

Japan, Race and Equality

the racial equality proposal of 1919

NAOKO SHIMAZU

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Japan, Race and Equality

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The Racial Equality Proposal of 1919

Naoko Shimazu



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To my parents

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Series editor's preface

'we are a people whose glorious history will bear to be held up to the gaze of Western nations. We have learned a great many things from the West, but there are some instances of our having outstripped our tutors.'

So wrote Count Okuma in *Fifty Years of New Japan*, published in 1910, some five years after Japan had emerged victorious in the Russo-Japanese war. Over the 87 years that have elapsed since those words were written, the history of Japan's relations with the rest of the world has passed through phases more turbulent than Okuma could probably have imagined. The tragic and terrible history of the 1930s and 1940s gave way, however, to decades in which the Japanese forged an amazing (and often deserved) reputation for economic development and efficiency. The idea of the Japanese outstripping their tutors is no longer as exotic as it must have sounded to an English-speaking readership in 1910, but its content has been radically changed with the passage of time. Japan has been widely accused by some Americans and others of exploiting American goodwill and soft attitudes since the 1950s in such a way as to maximise ruthlessly the interests of Japanese corporations and the Japanese economy in general. Whatever the truth of these accusations, during the late 1990s many influential Japanese have been moving to the view that forces of globalisation leave Japan little choice in terms of national interest but to move towards a more open, less controlled, form of economic, political and social order. Entrenched resistance to such a fundamental systemic change remains strong, but the balance of influences is shifting significantly. How the Japanese seek to resolve the dilemma of how far they can preserve a distinctive Japanese identity and practice in an increasingly globalising world is fascinating to watch.

The Nissan Institute/Routledge Japanese Studies Series seeks to

foster an informed and balanced, but not uncritical, understanding of Japan. One of its main aims is to show the depth and variety of Japanese institutions, practices and ideas. Another is, by using comparison, to see what lessons, positive and negative, can be drawn for other parts of the world. The tendency in commentary on Japan to resort to outdated, ill-informed or sensational stereotypes still remains, and needs to be combated.

It is not perhaps widely remembered nowadays that Japan proposed a racial equality clause at the Versailles Peace Conference in 1919. The initiative failed in large part as a result of determined opposition from Great Britain and her Dominions, spearheaded by the vitriolic Prime Minister of Australia, William Morris Hughes, fanatical defender of the White Australia Policy. Among other reasons, it also failed because President Woodrow Wilson of the United States regarded establishment of the League of Nations (which the US subsequently failed to join) as having higher priority than a clause outlawing racial inequality. In this luminous study, Dr Shimazu shows that a principle that would be practically non-controversial in the 1990s seemed extraordinary and even threatening to the major powers in the very different, imperialistic, world that existed decades earlier. At the same time, for Japan, torn between the idea of being a leader in Asia and the idea of being one of the 'western' imperialist powers, the clause was hardly conceived as a way of giving equality to all races. Rather, its purpose was to assert equality of status for Japan in the ranks of the major powers. In Dr Shimazu's words, Japan was 'an arrogant yet insecure power, dismissive of yet sensitive to international opinion'. Together with other snubs from the Western world, such as the Triple Intervention which followed the Japanese victory in the Sino-Japanese war of 1894-5, the rejection of the racial equality clause in 1919 may well be seen as a trigger for the chain of events that led to Japanese militarisation and international aggression two decades later. On the other hand, Dr Shimazu persuasively argues that the Japanese attempt, however self-serving, to promote a racial equality principle after the end of the First World War, made it much easier to embed such a principle into the Charter of the United Nations after the ending of a second world conflict even more destructive than the first.

Acknowledgements

This book is based on my doctoral thesis submitted to the University of Oxford in 1995. I have restructured the thesis substantially in order to focus more sharply on my particular approach to the topic. I am indebted to many friends and colleagues. My deep gratitude goes to my supervisors who, at various stages, gave me encouragement, support and advice. They were Dr John Darwin and Dr Andy Hurrell, both of Nuffield College, Oxford, Professor Benedict Kingsbury, now at Duke University, and Dr Ann Waswo of the Nissan Institute, Oxford. I would like to make a special mention of Professor Banno Junji of the Institute of Social Science at the University of Tokyo, to whom I owe the greatest intellectual debt. His critical and imaginative approach to political history has inspired me deeply over the years. He also enabled me to spend four months in the summer of 1987 as Foreign Research Scholar at the Institute of Social Science. At Oxford, the Nissan Institute has always made me feel welcome, and I would especially like to extend my thanks to Professor Arthur Stockwin, Dr Roger Goodman and Ms Diana Dick. My examiners, Professor Ian Nish of the London School of Economics, and Dr Rosemary Foot of St Antony's College, gave me excellent comments and suggestions, which I was able to include before publication. Last, but not least, all the 'suffering' one has to go through in completing a book would not have been possible without the support of my many good friends. In particular, I would like to mention Erica Benner, Antony Best, Harumi Goto-Shibata, Masa Okano, Andreas Osiander and Paola Rota. Many thanks are especially due to John Driffill.

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Ministry, the National Diet Library, the University of Tokyo Library, the Public Record Office in Kew Gardens, House of Lords Record Office, the British Library, the Bodleian Library, the University of Cambridge Library, the National Archives in Washington D.C., the Library of Congress, Seeley G. Mudd Manuscript Library at Princeton University, Manuscripts and Archives at Yale University, and Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Columbia University. In accordance with normal Japanese practice, Japanese names have been rendered with the family name preceding the given name. Also some key Japanese words have been used in the text in order to give more accurate nuances but in such cases, the English equivalents are provided in parenthesis.

N.S.
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Introduction

Japan attended the Paris Peace Conference of 1919 as one of the five great powers, and as the only non-Western great power. It was the culmination of a half century of intensive national effort to create a modern state, since the Meiji Restoration of 1868 when Japan discarded its late-feudal past. In retrospect, the presence of Japan in the Hall of Mirrors at Versailles, signing the Treaty of Versailles on 28 June 1919 with all the powers and looking very much part of the international scene, was a truly astonishing feat. Only fifty years before, it would have been impossible to imagine the Japan that we saw in 1919.

In principle, therefore, Japan was a paragon of success, proud and content with its newly acquired position of great eminence. Although Japan's rise may appear to have been successfully and effortlessly carried out, there inevitably existed internal and external tensions surrounding its emergence as a great power. As the Paris Peace Conference showed, the 'world' of 1919 was still dominated by the Western imperial powers, and Japan's position within it was unique. Japan was not only the only non-Western great power, but also the only one of the five non-Western powers to attend the conference.¹ In this sense, Japan's participation was highly significant because it was the only power in the non-Western world which could possibly make any impact on the conference and the world thereafter.

Many of the decisions taken at the Paris Peace Conference of 1919 were to have a lasting impact on various aspects of twentieth-century history. Possibly the most successful idea to emerge from the conference was the principle of self-determination, advocated by President Woodrow Wilson. However, the whole peace process was complicated by the fact that underneath the surface of 'new' diplomacy, as propounded by Wilson, there lay the methods and interests of the old, exercised fully by the great powers. The 'world' was in a state of flux, as not only was the old European *status quo* being threatened by the

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American 'new' diplomacy, but both Europeans and Americans felt threatened by the rise of revolutionary socialism in the Soviet Union. It was in this international environment, where contrary forces were at work, that the principle of racial equality emerged for the first time. This study is about understanding the rise and fall of the racial equality proposal of 1919, from the perspectives of the three protagonists – the Japanese who proposed it, and the British and Americans who opposed it. Moreover, it is about understanding the principle of racial equality as it stood at the time.

The picture of Japan painted in this study is a subtle and complex one. It shows Japan as an arrogant, yet insecure power, dismissive of, yet sensitive to international opinion. Domestically, there was a wealth of conflicting visions of Japan's role in Asia, in terms of its status as either the leader of Asia or as one of the 'Western' imperial powers. Because the racial equality proposal revealed more of the side of Japan which had not been adequately explored in the past, it provides an insight into how the Japanese themselves perceived their identity as being inherently dialectical, as both a 'Western' and an 'Asian' great power. Indeed, one of the most potent messages to emerge from the ensuing analysis is the uncertain nature of Japan's international status. In 1919, Japan still had not gained enough political confidence or military strength to act more independently of the Western imperial powers. Therefore, Japanese politics of the time generally consisted of reconciling the contradictory forces of pro-Westerners and 'independent' minded pan-Asianists. Importantly, the racial equality proposal was one issue which revealed such internal contradictions.

For Japan, the desire to gain 'equality with the West' had been one of the consistent national imperatives since the 1850s when the 'unequal' treaties were signed.² One of the major tasks of the Meiji government after 1868 was to revise these 'unequal' treaties, in order to gain 'equality' with the Western powers. After several unsuccessful attempts, beginning in 1878, the Japanese government finally managed to revise the 'unequal' treaties in 1894, taking effect from 1899. It has been argued that the pursuit of pragmatic concerns and concrete goals came to characterise Japanese foreign policy, which lacked an 'ideological backbone'.³ However, though the means of achieving the objective of the unequal treaties revision involved a pragmatic process, it can be argued also that the underlying motivation to achieve that objective must have been dominated by a deeper need to prove that Japan was not 'less' than the West, but equal to it. Seen in this light, the notion of Japan's 'equality with the West' was a highly significant underlying 'ideological' force in its thinking on foreign relations from the incep-

tion of modern Japanese foreign policy. From this historical perspective, it may not be too surprising that it was the Japanese who submitted the racial equality proposal in 1919.

In the past, the question of why the Japanese government submitted the racial equality proposal at the peace conference has attracted some scholarly attention. From the standpoint of Japanese history, the proposal stands out as an aberration in Japanese foreign policy for having insisted on the acceptance of an international principle at a major international conference. One of the major tasks of this study, then, is to attempt to understand 'why' the Japanese submitted the proposal. In this sense, this study is about the history of Japan around the time of the peace conference. In spite of the existence of many excellent general works on the Paris Peace Conference,⁴ there has been no sizeable study on Japan's participation from the Japanese perspective. This study hopes to fill in, albeit in a small way, a gap in the existing literature on Japan's emergence as a great power and its participation at the Paris Peace Conference.

Moreover, this study is also one of diplomacy, since many of the key observations made in the context of the racial equality negotiations have some relevance as to how diplomacy was conducted generally at the peace conference. The racial equality proposal illustrates a typical case of great power diplomacy at work where the primacy of *realpolitik* had set the tone for deliberations, negotiations and decisions on many vital issues. Since diplomacy, by definition, cannot be a one-way process, it is necessary to understand why the Japanese proposal was defeated by Britain and the United States as a principle unsuitable to be part of the covenant of the League of Nations. This sets in context the second major task of this study which is to explain the Anglo-American responses to the Japanese proposal. Only by understanding the international as well as national positions held by the three protagonists can we hope to reach a satisfactory, comprehensive understanding of this issue. In so doing, this study shows that the diplomacy surrounding the racial equality proposal was complicated by many layers of misapprehension on all sides. None of the protagonists had a neatly confined single perspective on the racial equality issue because, in most cases, there existed many diverse and often conflicting perspectives within the seemingly united national front. Hence, it is necessary to identify the separate strands, and to give appropriate weighting in terms of the ultimate decisions made by each state. In the end, the most noticeable commonality in the position taken by the protagonists is that each acted according to the perceived threat or gain to its national interests.

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Lastly, this study is about the evolution of the principle of racial equality. This was how the topic germinated initially, as it seemed strange that racial equality should be discarded in 1919, only to be fêted as being fundamentally crucial to the peace and stability of the international system in the United Nations Charter only some twenty-six years later. Evidently, what happened in the interwar period and the Second World War had a profound effect on the mores of society at both national and international levels, causing a radical change in attitudes towards some ideas which had previously appeared unimportant and even marginal. In this sense, the proposal of 1919 can be seen as the first major stage of the development of racial equality as a general principle of international importance. As the perspective taken here is not theoretical but historical, it will focus on understanding how contemporaries understood the term in 1919. The findings presented in the ensuing chapters may disappoint some purists, who may wish to believe that the Japanese had valiantly attempted to fight off Western racism by demanding universal racial equality. But there was little unselfish idealism displayed by any of the main players in this story. Hence, it will not be possible to reach a 'heroic' conclusion, but instead a more sober one. It will be shown that the principle of racial equality, as we conceive of it today in the universalist sense, was not even the issue at stake during the racial equality negotiations. Nonetheless, it cannot be denied that this is an important revelation as it brings us closer to understanding the values which governed the international society of 1919.

Methodologically, this study attempts to redress what is perceived to be an incomplete picture of the story presented in the existing literature. It seems that much of the existing literature on the racial equality proposal adopts a certain analytical position in examining the issue. For instance, one Japanese scholar has argued that the proposal was submitted to resolve the anti-Japanese immigration problems in the Anglo-Saxon territories by inserting a racial equality clause into the covenant of the League of Nations.⁵ However, this view was evidently adopted as a result of the type of original sources consulted. Another scholar has looked at the issue from the angle of Australian immigration.⁶ Yet another analysed the issue from the perspective of racial prejudice and racism.⁷ Then there have been those who have taken interest in the issue from the perspective of some of the contemporary Japanese personalities involved in the racial equality debate in 1919.⁸ The most comprehensive study from the Japanese perspective published thus far has been an article by an international lawyer who attempted to look at the issue without any obvious analytical bias.⁹ As

many previous scholars have tended to approach the study of the proposal from a certain angle, they have invariably produced findings apparently cogent to their analytical positions. This has resulted in the lack of a systematic, full-length study. Moreover, many of the works have tended to make generalisations without making substantive elaborations, and to be too uncritical of the perspectives of previous scholars. Therefore, this is an attempt to provide a more holistic treatment of the subject by analysing the history of the proposal, as far as practicable, in its totality. Above all, it is a critical study which questions all the assumptions hitherto made about the proposal and, in turn, seeks to present an alternative set of explanations which have been subjected to a more rigorous analytical test in the light of the much larger pool of primary sources consulted.

In order to have a systematic approach to examining the three countries, an overall analytical framework based on five categories of possible explanations was constructed and applied. These explanations provide satisfactory coverage of all the possible factors which are needed in analysing Japanese motivations and Anglo-American responses. The five explanations can be broadly categorised as follows: immigration, universal principle, great power status, domestic politics and politics of bargaining at the peace conference. It is necessary to specify what the terms of each of these explanations are, and how they applied to each country. The analysis of all the explanations will show that no single explanation, but rather a combination of explanations is needed to understand the respective positions taken by Japan, Britain and the United States on the racial equality proposal.

First, there is the immigration explanation which would argue that the Japanese government had submitted the racial equality proposal to resolve the long-standing Japanese immigration problems in the United States and the British Dominions. This was a pragmatic interpretation of the Japanese proposal which underlined how preoccupied the great powers were at the time with practical problems of immigration. In order to understand whether this had any part in explaining the Japanese motivations, it is necessary to investigate the link between the racial equality proposal and immigration in terms of how the proposal was formulated as a result of the perceived correlation between the two issues. In analysing how the explanation is applicable to the British position, it is necessary first to understand why the proposal was interpreted by the British government as implying immigration, and then why it was particularly important for Australia. Similarly, for the American position, an analysis will be made of the history of Japanese immigration in the United States in terms of how

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this affected the politics of immigration during the racial equality negotiation at the peace conference.

Immigration is the dominant explanation given in the existing literature on the racial equality proposal. Among Japanese scholars, the immigration factor is seen to explain the political origins of the racial equality proposal. For instance, Ikei Masaru argued that the proposal was intended to resolve the immigration problems.¹⁰ Onuma was also led to conclude that the political origins of the proposal must have derived from the national interest in resolving Japanese immigration problems.¹¹ Fitzhardinge, who discussed the racial equality proposal from the perspective of Australian Premier Billy Hughes, also discussed the proposal as an 'immigration' proposal.¹² It will be argued that the importance of immigration lay in its symbolic value and that the Japanese government wanted to resolve the immigration problems because that was seen as part of the 'diplomacy of saving face' (*memmoku gaikō*).¹³ In spite of its importance, however, this study will reveal that immigration was not the only explanation of the proposal but one of many, in terms of understanding both the Japanese motivations and the Anglo-American responses.

Second, there is the explanation which claims that the racial equality proposal was a demand for a universal principle of racial equality. This would argue that it was the intention of the Japanese government to use the peace conference as the opportunity of instituting formally the idea of universal racial equality which had been developing within Japanese foreign policy thinking. Accordingly, the proposal was an expression by the Japanese government of their belief in the universal principle of racial equality of all peoples. In terms of analysing the Anglo-American responses, it would similarly argue that Britain and the United States perceived the Japanese proposal as demanding universal racial equality, and that the proposal was based on idealistic and altruistic motives.

This explanation, which appears to be the most obvious, is widely quoted in literature, especially among international relations writers, and this is due to the fact that universal principles are considered to be an essential element of the study of the European expansion of international society.¹⁴ For instance, this is how the English School interpreted the Japanese proposal:

Japan proposed that the clause in the League of Nations Covenant providing for religious equality should be broadened to embrace racial equality. The principle of the equality of all men might have been taken to mean all men, yellow and even black, as well as white,

but the consequences of such a doctrine for the domestic policies of the powers – the treatment of the negroes in the United States, the ‘White Australian policy’ – militated against its acceptance.¹⁵

Another scholar went even further on similar grounds to claim that it was a ‘human rights’ proposal.¹⁶ Ikei argues that Japan, as one of five great powers, attempted to represent the interests of the yellow race through the proposal.¹⁷ What is attempted in this study is to gain an insight into how Japan, Britain and the United States approached the racial equality proposal as a demand of principle. The analysis of the proposal suggests that the racial equality proposal of 1919, in spite of these assumptions and extrapolations, was not really about universal racial equality. In this sense, it concurs with the view of Onuma that the racial equality proposal was not about universal racial equality, but an interesting case whereby Japan seemingly took an important international initiative to change the existing international order without ever having any awareness or intention of doing so.¹⁸

The third explanation claims that the racial equality proposal was motivated by Japan’s insecurity as a non-white great power and its desire to secure its great power status in the future international organisation. It introduces a new element into the criteria for what constituted ‘great power’, because what the Japanese attempted to do was to claim great power equality on the basis of racial equality. This explanation suggests that the basic criteria of great power status identified by the English School of Martin Wight and Hedley Bull may have been too Eurocentric in its assumptions.¹⁹ It will argue that Japan, coming from the non-Western tradition, had a different agenda in submitting the proposal deriving from a different perspective on international relations. This explanation was not applicable to the Anglo-American responses.

In the existing literature, this explanation has been suggested, fleetingly by Russell Fifield, that the Japanese wanted to establish their position definitively as a great power and hence the proposal was a sincere manifestation of this desire.²⁰ Fifield argues that Japan had wanted to establish its status by submitting a proposal such as universal racial equality which would be commensurate with its great power status. Unfortunately, he did not elaborate this claim. Onuma examined Japan’s historical experience as a non-white great power, and while he seems to imply that great power status was an important factor, he did not specifically refer to it as a category.²¹ Overall, there has not been enough serious consideration given to this explanation, possibly because this factor appeared more implicit than explicit. This

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study will emphasise great power status as the most important analytical factor in explaining the Japanese motivations.

Fourthly, the domestic politics explanation argues that it is necessary to understand the proposal in relation to the domestic political constraints of the respective countries. Since the category of domestic politics is too wide, we focus here on that aspect of domestic politics which had a direct relevance to the racial equality proposal. In the case of Japan, the explanation would argue that the proposal was related to the domestic politics surrounding the League of Nations, and more precisely, Prime Minister Hara's pro-League politics. Although the response of the Japanese public to the racial equality proposal has been analysed in the Japanese works²², the domestic political explanation, especially in terms of the governmental response to the League of Nations, has been largely overlooked. This study will argue that the domestic political factor was important in understanding the Japanese government's attitude to the League of Nations and, concomitantly, the racial equality proposal which came as part and parcel of its League policy. In the case of the British Empire delegation, it will be argued that the importance of the proposal to Australia's domestic politics, particularly in terms of its perceived threat to the 'White Australia' policy, was the reason for the Australian opposition. As for the Americans, the explanation argues that domestic partisan politics, as manifested in the anti-League and anti-Wilson movement in the United States, had a limited role in explaining the American position. Contrary to the interpretation that President Wilson was affected by the domestic anti-Wilson lobby which resulted in him changing his attitude towards the racial equality proposal,²³ it will be shown that the domestic political factor was not as decisive as it seemed.

Fifthly, there is the politics of bargaining explanation, which claims that the proposal was used as part of the bargaining made to achieve other ends at the peace conference. This is a *realpolitik* view of the proposal. This explanation applies most readily in understanding the American positions, though it was not at all applicable in understanding the Japanese and British positions. At the first level, there was a group within the American delegation which suspected the Japanese government of having deliberately constructed the proposal as a political ploy to obtain Shantung. This argument, known as the 'bargaining chip' theory, was one of the key interpretations given to the proposal by the contemporaries in the American delegation at Paris.²⁴ The second level of this explanation argues that President Wilson had used his opposition to the proposal indirectly to attain his objective of establishing the League of Nations. Therefore, Wilson had made an

implicit trade-off by sacrificing the Japanese proposal in order to salvage his ultimate priority, the League of Nations. This is a completely novel perspective from which to explain the American position.

Although the framework consisting of the five explanatory factors listed above was used duly in the process of reaching the conclusions presented in this study, we are not testing the applicability of each factor here. This is because not all factors are of equal importance and relevance in each case. Hence, this study represents the finalised version of the analysis. For instance, although the possibility of all the five explanations in explaining the Japanese motivations have been considered, we focus here on the relevant three, that is, great power status, immigration and domestic politics, out of the possible five (the remaining two are universal principle and politics of bargaining), because the other two were simply not relevant. Similarly, in the case of Britain, we discuss the immigration and domestic politics factors because they were central to explaining the British opposition. For the American case, three explanatory categories will be addressed – immigration, domestic politics and politics of bargaining at the peace conference. Having said that, the explanation based on racial equality as a universal principle is so fundamental to our understanding of the principle today that an attempt has been made to address the question whenever suitable within the analysis.

At this juncture, it may be necessary to explain why the decision was made to leave out a discussion of the responses of the other great powers, namely France and Italy, and to concentrate on Britain and the United States. Admittedly, including France and Italy would provide an interesting contrast, as both supported the proposal. France declared that it was impossible not to accept the Japanese proposal because it was ‘an indisputable principle of justice’.²⁵ The French were sympathetic to the Japanese proposal because they perceived of it as a demand of universal principle, and saw hypocrisy in the American determination to create the League of Nations based on international justice while refusing racial equality on the grounds of Japanese immigration.²⁶ The Italians, represented in the League of Nations Commission by Prime Minister Vittorio Orlando, were similarly supportive of the racial equality proposal mainly because its spirit was perceived as in ‘harmony’ with the new organisation.²⁷ Although France and Italy supported the Japanese proposal, they were ‘uncommitted’ supporters, while the British and Americans were ‘committed’ opponents. Therefore, the degree of their interest in the issue was marginal throughout the negotiation, and this is reflected in the amount of material available on the topic, both in terms of primary

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and secondary sources. Moreover, the fact that Japan considered Britain and the United States to be the two key Western powers in this period, especially after the Bolshevik revolution of 1917, implies that more insight can be gained by focusing on the Anglo-American responses. Hence it was considered best to leave out the Italian and French responses, as it would not have been possible to give them the same coverage and depth of analysis. Needless to say, some materials on the French and Italian perspectives have been incorporated whenever appropriate; similarly, Chinese reactions to the proposal have also been incorporated whenever appropriate.

The structure of this study is as follows. Chapter 1 provides a detailed account of the negotiations of the racial equality proposal in the League of Nations Commission at the Paris Peace Conference. It is mainly chronological and largely descriptive, as its principal purpose is to paint a picture of the negotiations which is as comprehensive as possible, taking into account the Japanese, the British and Dominions, and the American positions. The Japanese proposal was negotiated over a period of two months and was ultimately defeated. What will become apparent during the course of the study is that the nature of the proposal changed substantially during the negotiations. Australia emerges as the winner who effectively managed to impose its own will on the overall perspective of the British Empire delegation, in order to reject the proposal. The American position remained ambiguous, though in the end it was President Wilson's unanimity decision which defeated the proposal.

Chapters 2 through 4 examine the Japanese motivations, each chapter dealing with one of the three explanatory factors of domestic politics, immigration and great power status. The second chapter analyses the domestic political origins of the proposal, which is an entirely new explanatory factor. It looks at the political origins of the proposal in the Hara government in late 1918 and how the proposal became part of Japan's peace policy. The most important revelation to be made is the inseparable connection made in domestic politics between the proposal and the League of Nations. An analysis of Japanese public opinion will be made, revealing that the Hara government's pro-League position ran against the prevailing view of the wider public which remained more pan-Asian and sceptical of the League. It will be suggested that Prime Minister Hara and his pro-Western supporters most likely needed to have a racial equality proposal in order to make the acceptance of the League more palatable to a not insubstantial number who remained sceptical of the benefits which Japan would accrue in joining the League.

Chapter 3 deals with immigration, the predominant explanatory factor in the existing literature. It provides a detailed background to the history of anti-Japanese immigration policies in the Anglo-Saxon territories, and how this was perceived to be one of the major diplomatic problems for the Japanese Foreign Ministry. One of the main conclusions to be drawn from the chapter is that the racial equality proposal was perceived to have been about immigration precisely because of the bureaucratic interest of the Japanese Foreign Ministry. Most significantly, it will show how closely linked this explanatory category is to that of great power status as a concrete manifestation of Japan's unease with its international status.

Chapter 4 deals with the most important explanatory factor, that of great power status, in explaining the Japanese motivations. It develops the idea that the underlying intention behind the proposal was related to the much larger problem of Japan as an emerging non-white great power at the time. It will be argued that Japan encountered a number of serious challenges from the West in the period 1895–1919, contributing to Japan's underlying sense of insecurity as the only great power of Asian origin. This insecurity was often expressed in terms of Japan's isolation from the West, especially by the Anglo-Saxon powers. Moreover, there existed domestically a complex dialectical debate about Japan's identity, between those who saw it as essentially Asian and those who saw it as Western. This chapter suggests that the Japanese sought racial equality to be included as part of great power equality.

In Chapter 5, the British government's response is analysed. It is suggested that the two explanatory factors of immigration and domestic politics explain the British opposition. First, the British government had interpreted the proposal as implying immigration. This meant that the fate of the proposal was left in the hands of the British Dominions which had the control over issues relating to immigration. In this light, Australia had the vested interest of protecting the 'White Australia' policy which was perceived to have been threatened by the proposal. Australian Prime Minister Billy Hughes, partly through the force of his personality, had managed to impose his opposition on the British Empire delegation's official position. In probing further, it becomes clear that the domestic politics factor was at play, as Hughes was using his rejection of the racial equality proposal at Paris as an important plank of his election platform for the up and coming general elections in December 1919.

Chapter 6 analyses the American opposition. The three explanatory factors, immigration, domestic politics and the politics of bargaining

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at the peace conference, are examined. The first two factors worked only as background considerations and were not directly responsible for the ultimate decision made on the proposal by the American delegation at Paris. An analysis of the explanation based on the politics of bargaining reveals that there were two levels operating simultaneously within the delegation: one was the position held by the American peace commissioners, and the other was Wilson's personal position. The 'bargaining chip' theory was expounded by some of the American peace commissioners who took the view that the Japanese government had concocted the proposal as a political instrument to gain Shantung. The most important explanation, however, is that President Wilson used the proposal to appease the British in order to attain his own primary objective, the establishment of the League of Nations.

Finally, Chapter 7 offers conclusions of the study. It also attempts to make a retrospective analysis of how the rejection of the proposal could have affected Japanese politics and diplomacy in the interwar period. It is suggested that the implications of the rejection of the proposal for interwar Japan were twofold: as a contributing factor to the general sense of disillusionment towards the West in the 1920s, and as a test case used by the pan-Asianists and other apologists in the 1930s to show how Japan had been discriminated by the West. Lastly, some assessment will be made of the role which the racial equality proposal of 1919 played in the evolution of the principle of racial equality in the twentieth century. The significance of the proposal lies in what it reveals, both about Japan and about the nature of international society of 1919.

1 Negotiating racial equality at the peace conference

The purpose of this chapter is to 'set the scene' for the analysis of the racial equality proposal of 1919, by providing a narrative account of the negotiations at the Paris Peace Conference. As it makes no claim to be a general study, this chapter will focus exclusively on the negotiations for the racial equality proposal which took place in the League of Nations Commission.

The League of Nations Commission was established by the Preliminary Peace Conference at the plenary session of 25 January 1919 in order to draft the covenant of the League of Nations.¹ The racial equality negotiation covers the period from late January to late April 1919, when the Japanese government made two unsuccessful attempts in the League of Nations Commission to have a racial equality amendment accepted as an insertion into the covenant of the League. Broadly, the negotiation went through three phases: the first phase from late January to 13 February, when the first attempt to include racial equality as part of Article 21 failed; the second phase from 14 February to 11 April, when the proposal was defeated for the second time; and the final phase from 12 April to 28 April when the Japanese delegate made a final speech on the proposal in the plenary session of the conference. The account of the negotiations shows that it was a complex process which involved the reconciliation of many layers of conflicting perceptions, both externally between the three states and internally within each delegation. Moreover, it reveals that the 'racial equality' proposal evolved substantively in the course of two months from one redolent of 'immigration' to one that was truly abstract.

THE PROTAGONISTS

Before unravelling the diplomatic drama over the racial equality negotiations, let us briefly introduce the members and peace policies of the

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principal three delegations – the British Empire, the United States and Japan – which were at the heart of the racial equality controversy at the Paris Peace Conference.

The British Empire delegation was composed of five plenipotentiaries: David Lloyd George (Prime Minister), Arthur Balfour (Foreign Secretary), Andrew Bonar Law (Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons), George Barnes (Minister without portfolio), and one representative in rotation from the British Dominions² and India whose representation was as follows: i) Canada: Robert Borden (Prime Minister), G.E. Foster (Minister of Finance), A.L. Sifton (Minister of Customs), C.J. Doherty (Minister of Justice); ii) Australia: William Morris Hughes (Prime Minister) and Joseph Cook (Minister of the Navy); iii) South Africa: Louis Botha (Prime Minister) and Jan Smuts (Minister for Defence); iv) New Zealand: William Massey (Prime Minister); v) India: Maharaja of Bikaner and Lord Sinha (Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for India). The principal players in the racial equality negotiations were Foreign Secretary Balfour, Lord Robert Cecil and General Smuts (the latter two being appointed as British representatives of the League of Nations Commission), Australian Premier Billy Hughes and, to a limited extent, Canadian Premier Robert Borden. The British Dominions played a highly prominent part in the racial equality debate, which belied the otherwise more secondary positions they occupied within the delegation. On the whole, they remained marginal and uninterested in the wider spectrum of issues which concerned the British government at Paris.³ Moreover, Prime Minister Lloyd George controlled much of the decision making.⁴ He had a strong distrust of professional diplomats and preferred to consult his close circle of advisers and friends known as the 'Garden Suburb'.⁵ The Foreign Office was only saved from obscurity because of Balfour, who managed to maintain a good personal channel of communications with the prime minister.⁶

In terms of war aims, Britain's initial objective on entering the war in August 1914 was the restoration of Belgian neutrality and this remained its core war aim for two and a half years.⁷ This motivational objective incorporated other causes such as the protection of France against aggression, the destruction of 'Prussian' military domination, and the defence of the rights of small nations.⁸ Apart from the core interest in maintaining the independence, integrity and unity of the British Empire, the British position at the peace conference was based on three things: first, to guarantee security for France; second, to settle territorial concessions; and third, to support the Wilsonian League of