

Republicanism and Imperialism at the Frontier: A Post-Black Lives Matter Archaeology of International Relations

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Introduction

Writing in 1960, Hans Morgenthau identified domestic racism as a fundamental challenge to US national interests:

The racial minorities of America are in the process of merging into that vast movement of non-white peoples, comprising four fifths of mankind, who demand equality. These people have undertaken to achieve for themselves and in relation to the white man what America has offered to the world as its purpose: equality in freedom. What an irony it would be if the majority of mankind were to achieve the American purpose for itself in opposition to America! And how dangerous it would be for the very survival of America if America was to harbor an irredenta which was to strive for the achievement of the American purpose against its professors! ¹

Doyen of security studies, John Herz, considered *The Purpose of American Politics* to be one of Morgenthau's "best" publications.² Nevertheless, the book has received but a fraction of the scholarly interest garnered by *Politics Among Nations*, published twelve years earlier.

In the summer of 2020 IR scholars rushed to respond to the unprecedented national and global eruptions of support for Black Lives Matter (BLM) in the wake of George Floyd's murder.³ Both the International Studies Association and the British International Studies Association issued statements on BLM. Editors of IR journals rushed to convene workshops and special issues on racism. Prominent magazines such as *Foreign Policy* and *Foreign Affairs* invited historians Brenda Gayle Plummer⁴ and

¹ Hans J. Morgenthau, *The Purpose of American Politics* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1960), 307.

² John H. Herz, "Political Realism Revisited," *International Studies Quarterly* 25, no. 2 (1981): 184; exceptions to this neglect include Douglas B. Klumeyer, "Hans Morgenthau and Republicanism," *International Relations* 24, no. 4 (2010): 389–413; Richard Ned Lebow, "Hans Morgenthau and The Purpose of American Politics," *Ethics & International Affairs* 30, no. 1 (2016): 55–62; R. Shilliam, *German Thought and International Relations: The Rise and Fall of a Liberal Project* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

³ Kelebogile Zvobgo and Meredith Loken, "Why Race Matters in International Relations," *Foreign Policy* (blog), 2020, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/06/19/why-race-matters-international-relations-ir/>; Gurminder K. Bhambra et al., "Why Is Mainstream International Relations Blind to Racism?," *Foreign Policy* (blog), 2020, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/07/03/why-is-mainstream-international-relations-ir-blind-to-racism-colonialism/>; Robbie Shilliam, "When Did Racism Become Solely a Domestic Issue?," *Foreign Policy* (blog), 2020, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/06/23/racism-ir-international-relations-domestic/>.

⁴ "Civil Rights Has Always Been a Global Movement," *Foreign Affairs*, June 19, 2020, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2020-06-19/civil-rights-has-always-been-global-movement>.

Keisha Blain⁵ to deepen accounts of the relationship between the Black freedom struggle and US foreign policy. It is no exaggeration to say that this moment of upheaval abruptly challenged a field that has based its theoretical distinctiveness, at least from Kenneth Waltz onwards, on the separation of international explanandum from domestic explanans, and has since the 1970s categorized the phenomenon of racism as a domestic element of (principally) US politics.⁶

Presently, engagement with race and racism in IR is booming. However, when comparing 1960 to 2020 it becomes clear that insufficient attention has been given to the long presence of the US Black freedom struggle in IR.⁷ Why is it that prior engagements made from the center of the field - such as Morgenthau's - are not integral to contemporary engagements in IR with BLM?

This is a question of disciplinary formation which the "post" in postcolonial critique is designed to address.⁸ Rather than referring to a linear chronology, the "post" has always acted, in good part, as an intellectual provocation: in the aftermath of an event (e.g. decolonization), how might we rethink received traditions of inquiry (e.g. Eurocentric historiography) that have proven ill-equipped to explain and evaluate the event itself? In this respect, postcolonial critique seeks to both expose disciplinary absences and retrieve displaced traditions of inquiry that can more adequately evaluate and explain the contemporary moment.

In this article I propose that IR should reckon with a "post-BLM" moment by retrieving from within its own field traditions of inquiry that exceed the inherited and, for many, common-sense separation of racial politics from international politics. Morgenthau's 1960 book is exemplary of the challenge facing us as a field: the most famous theorist of realism is hardly ever taught or read as a theorist of racism. This, though, begs another question: how did Morgenthau theorize racism? I argue that Morgenthau mobilized Frederick Jackson Turner's famous thesis on the US "frontier" to explain the domestic and international constitution of the Black freedom struggle. As such, Morgenthau's book provides an opportunity to undertake an archeology of the field which unearths the raced concept of the "frontier" - a commonplace in early 20th century IR but nowadays largely ignored.⁹

Methodologically, there exists an intimate albeit terse relationship between postcolonial critique and Foucauldian archeology.¹⁰ Regarding the matter at hand, archeology tasks us with excavating a

⁵ "Civil Rights International," September 9, 2020, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2020-08-11/racism-civil-rights-international>.

⁶ See Robert Vitalis, *White World Order, Black Power Politics: The Birth of American International Relations* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015); Robbie Shilliam, "International Security and Black Politics: A Biographical Note Toward an Institutional Critique," *Security Studies*, forthcoming.

⁷ see Errol A. Henderson, "The Revolution Will Not Be Theorised: Du Bois, Locke, and the Howard School's Challenge to White Supremacist IR Theory," *Millennium* 45, no. 3 (June 1, 2017): 492–510; Robbie Shilliam, "Race and Racism in International Relations: Retrieving a Scholarly Inheritance," *International Politics Reviews* 8, no. 2 (December 1, 2020): 152–95.

⁸ Ella Shohat, "Notes on the 'Post-Colonial,'" *Social Text*, no. 31/32 (1992): 99–113.

⁹ See for example, Raymond Leslie Buell, *International Relations* (New York: H. Holt and Company, 1925), 9–10, 51–53, 344; for current exceptions see Lucian M. Ashworth, "Mapping a New World: Geography and the Interwar Study of International Relations," *International Studies Quarterly* 57 (2013): 138–49; Lloyd E. Ambrosius, "Woodrow Wilson and The Birth of a Nation: American Democracy and International Relations," *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 18, no. 4 (December 13, 2007): 689–718; and especially Oliver Turner, "Frontiering International Relations: Narrating US Policy in the Asia Pacific," *Foreign Policy Analysis* Firstview (2022): 1–20.

¹⁰ Pal Ahluwalia, "Post-Structuralism's Colonial Roots: Michel Foucault," *Social Identities* 16, no. 5 (2010): 597–606; Robert Nichols, "Postcolonial Studies and the Discourse of Foucault: Survey of a Field of Problematization," *Foucault Studies*, no. 9 (2010): 111–44.

disciplinary archive built with and around the raced concept of the “frontier”;¹¹ postcolonial critique directs us to recover the contingency of this disciplinary formation via intellectual and political struggles over the imperial expansion of the US republic. I select as my archive four authors: William Francis Allen (1830-1889), Turner (1961-1932), Morgenthau (1904-1980) and Merze Tate (1905-1998). Archeology is neither intellectual history nor an evolutionary presentation of ideas. Accordingly, my selection of authors runs backwards and forwards from Morgenthau, albeit across demonstrable intellectual and political connectivities.

Moreover, this archeology references a foundational concern in political theory, namely, the fraught relationship between republicanism and imperialism.¹² While republicanism is a fundamental precept for the study of American democracy, imperialism has increasingly been retrieved as a fundamental precept for the study of international relations.¹³ In what follows, I excavate the analytical and normative resonances and dissonances that run through Allen, Turner, Morgenthau and Tate as they intellectually refract broader political contradictions between republicanism and imperialism in the US expansion of a raced frontier and its connection to the Black freedom struggle, in particular, the unfinished project of abolition. This excavation, I shall conclude, yields a set of morphemes which might help to reconfigure the field of IR post-BLM.

Although I provide substantive engagements with each author, taken as a whole, my argument should be treated as an underlabor that serves a disciplinary reorientation. Hence, the purpose of this article is to demonstrate that when it comes to the disciplinary formation of IR, both republicanism and imperialism are implicated in the raced conception of the frontier and its use in evaluating the political significance of the Black freedom struggle.¹⁴ The aim of this article is to suggest that a post-BLM IR must apprehend this struggle as a phenomenon that is conventional rather than peculiar to the field.

I begin with Allen, nowadays a marginalized figure, but in his day a formative influence in the mixing of two nascent fields - American history and political science. Allen was a teacher of freed Black peoples in the Civil War and a political commentator on its consequences. Allen argued that the development of the Anglo-Saxon race in the North American continent enabled a unique transmogrification of violent imperial expansion into peaceful republican arrangements - especially democratic self-determination. He also believed that Black peoples, post-abolition, could be included in this expansion. I then turn to Turner, an occasional member of the American Political Science Association, a colleague of Woodrow Wilson, and mentor of one of the first IR scholars in the American academy, Paul Reinsch. Turner tasked the argument of his own mentor, Allen, to confront the closing (in census data) of the continental frontier. But in doing so, Turner reduced the significance of the Civil War to a passing moment in a wider movement of republican freedom westward. Minimizing its constitutive struggles over race, Turner

¹¹ see R. Keith Sawyer, “A Discourse on Discourse: An Archeological History of an Intellectual Concept,” *Cultural Studies* 16, no. 3 (2002): 433–56.

¹² see especially David Armitage, “Empire and Liberty: A Republican Dilemma,” in *Republicanism: A Shared European Heritage*, ed. M. Gelderen and Q. Skinner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 29–46; Geoff Kennedy, “The ‘Republican Dilemma’ and the Changing Social Context of Republicanism in the Early Modern Period,” *European Journal of Political Theory* 8, no. 3 (July 1, 2009): 313–38.

¹³ see for example David Long and Brian C Schmidt, *Imperialism and Internationalism in the Discipline of International Relations* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005); Vitalis, *White World Order*; Vineet Thakur and Peter C. J Vale, *South Africa, Race and the Making of International Relations* (London: Rowman & Littlefield International, 2020); Jasmine K Gani and Jenna Marshall, “The Impact of Colonialism on Policy and Knowledge Production in International Relations,” *International Affairs* 98, no. 1 (January 10, 2022): 5–22.

¹⁴ I take the term “raced” from Lisa Tilley.

claimed that this movement made the US an exceptionally anti-imperial power on the early 20th century global stage.

Subsequently, I examine Morgenthau's translation of Turner's frontier thesis into a realist framework that introduced a tragic dimension to the relationship between imperial expansion and republican arrangements. Unlike Turner, Morgenthau argued that the enduring struggle over racism post-Civil War necessitated an attentiveness to the ethical dilemmas that inhered in the pursuit of democratic freedoms. This critical faculty, he proposed, was integral to the American purpose especially as the unfinished business of abolition had now been taken up in a Cold War struggle over global order. Although not relying upon Turner's frontier thesis, Tate, (Morgenthau's contemporary), engaged with the same historical narrative via a diplomatic history of the ultimate frontier for US imperial expansion – the 19th century Pacific. In her analysis, the struggle over abolition enveloped the struggle over the US annexation of Hawai'i. for this reason, Tate conceived of the US Black freedom struggle as part of a global constellation of anti-imperial self-determination movements. Tate understood this to be a contemporary rather than antiquarian concern, given the US military presence in the Cold War Pacific arena.

Allen and race development

Born to "colonial aristocracy", Allen graduates from Harvard in 1851 and a few years later travels to Europe. There he stays in Berlin and Göttingen for almost a year studying ancient history.¹⁵ During this time, Allen is influenced by the notion *en vogue* that historical knowledge is valuable in so far as it might illuminate the social forces affecting the present.¹⁶ Returning to the US, Allen takes on a number of teaching jobs. Come the Civil War he is dispatched in 1863 to the St Helena islands in South Carolina to teach the Black community that remains after the departure of the plantation owners. Eventually returning to the north, Allen takes the chair of Ancient Languages and History at the University of Wisconsin in 1867 where he stays until his death.¹⁷

Although a noted polyglot, Allen is what we would nowadays call an academic gatekeeper. He regularly reviews texts in the fledgling field of American history for the *Revue Historique*.¹⁸ He also writes commentary on post-Civil War politics in *The Christian Examiner* – a popular liberal newspaper. In 1878 Allen delivers twenty lectures at the recently incorporated Johns Hopkins University on the history of the fourteenth century. He is held in good standing by Hopkins faculty, among them being Herbert Baxter Adams, Allen's junior, who will later help to convene the first graduate (History and) Political Science seminar in the US.

Allen believes that the project of American democracy can be better understood by tracking the historical development of civilization via the movements of the Anglo-Saxon race. In this regard, Allen subscribes to and is a leading intellectual of Teutonism, alongside Adams and John Burgess at Columbia. Proponents of Teutonism conjecture that the genus of democracy originally lay in the ancient German forest communities, to be then transmitted to England, there becoming Anglo-Saxon, and afterwards

¹⁵ David B. Frankfurter, *William Francis Allen* (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1890), 79; David B. Frankfurter, "William Francis Allen," in *Essays and Monographs*, by William Francis Allen (Boston: Ge. H. Ellis, 1890), 19; James Robert Hester, ed., "Introduction," in *A Yankee Scholar in Coastal South Carolina: William Francis Allen's Civil War Journals* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2015), 2.

¹⁶ William Francis Allen, "Historical Fiction," in *Essays and Monographs* (Boston: Ge. H. Ellis, 1890), 112; Frankfurter, "William Francis Allen," 1890, 13.

¹⁷ Frankfurter, *William Francis Allen*, 1890, 80–81.

¹⁸ Frankfurter, 83.

crossing over to the New England settlements, becoming American.¹⁹ But Allen distinguishes himself from his peers by arguing that this racial movement is fueled by an abiding contention between republicanism and imperialism – i.e. between peaceful democratic self-determination and war-faring foreign dominium.²⁰ To explain this contention, Allen adds an exogenous dimension to racial theories that in his era tend to present race evolution as an endogenous process.

Drawing on the classist Theodor Mommsen and the Roman historian Tacitus, Allen describes the political institutions of ancient Germans as essentially democratic in character due to mutable hierarches that rendered nobility a “purely social distinction”.²¹ Nevertheless, over time a body of elected magistrates evolved into hereditary barons who controlled their inferiors by armed force. Henceforth, Allen asserts, a “peaceful community of peasants” was turned into a “quarrelsome nation of warriors”, organized in quasi-feudal fashion.²²

Allen identifies the root cause of this transformation in changing land ownership and usage.²³ For the ancient Germans, tracts occupied by individuals but cultivated in common formed the “democratic structure of society”. But then individual property emerged, which led to divided land, competition and “irregularities in wealth”.²⁴ Crucially, Allen attributes an imperial dimension to this emergence when a “semi-barbarous, but vigorous and intelligent people” – i.e. proto-republican Germans – were put in “direct contact and constant intercourse with a highly civilized nation” – i.e., expansionary Rome.²⁵

Allen tracks a later and analogous process with the inheritors of the Teutonic genus – the Anglo-Saxons - who established the polity of England in the aftermath of the Roman occupation. As in ancient Germany, Anglo-Saxons held to a “gentle and simple distinction” in hereditary rank over which even peasantry could travel. Moreover, whereas the freeman of ancient Rome was disgraced by the act of labor, “the English race” stood for “the dignity of labor” and recognized the “claims of industry”.²⁶ Allen claims that by honoring of self-governance and industriousness in the use of land, Anglo-Saxons alone preserved “primitive free institutions and the democratic spirit”.²⁷

Allen once more adds an imperial element to the development of the race. Only after the Norman conquest did social distinctions amongst Anglo-Saxons take on the hardness of nobility.²⁸ Concomitant to this hardening was the appearance of land freeholders (villeins) and the feudalization of old village communities into “manors”. Nonetheless, even if born of a “foreign” induced reduction of community to “servile status”, the title of freeholder consolidated in the legal realm the Teutonic genus - democratic

¹⁹ John W. Burgess, “The Ideal of the American Commonwealth,” *Political Science Quarterly* 10, no. 3 (1895): 404–25; Herbert B Adams, *The Germanic Origin of New England Towns* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1882).

²⁰ See William Francis Allen, *A Short History of the Roman People* (Boston: Ginn & Company, 1891).

²¹ William Francis Allen, *The Primitive Democracy of the Germans* (Madison: Hathi Trust, 1896), 3.

²² Allen, 4–5.

²³ Allen, 9.

²⁴ Allen, 8.

²⁵ Allen, 10.

²⁶ William Francis Allen, “The Place of the North-West in General History,” in *Essays and Monographs* (Boston: Ge. H. Ellis, 1890), 102.

²⁷ Allen, 102.

²⁸ William Francis Allen, “Ranks and Classes Among the Anglo-Saxons,” in *Essays and Monographs* (Boston: Ge. H. Ellis, 1890), 293.

self-determination.²⁹ The English constitution thereby turned, in Allen's words, an "exceptionally despotic [French] royalty" into "an instrument of freedom".³⁰

Allen's assertion is bold: the genus of the Teutonic race never evolved endogenously but always via an iterative succession of geopolitical and martial encounters over land use with differently evolved races. As part of this movement, the original impetus for democratic self-determination was retained but raised to a higher level of civilizational struggle in an almost Hegelian dialectic of republicanism and imperialism.

Allen then scales up this narrative to chart the causes and consequences not just of imperialism but of inter-imperial competition. Before the 18th century, he proposes, European leadership was "held by nations which dwelt within the bounds of the Roman Empire and had inherited its principles of unlimited authority and despotic rule."³¹ However, unlike the French or Spanish, Anglo-Saxon culture had not developed under Roman imperium. For this reason, English hegemony, especially after the Seven Years War, promoted within "international relations" the "habits and capacity of self-government" inherited solely through the Teutonic lineage.³² Such "liberal principles of government", Allen clarifies, were distinct from the (Roman) desire simply to "increase power" by enlarging territories.³³

Allen then extends this narrative to the colonization of the Americas. He begins with the English destruction of the Spanish Armada in 1588.³⁴ Spain, a "tyrannical, bigoted" empire, was at that point in time the only European power to hold land in North America.³⁵ Afterwards, England and France began to take on permanent colonies. France extinguished "free institutions" wherever it expanded to, whereas England championed them. By the end of the century, the "Anglo-Saxon race" began to realize its "manifest destiny" for supremacy over the North American continent.³⁶

It is at this point that Allen lays claim to the novelty of imperial expansion within North America. As supportive of free institutions as they were, the English had still not entirely elided despotism, as was apparent in their imperial rule over Catholic Ireland.³⁷ Only in North America did imperial expansion unproblematically generate republican arrangements. The "Old England" foundation of "compact, orderly [and] industrious" land tenure experienced a rebirth in New England.³⁸ There, the relatively-primitive conditions of the settler-colonial venture in North America impelled Anglo-Saxons to retrieve the kernel of democracy afforded by their ancient Teutonic heritage, to be grown anew out of the American soil.

Moreover, Allen argues that English colonization in North America was a capacious process that assimilated "foreign [that is, other European] elements of population ... bringing them into active

²⁹ William Francis Allen, "The Origin of the Freeholders," in *Essays and Monographs* (Boston: Ge. H. Ellis, 1890), 315.

³⁰ Allen, 318.

³¹ Allen, "The Place of the North-West in General History," 100.

³² Allen, 100–101.

³³ Allen, 100.

³⁴ Allen, 92.

³⁵ Allen, 93.

³⁶ Allen, 104.

³⁷ Allen, 100.

³⁸ Allen, 105–6; William Francis Allen, "A Survival of Land Community in New England," in *Essays and Monographs* (Boston: Ge. H. Ellis, 1890), 345–46.

relation to [the Anglo-Saxon] political system”.³⁹ As new states (e.g. Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, and Wisconsin) arose from the English defeats of the French and Spanish empires and the amalgamation of their European races, the republican impulse extended westward, guaranteeing personal freedom, universal education and religious liberty.⁴⁰ The American Constitution ultimately emerged as a “legitimate and healthy growth of the original Germanic institutions” which nonetheless put an end to the colonial system that “kept our ancestors in condition of subjection”.⁴¹

For Allen, then, the Teutonic lineage generated an unprecedented republican peace in North America through imperial expansion. But what is the place of slavery in this peace? After all, in his own lifetime of American development, the struggle over slavery has led to a terrible civil war. And Allen himself has contributed to the incipient reconstruction effort in South Carolina.

From his own experiences, Allen admits that the plantation system evinced “extreme cruelty and misgovernment”.⁴² But when the “masters departed”, Allen recalls that “the slaves did not scatter” and remained instead, as an “organic unity”. Personal observations lead him to propose that “a slave population [can be] turned into a free peasantry very rapidly and completely”.⁴³ He even suggests that, at least in the South Carolina islands, the new “freedmen in a dim way conceived that the plantation belonged to them collectively”, even while they still cultivated for a proprietor or lessee (or the Union army).⁴⁴ Allen believes that if freedmen could be given the opportunity to bid for ownership of confiscated property, they could self-govern in a fashion similar to ancient “Danubian principalities”.⁴⁵

Allen’s normative claim befits the brief optimism of the reconstruction period. To be clear: he is in no way innocent of white abolitionist anxieties over immediate and categorical emancipation.⁴⁶ Still, Allen does grant a capacious to the Teutonic genus such that it might amalgamate different European races. In his estimation, Black freedmen can in principle become freeholders. Hence, they might also join this amalgam and partake in the exceptional imperial expansion of republican freedom in North America.

Allen’s argument about the unprecedented republican character of Anglo-Saxon driven imperial expansion provides the historical and conceptual foundations for the frontier thesis of his most famous student, Frederick Jackson Turner.⁴⁷ Unlike his mentor, though, Turner starkly diminishes the challenges that the Civil War poses to American republicanism.

Turner and the Frontier

Whilst lecturing at Johns Hopkins in 1878, Allen strikes up an intellectual relationship with Herbert Baxter Adams. Later, Adams requests from Allen information on land holdings in Wisconsin. Allen tasks Turner with the research, which ends up becoming Turner’s doctoral dissertation on fur-trading,

³⁹ Allen, “The Place of the North-West in General History,” 106.

⁴⁰ Allen, 111.

⁴¹ Allen, 108–9.

⁴² Allen, “Survival of Land Community,” 346.

⁴³ Hester, “Introduction,” 7.

⁴⁴ Allen, “Survival of Land Community,” 346.

⁴⁵ Allen, 346.

⁴⁶ See for example Frankenburger, “William Francis Allen,” 1890, 12.

⁴⁷ Although I do not have room to development the point further, I would argue that European influences on Turner’s thesis are significantly overstated. There might exist a certain Europhilia at work in diminishing the foundational influence of Allen on his student.

submitted to Hopkins under Adams' patronage, and the first sustained statement of his famous frontier thesis.⁴⁸

Turner amplifies a particular strand of Allen's argument: that which identifies the geopolitical element of imperialism arising from the importance of "free" land in the "settlement westward".⁴⁹ However, Turner's thesis conjoins imperial expansion to the environment such that geopolitics is now rendered (what I would call) an imperio-scene.⁵⁰ Turner describes the North American landscape itself as an "imperial domain" in so far as its size and topographical variations are analogous to the whole of Europe.⁵¹ Notably, whereas nineteenth century German literature apprehends the frontier as a battleline running through "dense populations",⁵² it is for Turner the settler's "relation to land" that is of "fundamental importance"⁵³ - specifically, settlement "at the hither edge of free land".⁵⁴ In other words, it is the environmental peculiarities of the frontier and not martial potentialities which produce a space of social transformation and race development.

Turner's famous argument proceeds as follows. The frontier environment "strips [the European man] of the garments of civilization" and returns the settler society to "primitive conditions".⁵⁵ Subsequently, the settler transforms "the wilderness" into a "new product that is American". In "conserving and developing" what is "original and valuable" in the "free and competitive" environment of the frontier, the settler seeks to "break the bondage of social rank".⁵⁶ The frontier cultivates in him (and it is a "him") a "buoyant self-confidence and self-assertion" based on a practicality and inventiveness that seeks to master material circumstances.⁵⁷ This disposition, argues Turner, embodies a fundamental "hope for democracy".⁵⁸

Just like Allen, Turner adduces a uniquely incorporative and assimilative character to Anglo-Saxon development in North America. He proposes that, unlike their imperial armies, French, Spanish and other European immigrants are attracted to the frontier and enjoin the same transformative process to create a "composite nationality for the American people".⁵⁹ The frontier society re-civilizes itself with the "older social conditions of the East" but carries within itself the "enduring and distinguishing

⁴⁸ Michail Zontos, "The Legacy of Europe in American Progressive Historiography: The Transatlantic Persuasion of Frederick Jackson Turner and Charles Austin Beard" (PhD, University of Utrecht, 2019), 53–58; Wilber R. Jacobs, "Introduction," in *Frederick Jackson Turner's Legacy: Unpublished Writings in American History*, ed. Wilber R. Jacobs (San Marino: Huntington Library, 1965), 12.

⁴⁹ Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," in *The Frontier in American History* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1986), 1.

⁵⁰ see also François Furstenberg, "Frederick Jackson Turner and the Physiographic Imagination" (Unpublished Manuscript, 2020).

⁵¹ Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Middle West," in *The Frontier in American History* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1986), 126.

⁵² see in general John T. Juricek, "American Usage of the Word 'Frontier' from Colonial Times to Frederick Jackson Turner," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 110, no. 1 (1966): 10–34; see also Turner, "Significance of the Frontier," 3.

⁵³ Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Problem of the West," in *The Frontier in American History* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1986), 211.

⁵⁴ Turner, "Significance of the Frontier," 3.

⁵⁵ Turner, "Problem of the West," 205; Turner, "Significance of the Frontier," 4.

⁵⁶ Turner, "The Middle West," 154.

⁵⁷ Turner, "Problem of the West," 210; Turner, "Significance of the Frontier," 30, 37.

⁵⁸ Turner, "Problem of the West," 214.

⁵⁹ Turner, "Significance of the Frontier," 21–23.

survivals of the frontier experience".⁶⁰ Thus, as the frontier moves ever westward, Turner proposes that the transformative energies of the imperio-scene ensure a consistent and continued "rebirth" of North American society, ensuring that in this exceptional case imperial expansion cultivates republican arrangements.

Except that violence seems to be ubiquitous in Turner's thesis, not least because the frontier edges westwards through a "series of Indian wars".⁶¹ Turner justifies this violence by ontologically removing indigenous peoples as political actors from the imperio-scene. In his sketches of syllabi that he posts to Allen during his time at Hopkins, Turner sequences the material such that the indigenous presence becomes part of the natural, primitive environment explored and exploited by the settler.⁶² This is why his published writings only contain indigenous traces but not indigenous peoples. Consider, for example, how frontiersmen in "moccasins" live in the "log cabin of Cherokee and Iroquois", eat "Indian corn", and take "scalps".⁶³

Presented in this way, the conquest of North America does not give rise to the ethical dilemma of imperial republicanism, as it does in Europe. Violence is turned only against despotic forces – such as the French and Spanish empires - or simply against nature. But violence is never mobilized against other self-determining and freedom-loving peoples.

What, then, of the Civil War? At times, Turner addresses slavery with a seriousness matching that of Allen. Turner clearly acknowledges a rivalry between unfree and free labor in the expansion of the frontier, which most notably resulted in the 1820 Missouri compromise that divided the US between free and slave states on the 36° 30' parallel thereby leading the way to armed conflict.⁶⁴ Still, Turner holds to a fundamental belief that westward movement ultimately promotes individual freedom over indentureship and servitude.⁶⁵ This belief diminishes, in Turner's account, the struggle over slavery to but one historical "incident" in the broader movement westwards.⁶⁶ In fact, he complains that the historian's focus on abolition has led to a neglect of "immigration, interstate migration, industrial development, revolution of the transportation system, and all the tremendous forces of change involved in Western expansion of settlement".⁶⁷

In his political commentaries, Allen uses the struggle over reconstruction in the south to exemplify the challenges of building an executive branch responsive enough to pursue freedom against entrenched interests.⁶⁸ For Allen, abolition is a pivotal issue for any claim made to the exceptional nature of US

⁶⁰ Turner, "Problem of the West," 205.

⁶¹ see for example Turner, "Significance of the Frontier," 9, 15; see also Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Significance of the Mississippi Valley in American History," in *The Frontier in American History* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1986), 167.

⁶² Frederick Jackson Turner, "Letter to William Francis Allen," 1889 1888, Correspondence Box 1, Frederick Jackson Turner Papers, Huntington Library; see also Frederick Jackson Turner, "Pioneer Ideals and the State University," in *The Frontier in American History* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1986), 269.

⁶³ Turner, "Significance of the Frontier," 4.

⁶⁴ Turner, "The Middle West," 140.

⁶⁵ Turner, "Significance of the Frontier," 30; Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Old West," in *The Frontier in American History* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1986), 107.

⁶⁶ Turner, "Significance of the Frontier," 24.

⁶⁷ Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Middle Period, 1817-1858 by John W. Burgess," 1897, 2, Manuscripts & Documents Box 54, Frederick Jackson Turner Papers, Huntington Library.

⁶⁸ William Francis Allen, "The American Executive," *The Christian Examiner*, no. March (1866): 174–96.

republicanism. In contrast, Turner builds a theory of “sectionalism” that reduces the slave-holding south to one of multiple sectional struggles that vie to control the movement westwards.⁶⁹ The conceptual capaciousness of the “section” is indicative of its normative purpose for Turner: to relativize and provincialize the stakes at play over abolition.

Having elided and diminished the imperial violence of dispossession and slavery, Turner tracks the American experiment in democratic self-determination through its manifestation as a “federation of sections”. The federation envelops diverse peoples and interests through compromise and concession to build together an “empire of natural resources” through the expansion of the frontier.⁷⁰ While Allen proposes that freed Black men could be equal agents in the advance of the republic, Turner never even mentions the possibility. It is the frontier and not abolition that for Turner realizes the promise of American democracy.⁷¹

This is why Turner is convinced that it is the closing of the frontier (by Census in 1894) that fundamentally challenges the democratic promise rather than the racial conflicts intrinsic to imperial expansion.⁷² As capital concentrates into the hands of a few, the “self-made man” transforms from a frontiersman to a “millionaire”.⁷³ Whereas on the frontier, different European races could be disarmed and turned into factors of democratic enlargement, a “tide of foreign immigration” now funnels into cities and industrial areas, there to widen the “cleavage” between capital and labor, encourage “distinctions of nationality”, and “lower” standards of living.⁷⁴ Turner even conjectures that the end of the frontier could make of American development a conflictual and divisive process rather than a consensual and incorporative one.

Still, Turner finds a way to convince himself otherwise. He argues that frontier aspirations and effects can be rekindled in domains other than land – in “ideals and legislation”.⁷⁵ He starts to paint his imperio-scene in colors other than purely environmental. The exploitation of nature must now proceed through a science frontier, and the governance of peoples through a social science frontier, with universities helping to conserve “what was best in pioneer ideas” so as to enable administrators to “intelligently mediate between contending interests”.⁷⁶ In short, the challenge of American development, for Turner, is foundationally one of social engineering, not of racial or postcolonial justice.

That said, as inter-imperial tensions eventuate in the 1898 Spanish-American war, Turner looks towards a new geopolitical frontier. Recalling the “dreams” by mid-century politicians of Manifest Destiny, Turner promotes the pushing of the frontier into the “outlying islands and adjoining countries” of the

⁶⁹ Frederick Jackson Turner, “Lecture on Sectionalism,” in *Frederick Jackson Turner’s Legacy: Unpublished Writings in American History*, ed. Wilber R. Jacobs (San Marino: Huntington Library, 1965), 67; see also Staughton Lynd, “On Turner, Beard and Slavery,” *The Journal of Negro History* 48, no. 4 (1963): 235–50.

⁷⁰ Turner, “Lecture on Sectionalism,” 69; Turner, “Significance of the Mississippi Valley,” 179.

⁷¹ Turner, “Significance of the Frontier,” 3, 24.

⁷² Frederick Jackson Turner, “Crossing the Continent,” 1894, Manuscripts & Documents Box 54, Frederick Jackson Turner Papers, Huntington Library.

⁷³ Frederick Jackson Turner, “Social Forces in American History,” in *The Frontier in American History* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1986), 319.

⁷⁴ Frederick Jackson Turner, “Contributions of the West to American Democracy,” in *The Frontier in American History* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1986), 245; Turner, “Social Forces,” 316–17.

⁷⁵ Turner, “The Middle West,” 155; Turner, “Contributions of the West,” 261.

⁷⁶ Frederick Jackson Turner, “The West and American Ideals,” in *The Frontier in American History* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1986), 294, 300; Turner, “Pioneer Ideals,” 281, 285.

Pacific so as to command the trade with China.⁷⁷ Writing in 1903 and reflecting on the spoils of the 1898 war, Turner suggests that a new consideration of democracy and its relation to empire is warranted especially in the Pacific (as well as in the Caribbean).⁷⁸

Ultimately, Turner comes to believe that the social-scientific frontier and the oceanic frontier together provide a new challenge and opportunity to the American republic. No longer “isolated from the old world”, an experienced and competent government is required to navigate the inter-imperial tradewinds as an exemplary republic.⁷⁹ To make this argument, Turner redefines “sections” as “evolutionary echoes of the European state system”, which no longer contain war-like nationalisms.⁸⁰ Sectionalism, he now argues, is the modality by which a “vast unorganized empire” has been incorporated into a union under a “unique federal colonial system”.⁸¹ Turner then presents the Civil War as the exception that proves the rule: it was the one sectional struggle in American history that backwardly “reproduced conditions of Europe”.⁸²

In all these ways, Turner maintains that the North American continent was colonized in a peaceful and progressive fashion: imperial expansion worked as an environmental force to produce republican arrangements. Through the ever-rejuvenating qualities of the frontier, Anglo-Saxons filled the land with “free and orderly commonwealths” far more “quietly” and “naturally” than the growth of European nations through “conquest and oppression”.⁸³ Even after the closing of the mainland frontier, the US leaves its Monrovia separation to take to the world stage as an exceptionally “self-restrained democracy” providing “a remedy of social reorganization in place of imperious will and force”.⁸⁴ All these claims to peaceful democratic self-determination hold only so far as one accepts Turner’s elision and minimizing of racial violence in the westward movement of the frontier. Morgenthau cannot accept such an idealistic proposition.

Morgenthau and the American Purpose

Relocating to Chicago University during World War Two, Morgenthau sets upon translating his German-derived philosophy of realism into a language palatable to American political science.⁸⁵ For Morgenthau there is a tragic potential to acting as if one’s moral position can be fully instantiated in the world without being undermined in the process; paradoxically, pursuing the “lesser evil” might be the more virtuous path of action.⁸⁶ In a 1951 book entitled *In Defence of the National Interest*, Morgenthau

⁷⁷ Turner, “Problem of the West,” 219; Frederick Jackson Turner, “Dominant Forces in Western Life,” in *The Frontier in American History* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1986), 222; Turner, “American Ideals,” 297; see also Gordon H. Chang, “China and the Pursuit of America’s Destiny: Nineteenth-Century Imagining and Why Immigration Restriction Took so Long,” *Journal of Asian American Studies* 15, no. 2 (2012): 145–69.

⁷⁸ Turner, “Contributions of the West,” 256.

⁷⁹ Frederick Jackson Turner, “Middle Western Pioneer Democracy,” in *The Frontier in American History* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1986), 357.

⁸⁰ Turner, “The Middle West,” 133.

⁸¹ Turner, 139, 148.

⁸² Turner, 138.

⁸³ Frederick Jackson Turner, “The Ohio Valley in American History,” in *The Frontier in American History* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1986), 169–70.

⁸⁴ Turner, “Significance of the Mississippi Valley,” 203; Turner, “American Ideals,” 296.

⁸⁵ Shilliam, *German Thought and International Relations*, 177–98.

⁸⁶ Seán Molloy, “Aristotle, Epicurus, Morgenthau and the Political Ethics of the Lesser Evil,” *Journal of International Political Theory* 5, no. 1 (April 1, 2009): 94–112.

channels his criticism of “crusading” foreign policies towards the Cold War context, promoting amongst US foreign policy elites a prudential navigation of competing interests even if it grates against public opinion.⁸⁷

In May 1958, C. Van Woodward, a historian at Johns Hopkins University, takes advantage of Morgenthau’s visiting lectureship at the School of Advanced International Studies to invite him to give four public lectures under the rubric of “Diplomatic History”.⁸⁸ The lectures that Morgenthau gives in April 1959 are consolidated one year later into *The Purpose of American Politics*. The book departs from *In Defence of the National Interest* in one notable respect. Morgenthau advances a new thesis, absent in his earlier work, that the American purpose, from the establishment of Jamestown in 1607 to the “contemporary racial revolution”, is the achievement of “equality in freedom”.⁸⁹ The “unequal condition of the American Negro”, he claims, “has been an endemic denial of the American purpose”.⁹⁰

Why the shift? In between books, the post-war freedom struggle has received its first major legal victory – the desegregation of education by the Supreme Court in *Brown vs Board of Education* (1954). In an amicus brief for the case, the US Justice Department warns the Supreme Court that “racial discrimination furnishes grist for the communist propaganda mills”.⁹¹ Morgenthau joins these and other interested parties in recognizing the global significance of the ruling. But he does so by heavily drawing upon and utilizing Turner’s frontier thesis.⁹² It is fair to say that by publishing *The Purpose of American Politics*, Morgenthau seeks to leverage a Cold War rhetoric rife with “frontier of freedom” metaphors.⁹³

Morgenthau begins the book by describing the “transcendental purpose” of American politics in a realist register that invokes the pursuit of interest and manifestation of power rather than a liberal register of compromise and harmony of interest.⁹⁴ Nonetheless, Morgenthau directs his realist definition of purpose towards republican designs: a democratic ambition of “political equality” requires that each citizen be given opportunity to enjoy equal access to the mechanisms of political rule. This ambition is intrinsically opposed to the permanent possession of – and permanent subjection to – political power.⁹⁵ Hence, Morgenthau presents the purpose of American politics in ethically contradictory terms: it seeks to limit state power domestically while projecting national strength

⁸⁷ Hans J. Morgenthau, *In Defense of the National Interest: A Critical Examination of American Foreign Policy* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1951), 220–23; see in general Tarak Barkawi, “Strategy as a Vocation: Weber, Morgenthau and Modern Strategic Studies,” *Review of International Studies* 24, no. 2 (1998): 159–84.

⁸⁸ C. Van Woodward, “Letter to Hans Morgenthau,” May 21, 1958, Box 156 Folder 2, Hans J. Morgenthau Papers, Library of Congress.

⁸⁹ Morgenthau, *Purpose of American Politics*, i.

⁹⁰ Morgenthau, iv.

⁹¹ Charles King, “The Fullbright Paradox: Race and the Road to a New American Internationalism Essays,” *Foreign Affairs* 100, no. 4 (2021): 101.

⁹² While Turner is directly referenced only twice, the book’s argument makes foundational use of Turner’s arguments and narratives. (In contrast, Morgenthau speaks of the “colonial frontier” only briefly in the first edition of *Politics Among Nations*.) Another Wisconsin historian, William Appleman Williams, provides a contemporaneous mobilization of the frontier thesis in “The Frontier Thesis and American Foreign Policy,” *Pacific Historical Review* 24, no. 4 (1955): 379–95. So far, I have not found evidence of Morgenthau and Williams in sustained and mutually-enriching conversation, despite both also deploying a “tragic” lens to evaluate US foreign policy.

⁹³ See especially Turner, “Frontiering International Relations.”

⁹⁴ Morgenthau, *Purpose of American Politics*, 8.

⁹⁵ Morgenthau, 19–20.

abroad.⁹⁶ Put another way, “equality in freedom” requires the constant expansion of a domain of self-determination but in a fashion that remains republican rather than becoming imperialist. This purpose of American politics requires a tragic sensibility lest it is destroyed by hubris. Morgenthau utilizes Turner’s frontier thesis to provide just such a sensibility.

Morgenthau does not draw upon Allen’s race science. But he does with join him in identifying the European genus of the purpose of American politics. He likewise proposes a novel development in North America, referencing Turner’s graduate friend from Hopkins, Woodrow Wilson, to clarify the importance of “the impact of a new [natural] environment upon old ideas”.⁹⁷ Morgenthau takes Turner’s definition of the frontier almost word-for-word: “empty spaces of fertile land without political rule of competition”.⁹⁸ Utilizing Turner’s imperio-scene analytic, Morgenthau contends that the “egalitarian conditions of society” combined with “the absence of serious competition from abroad” provided a frontier space wherein the “permanent threat of political domination from within and without” was absent.⁹⁹

Morgenthau then claims, again in concordance with Turner, that the permissive conditions for republican arrangements within American development have been exceptional in human history.¹⁰⁰ To be precise, the expansionary logic of the American frontier is uniquely conducive to self-determination for all rather than imperial conquest for some.¹⁰¹ Morgenthau asserts that the American purpose is not only to maintain equality in freedom for its own citizens but to also provide an exemplar for other nations to emulate.¹⁰² The American purpose therefore breaches domestic and foreign policy divides: it must “expand the area of equality in freedom in order to maintain equality in freedom at home”.¹⁰³

But Turner’s idealism of the frontier jars against Morgenthau’s realism. No surprise, then, that Morgenthau draws out the tragic nature of Turner’s thesis by proposing that the expansionism implicit in the American purpose has at times threatened to undermine its very principle of equality in freedom. Recall that, unlike Allen, Turner sees in the abolition struggle a temporary – and un-American – perversion of the frontier’s impact. In Morgenthau’s reformulation of the frontier thesis, slavery once more takes on especial importance appearing at pivotal points in the book’s argument as the prime manifestation of tragedy.¹⁰⁴

Implicitly referencing the Missouri Compromise, Morgenthau argues that slavery “split American society into two groups, each committed to a different kind of freedom and intent upon promoting its own kind through territorial expansion”.¹⁰⁵ The unfinished struggle over abolition provides, for Morgenthau, a crucial lesson in political realism. Post 1865, the contrast between a “legal and moral commitment to

⁹⁶ Morgenthau, 11–12.

⁹⁷ Morgenthau, 13.

⁹⁸ Morgenthau, 13, 20–21.

⁹⁹ Morgenthau, 20.

¹⁰⁰ Morgenthau, 16, 19.

¹⁰¹ Morgenthau, 26–27.

¹⁰² Morgenthau, 34.

¹⁰³ Morgenthau, 36.

¹⁰⁴ The text’s first engagement with slavery occurs only on two pages and within a larger section entitled “Denial”. A draft of the book’s table of contents suggests a more pivotal place for slavery in the development of Morgenthau’s argument by featuring a dedicated subsection on slavery running four pages. Hans J. Morgenthau, “Draft Table of Contents,” 1959, Box 144 Folder 2, Hans J. Morgenthau Papers, Library of Congress.

¹⁰⁵ Morgenthau, *Purpose of American Politics*, 37–38.

equal opportunity for all” and the “actual denial of the opportunity to a collectively defined group of citizens” establishes “the tragic denial of the American purpose”.¹⁰⁶ It is the ever-constant attempt to overcome this denial that provides the historical dynamic of American politics. In other words, the ongoing struggle over abolition proves that the impossibility of “remaining faithful to the American purpose” is part of the “American experience itself”.¹⁰⁷ This recognition guards against hubris in policy making.

Morgenthau weighs the national interest with this tragic reformulation of Turner’s frontier thesis. He connects the unfinished legacy of abolition to the prospect of winning the Third World over to the American cause. For Morgenthau, the Cold War, just like the Civil War, is a struggle over different conceptions of freedom. He notes that African and Asian states see Cold War competition in qualitative terms: i.e., who might provide the more meaningful form of democratic self-determination – the US or USSR?¹⁰⁸ In contrast, the Eisenhower administration apprehends the problem “purely in quantitative terms” as a military and economic competition with the USSR. Morgenthau is adamant that foreign policy requires a calculus complex enough to present conflicts of interest as ethical challenges.¹⁰⁹

Morgenthau consolidates his argument by turning to the most identifiably tragic element in Turner’s own thesis, namely, that the closing of the frontier might have taken away the material conditions that enable the “unique and revolutionary” American purpose. Morgenthau follows Turner’s proposed solution, pointing to “new frontiers” in science and society where equality in freedom might be resuscitated.¹¹⁰ Morgenthau also shares Turner’s ambition to make the university a frontier force itself and to rejuvenate politics through scholarship that embraces complexity rather than takes its cue from public opinion.¹¹¹ Cultivated thus, policy makers can be armed with a tragic sensibility wherein the ethical horizon is always open to political action.

This is why the “denial of racial equality” – over a century since Lincoln’s emancipation declaration - is so important to Morgenthau’s argument. It is the incompleteness of that struggle which, for him, forms an ethical horizon for Cold War foreign policy. Purely legal resolutions cannot complete the purpose of American politics; invariably, the ethical stakes are so complex that resolutions, such as they have historically existed, have come about through civil war. But given the dominance of the federal government, force of arms can no longer operate as a vessel of contentions politics. So, although it took a Supreme Court decision (*Brown vs Board of Education*) to “stop the treatment of [Black] descendants as though they were still slaves”,¹¹² when seven states resist “the application of constitutional guarantees to Negroes”, it is hardly the “people” who decide the issue but the executive branch in Washington DC by the mobilization of federal troops.¹¹³

Morgenthau’s point is less about defending the Jim Crow notion of “state’s rights”. Rather, he is trying to argue that the American polity has been denuded of the ability and competencies to judge, act upon and defend the American purpose of equality in freedom. The ethical horizon for self-determination has

¹⁰⁶ Morgenthau, 39.

¹⁰⁷ Morgenthau, 39.

¹⁰⁸ Morgenthau, 222.

¹⁰⁹ Morgenthau, 203.

¹¹⁰ Morgenthau, 306.

¹¹¹ Morgenthau, 225.

¹¹² Morgenthau, 202.

¹¹³ Morgenthau, 272.

been flattened and simplified by executive, procedural and bureaucratic power broking over the unfinished task of abolition. The purpose of American politics is no longer alive with struggles over its contradiction.

For Morgenthau, the stakes at play for the renewal of American politics are no less than the winning of the Cold War, which is dependent upon a return to complex ethical judgment in foreign affairs. The Black freedom struggle in the US is “merging” with a “vast movement of non-white peoples, comprising four fifths of mankind, who demand equality”.¹¹⁴ This is why Morgenthau seriously considers the prospect, as articulated in the quote I began this article with, that African and Asian polities might even become the “professors” of equality in freedom to Americans.¹¹⁵ If that is the case, then the US has ceded its purpose to its own oppressed minority in league with other peoples.

Morgenthau’s disquiet is neither nationalistic nor pro-imperial. Due to its exceptional quality, the American purpose is a defense of humanity itself, and as such, clearly transcends the “nation state”.¹¹⁶ In other words, the republican pursuit of the American purpose on the world stage is, he asserts, “a precondition for American survival”. Morgenthau even parses the most existential issue in strategic studies – nuclear armageddon - through the existential challenge posed by the US Black freedom struggle: both issues demand an expanded horizon of equality in freedom. He therefore suggests to his fellow IR theorists that “the traditional relationship between domestic and international issues has been reversed”.¹¹⁷ Morgenthau’s contemporary, Merze Tate agrees. But she does not consider the American compact between republican arrangements and imperial force to be tragic, because, for her, the frontier has never been empty.

Tate and the Pacific

Allen would have looked on with (paternalistic) satisfaction at Tate’s ancestors. Her great grandparents were part of a group of free Black families who emigrated from Ohio to Central Michigan to partake in the Homestead Act 1862 which, through the federal provision of land, quickened the westward movement so important to Turner’s frontier thesis. Tate’s folks even embraced their status as “old settlers” of a Northwestern state, and she herself clarifies: “I was born in Michigan, not in Mississippi”.¹¹⁸

Tate settles upon an academic career in political science, bridging the historical and political concerns of Allen and Turner, and turning towards controversies in international politics not dissimilar to Morgenthau’s.¹¹⁹ Her first book on disarmament, published in 1940, is criticized by W.E.B. Du Bois for its lack of political economy but lauded by Morgenthau for its “systematic analysis of political problems”.¹²⁰ That said, Tate plies her craft in fora associated more with Du Bois than with Morgenthau –historically Black institutions. She is an associate professor of Political Science at Morgan State in Baltimore, and

¹¹⁴ Morgenthau, 307.

¹¹⁵ Morgenthau, 307.

¹¹⁶ Morgenthau, 307.

¹¹⁷ Morgenthau, 310.

¹¹⁸ Barbara D. Savage, “Professor Merze Tate: Diplomatic Historian, Cosmopolitan Woman,” in *Toward an Intellectual History of Black Women*, ed. Mia E. Bay et al. (University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 254–55.

¹¹⁹ Merze Tate, *The Disarmament Illusion* (New York: The Macmillan company, 1942), ix–x.

¹²⁰ Hans J. Morgenthau, “Reviewed Work: The Disarmament Illusion by Merze Tate,” *The Russian Review* 2, no. 2 (1943): 14–105; W Du Bois E. B., ““Scholarly Delusion.” Review of The Disarmament Illusion: The Movement for a Limitation of Armaments to 1907, by Merze Tate,” *Phylon* 2 (1943): 189–91.

then a Diplomatic Historian at Howard, in Washington DC.¹²¹ There, Tate teaches geopolitics to her Black students, including the study of imperialism.¹²²

It should be acknowledged that Tate's pedagogical definition of the frontier is more Germanic than Americana, focusing on battlelines rather than on social development.¹²³ However, in her own research, Tate oftentimes glosses Turner's conceptualization, for example, in her description of missionaries as a "cultural frontier".¹²⁴ Despite these nuances there are two elements that clearly connect Tate's oeuvre with the archaeology of the frontier that I have presented so far. Firstly, like Allen, Turner and Morgenthau, Tate presents the challenge that racism poses to republican arrangements as imperial and international in its scope and effects; secondly, in examining these scopes and effects, Tate follows the most important frontier of US imperialism into a region where the westward push of manifest destiny is supposed to climax at the fin de siècle - the Pacific.

The first of these elements appears in an article written during World War Two in the *Journal of Negro Education*. Tate argues that the war aims of the West can hardly be said to promote freedom "everywhere"; they are instead indictive of a "militarist and imperialist struggle" to guarantee freedom for some and power at the expense of others.¹²⁵ What is more, Tate worries that there already exist influential elements in the US federal government and military that practice Nazism. Tate wonders if "freedom from fear" extends to "negro mothers" living under anxiety that their sons might die at the hands of a "peace officer or mob". Would "freedom from want", she asks, be realized for Black workers suffering unemployment?¹²⁶

Tate proclaims that Black people in the US will fight against Hitler as much as to "enlarge freedom here in America" as to save Europe from fascism.¹²⁷ But a military victory is not enough. There must also be a "victory of democracy". Here, Tate pre-empts Morgenthau by arguing not only for an ethical element to be folded into the strategic calculus, but also that the Black freedom struggle in the US is constitutive of and has consequences for the fate of republicanism in the global struggle against fascism.¹²⁸ Given such stakes, nothing less than a "world charter for freedom" is required to convince the "black, brown and yellow people of the world that President Roosevelt's Four Freedoms will apply to them as well as to whites".¹²⁹ These concerns form the basis for Tate's turn to diplomatic history in the Pacific.

In 1958 Tate spends some months undertaking archival research in Hawai'i, Fiji, Samoa, New Zealand and Australia.¹³⁰ Through this work, she extends Turner's narrative of the frontier even if she does not remix his thesis, as Morgenthau does. For instance, Tate notes how the 1840s Oregon boundary dispute, a key territorial dispute between Britain and the US, focused attention on the commercial and military

¹²¹ Savage, "Diplomatic Historian, Cosmopolitan Woman," 252–53, 258; see also Vitalis, *White World Order*.

¹²² Merze Tate, "Teaching of International Relations in Negro Colleges," *The Quarterly Review of Higher Education Among Negroes* 15 (1947): 150.

¹²³ see Tate, 150.

¹²⁴ Merze Tate, *The United States and the Hawaiian Kingdom: A Political Story* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965), 4.

¹²⁵ Merze Tate, "The War Aims of World War I and World War II and Their Relation to the Darker Peoples of the World," *The Journal of Negro Education* 12, no. 3 (1943): 523.

¹²⁶ Tate, 529–30.

¹²⁷ Tate, 529.

¹²⁸ Tate, "Teaching of International Relations," 149.

¹²⁹ Tate, "War Aims," 531.

¹³⁰ Savage, "Diplomatic Historian, Cosmopolitan Woman," 260–61.

importance of the Pacific as the next chapter in so-called manifest destiny.¹³¹ In this way she presents the Pacific as a frontier of contending imperial forces just as the original frontier thesis treated the continental mainland.¹³² But unlike Allen, Turner and even Morgenthau, Tate gives political presence to indigenous actors at the oceanic frontier (albeit through the records of white statesmen). What is more, Tate demonstrates how inter- and intra-imperial struggles in the Pacific over indigenous self-determination are entangled in the fallout from the US Civil War.

To appreciate Tate's argument, some brief historical context is required. With the sugar trade curtailed by the Civil War, many planters moved into the Pacific, establishing themselves in Hawai'i, Queensland, Fiji and other locations.¹³³ Struggles over annexations of territory were in part driven by the need to source and regulate *kānaka* labor for the new plantations. A system colloquially known as "blackbirding" promoted kidnapping and capture from island shores, similar to the means deployed in the Atlantic slave trade including, Tate notes, the "civilizing" justification for such violence.¹³⁴

Tate examines Hawai'i's diplomatic record with these contentions in mind and through two inter-related issue areas: statehood, and labor migration. Concerning statehood, she exposes a deep distrust by *kānaka maoli* authorities of US intentions. Recall Turner's conviction that the Missouri Compromise was just one step along the way towards the triumph of free labor in the westward movement of the frontier. Alternatively, Tate argues that the Compromise proved a stumbling block for negotiations with the Hawai'ian government. For instance, British General William Miller saw a diplomatic opportunity in undermining US influence by warning *kānaka maoli* that they would become enslaved upon incorporation into the US polity because the Hawai'i islands fell south of the Compromise's latitude.¹³⁵

Tate reports that US Commissioner David Gregg was concerned as far back as 1854 that racism would impact negotiations for incorporation of the islands into the US polity. King Kamehameha III, Gregg observes, worried that "his color would prevent him from receiving that estimation which ought to be placed on his merits and capacity".¹³⁶ Above all, Tate extracts from Gregg's diary an admission that slavery was foremost in the mind of Hawai'ians when it came to diplomatic relations with the US.¹³⁷ This, she suggests, is what predominantly led Hawai'ian authorities to prefer federal union as a state rather than territorial incorporation by less republican means.

These concerns make more sense when it is remembered that sugar plantations had become an established presence in the islands by the late 1840s and grew significantly during and after the Civil War. Herein lies Tate's second area of inquiry – labor migration. Until the 1870s, plantation labor in Hawai'i was mostly provided by Chinese immigrants with Japanese immigrants arriving subsequently. Thus, demographic issues were directly implicated in the assessment of the strength of indigenous sovereignty.

¹³¹ Merze Tate, "Hawaii's Program of Primacy in Polynesia," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 61, no. 4 (1960): 377.

¹³² Merze Tate, "The Australasian Monroe Doctrine," *Political Science Quarterly* 76, no. 2 (1961): 264–84.

¹³³ Merze Tate and Fidele Foy, "Slavery and Racism in South Pacific Annexations," *The Journal of Negro History* 50, no. 1 (1965): 1–21; see also Gerald Horne, *The White Pacific: U.S. Imperialism and Black Slavery in the South Seas after the Civil War* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007).

¹³⁴ Merze Tate, "Slavery and Racism as Deterrants to the Annexation of Hawaii, 1854-1855," *The Journal of Negro History* 47, no. 1 (1962): 5.

¹³⁵ Tate, 7.

¹³⁶ Tate, 4.

¹³⁷ Tate, 5.

Tate recounts how King Kalākaua was anxious to bring other Pacific peoples under a Hawaiʻian led protectorate.¹³⁸ As part of this project, he sought to mitigate the political consequences of declining health and population numbers amongst his own people by encouraging Chinese migration.¹³⁹ The American ministers in Kalākaua’s government were concerned with the racial contamination that such mitigation strategies would cause. For instance, James Comly, US Minister to Hawaiʻi, suspected the king wished for an alliance with “the great oriental empire of China” and began to talk of a “yellow peril” when it came to population replacement.¹⁴⁰

Tate forwards the narrative to 1881 and the attempt by US Secretary of State James Blaine to incorporate Hawaiʻi by encouraging “intelligent ... American settlers” from the US mainland.¹⁴¹ Blaine went so far as to suggest a Hawaiʻian Homestead Act similar to that which Tate’s own family benefited from and was a key factor, for Turner, in the winning of the mainland north west. But in Hawaiʻi there existed no suitable government lands to turn over to homesteading. As Blaine’s plans floundered, Tate brings to light a subsequent strategy to recruit black labor from the southern states.¹⁴² But she reports that public opinion was strongly disapproving of any such immigration. Presbyterian minister Sereno Edwards Bishop, another progeny of emigrated missionaries, warned that Black immigrants, “removed from the controlling and civilizing influence of the white man” would, in Hawaiʻi “simply deteriorate like the population of Hayti”.¹⁴³

On Tate’s account one might say that Kamehameha III, Kalākaua and other *kānaka maoli* notables sought a republican form of government – federated statehood – for fear of being reduced to indentureship via white settler expansionism. US agents, alternatively, sought a form of imperial incorporation that would mitigate racial contamination of the American republic. In the end, imperialism won out: Hawaiʻi was forcibly annexed to the US in 1898 as an incorporated territory.

Tate sees in this diplomatic history lessons for her present. In 1964, she and her doctoral student Doris Hull take note of worldwide protests against nuclear testing in the US Pacific Proving Grounds.¹⁴⁴ Resonating with Morgenthau’s critique of the Eisenhower administration, Tate is ill at ease with the way in which the Pacific Trust area is designated as simply “strategic”. The US, she points out, has agreed to participate in the UN program to “lead former mandates toward self-government and independence”. Mismanagement of Trust areas, Tate warns, will only “disillusion those to whom the words “colonialism” and “imperialism” have sinister connotations.”¹⁴⁵

However, Tate does not share Morgenthau’s premise that empty lands comprise the frontier. In Tate’s narrative, the frontier that envelops indigenous politics in the Pacific carries with it the unfinished politics of mainland abolition.¹⁴⁶ For this reason, both indigenous dispossession overseas and unfinished

¹³⁸ Tate, “Hawaii’s Program of Primacy,” 378.

¹³⁹ Merze Tate, “Decadence of the Hawaiian Nation and Proposals to Import a Negro Labor Force,” *The Journal of Negro History* 47, no. 4 (1962): 248–50.

¹⁴⁰ Tate, 250.

¹⁴¹ Tate, 251–52.

¹⁴² Tate, 258.

¹⁴³ Tate, 261.

¹⁴⁴ Merze Tate and Doris M. Hull, “Effects of Nuclear Explosions on Pacific Islanders,” *Pacific Historical Review* 33, no. 4 (November 1, 1964): 379–93.

¹⁴⁵ Tate and Hull, 393.

¹⁴⁶ For a contemporary examination of the tensions between indigenous self-determination and anti-blackness in Hawaiʻi see Joy Enomoto, “Where Will You Be? Why Black Lives Matter in the Hawaiian Kingdom,” *Ke Ka’upu Hehi*

abolition at home are entangled processes. Not only does this mean that American republicanism is far from exemplary; in Tate's diplomatic history the US takes the stage as but one more imperial power in the Pacific. What is more, her narrative entangles the mainland Black freedom struggle in quotidian imperial expansion, thereby effectively denuding it, too, of an exceptional status.

It seems to me that Tate comes to her diplomatic history of the Pacific having already learnt a critique of US exceptionalism of any kind from the global war against fascism. Indeed, commenting on her pedagogy in 1947, she asserts that "the American Negro is only one of many minorities in the world and ... his [sic] problem is not unique but only one phase of a much larger issue."¹⁴⁷ This is why, facing down nuclear testing in the Pacific, Tate is convinced that only a global compact against imperialism and racism might provide for republican arrangements anywhere.

Conclusion

Allen, Turner, Morgenthau and Tate conceptualized the raced frontier as part of an effort to diagnose and prognose the making of US-led global order along republican and/or imperial lines. All their efforts variously engaged with abolition and the Black freedom struggle. Drawing together the theoretical and narrational resonances and dissonances of this disciplinary archive, I will extract four morphemes which might help to build a post-BLM IR. Furthermore, by highlighting the contingencies and contentions that these morphemes address, I will offer some theoretical and political questions that might shape a problematique of Black freedom struggle in IR scholarship.

Firstly, there is the prospect of American exceptionalism in the act of balancing republican arrangements with imperial expansion. Secondly, there is the consideration that this balancing act is site specific - not at the border between states, but rather at the frontier, which is intrinsically mobile and expansionary. Thirdly, there is the proposition that this frontier expands not only over geopolitical space but also via intellectual, legal, economic, and social domains. And fourthly, there is the premise that this expansion is intrinsically raced.

Some guiding questions arise from these morphemes. What openings and closures do specific geopolitical conjunctures provide for domestic racial politics? How might these conjunctures articulate through domains of contention other than geopolitical? Is US racial politics exceptional or just one expression of a global struggle to disarticulate republican arrangements from imperial violence? Indeed, what is the nature of abolition: a passing phase of Western civilization, an opportunity for republican inclusion into an imperial project, an unbreachable political horizon, or addressable only by a global anti-imperial compact? And what other struggles over coloniality are present in the struggle over abolition?¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁷ *Ale* (blog), 2017, <https://hehiale.com/2017/02/01/where-will-you-be-why-black-lives-matter-in-the-hawaiian-kingdom/>.

¹⁴⁷ Tate, "Teaching of International Relations," 149.

¹⁴⁸ I am thinking here primarily of indigenous politics, given Tate's contribution. Nonetheless, Turner's masculinist depiction of frontier life obviously begs for a gender critique that is not immediately evident in Tate's work. See, alternatively, Brittney C Cooper, *Beyond Respectability: The Intellectual Thought of Race Women* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2017); Imaobong Denis Umoren, *Race Women Internationalists: Activist-Intellectuals and Global Freedom Struggles* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2018); Patricia Owens and Katharina Rietzler, eds., *Women's International Thought: A New History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021).

Experts in racial politics might find the above suggestions somewhat obvious. But the purpose of this paper has been to excavate the problematique of Black freedom struggle from the center of the field rather than import it (into the margins) from elsewhere. I want to finish by offering some conjectures as to why I think this issue of positionality matters intellectually and politically.

At some point during the Cold War, the “border” seems to have achieved conceptual supremacy over the “frontier” amongst IR scholars. In the same period, the field provincialized the Black freedom struggle into a phenomenon of domestic politics. Both movements effectively prepared the ground for rendering BLM a form of politics peculiar to IR. Still, it cannot be quite as simple as claiming that an archaeology of the raced frontier could help to turn BLM – and return the Black freedom struggle – to a conventional phenomenon of the field. In fact, there can be no return to an intellectual past represented by Morgenthau in 1960. Because, since the late 1960s, a new academic architecture has come into shape, with Black Studies emerging as an ethical mode of academic inquiry critically supportive of the Black freedom struggle.

Perhaps, then, the salience of fostering a post-BLM IR can be identified in the prospect of a disciplinary relationship between IR and Black Studies. I am thinking, specifically, of a potential relationship between an archaeology of the raced frontier and a genealogy of Black self-determination. Black Studies holds a rich set of resources for thinking of republican arrangements otherwise at the frontier. There exists a large literature on “marronage” – a practice understood not narrowly as fugitivity but more expansively as the cultivation of quasi-autonomous publics amongst the human detritus of imperial expansion – Black, indigenous and non-conformist.¹⁴⁹ Such political communities can be gleaned historically and presently at all scales – e.g. local (quilombos), national (Haiti) and transnational (the Panthers), and across a range of domains – e.g. geographical, linguistic and digital. We might think of BLM itself as marronage publics, struggling to pursue republican arrangements in and against the violent expansion of imperial frontiers in built place and social space.¹⁵⁰

In this article I have sought to fashion an IR response to BLM that addresses rather than avoids disciplinary accountability. A post-BLM IR cannot indulge in fantasies of resetting itself, neither of rescuing itself by adding race as a variable, nor of miraculously finding salvation in other fields. BLM calls on us to reconfigure our own field. This article has provided an underlabor towards such a project.

¹⁴⁹ For example Neil Roberts, *Freedom as Marronage* (Chicago; London: The University of Chicago Press, 2015); Michaela Machicote, “Jezebel by Another Name: Black Women, Carceral Geography and the Practice of Urban Marronage in Chicago” (PhD Thesis, Austin, University of Texas, 2022).

¹⁵⁰ see for example Barbara Ransby, *Making All Black Lives Matter: Reimagining Freedom in the Twenty-First Century* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2018).