

## Visions of One World

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On August 26, 1942, Wendell L. Willkie, who had been Franklin D. Roosevelt's Republican opponent in the 1940 presidential election, took off from Mitchell Field on Long Island in a converted B-24 four-engine Liberator bomber. The bomber, called the "Gulliver" and flown by a crew of US Army officers, took Willkie on an extraordinary forty-nine day, 31,000-mile tour around a world engulfed in war. Not only did he circle the globe but, as Willkie made a point of noting after he landed back in Minneapolis, Minnesota, on October 14, for the bulk of his journey he flew around the equator, making numerous stops in South America, Africa, the Middle East, and Asia and looping back home through Siberia and over the Arctic Ocean. En route, he toured Cairo, Egypt, and made a trip to El Alamein in the country's Western Desert to confer with the Allied commander there, General Bernard "Monty" Montgomery, just as the Allied forces had stopped the German advance in North Africa and were planning for the final defeat of their forces there. In Beirut, Lebanon, Willkie met with the exiled leader of the Free French, General Charles de Gaulle, in his villa in the city. In Jerusalem he received both Jewish and Arab representatives and contemplated the conflict between them, wondering presciently whether "the only solution to this tangled problem must be as drastic as Solomon's."<sup>1</sup>

He made a side trip to the Turkish capital, Ankara – he got there on a commercial Pan-Am flight from Lydda airport in Palestine, since neutral Turkey would not allow a US military plane to enter its air space – and lauded the Turkish people as an example of an "Eastern" nation that had successfully embarked on the road to modernity. After visits to Baghdad, where he met leaders and ordinary people, and Tehran, where he dined with the Shah, Willkie continued to the Soviet Union. There, he discussed ideology and economics with

<sup>1</sup> Wendell L. Willkie, *One World* (New York, 1943), 25.

Soviet workers and farmers and met in the Kremlin with Joseph Stalin, whom he memorably described as dressed in “soft pastel colors.” Finally, he went on to China, flying into the country from the West as Japan was then occupying its eastern parts. Willkie stopped first in Urumchi, in what was then known as Chinese Turkestan, and then flew on to the wartime Chinese capital of Chongqing, in Sichuan Province, where he met with the Nationalist leader Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek and his US-educated wife, Song Meiling, but also with the communist leader Zhou Enlai, the right-hand man of Mao Zedong.

Twelve days after returning from his voyage around the world, on October 26, 1942, Willkie made a radio address, billed as a “Report to the People”, which all the major US radio networks carried live (Figure 30.1). Some 36 million Americans tuned in to this address, twice as many as the highest rated commercial program at the time. The next day, editorial pages around the country – from Kansas, Oregon, Minneapolis, Dallas, Louisville, Spokane, and many places besides – hailed it as a triumph. Willkie had the text of his radio address published as a thirty-page pamphlet along with some photographs from his trip. They depicted him meeting with various dignitaries in the Soviet Union, Egypt, and China – one showed him standing on stage in Chongqing delivering his “message to China,” with the Generalissimo and Madame Chiang, her sister Soong Qingling, the widow of China’s national hero, Sun



Figure 30.1 Wendell Willkie delivering his radio address on October 26, 1942. CBS Photo Archive / Getty Images.

Yat-sen, and the Soviet ambassador all seated on the stage to his side. The final images showed Willkie, after his return to the United States, discussing what he learned on his journey with “ordinary Americans,” including high school students in Rushville, Indiana, his home state, and a group of weather-beaten farmers in overalls standing in a corn field, where, according to the caption, they discussed Russian and American agricultural methods.<sup>2</sup>

The runaway success of Willkie’s radio address helped convince Willkie to write a book about his experiences, which he did with the help of Irita Van Doren, the book editor of the *New York Herald Tribune*, a prominent figure in American letters with whom Willkie had a long-time romantic affair. The book, titled *One World*, appeared in the spring of 1943. Aimed at a broad audience and composed in prose that reflected Willkie’s “sensible man on the street” persona, *One World* found unprecedented commercial success, selling some 3 million copies by the time of Willkie’s unexpected death, of a series of heart attacks, in October 1944, at the age of 52.

Why did a book documenting the journey of a private citizen to places largely in Asia and the Middle East gain such popularity among readers in the United States during the war? The answer has to do with the wartime shift in American views of these parts of the world, a shift that *One World* both reflected and helped advance. With the outbreak of war, regions of the world that had previously seemed, to most Americans, remote and exotic places, became important theaters of conflict, which meant that the peoples of those regions and their disposition toward the Allied war effort suddenly became a question of great concern for Americans. The success of Willkie’s book, however, was not simply about wartime strategy; rather, it also signaled a lasting transformation in American views about the vast swathe of the world stretching from Latin America to Africa, the Middle East, and Asia, that today is often called, taken together, the “Global South.”<sup>3</sup> It was during World War II that Americans “discovered” the Global South as an object of sustained

<sup>2</sup> “Wendell L. Willkie’s Report to the People, Oct. 26, 1942,” pamphlet (New York, 1942).

<sup>3</sup> The term “Global South” did not come into common use until the early twenty-first century. During World War II, Americans might have spoken of large regions within it as “The East,” understood to encompass lands from North Africa to Asia. Alternatively, they used terms such as “subject peoples” or “colonial peoples” to describe those peoples then under colonial rule, encompassing nearly all of Africa and much of Asia. Another phrase used at the time, especially by non-white writers, was the explicitly racial term “darker peoples” (or “darker races”), which, when applied to the international arena, was usually understood to include the peoples of Latin America as well as Africa and Asia. After the war, from the 1950s to the end of the Cold War, the “Third World” was probably the most common appellation for these regions. The 1960s saw the rise of the phrase “the developing world,” which remains in common use today.

interest and concern as they increasingly came to see these parts of the world, and the peoples who populated them, as crucial for the future of American security and of world order.

### The Global South Comes into View

Americans, of course, had myriad connections to the parts of the world that make up the Global South since colonial times. New England merchants made their fortunes in the China trade since the eighteenth century and American missionaries had been working in China, as well as in the Middle East, at least since the middle of the nineteenth. Americans were deeply implicated in the African slave trade, too, and even after that trade ended missionaries, hunters, traders, and thrill-seekers from the United States continued to travel there. As for Latin America, Washington had claimed it as its sphere of influence since the promulgation of the Monroe Doctrine in 1823. Even so, for most Americans the world outside North America and Europe remained a distant, exotic place. Foreign policy elites, for their part, tended to view most of those regions – Africa, the Middle East, the Indian subcontinent, Southeast Asia – as outside the scope of their most pressing concerns, and were largely content to leave them to the imperial machinations of the European empires. China, Japan, and the Philippines, the latter of which the United States acquired as an overseas colony in 1898, were the notable exceptions to this rule but they were just that: exceptions.

American attitudes toward the peoples of the Global South in those decades were shaped, too, by the racialized understandings of world affairs common among Europeans and North Americans before World War II. Born of centuries of racial slavery and imperialism, these understandings were further entrenched with the rise of scientific racism and social Darwinism in the latter decades of the nineteenth century. Seen through the lens of contemporary racial theory, the Western ascendancy in world affairs at the time was taken as proof of the superiority of Europeans and their descendants over other “races,” an idea bolstered by the rapid spread of European imperialism in Africa and Asia in the nineteenth century.

World War I, fought from 1914 to 1918, delivered a major blow to this view. Here were the major European powers, who claimed that their higher level of civilization gave them the right to rule over others, brutally killing each other by the millions and laying waste to large swathes of their continent while calling on their colonial subjects to help them fight. Millions of Indians, Africans, and others were recruited to the war effort by their imperial

masters. There was a moment, in the immediate wake of that war, when it seemed that the United States would move to involve itself more deeply with the peoples of the Global South. Many in the colonial world then saw the US president, Woodrow Wilson, as an avatar of self-determination and appealed for his support against their imperial overlords. There was talk then of US leadership in the just-established League of Nations and, more specifically, of US participation in the League's mandate system, whose declared purpose was to prepare colonial peoples for self-government. But the US Senate rejected US membership in the League of Nations, and Washington never played a role in the mandate system which, in any case, quickly devolved into little more than an instrument for the perpetuation and extension of European imperial rule.

The legitimacy of an international order based on white supremacy had been challenged all along, a challenge perhaps most famously distilled in the African American scholar W. E. B. Du Bois's declaration, at the First Pan-African Conference of 1900, that the "problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color line."<sup>4</sup> In the interwar years, many African American intellectuals continued to argue for a more racially egalitarian order both domestically and internationally, as did other non-white thinkers across the world. Such arguments for racial egalitarianism, and even challenges to the very concept of race itself, found support in certain provinces of academia, including the pioneering anthropologist Franz Boas and his students, as well as among some progressive Christian reformers, often with missionary connections in Asia or the Middle East. However, with racial segregation entrenched domestically and racial imperialism still ascendant internationally, these voices had little influence on broader debates or on public opinion in the United States in those years.

The outbreak of World War II, and particularly the US entry into war in the Pacific after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941, changed all this. Since its defeat of Imperial Russia in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–5, Japan had stood around the world as a symbol of a non-white nation that could match and even overtake European nations. Nationalists across the colonial world, including in India, the Middle East, and Africa, admired it as such and sought to emulate Japanese success in repulsing European imperialism and building a powerful, modern nation. Many

<sup>4</sup> "Address to the Nations of the World by the Pan-African Conference in London, 1900," drafted by W. E. B. Du Bois, cited in J. Ayodele Langley, ed., *Ideologies of Liberation in Black Africa, 1856–1970: Documents on Modern African Political Thought from Colonial Times to the Present* (London, 1979), 738–739.

Americans saw Japanese victories against European-led armies in Southeast Asia after Pearl Harbor – particularly the conquest of Singapore, the main British stronghold in the region, in February 1942 – as underlining the extent of the West’s decline in the face of a rising East and raising prospects of a global “race war.” Japanese wartime propaganda, which called on the peoples of Asia to join their war effort in racial solidarity, also echoed this idea and reinforced it in the minds of Westerners. Within this context, American elites and publics gradually came to view the non-white world as strategically important for the security of the United States and the future of world peace. It was there that Americans would have to fight and win the struggle for the future, if they were to win it at all.

*One World* reflected and amplified this shift. Although it included a general plea for postwar international cooperation, its main thrust was a rousing call for liquidating the imperial world order and recasting international affairs based on racial equality. The people of “the East,” Willkie informed his readers, had awakened, and they demanded their liberty. The European colonial system was an antiquated relic; it could not survive as a practical matter, and it also contradicted the stated goals for which Americans were fighting as stated in the Anglo-American Atlantic Charter of August 1941 and beyond. On his visit to Egypt, Willkie said, he tried to draw British colonial officials there on how they see the future of the colonial system, but in response he got nothing more than the unalloyed “White Man’s Burden” imperialism of Rudyard Kipling.<sup>5</sup> But had not Japan’s success in the war and its defeat of European forces in Asia, he asked his readers, shattered any remaining notion of white racial superiority? In the coming world order, the peoples of South America, Africa, Eastern Europe, and Asia, who made up “nearly three fourths of the people of the world,” must become part of international society as equals with the people of North America and Western Europe.<sup>6</sup>

When Willkie repeated, in the book, the common Allied refrain that the conflict was “a war of liberation” he made it clear that he was referring not to Poland or to France but to Asia and Africa; that the liberation he wanted his readers to consider was not from German occupation in Europe but from European, and especially British, imperialism in Asia and elsewhere. Everywhere he went, he said, his interlocutors asked him: Does the Atlantic Charter, with its heady talk of self-determination, apply in Asia? And, even more pointedly, given Washington’s close alliance with Britain:

<sup>5</sup> Willkie, *One World*, 14–15.    <sup>6</sup> Willkie, *One World*, 181.

What about India? Willkie, after all, had begun his round-the-world journey in August 1942, just weeks after the failure of Anglo-Indian negotiations to secure Indian cooperation in the imperial war effort, which in turn led Gandhi and the Indian National Congress to launch the Quit India Movement, pointedly demanding the end of British rule over the subcontinent. Just days before Willkie took off from Mitchell Field, the British authorities in India had arrested Gandhi and most of the leadership of the Indian National Congress. Many remained imprisoned until the end of the war.

Willkie did not visit India on his trip, since both London and Washington feared that such a visit would stoke further unrest, but he still found the opportunity to challenge the British directly on the question of their rule there. Speaking in Chongqing, the Chinese wartime capital, Willkie delivered a rousing anti-imperialist address, declaring: "We believe this war must mean an end to the empire of nations over other nations ... We believe it is the world's job to find some system for helping colonial peoples ... become free and independent nations."<sup>7</sup> This message must have pleased Generalissimo Chiang and others in the Chongqing audience, not only for its pertinence to China, where the United States and Britain would soon abrogate century-old unequal treaties as part of the wartime alliance, but also for its implications for the fate of European imperialism more broadly. Chiang himself, in his capacity as the Allied supreme commander in the China theater, had visited India in February of 1942, when he publicly asked the British to give Indians "real political authority" and annoyed them further by insisting on a personal meeting with Gandhi.

British Prime Minister Winston Churchill was not pleased with Willkie's open attack on the empire. In a speech the following month, on November 10, 1942, he offered a famous riposte: "I have not become the King's first minister in order to preside over the liquidation of the British Empire." Few were more committed than Churchill to the perpetuation of the empire – in the most famous of his wartime speeches, in June 1940, he had memorably imagined that the British Empire might "last for a thousand years." But the very next sentence of his November 1942 speech suggests that even Churchill, however reluctantly, could sense the winds of change, since he added apropos the future liquidation of the empire: "For that task, if ever it were prescribed, some one else would have to be found."<sup>8</sup> The empire, he knew, might not last for a thousand years.

<sup>7</sup> Speech in Chongqing, October 7, 1942, quoted in Willkie, *One World*, 182.

<sup>8</sup> Winston Churchill, Speech at Mansion House, London, November 10, 1942.

In *One World*, Willkie chastised not only the British but also the French, Dutch, Belgians, and others for their imperialist ways. But for American readers, perhaps his most startling move in the book was to turn a critical eye back on his own nation. In his penultimate chapter, titled “Our Imperialisms at Home,” he warned that the United States practiced within its own boundaries something that amounted to “race imperialism” and that Americans could never credibly pose as champions of racial equality abroad – a posture they had to adopt in the interest of world peace – until they got their own house in order. To do that, he said, they would have to resist any domestic threat to racial and religious minorities and reject all forms of racism and anti-Semitism. This is a project in which Willkie had already been involved earlier as one of the most prominent public critics of the isolationist “America First” movement, with whose leader, the aviator Charles Lindbergh, Willkie had had several prominent public debates.

### “Freedom for All or Freedom for None”

In *One World*, then, Willkie called for racial equality both at home and abroad, advocating for the establishment of a racially egalitarian international order. And though *One World* was just one book, the responses to it among contemporary readers and commentators suggested that it gave voice to a broad strand of opinion in the wartime United States. Glowing reviews of the book in papers across the country, from commentators on the left and the right, amplified its message. In the *New York Post*, the liberal columnist Samuel Grafton rejoiced that “Mr. Willkie has uttered the word India, loud and clear,” noting that “so far as I can learn no Englishman has called for his hat, stick, or car,” implying that the United States could, indeed must, challenge Britain on the question of empire despite their close alliance. The conservative writer David Lawrence recalled the aftermath of the last world war, writing that “not since the days of Woodrow Wilson has a discussion of international policy been expressed on a plane so high and yet so close to the aspirations of millions of human beings abroad.” In Kansas, the *Emporia Gazette* exalted: “For the first time in human history a major leader of a great republic spoke out specifically, naming names of nations and races,” concluding that the Atlantic Charter must apply to Asia and Africa and bring an end to the colonial system. Similar sentiments appeared in editorials across the country: in Minneapolis, Dallas, Louisville, Spokane, Portland, and many places besides.

Willkie may have been the best-known advocate of racial equality in the war years, but he was hardly alone. People of color, Americans and others, were

particularly concerned with the question of the war's impact on imperialism around the world. In the summer of 1943, just a few months after the publication of *One World*, the African American historian Merze Tate published an essay on Allied war aims and their connection to what she called the “darker peoples” of the world. Tate, the first African American woman to attend the University of Oxford and the first to earn a Ph.D. in international relations from Harvard University, taught at several women's colleges before joining the faculty of historically Black Howard University in Washington, DC, one of the first two women on the History faculty there (Figure 30.2). She began her essay by defining the term “darker peoples” to encompass that large majority of the world's population that was not of European descent. She then traced the history of disillusion among these peoples from the Paris Peace Conference of 1919 through the interwar years. Tate chastised “those Englishmen and Americans” who framed their postwar plans “primarily in terms of Europe, the Western World, the balance of power” and who took for granted a return to the prewar status quo in Africa and Asia, naming the eminent historian E. H. Carr and former US president Herbert Hoover among those whose approach, as outlined in their recent writings, exemplified this problem. Tate then outlined the structures of colonial oppression in Africa, Asia, and Pacific islands



Figure 30.2 Merze Tate (1905–96), international relations scholar and Howard University professor. Radcliffe College Archives.

and its connections to racial oppression within the United States and warned of the danger of an imminent “race and class war” unless the United States and Britain implemented their professed liberationist war aims. Any notion of white racial superiority collapsed in the face of Japanese victories in Asia, she wrote, and as Willkie had written, “the day is gone when men and women of whatever color or creed can consider themselves the superiors of other creeds and colors.” Tate concluded: “In the coming global order there must be freedom for all or freedom for none.”<sup>9</sup>

The broad interest among US intellectuals and policymakers in the war’s impact on race relations at home and abroad was on display in the November 1942 special issue of the progressive magazine *Survey Graphic*. The magazine’s editor, the veteran journalist, social reformer, and progressive activist Paul Kellogg, invited the eminent Howard University philosopher Alain Locke – widely known as the “dean” of the Harlem Renaissance – to serve as guest editor. Titled “Color: Unfinished Business of Democracy,” the issue opened with an introduction by Assistant Secretary of State Adolf A. Berle who, as a member of President Roosevelt’s “brain trust,” gave the venture a semi-official imprimatur. The first part of the issue considered the impact of the war on domestic race relations, with contributors including the head of the NAACP, Walter White, and the civil rights and labor leader A. Philip Randolph. The second part of the issue, however, focused on what the editor called the “Challenge of Color” in the wider world and included several contributors who would go on to lead efforts to implement an anti-imperialist program, such as the Trinidadian historian and future prime minister Eric Williams, who wrote about the Caribbean.

Indeed, expatriate non-white intellectuals living in the United States were prominent in this conversation about race and the war. One was Syud Hossain, a long-time advocate for Indian freedom, who stressed in his essay that Indian support for the war effort would remain half-hearted so long as Indians were “repressed and demoralized” by continued British rule. Krishnalal Shridharani, a young US-educated Indian journalist and independence activist, devoted his 1942 book, *Warning to the West*, to this point. The moment of decision had come, he warned his Western readers: a commitment to liberation and equality that would bring peace, or support for imperialism that would lead to a global race war. Lin Yutang, a Chinese-born writer and translator living then in the United States, issued a similar wartime warning. Having cut his teeth as a public

<sup>9</sup> Merze Tate, “The War Aims of World War I and World War II and Their Relation to the Darker Peoples of the World,” *Journal of Negro Education* 12, no. 3 (Summer 1943): 521–532.

intellectual during the creative ferment of China's New Culture Movement in the 1920s, Lin moved to the United States in the mid-1930s and found success as the author of books that introduced Chinese culture and philosophy to Western readers. However, he broke with the genial tone of his earlier works in a passionate book titled *Between Tears and Laughter*, published in 1943, where he decried Western racism and imperialism and warned that the future of world peace depended on the implementation of the principle that "no nation is better than any other nation."<sup>10</sup>

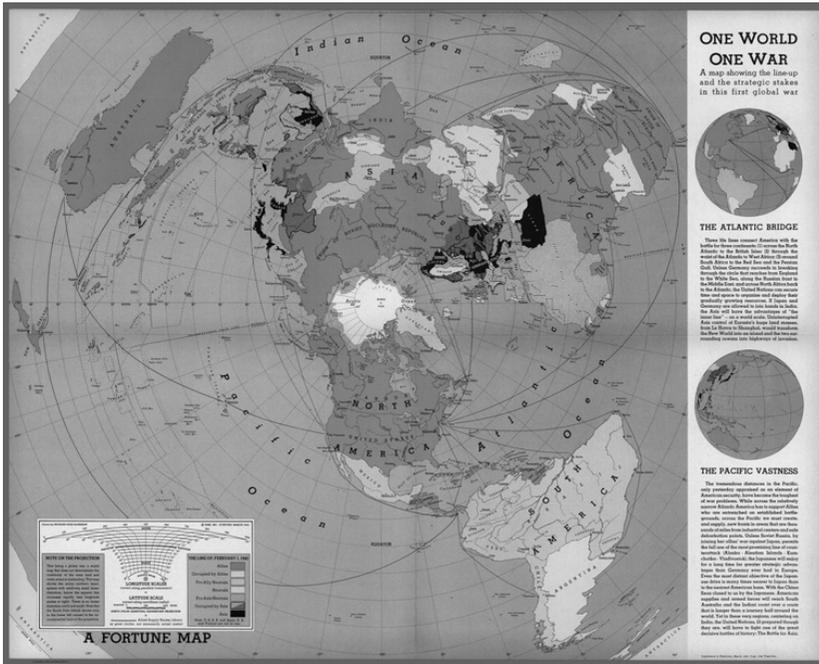
Prominent Americans, too, stressed that not only the success of the Allied war effort but also the construction of a stable postwar order depended on the support of Chinese, Indians, and other non-white peoples. Pearl S. Buck, a novelist child of missionaries to rural China, had won a Pulitzer Prize and then the Nobel Prize for Literature for her bestselling 1931 novel, *The Good Earth*, about Chinese village life in a changing world. Buck was perhaps the best-known popular expert on Asia in the United States at the time, and she made this argument prominently and repeatedly during the war years. Willkie hammered on this argument in his book and public pronouncements. President Roosevelt himself made it, too, writing for example in November 1943 that despite the shortcomings of the Chinese military effort it was "a triumph to have got the ... Chinese in on the Allied side. This will be very useful twenty-five or fifty years hence."<sup>11</sup> This notion, that not only the Allied war effort but the long-term future of American security depended on an alliance with non-white peoples half a world away, was central to reshaping American perspectives on the significance of the Global South.

### Shifting Geographies

During World War II, then, the question of race in international affairs roiled the public conversation in the United States. More Americans than ever before contemplated the possibility of an international order based on racial equality, and they did so more prominently than they had in the past. This conversation intertwined with another development that transformed the American perspective on the world, a wartime revolution in geographical imagination that placed the Global South, and especially the Asian landmass, at the center of the struggle for global power. This shift was exemplified in the large-format map included in the March 1942 issue of *Fortune* magazine,

<sup>10</sup> Lin Yutang, *Between Tears and Laughter* (New York, 1943), 207.

<sup>11</sup> Roosevelt to Lord Louis Mountbatten, November 8, 1943, in *F.D.R.: His Personal Letters, 1928–1945*, edited by Elliott Roosevelt (New York, 1950), 1468.



Map 30.1 *Fortune* magazine’s polar projection showing “One World One War” in March 1942. David Rumsey Map Collection, David Rumsey Map Center, Stanford Libraries.

part of the publishing empire of Henry Luce, who, like Pearl Buck, was a missionary child born and raised in China. The map, titled *One World One War* (Map 30.1) was the creation of Richard Edes Harrison, an architect and illustrator-cum-mapmaker who transformed the cartographic profession in the United States beginning in the late 1930s, pioneering new projections and perspectives just as Americans were searching for ways to better understand a changing world and their role in it.

Harrison’s most consequential decision in the 1942 *Forbes* map was to jettison the standard perspective that had been (and still is) commonly used for world maps, a perspective in which Europe appears at the top-center of the image with the American continent positioned to the west and Asia stretching to the east toward the edge of the map. This perspective, which employed the Mercator projection, dated from the sixteenth century and was well-suited for the age of naval exploration, but Harrison believed that in the new era of air travel it had outlived its usefulness. In his March 1942 map, he

instead used a polar projection, in which the viewer looks at the world as if positioned far above the North Pole. From this perspective, Harrison placed Asia, rather than Europe, at the top-center of the image with Africa to one side and the Americas stretching down toward the bottom of the image.

The traditional Mercator map centered on Europe; it made the Global North appear larger in relation to the Global South than it really was; and it highlighted the Atlantic Ocean, centering it prominently while splitting the Pacific Ocean into two, making North America appear relatively closer to Europe than to Asia, which was placed on the opposite end of the image. Harrison's polar projection reversed all these elements of the traditional Western view of the global space. It centered the image on Asia rather than on Europe; it highlighted the size of Asia, Africa, and South America while making Europe appear as an indistinct appendage of the Asian landmass; and it emphasized the proximity of North America and Asia, showing them directly facing each other across the Arctic Ocean. The explanatory text that accompanied the map instructed readers about the global nature of the war, emphasized the shrinking of distance in the age of air travel and, finally, explicitly highlighted the strategic significance of Asia for Allied victory in the war and for the exercise of global power in the postwar world.

The *Forbes* map, like Willkie's book, was part of a concerted effort among US internationalist elites to convince the American people to embrace a global perspective on the world and the US role in it (Figure 30.3). Willkie opened his book with a description of his flight around the world and noted that there were "no distant points in the world any longer." The people of "the East," he said, are as close to the United States as New York is to California, and therefore their concerns must concern Americans, too.



Figure 30.3 A few years after *Fortune* featured the polar projection map, a rotated version was used in the design of the United Nations logo.



Figure 30.4 Franklin D. Roosevelt examining the globe he received as a Christmas gift in 1942. Hulton Archive/Getty Images.

“Our thinking in the future,” he instructed, “must be world-wide.”<sup>12</sup> President Roosevelt (FDR) shared this view and he, too, worked to convince Americans to take a global perspective, partly by making sure that they saw him doing so himself. One widely circulated wartime image showed FDR staring intently at a massive, 50-inch diameter, 500-pound globe that he received as a Christmas gift from the US Army in 1942 (Figure 30.4). Commissioned by Army Chief of Staff George C. Marshall and reflecting the work of over fifty government geographers, cartographers, and drafters, the globe included some 17,000 place names and was said to be the largest-printed globe ever produced at the time. Americans, the message of this image was, now had to see the world whole.

### Averting a Future Race War

If Willkie was the most popular voice for internationalism in the United States during the war, Roosevelt was the most influential one. Willkie, after

<sup>12</sup> Willkie, *One World*, 2.

all, had gone on his trip as FDR's personal representative and both men shared a resolutely global outlook. Like Willkie, Roosevelt was critical of European imperialism not simply as a moral outrage or as an obstacle to the war effort but as an international order that was unsustainable and inimical to long-term US interests. The president, therefore, wanted to see the orderly but rapid liquidation of European imperial power after the war, certainly in China, India, the Middle East, and Indochina, and eventually in Africa as well. This was for him a strategic goal whose achievement was crucial for building the postwar order that he envisioned, one in which non-white peoples would take part as independent nations rather than as subject populations within imperial formations. Roosevelt had, after all, already committed before the war to granting independence to the Philippines, Washington's main colonial possession in Asia, and he thought other imperial powers ought to follow America's lead. This, he was convinced, was in the interest of the United States as well as in the interest of world peace.

Like Willkie, Merze Tate, Pearl Buck, Lin Yutang, Syud Hossain, and Krishnalal Shridharani, among many others, Roosevelt feared that a failure to integrate the world's non-white peoples in the postwar international order on terms that they could accept would eventually lead to yet another world war, a race war between the West and the rest of humanity. After all, dire warnings about a coming race war with "the East" had been commonplace in North America and Europe since the end of World War I, which some American and European commentators had cast as a civil war within the "white race." That vast conflict, the argument went, dealt a severe blow to the notion of white supremacy as the foundation for international order and augured the rise of other races, who were bound to resist it. This argument appeared perhaps most infamously in American race theorist Lothrop Stoddard's 1920 tract, *The Rising Tide of Color against White World Supremacy*, which predicted the collapse of global white supremacy in the face of rising anticolonialism and industrialization in Asia and beyond. But the view that World War I signaled the decline of the West, which many at the time saw as synonymous with the decline of the white race, was not only the province of racial ideologues. Merze Tate, who called in her 1943 essay for racial equality in international relations, also warned of the danger of a future race war if such equality did not come. In support of this argument she cited not only the writings of Wendell Willkie and Pearl Buck but also, prominently, the German historian Oswald Spengler, whose 1918 tome, *The Decline of the West*, was highly influential in the interwar decades and widely viewed as

prophetic after the collapse of Western economies in the global Depression of the 1930s.

Indeed, the view of World War II itself as a race war was not only a tenet of the German and Japanese war efforts. It was also the way that many Americans saw the conflict, especially the war in the Pacific, and the Japanese were often presented in deeply racist terms in US wartime media and propaganda. Japanese propaganda, in turn, highlighted tropes of Western decadence and decline and called on the peoples of Asia to join Japan in racial solidarity in its war against the white nations, whose imperial projects had humiliated and oppressed them for so long.<sup>13</sup> For Roosevelt, as for other American internationalists of that era, the way to head off the danger of Western civilizational decline and of an even more destructive future race war was to integrate the world's non-white populations – and first among them China and India, who were the most populous and, for many Americans at the time, the most “advanced” non-white nations – into a new, post-imperial world order. Failure to do so would not only give succor to Japanese propaganda and endanger the ongoing war effort, it would also lay the ground for a future of global racial conflict.

One prominent example of Roosevelt's effort to lay the foundation for a postwar order that included non-white peoples was his wartime push to elevate China into the ranks of the great powers. Soon after Pearl Harbor, he advanced the idea that, after the war, a concert of four great powers would take responsibility for keeping the peace of the world. These four powers – the “Four Policemen,” as Roosevelt often called them – included the United States, Britain, the Soviet Union, and China. The president's insistence on including China among his Four Policemen in the face of stiff resistance from both Churchill and Stalin, neither of whom thought China was a great power nor wanted it to be one, eventually led to China's induction as a permanent member of the newly established United Nations Security Council in 1945, a decision that shaped a fundamental aspect of the architecture of postwar international institutions.

Roosevelt's wartime goal of devising a postwar order that brought non-white peoples more fully into international affairs can be glimpsed in numerous components of his wartime strategy. His insistence on elevating China into the ranks of the great powers, his pressure on Churchill to promise Indians a rapid transition to independence, and his bitter criticism of French

<sup>13</sup> The classic work on this theme is John W. Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (New York, 1986).

imperialism in Africa and Indochina were all connected to his goal of liquidating the European empires and recasting the Global South according to the principle of self-determination. So, too, were his unprecedented wartime meetings – meetings he made sure to advertise – with Middle Eastern and African leaders, including the sultan of Morocco, the emperor of Ethiopia, and the kings of Egypt and Saudi Arabia. Each one of these encounters had its own context and involved a specific set of interests but taken together they signaled both Washington's rise to global power and its commitment to treating non-Western leaders as equals.

In one sense, Washington's wartime strategy toward the Global South was a strategy of hegemony, one that reflected the confidence of US leaders in their country's power and their determination to project it globally. If the postwar world was to see the liquidation of the old colonial empires and the integration of former colonial peoples into international society as independent nations, it was an integration that would happen on Washington's terms and that reflected its interests as they saw them. In another sense, however, we can think of this approach as a strategy of accommodation, driven as much by fear of the decline of the West vis-à-vis "the Rest" as by confidence in America's global power. Roosevelt, after all, assumed that the United States would draw down its military after the war, as it had done after all earlier wars, and did not foresee the rise of the massive peacetime military-industrial complex in the United States that did in fact develop after 1950. Given the growing strength of anticolonial sentiments across much of the Global South, sentiments that were bolstered by Japan's victories against European powers and the spread of its race war propaganda, Roosevelt believed that a postwar return to the colonial status quo ante – that is, a restoration of European colonial rule across much of Asia and Africa – was a recipe for disaster. Neither he nor Willkie used Stoddard's phrase, "the rising tide of color." But the idea of relative decline that it implied shaped their vision of the future, and it was partly to accommodate this decline that they crafted their global-integrationist approach and promoted the notion that common ideals – self-determination, the equality of peoples, and international cooperation – could bridge the global color line.

Not everyone within the US foreign policy elite shared this view or agreed with this strategy. Rather, we might think of the range of strategic visions for the postwar world that were prevalent among that elite as running the gamut from a racially exclusionary Anglo-American condominium on one end to Willkie's egalitarian internationalism on the other, with several intermediate positions between them. There were those – Churchill perhaps most

famously but there were prominent Americans who shared his perspective – who saw close cooperation between the United States and Great Britain as the surest foundation of postwar order. They had little faith that non-white peoples could govern themselves and little interest in letting them try. Some were dismissive, as Churchill was, of the possibility of postwar collaboration with Russia or China, viewing the former as an ideological enemy and the latter as weak and corrupt. Others, like the veteran commentator Walter Lippmann, advocated a pragmatic postwar alliance with the Soviet Union and possibly China as well as with Britain. On the other hand, there were those Americans, like the media baron Henry Luce, who had a keen interest in a freer, stronger China but did not necessarily generalize that interest, as Willkie and Roosevelt did, to the Global South as a whole.

These views vied during the war for primacy in US public opinion and, even more, for influence on government policies. Roosevelt himself believed that a more racially inclusive postwar international order comported with US interests and those of world peace, and he took steps to lay the foundations for such an order within the United Nations system. He was also, however, as he liked to describe himself, an expert juggler who balanced the often-contradictory requirements of fighting the war with those of planning for its aftermath, and who had to preserve the alliance with Churchill and Stalin even while trying to advance the independence of India and the promotion of China to great-power status.<sup>14</sup> Still, Roosevelt had faith in the institutions he was putting together to uphold the postwar international order and even hoped, according to his son Elliott, to serve as secretary-general of the United Nations after the end of his final term as president. But FDR died in office in April 1945 and under his successor, Harry S. Truman, the Atlanticist faction among the US governing elite, which prioritized the relationship with Europe over concerns about the future of the Global South, gradually gained the upper hand. By then Willkie, too, was dead, and other racial progressives, such as Henry Wallace, Roosevelt's vice president from 1941 to 1945, were losing influence.

We often think of the early postwar years as a time in which the United States shifted from an alliance with the Soviet Union – an alliance that Roosevelt and others had hoped would form the foundation of postwar peace – to a Cold War with Moscow that quickly escalated into military conflict on the Korean peninsula and a heavily armed (and nuclear) standoff in Europe and elsewhere. But there was another, no less important turn in

<sup>14</sup> Warren F. Kimball, *The Juggler: Franklin Roosevelt as Wartime Statesman* (Princeton, 1991).

Washington's international posture in those years. This was the pivot away from the wartime commitment to the liquidation of the imperial order and support for self-determination of subject peoples. The turn was gradual; after all, both British rule in the Indian subcontinent and Dutch rule in what became Indonesia ended soon after the war, with Washington's support. By the late 1940s, however, as the Cold War escalated, the containment of communism came to trump the advocacy of decolonization. This shift led, most disastrously, to Washington's support for the restoration of French rule in Indochina which would eventually devolve into the bloody, drawn-out American war in Vietnam.<sup>15</sup>

### The Legacy of World War II

Given the long shadow that the Cold War and the Vietnam War still cast over the history of the United States in the world after 1945, it is tempting to conclude that Willkie's anticolonialism and his advocacy of a racially inclusive order in international relations had little impact on the subsequent history of US foreign policy, and therefore to relegate the vision laid out in *One World* to the status of an alternative future that never came to pass. But the vision embedded in Willkie's book, and in Roosevelt's wartime strategy, did become encoded in the institutions that Americans and others designed to manage the postwar world order, important parts of which, *mutatis mutandis*, remain with us today. Among other things, it is that vision that accounts for the position of China as a founding permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, a seat it still holds today. This view also suggests that the rapid postwar decolonization of India and Indonesia was not an incidental byproduct of the war but rather an intentional part of the restructuring of world order that Roosevelt and Willkie (and, of course, Indian and Indonesian nationalists and their supporters around the globe) envisioned. It invites us, too, to see the rise in the 1960s of the so-called "Third World UN" in the wake of the broad decolonization of Asia and Africa not as an unintended consequence of US postwar institution-building but rather as an integral part of its design, indeed a fulfillment of its purpose, even if many Americans failed to recognize it as such at the time, or since.

<sup>15</sup> There are many books on this topic. Two of the best are Mark Atwood Lawrence, *Assuming the Burden: Europe and the American Commitment to War in Vietnam* (Berkeley, 2005); and Fredrik Logevall, *Embers of War: The Fall of an Empire and the Making of America's Vietnam* (New York, 2012).

It can be tempting, too, to dismiss the wartime views of Willkie and others like him as an expression of a peculiarly American strain of naive idealism. As it turned out, however, his expectation that the demands of “subject races” for liberation would profoundly shape the postwar world was right on point. Moreover, historians have recently shown that the international institutions that emerged in the wake of the war – institutions such as the United Nations, the Bretton Woods international monetary system, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights – involved significant input from representatives from the Global South. And though Washington largely turned away from anti-imperialism by the late 1940s, and especially after the Korean War, the view that centered the Global South in the postwar world and the concerns that underlay it, both moral and practical, continued to influence US foreign policy in the ensuing decades. We see it reflected in Truman’s Point Four Program, launched in 1949, which lay the groundwork for US development aid to countries in the Global South. We see it in the responses of the Eisenhower Administration in the 1950s to colonial crises from Suez to Algeria. We see it in the efforts of the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations to woo newly independent African nations in the 1960s. We see it, too, echoed in Nixon’s trip to China and in Carter’s policies toward South Africa in the 1970s. We see, in short, that the American discovery of the Global South in World War II shaped the history of the United States in the world for decades to come.

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