Originally Presented at the APSA 2026 Annual Meeting, Boston — iPoster Session

Warmth Without Equality: Reconfiguring Racial Hierarchy in the U.S. Postwar Discourse on Japan and Korea

Introduction

"Trust" is not a word often ascribed to post-World War II Japan or Korea by the United States, much less by seasoned U.S. foreign policy officials (Sato 146). Although documentation on Korea is scarce, negative perceptions of Japan as a country — not just anti-Japanese American sentiment – is recorded in both mainstream media and U.S. administrative documents. The U.S. was aware of perceptions of Japan as a country with aspirations of worldwide dominance; a 1957 New York Times article comments that many of Japan's "neighbors" feel an "active dislike for the Japanese" and perceive their aid and outreach efforts to be colonialistic in nature (Trumbull 204). American career diplomats such as Karl L. Rankin are recorded as part of the Committee on Un-American Activities Hearings on Proposed Legislation to Curb or Control the Communist Party of the U.S. that "remember after the last war Japan tried to get a naval base in Mexico" (ProQuest U.S. Congressional Collection 271) and the Japanese are categorized among countries that produce "dangerous alien enemies" alongside Japan and Italy (ProQuest U.S. Congressional Collection 488).

Yet the archival materials of Roger Nash Baldwin, housed in the Seeley G. Mudd Library, offer an underexamined window into early postwar American perceptions of East Asia. In his Japan and Korea: Notes and Materials collection, Baldwin repeatedly articulates a tone of admiration toward Japan that seems oddly incongruent with the recent memory of war. He remarks upon "the historic receptiveness of the Japanese to new ideas, heightened by [General] MacArthur's trust in them," and describes Tokyo in terms of "high hope and vivid drama," imbued with an "energy, purpose, lift such as you get in Japan." At the same time, this praise is embedded within a distinctly paternalistic framework: the Japanese, Baldwin writes, "do better because they want to obey us and imitate [the United States]."

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Such observations are difficult to reconcile with the dominant wartime and immediate postwar discourse that cast Japan as a dangerous, irrational, and fundamentally untrustworthy enemy. The mainstream likewise reflects the Japanese in a derogatory manner: a 1964 issue of *Life* magazine discusses the Japanese as "preen[ing] themselves" over their traditions of "frugality, restraint and poverty" (Johnson 93). Of course, a clear shift in the perception of the value of Japan's culture in the mainstream can be seen, such as a 1952 issue in *Holiday* magazine that claims Japan is "a land of exquisite beauty and a people dedicated to its cultivation" (Johnson 94) — however, this is distinct from foreign policy perspectives, which center around security, even though these may be infiltrated by ethnographic characterizations (Embre 442). Instead, prevailing sentiment during and immediately after the war emphasized the need for strict supervision and control, often expressed through dehumanizing and racialized tropes (Carson et al. 1). That Baldwin's writings depart so markedly from this language raises two central questions: first, why does explicitly positive — indeed, admiring — language emerge so soon after a brutal conflict? Second, on what basis did U.S. officials come to regard Japan as a partner capable of trust, even as "receptive" to democratic transformation?

While prior scholarship — most notably the work of Austin Carson and others — has documented the prevalence of dehumanizing metaphors and tropes of irrationality in U.S. policy discourse, these analyses have tended to emphasize uniformly negative representations. What remains underexplored is how such depictions could coexist with, and even give way to, more favorable assessments of certain populations. In Baldwin's account, Japan is not merely rehabilitated but elevated in comparative terms: as recorded in his notes, General John R. Hodge characterizes Koreans as "far less self-reliant, hard-working and dependable than the Japanese." Existing scholarship attributes U.S. military engagement in Japan to strategic necessity (Kim 343), but strategic necessity alone does not explain the emergence of affectively warm representations — it does not account for why policymakers came to express warmth towards Japan, not merely tolerate it.

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This study argues that such contradictions are not anomalies but are constitutive of a broader discursive shift in U.S. foreign policy thinking: one in which racial hierarchy was not abandoned but reorganized along two evaluative axes — warmth and competence. Drawing on a newly compiled corpus of archival materials, including Baldwin's papers, declassified National Archives records from 1940–1965, and the Office of the Historian's Foreign Relations of the United States series, the study demonstrates the coexistence of negative characterizations — demeaning, dehumanizing, denying capacity for self-governance — and positive ones — cooperative, disciplined, capable of reform — within the same discursive moment. Crucially, these characterizations were not distributed uniformly. Japan is consistently coded as both warm and competent; Korea as warm but incompetent. This asymmetry, the paper contends, reflects not the erosion of racial hierarchy but its reconfiguration: from outright dehumanization to a conditional, instrumentalized inclusion in which former enemies could be recast as partners — so long as they remained subjects of guidance, supervision, and reform.

This reconfiguration cannot be understood solely through the lens of racial ideology. Racialized assumptions operated in tandem with, and were refracted through, evolving geopolitical pressures — most notably the onset of the early Cold War and the consolidation of Communist power in China. As U.S. strategic priorities shifted, Japan's perceived capacity for reform and alignment with Western democratic norms was reinterpreted in increasingly favorable terms. Yet these assessments remained structured by evaluative reasoning about discipline, adaptability, and political maturity. The result is not a binary opposition between race and geopolitics, but their mutual constitution: Cold War pressures reshaped racial hierarchies, while racialized assumptions structured how those pressures were interpreted and acted upon.

By foregrounding this interplay, the study contributes a more nuanced account of how U.S. policymakers conceptualized postwar reconstruction in East Asia — and, more broadly, of how racialized discourse functions in foreign policy. It challenges the assumption that racialization operates only through negative or dehumanizing representations, demonstrating instead how seemingly positive appraisals can sustain hierarchical relationships with equal effectiveness. For scholars of international relations, race and

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ethnic politics, and postwar reconstruction, these findings carry significant stakes: if paternalism and conditional inclusion are themselves mechanisms of racial hierarchy, then the "warmth" expressed toward former enemies must be read not as evidence of liberalization, but as evidence of hierarchy's adaptability.

Theoretical Contribution

This study advances a theoretical intervention by reframing how racialized discourse in U.S. foreign policy is conceptualized across the transition from wartime to postwar contexts. Existing scholarship — most notably the work of Austin Carson, and related analyses of bureaucratic threat construction — has persuasively demonstrated the prevalence of dehumanizing tropes in U.S. policy language, emphasizing descriptors such as irrationality, belligerence, and animalistic analogy (Carson et al. 3). These accounts capture what might be understood as cold-negative representations: depictions that combine hostility with a denial of rational agency. They have substantially advanced our understanding of how racial ideology shapes threat perception and foreign policy conduct (Freeman et al. 177). However, they leave under-theorized a crucial dimension of evaluative judgment — namely, perceived competence — and its relationship to affective orientation.

This paper introduces a two-dimensional analytical framework, adapted from the Stereotype Content Model (SCM) developed by Fiske and colleagues in social cognition research, to distinguish between two independent axes of evaluative judgment in foreign policy discourse (Fiske et. al 4). The first axis — warmth — captures affective orientation: the degree to which a population is regarded with trust, admiration, cooperative goodwill, or paternal concern. The second axis — competence — captures perceived capacity: the degree to which a population is regarded as rational, disciplined, self-governing, and capable of institutional development. Critically, these axes are analytically independent: a population may be judged high on one dimension and low on the other, producing qualitatively distinct modes of representation with distinct political implications.

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This distinction allows for a more precise characterization of discursive shifts across the wartime and early Cold War periods. Wartime propaganda frequently cast Japan as simultaneously highly competent and threatening — a disciplined, technologically capable enemy whose very sophistication intensified the perception of danger. This configuration — cold and competent — corresponds to what SCM scholarship identifies as the "envy" cluster: groups perceived as capable but hostile, eliciting fear and preemptive aggression. In the immediate postwar period, however, archival evidence suggests a reconfiguration toward a different evaluative quadrant. Japan is increasingly portrayed as cooperative, receptive, and admirable — warm — yet still in need of guidance and supervision, with competence rendered conditional upon continued American oversight. Korea, by contrast, occupies a different quadrant: regarded with a degree of paternal goodwill but persistently characterized as incapable of self-governance, unstable, and dependent — warm but incompetent.

This shift is analytically significant for two reasons. First, it challenges the assumption, implicit in much IR scholarship on race, that racialization operates primarily through negative or dehumanizing representations. Freeman and colleagues note that "postwar foreign policy elites viewed their potential Asian partners as part of an inferior race who were less trustworthy and thus ineligible for membership in a NATO-like multilateral security community" (Freeman 186) — a formulation that captures coldness but does not account for the simultaneous presence of warmth. The SCM framework resolves this apparent contradiction: warmth and hierarchy are not mutually exclusive. Paternalism emerges precisely at the intersection of warmth and diminished competence, where populations are not rejected but reclassified as improvable subjects — capable of reform under American tutelage, but not yet of independent self-determination.

Second, this framework reveals that racial hierarchy does not require dehumanization to remain operative. The conditional inclusion of Japan — admired, trusted, elevated above Korea in the evaluative hierarchy — is itself a form of racial ranking. What distinguishes this postwar configuration from wartime dehumanization is not the absence of hierarchy, but its mode of expression: less bestial metaphor, more

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ethnographic calibration of capacity. In this sense, postwar discourse does not abandon racial hierarchy; instead, it reorganizes it. The warmth–competence framework provides the analytical tools to map this reorganization with precision, tracing how populations move across evaluative quadrants in response to both ideological pressure and geopolitical calculation.

Historical Context

The transformation in U.S. representations of Japan — from cold and competent adversary to warm and conditionally competent partner — must be situated within the geopolitical reordering of the early Cold War. As Soviet influence expanded and Communist forces consolidated power under Mao Zedong in 1949, U.S. strategic priorities in the Pacific underwent a fundamental reorientation. Japan's role was reimagined from defeated enemy to indispensable bulwark against communist expansion — a shift formalized by the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security in 1960, which institutionalized U.S. responsibility for Japanese defense (Kim 342), and by the incorporation of Japan into the Mutual Security Program, effectively rebuilding "a Japanese military that only seven years before [the United States] had sought to destroy completely" (Miller 83).

Yet this strategic reorientation did not, on its own, produce the affectively warm representations documented in the Baldwin papers and National Archives records. The existence of a security alliance does not necessitate admiration, trust, or the elevation of a former enemy in evaluative terms (Kim 343). More than strategic calculation was at work: as U.S. policymakers sought to justify both their trust in Japan and their continued supervisory role, they drew upon a preexisting vocabulary of evaluative judgment — one organized, as this study argues, along the axes of warmth and competence. Japan's perceived discipline, industriousness, and receptiveness to American democratic norms provided the discursive raw material through which strategic partnership was rendered legible and legitimate.

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This process was not without tension. Japan's path to warm representation was complicated by what David P. Rapkin identifies as a persistent "legitimacy deficit" — a legacy of militarism and colonialism, a mercantilist reputation, and widespread skepticism about Japan's capacity to articulate universalizable norms and values (Rapkin 196–199). Hideo Sato similarly acknowledges that despite Japan's nominal alignment with Western values of "freedom, democracy and human rights," its wartime aggression continued to generate perceptions of Japan as "a potential security threat" (Sato 146). These tensions are reflected in the archival record itself: cold and competent characterizations — "the prospects of the development of Japanese-American relations are far from peaceful" — coexist in the same documentary corpus with expressions of warmth and admiration. Here, the evaluative field was not unidirectional, instead being contested. Furthermore, this shift in the U.S. attitude towards Japan, at least in the mainstream, has been highlighted: the sociologist Nathan Glazer notes that “the Japan that was seen as barbaric, feudal, bloodthirsty, and treacherous at the end of a terrible war” is now seen very differently, ,where “the Japanese economy has become the second most important in the free world” (Glazer 7).

Characterizations aligned with discriminatory sentiments were to be expected even in foreign policy writing — “‘scientific conclusions’ as to [the Japanese character]” were seen as necessary, with “racist interpretations” being seen as “socially as well as scientifically unacceptable” yet “‘character structure’ interpretations” were found to be “all right” and used to “‘explain’ the international and domestic behavior of Japan” (Embre 442). Thus, generalizations were actively being made about “culture patterns” within Japan, especially to provide an “‘explanation’ for national and international socio-economic political developments” (Embre 443).

Korea presents a markedly different trajectory. Unlike Japan, Korea occupied a peripheral position in U.S. foreign policy planning for much of this period, resulting in comparatively sparse documentation of official evaluations. Yet what documentation exists — including Ambassador Muccio's correspondence and Baldwin's field notes — reveals a consistent pattern: Korea is regarded with a degree

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of paternal goodwill but characterized as fundamentally incapable of self-governance. Ambassador Muccio's assessment that Koreans "would be totally unable to make a parliamentary system work" and Baldwin's observation that he knows "no country with more complex obstacles to its national democratic freedom" together constitute a warm-incompetent configuration — sympathetic concern paired with a denial of political capacity. This configuration was reinforced by Cold War anxieties: Korea's perceived instability made it a potential "breeding ground" for communism, a characterization that positioned it as simultaneously a recipient of American concern and a site of indeterminate risk.

The Japan–Korea asymmetry can be seen as partially caused by Japan's colonial domination of Korea from 1910 to 1945, which had already inscribed a hierarchy of perceived capacity between the two populations in the minds of many American observers — a hierarchy that American policymakers, consciously or not, partially inherited and reproduced. General Hodge's recorded remark that Koreans are "far less self-reliant, hard-working and dependable than the Japanese" illustrates how colonial-era hierarchies were transposed into postwar American evaluative frameworks, now recast not as the judgments of an imperial power but as the assessments of a democratic supervisor. The historical context thus reveals a crucial mechanism: geopolitical pressures did not simply override racialized assumptions, nor did racialized assumptions simply determine strategic outcomes. Rather, they operated in a mutual constitution — Cold War imperatives reshaped which evaluative representations were politically useful, while evaluative assumptions about capacity and character structured how strategic choices were justified and enacted.

Methodology

This study employs a two-component analytical design combining systematic archival coding with close textual analysis, organized around the warmth–competence framework derived from the Stereotype Content Model (Fiske et al.).

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A. Material Sourcing

The primary corpus consists of archival materials drawn from three principal sources: the Roger Nash Baldwin papers (Japan and Korea: Notes and Materials collection), housed at Princeton University's Seeley G. Mudd Library; declassified records from the National Archives, including intelligence reports, diplomatic correspondence, and executive communications from 1940–1965; and the Office of the Historian's historical documents from the Harry S. Truman Administration (1945-1952) and the Dwight D. Eisenhower Administration (1953-1960).

These sources were selected for their combination of semi-official status — allowing for candid evaluative language that formal diplomatic documents often suppress — and their proximity to policymaking circles, ensuring that the representations documented are those operating at the level of foreign policy discourse rather than popular culture or propaganda. Moreover, the dates of the above sources, spanning 1940 to 1965, are most aligned with the post-Cold War timeline discussed throughout this paper

For the Office of the Historian documents, documents from Franklin D. Roosevelt administration (1933-1945) are not included, despite Roosevelt's administration being in place for the first half of the 1940s. This is due to the "Foreign Relations of the United States, Diplomatic Papers" only covering China, South Asia, and other regions adjacent or unrelated to Japan and South Korea; papers specific to the two countries only emerge later for the Truman and Eisenhower administrations.

B. Text Extractions, Categorization, and Coding

This paper makes use of a total of **350 text extractions from the above sources.** The first analytical component applies systematic lexical categorization of extractions from the corpus. Drawing on the two-dimensional SCM framework, the study constructs a differentiated coding dictionary organized along six evaluative categories: warmth, coldness, competence, incompetence, conditional diplomacy, and

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self-assured paternalism. The last two categories — conditional diplomacy and self-assured paternalism — are additional categories created based on common themes across text extractions, as they frequently combine elements of warmth and competence in ways that illuminate the paternalistic logic operating at their intersection.

The addition of "conditional diplomacy" and "self-assured paternalism" as distinct categories is analytically necessary because a substantial portion of the corpus does not fit cleanly within the binary warmth/competence axes, but instead operates at their intersection. These categories capture the mechanisms through which evaluative judgments are translated into policy-relevant hierarchies: conditional diplomacy reflects the instrumentalization of competence (cooperation granted upon proof of capacity), while self-assured paternalism reflects the moralization of hierarchy (control framed as benevolence). Without these categories, the analysis would understate how frequently warmth and competence are co-articulated in ways that justify asymmetric political relationships rather than merely describe them.

The following categories are exemplified by different quotations:

1. Warmth captures affective orientation toward a population: terms and constructions indicating trust, admiration, cooperative goodwill, moral approbation, or paternal concern (e.g., "receptive," "cooperative," "eager," "loyal," "teachable," "hopeful").

   In the case of Japan, warmth frequently takes the form of explicit admiration tied to perceived democratic potential, as reflected in the statement: "The Japanese, he [General MacArthur] felt are way ahead of the rest of the orient in all democratic efforts" (Baldwin Papers). This formulation not only signals approval but places Japan within a comparative hierarchy of advancement, indicating confidence in its political trajectory. In contrast, warmth directed toward

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Korea is structured less around admiration and more around moral encouragement and endurance, as seen in the Truman-era assertion that “The Government and the people of the United States are confident that the Korean people will continue to stand against the Communist aggressors with that firm determination which has contributed so much to stem the Communist tide” (Office of the Historian, Truman Administration). Here, warmth is articulated through support for resilience rather than recognition of institutional capability, reflecting a distinct affective register that privileges perseverance over agency.

2. Coldness captures negative affective orientation: terms and constructions indicating hostility, distrust, perceived irrationality, deceit, or existential threat (e.g., "fanatical," "treacherous," "irrational," "dangerous," "animalistic").

In the case of Japan, coldness appears most clearly in transitional and prewar-adjacent documents, where skepticism about long-term relations persists, as in the statement: “The prospects of the development of Japanese-American relations are far from peaceful” (National Archives). This reflects an enduring apprehension that coexists with emerging positive evaluations.

For Korea, coldness is less overtly adversarial and more reflective of instability and uncertainty, as demonstrated by the observation that “You get the general impression of a beaten, discouraged people, with desperate hopes for their national freedom, irritation with the occupation, a fear of the Russians, and above all, a struggle just to live” (Baldwin Papers). Although not explicitly hostile, this depiction encodes a form of evaluative distance by emphasizing volatility, insecurity, and the absence of stable political footing.

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3. Competence captures perceived capacity: terms and constructions indicating discipline, industriousness, rationality, administrative effectiveness, or capacity for self-governance (e.g., "disciplined," "efficient," "capable," "self-reliant," "adaptable").

   This category is overwhelmingly associated with Japan across the corpus. For example, Baldwin's rhetorical question—"Isn't Japan a nation which can rise in the world by its own power?" (Baldwin Papers)—attributes both latent and active capability, framing Japan as inherently capable of autonomous advancement. This is reinforced in more formal policy language, such as the Office of the Historian documentation from the Eisenhower administration, which notes that "Japanese authorities have demonstrated remarkable discipline and efficiency in supporting UNC operations" (Office of the Historian, Eisenhower Administration). These statements collectively establish competence as a stable and recurring attribute of Japan.

   By contrast, competence-coded extractions for Korea are notably absent; instead, the corpus contains explicit denials of such capacity. For instance, Baldwin records that "The general [General Hodge] evidently has little respect for Korean abilities… 'breed of cats.' He said he had trouble keeping them in office and that the turn-over was as great as among US personnel - once a year" (Baldwin Papers, May 23). The absence of affirmative competence attributions for Korea, combined with such derogatory assessments, constitutes a critical empirical pattern rather than a mere omission.

4. Incompetence captures perceived incapacity: terms and constructions indicating instability, backwardness, dependence, or inability to sustain democratic or administrative institutions (e.g., "unable," "chaotic," "dependent," "backward," "ungovernable").

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While Japan appears in this category primarily in temporally bounded, prewar or early wartime contexts—such as the statement "Japan is but children and should be treated as children" (Office of the Historian, Political Relations of States, 1941)—this attribution does not persist into the postwar period.

In contrast, incompetence is consistently and systematically applied to Korea. A representative example appears in early postwar policy discussions: "It is, of course, our objective to prepare Koreans to govern themselves. We are not doing so when we freeze into office people who have no mandate from the people as a whole and who are incapable of understanding their needs" (Office of the Historian, May 23, 1947). Here, incompetence is not framed as temporary but as structural, embedded in both political leadership and broader societal capacity, thereby reinforcing Korea's position within a dependent evaluative category.

5. Conditional diplomacy includes expressions of partnership contingent upon compliance or compensation.

This category is particularly prominent across both Japan- and Korea-related documents, though its structure differs by case. In relation to Japan, conditional diplomacy often takes a reciprocal form, as in the statement that "the United States and Japan shall assure each other mutually to supply such commodities as are, respectively, available and required by either of them" (Office of the Historian, Eisenhower Administration). The language of mutual assurance suggests near-parity, even as it embeds cooperation within structured obligations.

In contrast, conditional diplomacy toward Korea is more directive and supervisory, as illustrated by the formulation: "The basic objective of the mission is to negotiate an agreement with the

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Republic of Korea which will provide for the establishment and operation of joint machinery to stabilize the economy. This involves the effective utilization of United States economic aid, the adoption of appropriate fiscal and monetary trade measures to alleviate the inflation, and provisions for settlement by the United States…" (Office of the Historian, Truman Administration). Here, conditionality functions as a mechanism of control, linking aid to compliance and reinforcing Korea's subordinate position.

6. Self-assured paternalism include assertions of American authority framed as benevolent guidance are coded as supplementary.

Self-assured paternalism captures assertions of American authority framed as benevolent guidance, combining elements of warmth and hierarchical control. In the case of Japan, this is evident in Baldwin's observation that "the people are thus readily disciplined to follow what authority dictates" (Baldwin Papers, 1947), which simultaneously attributes positive qualities (discipline) and legitimizes external authority. Even when framed positively, such statements imply that Japanese competence operates most effectively under American direction.

For Korea, paternalism is articulated more explicitly in moral and financial terms, as seen in the statement: "There should be a clear recognition that Korea is and will remain a charge upon the American conscience and the American pocket-book, whether or not a united Korea is re-established, until such time as her economy has been restored" (Office of the Historian, May 23, 1947). This formulation frames intervention as both necessary and ethically justified, transforming dependency into obligation.

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As seen above, coding proceeds at the level of full passages rather than isolated lexical items. For instance, Baldwin's observation that "the people are thus readily disciplined to follow what authority dictates" is coded not merely as competence (discipline) but simultaneously as self-assured paternalism, as the attribution of discipline is embedded within a justification for hierarchical authority. Similarly, the statement that Koreans are "totally unable to make a parliamentary system work" is coded as incompetence, but when paired with formulations such as "our objective to prepare Koreans to govern themselves," the passage is elevated to the category of paternalism, where incapacity becomes the rationale for continued intervention.

Importantly, several passages exhibit internal tension across categories, revealing that evaluative judgments are not static but layered. For example, the National Archives statement that "The prospects of the development of Japanese-American relations are far from peaceful" (coldness) coexists within the same temporal corpus as descriptions of "remarkable discipline and efficiency" (competence). Rather than treating these as contradictory, the coding framework captures them as coexisting orientations, allowing for the identification of transitional evaluative configurations—particularly in the 1945–1947 period.

The relative scarcity of competence-coded references for Korea is not treated as absence but as a meaningful distributional outcome. The near-total lack of statements attributing administrative or political capability to Korea—contrasted with the density of such attributions for Japan—constitutes one of the strongest pieces of evidence for the asymmetrical structuring of the discourse. This asymmetry is reinforced by the persistence of incompetence-coded language across all sub-corpora, including Baldwin's field notes ("no country with more complex obstacles") and Truman-era policy documents ("incapable of understanding their needs").

Each document or passage is mapped onto the two-dimensional evaluative space defined by these axes, enabling the identification of distinct discursive configurations: warm-competent (partnership), warm-incompetent (paternalism), cold-competent (adversarial threat), and cold-incompetent (dismissive

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dehumanization). Crucially, the unit of analysis is not the individual keyword but the evaluative orientation of the passage as a whole, with keywords serving as primary evidence for that orientation. This prevents mechanical overcounting while maintaining systematic rigor.

The second component applies close textual analysis to interpret how coded passages function within their broader rhetorical and documentary context. Particular attention is paid to comparative rankings across national groups, or instances where Japan and Korea are evaluated in explicit relation to one another, and to shifts in evaluative configuration across the temporal arc of the corpus, from the immediate postwar period through the early 1960s. This qualitative layer ensures that the coding framework does not flatten discursive complexity but instead illuminates the specific mechanisms through which evaluative representations were constructed, contested, and transformed.

Finally, the study incorporates temporal comparison between wartime and postwar texts. By juxtaposing established findings on wartime propaganda — in which Japan was predominantly coded as cold-competent, an adversary whose danger derived precisely from its disciplined capability — with the postwar materials coded in this study, the analysis maps how representations shift across the rupture of 1945. The central empirical claim is that this shift does not simply move Japan from "negative" to "positive" representation, but relocates it within the evaluative space: from cold-competent to warm and conditionally competent. Korea, by contrast, occupies the warm-incompetent quadrant throughout the postwar period. This differential trajectory is the study's primary finding, and it is the mapping of that trajectory — not merely the identification of racialized language per se — that constitutes the methodological contribution.

C. Justification of Key Figures in the Corpus

a. General Douglas McArthur

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The inclusion of General Douglas MacArthur is analytically indispensable because he functions not merely as a military actor but as a central interpretive authority through which Japan—and, to a lesser extent, Korea—were evaluated, categorized, and governed. As a career Army officer appointed by President Harry Truman as commander-in-chief of United Nations forces during the Korean War (June 25, 1950), MacArthur possessed both operational command and discursive influence. His leadership of the counterattack at Inchon exemplified his strategic authority, while his earlier role as Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers in Japan positioned him as the primary architect of Japan's postwar political transformation. Crucially, MacArthur maintained direct access to the president and continued to advise military and civilian officials throughout his life, ensuring that his evaluative judgments circulated at the highest levels of policymaking.

Within the corpus, MacArthur's importance lies in his role as a legitimizing voice for warmth–competence reclassification. Statements attributed to him—such as the characterization that "The Japanese… are way ahead of the rest of the orient in all democratic efforts" (Baldwin) —do not function as isolated opinions but as authoritative signals that recalibrate how Japan is to be understood within U.S. foreign policy discourse. His position allows affective warmth (admiration for "receptiveness") to be institutionally validated, thereby facilitating Japan's movement into the warm-competent quadrant. Without MacArthur, such evaluative shifts would lack the authoritative anchor necessary to translate discourse into policy.

b. Roger Nash Baldwin

Roger Nash Baldwin's significance derives from his role as a mediating observer whose writings bridge informal ethnographic judgment and semi-official policy discourse. As an advisor to the U.S. Army and the United Nations in both Japan and Korea, Baldwin produced reports containing detailed narrative descriptions of political comportment, social behavior, and perceived readiness for democratic

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self-government. These reports were prepared for audiences that included General MacArthur and the American Civil Liberties Union, situating them within a broader rhetorical environment where assessments of "national character" were intended to circulate beyond private reflection and influence institutional thinking.

Baldwin's observations are particularly valuable because they reveal the micro-foundations of evaluative categorization. His descriptions—such as Japan's "energy, purpose, lift" or the assertion that the Japanese "want to obey us and imitate [the United States]"—demonstrate how warmth and competence are co-articulated within a paternalistic frame. Simultaneously, his depictions of Korea as facing "complex obstacles" expose the persistence of incompetence coding even in ostensibly sympathetic accounts. Baldwin thus provides the connective tissue between abstract policy language and lived observation, making visible how racialized evaluations are constructed, normalized, and transmitted across institutional contexts.

c. Ambassador John J. Muccio

Former Ambassador John J. Muccio occupies a critical position as a policy implementer whose assessments directly informed U.S. governance strategy in Korea. Serving as Special Representative of the President to Korea (1948–1949) and subsequently as Ambassador (1949–1952), Muccio operated at the interface between evaluative discourse and administrative practice. His statements—particularly those asserting that Koreans would be "totally unable to make a parliamentary system work" (Office of the Historian) —are not abstract judgments but policy-relevant conclusions that shaped the design and justification of U.S. intervention.

Muccio's importance lies in his role as a conduit through which incompetence coding is translated into institutional outcomes. Unlike Baldwin, whose observations are descriptive, Muccio's evaluations carry immediate policy implications, reinforcing Korea's placement in the warm-incompetent quadrant and legitimizing ongoing supervision. His position demonstrates that the discourse identified in this study

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is not merely rhetorical but operational, structuring concrete decisions regarding governance, aid, and political development.

D. Corpus-Specific Analysis

a. Roger Nash Baldwin Papers

The Baldwin corpus reveals the clearest manifestation of the warmth–competence asymmetry at the level of qualitative perception, and this maps directly onto divergent expectations regarding economic and institutional assistance. Japan's characterization as "receptive," "disciplined," and capable of "rising… by its own power" aligns with a model of aid that is transitional and capacity-enhancing rather than indefinitely sustaining. In this framework, aid is justified as catalytic—designed to accelerate a presumed trajectory toward self-sufficiency. Korea, by contrast, described as facing "complex obstacles" and lacking institutional coherence, is implicitly positioned as a site for continuous support. Baldwin's framing anticipates a bifurcation in aid logic: Japan as a future donor-partner, Korea as a long-term recipient. This anticipatory distinction is borne out in later material developments, where Japan transitions from aid recipient to major global donor within decades.

b. National Archives

The National Archives materials capture the moment in which evaluative uncertainty translates into conditional aid frameworks. Statements such as "if Japan so changes its attitude…" map onto early occupation policies that combined economic assistance with strict behavioral conditions. Aid here is neither purely punitive nor purely developmental—it is conditional and reversible. This corresponds to Japan's transitional position in the warmth–competence space: moving from cold-competent threat to warm-competent partner, but not yet fully stabilized. For Korea, however, conditionality operates differently. Rather than conditioning partnership, it conditions basic stabilization efforts ("effective utilization of United States economic aid…adoption of appropriate fiscal… measures"). The implication

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is that Korea's access to aid is contingent not on partnership readiness but on administrative compliance, reinforcing its placement in the warm-incompetent quadrant.

c. Office of the Historian

Truman-era documents exhibit the strongest alignment between paternalistic discourse and aid allocation. Statements emphasizing Korea as a "charge upon the American conscience" directly correspond to large-scale aid flows justified in moral rather than strategic terms. Aid is framed as obligation, not investment. This differs markedly from Japan, where even early aid is framed in terms of reconstruction with an implicit endpoint. The Korean War further entrenches this divergence: Japan's economy is indirectly stimulated through procurement and integration into U.S. supply chains, while Korea becomes the direct recipient of stabilization aid. Thus, the discursive configuration (warm-competent vs. warm-incompetent) maps onto two distinct aid paradigms: indirect integration versus direct dependency.

By the Eisenhower period, the discursive and material patterns converge. Japan is treated as a "mutually beneficial" partner within security and economic frameworks, reflecting its stable position as warm and competent. Aid, in this context, becomes embedded in reciprocal arrangements — trade agreements, technological exchange, and security cooperation — rather than unilateral transfers. Korea, however, remains within a framework of conditional supervision, with aid tied to "joint machinery to stabilize the economy." The persistence of such language indicates that Korea's evaluative position has not shifted; it remains structurally dependent. Thus, across the Eisenhower corpus, aid functions as a mechanism for maintaining, rather than transforming, the established evaluative hierarchy.

Findings

a. Discursive Distribution Across the Warmth-Competence Space

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Category	Count	% of Total
Conditional Diplomacy	~120	23%
Warmth	~95	18%
Competence	~90	17%
Incompetence	~85	16%
Coldness	~70	14%
Self-Assured Paternalism	~75	13%

Fig. 1. Frequency Analysis of Discursive Distribution Across the Warmth-Competence Space

Across the six categories in fig. 1, warmth-coded discourse is structured around signals of affective approval and relational confidence — "cooperation," "mutual benefit," "receptiveness," and "shared responsibility." Its register, however, varies considerably by subject nation. Toward Japan, warmth takes an admiration-based form, where Baldwin's papers describe "the historic receptiveness of the Japanese" with "high hope and vivid drama," while FRUS records from 1952 praise "remarkable discipline and efficiency." Toward Korea, by contrast, warmth is sympathy-based — oriented around suffering and obligation rather than capability. Phrases such as "charge upon the American conscience" and "desperate hopes for national freedom" encode Korea as an object of pity rather than a subject of genuine regard. Consequently, warmth is widely present across all periods, but attitudes toward Japan are more akin to admiration-based warmth, while attitudes toward Korea are rooted in sympathy-based warmth.

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Meanwhile, coldness-coded discourse is organized around the denial of rational agency. Common signals include “irrational,” “dangerous,” “aggressive”; “cannot trust,” “hysteria,” “fanaticism”, as well as suspicion of motives. Toward Japan in the pre-Cold War era, coldness reached its sharpest register, with officials describing Japan with descriptions such as ““cannot be expected to act logically”; “agitation and hysteria”; and “no longer possible to reason logically.” Toward Korea, the coldness is less dehumanizing in character and more frustration-based — extractions include observations that Korea is "suspicious of our [the U.S.’s] motives," with the description of Korea as "a breed of cats" representing a notable extreme. In both cases, distrust is mediated through the lens of communist instability, though the affective intensity differs markedly across national subject and historical period.

Competence-coded discourse emphasizes administrative capacity, social cohesion, and institutional reliability. Japan is its overwhelmingly dominant subject. Descriptions such as "disciplined to follow authority," "essential unity... patient and loyal," and "high administrative capacity" recur across document types and temporal periods. Diplomatic formulations reinforce this pattern through references to "effective cooperation" and the "ability to fulfill obligations." Consequently, competence is the most stable axis in the corpus — Japan's positioning along it undergoes no meaningful revision across the full twenty-year span studied.

Incompetence-coded discourse is structured around assertions of institutional failure and political incapacity. Korea is its primary subject. The corpus contains repeated formulations — "totally unable to make a parliamentary system work," "no law... puppet government," "fragile civilian administration," "incapable of understanding their needs" — that collectively deny Korea's capacity for self-governance. Japan appears in this category only during the prewar period, coded as momentarily irrational or politically inflexible. This is a contained, historically bounded attribution. For Korea, incompetence is not situational but persistent — a defining characteristic rather than a circumstantial failing.

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For the two other evaluative categories, conditional diplomacy encompasses formulations in which cooperation or recognition is made contingent on behavioral or institutional change: "if Japan so changes its attitude..."; "cannot expect cooperation unless..."; "must be coordinated." These conditional structures — *if/then*, *unless*, *provided that* — are the most prevalent single category in the corpus. Their prevalence indicates that U.S. foreign policy discourse is oriented less by affect than by evaluation. Relationships are assessed instrumentally, with partnership extended or withheld on the basis of demonstrated compliance and perceived capacity.

In the other evaluative category, self-assured paternalism, paternalistic discourse frames American authority as benevolent guidance rather than coercive control. Its signals include "prepare them for democracy," "must guide," and "treated as children." It appears across both national subjects, though with different inflections by period. Toward Korea, phrases like "charge upon the American conscience" and "prepare Koreans to govern themselves" are utilized to describe American obligation, yet with an awareness of the need to raise an autonomous, self-governing society: "they must be left to create their own democracy." Toward Japan, descriptions such as how Japan is "subject to the guiding hand of the American commander" are ascribed, as well as "they do better because they want to obey us" — and, at its most extreme, "Japan is but children." Paternalistic formulations are most explicit in the 1940s and become progressively bureaucratized by the 1950s, though the underlying logic of supervised development remains intact across both periods.

Hence, systematic coding of archival materials from 1940–1960 reveals that U.S. foreign policy discourse toward East Asia is not uniformly negative, but instead structured along two analytically distinct axes: warmth (affective orientation) and competence (perceived capacity). Across the full corpus, references coded as warm ($n \approx 95$) outnumber explicitly cold references ($n \approx 70$), indicating that postwar discourse cannot be characterized primarily by hostility or dehumanization. However, this aggregate obscures a critical asymmetry in how warmth is distributed across national groups.

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Pair	Meaning	Frequency
Warmth + Incompetence	Paternalism (Korea)	Very High
Warmth + Competence	Partnership (Japan)	High
Cold + Competence	Threat (prewar Japan)	Moderate
Cold + Incompetent	Dismissal (Japan)	Low
Cold + Incompetent	Dismissal (Korea)	Moderate

Fig. 2. Co-occurrence patterns

Japan is consistently represented as both warm and competent, combining affective approval with recognition of administrative and social capacity. Descriptions emphasize “discipline,” “efficiency,” and “receptiveness,” alongside expressions of admiration for Japan’s “energy” and “purpose.”

In contrast, Korea is overwhelmingly represented as warm but incompetent, characterized by sympathetic language—“discouraged,” “poor,” “struggling”—paired with repeated assertions of incapacity, including claims that Koreans are “unable” to govern themselves or sustain democratic institutions. Hence, in the table above, Korea as “competent” does not surface due to a lack of such perceptions recorded in the documents. Korea is consistently seen as downtrodden, while Japan is seen as capable — a view that aligns with the historical context (above).

This divergence produces two distinct discursive configurations: Japan as based in partnership –the combination of warmth and competence — and Korea as rooted in paternalism — the combination of warmth and incompetence. These configurations are not incidental but systematic, appearing across multiple document types and time periods. Importantly, warmth outweighs coldness overall, indicating

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that postwar discourse is not predominantly hostile. Competence versus incompetence is nearly equal overall, but Japan is overwhelmingly competent while Korea is overwhelmingly incompetent, forming a core asymmetry. Conditional diplomacy's dominance also appears in ~60-70% of documents - U.S. discourse is structured less by emotion alone and more by conditional evaluation frameworks.

b. Persistence of Conditional Reasoning and Instrumental Evaluation

The prevalence of conditional language indicates that U.S. discourse is not primarily expressive but evaluative and instrumental, framing relationships in terms of compliance, capacity, and strategic utility. Japan's elevation to partner status is consistently mediated through such conditional reasoning, while Korea's perceived deficiencies are used to justify continued supervision.

c. Temporal Transformation of Evaluative Configurations

Period	Dominant Pattern	Japan	Korea
1940-41	Cold-Competent	Threat	—
1945-47	Transition	Warm-Competent	Warm-Incompetent
1950-54	Conditional Logic	Partner	Dependent
Late 1950s	Stabilization	Partner	Dependent

Fig. 3. Temporal Distribution

A temporal comparison reveals a significant shift in the representation of Japan:

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1. 1940-1941 (Pre-war): Japan is predominantly coded as cold and competent, described as disciplined and capable but also irrational, aggressive, and threatening. This corresponds to a threat-based evaluative configuration.
2. 1945-1947 (Immediate Postwar): Japan transitions into a warm and competent category, with emphasis on receptiveness, discipline, and democratic potential. Korea, by contrast, emerges as warm but incompetent, a pattern that remains stable across the postwar period.
3. 1950-1954 (Korean War): Discourse becomes more bureaucratic, with a sharp increase in conditional diplomacy language. Japan is consistently framed as an effective and reliable partner, while Korea continues to be described as fragile and dependent.
4. Late 1950s: Japan's position as a warm-competent partner stabilizes, with only minor expressions of uncertainty. Korea remains in the warm-incompetent category.

Analysis

A. General Implications

The United States did not move from racialized hostility to neutrality or equality after World War II. Instead, it restructured racial hierarchy through differentiated evaluations of warmth and competence, producing a system in which Japan was elevated as a capable partner while Korea was positioned as a dependent subject requiring guidance.

This differentiation is legible not only at the level of categorical coding but in the granular texture of the language itself. Praise directed at Japan is *active*: "energy," "discipline," "efficiency" — descriptions that attribute agency and forward momentum. Warmth directed at Korea is *passive*: "poor," "discouraged," "struggling" — descriptions that encode suffering without implying capacity. The same nominal category of "warmth" functions, in practice, as two distinct discursive operations.

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Linguistic markers reinforce this asymmetry at the level of syntax. Japan is associated with verbs of agency — "organize," "manage," "cooperate." Korea is associated with verbs of dependency — "prepare," "guide," "stabilize." These are not stylistic variations but structural ones, encoding fundamentally different assumptions about political subjecthood.

The central empirical finding is that postwar U.S. discourse does not abandon racial hierarchy but reorganizes it. Rather than uniformly dehumanizing Asian populations, policymakers differentiate between them along evaluative axes of warmth and competence, producing a hierarchical ordering in which affective inclusion and political subordination operate simultaneously and without contradiction. Japan's elevation to partner status is itself mediated through conditional logic — extended on the basis of demonstrated compliance, not as an unconditional revision of hierarchy. Korea's perceived incapacity serves not as grounds for exclusion but as justification for sustained supervision. What this reveals is that positive appraisal — admiration, trust, perceived receptiveness — is not the absence of hierarchy but one of its instruments.

B. Mapping onto Foreign Aid

A notable tension emerges between mainstream cultural portrayals of Japan and the trajectory of U.S. foreign aid and economic policy. While media representations oscillate between admiration (“land of exquisite beauty”) and subtle condescension (“preen themselves”), policy discourse exhibits a far more stable trajectory toward integration and partnership. This suggests that foreign policy elites operated with a distinct evaluative framework that was less volatile than public discourse. The warmth–competence structure thus appears more clearly in policy than in media, indicating that elite-level racialized evaluation was both more systematic and more consequential for material outcomes.

Foreign aid patterns do not merely reflect strategic necessity; they create the underlying evaluative assumptions identified in the discourse. Japan’s rapid transition from recipient to donor—described as “remarkable” in later analyses of its “climb to prominence as a major provider of

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assistance to developing countries" (Hankes 2-3)—is not anomalous but consistent with its early classification as competent. Aid was structured to confirm and accelerate this perceived competence. Korea's prolonged dependence, by contrast, reflects the durability of incompetence attributions. Aid, in this case, becomes recursive: the perception of incapacity justifies continued assistance, and continued assistance reinforces the perception of incapacity.

The recognition of Japan's technological and economic achievements by the 1960s—particularly around events such as the 1964 World's Fair and how "American views of Japan changed drastically after 1948" (Abel 128) —can be read as the culmination of earlier competence attributions. These developments do not fundamentally alter the evaluative framework but rather validate it. Japan's success is interpreted as evidence that prior assessments of discipline and adaptability were correct, reinforcing the legitimacy of earlier policy decisions — according to J.R. Abel, wartime depictions of the Japanese people as irrational, duplicitous militarists were quickly replaced by less disparaging but still derogatory stereotypes of the subservient geisha or obedient student of American democracy" (Abel 129). This retrospective validation further entrenches the hierarchy by presenting it as empirically justified rather than ideologically constructed.

Perhaps the most striking implication of the findings is not Japan's rise but Korea's relative stagnation within the evaluative framework. Despite significant geopolitical attention during the Korean War, Korea does not undergo a comparable discursive reclassification. This suggests that movement across the warmth–competence space is not equally available to all actors. Instead, it is constrained by preexisting assumptions, colonial legacies, and the degree to which a population can be aligned with narratives of discipline and reform.

Conclusion

This study set out to explain an apparent anomaly in postwar U.S. foreign policy discourse: the simultaneous presence of warm, even admiring, representations of Asian populations alongside the

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persistence of hierarchical ordering. The answer the data supplies is that warmth and hierarchy are not in tension — in this case, they are mutually reinforcing.

By mapping policy discourse along the axes of the Stereotype Content Model, the analysis reveals a consistent asymmetry that traverses document type, authorial context, and historical period. Japan occupies the warm-competent configuration — the discursive position associated with trust, partnership, and delegated agency. Korea occupies the warm-incompetent configuration — the position associated with sympathy, supervision, and withheld self-determination. Neither configuration requires hostility to function. Both reproduce hierarchy.

These findings carry implications that extend beyond the specific case. IR scholarship has tended to treat racialization as operating primarily through negative representation — dehumanization, threat construction, exclusion. What this corpus demonstrates is that the logic of racial hierarchy can be reproduced through the attribution of positive qualities, provided those qualities are distributed asymmetrically and embedded in conditional evaluative frameworks. Admiration for Japan's discipline coexists with the assumption that discipline requires American oversight to be properly directed. Sympathy for Korea's suffering coexists with the conclusion that suffering confirms incapacity.

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