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Anti-Imperial Popular Sovereignty and the Politics of Transnational Solidarity

> From July 1954 onward the colonial peoples have been asking themselves: "What must we do to achieve a Dien Bien Phu? How should we go about it?"
>
> Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 31

> If America's soul becomes totally poisoned, part of the autopsy must read "Vietnam." It can never be saved so long as it destroys the deepest hopes of men the world over.
>
> Martin Luther King, Jr., "Beyond Vietnam," 205

The first part of this book traces the imperial genealogy of popular sovereignty by grounding collective "emancipatory" projects in wealthy polities in racial capitalism and imperial relations of exploitation and dependence. These chapters show that declarations of peoplehood entail possessive attachments to wealth obtained through empire and posit excessive self-and-other-determination of wealthy countries as central to understanding global injustice. The second part traces the specificities of the material background that sustains white projects of popular sovereignty by examining the provision of social reproduction by brown subjects and the joint forced conscription of racialized labor and nature. These chapters explicate how communities, families, and their natural environment are depleted because of these arrangements, including through racist narratives of bodily capacity that circulate through alienated entanglements between technology, race, and nature. The third part now moves to consider the emancipatory remainders in the notion of popular sovereignty, including, in this chapter, by constructing an anti-imperial version that instead of being founded upon the destruction of relations is built upon relationships of transnational solidarity.

I do this through a reading of the writings of Martin Luther King, Jr. on Vietnam and peoplehood and Frantz Fanon's writings on national consciousness and transnationalism. The war in Vietnam as an event encapsulated both the mobilization of the United States and its people to keep Vietnam within the controlled realm of empire and the anti-militaristic activism within the country, particularly – though not exclusively – among racially oppressed groups. The politics of resistance to the Vietnam war is a generative realm to consider potential openings that can properly differentiate the popular will of peoples from national elite imperial projects of racial capitalist subjection or collective projects to attain well-being at the expense of the exploitation of racial others. With this renewed language of popular sovereignty, it is not only possible but necessary to enter solidaristic relations with other peoples affected by oligarchic projects of accumulation in order to contest the global political economy. This language opens a path to the rehabilitation of the concept of popular sovereignty and confirms that the term needs not be rejected outright but must instead be theorized anew so that it can diagnose and undo its imperial entanglements.

To conceptualize this anti-imperial popular sovereignty, I read jointly Martin Luther King's anti-war essay "Beyond Vietnam: A Time to Break Silence" and Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*. Based on this reading, I define anti-imperial popular sovereignty as a popular democratic claim to self-government that actively eschews elite projects of outward domination and instead seeks to coalesce with democratic movements elsewhere in the world. The need for an anti-imperial popular sovereignty is particularly pronounced in wealthy countries, where progressive movements are often complicit in the domination that enables the wealth that they aim to redistribute. King's essay "Beyond Vietnam" is particularly well suited for the task of reconstructing an anti-imperial tradition of popular politics because in criticizing US aggression in Vietnam, King places the United States in a genealogy of imperialism and contests the disavowal of this trajectory in Cold War narratives of containment. King urges the American people to collectively condemn the ties between their government and unjust regimes and to reject the benefits emerging from these ties. King's critique targets the unworldliness and ignorance that underlies the disavowal of the global as a proper subject of popular politics and notes its misguidedness by tracing the continuity of anti-democratic politics and exploitative foreign relations. Moreover, he convincingly casts peoples as world historical actors whose responsibility is to stand in solidarity

with others, or at least refrain from blocking other peoples' struggles for justice.

I juxtapose King's framework of anti-imperial popular sovereignty with Fanon's writings on national consciousness and transnationalism, including his critique of postcolonial elites. With Fanon's writings on national consciousness and his skepticism about bourgeois internationalism, I theorize further the desirable connections between democratic collectives and transnational projects. In this reading, Fanon's critique of postcolonial elites is continuous with King's denunciation of the Vietnam war as a project of US elites to defend the wealth of their Vietnamese counterparts and their access to peripheral countries' resources. With this, I build an account of symbiotic elites that projects of popular sovereignty in the wealthy world and Global South must jointly oppose. In other words, King's anti-imperial notion of popular sovereignty alongside Fanon's account of postcolonial democracy and Thirdworldism counter standard accounts of popular sovereignty whose emancipatory potential is assessed solely domestically because they disavow their dependence on global racialized capitalist accumulation.

This account of anti-imperial popular sovereignty is world historical in two ways. First, it demands peoples position themselves vis-à-vis world-spanning events – like the anti-colonial revolutions that the US war in Vietnam aimed to curtail – and take responsibility for their actions in advancing or obstructing emancipation. Second, the account I propose articulates the past historically not to simply recount events and represent it as "it really was," but to show that common dangers obstructed emancipation in the past and do so in the present, and that revolutionary traditions must be recovered, both to honor those who were at the receiving end of violence in the past and to contribute to subduing the forces of domination today.[1] This historical groundedness, as well as the explicit reference to peoples complements and/or amends recent contributions to anti-neoliberal and anti-imperial consciousness. Moreover, while an anti-imperial popular sovereignty primarily serves to scrutinize the Anglo-European projects of imperial popular sovereignty which primarily concern this book, the proposed account also considers critically how postcolonial countries' notions of peoplehood can resist their own oligarchic elites, a task that Fanon did not eschew. Finally, vis-à-vis the literature on the people engaged in earlier chapters and recent

[1] Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 1968 [1940]), 255.

accounts of postcolonial peoplehood, the concept of anti-imperial popular sovereignty shows that a historically grounded genealogy of resistance to empire can inform more capacious accounts of democracy which scrutinize the material bases of self-definition, theorize oligarchies as global actors dampening democratization, and re-cognize genuine popular sovereignty as necessitating transnational democratic coalition-making.

In the rest of this chapter, I first consider recent writings on transnationalism that theorize the dominating outward behavior of wealthy polities and place King within this tradition. I then analyze King's popular call for opposing the war in Vietnam as an effort to persuade the US people to withdraw their support from US elite-based projects of capitalist exploitation in alliance with Vietnamese elites. This opposition must be pursued in solidarity with democratic groups within the countries targeted by US aggression, making the realm of the transnational an alternative space of popular contention, which straddles the Global South and the west.[2] King positions the people as a world historical actor that judges US outward behavior politically, and must recast the Cold War as an imperial alliance between the United States and authoritarian elites in the developing countries to make the world safe for capitalist accumulation. Further, King connects this violent foreign policy to the failings of US democracy. I then juxtapose King's account with Frantz Fanon's work on national consciousness and postcolonial authoritarianism to propose an account of symbiotic elites and their dampening effect on emancipatory struggles around the world. Through Fanon's work on transnationalism, I theorize the right conditions for the establishment of solidaristic interconnections between peoples around the world.

5.1 THE DOMESTIC–GLOBAL NEXUS

Recent contributions theorize how western citizens' political stances and orientations are located vis-à-vis relations of outward injustice. These accounts focus on global commodity chains, exploring, for example, how neoliberalism shapes western citizens' orientations in ways that obscure the injustice of these arrangements.[3] Authors in this tradition

[2] Valdez, *Transnational Cosmopolitanism: Kant, Du Bois, and Justice as a Political Craft*.

[3] McKean, *Disorienting Neoliberalism: Global Justice at the Outer Limit of Freedom*. See also Young, "Responsibility and Global Labor Justice," Iris Marion Young, "Responsibility and Global Justice: A Social Connection Model," *Social Philosophy and Policy* 23, no. 1 (2006).

argue that resisting neoliberalism requires reorienting our view of the economy as an apolitical place where market freedom is exercised toward a space saturated with coercive authority that attempts to appear legitimate.[4]

This alertness to the transnational entanglements of well-being and its political implications is indebted to work in the Black radical tradition, including Audre Lorde's anti-imperialism, which demands that people of color in the United States take responsibility for their entanglement with exploitation and counter it by declaring their solidarity with the "victims of Euro-American imperialism."[5] Lorde's anti-imperial politics (which requires US citizens to recognize the power they hold and put it at the service of transnational solidarities) echoes Du Bois's writings in the 1920s and 1930s that I reconstruct elsewhere, including his account of transnational solidarity with anti-colonial activists and the emergence of an anti-colonial counter-public during this period.[6] Du Bois reveals the imperialism of the US polity and the continuity in the narratives of racial inferiority that legitimize the injustices suffered by African Americans and colonial subjects.[7] Yet these claims are not intelligible within an imperial domestic public sphere, making Du Bois turn toward nonmainstream publics where Black political subjects can re-cognize themselves as participants in transnational anti-imperial counter-publics.[8] These accounts, by nesting Anglo-European publics within imperial relations and highlighting the continuities of racial exclusion domestically and racialized injustice globally, are better equipped to orient political action in conditions of deep and growing domestic and global injustice. They also point toward promising forms of coalition-making that can contest the exploitative dependence of peoples on extractive arrangements of an imperial or neo-imperial kind.

Martin Luther King's essay "Beyond Vietnam: A Time to Break Silence" can be located within this tradition, but it is particular in that it specifically addresses the US people as a whole and calls on them to oppose an imperialist war. As such, it offers rich theoretical resources to

[4] McKean, *Disorienting Neoliberalism: Global Justice at the Outer Limit of Freedom*, 179. See also Young, "Responsibility and Global Labor Justice," Michael Goodhart, "Interpreting Responsibility Politically," *Journal of Political Philosophy* 25, no. 2 (2017).

[5] Jack Turner, "Audre Lorde's Anti-Imperial Consciousness," *Political Theory* (forthcoming): 22.

[6] Valdez, *Transnational Cosmopolitanism: Kant, Du Bois, and Justice as a Political Craft*, chapters 4 and 5.

[7] Ibid., 117–52.

[8] Ibid., 138–47.

understand the process of self-definition that is required to position the peoples as world historical collective actors that can stand in solidarity with colonial peoples in the periphery and enact a radical democratic response to the transnational reactionary elite politics that he outlines.

5.2 POLITICAL WORLDLINESS AS ANTI-IMPERIAL POPULAR SOVEREIGNTY

King's anti-imperial popular sovereignty foregrounds transnational solidarity that opposes and transcends statist projects of outward domination allied with multinational corporations and international organizations. King makes clear the need for popular narratives that are anti-elitist and *explicitly* face the complicities of western democracies in projects of political control and economic extraction abroad, thus directly targeting the imperial tendencies of popular sovereignty critiqued in this book. King's account also reveals how racial capitalist projects of domination depend on the cooptation of oppressive elites in the periphery. This framework opens avenues to transnational solidarity without being naïve about the deep possessive attachments to imperial structures that tie white citizens to imperial projects. To counter these attachments, King argues, citizens ought to cultivate a sense of history and worldliness, through which they can both understand the dependency of their well-being on global exploitation and start the work of refusing such entanglements and connections with those abroad who struggle against imperial domination.

King gave "Beyond Vietnam" in 1967 as a speech to an audience of 3,000 people at the Riverside Church in New York. It was based on a four-part draft prepared by King before departing for Chicago on March 24, but was stalled by King's assistants, obliging Pastor Andrew Young to rely on volunteers, including Spelman College's Vincent Harding and John Maguire of Wesleyan, to develop the draft, subject to King's feedback and changes to the final version, past the deadline for submission to the news media.[9] King's stance against Vietnam went against close allies and visible Black leaders, including Ralph Bunche, then United Nations under-secretary-general.[10] While the speech itself was continuous with

[9] Taylor Branch, *At Canaan's Edge: America in the King Years, 1965–68* (Simon and Schuster, 2007), 586–91.

[10] Branch, *At Canaan's Edge: America in the King Years, 1965–68*, 584–94; David Lewering Lewis, *King: A Biography* (University of Illinois Press, 2012), 357–8.

his public anti-war statements in the two years that preceded it, its delivery in New York and its role as a preface to King's participation in the April 15 anti-war march to United Nations Plaza magnified its impact.[11] The speech resulted in widespread public condemnation, sometimes followed by half-apologies.[12] In an editorial ("Dr. King's Error"), the anti-war *New York Times* declared that diverting "the energies of the civil rights movement to the Vietnam issue is both wasteful and self-defeating" and that combining these "distinct and separate" causes could prove "disastrous for both."[13] This reaction suggests the threat that the mere naming of these connections posed to structures of domination, let alone that of King's positioning himself in greater proximity to the Black tradition of anti-imperial critique.[14] King's attention to these connections entailed a radical challenge, by bringing into relief his account of transnational oligarchic politics, collective self-definition, and their interplay in a world historical moment that finds the United States taking the mantle of empire, an underemphasized aspect of his thought.

This interpretation goes beyond the predominant focus on one of King's claims in that speech, namely that the war effort was diverting resources away from poverty programs and social uplift.[15] While this was one of King's claims regarding the entanglement between foreign and domestic affairs, his critique is more expansive, including three other points. First, he notes that war-making curtails dissenting voices that call attention to the reactionary character of the Vietnam expedition.[16]

[11] Adam Fairclough, "Martin Luther King, Jr. and the War in Vietnam," *Phylon* 45, no. 1 (1984), Branch, *At Canaan's Edge: America in the King Years, 1965–68*, 584, Lewis, *King: A Biography*, 359.

[12] Including by President Johnson's advisers and Bunche himself, who argued that he misunderstood the speech to be a "mandate to 'fuse' civil rights with peace groups." Branch, *At Canaan's Edge: America in the King Years, 1965–68*, 596.

[13] New York Times, "Dr. King's Error," *New York Times*, April 7, 1967.

[14] Unlike others in this tradition, King stopped short of embracing Marxism, but he did show unequivocal signs of support for democratic socialism and opposition to capitalism, while distinguishing himself and his proposals from communism and his ideas from Marx's, who, he argued, "didn't follow Hegel enough." See Martin Luther King, Jr., "Where Do We Go from Here?," in *The Radical King*, ed. Cornel West (Boston: Beacon Press, 2015 [1967]), 176–77, Andrew J. Douglas and Jared A. Loggins, *Prophet of Discontent: Martin Luther King Jr. and the Critique of Racial Capitalism* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2021), chapter 3.

[15] Fairclough, "Martin Luther King, Jr. and the War in Vietnam," Henry E. Darby and Margaret N. Rowley, "King on Vietnam and Beyond," *Phylon* 47, no. 1 (1986).

[16] Fairclough, "Martin Luther King, Jr. and the War in Vietnam," 26–27, Thomas F. Jackson, *From Civil Rights to Human Rights: Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Struggle for Economic Justice* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 313–14. For

Second, King contrasts the militarization of US society with a nonviolent, persuasive approach to democratic politics. Finally, he connects the war with a desire for wealth and material goods, which he deems a poor principle to orient democracy.

King, moreover, proposes an outward stance that is both collective and historically minded. If adopted, this stance positions a people as an actor whose actions abroad can be judged politically. In King's address, this judgment concerns the role of the American people vis-à-vis the historical moment of decolonization. This stance pierces the ideology of Cold War discourse,[17] which focused on communist threat and containment and distorted the public understanding of the conflict, disavowing the US imperial project and the liberatory character of the Vietnamese struggle against the violent political alienation of imperial exploitation.

To recast Vietnam as an imperial endeavor, King historicizes the moment, recounting that as early as the mid-1950s, the United States was meeting 80 percent of the costs of the French effort to recolonize Vietnam after the country declared independence in 1945.[18] The defeat of the French, King states, could have been followed by independence and land reform, but instead the United States supported dictator Ngo Dinh Diem, who allied with landlords, crushed the opposition, and refused to unify with the North. The successive dictatorial regimes that replaced Diem after the coup against him and his assassination only brought more US troop commitments; this was followed by massive population displacements to escape US bombing and the bulldozing of entire areas.[19] Throughout, the United States boycotted peace efforts from the North and elections that would have brought Ho Chi Minh to power.[20] In light of these actions, King concludes, the Vietnamese must see Americans as "strange liberators" and reasonably distrust their talk of democracy and land reform.[21]

the relation between war and democracy, see also Lucia Rafanelli, "Not Just War by Other Means: Cross-Border Engagement as Political Struggle," manuscript on file with the author (2021).

[17] The question of ideology figures prominently in King's public writing on Vietnam, where he consistently condemns the brainwashing of people by the press and others, which prevented their critical engagement with the question. Fairclough, "Martin Luther King, Jr. and the War in Vietnam," 27.

[18] Martin Luther King, Jr., "Beyond Vietnam: A Time to Break Silence," in *The Radical King*, ed. Cornel West (Boston: Beacon Press, 2015 [1967]), 207.

[19] Ibid., 207–8.

[20] Ibid., 210.

[21] Ibid.

But while the Vietnamese people knew that the discourse of freedom and democracy orienting US Cold War foreign policy was "political myth," such worldliness was lacking among US citizens, who were content with mechanical allegiance to nationalistic goals.[22] This unthinking embrace of narrow self-interest, varnished by Cold War ideology, King argues, is a symptom of a deeper malady of American democracy, whose spirit is dampened by racism, militarism, and materialism.[23] The popular will emerging from this scenario is not clear-eyed but misinformed, apathetic, and conformist.[24] Here King harshly criticizes his allies, who cautioned him against speaking, claiming they do not know the world they inhabit.[25] Hence, American support for foreign policy operates "blindly" in the world, making them an agent that advertises its credentials of freedom and democracy while siding with powerful elites who exploit their peoples. This unworldliness prevents US citizens from properly taking the perspective of their "enemies" and leads them to the violent crushing of liberatory struggles that they do not understand.[26]

Without perspective-taking and understanding, US actions in Vietnam are "horribly clumsy and deadly" games.[27] The particular language that King uses is important; US actions are not only deadly, they are also "clumsy," in the sense of relying on a rough and unsophisticated binary reading of the moment and employing violence in the name of materialism only partially cloaked in anticommunism. By recasting the era as one of anti-colonial revolution rather than "Cold War," King exposes the magnitude and stark consequences of the lack of responsibility of the US citizenry. Rather than standing on the side of liberation, their shallow assessment and clumsy games, backed by a massive military and its weaponry, destroys the "deepest hopes of men" around the world.[28]

Thus, King implicates the demos itself in his critique of US imperial endeavors in Vietnam. Imperial exploitation is tied to the unworldliness of the American people, their willingness to enlist behind shallow assessments of the world and destructive wars predicated upon such historical misreadings. This is a public unwilling to judge its outward behavior democratically; it is too concerned with how to fairly distribute the spoils

[22] Ibid., 206.
[23] Ibid., 214.
[24] Ibid., 201–2.
[25] Ibid., 202.
[26] Ibid., 213.
[27] Ibid., 211.
[28] Ibid., 205, 13.

that comes from this behavior, or is prevented from doing so by a state all too ready to repress voices who dare to express dissent. The United States is an ungainly world leader, King argues: it confidently enlists its military to prioritize the stability of its investments over the revolutionary projects of other peoples and, in the process, reveals the very poor conception of democracy that animates it, a democracy that is fully subsumed within empire.[29]

This account amounts to a *geopolitics* of popular sovereignty which is outward looking and historical, rather than inward looking or based on abstract principles. Polities must grapple with their global position, their dependence on and support of systemic forces of global exploitation, and their positioning vis-à-vis world historical forces of emancipation, a task that depends on dismantling racial ideologies that naturalize hierarchies and delegitimize claims of emancipation as mere violence and disorder. This account goes beyond traditional ways of thinking about popular sovereignty, as having to do exclusively with questions of representation, determining the shape of the people, or the dynamics of this process.[30] It also departs from how contemporary cosmopolitan accounts consider the interrelation between popular sovereignty and the global as bottom-up projects of diffusion of European democratic norms toward the rest of the world.[31] For King, popular sovereignty, that is, a collective project that democratically distributes *common*wealth, can be legitimate only if it scrutinizes its place

[29] Ibid., 213–14. These claims echo more radical and outspoken Black activists of King's era. Only two years later, and partly inspired by the disillusionment with moral appeals that followed King's murder, James Boggs's claim that the United States wields its global influence against other peoples' revolutionary projects would echo King's statements. James Boggs, "Manifesto for a Black Revolutionary Party," in *Pages from a Black Radical's Notebook: A James Boggs Reader*, ed. Stephen Ward (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2011 [1969]), 202.

[30] Frank, *The Democratic Sublime: On Aesthetics and Popular Assembly*, Grattan, *Populism's Power: Radical Grassroots Democracy in America*, Macarena Marey, "The Ideal Character of the General Will and Popular Sovereignty in Kant," *Kant-Studien* 109, no. 4 (2018).

[31] These scholars conceptualize the nexus between democracy and outward behavior as building upon neo-Kantian accounts of the democratic peace. They include Jürgen Habermas, "Does the Constitutionalization of International Law Still Have a Chance?," in *The Divided West* (Cambridge: Polity, 2006), Lea Ypi, *Global Justice and Avant-Garde Political Agency* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), Shmuel Nili, "Liberal Integrity and Foreign Entanglement," *American Political Science Review* 110, no. 1 (2016), and Lior Erez and Cécile Laborde, "Cosmopolitan Patriotism as a Civic Ideal," *American Journal of Political Science* 64, no. 1 (2020). Elsewhere I contend that the

in the world and rejects the reliance on the resources of others obtained through violence. King's vocal denunciation of Vietnam was necessary to debunk the geopolitics of containment and anticommunism that were layered over and obscured the imperial and exploitative goals of US involvement. Anticommunism, which was deployed with particularly zeal against Black radicals,[32] operated as an epistemology of white ignorance, namely, a collective cognitive process that entails an active "not knowing" of facts and incorrect moral judgments about right and wrong regarding the treatment of nonwhites.[33] The reaction to King's intervention, moreover, illustrates the coercive resources invested in the protection of this social epistemology, at play in King's associates' fear of taking his anti-war stance public and the vicious attacks King suffered after he did. A genuinely democratic popular will would have criticized the dark underpinnings of the US polity and its foreign expeditions, but the mere ability to question the Vietnam war and connect it to racial injustice was severely thwarted, and dissent was assimilated to disloyalty.[34] This censorship, King would later argue, "bring[s] down a blanket of intimidation" to disconnect societal discussions from structural change.[35] But dissent, he argued, is necessary to air the many wrongs of US foreign policy, to expose it as imperial, and to redirect attention toward ties of solidarity and commitment to emancipatory struggles at home and abroad, all necessary steps for an anti-imperial popular sovereignty.[36]

predominant moral focus in these approaches, and the assumption that democracy or republicanism at the domestic level (sooner or later) translates into benevolent stances toward the world, obscures rather than theorizes *imperial popular sovereignty* as the dominant mode of western popular sovereignty. Valdez, *Transnational Cosmopolitanism: Kant, Du Bois, and Justice as a Political Craft*, 60–72, 148–51, "Antiimperiale Volksouveränität: Martin Luther King, Frantz Fanon und die Möglichkeit Transnationaler Solidarität," in *Volkssouveränität und Staatlichkeit: Intermediäre Organisationen und Räume der Selbstgesetzgebung*, ed. Philipp Erbentraut and Oliver Eberl (Baden Baden: Nomos Verlag, 2022).

[32] Charisse Burden-Stelly, "In Battle for Peace During 'Scoundrel Time': W. E. B. Du Bois and United States Repression of Radical Black Peace Activism," *Du Bois Review* 16, no. 2 (2019).

[33] Charles W. Mills, "White Ignorance," in *Race and Epistemologies of Ignorance*, ed. Nancy Tuana and Shannon Sullivan (New York: State University of New York Press, 2007), 22, 27.

[34] Fairclough, "Martin Luther King, Jr. and the War in Vietnam," 27.

[35] Martin Luther King, Jr., "Domestic Impact of the War" (National Labor Leadership Assembly for Peace: 1967).

[36] King, "Beyond Vietnam: A Time to Break Silence," 211, 17.

King's critique also addresses how imperial foreign policy dehumanizes US citizens, by enlisting the poor in the fight for the protection of capitalist interests. King's claim here is not that the war should end because it hurts the United States, but that the entanglements abroad are of a piece with oligarchic forces at home, which will only harden if their power is furthered by political support for foreign exploits. These problems, in King's terms, "are tied together;" a nation that "thingifies" slaves will exploit them as well as poor people, and a nation that exploits their own "will also use its military might to protect [its foreign investments]."[37] These entanglements are clear in King's reflections on Black and white poor soldiers who return "physically handicapped and psychologically deranged" or who die to protect US corporate interests and wealthy elites in Vietnam. The violence required to sustain exploitation abroad, in other words, enlists the poor at home to fight on the side of the wealthy at home and abroad and create hell for the vulnerable in Vietnam, something that "the most sophisticated among the soldiers surely realize."[38] In this way, citizens' acceptance of and support for imperial war means that they abide by a transactional political form that deploys vulnerable members of a democratic collective into what King calls "brutal solidarity," that is, the joining of forces for the purposes of destruction, death, and the obstruction of decolonization.[39]

King calls on Americans to instead occupy "the high grounds of a firm dissent based upon the mandates of conscience and the reading of history."[40] In other words, morality is insufficient without a clearheaded world historical analysis. The popular sovereignty King puts forward requires an active acknowledgment of the place occupied by western states in the world and the extension of solidarity toward revolts against old regimes of exploitation that can leave way for "new systems of justice and equality."[41] This is a *political* critique of the United States as a power that has "strength without sight," that is, a critique of its historical sensibility and its vision, which is also that of its citizens.[42] In question are not just the brutality of war and the eerie ability of the United States to brush off the blood and despair it leaves behind, but also its aim to violently pursue enrichment at the expense of the global struggle against colonialism around

[37] King, "Where Do We Go from Here?," 178.
[38] King, "Beyond Vietnam: A Time to Break Silence," 210–11.
[39] Ibid., 213.
[40] Ibid., 202.
[41] Ibid., 215.
[42] Ibid.

the world during the Cold War. Ultimately, Americans' refusal to renounce the privileges and pleasures facilitated by overseas profit positions the country on the wrong side of world revolution.[43] The Cold War operates as a blanket excuse to establish alliances with elites in postcolonial countries to maintain western access to the wealth of the Global South. These connections exceed Vietnam to include alliances with the "landed gentry of Latin America" and the sizable investment of western capitalists in Asia, Africa, and South America, whose profits are taken out without concern for the social improvement of the countries involved.[44]

Here King zeroes in on the dangers of the notion of popular sovereignty criticized in this book, that which presumes that its task is limited to providing for the people and omits analyzing the sources and means through which their wealth is acquired. Here, he echoes Du Bois's critique of imperial democracies or "democratic despotisms," in which the formal advance of democracy coexists with "hatred toward darker races" and the exploitation of the rest of the world, as reconstructed in Chapter 1.[45] Peoples, in King's account, must be held accountable for the sources of the power and wealth they proudly display and for their actions when confronted by urgent times. In other words, a world historical and geopolitical perspective informs his assessment of the behavior of powerful countries when they had the opportunity to act and neglected to do so, or acted to secure oppression instead, feats that are recorded in an "invisible book of life."[46]

By pointing at the possessive attachments that underlie wealthy democracies, King questions the sufficiency of domestically oriented progressive projects for legitimate popular sovereignty. Instead, peoples are responsible for the actions that make their well-being possible and must engage critically with the position of their polity in the world and its role in crucial historical moments, which should follow from "an overriding loyalty to mankind." This contrasts with racism and militarism as the dominant way wealthy countries relate to the Global South and its diasporas, theorized in the second part of this book. These exploitative relations and the materialism they enable become the very source of collective purpose, a stance that degrades the democratic character of their

[43] Ibid., 213, 14.
[44] Ibid., 214.
[45] Du Bois, "The African Roots of War," 709.
[46] King, "Beyond Vietnam: A Time to Break Silence," 217.

popular will by enlisting white citizens in projects of alliance with and enrichment of elites around the world. To this King opposes loyalty to mankind and love, understood not as something "sentimental and weak" but as the "supreme unifying principle of life." Loyalty and unconditional love, he continues, must replace the hate and retaliation that has wrecked nations that "pursued this self-defeating path."[47]

This self-defeating path is led by the interests of capitalists and the force of the state, but King's critique exceeds these groups; he asserts that a polity that is outwardly unjust already bears the marks of these orientations in its own functioning, that is, racism, materialism, and militarism. These flaws, he argues, both precede and are magnified by an unjust foreign policy. As King shows, the most vulnerable in western societies pay particularly dearly for the aggressive pursuit of power abroad, and the revolution of values he advocates depends on the reorientation of the domestic content of popular sovereignty away from military defense and toward social uplift, away from war and toward peace, and away from racism and toward solidarity.[48] Involved in all of these shifts is a refusal of materialism (an orientation to "things" rather than "people"), for it is the force that crowds out solidaristic feelings and creates predatory political systems at home and abroad.

5.3 SELF-DEFINITION, TRANSNATIONAL SOLIDARITY, AND EMANCIPATION FROM SYMBIOTIC ELITES

The account of anti-imperial popular sovereignty I read in King's essay on Vietnam mirrors Fanon's account of postcolonial popular sovereignty in its keen understanding of the world historical moment of postwar anticolonial struggle and of the transnational linkages that serve the purpose of democratization.[49]

King contends that democracies degenerate when they conscript their poor into the task of sustaining global power and their wealthy allies in the (post)colonial world, the selfsame coopted bourgeoisies that Fanon

[47] Ibid., 216.

[48] King, "Beyond Vietnam: A Time to Break Silence," 215.

[49] The pairing between Fanon and King might raise questions, given their divergent ideological locations vis-à-vis socialism and the use of violence. Their different persuasions, however, do not so much invalidate this juxtaposition as make their convergence in the diagnosis of an oligarchically supported imperialism a sign of the strength and reach of a transnational anti-imperial revolutionary ethos. Moreover, recent readings of King's thought have brought into relief the radicalism of his critique of capitalism. Douglas and

targets in *The Wretched of the Earth*. For Fanon, postcolonial bourgeoisies serve as the intermediaries between the metropole and their own country partly by choice, partly due to lack of clout, and partly because of the rapacity of the colonial system.[50] Thus King and Fanon take apart nation-states, offering a nuanced account of oligarchies in the west and the Global South who are the primary beneficiaries of the alliances that enable capitalist accumulation, whose costs are bore by racialized marginalized groups within states. King highlights that Black and white soldiers that would not be able to live in the same neighborhood jointly work in support of empire. This "brutal," cooperative, inter-racial work against the revolution of the dispossessed in the underdeveloped world is the same revolution whose democratic credentials Fanon is interested in deepening post-independence.

Fanon, in his analysis of national consciousness among postcolonial peoples, focuses on the receiving end of western military intervention, military aid, and the training of national armies in the Global South, all of which aim to immobilize the people's consciousness.[51] This immobilization, alongside western-oriented elites' distrust of the capability of the masses for self-government, is what the self-definition of these peoples and their emergent national consciousness counters.[52] National consciousness aids people's resistance to oppression and their ability to grasp complex issues, despite the chemical and psychological warfare of world powers and the corruption and brainwashing of the "would-be-dictators" that replaced them.[53] The struggle itself, moreover, opens new visions for the masses, whose self-definition is rooted in local and collective practices of consciousness-raising that serve to resist top-down efforts to thwart their emancipation.[54]

Loggins, *Prophet of Discontent: Martin Luther King Jr. and the Critique of Racial Capitalism*. Finally, despite King's championing of nonviolence, "Beyond Vietnam" finds him assessing violent resistance in Vietnam as a reasoned and emancipatory response to the ruthless violence of the United States and the regime it supports. This is not unlike Fanon's own assessment of force as the only language that the colonizer understands, and the one it has used, consistently and without moral remorse, in its colonial dealings. Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Richard Philcox (New York: Grove Press, 2004 [1961]), 43.

[50] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 98.

[51] King, "Beyond Vietnam: A Time to Break Silence," 203–4, 14, Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 118–19.

[52] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 130.

[53] Ibid.

[54] Ibid.

Fanonian projects of radical democratization are built upon practices that overcome the nationalism of the independence struggle and replace it with a national consciousness that is both historical and transnational. Fanon describes this transformation in spiritual terms that echo King's own prophetic style and his orientation toward new forms of participation by the poor in his later years.[55] For example, Fanon describes meetings of local citizens' cells as "a liturgical act," where the masses "meet, discuss, put forward suggestions and receive instructions," in a way that makes their brains multiply the potential association of ideas and opens up a wider panorama in front of their eyes.[56] The theme of discovery and widening vistas also animates King's essay, which condemns the narrow "thing-oriented" panorama of US society, and the poisoning of "America's soul" entailed by the crushing of revolutionary actions abroad.[57] This poisoned background, moreover, makes the breaking of the silence on Vietnam "a vocation of agony" given the attacks and censorship that follow, and thus not too different from countering postcolonial authoritarian elites.[58]

Like King, Fanon grounds national consciousness in history. For this, local intermediary organizations must develop the "towns and minds" to see beyond the next harvest and "answer to history."[59] These intermediary bodies do not so much communicate government orders as become spokespersons and defenders of the masses against corruption.[60] The national consciousness of local groups develops in dialectical relation with their representatives so that, through this back and forth, gradually, the people can overcome the demoralization instilled by colonization and become worldlier, more aware of the sense of time of the "rest of the world."[61] But simply looking outward and creating institutions that draw their inspiration from Europe will not do.[62] Fanon offers the cautionary tale of the United States, who two centuries earlier decided to catch up with Europe and was "so successful that [it] ha[s] became a monster where the flaws, sickness and

[55] Shatema Threadcraft and Brandon M. Terry, "Gender Trouble: Manhood, Inclusion, and Justice," in *To Shape a New World: Essays on the Political Philosophy of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, ed. Tommie Shelby and Brandon Terry (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2018), 234.

[56] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 136.

[57] King, "Beyond Vietnam: A Time to Break Silence," 202.

[58] Ibid.

[59] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 127–28, I take the term "intermediary organizations" from Oliver Eberl and Philipp Erbentraut, "Einleitung: Vokssouveränität, Staatlichkeit und intermediäre Organisationen," in *Vokssouveränität und Staatlichkeit*.

[60] Ibid., 130.

[61] Ibid., 135.

[62] Ibid., 239.

inhumanity of Europe have reached frightening proportions."[63] Instead, Fanon argues, international consciousness establishes itself and thrives at the heart of national consciousness, where it can nurture the Third World project of solving the problems to which Europe could not find answers and avoid alienation, i.e., "dragging man in directions which mutilate him, [impose on his brain] tempos that rapidly obliterate and unhinge it, … tear him from himself and his inner consciousness, break him, and kill him."[64]

Here Fanon works on multiple scales, where local groups are one important aspect of the undoing of the work of colonization, whose effects are also felt on a variety of levels.[65] Fanon's emphasis on the "psychological and corporeal elements of the process of construction" after colonization has a counterpart on the national and the global scales,[66] but always resisting the imitation of Europe, and instead pioneering new ideas drawn from processes of national consciousness that increase the affinities of the brain mass of humanity, rather than separating men from each other.[67] In this way, Fanon's account of postcolonial peoples, who craft a trajectory that explicitly eschews European dehumanizing ideals, echoes recent theories of postcolonial peoplehood by Nazmul Sultan, David Temin, and Arturo Chang that grapple with developmental ideas, repurpose them, or restore Indigenous genealogies to claim popular sovereignty, respectively.[68] Yet the anti-imperial notion of peoplehood that I put forward via King and Fanon exceeds these accounts by singling out the problem of postcolonial elites as a central obstacle to democratic founding, whose overcoming requires establishing transnational solidarity to target the oligarchic networks of power and coercion that sustain racial capitalism. This transnational anti-oligarchic orientation reveals an embrace of the global that is nuanced, wary of internationalisms that either rescue "African culture" to measure up with the ostentatious culture of Europeans, extend Europe's essentializing of all Africans and

[63] Ibid., 236–37.
[64] Ibid., 238.
[65] Begüm Adalet, "Infrastructures of Decolonization: Scales of Worldmaking in the Writings of Frantz Fanon," *Political Theory* 50, no. 1 (2022): 25.
[66] Ibid., 19, 21, 22.
[67] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 237–38.
[68] Nazmul Sultan, "Self-Rule and the Problem of Peoplehood in Colonial India," *American Political Science Review* 114, no. 1 (2020), David M. Temin, "Development in Decolonization: Walter Rodney, Third World Developmentalism, and 'Decolonizing Political Theory'," *American Political Science Review* (forthcoming), Arturo Chang, "Restoring Anáhuac: Indigenous Genealogies and Hemispheric Republicanism in Postcolonial Mexico," *American Journal of Political Science* (forthcoming).

their problems, or do not carefully historicize African and Afro-diasporic political questions.[69]

In contrast, transnationalisms that "aid in the struggle against colonial clients domestically and against western dominance abroad" are welcomed,[70] a project that fits King's desired response to Vietnam from the core of the American empire. This solidaristic reach toward marginalized groups within the Anglo-European world has not been given as much attention as Fanon's "collective dynamics of the Third World project" expressed at a mass scale.[71] Anuja Bose's account of Fanon's articulation of the tension between the logic of repressive sovereignty of the imperial nation-states and the logic of resistance within the colonies, does not inquire into the potential of solidarity with groups within the metropole that could work to destabilize empires from within.[72]

Vietnam and the Re-Historicization of Modernity

King and Fanon's affinities extend to their engagement with Vietnam, which Fanon uses to articulate the relationship between national consciousness and transnational solidarity through the establishment of a common temporality that brings together subaltern subjects around the world.[73] This shows in Fanon's assessment of the victory of Vietnam over its colonial power: "The great victory of the Vietnamese people at Dien Bien Phu is no longer strictly speaking a Vietnamese victory. From July 1954 onward the colonial peoples have been asking themselves: 'What must we do to achieve a Dien Bien Phu? How should we go about it?'"[74]

Thus, the Vietnamese victory against the French (and its ally the United States) at Dien Bien Phu shows to colonized peoples that victory is "within reach of every colonized subject," subject only to the proper

[69] Inés Valdez, "Cosmopolitanism without National Consciousness Is Not Radical: Creolizing Gordon's Fanon through Du Bois," *Philosophy & Global Affairs* 1, no. 2 (2021): 7.
[70] Ibid., 12.
[71] Anuja Bose, "Frantz Fanon and the Politicization of the Third World as a Collective Subject," *Interventions: An International Journal of Postcolonial Studies* 21, no. 5 (2019): 672.
[72] Ibid., 673.
[73] Valdez, *Transnational Cosmopolitanism: Kant, Du Bois, and Justice as a Political Craft*, 156, 62, 71.
[74] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 30–31.

organization.[75] Vietnam here appears as an exemplar event that expands the realm of imagination for colonized peoples and brings them together as agents who can expand the realm of the possible. Colonial subjects, whose "dreams of liberty" were made impossible by the colonizers, become "political creature[s] in the most global sense of the term."[76] The political import of Vietnam thus exceeds the achievement for the Vietnamese to mobilize subaltern actors worldwide, including Fanon, King, and Black Power activist James Boggs:

> If mankind still lives a thousand years from today, the chief contribution of this historic epoch to human progress and the advance of civilization will be recognized to have been not the flight to the moon nor the conquest of outer space but the discovery in Vietnam, China, Cuba, the Middle East, and the liberated areas of Africa of the revolutionary process by which great masses of technologically undeveloped peoples are transforming themselves into the politically most advanced human beings the world has ever known. With the conscious mass creation of these new men, women, and youth in the second half of the twentieth century, the history of humanity really begins.[77]

Boggs mentions the technological superiority of core countries only to discard it as a marker of "progress" compared to the truly progressive political accomplishments of "*technologically* undeveloped peoples," which truly initiate the history of humanity. Thus, the anti-colonial imagination that Vietnam elicits in the colonial world was also politically transformative in US left politics, not least because it transformed strategies and spearheaded coalitions among differently racialized groups. Notably, the war switched the political tactics of Mexican-American activists, who had since the Second World War relied on their service in the military to justify their demands for equal treatment.[78] Black Power militants and their insistence upon race pride further inspired Chicano activists and led Mexican-Americans to shift away from claims to whiteness as a route to inclusion and to start politicizing their brownness.[79] This, and other influential left critiques within the anti-war movement, led to the sustained campaign against US Vietnam policy, the founding of the National Chicano Moratorium Committee, and the largest anti-war

[75] Ibid.
[76] Ibid., 40, 50.
[77] Boggs, "Manifesto for a Black Revolutionary Party," 227.
[78] Lorena Oropeza, *Raza Sí!, Guerra No!* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 49.
[79] Ibid., 6, 52, Laura Pulido, *Black, Brown, Yellow, and Left* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 60.

march organized by a US ethnic group, in August of 1970.[80] The anti-war coalitions, comprised of Asian Americans, Chicano and Latino movements, and Indigenous peoples, moreover, were approached by North Vietnamese representatives, or traveled to Vietnam to cement their solidarity.[81] Further, the travel and communication that brought together these groups further stimulated their political imagination and expanded the sense of community beyond the United States.[82] Thus, when Fanon cites Vietnam as a world historical event that creates new visions for colonial peoples, he participates in a transnational anti-colonial community that encompasses radical activists of marginalized groups worldwide that elevated Vietnam for its ability to upset the historical trajectory of a mechanistically destructive European project and opened new paths. What is notable and important for the reconceptualization of popular sovereignty is that both Fanon and King, writing six years apart from each other, specifically connect Vietnam to the radical potential of self-definition among the masses of the core and the Global South – a necessary step to counter the dampening of democratizing forces by capitalist elites, who act transnationally and symbiotically.[83]

Vietnam and other anti-colonial events, in Fanon's telling, not only create a common revolutionary consciousness and temporality among the colonized, but also affect the colonizers, who, in panic, move to decolonize, believing that making the "first move" can let them set the conditions of the aftermath.[84] Facing unrest at home during the period of decolonization meant that European powers could no longer station troops in the colonies permanently, forcing them to accept the sovereignty of their colonies.[85] The new anti-colonial consciousness also meant that withdrawal was far from the end of the affair, Fanon argued. Colonial

[80] Oropeza, *Raza Sí!, Guerra No!*, chapter 5.

[81] Judy Tzu-Chun Wu, *Radicals on the Road: Internationalism, Orientalism, and Feminism During the Vietnam War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013), 7–8.

[82] Ibid., 3.

[83] In the late 1960s and early 1970s, scholars studying dependent development and imperialism echoed these concerns about alliances among elites, though without considering the transnational politics of solidarity that Fanon and King consider and I reconstruct here. Fernando Henrique Cardoso and Enzo Faletto, *Dependencia y Desarrollo en América Latina: Ensayo de Interpretación Sociológica* (Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI, 1996 [1967]), Andre Gunder Frank, *Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America* (New York: New York University Press, 1967), Johan Galtung, "A Structural Theory of Imperialism," *Journal of Peace Research* 8, no. 2 (1971), Ruy Mauro Marini, *The Dialectics of Dependency* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2022 [1972]).

[84] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 31.

[85] Ibid., 31, 34.

subjects would not be fooled or fed by "moral reparation for national independence," knowing that the "wealth of the imperialist nations is also [their] wealth," and Europe itself their creation.[86]

Reading Fanon and King jointly reveals the convergence in the transformative effect of Vietnam on colonial subjects and US racialized groups, which pushes against Fanon's perhaps excessive zeal to historicize and nationalize US struggles and separate them from colonial ones.[87] It shows that racialized groups within the United States were energized by the engagement with anti-colonial resistance and indebted to dynamic spaces located at the margins in the metropole.[88] While Fanon addressed the "European masses" as complicit with "our common masters" and potential allies in the task of re-habilitating "man,"[89] the joint reading proposed demonstrates that dissident groups within the United States were ready for alliances of this kind, and had found in Vietnam a cause that echoed their own situation of racial injustice and provided imaginative fodder in their emancipatory struggle.

5.4 AN EMPIRE OF OLIGARCHS

The juxtaposition of King and Fanon not only identifies the masses whose affinities can ground transnational solidarity, but also diagnoses the symbiotic relation between western and Global South capitalist elites, who emerge as the main obstacle to the deepening of democratic peoplehood in the world. This means that an anti-imperial notion of popular sovereignty must contain an anti-elitist critique that conceptualizes and condemns the transnational elite alliances and regimes that facilitate exploitation and requires the sacrifice of the most vulnerable members of

[86] Ibid., 53, 55, 58.

[87] Valdez, "Cosmopolitanism without National Consciousness Is Not Radical: Creolizing Gordon's Fanon through Du Bois."

[88] Even before Vietnam, marginal spaces such as Black churches and colleges in the United States were crucial for the transformation of Black political consciousness that Du Bois envisioned in the aftermath of the Great War, which emerged from a staunch critique of US ideals and developed in reciprocal conversation with oppressed subjects abroad. W. E. B. Du Bois, "Does the Negro Need Separate Schools?," *The Journal of Negro Education* 4, no. 3 (1935), W. E. B. Du Bois, "A Negro Nation within the Nation," *Current History* 42, no. 3 (1935). For further discussion, see Valdez, *Transnational Cosmopolitanism: Kant, Du Bois, and Justice as a Political Craft*, 138–47, and "Du Bois and the Fluid Subject: *Dark Princess* and the Splendid Transnational in the Harlem Renaissance," in *Expecting More: African American Literature in Transition, 1920–30*, ed. Rachel Farebrother and Miriam Thaggert (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2022).

[89] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 62.

political communities. Such a mode of popular sovereignty would activate resistance to imperial exploitation by western polities, but it also targets authoritarian postcolonial governments who prevent the stimulation, revival, and acceleration of the democratic consciousness of their citizenry.[90]

This radical reconsideration of popular sovereignty in both the metropole and the postcolony is Fanon's "final stage of a dual consciousness" and it requires the renewal of the terms of exchange between these sites. In this new era the underdeveloped world no longer receives European "aid to the unfortunate" with trembling gratitude, but rather understands that "*it is their due*." The capitalist powers, in turn, are ready to acknowledge that "effectively, *they must pay up*."[91] There is a complementary call in King for US citizens to abandon their "proneness to adjust to injustice" out of "comfort, complacency, and a morbid fear of Communism."[92] Instead, a compassionate look is required, but one that goes beyond the actions of a Good Samaritan toward interventions that transform "the whole Jericho Road," to avoid men and women "being constantly robbed and beaten as they make their journey on Life's highway."[93]

In other words, the revolution of values that King calls for not only departs from the pre-political moral stance with which he is often identified, but also explicitly singles out structural deficiencies ("the whole Jericho Road") and systematic processes of dispossession and injustice ("constantly robbed and beaten"). The juxtaposition between Fanon and King again highlights the underemphasized "materialism" of King, whose anti-imperialism identifies structural injustice, creates uneasiness and indignation at the connections between wealth and poverty, and ties them to US capitalists' unscrupulous financial maneuvers overseas.[94] Thus, if for Fanon the work of self-definition of the *colonized* needs to be accompanied by restitution, as Jane Gordon notes,[95] restitution requires in turn that the *colonizing* society undergoes a complementary process of self-definition. This parallel self-definition of the colonizer is what King articulates as the "ability to recapture the revolutionary spirit" by declaring

[90] Ibid., 72, 128, Jane Anna Gordon, *Creolizing Political Theory: Reading Rousseau through Fanon* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014), 131, 50, 85.
[91] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 59, my emphasis.
[92] King, "Beyond Vietnam: A Time to Break Silence," 215.
[93] Ibid., 214.
[94] Ibid.
[95] Gordon, *Creolizing Political Theory: Reading Rousseau through Fanon*, 158.

"eternal hostility to poverty, racism, and militarism," changing unjust mores, and bringing closer a day of brotherhood.[96]

King's call for transformation – led by racialized minorities and the poor, who are left behind or conscripted into dehumanizing militaristic projects – opposes the reactionary alliances that capitalism pursues with postcolonial bourgeoisies. These are the postcolonial authoritarian leaders that Fanon's project of radically democratic national consciousness targets, and which maintain the masses in a lethargic state through western-trained and -funded military and police. The radical democratic politics put forward by King and Fanon demands peoples position themselves in world history as a transnational collective willing to intervene to expand the revolutionary potential of the moment in which they live. The world historical account that these two approaches put forward traces the entwined character of reactionary politics in the west and the Global South, and outlines the radical intermediary spaces of anti-imperial popular sovereignty where transnational solidarity can be nurtured.

This emancipatory project is necessary to counter the ideological and material power of symbiotic global oligarchic politics, in which both western and Global South regimes are complicit. This military-backed forms of economic extraction require the political demobilization of the citizenry, either by privileging bland materialism as the goal of collective self-governing in wealthy countries or by repressing dissent and radical democratic contestation by racial minorities and the populace in the Global South.

The transnationalism of these democratic visions could not be more distant from the approach of multilateralism, which has an elective affinity with the imperial popular politics described in the first two parts of this book, because it brings together states whose peoples recoil from facing history and taking responsibility for the peoples they interfere with. Such popular politics are incomplete political forms, as long as they do not come to terms with the transnational entanglements of the elites that they face domestically and reject side deals that betray emancipatory causes elsewhere. *Democracy and Empire* makes clear that these deals were intimately entwined with formative moments of white democracy, and they are still at play in authoritarian outbursts fueled by the desire of white citizens to appropriate the increasingly meager gains that financial capitalism leaves to the middle classes. The sheltering of this group

[96] King, "Beyond Vietnam: A Time to Break Silence," 215, 16.

depended on self-and-other-determination, the destruction of nature, and the degradation of the racialized subjects and families that ensure the social reproduction of western polities.

Juxtaposing Fanon and King, however, also reveals convergences between the oppressed actors targeted by racial capitalism and their radically democratic projects. This suggests a research agenda that relocates the politics of popular sovereignty in intermediary realms of politics, both *below* the level of nation-states, through anti-elitist democratic groups that can lead processes of democratization from the bottom up; and *above* this level, through transnational coalitions that target global capitalist elites that sustain domination. This is popular sovereignty in an anti-imperial form, a public will opposed to the brutal solidarity of capitalist elites that opens two theoretical pathways. First, it creates a conceptual space for thinking about popular sovereignty without leaving out the space of the global as a realm of political responsibility. Second, it diffuses binaries between well-ordered liberal democracies and violent/corrupt regimes that implicitly or explicitly organize inquiry in analytical philosophy and political science more broadly, by tying both kinds of polities to a global regime of domination and by understanding domestic struggles as necessarily entwined. In other words, the proposed account claims that for domestic politics to be truly democratic, it ought to be transnational.

For this research agenda to progress, however, it is necessary to reflect further on the political relations with Indigenous peoples, on whose land this politics of solidarity takes place. The preceding chapters have touched upon settler colonialism by locating the immigration regime as an accessory of this political form (Chapter 2), and by theorizing the annexation, settlement, and the labor exploitation of Indigenous Mexicans in the lands of their ancestors (Chapter 3) and the destructive stance toward the land and communities of African natives (Chapter 4). The concluding chapter centers North American Indigenous political thinkers to further specify an emancipatory politics that aims to undo settler colonialism and assimilation, while remaining in solidarity with other subjects violently conscripted into this process and attentive to regenerative relations with nature.