

Decolonizing Global Studies

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Abstract and Keywords

This chapter argues for the need to decolonize global studies, particularly as it is emerging as a new field of inquiry in the Global North. This entails decolonizing the basic building blocks that have dominated the past three centuries of Western thought. For global studies scholars, this means decentering the dominance of a White privileged world view that naturally assumes that such a world view leads the rest at home and abroad. It also means actively seeking to understand social and political relations from the standpoint of non-Western communities. The chapter argues for the need to decolonize Western thinking precisely because histories of marginalization and being “cut out” of the positive impacts of global capitalism have long been the experience among many non-Western peoples of the world..

Keywords: capitalism, globalization, postcolonialism, decolonization, postnationalism, pluralism, knowledge production, indigeneity, human rights, global governance

IN the wake of the 2016 US presidential election, there has been much hand-wringing and angst among the center-left trying to understand just what happened and why they were so taken by surprise with the results. Unfortunately, the genuine disbelief in the election results is reminiscent of the public reaction voiced after the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. Back then, many US citizens asked, “How could *they* hate us so much?” whereas now the question is “How could *we* hate ourselves so much?” Although there are many complicated issues at play, the general consensus seems to be that globalization and the forces of global capital have left many White middle-class Americans impoverished and feeling marginalized. This is an entirely new experience for these constituencies (although not so new for non-Whites whose legacies of immigration and former slavery have forced many to exist on the margins of society for centuries).¹ Despite the differences of voting across race and ethnic lines, according to the French economist Thomas Piketty (2016), “Trump’s victory is primarily due to the explosion in economic and geographic inequality in the United States over several decades and the inability of successive governments to deal with this” (see also Rasmus 2016). As argued by Cosmin Cerel (2016), along with many others, “We should have seen this [Trump] coming” (p. 2).

This chapter explores why scholars associated with the field of global studies were surprised by the results of the US presidential election and why there may be a need to decolonize the field as it is emerging, particularly in the Global North. After all, global scholars are acutely aware of “globalization and its discontents,” to borrow from the title of Joseph Stiglitz’s (2002) groundbreaking book. In this chapter, I ask, What does this failure to anticipate support for Donald Trump suggest with respect to the field of global studies, particularly as it evolves in the United States? How is it possible to ensure that global studies remains relevant and “real” in the sense that it does not become an intellectual arena of primarily privileged White scholars cut off from unexpected political activism and social movements that they fail to see let alone comprehend? In other words, what steps can be taken so that in the future scholars in the Global North may not be so taken by surprise about what is happening as a result of unfolding global processes manifesting on their own domestic fronts?

(p. 252) This chapter responds to this question by arguing for the need to decolonize global studies—to decolonize the basic building blocks that have dominated the past three centuries of Western thought (Mutua and Swadener 2011; Santos 2007, 2014). Writes Oliver Stuenkel (2016), “Our Western-centric world view thus leads us to under-appreciate not only the role non-Western actors have played in the past and play in contemporary international politics, but also the constructive role they are likely to play in the future.” For global studies scholars, this means decentering the dominance of a White privileged world view that naturally assumes that such a world view leads the rest at home and abroad. It also means actively seeking to understand social and political relations from the standpoint of non-Western communities, particularly the standpoints of postcolonial and Indigenous peoples who globally constitute a much larger population than Euro-Americans. I argue for the need to decolonize Western thinking precisely because histories of marginalization and being “cut out” of the positive impacts of global capitalism have long been the experience among many non-Western peoples of the world. Learning from these alternative subject positions and experiences offers a way to rethink the current phase of globalization as it impacts those living in the Global North and the Global South. At the very least, it highlights that “thinking globally” is not a singular practice but, rather, highly diverse and pluralistic, encompassing ways of thinking that scholars clinging to a Western-centric worldview perhaps cannot yet imagine (Darian-Smith 2015a).

The decolonizing of Western knowledge could and should be made on many fronts, but this chapter focuses on what I consider are three of major significance: (1) the need to pluralize histories, (2) the need to depoliticize human rights, and (3) and the need to re-politicize global capitalism. In most scholarship produced within mainstream academia, these three fronts would typically be analyzed separately, but I want to push their mutually constitutive interdependencies as they intertwine over decades and even centuries.

I divide the chapter into three parts and begin in the first part with a discussion about decentering modernist frameworks. In the second part, I look back in time to the work of the African American postcolonial scholar W. E. B. Du Bois, whose insights revealed the

deep interconnections between crises of humanity wrought by global capitalism in an earlier nineteenth-century colonial era of open markets and laissez-faire capitalism. Then in the third part, I explore current Indigenous activism surrounding Standing Rock in North Dakota as an illustration of contemporary human rights abuses and conflict wrought by neoliberal capitalism. Both Du Bois and Standing Rock underscore the need to decolonize conventional ways of presenting the past as an unfolding narrative of Western nations' superiority and dominance. They point to the politicization of human rights rhetoric despite its aspirations of objectivity and neutrality in the post-World War II era. Moreover, they highlight the need to analyze and theorize a global political economy not as operating as an "invisible hand" bringing unintended social benefits to the general population but, rather, as a deeply political and, in many instances, violent force of subjugation, oppression, and expulsion (Sassen 2014). Finally, these two examples urge scholars to think beyond state geopolitical units—or at least not to begin analysis as if the nation-state formation is a given and "society" naturally correlates and coalesces to it. Rather, postcolonial and Indigenous perspectives remind us that modern nation-state formation emerged within competing historical contexts and a dynamic global political economy. These non-Western perspectives suggest that to better understand a shifting national political landscape—such as that dramatically unfolding within the United States—requires situating the national (p. 253) domestic sphere within culturally contingent, highly politicized, and often violent global economic processes.

Decentering Modernist Frameworks

Global studies is a critical and interdisciplinary field that embraces both the humanities and the social sciences.² As such, global scholarship is not bound by the "scientific" knowledge of economists (who did not anticipate the 2008 global economic recession) or the state-centered models used by most sociologists and political scientists (who did not anticipate Brexit or Trump). In contrast to mainstream social science disciplines, global scholars are aware of the power of ideology, religion, ethics, and emotion in shaping people's everyday social relations (Appiah 2006). Global scholars appreciate the significance of history, narrative, and memory in framing a person's sense of self and respective world view. They recognize the gross inequalities that have emerged throughout the world as a result of free-market neoliberal policies put into place since the late 1970s (Brown 2015; Collier 2008). They are versant in ideological frameworks such as the "clash of civilization" rhetoric and Islamophobia espoused by Samuel Huntington and others since the 1990s (Huntington 1993; see also Said 2001). Global scholars are knowledgeable about a range of global crises, such as mass migrations and regional conflicts that are in large part driven by a global political economy from which US capitalists have profited handsomely. Why, then, were global scholars so taken aback when reactionary political chaos experienced for decades throughout the world in postcolonial contexts finally exploded on the US domestic front?

I argue that global studies scholars did not anticipate Trump because they remain constrained in their understanding of the interconnections across time and space that informs global issues, processes, and crises. Despite the expanding intellectual horizons in recent years of many global scholars to include such things as climate change, dispossession, security, and ongoing terrorism, global scholarship remains largely entrenched in modernist presumptions, theories, and logics. This in turn has prevented scholars from entirely breaking free of mainstream conceptual and analytical frameworks such as individualism, rationalism, liberalism, secularism, democracy, sovereignty, and the conventional building blocks of society understood in terms of nation-states and their respective citizenry. One consequence of this enduring state-centered mode of thinking is that many global scholars—like their colleagues from across the US–Euro academy—were not able to fully appreciate the forces behind the widespread popular support that ensured Trump’s presidential victory.

In an effort to understand the US presidential election, some commentators point to the rise of right-wing politics across a number of countries in an effort to understand the rise of conservative politics as a global phenomenon (Moffitt 2016). They see similarities in Trump’s United States with Putin’s Russia, Erodoğan’s Turkey, Temer’s Brazil, Orbán’s Hungary, Kaczyński’s Poland, or Brexit in Britain. Of course, right-wing politics are playing out differently in these countries, but there are commonalities of racism, xenophobia, and ultra-nationalism. Against this conventional mode of comparative analysis, I suggest that seeing parallels and commonalities across nation-states provides some insights but does not fully explain the rise and formation of reactionary politics throughout the world.

(p. 254) Conservative politics is a symptom of deep structural shifts across time and space. In other words, analyzing crises of democracy requires a deeper probing than that offered by a conventional modernist understanding of politics framed and analyzed in terms of electoral politics, swings in governments, changing laws, citizen’s rights, and ideologies of state-nationalism (Maier 2013; Streeck 2014).

No one is suggesting that issues of state governance and citizenry are not important. However, what I am suggesting in this chapter is that it is essential to problematize nation-state formation as an unfolding and, in many cases, fraught process and to not assume that what constitutes the “state” is a fixed and given entity. Moreover, it is important to recognize that conventions of a right/left political spectrum do not operate in every state context, particularly in countries and on continents with deep histories of colonialism and neocolonialism.³ Looking at parallels across nation-states presents a temporally shallow reading of events that discounts deep histories of capitalist exploitation, colonial oppression, and social marginalization that have gone into the making of modern nations and their foundational myths of cultural homogeneity (Anderson 1983). In short, as scholars, we need to analyze pluralist and interconnected global histories to better understand how the legacies of time play out in the national politics of the present.

Global studies scholars should also appreciate the limits of nation-states to deal with the havoc that a deregulated global political economy has created during the past three decades. Unpleasant as it is to admit, nation-states alone cannot fix today’s global chal-

lenges such as climate change, depletion of natural resources, regional conflict, and mass migrations which are fueling domestic population's anger, insecurity, and disenfranchisement. What the world is experiencing is the meltdown of the modern nation-state in the face of overwhelming global crises.⁴ This can be seen most obviously in poorer regions of the world, such as sub-Saharan Africa, which suffers from the destabilization wrought by decades of decolonization. Against such grim images of human suffering and injustice, most scholars in the Global North cannot imagine the United States or Europe experiencing the tragic circumstances experienced by many countries and regions in the Global South. Ingrained biases of Western privilege prevent many of us from grasping that modern industrialized nation-states may not be able to manage their citizenry in the face of global crises (Porter 2016). As a result, and quite understandably, many scholars cling to modern liberal concepts such as individualism, rationalism, liberalism, secularism, democracy, and sovereignty. But it is the argument of this chapter that rather than cling to possibly outmoded conceptual frameworks, these terms themselves need to be critically interrogated in the context of the twenty-first century (Güven 2015; Sanín-Restrepo 2016).

Global scholar David Held wrote in 2002 that we need to recognize “the necessary partiality, one-sidedness and limitedness” of state-based reason especially “when judged from the perspective of a world of ‘overlapping communities of fate’—where the trajectories of each and every country are tightly entwined” (p. 57). Fortunately, more and more global scholars—many of them informed by the contributions of global history—are increasingly sensitive to the need to decenter the nation-state.⁵ With the enormous power of multinational corporations and a wide range of non-state actors eclipsing conventional notions of state governance, these scholars are keen to not reify a modernist framework or assume the norms of democracy are secure. As argued by Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt (2016), professors of government at Harvard University, the rules of democracy are changing. Moreover, increasingly more global scholars are anxious to recognize that new modes (p. 255) of political, economic, and cultural formation—what Saskia Sassen (2008) calls “global assemblages”—criss-cross borders and localities and regions, reconfiguring geopolitical conventions of territory, centrality, and power (Lantham 2016).

Often unconsciously, much of the new global studies scholarship draws upon standpoint theory, which was first introduced by Dorothy Smith in 1977 in her groundbreaking book, *Feminism and Marxism*. Standpoint theory underscores that there are many different perspectives and subject positions and that these standpoints represent variations in people's ways of knowing and experiencing the world. Building on this feminist platform, standpoint theory in the context of global studies suggests that all subject positions and experiences—not just those of women—should be valorized and included in analyses of political, social, cultural, and economic processes. This means more than simply widening the liberal framework to recognize and include non-White/non-Western peoples as members of the nation-state.⁶ More profoundly, it means that global studies scholars should be sensitive to the existence of alternative imaginings of one's place in the world and plural historical narratives and memories of how one arrives at that place. This awareness may include different epistemologies, logics, and sets of social and political relations that do

not correlate with taken-for-granted concepts of state and citizenship. These alternative epistemologies may even counter or directly challenge taken-for-granted ideologies such as nationalism and capitalism (Santos 2007, 2014).

Elsewhere, I and my co-author Philip McCarty have written about the decentering of the nation-state as a characteristic of global studies scholarship (Darian-Smith and McCarty 2017). We suggest that this decentering is more than a questioning of the conventions of geopolitical analysis because it also involves decentering the predominance of “First World” knowledge and Western-centric concepts, logics, and world views. Decentering as an ethical commitment is related to decolonialism as an intellectual commitment. I argue that both are vital if global studies scholarship (as it is practiced in the Global North) is to imagine alternative futures beyond modernist frameworks and so retain its analytical relevance in a world of shifting postnational asymmetries of economic, political, religious, and cultural power (Darian-Smith 2015b).

W. E. B. Du Bois and Global Racism

One of the earliest postcolonial scholars to think like a contemporary global historian was W. E. B. Du Bois, the first African American to receive a doctoral degree from Harvard University in 1895. Du Bois was trained as a historian and sociologist, and he taught economics as well. He brought his considerable insights about colonialism and slavery to bear on a systemic and structural understanding of global capitalism that wrought inequality and racial oppression throughout the history of the United States.

An extensive body of literature exists on Du Bois and his role in US race relations, and I cannot do his writings and activism justice in this brief chapter. However, what is often eclipsed in this extant body of writing, and what I wish to focus on, is that Du Bois was central in configuring racism and marginalization as a global issue by drawing connections between Black oppression and the victimization of others throughout the world. Du Bois’ international activism and writings on global oppression in the decades following World War II (p. 256) solidified his interpretation of the history of the world as embedded within a global political economic system. Specifically, the Holocaust affirmed Du Bois’ thinking that the same economic and political forces that created the oppression of African peoples in the colonial margins could also create oppression and genocide at the centers of Western imperial states, most notably Germany and the United States. This realization informed Du Bois’ questioning of the taken-for-granted Western model of international relations that foregrounded the modern nation-state in binary relations of colonizer/colonized, center/periphery, and superiority/inferiority. The events of World War II were pivotal in challenging a center/periphery model of European domination and consolidating Du Bois’ understanding of a full circle of oppression such that centers of European imperialism were subject to mass racial violence analogous to the violence perpetrated at their colonial edges (Figure 16.1).



Figure 16.1 W. E. B. DuBois, founder of the NAACP and opponent of imperialism: “In college, I replaced my hitherto egocentric world by a world centering and whirling about my race.”

Source: Schomburg Center of the New York Public Library.

Moreover, World War II helped Du Bois move beyond a schema of black, brown, yellow, and white races and solidified his thinking that racism based on pseudoscientific hereditary distinctions of skin-tone classification was empirically unsound. Du Bois, who was a long-standing friend of the German American anthropologist Franz Boas, shared with Boas a deep skepticism of social Darwinism and biological explanations of racial inferiority. (p. 257) Nonetheless, when Du Bois visited Germany in 1936 and became aware of the atrocities that the Nazis perpetrated on Jews, homosexuals, and other minorities who biologically looked exactly like themselves, he was deeply troubled. This realization forced Du Bois to think more imaginatively about the production of race, such that religion, cultural heritage, and socioeconomic status were folded into his understanding of the global dimensions of racism to involve Blacks, Jews, Roma, and other cultural and religious minorities. In this process, Du Bois built upon his early pre-war writings that called for Blacks to be equally treated to develop a more nuanced interpretation of racism that enabled him to frame the oppression of African Americans as a violation of universal human rights more generally. This understanding of human rights as a universal entitlement was brought home to the American public through his increasingly radical commentaries and activism in the 1940s and 1950s.

Du Bois’ thinking of race in the context of Jewish persecution took on new nuances and complexities. In 1952, three years after visiting Poland (and specifically the Warsaw ghetto), Du Bois (as cited in Darian-Smith 2012) wrote in the journal *Jewish Life* that the result of his visits

was not so much clearer understanding of the Jewish problem in the world as it was a real and more complete understanding of the Negro problem. In the first place, the problem of slavery, emancipation, and caste in the United States was no longer in my mind a separate and unique thing as I had so long conceived it. It was not even solely a matter of color and physical and racial characteristics, which was particularly a hard thing for me to learn, since for a lifetime the color line had been a real and efficient cause of misery. It was not merely a matter of religion. I had seen religions of many kinds—I had sat in the Shinto temples of Japan, in the Baptist chapels of Georgia, in the Catholic cathedral of Cologne and in Westminster Abbey. No, the race problem in which I was interested cut across lines of color and physique and belief and status and was a matter of cultural patterns, perverted teaching and human hate and prejudice, which reached all sorts of people and caused endless evil to all men. So that the ghetto of Warsaw helped me to emerge from a certain social provincialism into a broader conception of what the fight against race segregation, religious discrimination and the oppression by wealth had to become if civilization was going to triumph and broaden in the world. (p. 489)

To counter this global system of racial oppression, Du Bois increasingly turned to the growing conversations around universal human rights that erupted in the fifth and last Pan-African Congress, held in Manchester, UK, in 1945. At this historic meeting, the pan-African movement dovetailed with self-determination movements that had emerged throughout the 1940s to create a much wider front against Western imperialism. The Congress was symbolically and politically important: It involved not only Black Africans but also Afro-Caribbeans and Afro-Americans in the common call for independence from imperial control and demands for recognition of human rights. It is in this context that Du Bois and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) played significant roles in leading the charge against European colonial regimes and arguing for the need to recognize universal human rights in order to secure lasting world peace.

At the historic five-week-long United Nations Conference on International Organization held in San Francisco in 1945, Du Bois, along with many other postcolonial activists, forcefully argued that recognizing human rights throughout the world was essential for securing world peace (Lauren 2003: 177–198). He was concerned that the language of the proposed United Nations (UN) Charter should speak not only about nations (p. 258) and states but also to the rights of individuals and races of people (Borgwardt 2005: 193). He argued that the UN Charter must refer to the “essential equality of all races” and help the millions of oppressed colonial subjects to have a voice in governmental processes (Aptheker 1978: 11). Furthermore, Du Bois (as cited in Lauren 1983) declared that the UN Charter should

make clear and unequivocal the straightforward stand of the civilized world for race equality, and the universal application of the democratic way of life, not simply as philanthropy and justice, but to save human civilization from suicide. What

was true of the United States in the past is true of world civilization today—we cannot exist half slave and half free. (p. 21)

Du Bois' concept of world civilization was important for underscoring the inclusivity of all peoples, both colonizers and colonized. Moreover, by calling for universal citizenship, Du Bois highlighted the view that the enforcement of human rights should not be left to nation-states but, rather, protected through the mechanism of the international/transnational UN entity.

Du Bois, along with many other postcolonial activists, hoped that the establishment of the United Nations in 1945 and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 would bring global recognition to the plight of formerly colonized peoples and provide a platform for their inclusive participation in establishing world peace. Unfortunately, this hope was quickly dashed for expedient political reasons. Du Bois' anti-colonial and anti-racist rhetoric put him and his camp in direct conflict with the White Southern Democrats, who were led to a large degree by Texas Senator Tom Connally. Connally was committed to the principle of states' rights and the limiting of federal (and international) oversight over the Southern states' institutionalized racism through Jim Crow laws. Significantly, Connally's domestic concerns and determination to resist wording about human rights being put into the UN Charter dovetailed with the federal government's foreign policy toward anti-colonialism. Emerging Cold War tensions with the Soviet Union made it an imperative that the United States maintained control over its Pacific island colonies as strategic military outposts. Hence, conversations about anti-colonialism and support for independence movements raised by many of the attending state representatives were quickly shelved by the US delegation, and authority over US Pacific colonies moved to the veto-protected Security Council. In short, Du Bois' insight that racism was a globally interconnected system of oppression (which in his view had been affirmed by the events in Nazi Germany) was silenced or ignored by a US government anxious not to displease Western colonial powers and US allies in the emerging Cold War (Dudziak 2000: 11; see also Darian-Smith 2012: 498).

Despite the United States agreeing to the establishment of a UN Commission on Human Rights, the San Francisco conference was regarded by many non-Western nations, as well as by all the attending activist associations, as a grave disappointment. Rayford Logan, a pan-African activist and advisor to the NAACP, "angrily denounced the UN Charter as a 'tragic joke'" (as cited in Anderson 2003: 55). Du Bois summed up his disappointment in a letter to the editor of the journal *Foreign Affairs*, stating, "While the San Francisco Conference took steps to prevent further wars in certain emergencies they did not go nearly far enough in facing realistically the greatest potential cause of war, the colonial system" (as cited in Aptheker 1978: 16). In a private telegraph, Du Bois further commented, "We have conquered Germany but not [its] ideas. We still believe in white supremacy, keeping negroes in their places and lying about democracy, when we mean imperial control of 750 million (p. 259) human beings in colonies" (as cited in Anderson 2003: 51). Publically, he railed against the failings of the UN Charter for perpetuating the paternal op-

pression of the European nations, writing in the *New York Post* (as cited in Aptheker 1982),

What guarantees ought to be set up by international action to safeguard human rights? So far as the mass of civilized men are concerned, such guarantees have been repeatedly stated but only in part realized. So far as the majority of human beings are concerned, they have for the most part not even been initiated. The usual reason given is that colored folk, colonial peoples, lower classes, have no conception of "rights," could not use them if they had them, and naturally do not have them. We greater folk will guide and guard them when once we get our own rights. But is it not barely possible that one of the reasons human rights are not realized in Germany, England and the U.S. is just because they can be flouted at will in Nigeria, Java, Fiji and among the natives of South Africa? (pp. 2-3)

In 1950, Du Bois ran for the US Senate on the American Labor Party ticket in New York. The next year, at the height of the Cold War and McCarthyism, he was indicted under the Foreign Agents Registration Act for his involvement in the Peace Information Center and his association with Soviet-affiliated peace efforts. After being acquitted, Du Bois went on a speaking tour and gave public talks such as that before an audience of 15,000 in the Coliseum of Chicago. There, he declared—in language as applicable today as it was then—the need to disentangle corporate interests from governmental power and to socialize the economy (Du Bois 1968):

Big business in the United States is forcing this nation into war, transforming our administration into a military dictatorship, paralyzing all democratic controls and depriving us of knowledge we need. . . . There is no way in the world for us to preserve the ideals of a democratic America, save by drastically curbing the present power of concentrated wealth; by assuming ownership of some natural resources, by administering many of our key industries, and by socializing our services for public welfare. This need not mean the adoption of the communism of the Soviet Union, nor the socialism of Britain, nor even the near-socialism of France, Italy or Scandinavia; but either in some way or to some degree we socialize our economy, restore the New Deal, and inaugurate the welfare state, or we descend into military fascism which will kill all dreams of democracy. (pp. 377-378).

Despite many supporters, Du Bois was increasingly marginalized by both Black and White activists and political organizations, and the "NAACP essentially abandoned him" (Darian-Smith 2012: 501). In the context of the Cold War, his views were seen as highly problematic and, for some, even traitorous. This distancing from Du Bois by Black and White activists correlated with the US government's targeting as "communist" anybody who linked domestic racial struggles with the international anti-colonial movement. As his marginalization and disillusionment mounted, Du Bois became increasingly more active in overseas political organizations and communities focused on self-determination, such as the small expatriate community that existed in Ghana (Gaines 2007).

In contrast to Du Bois' escalating political and social marginalization within the United States, he was often treated as a hero in international circles. He was well received in Britain, and when he was traveling for 10 weeks in China in 1959, the occasion of his 91st birthday was given national celebration and his plea for the unity of China and Africa widely broadcast (Du Bois 1968: 405). In his later writings, Du Bois mused on the injustices of American imperialism, writing sadly that the United States

(p. 260)

is still a land of magnificent possibilities. It is still the home of noble souls and generous people. But it is selling its birthright. It is betraying its mighty destiny. . . . Today we are lying, stealing, and killing. No nation threatens us. We threaten the world. (pp. 419, 415)

Du Bois and Trump

In the context of the new US administration under Donald Trump, Du Bois' words ring across the decades with poignancy and foreboding. Trump's racist and xenophobic slogans, embrace of capitalist elites, promotion of violence against his critics for being "un-American," and evoking of Cold War rhetoric together underscore circulatory logics of exclusion and authoritarianism across time and space, decades and continents. Du Bois' extraordinary insights shed light on the present. He appreciated that the violence and oppression experienced in the colonies were linked to the violence and oppression experienced within European imperial centers. The common element in the lives of both the colonized and the colonizer is the logics of an exploitative global political economy that disproportionately impacts marginalized communities at home and abroad, in turn justifying overt and covert racism.

In thinking about the decolonizing of Western knowledge in terms of (1) pluralizing histories, (2) depoliticizing human rights, and (3) repoliticizing a global political economy, Du Bois offers an astute postcolonial perspective of import to global studies scholars. First, Du Bois was intimately aware of the need for nation-states to maintain a singular cultural identity and suppress pluralized histories and subjectivities under colonial and postcolonial rule. Today's worldwide backlash of ultra-nationalism in the face of uncompromising global diversity and global migrations would not have surprised Du Bois in the least. Second, Du Bois—himself the target of McCarthyism—would not be surprised by Trump's dismissal of civil and political rights in the stamping out of "unpatriotic" criticism. Nor would Du Bois be taken aback with Trump's endorsement by the Ku Klux Klan and white supremacy groups, or his explicit appeals to Islamophobia. Du Bois spent his entire life fighting Jim Crow laws and the politicization of human rights at home and on a global stage (Darian-Smith 2012; Moyn 2012). Third, Du Bois would have clearly seen historical continuities between the "robber baron" era of the latter half of the nineteenth century and today, in which a supposed apolitical global political economy justifies and naturalizes mass inequality and a global color line. Trump's embrace of corporate power that unabashedly makes a sham of the checks and balances of government evokes an earlier pe-

riod when a plantation economy helped create the modern United States and democracy was merely a radical aspiration. In short, if Du Bois were alive today, I am confident that he would have anticipated the appeal of Trump to disempowered Whites, who until recent decades had driven the country's political agenda and determined its nationalist identity.

The Great Sioux Nation and Global Capitalism

While the United States—and the world—was consumed by the 2016 US presidential campaigns, Indigenous communities mobilized an international protest in North Dakota (p. 261) against the laying down of an oil pipeline. The Dakota Access Pipeline protest, also known by the hashtag #NoDAPL, was a grassroots demonstration by Native communities against the building of a pipeline under the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers. The Dakota Access Pipeline is part of a massive underground project that runs more than 1,000 miles carrying oil from the Bakken oil fields in North Dakota southward through Iowa to holding tanks in Patoka, Illinois. The original plan to run the underground pipeline under the Missouri River near Bismarck (the capital city of North Dakota) was rejected because of its potential threat to municipal water supplies and natural wetland and waterway crossings. As a result, the plan for construction was moved to cross under the Missouri River, approximately half a mile from the Standing Rock Indian Reservation. Members of the reservation view the pipeline as threatening their clean water supply as well as violating their ancestral burial grounds. These sites are considered essential to their sense of identity and historical narratives connecting them to place and territory (Bravebull 2016).



Figure 16.2 Standing Rock Chairman Dave Archambault II speaking before the Human Rights Commission of the United Nations in Geneva on September 20, 2016.

For many months, the #NoDAPL protest was entirely ignored by mainstream media, reflecting a general lack of interest in the United States for anything pertaining to Native peoples. However, as the number of supporters swelled to thousands and international media began spreading news of the protest throughout the world, it was no longer possi-

ble to disregard events on the domestic front. By September 2016, news stories started appearing detailing the use of attack dogs by security workers on protesters, which injured a number of them. Global attention was furthered when the Standing Rock Chairman Dave Archambault II spoke before the Human Rights Commission of the United Nations in Geneva on September 20, 2016. He argued that the United States had violated its nineteenth-century treaties with the tribe and that by supporting the pipeline, it had violated the tribe's human rights and sovereignty (Medina 2016; Figure 16.2).⁷ In October, public attention (p. 262) grew further as stories circulated widely on social media of armed soldiers in riot gear using tear gas, tanks, and other military equipment to clear protest camps. Calls for the arrest of high-profile journalists and celebrities who had joined the protest also helped bring attention to the movement, as did a new song released by Neil Young called "Indian Giver" ("Neil Young Honors Dakota Access Pipeline Resistance" 2016).

The Standing Rock Indian Reservation is the sixth largest reservation in the United States and a highly symbolic region overlaid with violence and memories of the US colonial government's treatment of Native peoples. In 1874, gold was discovered in the Black Hills, land considered sacred to the Sioux. The US government tried to force the purchase of the land, but the offer was rejected by the leader Sitting Bull. What ensued was war and devastation, with the Sioux initially victorious against the US army at the Battle of Little Bighorn but ultimately overcome and forced to surrender. In 1877, the US government took the Black Hills from the Sioux and split the tribal lands into two smaller reservations (Keeler 2016). Against this background of historical violence and deep memories of betrayal and failure by the US government to stand by its treaties and legal promises, the Dakota Access Pipeline protest takes on a particularly poignant symbolism. As noted by LaDonna Bravebull Allard (Bravebull 2016), Standing Rock's Historic Preservation Officer,

We must remember we are part of a larger story. We are still here. We are still fighting for our lives, 153 years after my great-great-grandmother Mary watched as our people were senselessly murdered. We should not have to fight so hard to survive on our own lands.

Arguably, Standing Rock, as a site of postcolonial conflict, has more than historical symbolism. Many tribal members do not view themselves as "protestors" of global capitalism but, rather, "protectors" of water and Mother Earth. They present an alternative understanding of people's place in the world as part of a holistic system that incorporates water, sun, trees, and animals and that sponsors a sense of collaboration, cooperation, inclusivity, and a caretaker obligation to protect nature for past and future generations.⁸ Many tribal communities argue that resisting the pipeline is essential because there is much more at stake than extractive industries seeking profit, an argument that expressly flies in the face of Milton Friedman's rationale of neoliberal economics. For many journalists and non-Native supporters who joined the Standing Rock camps, there was a sense of

amazement at this alternative narrative of how to live in the world. According to Raul Garcia (2016),

Even when we were talking about politics, the sacredness of it all was what tribe members conveyed as important. The respect of the people overcame any thought of animosity, and the solemnity of the place and the need to protect nature inspired peaceful unity. This indigenous vision of sacred air, sacred water and sacred land was striking to me. I live in Washington, D.C., where polarized rhetoric dominates the landscape, and where, since the presidential election season, distasteful attacks are rampant. Visiting the camps and understanding the spirituality driving this struggle against corporate profit was an eye-opening and humbling experience.

Importantly, the sense of water as sacred also presents alternative ways of organizing political power that counter the dominant international order that is organized through nation-states and which has long been dominant, particularly since post World War II. The prominent Native American cartoonist Ricardo Caté, from Kewa Pueblo, graphically (p. 263) demonstrates the need to reorganize global power in his cartoon titled “United Nations,” which shows hundreds of flags at Standing Rock representing Native Nations, Indigenous peoples, and non-Native political allies all standing in solidarity (Figure 16.3). Winona LaDuke, Executive Director of Honor the Earth, a Native American environmental group, has also drawn attention to the need to reorganize political power by declaring, “This is a moment of opportunity, a moment for cities and nations and people all over the world to stand up and demand that no more rivers be poisoned, and no more people be sacrificed” (LaDuke 2016). But as noted in a UN statement issued by members of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, “Actions such as these [blocking the pipeline] tend to occur in different parts of the world and are often misunderstood and described as rebellious, backward thinking and unilateral opposition to development” (United Nations 2016). Members went on to state,

Therefore, we call on the United States government to establish and implement, in conjunction with indigenous peoples concerned, a fair, independent, impartial, open and transparent process to resolve this serious issue and to avoid escalation into violence and further human rights abuses.

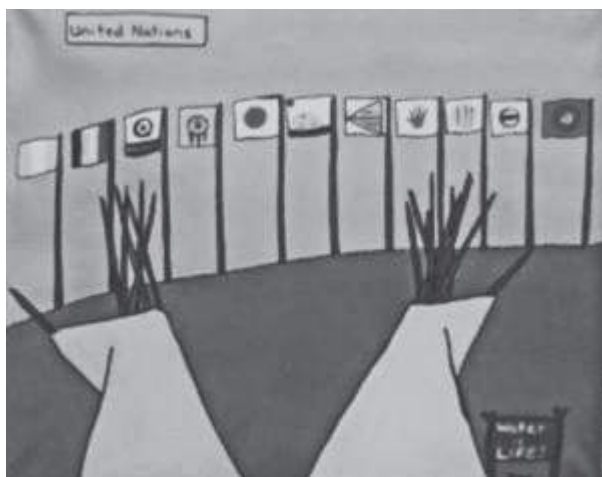


Figure 16.3 “United Nations,” one of the most spectacular and strengthening images at Standing Rock are the hundreds of flags representing Native Nations, Indigenous peoples, and non-Native political allies, all standing in solidarity.

Source: <https://indiancountrymedianetwork.com/culture/arts-entertainment/nodapl-trump-mother-earth-funny-cartoons-ricardo-cate/?mqsc=ED3863763>.

(p. 264) The details of the Dakota Access Pipeline are complicated and not entirely transparent to the general public. What is known is that because of the manipulation of permit laws that treat the pipeline as small construction projects, it was able to be exempt from review under the Clean Water Act and the Environmental Policy Act. This exemption was brought to the attention of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Department of the Interior, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, which together asked the US Army Corp of Engineers for a formal environmental impact assessment. According to the Council (as cited in *Indian Country Today* Staff 2016), the

EPA recommended that the Corps’ draft Environmental Assessment “be revised to assess potential impacts to drinking water and the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe. . . . Based on our improved understanding of the project setting, we also recommend addressing additional concerns regarding environmental justice and emergency response actions to spills/leaks.”

Notes Dallas Goldtooth, an organizer with the Indigenous Environmental Network (as cited in *Indian Country Today* Staff 2016),

It is impressive to see these federal agencies stand up in support of the Standing Rock Lakota Nation and acknowledge the tribe’s right to be consulted on any extractive development that impacts lands, water, and peoples within their territory. And although a full EIS [environmental impact statement] is a welcome step to hold Dakota Access accountable, the only way we can truly protect the land and

water is by rejecting such dirty oil projects, enacting just transition policy towards renewable energy, and keeping fossil fuels in the ground.

During the later months of 2016, the protest camps swelled into the thousands with Native and non-Native supporters. The #NoDAPL movement was widely acclaimed to be unprecedented in terms of support of Indigenous rights in the United States (Street 2016). But as the winter cold set in, tensions mounted between protestors and security agents eager to have the camps disband. Reports of water cannons spraying activists in a deliberate attempt to inflict injury in the frozen landscapes of North Dakota brought international condemnation. Security forces declared they would physically break up the camps. On December 2, 2016, approximately 2,000 military veterans arrived to support the activists and pledged to form a human shield to protect them from police. Fortunately, on December 4, the US Army Corps of Engineers announced that it would not issue a permit for an easement through federally owned land and would halt construction until a full environmental impact review had been made. Although this was viewed throughout the world as a victory for Indigenous peoples, it was short-lived. In January 2017, the Trump administration signed a presidential memorandum that granted an easement to continue construction of the pipeline over reservation land. Despite legal protests by the Cheyenne River Sioux, construction continued and was complete by April 2017, and by June 2017 the pipeline was commercially in operation.

Native Americans and Trump

Violence against the world's Indigenous peoples has been occurring for centuries (Samson and Gigoux 2016). Historically, Indigenous communities have been disproportionately impacted by early European colonial ventures in search of natural resources and cheap (p. 265) labor. The United States, first under British colonialism and then under independent rule, participated in the subjugation of Indigenous peoples. Indians, subject to the practices of colonialism and imperialism, were often the targets of genocide, racism, and dispossession (Forbes 2008). One result of these deep historical antagonisms is that Native Americans remain the most socioeconomically marginalized of all ethnic communities in the country.

Conflict surrounding the Dakota Access Pipeline points to enduring colonial legacies that play out in attempts by multinational corporations, now in overt alliance with US federal agencies, to dispossess Native Americans of their sovereign rights to land and resources. There is a long history of violent land-grabbing by Whites of Indian lands (McNally 2016). For many tribal leaders, the recent conflict over the pipeline is understood as the continuation of war against them. Trump has openly criticized tribes and vowed to privatize reservation land to further exploit natural resources. Against great uncertainty about the future, John Echohawk (2016), Executive Director of the Native American Rights Fund, declared,

As Native people we have been down this road before. For over 500 years we have endured the invasion of our homelands, endured the horrific and failed termina-

tion, assimilation and boarding school policies of the federal government, and in more recent times we have fought past administrations' attacks on Indian country and the environment and won. Since the Trump administration has not announced any Native policy positions, we look forward to the opportunity to work in partnership and educate them about Native rights. But make no mistake, we are firmly committed to continue our fight to protect Native rights and tribal sovereignty—and fight we will. We stand by our commitment as “Modern Day Warriors.” . . . We encourage our brothers and sisters and our allies to be brave, take courage, remember our ancestors, and continue to stand firm with us for justice.

What does resistance to the Dakota Access Pipeline suggest about better understanding the shifting political landscape within the United States? How can the historically most marginalized communities in the country help us understand the groundswell of support for Trump in the 2016 presidential election? What do the alternative world views and standpoints of Native peoples offer in terms of rethinking scholarly conventions about how mainstream politics and governance operate within the parameters of the nation-state? In other words, how do Indigenous perspectives help us decolonize the building blocks of Western knowledge and think more creatively and inclusively about our collective futures?

One possible answer lies in the writings of Judith Butler and Athena Athanasiou, who in their book, *Dispossession: The Performative in the Political* (2013), call for disenfranchised communities to come together, often in desperation, to assert their collective stance against exploitation, discrimination, and erasure. Butler and Athanasiou are concerned with how groups of people perform their dispossession in positive ways, calling for new alliances and new ways of belonging and being that do not neatly correlate to nationalist frameworks or hinge on capitalist dogma of property ownership and self-interested individualism (Figure 16.4). In the context of the Dakota Access Pipeline demonstrations, Butler and Athanasiou's concluding words from their book seem most appropriate:

If there is a crowd, there is also a media event that forms across space and time, calling for the demonstrations, so some set of global connections is being articulated, a different sense of the global from the “globalized market.” And some set of values is being enacted in the form of collective resistance: a defense of our collective precarity and persistence in the making of equality and the many-voiced and unvoiced ways of refusing to be disposable. (p. 197) (p. 266)



Figure 16.4 Standing Rock solidarity march in San Francisco, November 2016.

Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dakota_Access_Pipeline_protests#/media/File:Stand_with_Standing_Rock_SF_Nov_2016_11.jpg

In thinking about the decolonizing of Western knowledge in terms of (1) pluralizing histories, (2) depoliticizing human rights, and (3) repoliticizing a global political economy, protesters of the Dakota Access Pipeline offer an Indigenous perspective of import to global studies scholars. First, Indigenous peoples are intimately aware that their history was silenced in the making of the modern United States. Manipulated laws, broken treaties, absconded funds, lies, and cheating all featured in the ways Whites treated Indigenous peoples and to this day filter through their ongoing relations (Washburn 2016). Hence, Native Americans were not surprised—as most scholars were—by the explicit manipulation of “truth” by Trump and the Republican Party to further their political agendas (*New York Times* Editorial Board 2016).

Second, Native Americans have intimately experienced the politicizing and denouncing of Indigenous rights in defense of the national polity. It should be remembered that on the international level, in 2007, as 144 states adopted the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, four countries voted against it—the United States, Australia, New Zealand, and Canada. On national and local levels, Native Americans have been denied basic political and civil rights for centuries. Hence, they would not have been surprised by Trump threatening those opposing him with violence, calling for harsher voting procedures for minorities, denouncing free journalism, and explicitly violating norms of governance and accountability.

Moreover, Native Americans would not have been surprised by the interference of Russia in the United States’ national political process by cyber-hacking and other underhanded disclosures of confidential information. After all, the capacity of tribes to run their own (p. 267) internal affairs has been taken out of their hands by federal agencies for centuries, and the concept of tribes as sovereign nations is constantly under legal attack by the Supreme Court and successive governmental administrations. Moreover, Indigenous

peoples throughout the world, and particularly in Latin America, are deeply aware of how both the United States and Russia interfered in their countries domestic politics throughout the decolonization and Cold War eras. Russia now continuing its international strategies by interfering in the political and civil rights of US citizens would probably seem disturbingly familiar.

Finally, with respect to decolonizing the concept that a global political economy is politically neutral, Native American perspectives offer much insight. They have been at the forefront of the politics of capitalism and dispossession for centuries, first with respect to land-grabbing of their territories for agricultural purposes and, more recently, for mining and extractive industries (Svampa 2015). Native peoples—in the United States and throughout the world—have never been fooled by the apolitical myths of capitalism that have been so heavily embraced and endorsed in the neoliberal policies of the past 40 years.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have called for the decolonizing of Western knowledge. There is much at stake in this call. If it can be achieved, decolonizing Western knowledge may help US and European scholars more fully understand what is going on “over there” in the Global South and appreciate that in fundamental ways, the binary between a Global South and a Global North no longer holds. It may also help scholars in wealthy industrialized nations better understand their own increasingly multiracial, multiethnic, and multireligious societies and the political ramifications and social contradictions of that reality. Perhaps most important, decolonizing contemporary knowledge and its future production may help scholars better see the mutually constitutive relations and systemic interconnections across time and space that inform and shape the current global political landscape and that come to ground and manifest in national domestic politics.

In our current postnational era, global scholars are uniquely poised to help in the problematizing and decolonizing of the concepts of “statehood” and “democracy” in an effort to better understand the reassertion of reactionary politics throughout the world and how best to counter that trend. As champions of critical interdisciplinary scholarship, global scholars can help decolonize knowledge production and promote a more inclusive global intellectual framework that embraces plural ontologies, epistemologies, and non-Western world views (Darian-Smith and McCarty 2017). This may in turn promote more nuanced understandings of what is going on in terms of ordinary peoples’ responses to the forces of globalization, feelings of marginalization and insecurity, and crises of identity in a world of vast multiethnic and multireligious diversity. In my view, this represents the extraordinarily exciting promise and value of global studies as an emerging field of inquiry.

Who better to help white elite scholars better understand the United States’ shifting domestic landscape than those who live among us but from whose standpoint we rarely think or imagine. African Americans and Native Americans carry within their collective memories silenced narratives of the past, as well as intimate knowledge of the politicizing

of human rights and the legacies of exploitative global capitalism. It is from their experiences (p. 268) that privileged scholars may learn new insights. Learning to see from the standpoints of postcolonial and Indigenous subjectivities suggests that “democracy” and “nationalism” are not all they can and should be for those who live on the margins of the state. African Americans and Native Americans show us that global capitalism, in both its colonial and postcolonial iterations, is a highly politicized process that carves up society between “winners” and “losers” and in that process creates enormous conflict and disenfranchisement. In short, what some of Trump’s supporters have been experiencing during the past three decades, others have been cumulatively experiencing, in some cases, for centuries.

Unfortunately, what is being experienced are new conflicts and tensions as the numbers of impoverished people grow in ways that have been difficult to imagine within the enclave of the US–Euro academy. In contrast, non-Western scholars have long anticipated the growing populations of the disempowered, with scholars such as Yash Ghai, a Kenyan academic in constitutional law, writing portentously in 2000,

The globalization of economies has also brought cultures into greater contact, and made most states multi-ethnic, with contradictory consequences. On one hand, there is greater knowledge of other cultures that produces a sympathetic understanding of diversity and emphasis on human solidarity. On the other hand, globalization itself has produced a sense of alienation and powerlessness in the face of new global forces, in which one’s identity depends even more fundamentally on one’s culture, while that culture may be perceived to be under threat from external forces. (p. 1095)

What is becoming clear is that the United States and other industrialized countries in the Global North are now part of what is typically thought of as the Global South (Sanín-Restrepo 2016). As Du Bois argued so insightfully years ago, the binary between “us” and “them” is not obvious given that we are connected through the forces of global capitalism. According to Du Bois, it is inevitable that the logics of oppression exercised at the edges of imperialism will ultimately return to settle in, and perhaps implode, the centers of Western nationalism. In order to keep pace with this interconnected geopolitical global reality, scholars need to take seriously alternative epistemologies and ways of viewing the world that may not correlate with dominant Western sensibilities and the taken-for-granted principles of liberal democracy. Transcending modernist conceptual frameworks—as argued by the protestors at Standing Rock—may provide insights into how to better understand and envisage our own immediate postnational contexts and uprisings of “public disorder” (Body-Gendrot 2016). It may also help scholars counter and resist reactionary political, economic, and social trends that seek to silence intellectual capacities to imagine alternative futures that may not be bound by Western-centric concepts of individualism, rationalism, liberalism, secularism, democracy, and national sovereignty. Given the backlash against the status quo and rise of authoritarianism throughout the world, it is clear that the dominant assemblages of power are not creating global equality and justice for all. In this context, decolonizing the basic building blocks that have dominated the

past three centuries of Western thought may well become an imperative for the emerging field of global studies.

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Notes:

(1.) As noted by George Yancy (2016), an African American philosopher, "For many Black people, making America 'great again' is especially threatening, as it signals a return to a more explicit and unapologetic racial dystopia. For us, dreaming of yesterday is not a privilege, not a desire, but a nightmare." Yancy is one of 200 professors placed on the Professor Watchlist, a website created by a conservative youth group known as Turning Point USA.

(2.) See Juergensmeyer (2014), Nederveen Pieterse (2013), Duve (2013), Sparke (2013), Darian-Smith (2015b), McCarty (2014), Middell (2014), and Steger (2015).

(3.) This was demonstrated in an important conference, “The Rise of the Global Right?” organized by the Society of Global Scholars in the Global Studies Department at the University of California at Santa Barbara, November 2016 (<http://www.global.ucsb.edu/news/event/591>).

(4.) While multinational corporations and global financiers stand on the sidelines cheering the demise of nation-states as they eagerly amass enormous profit, their glory days are doomed to be short-lived. As Joseph Stiglitz (2012) and other leading economists are quick to acknowledge, corporations need state and global governance mechanisms in order to do business. In a totally deregulated and privatized finance sector, economic profits cannot be sustained over time and with any predictability.

(5.) Global historians have been particularly important in problematizing the nation-state and forging new modes of inquiry that contextualize nations within intercontinental flows of ideas, cultures, resources, and movements of people (Bentley 2013; Conrad 2016; Hughes-Warrington 2005; Pernau and Sachsenmaier 2016). Together, these scholars call for the removal of the “analytical shackles of ‘methodological nationalism’ ” (Zürn 2013: 416). As a relatively new subfield of inquiry, global historians reflect upon historiographical conventions and point to the limitations of national histories that have dominated the past 200 years in the US–Euro academy. They are keen to explore how modes of cultural exchange and conceptual translation that flowed across state boundaries and diverse cultures shaped events, including the very construction of nations and nationalist identities. So instead of taking the nation-state as a given and then making comparisons between them, global historians explore how nations developed over time as a product of transnational events, complex social relations, and geopolitical forces (Frühstück 2014; Goebel 2015).

(6.) Some Indigenous peoples do not wish to be “recognized” in this way and reject attempts to incorporate/subsume their identities and subjectivities within what they regard as a colonial framework that has violently subjugated them over centuries (Coulthard 2014; Moreton-Robinson 2015; Simpson 2014).

(7.) Presenting an appeal to the UN has an important history in Native American politics. In 1977, the American Indian Movement sent delegates to the International NGO Conference on Discrimination Against Indigenous Populations in the Americas, held at the UN offices in Geneva. According to commentators, this was a “watershed event, the very first UN conference with Indigenous delegates, the first direct entry of Native peoples into international affairs, the first time that Native peoples were able to speak for themselves at the UN. Some governments felt so threatened that they prevented delegates from participating and persecuted them upon their return” (John Curl, http://ipdpowwow.org/Archives_1.html; see also Notes 1978).

(8.) According to a UN statement issued by the UN members of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues: “For indigenous peoples, the environment is a living entity that contains our life sources as well as our sacred sites and heritage. The environment is an important part of our lives and any threats to it impacts our families, ancestors and future

generations. It is therefore imperative that the United States respects and recognizes the intrinsic, inter-related rights of Sioux and their spiritual traditions, history, philosophy, and especially their rights to their lands and territories” (United Nations 2016).

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