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## Africa in Du Bois's Internationalist Thinking

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### Abstract

This article addresses the recent interest in Black Internationalism in the history of political thought and related fields by engaging with a portion of W. E. B. Du Bois's (1868–1963) work. It examines in particular how Du Bois treats Africa in his published and unpublished writings from the 1910s to the 1940s in light of the challenges of world war and continued imperial expansionism in the global South. I argue that through a rhetorical framing of problems on the continent, and by situating Africa in relation to global economic problems as well as the goal of long-lasting peace, Du Bois comes up with novel approaches to war and empire, as well as solutions to the problems that they pose. I conclude by reflecting on how he can contribute to debates on Black Internationalism today.

**Keywords:** W. E. B. Du Bois; Black Internationalism; War; Peace; Empire

### Introduction

Japan's 1905 military victory against Russia left a marked impression upon W. E. B. Du Bois (1868–1963) (Chandler 2012; Mullen 2015). At the time, the scholar and budding agitator for racial equality was in his first stint as a professor at Atlanta University (Yancy 1978). In a brief article published a year following the war, he reacts by affirming that it had “marked an epoch,” and restating the grand claim that he introduced at the Pan African Congress meeting in London in 1900 (Du Bois 1970a [1900], p. 125), and repeated in his celebrated 1903 text *The Souls of Black Folk* (Du Bois 2007a [1903]): “the problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color line” (p. 3). In this later piece, Du Bois redeploys the color line, his iconic metaphor used to capture racial prejudice, by submitting that it “belts the world.” This is so to Du Bois because Japan's triumph represents a symbolic defeat for White supremacy. He surmises that it would lead to the “awakening” of colored peoples around the globe, and eventually to the transcendence of their subordinate collective status as colonized and racially marginalized populations (Du Bois 1906, p. 30).

Of note is that in his remarks, Du Bois approaches the outcome of the 1904–1905 Russo-Japanese war from a domestic perspective. He laments a penchant in his native land to simply “be done with” what he describes as “our most sinister social problem, the negro” (Du Bois 1906, p. 30). Such a dismissive attitude to Du Bois does not come to terms with the scope of this problem. Perhaps if it was unique to the United States, it would be easier to ignore. But “the negro problem in America” was “but a local phase of a world problem,” as demonstrated by the reactions sparked globally by Japan's victory (Du Bois 1906, p. 30). To understand it on this broader scale was to ascribe to race the gravity that it deserved, as an

issue that varied according to regional and historical particularities, but that also displayed commonalities and carried immense importance in Asia, Africa, and the Americas.

In this short reflection, Du Bois illustrates an example of what scholars later come to term ‘Black Internationalism.’ In the understanding laid out in “The Color Line Belts the World,” it represents a strategy for thinking anew about processes and patterns that may be confined by many American thinkers to the context of the nation-state. When situated within but also beyond this level, anti-racist struggles are seen differently. Rather than prompting exhaustion, such efforts (and the root problem of race underlying them) come to assume added urgency in light of parallel efforts in other parts of the world.

In this article, I treat an understanding of internationalism in Du Bois’s work that closely aligns with the sense of it that he elaborates here. I do so by situating this work in relation to the history of political thought as well as African diaspora studies, and ask: what is distinct about Du Bois’s approach to this topic? And in what ways are his considerations of it consequential for Black Internationalist thinking more generally today? In speaking to these questions, and while attending to the changing historical contexts that he is responding to across this period, I offer in what follows a close interpretation and evaluation of a set of Du Bois’s writings composed from the 1910s to the 1940s. This is done with the objective of bringing out the different analytical and rhetorical techniques that Du Bois employs in examining the topic of internationalism, and in order to demonstrate how he puts forth a coherent style of thought regarding global affairs.

I argue that beyond capturing relations of exploitation and pointing out bonds between Black and other non-White populations that derive from common experiences of suffering, Du Bois develops a form of thinking that involves disclosing aspects of war and empire that are conventionally obscured. His internationalism in other words serves a critical function. By drawing attention to the histories and perspectives of Black African populations, Du Bois orients his audience toward systematically considering what is downplayed or neglected in international politics. What results for him are alternative approaches to addressing crises in this domain, and to providing sustainable solutions to them.

This article will be structured as follows. The next section introduces the idea of Black Internationalism as a trend within the broader tradition of Black political thought and elaborates different ways that it has been understood by proponents as well as observers. The section will also touch on secondary literature connected to this theme in Du Bois’s work and demonstrate how this article relates to and differs from other commentaries. The following three sections are focused on an analysis of the aforementioned primary works by Du Bois on the themes of war, political economy, and peace, and their relationship to Africa and Africans. The article then concludes with a discussion of what the takeaways of Du Bois’s meditations on Black Internationalism are for relevant debates in the present and considers the work of contemporary thinkers who reflect on this idea.

## Du Bois and Black Internationalism

A burgeoning literature in African American studies, history, political theory, and related fields has concerned itself with the global dimensions of anti-racism (Anderson 2015; Burden-Stelly and Horne, 2021; Daulatzai 2012; Dunstan and Owens, 2022; Lubin 2014; Stephens 2005; Von Eschen 1997). Some trace the origins of such struggles back to the Haitian Revolution (1791–1804), and the repercussions that its repudiation of slavery and empire had across the African diaspora and the trans-Atlantic region (Scott 2018; West and Martin, 2009). Consideration of politics and history from an international perspective amongst Black thought leaders also boasts a rich lineage. Robin D. G. Kelley observes that it was standard practice for figures such as Martin Delany (1812–1885), Paul Cuffe (1759–1817), and others to refuse to limit their work to national boundaries, and that this

applied regardless of ideological persuasion.<sup>1</sup> To seriously address concerns such as restrictions on citizenship for African Americans, or the realities of modern imperial expansionism, presupposed a diasporic frame in which to think and maneuver (Kelley 1999).

Afro-Caribbean thinkers have likewise long situated their reflections on politics in a global frame, and since at least the early twentieth century, have in the process greatly influenced the thought of their counterparts in the United States (James 1998; Watkins-Owens 1996). C. L. R. James (1901–1989) for instance looks to the thought and action displayed by Haitians in their revolt against the French in order to derive lessons for African uprisings against European rule in the 1930s (James 2012 [1938]). A couple of decades thereafter, Claudia Jones (1915–1964) details efforts by Caribbean states to achieve unity through federation and discusses what efforts to stymie this partnership by the United States and Britain mean for workers' struggles in these metropolises (1958). Stuart Hall (1932–2014) later highlights the eclectic sources that shape Caribbean cultural identity. Rather than offering a view that is essentialist and transhistorical, as some did during the immediate post-colonial era of the 1960s and 1970s, he advocates for a conception of the Caribbean subject that is historically variable, and the product of influences deriving from Africa, Europe, and the Americas (Hall 1990, 2017).

'Black Internationalism' has become the heading used in pertinent scholarship to capture this approach to global thinking laid out by these figures and others. It is defined, among other things, by endeavors to establish connections (both symbolic and concrete) amongst Black and other populations of color globally, and to bring about socio-political change as a result, as well as the novel terms and discourses that emerge from such worldly connections (Blain 2018; Farmer 2017; Higashida 2013; Horne 2018; Makalani 2011; Spencer 2009; Wilkins 2007).

The fact that the term Black Internationalism postdates the Haitian Revolution as well as the work of the earliest figures in Kelley's narrative raises the question of whether it is germane to the varied political events and thought schemes that it is believed to reflect. While some trace its popularization back to a 1928 essay by Martinican thinker Jane Nardal (1902–1993) (Adi 2018; Blain and Gill, 2019; Farmer 2022), even after her piece, Black Internationalism was not explicitly invoked by many movements and figures subsequently understood under this category.

As Charisse Burden-Stelly and Gerald Horne (2020) point out, Black Internationalism nonetheless remains an appropriate descriptor for such groups and figures. Despite limiting its applicability to leftist politics, they accurately recognize that it serves as a useful hermeneutic tool through which to make sense of the worldly strivings of numerous Black intellectuals and activists. It is in a similar sense that it will be used in this essay in relation to Du Bois's thought. He does not expressly appeal to it, but much of his thinking concerning global history and politics aligns within the contours of how it has come to be conceived.

Internationalism as a motif in Du Bois's thought has been treated in a number of commentaries. Juliet Hooker (2017) dwells on the role of inter-racial mixture within certain of his writings, including his collection of essays *Darkwater* (1920), and his novel *Dark Princess* (1928). Hooker situates him alongside other "hemispheric thinkers" by arguing that he draws inspiration from Latin American conceptions of racial mixture or *mestizaje*. For her, Du Bois relies on this idea in order both to criticize racialist science in the early twentieth century, and to fashion bonds between non-White peoples outside of the nation-state, which he projects as the bases for combatting racial discrimination and colonialism in the future.

Inés Valdez (2019) reads Du Bois as a proponent of "transnational cosmopolitanism" in contrast with what she takes to be the more parochial cosmopolitan framework found in Immanuel Kant's (1724–1804) thought. She calls attention to Du Bois's role in organizing

the Pan-African Congress post-World War I and understands its meetings to constitute a “new public” that brought together anti-racism in the United States and anti-colonialism in Africa. The core element of Du Bois’s internationalism according to Valdez consists of esteeming African and other racialized populations when conceiving of political judgment and action.

Brandon Byrd, for his part, probes the evolution of Du Bois’s internationalism, specifically through his engagement with the 1915–1934 U.S. occupation of Haiti. Byrd (2020) observes that at first, Du Bois was supportive of the U.S. intervention. He endorses it both on the grounds that Haitians were allegedly in need of American-led uplift,<sup>2</sup> and out of a belief that by facilitating this assistance, African Americans could become better integrated into the institutional life of their country. After a year of occupation, however, Du Bois becomes critical of the military presence of the United States, as well as the depredations of American finance capital on the island. Byrd (2020) shows that he draws parallels between the suffering of Haitians under American occupation and the plight of Blacks in the southern United States. He argues that his tracking of conditions in Haiti during this period leads Du Bois by the 1930s toward a more radical form of internationalism, in defense of alliances between colonized peoples and the working poor against global forces of military and economic power.

Zachariah Mampilly (2022) addresses similar themes across roughly the same period in Du Bois’s life. In a recent piece in *Foreign Affairs*, he revisits a series of essays that Du Bois writes for the same journal between the two world wars. His interventions, which focus on topics such as militarism, political economy, and continued Western colonial exploits in Liberia and Ethiopia, demonstrate that Du Bois anticipates many of the concerns that come to animate the field of international relations in the decades that follow. Rather than read him primarily as a thinker of civil rights, Du Bois’s abiding lesson for students of politics to Mampilly is “that the domestic could never be divorced from the global” (Mampilly 2022, p. 167). This insight, he argues, continues to bear relevance in the context of the contemporary ‘war on terror,’ when for instance domestic freedoms are curtailed, at the same time that authoritarian governments around the globe are supported in the name of narrowly conceived national interests.

Adom Getachew and Jennifer Pitts (2022) also take up the connection between the local and the global in Du Bois’s internationalist writings. They examine the links that Du Bois establishes between democracy and imperialism, and how for him, European and U.S. imperial engagements end up eroding popular rule domestically. He also, to them, stresses that the conjoining of democracy to empire is contingent; it does not undermine the ideals of “equality and self-rule” that he maintains a life-long attachment to. They note that Du Bois hints at potential coalitions between peoples of color around the world in order to imagine an end to imperialism and war, and the achievement of democratic renewal (Getachew and Pitts, 2022).

Getachew and Pitts additionally call attention to a problematic dimension of Du Bois’s internationalism, namely his support, despite abuses of basic rights and other oppressive practices, of imperial Japan, the Soviet Union, and communist China. Their remarks follow on the work of others who have examined Du Bois’s relationship with, and travel to, these states. With regard to Japan for instance, some argue that Du Bois was fully aware of its imperialism in China in the 1930s. He tends nonetheless to diminish the harm practiced by state authorities by either defending it as necessary in light of an alleged Western threat, or by assuming that racial subordination was absent in Japan’s domination of its neighbor (Lee 2015; Taketani 2014).

After its communist revolution in 1949, Du Bois looks to China as a model of future development for the global South, and in particular for Africa (McDuffie 2019). He refuses though, during and after his trips to the country in the 1950s and 1960s, to adopt a critical

position toward the “exceptionally idealized depiction of Chinese life and politics” that he and his wife Shirley Graham were given by their state hosts (Frazier 2015, p. 57; Lewis 2000). Something similar can be said of Du Bois's relationship toward and writings on the Soviet Union in his final decades. He either ignores or diminishes the brutalities of Stalin and other Soviet authorities, an attitude that stands in awkward juxtaposition to the strident defenses of freedom and denunciations of authoritarian rule that he otherwise consistently articulates (Cain 1993).

Some understand Du Bois's views toward the Soviet Union at the time as the reactionary result of the persecution that he faced at home during the 1950s, including government surveillance, the confiscation of his passport, and charges brought against him for being a foreign agent (Broderick 1982). The supportive treatment that he received during his travels to the Soviet Union also arguably led him to adopt favorable judgments toward its political system.<sup>3</sup> Others maintain that Du Bois's support for the Soviet model should be understood along the lines of the predilection that he expressed early in life for highly-disciplined, top-down forms of rule (Cain 1993; Lewis 2000).<sup>4</sup> While still others argue that even as he downplays the “known suffering among Stalin's victims,” Du Bois projects a future order that he hopes would follow from the egalitarian principles and revolutionary beginnings of both the Soviet Union and the United States (Mullen 2019; Rasberry 2016, p. 190).

Others have examined the specific period from Du Bois's career that is a focal point here, in addition to the Afrocentric positions that he espouses at the time. They suggest that from the 1910s forward, Du Bois not only ascribes centrality to Africa, but understands its significance in concretely economic and political terms. By this is meant that in his earlier works—“The Conservation of Races” (1897) and *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903)—he refers to it in an abstract or “mystical” sense, as the ostensible foundation for shared cultural identity amongst peoples in the African diaspora. However, in later works, he shifts toward discussing Africa in an empirically and historically grounded fashion, and pinpoints specific political problems facing societies on the continent (Appiah 2014; Balfour 2011; Jones 2008). This article proceeds from this turn in his thinking. In contrast with these commentaries and others, however, I point out the importance of the approach that Du Bois adopts in centering Africa in his geopolitical vision, as well as what he hopes to gain from the attention that he affords to it.

In specific terms, in his writings (both published and unpublished) on modern empire and war from the 1910s to the late 1940s, Du Bois repeatedly calls attention to how Africa's history and current socio-political conditions are closely bound up with these phenomena. Diplomats, colonial officials, and scholars according to him routinely fail to appreciate this connection. He sees this disregard as an indication of an unwillingness to earnestly consider the place of Africa in relation to contemporary problems, and a tendency to ignore the judgments and viewpoints of Black Africans. The ramifications of these omissions are pivotal for Du Bois precisely because of the bearing that Africa has on empire and its effects (in the global North and South alike) as well as to global military confrontations. If its importance is not adequately recognized, unending war and economic injustice risk becoming exacerbated.

Du Bois's response is twofold. The first is to make use of the language of paradoxes and riddles, and to gesture toward political and economic realities that are hidden or obscured. He thereby encourages scrutiny of the basic causes of global conflicts, as well as how Black and other colonized populations encounter the systems of rule that they are forced to live under.

The second relates to the substantive topics that Du Bois sheds light on: Africa's role in political economy as well as a yet-to-be-realized ideal of enduring peace. Social protections in the United States and Europe are directly shaped for him by the extraction of wealth from Africa. Efforts to ensure the longevity of these protections, in addition to the system of economic democracy that they are constitutive of, demand attention to the ways that



African labor and resources are controlled. Global peace is additionally structured by how outsiders relate to the continent and its inhabitants. In order to become an abiding value, Du Bois calls for ongoing and informed engagement with African history, openness to the grievances expressed by local social movements, and the reform of global institutions in line with considerations of justice and fairness for Africans.

Empire and war—in particular the two world wars—are clearly global in scope. Less apparent is the need to consider these phenomena, as Du Bois does, from the perspective of race. What is ‘Black’ in this specific understanding of his internationalism is his emphasis on the role of Black populations in relation to fundamental political and economic processes. By adopting such a perspective, he wagers that novel approaches to the injustice of empire and the catastrophes of world war will become manifest. Race according to him is essential to these problems and needs to be foregrounded if alternative paths in the future are to be imagined.

Attention to these factors entails going beyond the observation that other commentators make regarding an evolution toward increased groundedness in Du Bois’s discussions of Africa. He indeed becomes more grounded by offering concrete analyses of historical developments within African societies, in place of the casual references to the continent that marked his work during an earlier period. More importantly nonetheless is what this greater empirical specificity leads to and involves.

His internationalism is concerned at a deeper level with formulating issues in ways that are distinct from how they are understood in dominant discourses in the Euro-Atlantic region. This presupposes alternative perspectives on the emergence and spread of democracy and industrialization. It also translates into uncovering underappreciated causes of war and showing that tactics of coercion employed in the colonies are by no means distinct to these regions, but rather presage those to be taken up in the U.S. and Western Europe. These insights all derive from the broad geographic scale that Du Bois theorizes from. He demonstrates the need to consistently examine our most pressing problems beyond the parochial frames that they are frequently left at, so as to provide systematic explanations for such problems and to mitigate their future occurrence. It is here, I argue, that the main purchase of his internationalism lies.

### Uncovering the ‘Roots’ of War

Du Bois’s stance on World War I generated controversy. This was not just due to the fact of his support for the Allied effort in the conflict. In addition, the substance of his endorsement appeared questionable. In a July 1918 editorial in the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People’s journal *The Crisis* entitled “Close Ranks,” he argues that African Americans should “forget [their] special grievances and close [their] ranks shoulder to shoulder with [their] white fellow citizens and the allied nations that are fighting for democracy” (p. 111).

In his recent study of Du Bois’s relation to WWI, Chad Williams (2023) points out that he saw Black support for the war effort, in particular through the sacrifice of Black service members, as vital to the struggle for racial equality in the United States and to the reform of its democratic system. Yet his call for African Americans to set aside for the moment their concerns over racial injustice sparked opposition in the community. It was seen to belittle legitimate outrage over their mistreatment, and as naïve in its assumption that Black support for the war would yield meaningful changes to the country’s racist institutions and dominant culture (Lewis 1993; Williams 2023). In subsequent editorials during the months that followed, he walked back his call (Marable 1986; Williams 2023). Du Bois also later reflects that in his support for the Allied effort, he “did not realize the full horror of war and its wide impotence as a method of social reform” (2012 [1940], p. 255). As Williams

(2023) recounts, he remained troubled by his stance for much of the rest of his life, and tried to rationalize it in light of what he believed was a jingoistic global environment that he failed to adequately distance himself from.

Du Bois's judgments of the war at the time were nonetheless more complex than his stance in "Close Ranks" would lead one to believe. In a 1915 essay he calls out the hypocrisy of Westerners who bemoan the "brutality and inhumanity" of WWI, but "turned deaf ears" toward the sufferings visited upon non-White peoples through enslavement and colonization over preceding decades and centuries (1915b, p. 81). Du Bois was additionally critical of the forces that created the conditions for world war, as he makes clear in his 1915 *Atlantic Monthly* essay entitled "The African Roots of War."

He starts this piece by maintaining that most consider Africa's role in an array of problems, including WWI, to be negligible. To the contrary, he avers that "it is a prime cause of this terrible overturning of civilization" (1915a, p. 707). More conventional explanations for the war allude to territorial disputes between the Allies and the Central Powers in the Balkans. Du Bois, though, concentrates his attention outside of Europe. After Belgian expansion into the Congo in the latter part of the nineteenth century, France, Germany, and England pursued a similar path elsewhere, and vied for African crops, minerals, and labor (Du Bois 1915a). Competition amongst these imperial powers for such wealth and resources on the continent then led to military confrontation.

Du Bois sets himself the task of explaining this common oversight regarding the causes behind WWI. An accurate historical account of geopolitical conflict is without question significant to him, but just as much for what such an understanding contributes to practical political life as for strictly academic reasons. Proper comprehension of the actions of outside powers in Africa is crucial to preventing further calamities like the one that the world was witnessing at the time. "These words seek to show," he writes toward the beginning, "how in the Dark Continent are hidden the roots, not simply of war to-day but of the menace of wars to-morrow" (1915a, p. 707).

The "roots" of the war are presented here as misunderstood because "hidden," although not simply because of a dearth of information. An assumption about how the modern period develops is even more consequential to this misunderstanding. According to Du Bois, the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in Europe are popularly defined by the gradual expansion of rights to participate in the political process, and by non-elites claiming a larger share of wealth. These processes of democratization, especially in terms of access to goods and higher wages for middle and working classes, importantly depend on the exploitation of land and resources in the "darker nations of the world"—Africa and other colonized regions (1915a, p. 709).

Amongst its proponents, European democratization is viewed as an unquestionably progressive advancement. Du Bois however looks upon this development from the perspective of the suffering of non-White peoples that it is premised on. The improvement in living conditions for popular classes in Europe requires continued lucrative profits, and these can only be assured by taking advantage of masses of people in Asia, Africa, the Caribbean, and South America. Du Bois (1915a) accordingly adopts the notion of "democratic despotism" to explain this tension (p. 709). Greater equality is certainly gained, but it necessitates the exclusion of other populations from its advantages, and their subjection to foreign financial interests.

This dynamic is vital to what is "hidden" in the war as it belies prevailing impressions of democracy, and because it "has not been clearly formulated" (Du Bois 1915a, p. 709). For its defenders, there is nothing fundamentally perverse about democratization, and it unquestionably should not be conflated with the systems of "aristocracy and despotism" that it overthrew. When confronted with criticisms, they "cry out and then rub their eyes, for surely they cannot fail to see strengthening democracy all about them?" (p. 709).

The “paradox” is that local and regional democratic structures in the West rely, to a fundamental degree, on the inequality and subjugation of populations abroad.

His description of this tension within democratic systems as a “paradox,” similar to his framing of European expansion in Africa in the nineteenth century as a “riddle” (p. 708), shows that to Du Bois there are real obstacles to understanding what lies behind the war. Dominant impressions of modern development militate against linking democracy to empire. He articulates such a connection, and in so doing, provides an indication of what the avoidance of large-scale belligerence in the future will require. Therefore, while Du Bois’s personal stance on WWI was one of support for one side, he was also intent on precluding such conflicts in years to come and orients his audience toward Africa and other non-Western regions in the hopes of realizing that objective. The rhetorical approach that he adopts in this essay also continues to inform his writings in the years ahead as he seeks to reveal aspects of African affairs that continue to be obscured.

### **Africa in the Global Economy**

A heightened focus on Africa is implicit in “The African Roots of War.” Du Bois indicates in it the importance of properly analyzing the actions of imperial powers in order to grasp the role that Africa played in WWI. In subsequent works, his thinking evolves as he directs attention toward a deeper investigation of the continent’s economic conditions so as to reveal the centrality of African labor and raw materials to modern development.

For example, he stresses that the trans-Atlantic slave trade beginning in the sixteenth century, and the partitioning of African territory for European conquest in the late nineteenth, were instrumental to European and American industrialization (Du Bois 1943). If the place of Africa in this process and the wealth that it generated tends to be downplayed by Western scholars, to Du Bois that fact stems from an unwillingness to admit the extent of European dependence on enslaved labor. There is a far greater eagerness amongst such scholars to recognize England’s efforts in the struggle for the abolition of slavery.

He does not discount the activities of European abolitionists and the role of “moral force” in effecting the end of the slave trade. Yet, Du Bois emphasizes that material factors, such as diminishing gains from the trade, and disruptions to the sugar market introduced by the Haitian revolution, were just as important to abolition. Moreover, enslavement to him was replaced with other systems of “forced labour.” In places such as Rhodesia and South Africa, European commercial interests procured increasingly large tracts of land for copper mining, displacing native inhabitants in the process. Workers were consequently made dependent on a volatile wage system as well as precarious opportunities for employment (Du Bois 1938).

Although government revenues from investments made by Germany, France, Britain, and Portugal from the nineteenth to the twentieth century were low, Du Bois (1943) maintains that such expenditures should be seen as the foundations for wealth accumulation for European finance capital. These outlays in turn served as the grounds for lucrative profits for traders obtained through the export of raw materials from Africa including minerals, cotton, and cocoa (Du Bois 1985b [1942]). “The profits,” he writes, commenting on Europe, “have not been evenly distributed at home; but the net return to the white races for their investment in colored labor and raw material in Africa has been immense. That, very briefly, is the fundamental fact of the situation which confronts us in Africa today” (Du Bois 1943, p. 725).

He frames the contributions of Africa to global economic advancement as a “fact” to be proven because of a tendency to understand this growth as endogenous to Europe. In such standard narratives, which Stuart Hall (2021 [2003]) later refers to as among Europe’s



“myths,” where the continent is seen as “somehow autochthonous – producing itself, by itself, from within itself” (p. 376), raw materials are believed to be used productively only as a result of European innovation and involvement. The endeavors of Black workers are as a result dismissed. Du Bois (1985b [1942]) traces both conclusions back to arguments in defense of Black inferiority, and counters them by highlighting the undeniable influence that Black populations have on modern development. As Christopher McAuley (2019) suggests, Du Bois identifies labor as “the one, unequivocal contribution of black people to the Western world,” (p. 96) and this contention needs to be understood in a context where it was commonly assumed that this population did not substantially affect Western civilization.

The other part of the above passage that stands out is Du Bois's reference to equitable economic redistribution “at home.” Centralized economic planning in Western countries during both world wars provided an impetus to the view that socialist ideas were realizable in practice. The economic crisis of the Great Depression (1929–1939), with the high levels of unemployment and poverty that it occasioned, also brought belief in the merits of a self-regulating market further into question (Biebricher 2018; Norris 2020). While mindful of the racial exclusions built into these shifts,<sup>5</sup> Du Bois points out that in Europe and the United States, these developments entailed greater acceptance of the view that “property and profit must be limited by considerations of the public weal” (1983 [1933]; 1936, p. 2).

He observes that in contrast, in Africa and Asia by the 1930s and 1940s, Western political and economic elites continue to endorse free market considerations as well as erroneous assumptions about the alleged racial inferiority of native groups (Du Bois 1936). The “foreign investor” can act without restraint in these regions. One “only has to appease public opinion at home,” which does not know of local conditions and would willingly “remain ignorant” so long as profits continue (Du Bois 1970c [1944], p. 154). The connections between global economic processes and goals of democratic change are consequently ignored: “it usually does not enter our thought that this colonial development in Africa and Asia, must in the interdependence of industry, powerfully condition all economic, political and social reform in the white world” (Du Bois 1936, p. 2).

Du Bois allows that there may be a measure of democratic progress in the United States and Europe while such imperial exploits persist. Yet similar to his earlier thesis regarding democratic despotism, he understands any such gains as dependent upon the subjection of African and Asian peoples. Several basic differences with regard to his prior position also stand out. For one, Du Bois no longer considers the highly educated and other elites in the African diaspora to be in a position to dictate future advancement to others, as he did previously (1970b [1919]; 1985a [1897]).<sup>6</sup> Instead, he views the fate of the colonized as bound up with other oppressed groups around the world, as a result of race prejudice, as well as economic injustice for White and non-White workers alike (1970e [1945]). The robust achievement of political equality amongst these disparate groups comes to depend to him upon recognizing common sources of wrongdoing and cooperating to spread education and implement systems of fair political rule (Du Bois 1941).

Additionally, both because of the increasing adoption of policies of economic redistribution in the United States and beyond, as well as his own evolution as a thinker, by the 1940s Du Bois becomes more attached to the ideal of economic democracy.<sup>7</sup> Equal rights to participate in the political process must be connected, according to him, to efforts to lessen income inequality through measures such as due access to basic goods, including employment and housing.

From the perspective of such a goal, and beyond the clear moral harm done to its native inhabitants, continued imperial practices in Africa pose a threat. The commodification of African workers, as well as the denial of land ownership and basic educational opportunities to them, prefigure strategies to be used against labor in Western metropolises (Du Bois

1970e [1945]). Rather than seeing economic protections in the latter as irrevocable gains, Du Bois regards them as temporary advancements liable to be undermined in accordance with strategies perpetrated against those on the periphery of the global economy.

Western democratic systems become, as a result, untenable. As Africa provides a “greater and greater reservoir of labor and materials” (Du Bois 1936, p. 7), the lure of taking advantage of these resources leads to the neglect of domestic social protections. Democracy in Europe, Du Bois cautions, “will be overthrown if the more powerful classes within the democracy are supported by streams of wealth which come out of the low wages and cheap materials from over more than half the earth” (1985b [1942] p. 188). He clearly recognizes the misconduct that Africans and other colonized populations in Asia are subjected to as a result of this system. What he is moreover guarding against though is the tendency to treat the circumstances of the colonized in isolation from those in European metropolises. To dismiss the sufferings of those in Africa and Asia as distant problems may be a convenient way to bracket the consequences of imperial policies. By demonstrating the undeniable domestic impact of overseas practices, Du Bois reveals the pitfalls of such an approach.

### Enduring Peace

Geopolitical conflict and its potential resolution also connect Africa to other parts of the world. Chastened by the reaction that his earlier stance on WWI prompted amongst the African American public, Du Bois did not initially endorse the Allied effort in the Second World War. Germany’s invasion of Russia and the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941 compelled him to shift his stance (Williams 2023). Manning Marable (1983/1984) notes that although some would consider Du Bois’s support for the United States and its partners in the fight against the Axis powers to contradict his incipient commitment to pacifism, he was not unquestioningly attached to the avoidance of war. Du Bois alludes in this context to the Haitian Revolution as an example of violence used for a just cause in order to justify his position.

At the same time, he did not harbor illusions about the prospects of an Allied victory improving the life circumstances of non-white populations, whether in the United States or abroad (Williams 2023). Du Bois was also deeply troubled by the recurrence of global armed conflict. He regarded it as evidence of a failure amongst leading political powers to heed the lessons that he imparted in “The African Roots of War,” and as an indication that large-scale militarism would linger through the foreseeable future.

Not unexpectedly then, and to an even greater extent than previously, peace comes to occupy a central place in Du Bois’s post-WWII political activity. He joins left-wing Black intellectuals including Claudia Jones and Paul Robeson (1898–1976) in opposing the Cold War buildup of the United States (Burden-Stelly 2019). He additionally supports Progressive Party candidate Henry Wallace’s 1948 presidential campaign, marked by its calls for *rapprochement* with the Soviet Union, and alongside others, promotes the Stockholm Peace Appeal, a campaign in 1950 that advocated for the global abolition of nuclear weapons (Burden-Stelly 2019; Marable 1983/1984).

Peace additionally stands out as a major theme in Du Bois’s writings during and after WWII. The important point is how Africa figures into his conception of this value. It is unsurprising that he envisions opposition to imperialism there and elsewhere in the global South to go hand in hand with the achievement of enduring peace. What shape though should anti-imperialism at this moment take? How should African history and politics be understood? And what reforms to nascent global institutions will be necessary in order to make them truly representative of African and other non-Western voices?

WWII looms large in Du Bois's 1946 book *The World and Africa*. If its antecedent caused him to question the faith that he previously held in Western modernity, the Second World War brings his skepticism to new heights. The war prompts him to re-examine the past and present. In particular, he stresses the need to consider African history in light of a continuing aversion toward recognizing the role of its native inhabitants in social, cultural, and economic life, which to him not only contributes to the contemporary crisis but will allow it to persist.

This argument overlaps considerably with that which Du Bois makes in "The African Roots of War." In that same work he moreover goes on to underscore the importance of African labor and raw materials to Europe's modern development, just as he does in his essays and speeches following WWI (Du Bois 2007b [1946]). What is distinct about *The World and Africa* is the attention that he dedicates in it to documenting Africa's histories in all of their richness and plurality. He narrates the past deeds and achievements of the populations of Egypt, Ethiopia, Dahomey, Benin, Congo, and Sudan in industry, the sciences, and the arts. He also points out the steady interchange between the cultures of these regions and those of ancient Greece and Rome, Renaissance Italy, and modern England and France.

Although only a broad survey, Du Bois's effort in this text can be understood to open the way to more detailed examinations of these interconnections. That is precisely how he envisions studies of Africa needing to proceed "in view of the present world catastrophe" (Du Bois 2007 [1946], p. 50). He links WWII to the denial of civilizational accomplishments on the continent, and the assumption that European history is the norm against which all others are judged. Different futures would hence presuppose a changed understanding of the past, built on an acknowledgment of moments of contact and mutual imbrication between regions that at the time are commonly coded as discrete from, or even antagonistic to, one another.

Du Bois also urges caution regarding what is known about Africa. In a 1948 paper entitled "The African Roots of Peace," he observes that the British press has of late been seen to pine for African news. The yearning corresponds to a desire in Britain and amongst other Western European powers to control African resources so as to regain prestige and material strength after WWII. This conjoining of nostalgia for imperial clout with a longing for knowledge about Africa carries risks to Du Bois. "Africa may be 'news' today," he comments, "but the news is delayed and distorted" (Du Bois 1948, p. 2). Self-serving European powers, unrepresentative local governments, and "native spokesmen" with poor educational training and questionable motives combine to make accurate knowledge of African affairs "exceedingly difficult" (p. 2).

He proceeds circumspectly in response: "I wish to essay a picture of current Africa and its human problems in relation to present day Europe and America, in order to make clear, if possible, the effect which the stature of Africa will have on the greatest problem of the world today – peace" (Du Bois 1948, p. 2). Lawrie Balfour (2011) remarks that in his autobiographical writings, Du Bois employs the term 'essay' in order to describe his analyses and arguments as tentative and bereft of categorical conclusions. He uses the verb in the same sense here. In this case, it is the perils of deceptive knowledge production that lead him to qualify his claims, where he sees "[his] collection of facts" as "uneven and inaccurate" (Du Bois 1948, p. 2).

The stakes of the moment also however condition Du Bois's discretion. The recent history of two world wars and the prospect of continued global belligerence clearly inform this paper. Given the gravity of these circumstances, it is insufficient to simply purport to overcome misunderstandings of Africa. What is required instead is an acknowledgment of the difficulty of any such comprehension, and the elusiveness of the goal of peace that he attaches to it.

As he does in other works, in “The African Roots of Peace” Du Bois details continuing efforts by foreign finance capital to extract resources from the continent, including peanuts from East Africa and palm oil from Nigeria. At the same time, opposition activities amongst local groups have become more intense, and he accordingly lays greater stress on the movements spearheading them. Du Bois alludes to strikes (mostly amongst laborers but also those carried out by students) in South Africa, Kenya, Uganda, Nigeria, the Gold Coast, and Sudan from 1944 to 1947. The demands of demonstrators in these different regions vary, but center largely on bread-and-butter issues, such as inadequate and unequal pay, and price increases.

Similar to his positive evaluation of the West African Cocoa Farmers, a delegation that comes to the United Kingdom in 1945 to press for fairer labor conditions and greater control over workspaces, Du Bois (1946) here interprets labor unrest across the continent as a gesture toward a more sustainable status quo. Rather than relying on the goodwill or guidance of outsiders, these organizing efforts illustrate the empowerment of ordinary people in Africa. Greater equality in political and economic life alone will eliminate the conditions that allow for outsiders to compete, and eventually come into conflict, over Africa’s resources. The significance of the play on the title of his earlier WWI essay is revealed by this insight. If the ‘roots of war’ on the continent consisted in such exploitative competition, the ‘roots of peace’ lie in attention to the question “what is Africa itself thinking?,” and in enabling native demands to be addressed (Du Bois 1948, p. 8).

Yet in keeping with the circumspection that he begins the paper with, Du Bois again expresses the need to be wary of drawing general conclusions. By virtue of its enormous geographical and social diversity, and its varied histories, he comments that “in a sense our very basis of inquiry is faulty, when we speak of ‘Africa’” (Du Bois 1948, p. 14). He goes on to discuss “six Africas,” different regions of the continent that display individual characteristics while also commonality with the space as a whole.

Du Bois’s exhortation to attend to this diversity, and to realize the need for detailed, historically informed studies of African societies reflects his exasperation over continued geopolitical crises. If these conflicts have epistemological foundations, they can be discovered in part in superficial understandings of Africa and other regions of the global South. He therefore enjoins his audience to be mindful of how these areas of the globe are represented, and the extent to which the lure of simplification enables further harm and suffering for local groups. This does not discourage him from drawing broad conclusions and speaking of Africa in coherent terms. The point is to do so from a position that is attentive to the complexity of the continent, including that of its local voices, and to acknowledge that even then, peace will be a demanding and fleeting objective.

The other relevant aspect of Du Bois’s treatment of peace at this time is his consideration of the soon-to-be-founded United Nations. Judged by this principle, and the democratic standards that were touted by the Allies during the war, he finds much that is wanting in the plans set out for it. Du Bois (1945) laments, for instance, the lack of attention that racial animus and acquisitiveness as key drivers of global conflict garner at the Dumbarton Oaks Conference, the 1944 meeting in Washington D.C. that would lead to the founding of the United Nations. The concentration of power in the Security Council, and the relative weakness of the General Assembly, warranted concerns over how representative the international body could claim to be. Relatedly, the continued denial of voice by colonial powers to subject populations, as was seen for example in the Belgian government purporting to speak for the interests of Congolese at the UN, served to further undermine the purportedly democratic nature of the proposed organization.

To those who would respond that this arrangement is the best that could be hoped for at the moment, Du Bois recalls the legacy of the Mandates Commission, set up after WWI by the League of Nations to administer the former colonies of Germany and the Ottoman

Empire. He approvingly cites Article 22 of the League's covenant, which governed the existence of the Mandates Commission, by describing it as the basis of "new international law." This is so to Du Bois because, "the Mandates Commission was supposed to see that the people of these colonies were fairly treated, and that something was done for their social uplift and their economic betterment" (Du Bois 1945, p. 139). These plans, by proposing to justly administer the aforementioned colonies, provide a more effective model according to him for achieving peace than do the proposals laid out at the Dumbarton Oaks Conference.

Du Bois's praise for the Mandates Commission should be understood in the context of the post-WWI era. At the time, he considered the newly formed body from the perspective of his work in organizing and leading the Pan African Congress (PAC). The latter, which was defined by its struggle to bring about unity amongst, and advocate for the rights of, Africans and peoples of African descent, held a meeting in Paris in 1919 at the same time that Western powers were deciding on plans for peace. Du Bois (1970d [1945]) credits the work that he and his interlocutors at the PAC did with shaping the Mandates Commission and its approach to handling colonies in Africa. For this reason, Du Bois and other Black intellectuals invested promise in the League as a crucial vehicle for the realization of racial justice in the wake of the war (Hodder 2021).

Some commentators look upon the PAC meetings from 1919 to 1927 as largely elite-led affairs that shied away from fundamentally challenging European rule in Africa (Contee 1972; Geiss 1974). Others contest such interpretations. They point to fact that the citizenship and rights for Black populations of the French and British empires that the PAC advocated for formed the horizon of possible political change at that moment. Its efforts should accordingly be appreciated as groundbreaking for the time, and for establishing a path toward future transformations (Dunstan 2016; Hodder 2021). The second view is closer to Du Bois's. The PAC to him centers the socio-economic well-being of Africans as well as their claims to basic rights during a period when both were conventionally discounted by Western imperial authorities. The absence of a corresponding concern for Africa and Asia within designs for the UN, as is evidenced by the lack of determination to challenge major discrepancies in economic and political power in the global order, bespeaks to Du Bois (1970c [1944]) a pivotal weakness of these plans.

In hearkening back, in the mid-1940s, to the Mandates Commission, what he lauds are the standards of fairness and socio-economic well-being laid out in Article 22. With this as a precedent, Du Bois (1945) calls for the UN to establish a "new Mandates Commission," designed to build on the legacy of its predecessor (p. 139). It should be tasked according to him with overseeing three specific reforms: the allocation of seats in the General Assembly to representatives of the colonized alongside those from the metropolises that rule over their territories; the formation of a council to address the grievances of the colonized; and the solicitation of statements on the part of imperial powers promising to grant equality to those under their dominion, and to offer them a choice of eventual independence or incorporation as equal citizens within their states.

These recommendations constitute an important part of Du Bois's understanding of post-war peace. They bear the influence of his consideration of Africa inasmuch as the work of the PAC in advocating for the rights of its inhabitants is clearly present. This includes the 1945 meeting of the Congress, which in comparison with those held from 1919 to 1927, was more of a grassroots gathering, with a militant labor and anti-colonial orientation (Munro 2017; Williams 2022). The general milieu of emergent decolonization in Asia and Africa during this period also plays a role in shaping Du Bois's thinking. In order for peace to be meaningful and enduring it should, according to him, accommodate this trend in favor of independence, as well as efforts to respond to the demands of marginalized groups for economic and political justice (Du Bois 1970d [1945]). Only then can the threat of persistent militarism around the world be held in check.



## With and Beyond Du Bois

This essay has examined how Du Bois engages with African history and affairs in the first half of the twentieth century during moments of acute global turmoil. Although conventionally cast aside or poorly understood by many experts of war and political economy, Du Bois insists on a proper understanding of the continent and its Black populations to any effective analyses of these issues. Solutions to the complications that they pose require to him an analogous focus.

Du Bois's reflections prompt the question of how his treatment of Africa in connection with these problems relates to the tradition of Black Internationalist thinking that it can be situated within. As mentioned above, there are various ways to understand the meaning of Black Internationalism, and an array of authorial perspectives that inform it. While not exhausting this trend, some commentators are content to understand internationalism in terms of alleged links that are realized or posited between populations across the African diaspora, or to emphasize shared experiences of exploitation or harm in socio-political life that they undergo.

These themes are not absent from Du Bois's internationalism. Yet he importantly approaches them from the standpoint of broad historical processes. When it comes to the foci of this article, that means the onset of world war, and continuing relations of imperial subjection. Internationalism allows him to grasp these phenomena in novel ways. In other words, internationalism is a method of thinking for Du Bois. Rarely if ever separated from domestic considerations, with it as a standpoint, he is able to situate problems in wider and different contexts in order to overcome the shortcomings of narrower viewpoints.

Moreover, what Du Bois's internationalism shows is that it is not enough to merely expand one's frame of reference in order to come up with innovative approaches to pressing issues. Even more important is to ask how such an expanded range of vision affects the way, for instance, that global peace is conceived. To gesture toward the role of Africa in relation to this objective is one thing. It is something else entirely to address African history in a sophisticated and detailed manner, to pay heed to its diversity, and to consider how different groups on the continent think about it as a value. The latter is clearly Du Bois's preferred approach, and it shows what a constructive form of internationalist thinking can look like.

A consideration of varied issues around the world today makes the contemporary applicability of Du Bois's internationalism evident. The intolerance shown toward certain populations in reaction to the COVID-19 pandemic reinforced a recent tilt in the direction of xenophobic nationalism globally. Solidarity with those suffering as a result of the proliferation of chauvinistic discourses, and/or the imposition of coercive border regimes, would be a clear necessity in response. An internationalist perspective on COVID would additionally be crucial. It would assist in clarifying the shared causes behind the disproportionately negative impact of the virus on Black and other minority communities in the Euro-Atlantic region, as well as Africa and the global South more generally, including the decimation of basic health and financial provisions, and inadequate investment in medicine and medical equipment (Hanieh 2020; Taylor 2020).

The dysfunctions of these social and health systems are tied to the dismantling of welfare services and the implementation of austerity measures that have characterized the shift in the direction of neoliberalism over the past half century (Whyte 2019). In the wake of this change, Lester Spence (2015) alludes to how Black elected officials in cities such as New York and Philadelphia, while avowedly anti-racist, discuss problems of crime and poverty in ways that draw from neoliberal prescriptions for increased personal and family responsibility. Spence points out that their language echoes that of the elitism that Du Bois

expresses toward poor African Americans in his early work. While this connection is apt, the aspects of his thought highlighted in this essay could offer an alternative perspective. Du Bois's internationalism would lead to an understanding of the similar effects of inequality that this economic system as a structure has produced globally, thus shifting discourses away from the moralizing that Spence detects amongst such officials and others.

The importance of his internationalist vision is additionally revealed by the endurance of destructive practices of war in the present in Sudan, Haiti, Palestine, and other regions of the global South. Beyond calls for peace, an internationalist perspective on contemporary militarism that takes cues from Du Bois's thought would stress the need to approach conflicts with deep historical consciousness. It would also attend to how victims of such bellicosity are discursively portrayed as dispensable and examine the commonalities and differences in the current practice of warfare. These include the use of new technologies, the role of weapons manufacturers, and the actions taken by local, regional, and global powers. Such a perspective would allow one to concentrate on the particularities behind individual instances of military aggression, while not losing sight of how they fit into broader patterns of violence that affect racialized populations around the world.

Other thinkers from Africa and the African diaspora examine these topics and related ones, and thereby articulate novel conceptions of Black Internationalism. Souleymane Diagne (2023) for instance refers to the importance of the legacy of the 1955 Asian-African Conference in Bandung, Indonesia, which brought together delegates from Asia, and to a limited extent from Africa, to discuss and devise ways to oppose Western imperialism. The substance of the meeting and its Final Communiqué have often been shrouded in a romanticism that overlooks the real tensions between attendees and that exaggerates the role of non-alignment at this key moment during the Cold War amongst the countries represented (Finnane 2010; Lee 2010). Notwithstanding these complications, Diagne (2023) turns to Bandung for what he sees it anticipating. It foreshadows to him a world without Europe at its center. For Africans, this entails an equality with other regions that, even if still unrealized, shows signs of fulfillment in the present, and should for this reason be recognized as consequential.

The internationalism that emerges from Achille Mbembe's (2021) considerations of Africa and its diaspora is likewise future-oriented. According to him, social developments on the continent, and the philosophies of life of its populations, make salient its vital role in coming decades. This is evidenced, amongst other things, by the centrality of its extractivist economies to "corporate activity" and the "financialization of risks," in addition to its robust biosphere and "hydrographic power" (Mbembe 2021, pp. 37, 222). It is also shown in African traditions that conceive of human beings as always supplemented by the environments and objects around them. At a time of the dominance of screens in everyday life, and when it has become commonplace to refer to high-tech devices as extensions of our personhood, Mbembe suggests that these established thought patterns contain important lessons for coping with these changes and others around the world.

Fatima El-Tayeb (2016) shines a light on the disparaging portrayal of Black and other communities in German politics, as well as academic, cultural, and media commentaries. She shows how Germany is made out to be a generous and welcoming society, perpetually burdened by "crises," from the financial woes of the Eurozone to a constant influx of refugee arrivals. While the United States may be characterized as having problems with structural racism, Germany is depicted as lacking in such issues. El-Tayeb argues that such narratives overlook the commonalities between the country and others in the global North, including the incidence of everyday discrimination against racialized communities, frequent violence perpetrated by extremist nationalist and other groups, and restrictive border policies. Moreover, she explains that these realities are inextricably bound to prevailing discourses, where racialized groups are characterized as not only perpetually foreign,

despite in many cases a presence that cuts across generations, but as threats to German identity.

Paul Gilroy (2021) also addresses the issue of migration to Europe. He calls attention to the frequent occurrence of war as well as the harmful effects of climate change as compelling many across Africa in recent years to attempt the often-deadly journey across the Mediterranean. The precarity of “African fugitives, refugees and travelers” is structured to a significant extent by the punitive security arrangements meant to control migration that are implemented by European and North African governments (Gilroy 2021, pp. 109, 112). Gilroy turns to race as critical to imagining ways to respond. Just as we as humans have distinguished ourselves from one another, so we as a species have done so with regard to non-human life. “Thinking at sea level” would point toward a different, non-hierarchical relationship (p. 108). Such an approach to thought would not involve an innocuous celebration of diversity, but rather be explicitly anti-racist, and oriented toward a strengthening of democratic practices. It would also encompass novel concepts such as “conviviality” and “multi-species” that allow for a non-consumerist orientation toward our natural environment (Gilroy 2021, p. 121).

To conclude, these examples, and this brief survey of authors theorizing under what can be considered a tradition of Black Internationalism, point in crucial respects beyond Du Bois’s thinking. New developments pose a novel series of challenges for internationalist perspectives. These writers grapple in creative ways with these transformations, such as by considering under-studied communities, re-examining past events, and innovating values and outlooks based on the experiences and views of African and African diasporic populations. At the same time, important parallels with Du Bois stand out. They all proceed from informed historical standpoints, look beyond a simple focus on common harm or bonds of solidarity as what constitutes internationalism, and consistently think within and outside of nationalist frames of reference. In these ways and others, Du Bois’s writings continue to provide an example of what rigorous internationalist thinking should look like in the future.

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### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Sarah Dunstan (2021) makes a similar point about ideological plurality amongst proponents of Black internationalism, pointing out that this style of thinking encompasses the leftist thinking of George Padmore (1903–1959) as much as it does the conservatism of Alain Locke (1885–1954).

<sup>2</sup> In other work, Byrd (2018) demonstrates that the same patronizing perspective toward Haitians could be found amongst other African American elites at the time.

<sup>3</sup> In his study of Du Bois and Max Weber (1864–1920), Christopher McAuley (2019) comments on the esteem that he developed for German culture and society as a result in part of fond impressions of his time spent there, dating back to his stint as a doctoral student in Berlin from 1892 to 1894. Du Bois was said to be well aware of anti-Polish sentiments espoused by Weber and other Germans, and though he was opposed to these sentiments, he did not voice them. Similar to his views on the Soviet Union, McAuley claims that this was because of “the difficulty Du Bois had criticizing the people and places that treated him kindly” (p. 53).

<sup>4</sup> What these authors have in mind is Du Bois’s conception of a ‘talented tenth,’ or a Black intellectual vanguard that he thought, by dint of their advanced educational training, should be in a position to mold and lead others in Black communities. On the notion of the ‘talented tenth’ in Du Bois’s thought, see: Gooding-Williams (2009); Taylor (2021).

<sup>5</sup> On such exclusions in post-WWII welfare states, see also: Moyn (2018).

<sup>6</sup> See also on this point: Rabaka (2020).

<sup>7</sup> Even though he identified as a socialist beginning in the early 1910s, as Adolph Reed makes clear, this label carried both conservative and radical meanings at the time in the United States. At an early stage, Du Bois had still not adopted the radically egalitarian view of socialism that he would come to be associated with by the 1930s. See: Reed Jr. (1997).

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