wrote on 23 April: “Not since the guns of Fort Sumter boomed out over Charleston Harbor in 1861 has the nation fronted so serious a threat as it does today.”⁷⁹ In mid-May 1913 Admiral Bradley A. Fiske told Navy Secretary Josephus Daniels that “war is not only possible but even probable.”⁸⁰ An *American Political Science Review* article argued that the Japanese were threatening because they were “going just as far in their aggressiveness as sheer force will carry them.”⁸¹ The popularity of Sax Rohmer’s character, Dr. Fu Manchu, “the yellow peril incarnate in one man,” reflected and amplified fears of an aggressive Japan.⁸² Yet when the cabinet discussed the possibility of war, it concluded that Japan was financially unprepared for conflict. The war scare gradually disappeared, but it contributed to transforming Japan into a “Yellow Peril.”

The year 1920 brought another war scare. Fighting on the same side during World War I did little to mitigate American threat perceptions of Japan. Secretary of War John W. Weeks’s speeches emphasized the imminence of Japanese-American war. Newspaper headlines warned readers about the Japanese quietly invading America.⁸³ The British ambassador to the United States, Sir Auckland Geddes, pointed out that the American public opposed the alliance and viewed Japan as “the inevitable enemy of the next war.”⁸⁴ Senator Phelan claimed that the Japanese are “warlike people.”⁸⁵ A lonely voice in the anti-Japanese State Department, Secretary of State Robert Lansing lamented regarding American worries about Japanese activities in the Russian

⁷⁶ Iriye, *Pacific Estrangement*, 165.

⁷⁷ McWilliams, *Prejudice*, 32.

⁷⁸ Lee of Fareham, “Anglo-Japanese Alliance,” memorandum, British Cabinet Papers (CAB) 24/123, 21 May 1921.

⁷⁹ Buell, “The Development of Anti-Japanese Agitation in the United States,” 64.

⁸⁰ Walter LaFeber, *The Clash: U.S.-Japanese Relations throughout History* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1997), 105.

⁸¹ John H. Latane, “Our Relations with Japan,” *American Political Science Review* 8, no. 4 (November 1914): 583.

⁸² Sax Rohmer, *The Insidious Doctor Fu-Manchu* (New York: Pyramid, 1961 [1913]), 17.

⁸³ *Japanese Immigration*, 350.

⁸⁴ “Foreign Countries Report,” Foreign Office, CAB 24/155, no. 46, 29 June 1921, 10.

⁸⁵ Congressional Record (CR), 18 February–4 March 1921, 6th Cong., 3rd sess., vol. 60, pt. 4 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1921), 4147.

Far East that many Americans “are forever on the verge of hysterics about the deep and wicked schemes of Japan. They imagine some of the most preposterous things and report them as facts. I would think that some of these enemies of Japan were mentally unbalanced but for their sanity on all other subjects.”⁸⁶

During the crises of 1913 and 1920 the perils of migration and arms worked both directly through decision-makers’ threat perception and indirectly through the public’s threat perception to turn Japan into a “Yellow Peril” and to make the Anglo-Japanese Alliance appear dangerous. Although we have no public opinion data from this period, one scholar claimed that by 1921 90 percent of Americans opposed the alliance.⁸⁷ Ian Nish argued that “American opinion had developed a neurosis toward the Anglo-Japanese alliance,” while the US government went along with the public’s fears.⁸⁸ In 1921 alone a survey of naval officers, a study by the US Navy’s General Board, and an army report titled “Preliminary Estimate of the Situation” all expressed concerns about Japanese aggressive intentions and deemed the alliance threatening.⁸⁹ There were exceptions to this widespread fear of Japan and the alliance, especially among academics and religious leaders, but they represented an isolated minority.

The main reason why the United States perceived the alliance as threatening was not so much because it feared that Britain would assist Japan in a war against the United States. Most Americans saw an Anglo-American war as unthinkable and believed British reassurances—also codified in Article IV of the alliance treaty. Most were persuaded that, as British Foreign Secretary George Curzon told American ambassador George Harvey, “at no stage had it ever been contemplated by us, even as a remote possibility, that the agreement could be used against America.”⁹⁰ Instead, the United States feared that the alliance would further embolden an already aggressive Japan, increasing the likelihood of a Japanese-American war.⁹¹

Fears of Japanese immigration and a Japanese-American war were lower among African Americans than among whites. It is reasonable to suggest that this is partly because they held the anti-Japanese racial prejudices of the

⁸⁶ Quoted in Burton F. Beers, *Vain Endeavor: Robert Lansing’s Attempts to End the American-Japanese Rivalry* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1962), 121.

⁸⁷ Chung-Fu Chang, *The Anglo-Japanese Alliance* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1931), 254.

⁸⁸ Nish, *Alliance in Decline*, 281.

⁸⁹ Thomas H. Buckley, *The United States and the Washington Conference, 1921–1922* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press 1970), 49; Louis Morton, “War Plan Orange: Evolution of a Strategy,” *World Politics* 11, no. 2 (January 1959): 228.

⁹⁰ BDFA, pt. II, ser. E, vol. 4, doc. 17

⁹¹ CR, 67th Cong., 2nd sess., vol. 62, pt. 4, 2 March–22 March 1922, 3552; BDFA, pt. II, ser. E, vol. 4, doc. 363; Thompson, *The Yellow Peril*, 412.

white majority to a lesser extent. As the *Colored American* wrote, "We do not subscribe to [anti-Japanese] American race prejudice."⁹² Du Bois exaggerated only slightly when he argued that the Japanese could expect racial prejudice from whites but "sympathy and appreciation" from blacks.⁹³ African Americans opposed the fears of immigration and criticized racially discriminatory measures such as the 1913 California Land Law.⁹⁴ When in the 1920s they did succumb to the peril of migration, they worried primarily about European, not Asian, immigrants.⁹⁵ Similarly, African Americans were not subject to the peril of arms. In the wake of the Russo-Japanese War, they embraced the Japanese as "colored people." The *Colored American* argued that the "yellow peril" was no more than Asia's challenge to white imperialism; the *Washington Bee* likened Russian soldiers to Southern whites and warned that their victory would be a gain for white racism.⁹⁶ Before the 1921 Washington Conference blacks worried not about the termination of the alliance but the isolation of Japan by Anglo-Saxons.⁹⁷ African Americans were less concerned about a Japanese peril of migration and arms than whites, supporting another observable implication of the theory. Overall, however, racial difference inflated American threat perceptions of Japan.

Racial Difference Inflates British Threat Perceptions of Japan

Although Britain did not experience a wave of Japanese immigration similar to the United States, the peril of migration was strong in the British dominions. Partly due to the peril of migration, the dominions saw Japan as a "yellow Delilah" at the 1911 Imperial Conference, opposed racial equality at the 1919 Paris Peace Conference, and emphasized the importance of keeping

⁹² Reginald Kearney, *African American Views of the Japanese: Solidarity or Sedition?* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), 14, 42. This does not imply that any racial minority is exempt of racial prejudices in general.

⁹³ Reginald Kearney, "The Pro-Japanese Utterances of W.E.B. Du Bois," *Contributions in Black Studies* 13, no. 1 (1995): 210.

⁹⁴ Marc S. Gallicchio, *African American Encounter with Japan and China: Black Internationalism in Asia, 1895–1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 15; David J. Hellwig, "Black Leaders and United States Immigration Policy, 1917–1929," *Journal of Negro History* 66, no. 2 (Summer 1981): 111, 117.

⁹⁵ Kearney, *African American Views of the Japanese*, xvii, 68.

⁹⁶ Ibid., *African American Views of the Japanese*, 19, 28.

⁹⁷ Gallicchio, *African American Encounter with Japan and China*, 49; Kearney, *African American Views of the Japanese*, 60.

the empire under “the Anglo-Saxon race.”⁹⁸ Throughout this period Britain worked hard to persuade the dominions that in the absence of some Anglo-American agreement the security of the empire required the maintenance of this interracial alliance.⁹⁹

Like the United States, Britain was also subject to racial prejudices regarding Japanese aggressiveness. As early as 1911 a British defense analysis identified Japan as the most likely threat.¹⁰⁰ A 1917 official memo described Japan as “fanatically patriotic, nationally aggressive.”¹⁰¹ The First Sea Lord between 1919 and 1927, Admiral Earl Beatty, believed that the Japanese were “a military race,” and British evaluations of Japanese military power were partly based on this racial prejudice.¹⁰² A 1920 Foreign Office memo echoed these fears and warned that the racial threat posed by an “Orient” under Japanese leadership may ultimately challenge Western civilization.¹⁰³ However, as opposed to the United States, Britain believed that the alliance restrained, rather than amplified, Japanese aggressiveness.¹⁰⁴ As Curzon put it, “if they were not controlled and kept in order by their Alliance with this country they would be at liberty to pursue their aggressive policy in China and elsewhere unchecked, even to the length of waging war on the United States of America.”¹⁰⁵ Racially increased fears undermined the alliance, but in the absence of US opposition to the alliance and the possibility of Anglo-American cooperation, Britain would have probably renewed it. Explaining Anglo-American differences over the restraining power of the alliance is beyond the scope of this paper, but it is likely grounded in the US traditional suspicion of “entangling alliances” and Britain’s imperial confidence that it could control racial others.

⁹⁸ “Memorandum on Effect of Anglo-Japanese Alliance upon Foreign Relationship,” BDFA, pt. II, ser. E, vol. 2, doc. 12, 9; Committee of Imperial Defense Minutes (CID), 26 May 1911, Public Records Office (PRO), MF-13362, CAB 2: Minutes, 1902–1939; r. 1, CAB 2, vol. 3; BDFA, pt. II, ser. E, vol. 2, doc. 305, 373.

⁹⁹ Nish, *Alliance in Decline*, 51; CAB 5/2/2; CID, 26 May 1911, PRO, MF-13362, CAB 2: Minutes, 1902–1939; r. 1, CAB 2, vol. 3.

¹⁰⁰ Nish, *Alliance in Decline*, 50–51.

¹⁰¹ BDFA, pt. II, ser. E, vol. 2, doc. 242, 224.

¹⁰² Philip Charrier, “The Evolution of a Stereotype: The Royal Navy and the Japanese ‘Martial Type,’ 1900–1945” *War and Society* 19, no. 1 (May 2001): 23–46.

¹⁰³ “Memorandum by Mr. Wellesley respecting the Anglo-Japanese Alliance,” in *Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919–1939 (DBFP)*, 1st ser., vol. 14, doc. 97, eds., Rohan Butler, J. P. T. Bury, and M. E. Lambert (London: Her Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1966).

¹⁰⁴ Nish, *Alliance in Decline*, 46, 310; Antony Best, “The ‘Ghost’ of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance: An Examination into Historical Myth-Making,” *Historical Journal* 49, no. 3 (September 2006): 817; DBFP, 1st ser., vol. 4, doc. 97; BDFA, pt. II, ser. E, vol. 2, doc. 242.

¹⁰⁵ CID, Minutes of the 134th mtg., 14 December 1920, PRO, MF-13362, CAB 2: Minutes, 1902–1939; r. 1, CAB 2, vol. 3.

“Blood Brothers”: Racial Similarity Deflates Anglo-American Mutual Threat Perceptions

Whereas racial difference increased us and British threat perceptions of Japan and transformed it into a “Yellow Peril,” Anglo-American racial similarity decreased their mutual threat perceptions and transformed them into “Blood Brothers.”¹⁰⁶ Despite the fact that the number of immigrants of English descent to the United States was much higher than that of the Japanese, Americans welcomed them. For example, between 1901 and 1910, when Japanese immigration increased the fastest, the number of British immigrants to the United States was 2,714,188 compared to 54,838 Japanese.¹⁰⁷ Yet the peril of migration was largely absent toward Anglo-Saxon immigrants. Nonetheless, there were concerns toward the approximately 1.5 million Irish immigrants between 1881 and 1921, who were seen as racially different.¹⁰⁸

If racial difference heightened the peril of arms and made war with Japan seem probable and even inevitable, racial similarity lowered the peril of arms and made Anglo-American war unlikely and even unthinkable.¹⁰⁹ Theodore Roosevelt, John Hay, Arthur Balfour, and Joseph Chamberlain subscribed to Anglo-Saxon racial ideas that underpinned this solidarity. Andrew Carnegie went as far as to say that race sentiment was “the real motive which at the crisis determines his [man’s] action in international affairs,” while British Ambassador James Bryce opined that “the sympathy of race does not often affect the relations of states, but when it does it is a force of tremendous potency.”¹¹⁰

Anglo-American deflated mutual threat perceptions are the more remarkable because their material capabilities should have made them see each other as potentially threatening. British power was superior to that of Japan and American power was growing faster than that of Japan. As shown below (Table 3), Japan remained far below Britain and the United States on most power indicators, except population, where it exceeded Britain’s. Threat perception was not simply a function of material capabilities but of racial identity as well.

¹⁰⁶ For a similar argument, see Marilyn Lake and Vanessa Pratt, “‘Blood Brothers’: Racial Identification and the Right to Rule: the Australian Response to the Spanish-American War,” *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 54, no. 1 (March 2008): 16–27.

¹⁰⁷ Iyenaga and Sato, *Japan and the California Problem*, 218; Arthur C. Turner, *The Unique Partnership: Britain and the United States* (New York: Pegasus, 1971), 71.

¹⁰⁸ For Irish racial identity see Matthew Fry Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999); Noel Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White* (New York: Routledge, 1995). For Irish emigration see Kerby A. Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles: Ireland and the Irish Exodus to North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 569.

¹⁰⁹ For a good overview of how war became unthinkable due to racial and strategic reasons, see Maurice P. A. Hankey, “Three Questions of Imperial Defence related to Anglo-American Relations,” *CAB* 24/199; see also Vucetic, *The Anglosphere*, chap. 2.

¹¹⁰ Anderson, *Race and Rapprochement*, 13, 28, 52.

TABLE 3 US, British, and Japanese Power Indicators ¹¹¹

	Population (millions, 1920)	Iron/Steel Production (millions of tons, 1920)	Energy Consumption (millions of metric tons of coal equivalent, 1920)	First-line Battleships and Cruisers (1921)	Warship Tonnage (built and building, 1919)
US	105.7	42.30	694	16	2,067,478
Britain	44.4	9.20	212	26	2,829,661
Japan	55.9	0.84	34	10	980,426

Irish Americans, who at the time were perceived as racially different from Anglo-Saxons, were less subject to deflated threat perceptions of Britain. This supports another observable implication of the theory. Between 1889 and 1921, 11 percent of US Cabinet members had Irish origins.¹¹² Irish Americans and their supporters in Congress were skeptical of Anglo-Saxonism and distrusted Britain, a tendency reinforced by British opposition to the Irish independence struggle.¹¹³ Irish Americans were not numerous enough to annul the threat deflationary impact of Anglo-American racial similarity, but they did moderate this impact.

The Termination of the Alliance

Supporting the expected observable implications, racial similarity facilitated Anglo-American cooperation, whereas racial difference facilitated discord between the Anglo-Saxon and the Japanese. This section briefly traces these dynamics and explicates how they contributed to the termination of the alliance, but only after adducing more evidence that racially inflated threat perceptions contributed to American opposition to the alliance.

There are at least four categories of evidence that suggest a causal relationship between American racially heightened threat perceptions and opposition to the alliance. To start with, US congressional debates over the ratification of the Four-Power Treaty, which terminated the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, indicate that senators feared Japan and opposed the alliance not only due to Japanese imperialism in China and naval disarmament concerns, but also due to the perils of migration and arms. Senator John S.

¹¹¹ CR, 67th Cong., 1st sess., vol. 61, pt. 2, March–Nov. 1921, 1736, 1742; Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989 [1987]), chaps. 5–6.

¹¹² Bruce M. Russett, *Community and Contention: Britain and America in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1963), 106.

¹¹³ CR, 67th Cong., 2nd sess., vol. 62, pt. 4, 2 March–22 March 1922, 3856–57; Nish, *Alliance in Decline*, 279.

Williams (D-Mississippi) linked the ratification of the treaty to “the preservation of the race to which I belong, the great white race.”¹¹⁴ Senator Joseph E. Ransdell (D-Louisiana) included among the main reasons for ratifying the Four-Power Treaty the problem of “Japanese immigration and land ownership” and Japan’s “remarkably militaristic spirit.”¹¹⁵ Joseph T. Robinson (D-Arkansas) thought “the real trouble” between the United States and Japan was due to immigration, racial equality, and the right to land ownership, all part of the peril of migration. Robinson was also haunted by the peril of arms and worried that if Japan took control of China, together they would “constitute a yellow peril.”¹¹⁶ Others like Key D. Pittman (D-Nevada), Claude A. Swanson (D-Virginia), and Gilbert M. Hitchcock (D-Nebraska) were apprehensive about the peril of migration and of arms, while Lawrence C. Phipps (R-Colorado) submitted that this racial problem was ingrained in “inherent differences that grow out of what we politely call race prejudices.”¹¹⁷ Interestingly, a few Senators whose threat perceptions were most racially inflated became disenchanted with the Four-Power Treaty because in their view it did not do enough to mitigate the “Yellow Peril.” They wanted the treaty to not only terminate the Anglo-Japanese Alliance but also explicitly prohibit its future renewal.¹¹⁸

Second, racial prejudices and threat perceptions co-varied not only across racial minorities, as shown above, but across white individuals as well. Individuals who held Anglo-Saxon racial prejudices tended to trust Britain, fear Japan, and oppose the alliance. Most came from East Coast families of English descent. From 1889 to 1921, 63 percent of US cabinet members had British (excluding Irish) origins, of which 32 percent were English.¹¹⁹ Perhaps the best example is Henry Cabot Lodge. In a speech to Congress he gave a glimpse of his racial views, stating that races possessed “moral and intellectual characters, which in their association make the soul of race, and which represent the product of all its past, the inheritance of all its ancestors, and the motives of its conduct.”¹²⁰ During Senate debates over the ratification of the Four-Power Treaty, he argued that “the Anglo-Japanese alliance was the most dangerous element in our relations with the Far East and with the Pacific.” He fretted that it “encouraged the war spirit” in Japan and maintained that the demise of the alliance would eliminate this danger.¹²¹ Instead, Lodge advocated Anglo-American agreement, which would

¹¹⁴ CR, 67th Cong., 2nd sess., vol. 62, pt. 4, 2 March–22 March 1922, 3856.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 3906.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 3607, 3610; also CR, 67th Cong., 2nd sess., vol. 62, pt. 5, 1922, 4599, 4618.

¹¹⁷ CR, 67th Cong., 2nd sess., vol. 62, pt. 5, 4541, 4598, 4617, 4557, 4592, 4323.

¹¹⁸ CR, 67th Cong., 2nd sess., vol. 62, pt. 4, 2 March–22 March 1922, 4233; CR, 66th Cong., 2nd sess., vol. 59, pt. 9, 1920, 4492.

¹¹⁹ Russett, *Community and Contention*, 106.

¹²⁰ Thomas G. Dyer, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Idea of Race* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1980), 10.

¹²¹ CR, 67th Cong., 2nd sess., vol. 62, pt. 4, 2 March–22 March 1922, 3552.

be “the natural order of things” and would be “infinitely preferable” to the alliance.¹²²

Another category of evidence identifies a link between the racial prejudices of decision makers and their foreign policies. The connection between Wilson’s liberalism and racism in both domestic and foreign policy are well documented. He defended segregation at home, lamented the contamination of US bloodlines by new immigrants, and rejected Japan’s request to include the racial equality clause in the League of Nations Charter.¹²³ Willard Straight, an early advocate of anti-Japanese policies and one of the architects of William Howard Taft’s East Asian policy, was also prejudiced. He wrote to a friend in 1904 that “with no real cause for complaint I now find myself hating the Japanese more than anything in the World.” A year later he wrote that “One recognizes him [a Russian] as a man, and the Japanese will have to change a good deal before they cease to cause one to look for the tail.”¹²⁴ The exaggerated fears of Senator James Reed (D-Missouri) of the alliance make more sense when we understand that his foreign policy views were shaped by his racial prejudice and commitment to racial inequality.¹²⁵ Finally, racial prejudices also worked indirectly against the alliance through public opinion. In conversations throughout 1921 with British ambassador Auckland Geddes, Secretary of State Charles Hughes repeatedly stated that renewal would have a “very serious effect on American opinion.”¹²⁶ Public opposition to the alliance was partly based on racially amplified threat perceptions, as discussed above. In light of this it is reasonable to suggest that US opposition to the alliance was partly racial.

Racially inflated threat perceptions also undermined British support for the alliance, facilitated Anglo-American cooperation, and undermined the alliance. As a racial “alliance of convenience,” the Anglo-Japanese alliance was fraught with tension.¹²⁷ The dominions’ anti-Japanese attitude, Japan’s advocacy of racial equality, and its covert support for Indian seditionists were only a few racial causes of friction.¹²⁸ During World War I Japan was treated with much distrust by its allies, partly due to what the British Secretary of War,

¹²² BDFA, pt. II, ser. E, vol. 2, doc. 305, 372–73.

¹²³ Lloyd E. Ambrosius, “Woodrow Wilson and the Birth of a Nation: American Democracy and International Relations,” *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 18, no. 4 (December 2007): 689–718; Stephen Skowronek, “The Reassociation of Ideas and Purposes: Racism, Liberalism, and the American Political Tradition,” *American Political Science Review* 100, no. 3 (August 2006): 389; Preliminary Peace Conference, Protocol no. 5, Plenary Session of 28 April 1919, FRUS.

¹²⁴ Quoted in James C. Thomson Jr., Peter W. Stanley, and John Curtis Perry, *Sentimental Imperialists: The American Experience in East Asia* (New York: Harper and Row, 1981), 145–46.

¹²⁵ CR, 66th Cong., sess. 1, vol. 58, pt. 1, May–November 1919, 235–46; Charles N. Spinks, “The Termination of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance,” *Pacific Historical Review* 6, no. 4 (1937): 326.

¹²⁶ DBFP, 1st ser., vol. 14, doc. 17, 312; CAB 23/26, 30 June 1921.

¹²⁷ For “alliances of convenience,” see Evan N. Resnick, “Strange Bedfellows: US Bargaining Behavior with Allies of Convenience,” *International Security* 35, no. 3 (Winter 2010/2011): 144–84.

¹²⁸ BDFA, pt. II, ser. E, vol. 2, doc. 209.

Alfred Milner, saw as “very strong prejudice against Japan among the Entente Powers.”¹²⁹ Yet the alliance provided benefits, so the allies preserved it for two decades by engaging in pro-alliance propaganda, deception, secrecy, and court diplomacy.¹³⁰ However, when the United States showed some openness to Anglo-American cooperation and opposed the renewal of the alliance, British incentives to keep the alliance alive diminished drastically.

According to a Foreign Office memorandum, the alliance was “a flimsy scrap of paper to bind together two nations which are naturally antagonistic by race and temperament.”¹³¹ The Anglo-Saxonist Victor Wellesley, the assistant secretary in the Foreign Office superintending the Far Eastern Department, dismissed the alliance as “an unnatural and artificial compact” and advocated a “natural alliance with America.”¹³² William C. Greene, British ambassador in Tokyo, as well as the War Office and the Foreign Office stressed the importance of cooperating with the United States, not only on grounds of material interests (primarily naval disarmament and US forgiveness of British World War I debt) but also racial similarity.¹³³ For these reasons Britain moved away from renewing the alliance to a trilateral agreement to “steer a straight course” between its ally and its racial kin.¹³⁴ Because Japan expressed interest in renewing the alliance, Britain wanted to discuss the issue during the 1921 Imperial Conference.

At the 1921 Imperial Conference in London, racial patterns of conflict and cooperation prevented renewal and pushed Britain closer to a trilateral agreement. Although the United States was not present at the conference, it had an impressive degree of influence through the Canadian Prime Minister Arthur Meighen in London and US Secretary of State Charles Hughes in Washington. Before the conference Meighen telegraphed the British prime minister, David Lloyd George, to express his opposition to renewal.¹³⁵ He continued the crusade against the alliance at the conference, making clear his racial preference for cooperating with the Americans and terminating

¹²⁹ Nish, *Alliance in Decline*, 235.

¹³⁰ Antony Best, “Race, Monarchy, and the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, 1902–1922,” *Social Science Japan Journal* 9, no. 2 (October 2006): 171–86; Robert J. Gowen, “British Legerdemain at the 1911 Imperial Conference: The Dominions, Defense Planning, and the Renewal of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance,” *Journal of Modern History* 52, no. 3 (1980): 385–413; Nish, *Alliance in Decline*, 169, 235, 246–47.

¹³¹ “Memorandum on Anglo-Japanese Relations,” BDFA, pt. II, ser. E, vol. 2, doc. 242, 226.

¹³² “Memorandum by Mr. Wellesley on Anglo-American co-operation in the Far East,” DBFP, 1st ser., vol. 14, doc. 40, 33, 35. For a similar Foreign Office memo, see BDFA, pt. II, ser. E, vol. 2, doc. 12, 9.

¹³³ “Notes by Sir C. Greene on Japan’s Foreign Policy, bearing on the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, and Comments on Mr. Wellesley’s Minute,” BDFA, pt. II, ser. E, vol. 2, doc. 90; BDFA, pt. II, ser. E, vol. 2, doc. 12; War Office to Foreign Office, BDFA, pt. II, ser. E, vol. 3, doc. 8.

¹³⁴ BDFA, pt. II, ser. E, vol. 2, doc. 12; HANSARD, 1803–2005 British Parliamentary Debates on Anglo-Japanese Alliance, House of Commons Debates, 17 June 1921, vol. 143, 850; DBFP, 1st ser., vol. 14, doc. 212.

¹³⁵ “Memorandum by Mr. Lampson on Correspondence with the Canadian Government Relating to the Anglo-Japanese Alliance,” DBFP, 1st ser., vol. 14, doc. 363.

the alliance through a tripartite agreement.¹³⁶ Meanwhile, Secretary of State Hughes repeatedly put pressure on British ambassador Geddes, emphasizing that both the American public and the government opposed the alliance. The public regarded an American-Japanese war as inevitable. Hughes himself believed that the alliance made Japan more aggressive and increased the chances of war. Geddes informed Foreign Secretary Curzon on at least four occasions (24 June, and 2, 6, and 7 July) that the United States firmly opposed the renewal of the alliance.¹³⁷ Hughes signaled that the United States was interested in a tripartite agreement, which he regarded as a means to terminating the alliance. The effectiveness of Meighen's and Hughes' pressure was amplified by British eagerness to cooperate with the United States. This eagerness to cooperate, according to Lloyd George, was based on "a sense of fraternity" and "deep-rooted instinct."¹³⁸ A trilateral agreement became Britain's first choice.

The fate of the alliance was to be decided at the Washington Conference. The Japanese Ministry of War and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs were still "extremely anxious" to retain the alliance with minor modifications.¹³⁹ But as the conference drew near racial similarity encouraged Anglo-American cooperation against Japan. William V. Pratt, member of the US Navy's General Board, suggested that the alliance was only a temporary fix for issues that could be "better and more permanently solved in the interest of peace in the hand of an undivided Anglo-Saxon race."¹⁴⁰ Geddes informed British delegates that there is in the United States "a widespread desire for the effective cooperation of the English speaking peoples."¹⁴¹

The alliance was terminated at the 1921 Washington Conference. Racially deflated Anglo-American mutual threat perceptions encouraged cooperation against what they perceived as a "Yellow Peril" posed by Japan. This fatally undermined the alliance. According to the British ambassador to Japan, Charles Eliot, the alliance "was really dead before its termination."¹⁴² Japan had little choice but to acquiesce to its demise. On 13 December 1921 the United States, Britain, Japan, and France signed the Four-Power Treaty. The treaty was ratified in 1923, when it abrogated the alliance. The demise of the alliance facilitated Anglo-Saxon/Japanese alienation and

¹³⁶ William R. Louis, *British Strategy in the Far East 1919–1939* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), 65; Imperial Conference Minutes (ICM), 9th mtg., 29 June 1921, CAB 32/2; ICM, 12th mtg., 1 July 1921, CAB 32/2.

¹³⁷ BDFA, pt. II, ser. E, vol. 4, doc. 363; BDFA, pt. II, ser. E, vol. 4, doc. 5; DBFP, 1st ser., vol. 14, doc. 326.

¹³⁸ Louis, *British Strategy in the Far East 1919–1939*, 77; ICM, 30th mtg., 26 July 1921, CAB 32/2; Extract from Statement by Prime Minister in the House of Commons, BDFA, pt. II, ser. E, vol. 4, doc. 132.

¹³⁹ BDFA, pt. II, ser. E, vol. 4, doc. 182.

¹⁴⁰ Buckley, *The United States and the Washington Conference, 1921–1922*, 49.

¹⁴¹ Geddes to Curzon, DBFP, 1st ser., vol. 14, docs. 402, 404.

¹⁴² Eliot to Curzon, DBFP, 1st ser., vol. 14, doc. 548.

German-Japanese rapprochement, making World War II possible.¹⁴³ Fears of the "Yellow Peril" became self-fulfilling.

ALTERNATIVE EXPLANATIONS

This section addresses three alternative explanations that center on endogeneity, instrumentalism, and epiphenomenalism. First, one could object that race is endogenous to threat perception. Ido Oren eloquently articulates this criticism regarding democratic peace. He argues that democratic peace was the result of American decision makers and scholars defining democracy in ways that excluded America's enemies and included its friends. Democracy is the effect, not the cause, of democratic peace.¹⁴⁴ Drawing on this incisive criticism, one may submit that we see intra-racial cooperation and interracial discord not because of the causal import of race, but because the United States defined the boundaries of collective racial identities to include its friends (Britain) and exclude its enemies (Japan). Racial similarity between the United States and Britain was the effect of their prior amity, while racial difference between them and Japan was the effect of their troubled relations with Japan. In this view, race is not a cause but an effect.

This objection is a useful reminder that racial identities are malleable and can be shaped by the imperatives of international politics. However, reducing race to a malleable effect is taking a valid point too far. While identities are shaped by interstate interactions, they also shape these interactions. The literature reviewed earlier makes clear that identity has a causal impact on threat perception. Experimental studies provide compelling evidence that race has a causal status.¹⁴⁵ The causal arrow between identity and international politics runs both ways. Because much of the democratic peace literature treated democracy as a cause, it made sense for Oren to draw attention to democracy as effect. However, since much of the race literature conceives of racial identities and prejudices as effects of threat perception (see footnote 41), my contribution is to highlight race as a cause of threat perception.

The historical record also shows that racial identity boundaries do not simply mirror prior foreign relations. During the nineteenth century, Anglo-American relations were conflict-prone, as the War of 1812, the Oregon Crisis

¹⁴³ Winston Churchill, *The Second World War: The Gathering Storm* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1948), 13.

¹⁴⁴ Ido Oren, "The Subjectivity of the 'Democratic' Peace: Changing U.S. Perceptions of Imperial Germany," *International Security* 20, no. 2 (Fall 1995): 147, 178.

¹⁴⁵ Elizabeth A. Phelps and Laura A. Thomas, "Race, Behavior, and the Brain: The Role of Neuroimaging in Understanding Complex Social Behaviors," *Political Psychology* 24, no. 4 (December 2003): 747–58; Joshua Correll, Bernadette Park, Charles M. Judd, and Bernd Wittenbrink, "The Police Officer's Dilemma: Using Ethnicity to Disambiguate Potentially Threatening Individuals," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 83, no. 6 (December 2002): 1314–329; Mendelberg, *The Race Card*, chaps. 7–8.

(1845–46), the Trent Affair (1861), and the Venezuela Crisis (1895) illustrate. Yet ideas of racial similarity persisted, and, as Stephen Rock shows, they contributed to Anglo-American rapprochement.¹⁴⁶ Further, Japan became racially different (yellow) when its foreign relations with the West were almost nonexistent, rather than troubled.¹⁴⁷ Japan also remained racially different from the United States during periods of Japanese-American amity, despite efforts to “whiten” it.¹⁴⁸ Admittedly, racial prejudices mirror prior foreign relations more closely than racial identities do. To take this into account, I incorporated activation as an element of this “color of threat” theory. There are also examples of successful efforts to redefine racial identity boundaries, such as American efforts to “Orientalize” Russia during periods of Russian-American enmity.¹⁴⁹ Yet most of these cases fall outside the purview of this paper because they violate its scope condition, especially that pertaining to the uncertainty of the threat. At the time of “Orientalizing” efforts aimed at Russians there was little uncertainty about Soviet enmity and the threat this represented to the United States. One of Oren’s main points is that democratic peace scholars should not treat “democracy” as an objective and transhistorical category.¹⁵⁰ We should not make the opposite mistake by reducing race to an entirely subjective (rather than intersubjective) and infinitely malleable effect.

Another set of alternative explanations, instrumental models of threat inflation, would explain exaggerated threat perceptions as the function of manipulative elites maximizing interests under conditions of information asymmetry.¹⁵¹ One may argue that the media inflated threats to increase sales, politicians increased threats to gain votes, and labor unions increased threats to gain protection from Japanese labor competition. Instrumental threat inflation played an important role in activating racial prejudices, but following activation, racial dynamics went beyond instrumentalism. The instrumental model is insightful and powerful in many other cases, but here it is incomplete in at least two respects. First, it overestimates the accuracy of elite threat perception and elite ability to manipulate information. Part of the elite was

¹⁴⁶ Stephen R. Rock, “Anglo-US Relations, 1845–1930: Did Shared Liberal Values and Democratic Institutions Keep the Peace?” in *Paths to Peace: Is Democracy the Answer?* ed. Miriam Fendius Elman (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997), 139.

¹⁴⁷ Rotem Kowner, “Skin as a Metaphor: Early European Racial Views on Japan, 1548–1853,” *Ethnohistory* 51, no. 4 (Fall 2004): 751–78.

¹⁴⁸ Joseph M. Henning, “White Mongols?: The War and American Discourses on Race and Religion,” in *The Impact of the Russo-Japanese War*, ed. Rotem Kowner (London: Routledge, 2007), 153–66. For the Japanese as “honorary white,” see Yukiko Koshiro, *Trans-Pacific Racisms and the US Occupation of Japan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 16.

¹⁴⁹ Oren, “The Subjectivity of the ‘Democratic’ Peace,” 181.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 149.

¹⁵¹ Chaim Kaufmann, “Threat Inflation and the Failure of the Marketplace of Ideas: The Selling of the Iraq War,” *International Security* 29, no. 1 (Summer 2004): 5–48; Jane K. Cramer and Trevor A. Thrall, eds., *American Foreign Policy and the Politics of Fear: Threat Inflation since 9/11* (New York: Routledge, 2009).

subject to the “Yellow Peril,” and genuinely perceived Japan and the alliance as threatening. Many in the American military and naval forces, including Secretary of Navy Josephus Daniels, Rear Admiral Richmond P. Hobson, Chief of Naval Operations Bradley A. Fiske, Lieutenant General Adna R. Chaffee, and Major General J. P. Story shared the exaggerated racial fears of the general public.¹⁵² The State Department was also “solidly anti-Japanese.”¹⁵³ Second, although some elites used the “Yellow Peril” instrumentally, racial prejudice is necessary to explain why it resonated so well with the public. Economic competition does little to explain this phenomenon even in California, let alone in states like Louisiana and Kansas, where the “Yellow Peril” and subsequent anti-Japanese legislation emerged in response to a negligible number of Japanese residents.¹⁵⁴ Bringing racial prejudice in helps explain why threat inflationary arguments worked so well. As Lieutenant Colonel F. S. G. Piggott, British military attaché to Japan, observed, it was the “latent anti-Japanese” of the majority that made the success of the small minority of “professional anti-Japanese” possible.¹⁵⁵

A third alternative, the “dueling empires” explanation, suggests that race is epiphenomenal. The Anglo-Saxon states saw Japan and the alliance as threatening not because of racial difference, but because Japanese imperialism and revisionism threatened their imperialist ambitions in Asia. Akira Iriye contends that as Japanese and American power increased, their interests expanded and eventually clashed.¹⁵⁶ Many in Britain and the United States worried that the alliance allowed Japan to claim zones of special interests in Southern Manchuria and Eastern Mongolia, undermining the policy of equal commercial opportunity for all in China.¹⁵⁷ Japan’s annexation of Korea in 1910, its expansion in Southern Manchuria and Shantung, and its Twenty-One Demands on China in 1915 also provided reasons for concern.¹⁵⁸

This explanation accounts for part of why Japan was perceived as threatening, but without race it remains incomplete. To begin with, it neglects that the imperialist interests underpinning “dueling empires” were shaped by racial identities and prejudices. As Iriye himself recognized, “Each country’s expansionism manifested self-consciousness about civilization and race.”¹⁵⁹

¹⁵² Neu, *The Troubled Encounter*, 90; Daniels, *The Politics of Prejudice*, 77.

¹⁵³ Neu, *The Troubled Encounter*, 91.

¹⁵⁴ At the time of the anti-Japanese legislation Louisiana had 13 Japanese residents of a population of 2,363,880, while Kansas had 10 Japanese residents of a population of 1,801,028. Dudley O. McGovney, “The Anti-Japanese Land Laws of California and Ten Other States,” *California Law Review* 35, no. 7 (1947): 18.

¹⁵⁵ BDFA, pt. II, ser. E, vol. 5, doc. 210: page 5.

¹⁵⁶ Iriye, *Pacific Estrangement*.

¹⁵⁷ Appendix to CR, 67th Cong., 1st sess., vol. 61, pt. 9, March–Nov. 1921, 8951; Buckley, *The United States and the Washington Conference, 1921–1922*, 118; Merze Tate and Fidele Foy, “More Light on the Abrogation of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance,” *Political Science Quarterly* 74, no. 4 (December 1959): 544; DBFP, 1st ser., vol. 14, doc. 40, 35; Nish, *Alliance in Decline*, 104.

¹⁵⁸ Buckley, *United States and the Washington Conference*, 76.

¹⁵⁹ Iriye, *Pacific Estrangement*, 49.

There is also evidence that Anglo-Saxon racism was not epiphenomenal but encouraged Japanese revisionism, particularly after World War I. The exclusion of Japanese immigrants from the British Empire and the United States, Anglo-Saxon resistance to Japanese (but not Western) imperialism, and the rejection of Japan's racial equality proposal at the 1919 Paris Peace Conference are just a few examples of how the white supremacist international system discriminated against Japan.¹⁶⁰ While Japanese imperialism cannot be reduced to Western racism, the latter did encourage Japanese revisionism.

There is also reason to doubt that American threat perceptions were entirely dependent on the Japanese threat to US imperialist interests in China. Even those who lacked imperialist ambition in China held exaggerated fears. For instance, Roosevelt saw Japan as a "Yellow Peril" even though he thought the United States did not have significant imperialist interests in China.¹⁶¹ Conversely, some of those who worried about Japan's threat to Anglo-Saxon imperial interests in China were skeptical of the Yellow Peril. Secretary Lansing, who wanted to safeguard US commercial interests against what he saw as a Japanese threat, was unconvinced of the "Yellow Peril."¹⁶² Moreover, while Japanese imperialism and revisionism understandably raised concerns of "dueling empires," these concerns were inflated by racial difference. The 1905 Taft-Katsura memorandum, the 1908 Root-Takahira agreement, and even the 1917 Lansing-Ishii Agreement suggest that the two empires were not predestined to clash but could have reached some compromise. However, racially inflated fears made interracial conflict appear inevitable and impeded any such compromise. As Homer Lea put it in his *Valor of Ignorance*, "The two expanding empires could possibly avoid conflict only if they were related racially."¹⁶³ Concerns of Japanese imperialism were also inflated by racial fears that an "Oriental" coalition comprised of Japanese leadership and Chinese masses would ultimately threaten not only Anglo-Saxon imperial interests but also Western civilization itself.¹⁶⁴ In sum, alternative approaches are insightful, but without race they cannot account for the "Yellow" in the "Yellow Peril."

¹⁶⁰ DBFP, 1st ser., vol. 6, doc. 695, enclosure 4; Preliminary Peace Conference, Protocol no. 5, Plenary Session of 28 April 1919, *FRUS* 1919.

¹⁶¹ Neu, *Troubled Encounter*, 65.

¹⁶² For Lansing's effort to safeguard US commercial interests through a bargain with Japan, see Burton F. Beers, "Robert Lansing's Proposed Bargain with Japan," *Pacific Historical Review* 26, no. 4 (1957): 391–400. For his skepticism of the Yellow Peril, see *ibid.*, n. 86.

¹⁶³ Quoted in Iriye, *Pacific Estrangement*, 166.

¹⁶⁴ Thompson, *Yellow Peril*, 401; DBFP, 1st ser., vol. 14, doc. 97.

RACE AND THREAT IN INTERNATIONAL POLITICS

This article develops a racial theory of threat perception, which shows that under certain conditions race shapes international discord and cooperation. While racial difference inflates threat perceptions and facilitates discord, racial similarity deflates threat perceptions and facilitates cooperation. The value of this “color of threat” theory is demonstrated in the case of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance. Racial similarity deflated Anglo-American mutual threat perceptions and facilitated ostensibly natural cooperation between these racial kin. In contrast, racial difference inflated Anglo-American threat perceptions of Japan, made cooperation with Japan appear “unnatural,” and thus facilitated discord. The result was Anglo-American cooperation against the Japanese “Yellow Peril” to terminate the alliance.

The theory can be extended both empirically and theoretically.¹⁶⁵ The alliance case highlights how difference in racial identity causes overestimation of modest threats and results in overreactions or overbalancing. But if the theory is correct, there should also be cases of racially induced underestimation of serious threats or underbalancing. Threats are intersubjective, which leaves open the possibility of their subjective misperception. One promising research avenue could be to apply the theory to cases where shared racial identity causes underestimation of major threats. One could assess, for example, whether shared racial identities can provide an alternative explanation for “unanswered threats.”¹⁶⁶

Another research avenue is to extend the theory beyond the “Yellow Peril.” Racism has a self-fulfilling character, due to powerful cultural-cognitive mechanisms.¹⁶⁷ These mechanisms assist the diffusion and entrenchment of racism, and suggest that the theory’s logic is more broadly applicable. Preliminary research indicates that Japan’s threat perception was also racially inflated as it saw the Anglo-Saxon bloc as a “White Peril.”¹⁶⁸ The former leader of the Rikken Minseitō Party, Ryutaro Nagai, conducted a sustained campaign against the “White Peril,” while the pan-Asianist Kenichi Koderu complained that “the Yellow Peril is simply a bad dream, [but] the White

¹⁶⁵ For empirical extensions, see Zoltán I. Búzás, *Race and International Politics: How Racial Prejudice Can Shape Discord and Cooperation among Great Powers* (Unpublished diss., Ohio State University, 2012).

¹⁶⁶ Randall L. Schweller, *Unanswered Threats: Political Constraints on the Balance of Power* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006).

¹⁶⁷ On cultural and cognitive mechanisms of “self-fulfilling prophecy,” see Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 184–89; Hopf, “The Logic of Habit in International Relations,” 541.

¹⁶⁸ “Memorandum respecting the Tone of the Japanese Press with regard to the Washington Conference,” BDFA, pt. II, ser. E, vol. 4, doc. 195; BDFA, pt. II, ser. E, vol. 2, doc. 210, 171; Alston to Tilley, DBFP, 1st ser., vol. 6, doc. 522, 763; BDFA, pt. II, ser. E, vol. 2, doc. 338.

Peril is a present reality.”¹⁶⁹ Future research could apply the theory to cases beyond the “Yellow Peril,” where racially inflated fears of “White Peril,” “Brown Peril,” and “Black Peril” shaped patterns of international discord and cooperation.

Finally, future work should extend the theory to the post-decolonization period. During the last fifty years tremendous progress has been made on combating racism. The United States has an African American president, Americans see the Japanese more as a “Model Minority” than a “Yellow Peril,” and the Japanese-American alliance has been durable and successful. Although the importance of these changes cannot be understated, they should not be equated with a shift from a racial to a post-racial international system. Race still matters, albeit in more subtle and complex ways.¹⁷⁰ Nonetheless, the strong normative prohibition against racism may alter the threat of inflationary logic of racial difference. Further theoretical refinement may be required to capture this change. One potential direction is provided by the “implicit race card” literature.¹⁷¹ This contends that strategic elites garner support for their policies by inflating the public’s threat perception through implicit racial appeals that target the public’s prejudices. These implicit appeals circumvent the powerful normative prohibition against racism. Although the argument is typically applied to discuss the domestic impact of race, it should also be internationally relevant. To conclude, race does not always matter, but when it does “colorblind” IR theories are insufficient. I hope this article and the research avenues it identifies will contribute to taking race more seriously in the discipline.

¹⁶⁹ Sven Saaler, “Pan-Asianism during and after World War I: Kōdera Kenkichi (1916), Sawayanagi Masataro (1919), and Sugita Teiichi (1920),” in *Pan-Asianism: A Documentary History, Volume 1: 1850–1920*, eds., Sven Saaler and Christopher W.A. Szpilman, (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2011), 260; Ryutaro Nagai, “The White Peril,” *Japanese Magazine*, 14 June 1913, 39–42; Peter Duus, “Nagai Ryutaro and the ‘White Peril,’ 1905–1944,” *Journal of Asian Studies* 31, no. 1 (November 1971): 41–48.

¹⁷⁰ Nancy C. Allred, “Asian Americans and Affirmative Action: From Yellow Peril to Model Minority and Back Again,” *Asian American Law Journal* 14 (2007): 58; Phelps and Thomas, “Race, Behavior, and the Brain: The Role of Neuroimaging in Understanding Complex Social Behaviors”; Susan T. Fiske, Hilary B. Bergsieker, Ann Marie Russell, and Lyle Williams, “Images of Black Americans: Then, ‘Them,’ and Now, ‘Obama!’” *Du Bois Review* 6, no. 1 (Spring 2009): 83–101; Howard Winant, *The World is a Ghetto: Race and Democracy since World War II* (New York: Basic Books, 2002); Audie Klotz, “Norms Reconstituting Interests: Global Racial Equality and U.S. Sanctions against South Africa” *International Organization* 49, no. 3 (Summer 1995): 451–78.

¹⁷¹ For a good example, see Mendelberg, *Race Card*.