

**Colin Powell
and
Condoleezza Rice**

*Foreign Policy, Race, and the
New American Century*

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Foreword

Race is a social construct and a powerful sociological metaphor; it unfolds and operates on multiple levels, at times, intersecting with other variables (Crenshaw 1995 and Delgado 2001). Currently, the intersection of race, gender, class, power, and hegemony as conceptual tools is central to the study and investigation of international relations and foreign affairs. Race and its intersectional consequences, like race and gender, as well as race and class, have contributed significantly to conceptual and theoretical models that advance our understanding of the world. Now, critical race theory is influencing the study of international relations like never before.

Race as a social construction, and its influence on international relations is gaining currency; and the study of race as an aspect of international relations and U.S. foreign policy is more common. In international affairs and human rights, issues such as genocide, immigration or migration, the death penalty, displaced peoples, torture, rape, and other violations, may at times, have a distinctly racial or ethnic dimension. In particular, events such as the genocides in Cambodia in the 1970s, Iraq in the 1980s, Rwanda and the former Yugoslavian republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina in the 1990s, and now the Sudan, are powerfully grim reminders of the ways in which race and ethnicity act as destabilizing factors in international relations. Given these events, it is easy to understand why race and ethnicity are central to the study of international affairs.

In the United States, the study of race and foreign policy, as currents within international affairs, are enjoying a renaissance as more and more scholars are examining the ways in which race influences U.S. decisions, actions and conduct in international affairs. This is due to several factors, one being the U.S. civil rights movement, on the one hand and the centrifugal role African Americans

have played in influencing U.S. foreign policy considerations, on the other. Major events of the nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first centuries illustrate the role of African American social movements: from the anti-slavery campaigns of the late nineteenth century, to the black participation in the Abraham Lincoln Brigade that fought in Franco's Spain; from the question of colonialism and formation of the United Nations, to the war in Vietnam; from the liberation struggles in southern Africa to the role of black activists and intellectuals at the World Conference against Racism (2001), speak to the crucial role that African Americans have played in international affairs. Oftentimes their views have been diametrically opposed to the official policies of the United States.

Within the social sciences—history, sociology, political science, international relations, African American Studies, and Women's Studies—race and its intersectional consequences, when properly used as a conceptual tool, provides a unique understanding, a deeper interpretation, and a more nuanced critique of social relations. More recently, scholars have widened their understanding of the constituencies that influence foreign policy making. In particular, they have come to realize that U.S. foreign relations are embedded in complex social, economic, cultural, and political factors of domestic as well as foreign origins. The race relation approach offers practical assistance in dealing with international issues, and it helps to broaden awareness that race itself is a salient factor in international relations (Plummer 2002, 3).

Race and International Affairs

In a 1969 article in *Foreign Affairs*, "Color in World Affairs," Harold Isaacs argued that the modern world was created as a racially hierarchical polity, globally dominated by Europeans and North Americans and that the world as of the late 1940s was by and large white and Western dominated (Isaacs 1969, 235). Unfortunately, this still holds true even until today. While the old structures of formal colonialism and de jure colonialism, have been dismantled through the painful processes of decolonization, national liberation movements, social revolutions, civil rights movements, and anti-apartheid struggles, the fundamental nature of Western control—read as mainly as white—over the rest of the world—read as mainly as nonwhite—is largely intact. This control was ensured and based on a series of institutions elaborated in the aftermath of World War II.

These post-World War II political institutions—some inter-connected and overlapping and other not—were designed based on the social and political power of the United States and the old Soviet Union. The United States as a main hegemonic power would take the lead in the establishment of a new

post-war framework that would include: the United Nations and the Security Council, the Bretton Woods System, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, and other multilateral institutions; these leading hegemonic actors, would preside over the world making decisions for the whole of humanity, the majority of which being nonwhite.

Within this context the concept of a racialized social system is quite useful for the study of international relations. Its application to foreign policy and international affairs establishes a framework to better understand and analyze the role of racialized social systems. For example, the trans-atlantic slave trade; colonialism in African, Asia, and Latin America, which were part of the field of international relations, as they were clearly subjected to the rules, laws, interpretations, and conventions of international treaties; and apartheid in the United States and South Africa were in fact racialized social systems. A racialized system refers to societies or systems in which economic, political, social, and ideological levels are structured by the placement of actors in racial categories. These systems are structured or conditioned by race because social systems articulate two or more hierarchical patterns (Bonilla-Silva 1996, 469).

In short, all racialized social systems place peoples within racial categories and differential hierarchies that produce particular social relations between or among the groups. The group or groups placed in the superior position (i.e., usually as defined by their position within the political economy) tends to have more access to the political process, higher levels of income and capital, access to land, better education and health care, and is granted more social value (e.g., smarter or better looking); and has the power to define social boundaries between themselves and "others" or what W.E.B. Du Bois called the psychological wage. The totality of these racialized social relations and practices constitute the racial structure of a society (Bonilla-Silva 1996, 470).

In the aftermath of World War II, the United States apartheid framework systematically excluded blacks from voting rights and effective political participation to jobs within the federal bureaucracy. As a consequence, few blacks were employed by the U.S. foreign policy establishment. Although blacks were sharp critics of U.S. foreign policy from the outside, few were able or allowed to get foot inside. In *Black Diplomacy: African Americans and the State Department, 1945-1969*, Michael Krenn points out that historically blacks were excluded from positions within the foreign policy establishments and the important posts at the State Department. He argues that in 1950, of the thirty-three blacks in the Foreign Service, two-thirds were employed in traditionally black posts in Liberia. Except for the newly appointed ambassador, Edward P. Dudley, nearly all held low-grade positions (Krenn 1999).

He posits that institutional racism and elitism—the “old boy’s club” mentality—explains why blacks and other outsiders were excluded or not recruited and employed in the foreign policy bureaucracy. The preference for white men who were southern bred and/or Ivy League-trained to serve as career officers remained unchanged over the second half of the twentieth century. He contends that, however, during the Truman years, “Department of State officials slowly came to the conclusion that race would play an important role in the postwar world” and realized “that America’s domestic racial problem was now a foreign policy problem” (Krenn 1999).

Krenn also points out in the *African American Voice in U.S. Foreign Policy since World War II*, that social scientists are starting to examine the intersection of race and U.S. foreign policy. New questions are being raised: Does racism influence U.S. policies toward people of color (at home and abroad)? What was the role of racism in specific policy actions and formulations: Manifest Destiny and the wars with Mexico, the war in the Pacific against Japan, and the decision to drop the atomic bomb? How did African Americans in the United States develop a foreign policy framework, and how did it affect issues such as the occupation of Haiti, the Italo-Ethiopian War, attitudes toward decolonization of Africa, and relations with South Africa (Krenn 1988)? These are crucial questions.

Krenn argues that in the aftermath of World War II, one of the most significant developments in terms of race and U.S. foreign policy was the emergence of a much stronger and vocal African American voice in U.S. foreign relations. African Americans understood intuitively and intellectually that the organic forms of oppression at home were tied or linked to the situations of other oppressed peoples abroad. Moreover, African Americans saw the concrete links between their own struggles for human rights at home and the struggles of peoples of color across the globe.

Similarly Mary L. Dudziak’s seminal study, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (2000), explores the impact of foreign affairs on U.S. civil rights policy during the early years of the Cold War (1946–1968). After World War II, the United States took on the mantle of world leadership, yet, at the same time, found itself subject to increasing international criticism. According to Dudziak (2000), American racism was seen as the nation’s Achilles heel. U.S. allies, as well as critics, questioned whether civil rights abuses undermined the international image of the United States and interfered with its leadership of the free world. How could American democracy be held out as a model for others to follow, particularly newly independent nations in Asia and Africa, when within U.S. borders persons of color were lynched, were segregated in schools and public accommodations, and were disenfranchised? When the Soviet Union made American racism a principle anti-American propaganda

theme in the late 1940s, civil rights in America became the terrain upon which an important Cold War ideological battle would be waged.

Dudziak (2000) argues that concerns about the impact of race discrimination on U.S. foreign relations led presidents from Truman through Johnson to pursue civil rights reform as part of their broader Cold War strategies. While foreign affairs was only one of the factors motivating civil rights reform during these years, it was crucial in understanding why a period of domestic repression, such as the Cold War, was simultaneously, also a period during which some civil rights reform would take hold. According to Dudziak, for nearly twenty years, countering the problem of race was an important issue in America's Cold War policy. The government tried—however unsuccessfully—to portray the story of race in democratic America as one of progress. Consequently, civil rights reform was uneven, if not sporadic, as Washington had to bring reality more in line with its ideological rhetoric. Thus, she argues, civil rights reform was in part a product of the Cold War.

Brenda Gayle Plummer's edited volume, *Window on Freedom: Race, Civil Rights, and Foreign Affairs, 1945–1988* (2003) explores how race mediated freedom in the foreign relations of the United States. She argued that Gunnar Myrdal's *An American Dilemma* (1944), was a high watermark in the history of race relations as his work broke new ground in making what had been an insurgent view within the social sciences normative in the academy. Despite the work that black scholars had been producing for years, the new view of race gained legitimacy only when underwritten and rubber-stamped by a scholar anointed by the mainstream academic leadership. One of the derivative benefits of Myrdal's study is that it legitimated a discourse that explicitly linked racial reform with the desired world order.

In stark contrast to the traditional power relations or realist approach that emphasizes power struggles among nation-states this volume offers a pluralist view on international affairs. It examines the full range of political, social, and ideological behaviors as well as the role of non-government actors and how they influence foreign policy. According to Plummer (2003), in the post-World War II period, racism undermined U.S. global leadership and strained its relations with countries that had a stake in achieving global racial equality; likewise, racial discrimination in the United States had implications for relations between European states and their former colonies. By linking U.S. domestic politics to international affairs, it is argued that the overall struggle for human rights by racial and ethnic minorities is best understood within the context of competitive international relations.

There are, of course, other works that critically explore race and the intersection of U.S. foreign policy and international affairs. The scholarship on the

convergence of race; civil rights; the Cold War; African Americans and human rights; McCarthyism; and the impact of black radicalism on U.S. foreign affairs is flowering. Gerald Horne's classic work *Communist Front? The Civil Rights Congress, 1946-1956* (1988), to Penny Von Eschen's *Race against the Empire: Black Americans and Anti-Colonialism, 1937-1957* (1997)—and many more—demonstrate the full range of works now emerging on race, foreign policy, and international relations.

Powell and Rice: The New American Century

Colin Powell and Condoleezza Rice: Foreign Policy, Race, and the New American Century examines race, gender, and the construction of U.S. foreign policy. It is an impressive work: It adds to the scarce literature on the intersection of race, gender, and international relations, and it magnifies our interpretative power regarding the ways that African Americans have influenced foreign policy and international affairs. How have African Americans—churches, the media, intellectuals, activists, non-governmental groups, trade unionists, congresswomen and men—framed, articulated, and implemented foreign policy issues and strategies? Is it even possible to speak of a uniquely African American foreign policy? These questions set the stage for an interesting analysis and critique of Colin Powell and Condoleezza Rice as leading foreign policy architects. Given the body of materials by Powell and Rice—speeches, interviews, articles, and public pronouncements—to date there is little systematic and detailed analysis reflecting their views as key foreign policy strategists. This book fills this void nicely.

The rise of Colin Powell and Condoleezza Rice as U.S. foreign policy architects raises a number of substantive and complex questions regarding U.S. foreign policy. It is clear that their appointments served to place race as well as gender firmly within the fluid parameters of international relations and U.S. foreign policy. The year 2000 was a watershed year for black political power as Colin Powell became the first black secretary of state, and Condoleezza Rice became the first black national security advisor, thus making her the first black and woman to hold this post. Subsequently, Rice in 2004, was named secretary of state, making her the second black to be named as secretary of state and the first black woman to hold this post. It could be argued convincingly that as persons of color, a black man and a black woman, that holding these positions has served to place race and gender squarely at the center of international relations and foreign affairs. It could be further argued that their rise to the highest and most powerful positions within the U.S. foreign policy establishment serves to spotlight the role of African Americans in the area of international affairs as

never before. Before their appointments, blacks had never held such high posts within with the U.S. foreign policy establishment. However, a black foreign consensus—the attempt by African Americans to influence U.S. foreign policy—has existed for years.

Moreover, the fact that they were appointed by an extremely conservative Republican administration that lost the popular vote in the 2000, and with little or no ties to a black constituency, only serves to raise more thorny and complicated questions. While there have been black ambassadors and a handful of blacks operating within the State Department machinery over the years, there had never been any black Americans—before them—with such important roles in constructing, articulating, and representing the United States in foreign affairs. In fact, with their appointments they became the highest ranking blacks in the U.S. government ever. It should be pointed out, however, that long before Powell and Rice, African Americans (as outsiders and insiders) historically had played important and crucial roles in shaping U.S. foreign policy interests and considerations.

This is one of the first books to examine the intersection of race, gender, and the politics of U.S. hegemony. It analyzes the roles, influences and, more important, the social construction of U.S. foreign policy by Colin Powell and Condoleezza Rice as African Americans within the framework of international relations. Few African Americans have played such key roles in the social construction and implementation of U.S. foreign policy as Powell and Rice. There are some works on Powell and Rice, although uneven, and they are not very critical. However, *Colin Powell and Condoleezza Rice: Foreign Policy, Race, and the New American Century* is one of the first serious attempts to place their views, policy positions, speeches, interviews, and their overall approach to U.S. foreign policy and international affairs within the parameters of international relations and domestic politics by a leading political science scholar. By examining the intersection of race, gender, politics, and hegemony this work moves way beyond the traditional scope of the international relations framework. By problematizing the intersection of race, gender, and politics, Clarence Lusane opens critical new spaces of inquiry long ignored by scholars of U.S. foreign policy and international relations.

Does racial identity as well as racial perceptions on the domestic and international level help shape the consumption of the new paradigm in U.S. foreign policy as presented by Powell and Rice?

How does their racial identity disturb or interrupt conventional notions about the role of race in international affairs?

Given the long history of African American participation in foreign affairs, in what ways do Powell's and Rice's views converge or deviate from other influential African Americans (W.E.B. Du Bois, Shirley Graham Du Bois, Paul Robeson, and Ralph Bunche)?

What is the political relationship among race, contemporary U.S. foreign policy, and global security in the post-September 11 era?

By posing such questions—as well as providing answers—Lusane liberates international relations and U.S. foreign policy from its staid and rigid approach that ignores or downplays race and its intersectional consequences. By doing so, he provides a fresh angle from which to examine U.S. foreign affairs, international relations, and the crucial role of African Americans in international affairs. This work is a critical as well as a serious examination of the reconfiguration of U.S. national security strategy and the commonly referred to “war against terrorism.” Against the backdrop of Bush's newly emerging security paradigm, pivotal foreign policy adventures are analyzed that include: the World Conference against Racism 2001; the attacks of September 11, 2001; the invasion of Afghanistan (2001) and Iraq (2003); the ouster of Jean-Bertrand Aristide in Haiti (2004); and Bush's foreign policy toward Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean—to name only a few.

Lusane meticulously locates Powell and Rice shifts and transformations as foreign policy thinkers within the historical and ideological evolution of the Republican Party. He draws a high resolution picture of Powell and Rice within the larger context of black Republican activism. Powell and Rice, as two of the most visible and powerful black Republicans, are considered oddities. First, neither has been elected to political office. Second, unlike some black Republicans, they became Republicans late in their political lives. Third, both use race strategically and symbolically when it is convenient or necessary. Fourth, both use the raw narrative power and moral underpinnings of the civil rights movement, albeit differently, in their official discourse. However, it is Powell more than Rice, who has drawn a clear distinction between himself and the Republican Party. Powell is pro-choice, believes in a person's right to bear arms, but posits some form of gun control, and supports affirmative action. It is argued that as players in the administration, Powell's views were considered more centrist or moderate while Rice was further to the Right. Powell, moreover, appears to be more race conscious than Rice as he generally acknowledges that his achievements can be attributed to affirmative action.

Lusane accurately points out that within the broad trajectory of the Republican Party, the black moderate Republican view, such as Powell and others, has

the unreconstructed realist, navigate the treacherous terrain of neo-conservative foreign policy? It is against this backdrop that this book deconstructs with laser-like precision the broader policy objectives of neo-conservative paradigms with Powell and Rice at the center.

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