

CHAPTER ONE

Ralph Bunche

African American Intellectual

MARTIN KILSON

I WANT to discuss the analytical trajectory along which the young Ralph Bunche—during his graduate studies in political science at Harvard University in the late 1920s and early 1930s—arrived at an intertwined leftist-and-pragmatic characterization of the political system of twentieth-century European colonial governance in African societies. The main source for my discussion is Ralph Bunche’s Harvard University PhD dissertation titled “French Administration in Togoland and Dahomey” (1934), which was produced under the direction of several Harvard Department of Government professors, including senior adviser Professor Arthur Holcombe and junior adviser Assistant Professor Rupert Emerson.

Bunche’s Leftist-Pragmatist Persona

Bunche’s PhD dissertation was unique insofar as it was the first political science dissertation at an American university that was based on fieldwork in African societies. To my knowledge, the only other American political science scholar who, by the 1930s, had preceded Ralph Bunche in undertaking on-the-ground research relating to colonial governance in Africa was Raymond Leslie Buell. As an assistant professor in Harvard’s Department of Government in the 1920s, Buell conducted fieldwork in a large swath of African colonial territories, which resulted in two classic volumes titled *Native Administration in Africa* (1927).

As I'll point out later, through several analytical stages in Bunche's dissertation on European imperialist rule in Africa his analysis fluctuates between Marxist and pragmatist perspectives, with the pragmatist perspective eventually prevailing. The roots of Bunche's Marxist perspective were associated with his quest as a second-generation member of the twentieth-century African American intelligentsia to fathom the dynamics of racial-caste marginalization of peoples of African descent in American society. The sources of Bunche's pragmatist perspective were rooted in the political science curriculum Bunche experienced (a curriculum fashioned by liberal political science scholars like Arthur Holcombe, John Gaus, Raymond Leslie Buell, and Rupert Emerson), and also rooted in the intellectual dynamics Bunche experienced as a Harvard graduate student. Several progressive-oriented African Americans were graduate student peers of Ralph Bunche, among whom were John P. Davis (a Harvard Law School student), Robert Weaver (an economics student), and John Hope Franklin (a history student).

American Aspects

As those of you know who have read the writings of John Kirby on the black American intelligentsia in the New Deal era, William Banks's seminal probe of the quest for black responsibility among the twentieth-century black intelligentsia, or the marvelous biographies of Ralph Bunche by Brian Urquhart and Charles Henry, the ideological and political attributes of the young Ralph Bunche were on the left of the American political spectrum. And Bunche shared this intellectual trait with other black intellectuals during the years between the two world wars. Among others, that second-generation group of twentieth-century black professionals with whom Bunche shared a leftist worldview include John Aubrey Davis Sr., political scientist on the faculty of Lincoln University; John P. Davis, NAACP labor lawyer; St. Clair Drake, anthropologist on the faculty of Dillard University; Langston Hughes, poet; Thurgood Marshall, NAACP civil rights lawyer; A. Philip Randolph, head of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters; Ira Reid, sociologist on the faculty of Fisk University; Robert Weaver, economist for the National Urban League; and economist Abram Harris, psychologist Kenneth Clark, civil rights lawyers Charles Houston and James Nabrit Jr., and sociologists E. Franklin Frazier and Doxey Wilkerson, all on the faculty of Howard University.

Bunche shared another key intellectual-formation trait with his leftist black intellectual peers. They all stood on the broad radical-democrat shoulders of William Edward Burghardt DuBois—that great trailblazer of intellectual progressivism among the early-twentieth-century African American intelligentsia. Influenced by the great Alexander Crummell of the American Negro Academy and of Wilberforce University, DuBois fashioned and propagated what I call a black-ethnic commitment orientation for early twentieth-century black intellectuals. Writing in 1903 in his great tome *The Souls of Black Folk*, DuBois observed that black-ethnic commitment among the evolving twentieth-century black intelligentsia “must insist continually . . . that voting is necessary to modern manhood, that color discrimination [racism] is barbarism, and that black boys need education as well as white boys.”

For DuBois, then, the black intellectual committed to his own people should be engaged in facilitating the development of a modern social system and citizenship rights for the African American working class. He argued that black intelligentsia who failed to advance these goals were “shirk[ing] a heavy responsibility,—a responsibility to themselves, a responsibility to the struggling masses, a responsibility to the darker races of men whose future depends so largely on this American [Negro] experiment.”¹

The young Ralph Bunche, however, tended to locate an independent turf for himself on the shoulders of DuBois. The young Bunche’s leftist thinking exhibited a firm belief in the Marxist view of the Western working class as a multicultural radical force. Accordingly, in the 1930s, when a major section of Bunche’s black leftist peers were fashioning civil-rights activist organizations to challenge white supremacist practices such as not hiring blacks in white-owned businesses located in urban black communities (in New York, Cleveland, Chicago, Richmond, Philadelphia, Washington, D.C., and elsewhere), Bunche did not join this Don’t Buy Where You Can’t Work movement.

The organization was called the New Negro Alliance (NNA), organized in Washington, D.C., in 1933 and active until 1940. Its leading members included John Aubrey Davis, Belford Lawson, lawyer; James Nabrit, Albert DeMond, and William Hastie, civil rights lawyers; Elmer Henderson, lawyer for the National Urban League; H. Naylor Fitzhugh, accounting professor at Howard University; and Charles Houston, civil rights lawyer and dean of Howard Law School, among other Washington-based black professionals.

Bunche's kind of American Marxist faith in white working-class radicalism meant that Bunche wanted black civil rights activism to be organized and conducted in a manner that accommodated the white working class. In Bunche's vision, therefore, it was a mistake for the NNA to base its antiracist activity primarily among black citizens. As John Aubrey Davis informed me of the alliance's relationship with the young Ralph Bunche in the mid-1930s: "Bunche was never a member, only a critic. . . . Bunche attacked the NNA because he feared the division of the [American] labor movement on the basis of race. He saw the only good in the organization was that it taught public protest, solidarity, and direct action."²

Other 1930s true-believer Marxist-oriented black intellectuals adopted Bunche's independent posture toward civil rights organizations based on black community mobilization, such as E. Franklin Frazier and Abram Harris, each of whom kept organizational distance from Washington's New Negro Alliance. Interestingly, neither Bunche, Frazier, nor Harris fashioned and tested an alternative civil rights activist organization with important white working-class participation. And for good reason: the dominant body of white working-class Americans in the era between the two world wars clung to racist values and practices. The white working class made this brutally clear during those seemingly highly patriotic World War II years. It violently and viciously attacked the courageous efforts of Bunche's 1930s leftist peers like James Nabrit, Charles Houston, John Aubrey Davis, George Crockett, Elmer Henderson, Clarence Mitchell, Robert Weaver, and others who became major federal-government technocrats administering the fair-labor practices of Roosevelt's Fair Employment Practices Committee (created by executive order) at local levels in the industrial North and South. White workers fomented many violent and vicious riots against black FEPC officials' courageous efforts to gain wartime industrial jobs for African American workers.

African Aspects

The interesting intertwining of leftist and pragmatist elements in the mindset of the young Ralph Bunche stands out in his writings on the nineteenth- and twentieth-century European colonial system in Africa. His main works on this subject were his Harvard doctoral dissertation, "French Administration in Togoland and Dahomey," and a small but very important book, *A World View of Race*.

Bunche's leftist-pragmatist persona was rooted in the values and norms of the Enlightenment, which had delineated the groundwork of the knowledge revolution and the economic revolution that fashioned the European nation-state. The young Bunche considered this extraordinary metamorphosis out of the feudalistic era a momentous opportunity for advancing humanitarian and egalitarian processes for all people, regardless of race, religion, gender, and political origins. Writing in *A World View of Race*, just two years after completing his dissertation, Bunche embraces the Enlightenment legacy:

The concept of human equality and the doctrine of natural rights were cradled in the modern Western World. These ideals embodied the political promise of the future; indeed, they formed the warp and woof of the most modern political institutions. There was no limit to the promise which such doctrines held forth to peoples and classes which had been abused and oppressed for centuries. The "civilized" West of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries became a great testing ground for these principles which were counted upon to free the great masses of people from suffering and bondage.³

This respect for values and structures of progress inspired by the Enlightenment was not, however, uncritical or one-dimensional. Quite the contrary. The young Bunche had a naturally critical mindset, and thus a gift for *realpolitik*. If not fully present at Bunche's initial encounter with a new idea, policy, or system, this critical mindset would nevertheless soon surface, lending a pragmatic bent to Bunche's thinking and behavior. This, then, is what I mean when I refer to the "pragmatist" feature of the young Ralph Bunche. Although he embraced the generic importance of the Enlightenment legacy, what might be called the young Ralph Bunche's gut-level sense of *realpolitik* regulated his fidelity to the European Enlightenment legacy. Accordingly, for the young Bunche the dynamics of the real world required skepticism toward one's fealty to the Enlightenment legacy. This, I think, is precisely what Bunche had in mind when he writes in *A World View of Race*,

In the practical history of our modern world, the ideal doctrine of the "equality of man" . . . has fallen upon hard times. True, we continue to pay lip service to the "sacred" concept of the "natural rights of man" and its international corollary, the "rights of people."

But the dominant peoples and powerful nations usually discover that such concepts cut sharply against their own economic and political interests. So with these favored groups, who know well how to use them for their own profit, such doctrines come to assume a strange role. (1)

This theme of tension between ideals and the realities of power engaged the young Bunche throughout the 1930s. He entertained an especially strong preference for what might be called the cosmopolitan side of Enlightenment values—so much so that in *A World View of Race* (1936) Bunche even describes possible “cosmopolitan-type” patterns of class conflict evolving among oppressed groups influenced by what he called “the principles of equality and humanitarianism advocated by [Marxist rulers in] the Soviet Union.” Whatever their ideological roots, democratic or authoritarian, it seems that for Bunche class patterns trumped ethnic or race patterns when it came to political mobilization. As the young Bunche put it,

If the oppressed racial groups, as a result of desperation and increasing understanding, should be attracted by the principles of equality and humanitarianism advocated by the Soviet Union (and it is both logical and likely that they will) then racial conflict will become intensified. In such case, however, racial conflict will be more directly identified with class conflict, and the oppressed racial groups may win the support of . . . previously prejudiced working-class groups within the dominant [white or European] population. (36)

There was, then, a perpetual pushing and pulling between the ideal and realpolitik elements in the young Bunche’s intellectual metamorphosis, meaning that Bunche-as-political-actor was continually shifting between leftist and bourgeois-pragmatist political contours. Above all, this dynamic pervaded Bunche’s intellectual posture toward the European imperialistic mode of transferring the capitalist political economy to African societies.

Bunche’s Cost-Benefit View of Colonial Rule in Africa

In Bunche’s prize-winning Harvard dissertation we gain a thorough understanding of the interplay of contending leftist and bourgeois-

pragmatist patterns in his posture toward the impact of European colonial rule in nineteenth- and twentieth-century African societies. One might posit two stages in Bunche's interaction with the politics of modern colonial rule and the global implications of that politics: the political analyst stage (1930s to mid-1940s) and the crisis manager-diplomat stage (late 1940s through 1960s). Throughout the political analyst stage, Bunche's perception of colonial rule's metamorphosis in African societies vacillates between emphasizing the price exacted by colonial rule (his leftist outlook) and emphasizing the Western-type objective advantages transmitted by colonial rule (his bourgeois-pragmatist outlook). A critically candid young Bunche characterized colonial rule in his most assertively leftist published work, *A World View of Race*. Here he observes that the European imperialist process from the late nineteenth century onward crudely categorized the globe as either "advanced" or "backward" peoples, the latter being viewed as helplessly underdeveloped and incapable of keeping in step with the modernizing Western industrial societies. The young Bunche saw such theoretical classification of the world's peoples as mere deceit: an attempt, he wrote, "to mask [Europe's] cruelly selfish motives under high-sounding titles" (38)

Aware that the rhetoric of power is seldom the reality of power, the young Bunche recognized that the powercentric essence of colonial rule in Africa was plain enough:

Powerful industrial nations have raped Africa under the false pretense of shouldering "the white man's burden" . . . ; to convert [Africans] to the Christian religion and to expose them to the benefits of an advanced European culture. . . . [However,] the backward peoples bitterly learn that the "blessings" consist of brutal suppression, greedy economic exploitation of the natural and human resources of a country which is no longer their own, forced labor, the introduction of previously unknown diseases, vice and social degeneration. (ibid.)

Now, we can gain another perspective on the young Bunche's interface with colonial rule in Africa if we ask, why colonial rule in Africa in the first place? The young Bunche's two mindsets—the leftist and the pragmatist—responded in different yet overlapping ways to this query. In the 1930s, Bunche's leftist mindset resorts to rather conventional Marxist-Leninist wisdom to illuminate this query:

Imperialism is an international expression of capitalism. The rapid growth and expansion resulting from the development of industrialism and capitalism led the peoples of industrial countries to seek raw materials and new markets all over the world. This led to more general group contact and, because of the base motives of imperialism, to more widespread racial conflict . . . the accumulation of “surplus capital” and the resultant demand for overseas investments, all tended to force European imperialist nations to invade completely the African continent. (*World*, 40–42)

When the same question about colonial rule in Africa is addressed by the young Bunche’s bourgeois-pragmatist mindset, the response is more reflective. That is, it is less ideologically assured, evincing less operational closed-endedness and thus entertaining some operational open-endedness toward colonial capitalist metamorphosis in Africa:

Perhaps its [colonial rule’s] greatest significance is found in its possibilities as a fine proving ground in human relationships—social, economic and political. Here is one place in a troubled world where mistakes previously committed may be corrected, where, indeed, a new and better civilization may be cultivated, through the deliberate application of human intelligence and understanding.⁴

Here the young Bunche’s bourgeois-pragmatist mindset articulates the belief that, despite its crudely self-serving, wealth-expanding, and power-enhancing purposes, the colonial state in Africa might also entertain enough flexibility and creativity in form and ideas to permit institutional experimentation, in Bunche’s words, to forge “a new and better civilization . . . through the deliberate application of human intelligence and understanding.” But Bunche also understood that for colonial rule in Africa to make what might be called this “momentous political moral transformation” (the replacement of colonial capitalist authoritarianism with responsible and accountable governance), European colonial elites must recognize the generic salience of Africans as human beings. As Bunche put it in his dissertation, “French Administration in Togoland and Dahomey”: “After all, great though her natural resources are, the vital wealth of Africa is in the humanity that dwells within the sweltering continent. . . . The solution of the problem of the future of Africa is to be found in the determination of

the eventual relationships that will prevail between the Africans and [European] peoples” (“French,” 2ff.).

Shaping Accountable Colonialism through an African Elite

Now, in regard to the issue of a leftist black American intellectual arriving at a pragmatist outlook toward the possibility of achieving democratic-type spheres within racist colonial rule in Africa seventy years ago—nearly four generations ago—the young Bunche fashioned for himself a shrewd analytical perspective on how to remedy what his leftist mindset defined as the wealth-and-power-grubbing character of European colonial rule in Africa. In his Harvard dissertation, I suggest that Bunche employed what might be called a twofold system-remedial perspective. The first part of this system focused on the role of the small stratum of educated Africans—the budding black African bourgeoisie, let us say. The second focused on the process of regime accountability within colonial rule, which is to say, on the possibility of expanding participatory practices under colonial rule, such as legislative councils in British African countries, local administrative districts, or cantons, in French African countries, and the role of international organizations like the League of Nations and its so-called mandate system for supervising former German African colonies.

At the same time, however, the young Bunche’s bid for a pragmatist perspective toward racist colonial rule in Africa was continually checkmated by his leftist mindset. Thus what I call his quest for a system-remedial perspective was cautious—cautious but brave. As Bunche put it in his dissertation, “Though the time when the West African will be able, in the words of the League [of Nations] Covenant, ‘to stand alone in the strenuous conditions of the modern world’ is probably many generations removed from the present day, he should be serving an apprenticeship in the art of self-rule under the tutelage of his immediate [colonial] rulers. . . . It must be made possible for him now to acquire the experience and develop the leadership essential to good government everywhere” (388).

As a black American leftist intellectual, the young Bunche was quite certain that the governing precepts at the foundation of colonial rule in Africa were both mistaken (as ideas out of the European democratic tradition) and unworkable or crisis prone (as political blueprints). Asking himself, “By what devices is the African governed?”

Bunche responded, “Two extremes of policy have been applied to him. The one, based entirely on greed, regarded him as essentially inferior, sub-human, without a soul, and fit only for slavery. The other, based entirely on sentiment, regarded him as a man and brother, extended to him the equalitarian principles of the French Revolution and attempted to ‘Europeanize’ him overnight. Both were unscientific and devoted little attention to the needs and desires of the Africans” (*World*, 46).

Not only were the governing precepts of colonial rule in Africa flawed, they never even contemplated an endgame scenario. For the young Bunche, the importance of an endgame scenario was that it predisposes steps and stages—however minuscule—through which a terminus in colonial rule is reached. Anything less than this was, in Bunche’s analytical schema, a political recipe for systemic confusion and crisis. As Bunche wrote in *A World View of Race*, “French and English alike are in Africa primarily for economic exploitation and not for motives of philanthropy. . . . Both powers intend to retain control of their respective possessions and their subject populations indefinitely.” Accordingly, the young Bunche firmly chastises European colonial rulers for what might be called power-class myopia: “England and France [are] not thinking in terms of native independence or self-government for the West Africans” (47).

However, whenever the European colonial rulers arrived at a system-remedial perspective owing to internal or external crises, Bunche believed that that would spark serious thinking in terms of endgame scenarios. In his understanding of endgame dynamics, the young Bunche was keenly perceptive. For by 1933 fascism reigned in Europe—especially in Italy, Germany, Austria, and Spain—and the war that was required to smash fascism involved massive system-remedial implications for European colonial rule in Africa.

It was, of course, the optimistic, pragmatist facet of the young Bunche’s intellectual persona that sparked his understanding that an educated African cadre under colonial rule would be a necessary feature of the emergence of endgame scenarios. Bunche observed that this development must “show a definite program for native development which will lead the native toward an ultimate specific political and social status. . . . The only sound objective of African colonial policies should be to prepare the Africans for membership in the community of the civilized world” (*World*, 46–47).

Accordingly, in what I call Bunche's system-remedial analytical perspective, he recognized a crucial reformist conveyor-belt role under colonial rule for the fledgling African educated class. In his dissertation, Bunche informs us that the embryonic African educated stratum that he observed during his fieldwork in West Africa in the early 1930s was composed of all notable members of the native community—chiefs, wealthy merchants, government clerks, members of [traditional] village councils of elders (“French,” 96). Furthermore, the young Bunche gave French colonial rulers the edge in regard to recognizing a role for the embryonic African educated sector in a system-remedial process: “Beyond doubt, the French know the native better, they come into closer contact with native life, while the English stand aloof” (129).

In his more assertively leftist *A World View of Race*, Bunche also writes favorably (though perhaps naively) about the French cultural openness toward Negro peoples as compared to either the British or white Americans:

There is no color line in France and none in her colonies, though individual instances of prejudice and discrimination may be encountered in both places. The French attitude is strikingly evident on the boats of the French lines. . . . Here there is to be found a genial cordiality among the French and their elite associates of the darker races. . . . The genuine warmth of the association between these groups of upper-class black and white, the apparent lack of any race consciousness on the part of either, is quite startling when contrasted with similar groups on board the English and German vessels engaged in the same [Africa] service. On the latter most of the practices of segregation and aloofness common to the United States, its attitude toward its Negro population, are in evidence. (52)

Moreover, in numerous sections of his dissertation, Bunche discusses what he viewed as extensive efforts by French colonial rulers to cultivate access for a select cadre of Africans to posts in the governing regime. These posts included seats on municipal councils and on functional commissions, such as water commissions, school boards, and sanitation boards. Bunche also identified what he called “subaltern positions” in central government departments, representation in decision-making colonial assemblies, and even a few top-level positions in Paris relating to French colonial rule.⁵

Aspects of Bunche's Discourse on Endgame Scenarios

Throughout his writings on African affairs in the 1930s, the young Bunche was of several minds in regard to the role of the African educated elite in transforming colonial rule. In his dissertation, he writes, "The formation of the [African educated] elites is at once the most cardinal and the most debatable point in the present French policy. . . . The members of this elite above all others are to be bound to the French state and, through absorption of French culture, will become *assimilés* [assimilated]" (96).

Put another way, while on the one hand Bunche's pragmatist mindset led him to recognize the system-remedial role that the embryonic African educated stratum could play under colonial rule, on the other hand his leftist mindset would not let him be uncritical about this important issue. Indeed, Bunche even speculates that "the presence of an elite group in the native community . . . may be a condition viciously inimical to the best interests of the [African] masses" ("French," 97).

The young Bunche's dilemma in regard to the potential system-remedial role of the embryonic African educated elite became a testy issue in his dissertation. Referring to an anxiety on his part about "the [educated] elite native [becoming] a black Frenchman" (98), Bunche enters a delicate discussion of a leading highly educated Senegalese who functioned as a provincial administrator and in Paris as undersecretary for the colonies. That Senegalese was the famous Blaise Diagne. Bunche was disdainful about what he viewed as Diagne's hedonistic display of the wealth and influence he derived from his connection to French colonial rule. (Such display marks an African predatory-elite pattern whereby political power and wealth expansion are intertwined, a situation that has tragically plagued African ruling elites during the past forty years of independent African nation states). From the vantage point of his leftist mindset, the young Bunche reflected harshly on Diagne's career as a top-level Senegalese administrator under French colonial rule: "It is a matter of serious doubt that the celebrated Senegalese Diagne now has much honest concern with things African extending beyond the African bric-a-brac of his elaborate and ornate Paris apartment. Already many of his native constituents have hurled the epithet 'traitor' at him" ("French," 131ff.).⁶

I myself have been intellectually sympathetic to the crucial analytical role played by the young Bunche's leftist mindset in tilting

Bunche toward the negative features of his keen pragmatist recognition that by the 1930s European colonial rule in Africa required the preparation of endgame scenarios. It was, I suggest, this leftist facet of Bunche's analysis of European colonial rule in Africa that led him to emphasize the crucial importance for future independent African nation states of autonomous African elites, or what today, in the era of the postindependent African state, we would refer to as non-neocolonialized African elites.

I consider it fascinating that the young Ralph Bunche had the kind of keen and deep perceptiveness about the cross-cultural interplay of the corrupt, underside values and patterns among European elites on the one hand and the embryonic modern African educated elite on the other. Bunche was also keenly perceptive about modernizing development patterns in colonial African countries that would assist what might be called the corporateness of the African educated elite. That is, modernizing elements would minimize the dysfunctional impact of deep-rooted fissiparous cultural and ethnic forces among the emergent African-educated elite—fissiparous forces that we know today, nearly a half century after decolonization in Africa, have contributed tragically to too many “failed states” in Africa. As Bunche puts it in his dissertation, “Tribal lines are being cut across as a result of improved means of communication and travel, and tribal authority has been broken down deliberately by the French. This may prove to be a blessing in disguise to the native, however, for it will make it possible for him to ultimately present a united front in his demands for an increasing share in the control of his own country. This he could not do so long as tribal rivalries, jealousies, and isolation persisted” (422).

In these perceptive and profound formulations on the possible impact of modernizing elements under colonial rule on future independent African countries, the young Bunche shrewdly anticipated by thirty years Karl Deutsch's famous social-mobilization thesis for explaining post-World War II nationalist movements in the non-Western world.⁷ In 1936 Bunche also anticipated Immanuel Wallerstein's famous capitalist world-system analysis: “The African native today is comparable with the peasants and workmen of England and France of a century ago, and with other workers and peasants today in less advanced countries of the modern world.”⁸



Finally, in one observation on the keen analytical perception exhibited in the young Ralph Bunche's writings on colonial rule in Africa, I take issue with him. At the end of what I term Bunche's endgame-scenario analysis of colonial rule in Africa, he clearly anticipated the post-World War II African nationalist movements, although to my knowledge he never actually penned the words *nationalist movement*. However, toward the end of his 1934 PhD dissertation, Bunche is fully aware of what he calls variously "troublesome" movements and "weapons of effective resistance": "The [colonial state] cannot limit the experience and sophistication which inevitably come to the native along with the exploitative forces of Western civilization; these lead him to desire independence and self-assertion, making him 'troublesome' to the [colonial] administrators. . . . [Educated Africans] have news of the powerful weapons of effective resistance to abuses, employed by the oppressed in the Western world" (421).

Among the "powerful weapons . . . of resistance" Bunche refers to in his dissertation, he mentions "the boycott" and "the general strike," all of which, he suggests, could be aggregated through "a strong movement of passive resistance [that] could make the white man's presence in West Africa futile" (423). Of course, it was precisely this transnational flow of rebellious political ideas and methods that in the post-World War II era proved fundamental to the continentwide upheaval of African nationalism.

Interestingly, while toward the end of *A World View of Race* the young Bunche refers to the "Pan-African nationalists," he does so in a snide manner. Bunche entertained a gut-level antipathy to this mode of educated African leadership political mobilization against colonial rule. He considered the "Pan-African nationalism" methodology rooted in dysfunctional manipulation of ethnic and racial patterns. Accordingly, the young Bunche was downright contemptuous of the educated African leadership associated with "Pan-African nationalism": "There are those, like the Pan-African nationalists, who feel that the darker peoples of the world must band together and gird their black and yellow loins for the oncoming world conflict between the races. The stakes in this little fracas are supposed to be world supremacy" (*World*, 92).

Shaped by his bourgeois-pragmatist mindset, Bunche's put-down perspective toward Pan-African nationalists was off the mark and overly dogmatic. In fact, Bunche exaggerated and distorted the character and purposes of the Pan-Africanist sector among the emergent African

educated leadership, and as far as I can determine he never produced the names of specific personalities who propagated what he viewed as a hyperxenophobic Pan-Africanist discourse.

Formulators of Pan-Africanist discourse in anglophone colonial Africa such as the brilliant Fanti barrister J. E. Casely Hayford in the Gold Coast—now Ghana—who helped found the National Congress of British West Africa in the early 1920s, were decidedly not purveyors of xenophobic or race-chauvinist nationalism.⁹ Hayford's nonxenophobic or pluralistic approach to Pan-Africanist discourse is apparent in his seminal contribution to this discourse—*Ethiopia Unbound: Studies in Race Emancipation* (1911), which presumably the young Ralph Bunche didn't consult. Nor were contributors to Pan-Africanist discourse among the early twentieth-century educated African stratum in South Africa who organized the African National Congress, purveyors of xenophobic or race-chauvinist nationalism.¹⁰

In short, the young Ralph Bunche failed to understand that while no doubt a potential existed among the emergent African educated leadership for hyperxenophobic uses of Pan-Africanist discourse (as, say, in the hands of President Robert Mugabe in the postcolonial Republic of Zimbabwe), a potential also existed for systemically functional applications of Pan-Africanist discourse. This was the case in the 1920s to 1940s with the Gold Coast's and Nigeria's National Congress of British West Africa, and also with Ghana's first president, Kwame Nkrumah. It was similarly the case with the African National Congress in the Republic of South Africa, especially in the postcolonial government fashioned by its first African president, Nelson Mandela.

Put another way, the young Ralph Bunche's put-down perspective toward Pan-Africanism as an anticolonial mobilization methodology was misguided. He failed to grasp the valid nonxenophobic political mobilization role of Pan-Africanist discourse, or what I sometimes call black-peoplehood mobilization discourse in the African colonial situation. Bunche's preference for a kind of hyperpragmatic rationalism on the part of the emergent educated African power contenders under colonial rule was a version of wide-eyed idealism too removed from the oppressive specificity of the imperialist process in many parts of Africa.

Be that as it may, Bunche's particular critique of the Pan-Africanist anticolonial mobilization methodology was a minor analytical weakness in his brilliant dissection of the intricately dialectical character of

colonial rule in late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century Africa. The young Ralph Bunche's Harvard dissertation was a remarkable analytical achievement. It exhibited his incredibly unique skill at conceptually intertwining the leftist mindset and the bourgeois-pragmatist mindset that constituted his intellectual persona. Above all, a keenly humanitarian and egalitarian worldview was fundamental to the young Ralph Bunche's masterful analytical contributions to social science knowledge of colonial rule in Africa.

Notes

This chapter is taken from the keynote address for the UCLA Globalization Research Center–Africa conference commemorating the centenary of the birth of Ralph J. Bunche.

1. W. E. B. DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (Chicago: A. C. McClurg, 1903), 54–55.
2. See Martin Kilson, "John Aubrey Davis: Black Intellectual as Activist and Technocrat," chap. 11 of *The Making of Black Intellectuals: Studies on the African-American Intelligentsia* (forthcoming).
3. Ralph J. Bunche, *A World View of Race* (Washington, DC: Associates in Negro Folk Education, 1936), 1. Hereafter cited in text as *World*.
4. Ralph J. Bunche, "French Administration in Togoland and Dahomey" (PhD diss., Harvard University, 1934), 2. Hereafter cited in text as "French."
5. Bunche treats attributes of the emergent African educated elite stratum in the following sections of his 1930s writings: "French," 95ff., 103ff., 318ff., 388ff.; *World*, 46–49, 50–56, 57–65.
6. See also 95–105.
7. Karl Deutsch, *Nationalism and Social Communication: An Inquiry into the Foundations of Nationality* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1953).
8. Bunche, *World View*, 63. See Wallerstein's analysis in *The Political Economy of Contemporary Africa*, ed. Peter Gutkind and Immanuel Wallerstein (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1986).
9. I probe this development in Martin Kilson, "The National Congress of British West Africa," in *Protest and Power in Black Africa*, ed. Robert Rotberg and Ali Mazrui (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970).
10. For a contemporary variant of the young Bunche's view of Pan-Africanist or black-peoplehood political mobilization by a black analyst, see K. A. Appiah, *In My Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), chap. 1, "Invention of Africa," chap. 2, "Illusions of Race." I present a critique of Appiah in *The Transformation of Black American Intellectuals* (forthcoming). A version of this critique will appear in a forthcoming issue of *The Black Scholar*, "The Black Rejectionist Intellectual: Critique of K. A. Appiah's *In My Father's House*."

CHAPTER TWO

Ralph Bunche and the Dawn of Africanist Scholarship

DAVID ANTHONY

THE ACHIEVEMENTS of Ralph Johnson Bunche can scarcely be contained within the covers of the volumes that have sought to treat his life and work. Bunche occupied several divergent realms at once, as a scholar of modern social thought, movements, and change, all of which drew him to late-colonial Africa. Experience gained through two periods of fieldwork, one in eastern Africa and another in southern Africa, helped give texture to a nascent discipline. He would be neither the first nor the last scion of the African diaspora to contribute keenly to this intellectual endeavor. Even as his world was fraught with profound contradictions, it was also a world in which identities and relationships, especially between Old and New World Africans, wrestled with institutional ignorance, neglect, and invisibility. Bunche became among the first Africa scholars whose own ability to straddle these continents, crossing water in his own right, helped to solidify a field.

The Accidental Africanist

Bunche was steered into African studies by Edwin R. Embree of the Rosenwald Fund in 1932 to prevent him from pursuing a potentially radical study comparing racial mixing in Brazil and the United States with a view toward understanding differences between two groups of African-derived peoples.¹ Instead, Bunche viewed two French-run