

Race and racism in the founding of the modern world order

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Whether race and racism have been a part of the human condition throughout history is a matter of debate.¹ But there is little question that the emergence of racism as a *scientific, profitable, offensive, geopolitical* and *normative* basis for organizing world order came only with the rise of European global dominance, which began in the sixteenth century CE and morphed into the era of American primacy after the Second World War. Empire and slavery are neither new nor unique to Europe, but the symbiotic and mutually reinforcing link between empire, slavery and racism is a distinct product and feature of the European- and/or US-led world order.²

Race is not a new topic in the study of international relations. It was a major concern behind the founding of the International Relations (IR) discipline and in western foreign policy debates before the Second World War.³ But as the United States became both the leading world power and the centre of gravity for IR as a field of study after 1945, race was (and continues to be) swept under the carpet, and racism even legitimized, by mainstream scholarship and policy discourses about international affairs and world order.⁴

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¹ There is no consensus on the existence of race and racism in the classical period. See note 20 below.

² Taking a combined view of these forces allows one to refute those who argue that racism, along with slavery and imperialism, are timeless phenomena, common to all civilizations, and therefore should not be viewed as uniquely western. For example, Niall Ferguson insists that the rise of Europe cannot be attributed to its imperialism, because 'Empire was the least original thing the West did after 1500. Everybody did empire': Niall Ferguson, 'The 6 killer apps of prosperity', Ted Talk, https://www.ted.com/talks/niall_ferguson_the_6_killer_apps_of_prosperity/transcript?language=en. This draws on his book, *Civilization: The Six Killer Apps of Western Power* (New York: Penguin Books, 2012), p. 8. But not all empires were the same. The integration of racism, empire and slavery within a capitalist economy and a Standard of Civilization (SoC—to be discussed later) as a worldview and a legal doctrine, was the distinctive product of European empires, which had no parallels in earlier history. This is a central claim of this essay.

³ Robert Vitalis, *White world order, black power politics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2017); Amitav Acharya and Barry Buzan, *The making of global International Relations: origins and evolution of IR at its centenary* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019).

⁴ A striking example of mainstream IR scholarship's kid-glove treatment of racism is the special issue of *International Organization*, a leading journal in the field: 'Challenges to the liberal international order: *International Organization* at 75', *International Organization* 75: 2, 2021. There is no contribution by a postcolonial scholar, even though postcolonialism has done most to highlight racism in IR, and only one article is directly devoted to racism. In this essay, I offer a different view on racism and world order compared to what is presented in

Postcolonial academic scholarship has done much to uncover theoretically the problem of structural racism.⁵ However, the link between racism and *world order-making*, especially in an empirical and policy context, requires greater attention, as called for by this special issue of *International Affairs*.⁶ That Henry Kissinger's *World order*, published as recently as 2014 to become perhaps the best-selling book on the subject by a public intellectual, does not mention racism once, but instead credits Woodrow Wilson, despite his racist policies, as the 'world's conscience', says much about how leading policy-makers in the West continue to legitimize racism in world order.⁷ Confronting this mindset, I point in this article specifically to the deep integration of racism, slavery and empire in the making of the contemporary world order, led first by Europe and then by the US. The latter includes the liberal international order (LIO: I use this term rather than 'liberal world order' or 'liberal hegemonic order'), which has received considerable attention in international affairs policy debates in recent years.⁸ On the other side of the coin, I examine how resistance to racism and the demand for racial justice and equality became the key organizing principles of an alternative conception of world order championed by anti-colonial leaders and platforms before and after the Second World War. Here I argue that the drawing of an intrinsic link between colonialism and racism on the one hand, and between decolonization, racial equality and human rights on the other, was a major contribution of postcolonial nations, a link that

the special issue by two otherwise well-written essays. First, while Búzás (p. 440) argues that at 'San Francisco Conference, many participants attributed World War II to racism, and deemed the inclusion of racial equality in the United Nations Charter vital for peace in the new international order', I find little evidence of racism towards the colonized nations being blamed for the war, and reach exactly the opposite conclusion: that racism and racial inequality, along with colonialism, were swept under the carpet or even legitimized at the San Francisco Conference. While Tourinho (pp. 258–81) argues that the norms of racial equality such as those existing today were the result of 'co-constitution' by the western creators of the LIO and 'weaker' nations (which begs the question, 'on whose terms did the co-constitution occur?'), I find these norms to have been largely the product of anti-colonial struggles and the demands for racial equality by Third World/global South nations *in the face of vigorous western resistance* (such as western efforts to subvert the 1955 Asia–Africa Conference in Bandung—discussed later in this essay).

⁵ While lack of space precludes a detailed discussion of postcolonial scholarship on race and IR theory, excellent overviews can be found in these works: Randolph B. Persaud and Alina Sajed, eds, *Race, gender and culture in international relations: postcolonial perspectives* (London: Routledge, 2018); Alex Anievas, Nivi Manchanda and Robbie Shilliam, eds, *Race and racism in international relations: confronting the global colour line* (London: Routledge, 2014); and Olivia Umurerwa Rutazibwa, 'From the everyday to IR: in defence of the strategic use of the r-word', *Postcolonial Studies* 19: 2, 2016, pp. 191–200. An important constructivist study of the struggle for racial equality using South Africa's apartheid as a case-study is Audie Klotz, 'Norms reconstituting interests: global racial equality and US sanctions against South Africa', *International Organization* 49: 3, 1995, pp. 451–78.

⁶ Previous significant work on the role of race in world order-building include Srdjan Vucetic, *The Anglosphere: a genealogy of a racialized identity in International Relations* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011); Adom Getachew, *Worldmaking after empire: the rise and fall of self-determination* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019); and Alexander D. Barder, *Global race war: international politics and racial hierarchy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021). My approach sympathizes with the above, but also looks past the onset of European colonial expansion, the usual starting point of many postcolonial studies, and takes a more globally historical and constructivist approach, focusing on norms and institutions as developed in my previous work: Amitav Acharya, *Whose ideas matter: agency and power in Asian regionalism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009); and Amitav Acharya, *Constructing global order: agency and change in world politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018). And going beyond Getachew's focus on the demand for self-determination in an Afro-US context, I pay closer attention to Afro-Asian contributions to racial equality. Hence, a key question for this article is why 'racial equality', despite its prominence in the League of Nations debates, disappeared from the UN Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights but found prominence in the 1955 Afro-Asian Conference in Bandung.

⁷ Henry Kissinger, *World order* (New York: Penguin, 2014). On Woodrow Wilson, see pp. 256–69.

⁸ Amitav Acharya, *The end of American world order* (Cambridge: Polity, 2014).

was missing from or obscured in the UN Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), two of the most important foundations of the LIO.

Second, this article argues for close attention to be paid to the deep and symbiotic relationship between racism in knowledge production and racism in practice, with special attention to the role of epistemic communities, and of individual agents who act as conduits.⁹ In concluding, the article warns against the danger of faddism in recent calls for racial inclusion and the compartmentalization of race and racism along national lines, going against the historical interconnectedness or transnational nature of anti-racist movements around the world. This danger has not been sufficiently acknowledged in the current literature on race in IR.

Developing these arguments, this article first offers some definitions of key concepts: race, racism and world order. It then examines the close nexus between empire, slavery and civilization that led to the ‘invention’ of race as an organizing concept of international relations during the building of the European world order. The next part discusses how racism shaped the founding of the post-Second World War American-led world order, in which building a global norm of racial equality was neglected, leaving it to postcolonial countries to take the lead in the realization of decolonization and racial justice. In concluding, I caution against the dangers of complacency and compartmentalizing the study of race and racism, and call instead for racism to be viewed as an omnipresent global challenge, hence integral to the emerging research agenda of global IR.¹⁰

Conceptually linking race and racism to world order

Race is ‘one of the main groups to which people are often *considered* to belong, based on physical characteristics that they are *perceived* to share such as skin colour, eye shape, etc.’.¹¹ The biological, physical and behavioural differences that are common to most definitions of race are contested in scientific and social discourse. For example, establishing a scientific basis of race was once central to racism in the West, but science has since discarded the idea of race-based biological and intellectual differences even though it persists in present-day social and political beliefs.¹²

Racism can be defined as ‘prejudice, discrimination, or antagonism directed against a person or people on the basis of their membership of a particular racial or ethnic group, typically one that is a minority or marginalized’.¹³ But racism

⁹ Navnita Chadha Behera, ‘Globalization, deglobalization and knowledge production’, *International Affairs* 97: 5, 2021, pp. 1579–97.

¹⁰ Amitav Acharya, ‘Global International Relations (IR) and regional worlds: a new agenda for international studies’, *International Studies Quarterly* 58: 4, 2014, pp. 647–59. Global IR is not mainly about ‘regional “diversification”, or “pluralisation” of perspectives from beyond the West’. Meera Sabaratnam, ‘Is IR theory white? Racialised subject-positioning in three canonical texts’, *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 49:1, 2020, p. 5. Rather, Global IR calls for all biases and exclusions, including but not limited to racial bias, in both IR theory and epistemology, to be challenged.

¹¹ ‘Race’, *Cambridge Dictionary*, n.d., <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/race> (emphasis added). (Unless otherwise noted at point of citation, all URLs cited in this article were accessible on 6 Oct. 2021.)

¹² Lynn B. Jorde, ‘Genetic variation and human evolution’, 16 Oct. 2003, <https://www.ashg.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/genetic-variation-essay.pdf>.

¹³ ‘Racism’, *Lexico*, n.d., <https://www.lexico.com/definition/racism>.

is not just ‘simply bigotry or prejudice’. It extends to political and institutional ‘beliefs, practices, and policies reflective of and supported by institutional power, primarily state power’.¹⁴ This applies as much to the domestic arena of states as to the international.

Both race and racism are ‘socially constructed’ phenomena, although this does not make them any less ‘real’. As Geeta Chowdhry and Shirin Rai put it, race is a socially constructed category that has no biological or cultural fixity to it. However ... racial formations and racialized groups are ‘real,’ acquiring social meaning through a variety of social, legal, political and economic forces, and institutions; through ‘performative acts’; and through their intersections with gender, class, sexuality, nation, religion, and so on.¹⁵

World order in a general sense refers to how the ‘world’, or a big part of it, is organized—politically, economically and culturally—at a given period of history. In a widely used formulation, Hedley Bull identified the goals of ‘international order’ as preserving the state system, maintaining the sovereignty or independence of states, upholding relative peace or absence of war as the normal condition among states, limiting violence, keeping promises and protecting property rights.¹⁶ Against this rather status quo-oriented concept, other ideas about world order take a more expansive and normative view, stressing goals such as justice and equality. I argue that the former concept underpins the traditional western understanding of world order, while the latter underpins that of postcolonial states.¹⁷

Henry Kissinger defines world order as a ‘concept held by a region or civilization about the nature of just arrangements and the distribution of power thought to be applicable to the entire world’.¹⁸ Thus, world orders are created by civilizations or regions (and, I would add, great powers) on the basis of their own self-image, the values they regard as universal, and their own interest and influence. In this view, many civilizations may be regarded as creators of world order; indeed, Kissinger discusses China, India and Islam, although characteristically he begins with Europe (presenting Westphalia and the concert system as ideal-types) and ends with the United States, treating others as if they were aberrations.

¹⁴ Errol A. Henderson, ‘Hidden in plain sight: racism in international relations theory’, *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 26: 1, 2013, p. 72.

¹⁵ Geeta Chowdhry and Shirin Rai, ‘The geographies of exclusion and the politics of inclusion: race-based exclusions in the teaching of international relations’, *International Studies Perspectives* 10: 1, 2009, pp. 85–6. The controversial original UNESCO statement on race noted that ‘for all practical social purposes “race” is not so much a biological phenomenon as a social myth’ (p. 8), although it did not completely reject biological factors in race, and ‘geographic and or cultural isolation’ (p. 5) as reasons for the changing racial makeup of humans. See UNESCO, *The race question* (Paris, 1950), <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000128291>. Some scholars, in rejecting biological concepts of race, prefer the terms ‘racialized group’ (Lawrence Blum) or ‘racial identities’ (Anthony Appiah). See Michael James and Adam Burgos, ‘Race’, in Edward N. Zalta, ed., *The Stanford encyclopedia of philosophy*, summer 2020 edn, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2020/entries/race/>.

¹⁶ Hedley Bull, *The anarchical society*, 3rd edn (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2002), pp. 16–19. Bull was talking here about what he called ‘international order’, focusing on interstate relations, which he separated from ‘world order’, the latter involving all humankind. But his goals of order can apply to both.

¹⁷ For a detailed discussion of different understandings of order, see Amitav Acharya, *Constructing global order* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

¹⁸ Kissinger, *World order*, p. 9.

In this article, as noted above, I consider the European and American world orders as two overlapping phases of the 'modern' world order. It has been argued that the two phases differed significantly in terms of both their main organizing powers (European and American) and their institutional features (balance of power and imperialism in the former, and multilateral institutions in the latter).¹⁹ But there is also much continuity and commonality between them. Both reflect the primacy of the West over the rest, and of the capitalist mode of production. Key elements of the European interstate system, such as Westphalian sovereignty and the nation-state, were inherited, preserved and in some respects expanded under the US-led world order. Despite creating a set of multilateral institutions, the American world order shunned neither imperialism, especially in its early stages, nor the balance of power approach. But above all, race and racism remained a keystone and a shared foundation of both, differentiating them from world orders of the past.

Empire, slavery, capitalism and civilization: Europe's invention of race

Whether a proto-racism might have existed in the ancient world, including in ancient Greece and Rome, might be debated, but the fully developed scientific and social idea of race is undoubtedly a modern phenomenon.²⁰ Al-Jahiz, an Arab writer of the eighth and ninth centuries CE born in Basra, wrote that 'there are black tribes among the Arabs. White and black are the results of environment, the natural properties of water and soil, distance from the sun, and intensity of heat.'²¹ Although geography and environmental conditions would also figure in scientific racism in Europe and the West, there is a major difference. For European scientific racists, being European meant having white skin only; Al-Jahiz makes it clear that Arabs could be both black and white. Furthermore, he reveals that the Arabs did consider blacks (the people of Zanj, as they called the inhabitants of the Swahili coast) as civilized, a status that the Europeans would scarcely grant to people of colour. Bernasconi argues that although some form of racist belief did exist earlier, it was not until European thinkers used race to justify the slave trade and colonialism that the modern concepts of race and racism were invented.²² Eric Williams, a scholar and the first prime minister of Trinidad and Tobago, wrote that 'slavery was not born of racism: rather, racism was the consequence of slavery'.²³

Slavery was of course not a European innovation, but the transatlantic slave trade differed from its predecessors in several respects. The first is the sheer volume

¹⁹ G. John Ikenberry, *Liberal Leviathan: the origins, crisis, and transformation of the American world order* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011).

²⁰ Some writers have specifically rejected the existence of racial prejudice based on skin colour in ancient Greece and Rome. See Denise McCoskey, *Race: antiquity and its legacy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012). The Indian historian D. P. Singhal speaks of 'the Roman lack of racial or colour prejudices': D. P. Singhal, *India and world civilization* (New Delhi: Rupa, 1993), p. 84.

²¹ Abū Ūthmān al-Jāhiz, *The essays*, c. 860 BC, Fordham History Sourcebooks, <https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/source/860jahiz.asp>.

²² Robert Bernasconi, 'Who invented the concept of race? Kant's role in the Enlightenment construction of race', in Robert Bernasconi, ed., *Race* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), pp. 11–36.

²³ Eric Williams, *Capitalism and slavery* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994; first publ. 1944), p. 7.

of the transatlantic traffic. Estimates of the numbers of Africans shipped to the New World between 1500 and 1840 CE vary between 10 million and 12 million.²⁴ A second difference was qualitative. In the Arab slave trade in Africa, perhaps the most extensive previous example of a commercial slave trade, slaves were used both for household work and as soldiers. While the life of slavery is miserable anywhere, in the Islamic context, a slave (including a Zanj slave) could become a high official, as in the Ottoman empire, or even a ruler, as in India's 'slave dynasty' of the thirteenth century.²⁵ By contrast, transatlantic slavery led to the commodification and utter dehumanization of slaves. The colonial economy 'made slaves anonymous—they were so to speak, something bought in a store, selected purely on physical characteristics, like so many cans of soup'.²⁶ Moreover, the Arabs, like the Romans and Greeks, possessed both black and white slaves. Slavery was not linked to skin colour. With the rise of the West, especially in colonial United States in the eighteenth century, slavery was exclusively identified with skin colour (I will return to this later).

A third and perhaps more important difference was the racialization of slavery. Historically, slavery had been justified mainly on grounds of capture in the context of a 'just war', voluntary contract in return for money or welfare, or based on biblical beliefs—such as the 'Curse of Ham', in which patriarch Noah committed his son Canaan's descendants to servitude (Genesis 9: 24–7), and 'Abraham's slaves', which he and other patriarchs kept without incurring God's disapproval (Genesis 21: 9–10).²⁷ This slavery was not based on skin colour,²⁸ even though in popular versions Ham was rendered black, and his descendants African, and such beliefs would be adapted to provide justification for enslaving blacks in the United States.²⁹ But a major turning point in the racialization of slavery was the *Fundamental Constitutions of Carolina*. Among the principal drafters of this document was John Locke (1632–1704), one of the key philosophers of liberalism. Locke worked for Lord Shaftesbury, who, as the chief lord proprietor of Carolina, played a key role in the English colonization of the Carolinas;³⁰ Locke also served as secretary to the eight lords proprietors of Carolina from 1668 to 1671, and was an investor in the Royal Africa Company (1672–5), which was engaged in the slave trade. Article 110 of the *Fundamental Constitutions of Carolina*, adopted by the eight lords proprietors of Carolina (including Locke's employer, Lord Shaftesbury) on

²⁴ Charles Mann, *1493: uncovering the new world Columbus created* (New York: Knopf, 2011), pp. 366–7.

²⁵ Baki Tezcan, *The second Ottoman empire: political and social transformation in the early modern world* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

²⁶ Mann, *1493*, p. 432.

²⁷ Samuel Sewall's *Selling Joseph*, the first well-known anti-slavery writing in colonial north America, examined four justifications of slavery: civilizing people by enslaving and baptizing them; just war; the curse of Ham; and Abraham's slaves. See Samuel Sewall, 'The selling of Joseph: a memorial', 1700, DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska—Lincoln, <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/etas/26/#:~:text=The%20first%20anti%20slavery%20tract,the%20leading%20jurist%20of%20Massachusetts>.

²⁸ 'Why did so many Christians support slavery?', *Christianity Today*, no. 33, 1992, <https://www.christianity-today.com/history/issues/issue-33/why-christians-supported-slavery.html>.

²⁹ David M. Goldenberg, 'Black and slave: the origins and history of the Curse of Ham', in *Studies of the Bible and its reception*, vol. 10 (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter GmbH, 2017).

³⁰ William Uzgalis, 'John Locke', in Zalta, ed., *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, spring 2020 edn, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2020/entries/locke/>.

1 March 1669, stated: 'Every freeman of Carolina shall have absolute power and authority over his negro slaves, of what opinion or religion soever [*sic*].'³¹

These words for the first time explicitly and constitutionally identified slavery with a particular race—defined by skin colour—and clarified that being a Christian would not exempt a black person from slavery, despite some past injunctions against Christians enslaving fellow Christians. Locke's philosophy profoundly influenced the constitution of the United States.

Locke was hardly alone. Many other European and American philosophers provided justification for racism and colonialism, often both.³² While lack of space precludes a detailed elaboration, it is fairly clear that racism among western philosophers was neither rare nor short-lived, but commonplace, long-term and multifaceted. While there were important variations within western racist thought, its key features included the following:

- It was geographically widespread, encompassing Europe and the United States.
- It was long-term, spanning the centuries from the seventeenth to the twentieth, including figures such as Locke (seventeenth), Kant (eighteenth), J. S. Mill (nineteenth), Tocqueville (nineteenth), Angell (twentieth) and Wilson (twentieth).
- It cut across professions, including professors, thinkers, leaders and policy-makers alike.³³

³¹ 'The Fundamental Constitutions of Carolina: March 1, 1669', North Carolina colonial records, Avalon Project, Yale Law School, https://avalon.law.yale.edu/17th_century/nco5.asp. Some defenders of Locke argue that his shares in the Royal Africa Company were compensation from the English king, who had run out of cash to pay him, and note that he sold them within three years. They also note that Locke would go on to condemn slavery as 'so vile and miserable an institution', in his *Second Treatise of Government*, published in 1689 (but based on earlier work). And after his work on the Carolina Constitution was done, as chair of the Board of Trade of the new English king William III, he opposed Virginia's pro-slavery laws that granted land to settlers who imported servants and slaves. See Holly Brewer, 'Slavery, sovereignty, and "inheritable blood": reconsidering John Locke and the origins of American slavery', *American Historical Review* 122: 4, 2017, pp. 1038–78. The very fact that Locke would institutionalize slavery in drafting the constitution despite considering slavery as 'vile' itself bespeaks a striking lack of moral fortitude, leading scholar John Dunn to regard Locke's stance as one of 'immoral evasion': John Dunn, *The political thought of John Locke: an historical account of the argument of the 'Two Treatises of Government'* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), p. 175. Locke exemplifies the power of the racist structures within which he was working, which could co-opt even someone with a personal distaste for slavery, the foremost racist institution of the time.

³² For a detailed discussion of European thinkers' racism, see John M. Hobson, *The Eurocentric conception of world politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

³³ Zimmern is a good example of the academic-policy nexus in international relations. He was at the same time an ardent multilateralist and an imperialist. He was not only the first holder of the Woodrow Wilson Chair of International Politics at the University College of Wales, considered to be the first professorship in the subject of international relations (even though it was named as a chair in 'international politics'); he was also involved in the founding of the Royal Institute of International Affairs (1919), the League of Nations Society and UNESCO. Zimmern did not belittle other races in the way Kant or Hume did, but he did view the world in racial terms and had distinct anxieties about the rise of non-white races. He bemoaned the loss of 'white man's prestige ... because the East has unlocked the secrets of Western laboratory', and described Japan's victory in the Russo-Japanese war of 1904–1905 as 'the most important historical event which has happened, or is likely to happen, in our lifetime, the victory of a non-white people over a white people': Alfred Zimmern, *The third British empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1934), p. 109–10. Viewing racial conflict as one of the principal threats to world order, he saw British imperialism as a positive force for racial integration. Not surprisingly, he was among the first to use the term 'Commonwealth' as a way of preserving the legacy of the British empire: J. D. B. Miller, 'The Commonwealth and world order: the Zimmern vision and after', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 8: 1, 1979, p. pp. 159–74.

- It included philosophers and scholars of different theoretical standpoints, including liberals (Locke, Kant, Mill, Wilson), realists (Mahan and Mackinder), idealists (Hegel),³⁴ and Marxists (Marx himself).

Even among those who opposed imperialism, some created ‘colonial exceptions’.³⁵ J. S. Mill’s ‘tolerant imperialism’ held colonization to be permissible if it improved the lives of the colonized.³⁶ He would allow independence to Indians if and when they adopted the ways of European civilization. J. A. Hobson criticized imperialism as being too nationalistic and unprofitable, but opined that ‘all interference on the part of civilized white nations with “lower races” was not prima facie illegitimate’. His objection was only to imperial control by the *private enterprise* of white nations; ‘civilized Governments’ of white nations ‘may undertake the political and economic control of lower races’,³⁷ on the ground that the natural resources of the ‘lower races’ were needed for the benefit of the world. Norman Angell, the famous British idealist who advanced the liberal view that economic interdependence made war counterproductive, nonetheless justified British imperialism in India and Egypt, arguing that these nations could not develop interdependence and cooperation on their own, and thus that British military conquest had been beneficial to them.³⁸ Thanks to British imperialism, ‘the inferior race [of India] not only survives, but is given an extra lease of life by virtue of the conquest’.³⁹

Locke’s ideas about the social contract and property rights shaped the domestic laws and institutions of western nations, especially those of Britain and America; and there is an undeniable link between the domestic spheres of those two states and their rise as the most important builders of the modern world order. More directly related to world order, however, is the influence of Kant, especially his liberal–idealist conception of a universal order. On the 200th anniversary of Kant’s death, Joschka Fischer, then Germany’s foreign minister, remarked:

Kant is the most influential thinker of the Modern Age. So even though he may not have been thinking of a specific body such as the UN, he did consider the effects of a world state based on a union of countries. You can see how a lot of Kant’s ideas helped shape the UN, and *Perpetual peace* is definitely steeped in the spirit of global governance.⁴⁰

But Kant also believed that ‘humanity exists in its greatest perfection in the white race’, whereas the ‘yellow Indians have a smaller amount of talent’ and the

³⁴ Hegel classified the world, in terms of knowledge and freedom, into the despotism and tyranny of the Orient, the imperfect freedom of Greco-Roman civilization (the West in its infancy) and, as the third and highest stage, Germanic/European civilization. See Shawn Kelley, *Racializing Jesus: race, ideology, and the formation of modern biblical scholarship* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 49.

³⁵ Partha Chatterjee, ‘Empires, nations, peoples: the imperial prerogative and colonial exception’, *Thesis Eleven* 139: 1, 2017, pp. 84–96.

³⁶ Mark Tunick, ‘Tolerant imperialism: John Stuart Mill’s defense of British rule in India’, *Review of Politics* 68: 4, 2006, pp. 586–611.

³⁷ John A. Hobson, *Imperialism: a study* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1965; first publ. 1902), p. 232 (emphasis in original).

³⁸ Norman Angell, *The great illusion* (London: G. P. Putnam and Sons, 1913), pp. 146 and 236–7.

³⁹ Angell, *The great illusion*, pp. 236–7.

⁴⁰ Joschka Fischer (German foreign minister 1998–2005), ‘Kant is the most influential thinker of the modern age’, *Deutsche Welle*, 12 Feb. 2002, <https://www.dw.com/en/kant-is-the-most-influential-thinker-of-the-modern-age/a-1111992>.

‘Negroes are lower and the lowest are a part of the [native] American peoples.’⁴¹ Citing another celebrated Enlightenment rationalist, David Hume, Kant argued that the ‘negroes of Africa have by nature no feeling that rises above the trifling ... not a single one was ever found who presented anything great in art or science or any other praiseworthy quality’. The differences between the white race and black Africans were ‘fundamental’, and the division ‘appears to be as great in regard to mental capacities as in color’.⁴² Kant’s invocation of Hume on this subject (although the two disagreed on other matters) shows that European thinkers fed on each other’s racism. Kant’s racism has been defended on the ground that he, unlike Locke, was anti-imperialist.⁴³ Yet he would not support sovereignty for non-whites unless they first became civilized according to European standards. Kant remained ‘unapologetic that non-European societies should renounce their “lawless savagery” and move towards a capitalist republican state-form’.⁴⁴

Kant and Locke are often excused for being ‘products of their times’. Then what about contemporaries such as Johann Gottfried Herder, who rejected Kant’s scientific racism outright: ‘Notwithstanding the varieties of the human form, there is but one and the same species of man throughout the whole earth?’⁴⁵ James Tyrrell, who was once Locke’s housemate, argued that a slave, including one taken in a just war, could harm his master if denied ‘liberty and enjoyment of the ordinary Comforts of Life’; and that a slave, if he was not given such comfort (as in Barbados, which Tyrrell mentioned), ‘may lawfully run away if he can’.⁴⁶

Another important element of the European world order was the Standard of Civilization (SoC), prominent during the nineteenth century. While its detailed prescriptions were unclear and not uniform, the conditions for admission to the club of advanced nations included respect for property rights, provision of infrastructure, safe travel, freedom of religion and commerce (at least for foreigners), respect for international agreements, and possession of modern technology.⁴⁷ Japan felt that, in order to qualify, it needed not only to industrialize but also to become imperial; hence its participation alongside western forces in suppressing the Boxer Rebellion in China. Looking at Japan, Gerrit Gong argues that, ‘at

⁴¹ Cited in David McCabe, ‘Kant was a racist. Now what?’, *Newsletter of the American Philosophical Association* 18: 2, 2019, p. 2, <https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.apaonline.org/resource/collection/808CBF9D-D8E6-44A7-AE13-41A70645A525/TeachingV18n2.pdf>.

⁴² ‘Observations on the feeling of the beautiful and the sublime’, cited in McCabe, ‘Kant was a racist’, p. 3.

⁴³ Some defenders of Kant also argue that only his writings on geography and anthropology (published class lectures) were racist, as distinct from his writings on politics or ethics, which were free from racist remarks. Yet can someone be excused for views expressed in particular settings—e.g. racist, sexist or elitist remarks made in a private setting before close friends and supporters—while maintaining a very different public persona or stance? As Jasmine Gani argues, Kant’s philosophical work on cosmopolitanism cannot be considered in isolation ‘from its historical and imperialist conception. By excavating his works on geography and anthropology, it is possible to identify the constitutive effects of an erasure of race from Kant’s legal-political theory on the one hand, and a simultaneous project of racist codification in his natural history on the other.’ See Jasmine Gani, ‘The erasure of race: cosmopolitanism and the illusion of Kantian hospitality’, *Millennium* 45: 3, 2017, pp. 425–46 at p. 446.

⁴⁴ Hobson, *The Eurocentric conception of world politics*, p. 65.

⁴⁵ Cited in Raphael Falk, ‘Genetic markers cannot determine Jewish descent’, *Frontiers in Genetics*, 21 Jan. 2015, <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fgene.2014.00462/full>.

⁴⁶ Cited in Robert Bernasconi, ‘Proto-racism: Carolina in Locke’s mind’, in Iris Wigger and Sabine Rotter, eds, *Racism and modernity* (Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2011), p. 75.

⁴⁷ Barry Buzan, ‘The “Standard of Civilisation” as an English School concept’, *Millennium* 42: 3, 2014, pp. 576–94 at p. 580.

least in theory', the SoC was 'colourblind'; it 'discriminated neither in favour of, nor against, non-White, non-European countries'.⁴⁸ But it can hardly be a coincidence that the overwhelming majority of countries that the Europeans deemed unable to meet the standard were non-white, including China and India, which were perfectly capable of negotiating and honouring treaties, ensuring property rights and undertaking commercial and diplomatic exchanges. In reality, despite its taking on a legal veneer, the SoC was based on deeply racist assumptions. As Buzan argues, the SoC 'supported a partly racist taxonomy of "savage, barbarian and civilised" as a way of classifying the non-European world in relation to Europe, and gate-keeping on entry to European, and later Western, international society'.⁴⁹

Origins of the American world order: liberal or racial internationalism?

There is a common assumption among western scholars that the racist and imperialist world order promoted by European powers ended with the rise of US hegemony. This view needs serious questioning, as discussed below. To begin with, while the term LIO or 'American world order' is usually applied to the post-Second World War period, the reality is that the United States had been engaged in 'world order' building since its own foundation. Initially, US order building was limited to its own expansion within North America, augmented by the Monroe Doctrine, which asserted a US sphere of influence in Latin America and the Caribbean and aimed at preventing a return of European empires. Theodore Roosevelt, US president from 1901 to 1909, won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1906 for his mediation in the Russo-Japanese war; but his mediation was inspired less by concerns for peace than by racist geopolitical anxieties over the threat posed by Japan's victory over Russia to US interests in Asia. Roosevelt drew upon his racial beliefs to justify the European colonization of America. He wrote:

The most ultimately righteous of all wars is a war with savages, though it is apt to be also the most terrible and inhuman. The rude, fierce settler who drives the savage from the land lays all civilized mankind under debt to him.⁵⁰

Theodore Roosevelt knew personally the arch-defender of empire, Rudyard Kipling. After reading an advance copy of Kipling's 'White man's burden', which the poet had sent to him before its publication in 1899, he commented that it was 'rather poor poetry, but good sense from the expansionist standpoint'.⁵¹ Referring to domestic calls for autonomy to be granted to the Philippines, the

⁴⁸ Gerrit W. Gong, *The standard of 'civilization' in international society* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), p. 53; Tanja E. Alberts, 'Rethinking the principle of (sovereign) equality as a standard of civilisation', *Millennium* 42: 3, 2014, pp. 767–89.

⁴⁹ Buzan, 'The "Standard of Civilisation" as an English School concept', p. 578.

⁵⁰ Theodore Roosevelt, *Winning of the West*, cited in Howard K. Beale, *Theodore Roosevelt and the rise of America to world power* (New York: Collier, 1965), p. 149.

⁵¹ Martin F. Nolan, 'American empire/the day Teddy Roosevelt, Admiral Dewey and "bayonet rule" converged in S.F.', *SFGATE*, 11 May 2003, <https://www.sfgate.com/opinion/article/American-Empire-The-day-Teddy-Roosevelt-2649139.php>.

colonial control of which had passed from Spain to the United States in 1898, along with Guam, Cuba and Puerto Rico (the US also annexed Hawaii, not a Spanish colony, the same year), Roosevelt complained in a letter to Kipling in 1904 about American ‘jack fools who seriously think that any group of pirates and head-hunters needs nothing but independence in order that it may be turned forthwith into a dark-hued New England town meeting’.⁵²

The racial feelings in American academic and policy debates on international affairs underpinned the founding in 1910 of the first American magazine devoted to international affairs, suggestively titled the *Journal of Race Development (JRD)*. The *JRD* aimed to be a ‘forum for the discussion of the problems which relate to the progress of races and states generally considered backward in their standards of civilization ... [and] how they may best be helped by the stronger’. In 1919, the *JRD* assumed the new name of *Journal of International Relations*, which three years later was absorbed into the magazine *Foreign Affairs*, taking over its predecessor’s ‘inheritance and good will and ... appealing to a wider public’.⁵³ *Foreign Affairs* became perhaps the most influential liberal outlet for policy debates in international affairs in the United States, if not the world.

As noted above, the American-led stage of world order building should not be regarded as a fundamental break from European beliefs and practices. Many of the founders of the United States accepted the ‘civilizing mission’ of the white race. The first US president, George Washington, started a policy of ‘civilizing’ the surviving native Indians.⁵⁴ The inferiority of blacks to whites was ingrained in the constitution as the ‘three-fifths compromise’, which counted only three-fifths of a state’s black population as part of its total population in allocating its congressional seats and share of taxation. Thomas Jefferson confessed, although he would call it a ‘suspicion only’, ‘that the Blacks, whether originally a distinct race, or made distinct by time and circumstances, are inferior to the Whites in the endowments both of *body and mind*’.⁵⁵ In the United States, slavery not only contributed to racism, it also fuelled the country’s rise to world power. By 1860, America’s four million slaves (including domestically traded slaves after the US Congress banned the import of slaves in 1807), most of whom were engaged in sugar, cotton, tobacco and rice cultivation, were producing ‘well over’ 60 per cent of the nation’s GDP.⁵⁶ The cotton industry, which accounted for more than half of all US exports in the first half of the nineteenth century, was heavily dependent on slaves. ‘By 1850, 1.8 million

⁵² Cited in Patrick Brantlinger, ‘Kipling’s “The white man’s burden” and its afterlives’, *English Literature in Transition, 1880–1920* 50: 2, 2007, p. 177.

⁵³ George H. Blakeslee, ‘Introduction’, *Journal of Race Development* 1: 1, July 1910, p. 1 (emphasis added); *Journal of International Relations* 10: 1, July 1919; Vitalis, *White world order, black power politics*, p. 90; ‘Editorial statement’, *Foreign Affairs* 1: 1, 1922, p. 1. Despite this clear link, an official history of *Foreign Affairs*, written by its editor from 1972 to 1984, William Bundy, would not acknowledge its ‘inheritance’ of the *JRD* or *JIR*, or even mention them: William Bundy, ‘The history of *Foreign Affairs*’, *Foreign Affairs*, 1994, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/history-foreign-affairs>.

⁵⁴ Theda Perdue, ‘“Mixed blood” Indians: racial construction in the early South’, Mercer University Lamar Memorial Lectures, no. 45 (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2005), p. 51.

⁵⁵ Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia, query 14, 1781–1782* (emphasis added), <https://mason.gmu.edu/~zschrage/hist120spring05/jeffersonquery14.htm>.

⁵⁶ Author visit to galleries of the National Museum of African American History, Washington DC, 30 July 2017.

of the 2.5 million enslaved Africans employed in agriculture in the United States were working on cotton plantations.⁵⁷ The slave trade was also highly beneficial to the US financial (as banks invested in the slave trade) and shipping sectors. The wealth generated from the cotton industry made the lower Mississippi valley home to the majority of millionaires in the United States around 1860. And it made slave labour the US economy's most valuable asset, estimated at \$3.5 billion, exceeding the combined worth of all manufacturing and railroads.⁵⁸

In contrast to Roosevelt's imperial vision, President Woodrow Wilson championed liberal internationalism. Wilson's appearance at the Versailles Conference of 1919 as a champion of universal organization (in the form of the League of Nations) and the norm of self-determination masked his racist beliefs. Using his power as the chair of the League of Nations Commission, Wilson used a procedural tactic—insisting on unanimity as opposed to majority support, which he had used on previous occasions at the conference—to kill the inclusion of a 'racial equality' clause in the League of Nations principles, as had been sought by Japan.⁵⁹

Japan's demand for 'racial equality' was motivated not by a desire to elevate Asians or blacks, but to protect Japanese from discrimination in the United States and to bolster its quest for equality with the western great powers. Some have argued that Wilson's stance against the racial equality clause was a pragmatic move to placate opposition in the US west coast to Japanese migration and to prevent the breakup of the conference through opposition to the racial equality clause from Britain and Australia. But it was also linked to his own personal racism, manifested in his tolerance of the Ku Klux Klan and segregation of the federal civil service. William Wiseman, chief adviser to British Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour at Versailles, who had enjoyed a close relationship with Wilson's adviser Colonel Edward House during his posting as head of the British spying mission in the United States during the First World War, noted that 'the American hatred of all yellow races is thinly, if at all, disguised. Any thought of the yellows being brought in to redress the balance of the whites is repugnant to them'.⁶⁰

After Versailles, 'racial equality' dropped out of the picture. The next effort at creating a universal organization, the UN, recognized in article 2 of its charter preamble 'sovereign equality' rather than 'racial equality'. While the UN Charter (in part I: 'Purposes and principles') mentions 'race', it is in the context of human rights, rendering discrimination on the basis of race as a violation of human rights. The preamble does not specifically mention 'racial equality' or colonialism.⁶¹

⁵⁷ 'How slavery helped build a world economy', an excerpt from *Jubilee: the emergence of African-American Culture*, a publication of the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture of the New York Public Library (National Geographic Books, 2003), 3 Jan. 2003, <https://api.nationalgeographic.com/distribution/public/amp/news/2003/1/how-slavery-helped-build-a-world-economy>.

⁵⁸ Ta-Nehisi Coates, 'Slavery made America', *Atlantic*, 24 June 2014, <https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2014/06/slavery-made-america/373288/>.

⁵⁹ Josh Axelrod, 'A century later: the Treaty of Versailles and its rejection of racial equality', NPR, 11 Aug. 2019, <https://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2019/08/11/742293305/a-century-later-the-treaty-of-versailles-and-its-rejection-of-racial-equality>.

⁶⁰ Cited in Naoko Shimazu, 'Japan: Japan at the Paris Peace Conference of 1919: a centennial reflection', *Japan Review* 3: 1, 2019, p. 4.

⁶¹ *United Nations Charter (full text)*, 26 June 1945, <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/un-charter/full-text>.

The deliberations and documents of the 1945 San Francisco Conference, which drafted the UN Charter, are especially revealing.⁶² The terms ‘racism’ or ‘racialism’ do not appear in the verbatim records and supporting documents of the ‘general’ discussions, which were about developing the overall framework of the UN.⁶³ As in the preamble, all mentions of ‘race’ occur in the context of human rights, as for example in the passage concerning ‘universal respect for, and observance of, human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, language, religion, or sex’.⁶⁴ This language is repeated throughout. Colonialism was scarcely discussed or debated at the entire San Francisco Conference, although it was held at a time when racial discrimination and colonial rule were still widespread around the world. The conference’s records do not acknowledge a link between racism and colonialism, or present colonialism as a violation of human rights. The lack of focus on colonialism had to do with the refusal of the British leader Winston Churchill to allow the application of the principle of self-determination in the Atlantic Charter, a key foundation of the UN, to British colonial possessions.⁶⁵

It might be argued that other concepts, such as ‘self-determination’ and ‘sovereign equality’, substituted for the demand for racial equality at San Francisco. But these terms do not have the same meaning as racial equality; otherwise Japan, a sovereign nation, would not have demanded racial equality. If Japan’s failed demand for racial equality proved anything, it was that racial discrimination and inequality could persist even among sovereign nations.

‘Imperialism’ did get noticed, but only in reference to Nazi Germany and fascist Italy and Japan,⁶⁶ not in relation to Britain’s empire or those of the other European powers. There are only a handful of direct references to ‘colonialism’, ‘colony’, ‘colonies’ and ‘colonial’. The San Francisco Conference did discuss ‘dependent territories’ in the context of the proposed Trusteeship Council.⁶⁷ But the trusteeship system that the UN created was limited to twelve territories, eleven of which were already governed under mandates from the League of Nations (the twelfth was Italian Somaliland). Other territories were only to be ‘*voluntarily placed* under the System by States responsible for their administration’,⁶⁸ a formula that would permit the continuation of colonial rule. In the discussion of the trusteeship system at the conference colonialism was scarcely mentioned, even though this might seem to have been a logical place to discuss it.

Why did racism, racial equality and colonialism find almost no mention in the UN Charter deliberations? Three reasons might be put forward. First, as mentioned,

⁶² *Documents of the United Nations Conference on International Organization, San Francisco, 1945* (UNIO), UN Digital Library, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/1300969>. These documents are hereafter mentioned as UNIO, as per their official abbreviation in the UN Digital Library, and cited by their volume number).

⁶³ UNIO, vol. 1.

⁶⁴ UNIO, vol. 10.

⁶⁵ Getachew, *Worldmaking after empire*, p. 71.

⁶⁶ Even then there seems to have been a racial hierarchy, since only Japan’s among the three was referred to as ‘medieval imperialism’.

⁶⁷ UNIO, vol. 1, p. 622.

⁶⁸ UN, *The United Nations and decolonization: international trusteeship system*, n.d., <https://www.un.org/dppa/decolonization/en/history/international-trusteeship-system-and-trust-territories> (accessed 24 March 2021) (emphasis added).

the key purpose behind the creation of the UN was war-prevention in the immediate context of the Second World War (and the shadows of the First). Even human rights were stressed in that context.⁶⁹ Second, the key drafters of the Charter were from the West, and some were colonialists and/or racists themselves. They saw colonialism in a relatively benign light, or at least as a fact of life. For example, Jan Smuts, a key figure in San Francisco and a participant at Versailles, who chaired Commission II (which covered the General Assembly and the Trusteeship Council), gave an impassioned speech to the closing plenary of the conference on 26 June 1945 in which he exhorted the new organization to provide 'security against war and for human advance' for 'dependent peoples still unable to look after themselves'. He then went on to add: 'To this happy result all the delegates, and in particular those of the United Kingdom as the greatest colonial world power, and of the Dominions, especially Australia and New Zealand, as well as of India, have made outstanding contributions.'⁷⁰ Smuts not only ignored the idea of political independence for the colonies, but in referring to Britain as 'the greatest colonial world power' also implicitly accorded it not condemnation in that role but an affirmation of its greatness, which was about to become even greater with the new security and socio-economic role of the UN. To some western leaders involved in the making of the UN system, anti-colonialism was 'racism in reverse'. Sir Alan Burns, the British representative to the UN Trusteeship Council, later wrote of anti-colonialism as a form of 'colour prejudice in reverse which reflects the resentment of the darker peoples against the past domination of the world by European nations'.⁷¹

Third, Asian and African nations, which would have been more concerned with colonialism, had little representation and few leadership positions at the San Francisco Conference.⁷² Among the countries that came to be known as the 'Third World' or 'global South', the majority were the settler nations of Latin America. Independent for over a hundred years by this point, they had other priorities, such as regional cooperation. Revealingly, only four of the countries represented at the Bandung Conference of 1955, where anti-colonialism and anti-racialism would be at the forefront of concerns (Egypt, Liberia, Turkey and India), were present at San Francisco.

India, still under British rule, was represented by the British colonial government at the San Francisco Conference. The head of the Indian delegation, Arcot Ramaswami Mudaliar,⁷³ did a creditable job as chair of the Committee on Economic and Social Cooperation that founded the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). But he lacked the authority that might have been exercised by someone like

⁶⁹ Johannes Morsink, *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights: origins, drafting, and intent* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999).

⁷⁰ UNIO, vol. 1, p. 678.

⁷¹ Sir Alan Burns, *In defence of colonies* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1957), p. 5.

⁷² In so far as the structure of the conference was concerned, all but one of the four technical commissions were led by western delegates. The technical committees under each commission were under more diverse leadership: nine out of twelve such committees were chaired by postcolonial states. But even here only two were headed by Asian and African countries, namely India and Egypt. See UNIO, vol. 1, pp. 7–12.

⁷³ Mudaliar was listed in official documents as 'Supply Member [*sic*] of the Governor General's Executive Council', an advisory body to the British Viceroy of India.

Jawaharlal Nehru, a major voice of anti-colonial and anti-racial demands, who was still in British prison when the San Francisco Conference began on 25 April 1945, and who as Indian prime minister from 1947 would convene the Asian Relations Conferences of 1947 and 1949 and co-convene the Asia–Africa Conference in Bandung in 1955, to advance decolonization and racial equality. The San Francisco records strongly suggest that anti-racism and decolonization were secondary concerns at the founding of the UN.

It is not surprising that some of the most direct references to national independence and racial equality in San Francisco came from non-western nations, such as Haiti and Liberia. Liberia called for recognition of the ‘dreams and hopes of small nations ... of world peace and the security of their rights and independence’.⁷⁴ Haiti argued that the principle of racial equality should be just as important as that of sovereign equality: ‘Together with the fundamental principle of equality between peace-loving states, as mentioned in Chapter 2 of the Dumbarton Oaks Proposals, it is also necessary to express there the principle of racial and religious non-discrimination in relations between peoples.’⁷⁵

The 1948 UDHR mirrored the UN Charter in prohibiting discrimination on the grounds of race, which listed race as one of the factors on the basis of which discrimination was illegitimate, along with ‘sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status’.⁷⁶ The UDHR did advance the anti-racism agenda in one small but important way, by adding ‘colour’ to ‘race’. Revealingly, this came about through the intervention of two Indian representatives in the UDHR negotiations: Minocheher (Mino) Masani and Hansa Mehta. Mehta, a feminist, nationalist and writer, was a member of the UN Human Rights Commission (she was not a member of the UDHR drafting committee, which had only one woman member, its chair, Eleanor Roosevelt;⁷⁷ but the commission members were able to vet and comment on the language proposed by the drafting committee). Upon seeing that the original draft of UDHR article 2 did not mention colour, Masani argued that ‘race and colour were two conceptions that did not necessarily cover one another’.⁷⁸ When told that not even the UN Charter had mentioned colour and that a reference to race might be understood as subsuming colour, Mehta countered that the UDHR should go beyond the UN Charter and specifically mention colour.⁷⁹ Thus was ‘colour’ added to ‘race’.⁸⁰

Mehta also made a forceful intervention that would lead to the change in the language of the UDHR from the original wording, ‘all men are created equal’, as

⁷⁴ UNIO, vol. 1, p. 450.

⁷⁵ UNIO, vol. 1, p. 443.

⁷⁶ UN, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, 10 Dec. 1948, https://www.ohchr.org/EN/UDHR/Documents/UDHR_Translations/eng.pdf.

⁷⁷ UN, *Drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, New York, Dag Hammarskjöld Library, <https://research.un.org/en/undhr/draftingcommittee>.

⁷⁸ Cited in Morsink, *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, p. 102.

⁷⁹ Morsink, *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, p. 103.

⁸⁰ It is significant that Mehta’s position was supported by Lebanon’s Charles Malik and Philippines’ Carlos Romulo, both key figures at the 1955 Bandung Conference. The Indian amendment to add ‘colour’ to ‘race’ was adopted by a vote of 10 to none, with six abstentions: Morsink, *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, p. 103.

had been proposed by Britain, France and Australia (all represented by men) and initially accepted by Mrs Roosevelt, to 'all human beings' under article 1.⁸¹ But the UDHR did not mention colonialism, which many anti-colonial leaders saw as a major abuse of human rights.⁸²

Like the UN itself, the UDHR was primarily a response to Nazi imperialism and abuses, not those perpetrated by western colonialism. As with the UN Charter, the key players in drafting the UDHR were from the West.⁸³ Today, on the UN's web page, Mrs Roosevelt is 'recognized as the driving force for the Declaration's adoption', while the Canadian John Humphrey, director of the UN Secretariat's Division for Human Rights, gets credited with having 'prepared the Declaration's blueprint' and René Cassin of France is said to have 'composed the first draft of the Declaration'.⁸⁴ Mehta and Masani are notably absent. This is symptomatic of the way in which the traditional narratives of world order-building, and some recent mainstream contributions that do recognize the place of anti-racial advocacy (see footnote 5), have marginalized anti-racist thought and advocacy by non-western participants in the founding of the UN and of the LIO. Yet we need a full accounting of non-western contributions, especially from women, to disrupt the western civilizational narrative and self-image of world order.⁸⁵

Thus the UN Charter and the UDHR, both of which made race one among several areas of non-discrimination, missed the opportunity to advance the global norm against racial prejudice. The norm of racial equality applies to race relations both *within* and *between* states, unlike sovereign equality, which focuses only on *interstate* relations. So focusing on the latter and not specifically on the former diluted the fight against racism in general, including domestic racism in western states. Had racial equality been specifically mentioned in the UN Charter or the UDHR, that might have given more prominence to the fight for racial justice, and less oxygen to racist regimes such as apartheid South Africa. Those regimes could hide behind non-intervention, which, being specifically mentioned in the UN Charter, could claim to enjoy a higher importance than racial equality as a global norm. The prohibition of discrimination on the basis of race or colour did not amount to colonialism being viewed as a form or source of such discrimination. Yet such a link emerged as a major demand for postcolonial nations after the

⁸¹ Devaki Jain, *Women, development and the UN* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), p. 20; Rebecca Adami, *Women and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (London: Routledge, 2018), pp. 67. As Adami points out, a French draft had proposed: 'All men are brothers being endowed with reason, members of one family.' This would change to 'all members of the human family' in the UDHR preamble, and article 1 would read 'all human beings' instead of 'all men'.

⁸² The closest the UDHR came to referring to colonialism was in the second part of article 2: 'Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty.' *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>.

⁸³ *Drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights*.

⁸⁴ UN, *History of the Declaration*, www.un.org/en/about-us/udhr/history-of-the-declaration.

⁸⁵ Rebecca Adami and Dan Plesch, eds, *Women and the UN: a new history of women's International Human Rights* (London: Routledge, 2021); Rosalind Parr, 'Solving world problems: the Indian women's movement, global governance, and "the crisis of empire", 1933-46', *Journal of Global History* 16: 1, 2021, pp. 122-40.

Second World War. This became clear at the Asia–Africa Conference in Bandung in April 1955.

In opening the Bandung Conference, Indonesian President Sukarno described it as ‘the first intercontinental Conference of colored peoples in the history of mankind’.⁸⁶ More accurately, Bandung 1955 was the first *intergovernmental* conference of ‘coloured’ or non-western countries. There had been gatherings against racism before, notably the Ligue contre l’impérialisme et l’oppression coloniale (League against Imperialism and Colonial Oppression), held in Brussels in 1927, and the two Asian Relations Conferences in New Delhi (in 1947 and 1949—the latter focused specifically on Indonesian independence from the Dutch). Also important were the six Pan-African Congresses held between 1900 and 1945, which were attended by delegates (mostly but not entirely black) from the United States, the Caribbean, Africa and Europe, and sometimes also from Asia. But the Brussels Conference, said Sukarno, ‘was a meeting place thousands of miles away, amidst foreign people, in a foreign country, in a foreign continent’, whereas the Bandung Conference was attended by participants who ‘are colonies no more. Now we are free, sovereign and independent ... We do not need to go to other continents to confer.’⁸⁷

More significantly, there were more Asian and African countries (29) at Bandung than in San Francisco (13 excluding South Africa). Whereas Latin American nations constituted the majority among the postcolonial nations represented at San Francisco, Bandung was exclusively an Asian (including west Asian)–African affair. This made a huge difference, giving far more play to racism and colonialism at the Bandung Conference compared to San Francisco.⁸⁸ Not surprisingly, the Bandung Conference encountered stiff western resistance, led by the UK and the US, who were worried, in the words of declassified British Foreign Office documents, that the ‘mischievous nature of the proposed Afro-Asian Conference’, would stir up all the ‘problems affecting *national sovereignty, racialism, and colonialism*, on all of which the conclusions reached are likely to be embarrassing to us’.⁸⁹ Acting in concert, Western powers first tried to prevent the conference from happening and, failing that, to manipulate its outcome to their ends. Frustrating this, the Conference established the intrinsic link between colonialism, human rights and racism (which was officially called racialism, to capture its broader diplomatic, social, cultural and ideological, as well as personal, dimensions). The linking of colonialism and racism with human rights was vital,

⁸⁶ ‘President Sukarno opening speech at the Bandung Conference, 1955, Indonesia’, in *Asia–Africa speaks from Bandung* (Jakarta: Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1955).

⁸⁷ ‘President Sukarno opening speech’.

⁸⁸ This is not to deny that many Latin American countries were anti-colonial and anti-racist in their outlook, but to acknowledge that for the Asian and African countries, the twin issues of colonialism and racism were much more immediate and existential threats and concerns.

⁸⁹ UK High Commissioner, Ceylon, Telegram to Commonwealth Relations Office, 18 Jan. 1955, D2231/60, FO 371/116976; F. S. Tomlinson, ‘Position regarding Afro-Asian Conference’, 12 Jan. 1955, D2231/47, FO 371/116976 (London: The National Archives). Collected by the author, emphasis added: Amitav Acharya, ‘Lessons of Bandung, then and now’, *Financial Times*, 22 April 2005, <https://www.ft.com/content/a3a3f116-b291-11d9-bcc6-00000e2511c8>.

since ‘the question of colonialism, the defining issue of the [Bandung] conference, was in many respects a question about human rights’.⁹⁰

The five convening nations of the Bandung Conference—India, Indonesia, Ceylon, Burma and Pakistan—also known as the Colombo Powers, officially declared that one of its main goals would be ‘to consider problems of *special interest to Afro-Asian peoples; e.g. problems affecting national sovereignty and of racialism and colonialism*’—the exact words that the British were so fearful of.⁹¹ When Bandung concluded, principle 3 of the ‘ten principles’ of its final communiqué called for the ‘recognition of the equality of all races and of the equality of all nations large and small’, a clear recognition that, from the perspective of postcolonial nations, sovereign equality did not equate to or subsume racial equality; on the contrary, the latter deserved to be recognized in its own right. The Bandung Conference also made a direct and unambiguous link between colonialism and human rights that was absent from the UN Charter and the UDHR, agreeing that ‘colonialism in all its manifestations is an evil which should speedily be brought to an end’. The Bandung communiqué affirmed that ‘*the subjection of peoples to alien subjugation, domination and exploitation constitutes a denial of fundamental human rights, [and] is contrary to the Charter of the United Nations*’.⁹² These are exactly the same words that the UN General Assembly would borrow in its declaration on colonialism in 1960.⁹³ Here is the Bandung Conference’s key legacy for world order. At a foundational moment for what came to be known as the Third World, the Bandung Conference made the unequivocal link between racism, colonialism and human rights, something which the UN Charter and UDHR had failed to do.

Lest we forget!

This article has argued that, while imperialism and slavery are not unique to European or western civilization, scientific racism, the identification of slavery with a racial group, and the interlocking nexus between racism, slavery and imperialism are distinctive contributions of the European-derived modernity upon which the foundation of the Europe- and US-led world order rests. On the other side, exposing and challenging this nexus and establishing the symbiotic link between empire, race and human rights are distinctive contributions of anti-colonial struggles and postcolonial nations, which are yet fully to realize their aspirations.

This article also underscores the link between academics, philosophers, public intellectuals, leaders and policy influencers. Many western philosophers of politics and world order, such as John Locke, Alfred Zimmern and Woodrow Wilson,

⁹⁰ Roland Burke, ‘“The compelling dialogue of freedom”: human rights at the Bandung Conference’, *Human Rights Quarterly* 28: 4, 2006, pp. 947–65 at p. 950.

⁹¹ ‘Joint communiqué’, Conference of the Prime Ministers of the Five Colombo Countries, Bogor, Dec. 1954, in *Asia–Africa speaks from Bandung* (emphasis added).

⁹² ‘Final communiqué of the Asian–African conference’, in *Asia–Africa speaks from Bandung*, pp. 155–6 (emphasis added).

⁹³ UN, ‘Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples’, General Assembly Resolution 1514 (XV), 14 Dec. 1960, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/Independence.aspx>.

operated at the intersection between the academic and public policy spheres. Some, like Kant, while not directly involved in policy-making, heavily influenced policy ideas about world order. Such academics and intellectuals became conduits for, or were complicit in, imperialist and racist thought. On the opposite side, anti-colonial struggles and their leaders also combined academia (especially when earning their doctorates) with anti-racist and anti-colonial activism and leadership. Examples of these figures would include W. E. B. Du Bois, Caribbean leaders such as Eric Williams, and several leaders of the pan-African movement.⁹⁴

Finally, it should be noted that, despite the call for more space for race and racism in international relations analysis and policy-making, several challenges confront the realization of this goal. I would like to highlight two. The first is the risk of feel-good intellectual self-gratification and faddism. Scholars and policy-makers might play along with opposition to race and racism as long as they remain newsworthy, driven by public demonstrations and debate, so that studying them appears politically correct. Since the rise of Trumpism, populism and the wave of anti-racism protests spearheaded by Black Lives Matter, in particular in the summer of 2020, many western think tanks, institutions and publications have woken up to racism, and issued publications on the topic.⁹⁵ Admirable as these efforts are, there is a real chance that this attention could turn out to be transient, like a Twitter 'fleet' (now discontinued) that disappeared after two days. At the same time, the right-wing backlash against 'critical race theory' is a reminder that 'bringing race in' to school and college curriculums is by no means a foregone conclusion. In the United States, which remains the academic powerhouse of the IR field, the problem is especially deep-rooted. It is important to remind ourselves that in so far as race is concerned, Trump is but a symptom of a wider malaise; he follows US Presidents Theodore Roosevelt (Republican) and Woodrow Wilson (Democrat) in serving as a conduit for the structural racism that has been a crucial foundation of the US-led world order.

In the meantime, the mainstream theories that dominate IR curriculums in the West (and many parts of the global South), including those used to train PhD students—the next generation of teachers and scholars—continue to give scant attention to race and racism. The standard practice seems to be to devote a week or two to the subject. Yet this barely exposes, let alone overcomes, the underlying racial biases and approaches behind the whole spectrum of ideas, institutions, narratives and practices that dominate international affairs and world order. The goal should be instead to integrate race and racism into the whole framework

⁹⁴ Acharya and Buzan, *The making of global International Relations*.

⁹⁵ See e.g. Gurminder K. Bhambra, Yolande Bouka, Randolph B. Persaud, Olivia U. Rutazibwa, Vineet Thakur, Duncan Bell, Karen Smith, Toni Hastrup and Seifudein Adem, 'Why is mainstream international relations blind to racism?', *Foreign Policy*, 3 July 2020, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/07/03/why-is-mainstream-international-relations-ir-blind-to-racism-colonialism/>. The magazine invited several prominent postcolonial scholars, who would otherwise not find space in its pages. Another example is this Council of Foreign Relations study: Clara Koppell, Reuben E. Brigety and Jamille Bigio, *Transforming international affairs education to address diversity, equity, and inclusion*, discussion paper, 8 March 2021, <https://www.cfr.org/report/transforming-international-affairs-education-address-diversity-equity-and-inclusion>. This special issue of *International Affairs* represents a much more serious and elaborate such attempt.

of how IR and other social sciences and humanities are studied and practised. Looking specifically at IR, while (as noted at the outset of this article), some IR theories, especially postcolonialism, have been at the forefront of studying race and racism, others, such as realism, liberalism and constructivism, need to do much more, since they continue to dominate the courses and classrooms on world politics. Professional associations like the American Political Science Association (APSA), International Studies Association (ISA) and European International Studies Association (EISA) need to make race and racism a main theme of their gatherings, not just subsume it under more general slogans about diversity or inclusion. Any sidelining of racism in academic and policy discourse would not just be morally wrong; it would also set back academic research and policy-making in international affairs directed towards bringing about change. It is only with a deeper long-term understanding of the origins of the modern world order, and the role played in it by race and racism, that more informed contributions can be made to the debate about the present and future world order.

A second and related danger is what I would call compartmentalization. This can manifest itself in both academic and policy domains. In academia, the focus on race and racism, as among postcolonial scholars, often involves discourses among the like-minded, directed at but without the participation of mainstream scholars, who thus find it easy to ignore the challenge. In the policy domain, media organizations and think tanks that spearhead public debate tend to focus on a short-term national context. For example, the recent interest in race in the United States is heavily focused on its domestic context,⁹⁶ with little attention to its transnational dimensions, even though the Black Lives Matters movement has garnered sympathy and support worldwide. This makes the interest in race subject to the vagaries of US domestic politics. It is also contrary to the lessons of the past century, in which, as discussed above, anti-racist struggles had a transnational scope, both before and during the anti-apartheid movements. Martin Luther King drew inspiration from Mohandas Gandhi, who also inspired Nelson Mandela. This article has discussed the Bandung Conference, where a number of American black observers such as Richard Wright were present. The very first Pan-African Conference in 1900 was attended by W. E. B. DuBois from the United States and Dadabhai Naoroji from India—the latter being an economist who developed the ‘drain theory’, explaining how massively Britain benefited economically from its colonial rule over India.

The study of race and racism opens up rich and productive avenues of academic and policy-oriented research in areas including the creation and limitations of contemporary international norms such as human rights and transitional justice, and the emergence and working of the institutions and norms of global govern-

⁹⁶ See e.g. Ibram Kendi, *Stamped from the beginning: the definitive history of racist ideas in America* (New York: Bold Type, 2017)—the first section of which briefly discusses origins of racism—and Kendi, *How to be an antiracist* (New York: One World, 2019). As noted above, Getachew’s superb study, *Worldmaking after empire*, focuses on black nationalism and the Afro-US connection, to the neglect of other and prior transnational anti-racist movements, including pan-Asian and Afro-Asian connections. See Randolph Persaud, ‘A neo-Gramscian/postcolonial engagement with Adom Getachew’s *Worldmaking after empire*’, *Millennium* 48: 3, 2020, pp. 372–81.

ance. A particular area of interest should be the agency of non-western nations in challenging and reshaping world order in the twentieth and still unfolding twenty-first centuries.⁹⁷ Moreover, this may be a good time for academic and policy debates to refocus on 'global racial equality' and give it the same weight as 'sovereign equality', 'self-determination' and 'non-intervention'. Governments that are keen to export democracy as a foreign policy tool should be promoting anti-racist ideas and approaches both at home and abroad. Research on race and racism could stimulate policy discussions and recommendations on what new norms and institutions might be needed to cope with conflict and the demand for justice and equality as world order shifts and adapts to the twenty-first century.

⁹⁷ Acharya, *Constructing global order*.