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Modern Intellectual History (2022), **19**, 551–574
doi:10.1017/S1479244321000093

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

ARTICLE

Claudia Jones, International Thinker

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Abstract

This article analyses the early international thought of Trinidad-born Marxist journalist Claudia Jones. We focus on a neglected aspect of Jones's intellectual production in the United States: her interrogation of geopolitics in her Weekly Review *articles in the early 1940s. We situate Jones in relation to the contemporary popularization of geopolitical thought in this period, reading her alongside another neglected figure in histories of international thought, the African American geopolitical scholar and diplomatic historian Merze Tate. Jones read together the geopolitical, class, racialized, and anticolonial implications of the expanding Nazi empire, positioning her at the forefront of Marxist theoretical innovation in this period. Moving beyond studies of canonical texts and white male thinkers in international intellectual history, we build on black women's intellectual history to center a black working-class woman's popular theorizing of international relations.*

As recently as 2016, international historian Imaobong Umoren observed that the two fields of global intellectual history and black women's intellectual history are "usually considered separately."[1] Despite decades of work on black women intellectuals, including extensive work on their theorizations of global hierarchy, general histories of international thought and global intellectual history are still written as if women of color had no significant thoughts about the relations between peoples, empires, and states.[2] The separation between global and international intellectual history and black women's intellectual history is a product of the deeply racialized and gendered history of the field of international relations

[1]Imaobong Umoren, "Anti-fascism and the Development of Global Race Women, 1928–1945," *Callaloo* 39/1 (2016), 151–65, at 151.

[2]C.f. Gregg Andrews, *Thyra J. Edwards: Black Activist in the Global Freedom Struggle* (Columbia, 2011); Cheryl Higashida, *Black Internationalist Feminism: Women Writers of the Black Left, 1945–1995* (Chicago, 2011); Gerald Horne, *Race Woman: The Lives of Mrs. Shirley Graham Du Bois* (New York, 2000); Dayo F. Gore, *Radicalism at the Crossroads: African American Women Activists in the Cold War* (New York, 2011); Barbara Ransby, *Eslanda: The Large and Unconventional Life of Mrs. Paul Robeson* (New Haven, 2014); Imaobong Umoren, *Race Women Internationalists: Activist-Intellectuals and Global Freedom Struggles* (Berkeley, 2018); Keisha N. Blain, *Set the World on Fire: Black Nationalist Women and the Global Struggle for Freedom* (Philadelphia, 2018); Keisha N. Blain and Tiffany M. Gill, eds., *To Turn the World Over: Black Women and Internationalism* (Urbana, 2019); Sarah C. Dunstan, "'Une nègre de drame': Jane Vialle and the Politics of Representation in Colonial Reform, 1945–1953,' *Journal of Contemporary History* 55/3 (2020), 645–65.

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https://doi.org/10.1017/S1479244321000093 Published online by Cambridge University Press

itself.[3] More generally, as Barbara D. Savage has written, there is a "broader problem within academic politics where the work of black scholars and thinkers is less likely to be studied, taught, or used, and more often subject to blunt categorization or appropriation."[4] The "usual separation" of black women's international thought and international intellectual history does not arise from a natural separation of fields, but from deep-seated racialized, gendered, and classed assumptions about intellectual significance and influence.[5]

In this article, we problematize the "usual" separation between studies of black women's thought and white, male-centered international intellectual histories.[6] Building on and extending the work of numerous scholars of black intellectual history and radicalism, we analyze and contextualize the distinctively geopolitical languages that Trinidad-born Marxist journalist Claudia Jones (1915–64) developed in the early 1940s. We focus on Jones's intellectual production on what later became one of the core international relations subjects of "geopolitics," the analysis of relations between geography, peoples, and resources, and a central theme in histories of international thought. However, our purpose is not to assimilate Jones to the accepted canon of classical geopolitical theory. Jones rearticulated an already existing alternative anticolonial thinking on the relations between geography, peoples, and resources, which, as Brandon Byrd has observed for African American intellectual history, has "its own origins, objectives, and methods."[7] Indeed, as the recent *American Historical Review* roundtable on the subject emphasized, black internationalist thought more broadly has long offered a rich resource for challenging the "dominant and canonical epistemes" of Anglo-American international thought.[8] Here we place Jones in conversation with "classical" geopolitical thinking and its popularization in the 1940s to reenvision the subjects, thinkers, and approaches currently found in histories of geopolitical international thought.

The vast majority of Jones's written intellectual production took the form of journalism and political essays, most commonly in newspapers published by the Communist Party of the United States (CPUSA). Indeed, though she received no formal education beyond high school, Jones was relatively privileged in her access

[3]A recent study of sixty historical surveys of international thought published since 1929 found references to only four women of color. Patricia Owens, "Women and the History of International Thought," *International Studies Quarterly* 62/3 (2018), 467–81, at 470.

[4]Barbara D. Savage, "Beyond Illusions: Imperialism, Race and Technology in Merze Tate's International Thought," in Patricia Owens and Katharina Rietzler, eds., *Women's International Thought: A New History* (Cambridge, 2021), 266–85, at 276.

[5]Kimberly Hutchings and Patricia Owens, "Women Thinkers and the Canon of International Thought: Recovery, Rejection, and Reconstitution," *American Political Science Review* (2021), https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055420000969.

[6]On methodologies of black intellectual history see Brian D. Behnken, Gregory D. Smithers, and Simon Wendt (eds.), *Black Intellectual Thought in Modern America: A Historical Perspective* (Jackson, 2017); and Keisha N. Blain, Christopher Cameron, and Ashley D. Farmer (eds.), *New Perspectives on the Black Intellectual Tradition* (Evanston, 2018).

[7]Brandon Byrd, "The Rise of African American Intellectual History," *Modern Intellectual History* (2020), https://doi.org/10.1017/S1479244320000219, 3.

[8]Monique Bedasse, Kim D. Butler, Carlos Fernandes, Dennis Laumann, Tejasvi Nagaraja, Benjamin Talton, and Kira Thurman, "*AHR Conversation*: Black Internationalism," *American Historical Review* 125/5 (2020), 1699–1739, quote by Carlos Fernandes at 1720.

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to the means of disseminating her ideas. Few other figures of her class, gendered, national, and racialized position had regular columns or editorships.[9] Jones's writings shaped how thousands of ordinary citizens and colonial subjects in the United States, Britain, and the Caribbean thought about international relations.[10] The *West Indian Gazette* and London's Notting Hill Carnival, both of which she founded, were formative of British blackness.[11] Claudia Jones has been described as "one of the most brilliant, innovative black feminist and radical thinkers of the twentieth century."[12]

Unsurprisingly, Claudia Jones is a key figure in black intellectual histories and is situated within multiple traditions, most commonly black radical internationalist, Caribbean radical, anti-imperial, and transnational black feminisms. Scholars including Carol Boyce Davies, Cheryl Higashida, Denise Lynn, Erik McDuffie and Dayo F. Gore have framed Jones as a radical black feminist, studying her alongside other black women associated with the CPUSA.[13] Francisca de Haan has read Jones in the context of transnational and international feminisms alongside left leaders such as Eugénie Cotton and Pak Chong-ae.[14] However, in the early 1940s, Jones's published work was not as explicitly focused on gender nor, as with her later *Daily Worker* column, primarily aimed at organizing a multiracial and multinational coalition in her role as secretary of the National Women's Commission of the CPUSA.[15] In this period, Jones was charged with reaching and organizing the multiracial and mixed-gendered audiences of the Young Communist League (YCL) through its organ journal, *Weekly Review*. This responsibility, Jones's biographer Carol Boyce Davies notes, 'accompanied her service as education director of the Young Communist League for New York State'.[16] However, as Boyce Davies also notes, Jones is largely missing from histories of US radicalism at mid-century.[17]

[9]Ula Taylor, "Street Strollers: Grounding the Theory of Black Women Intellectuals," *Afro-Americans in New York Life and History* 30/ 2 (2006), 153–71; Joy Jones, "An End to the Neglect of the Problems of Black Women," in Beverly Guy-Shefthall (ed.), *Words of Fire: An Anthology of African-American Feminist Thought* (New York, 1995), 108–23.

[10]There are no circulation figures for *Weekly Review*. However, *Daily Worker* had a circulation of 64,348 in 1948 and *Political Affairs* reached 17,000 in 1954. David Shannon, *The Decline of American Communism: History of the Communist Party of the United States since 1945* (New York, 1959), 88–91. The *West Indian Gazette* had a steady circulation of 10,000 throughout its run, peaking at 30,000 in 1958. Marika Sherwood, *Claudia Jones: A Life in Exile* (London, 1999), 134.

[11]Bill Schwarz, "Claudia Jones and the *West Indian Gazette*: Reflections on the Emergence of Post-colonial Britain," *Twentieth Century British History* 14/3 (2003), 264–85.

[12]Erik S. McDuffie, *Sojourning for Freedom: Black Women, American Communism, and the Making of Black Left Feminism* (Durham, NC, 2011), 8.

[13]Carol Boyce Davies, *Left of Karl Marx: The Political Life of Black Communist Claudia Jones* (Durham, 2008); Higashida, *Black Internationalist Feminism*; Denise Lynn, "Socialist Feminism and Triple Oppression: Claudia Jones and African American Women in American Communism," *Journal for the Study of Radicalism* 8/2 (2014), 1–20; McDuffie, *Sojourning for Freedom*; Gore, *Radicalism at the Crossroads*, 15–73.

[14]Francisca de Haan, "Eugénie Cotton, Pak Chong-ae, and Claudia Jones: Rethinking Transnational Feminism and International Politics," *Journal of Women's History* 25/4 (2013), 174–89.

[15]Cristina Mislán, "Claudia Jones Speaks to "Half the World": Gendering Cold War Politics in the *Daily Worker*, 1950–1953," *Feminist Media Studies* 17/2 (2017), 281–96.

[16]Boyce Davies, *Left of Karl Marx*, 73–4.

[17]Ibid., 2. But see Kate Weigand, *Red Feminism: American Communism and the Making of Women's Liberation* (Baltimore, 2001), 97–113.

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This suggests the need to build on Boyce Davies's framework, situating Jones as a working-class Caribbean women simultaneously within and outside American radical intellectual traditions.[18]

In this article we analyze and contextualize what we newly identify as the distinctively geopolitical languages Claudia Jones deployed in her *Weekly Review* articles between the summers of 1941 and 1943, her response to what she described as "the new realignments" of international relations in this period.[19] We pay particular attention to these writings because they are the principal source for Jones's combination of geopolitical thinking with analysis of anticolonial struggles and Marxist analysis of historic stages. Jones's writings on what became a foundational subject in later histories of international thought, the political implications of the spatial location of particular populations and their resources, emerges most clearly in her writings in support of opening a second military front against the "Berlin–Rome–Tokio" Axis in World War II and in her analysis of what was at stake for the anticolonial left.[20] This framing might at first sight seem at odds with Jones's dominant Marxist–Leninist orientation. After all, geopolitical discourse first emerged in Britain, the United States, and Germany as a response to threats to global white supremacy, including anxieties about rising non-European powers, anticolonial resistance, and industrial working classes.[21] Geopolitical discourse was also gaining prominence among wider US military and intellectual circles in the early 1940s. However, we read this imperial discourse alongside anticolonial and antiracist critiques of empire and white supremacy, which were often explicitly framed in terms of the relations between territory, population, and resources.[22] At a time when such thinking had a pressing political application, Jones reoriented geopolitical analysis for anticolonial and Marxist strategic purposes while centering the material resources, agency, and power of the colonized.

These years, dominated by the Second World War, are characterized by the rise of nationalist anticolonial movements and competing blueprints for a new world order.[23] For Jones, this became even more urgent when the United States abandoned its position of formal neutrality in December 1941. Within the CPUSA this meant the consolidation of the Popular Front strategies adopted from 1935, adapting party policies to "national realities," including coalitions with non-party trade union and other leftist groups and the subordination of all other aims to

[18]Carol Boyce Jones, "Sisters Outside: Tracing the Caribbean/Black Radical Intellectual Tradition," *Small Axe* 13/1 (2009), 217–29.

[19]Claudia Jones, "How Is Morale in America's Army?", *Weekly Review*, 26 Aug. 1941, 6, 15.

[20]Claudia Jones, "Books in Review: The War and the Negro People, by James W. Ford," *Weekly Review*, 3 Feb. 1942, 14. On geopolitical thinking in the US context more generally see Neil Smith, *American Empire: Roosevelt's Geographer and the Prelude to Globalization* (Berkeley, 2003).

[21]Halford J. Mackinder, "The Geographical Pivot in History," *Geographical Journal* 23/4 (1904), 421–7. See also Karl Haushofer, *Geopolitik des Pazifischen Ozeans* (Berlin, 1925); Ellen Churchill Semple, *Influences of Geographic Environment: On the Basis of Ratzels' System of Anthropo-geography* (London, 1911).

[22]This follows in the vein of Adom Getachew's important reading of anticolonial writers against the dominant literatures in international relations and political theory. Adom Getachew, *Worldmaking after Empire: The Rise and Fall of Self-Determination* (Princeton, 2020).

[23]Sarah C. Dunstan, *Race, Rights and Reform: Black Activism in the French Empire and the United States from World War 1 to Cold War* (New York, 2021), 171–218.

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the goal of defeating National Socialism.[24] More broadly, US foreign policy shifted toward an even more decisive role in the international order.[25] Many African American activist organizations envisaged the Second World War as a two-pronged fight against National Socialism abroad and racial injustice at home. From 1942, this approach came to be known as the "Double V for Victory campaign" popularized by the black-owned *Pittsburgh Courier*.[26] For many black intellectuals, the question was whether US foreign policy would continue to replicate the racism of US society or whether, in tandem with anticolonial groups, the groundwork for an entirely different world order could be forged.[27]

We argue that despite the lack of obvious ideological affinity between Marxism–Leninism and the "classical" geopolitical tradition, Claudia Jones's geopolitical analysis in the early 1940s is more than the international relations counterpart to the compromises of the Popular Front. Accordingly, we offer a different reading to journalism scholar Cristina Mislán, who has argued that while Jones critiqued growing US power in the early 1940s, her arguments simultaneously contributed to the growth of US imperialism.[28] Placing Jones in conversation with the turn to geopolitical thinking in the US at this moment identifies and highlights the radical nature of Jones's thinking. She did not separate the relations between geography, peoples, and resources from either capitalism or anticolonial struggles. We show how Jones innovated a seemingly non-Marxist lexicon as well as highlight the relationship between Jones's geopolitical analysis and her theoretical ideas on war's ability to make and remake nations, collective subjectivities, and ultimately international orders. Jones is normally read with thinkers of the black left. Alongside this primary intellectual context, we simultaneously situate Jones in conversation with less radical strands of international thought to highlight the distinctiveness of Jones's geopolitical writings. We also respond to Keisha N. Blain's call for more scholarship on black working-class women's international thinking.[29] We do so through a contrast to a contemporary with whom Jones is not normally associated, the African American diplomatic historian Merze Tate, who, as recently identified by Barbara D. Savage, was developing her own highly original antiracist approach to geopolitics at this time.[30]

[24]M. Isserman, *Which Side Were You On? The American Communist Party during the Second World War* (Middletown, 1982), 12.

[25]Stephen Wertheim, *Tomorrow, the World: The Birth of US Global Supremacy* (Cambridge, 2020).

[26]See James G. Thompson, letter to the editor, *Pittsburgh Courier*, originally printed 31 Jan. 1942; reprinted 11 April 1942, 5.

[27]On African American connections to anticolonial movements see Carol Anderson, *Bourgeois Radicals: The NAACP and the Struggle for Colonial Liberation, 1941–1960* (Cambridge, 2014); Dunstan, *Race, Rights and Reform*. On the movement away from an international focus in African American activism see Carol Anderson, *Eyes Off the Prize: The United Nations and the African-American Struggle for Human Rights, 1944–1955* (Cambridge, 2003); Mary Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton, 2011).

[28]Cristina Mislán, "The Imperial 'We': Racial Justice, Nationhood, and Global War in Claudia Jones' *Weekly Review* Editorials, 1938–1943", *Journalism* 18/10 (2017), 1415–30, at 1427, 1417, 1426.

[29]Keisha N. Blain, "'The Dark Skin[ned] People of the Eastern World': Mittie Maude Lena Gordon's Vision of Afro-Asian Solidarity," in Patricia Owens and Katharina Rietzler eds., *Women's International Thought: A New History* (Cambridge, 2021), 179–97.

[30]Savage, "Beyond Illusions", 277.

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Black radical journalist

As historians Ula Taylor, Keisha N. Blain and Brittney Cooper have recently emphasized, journalism was one of the few forms through which black working-class women could articulate political and intellectual agency and is thus central to black intellectual history.[31] Claudia Jones's path to journalism was shaped by her active involvement in left-wing and black nationalist circles in interwar Harlem. Her family was among the 24,000 West Indian immigrants to the city between 1920 and 1926, which became the base of a number of radical groups, from W. E. B. Du Bois's Pan-African Association to Marcus Garvey, Amy Ashwood Garvey, and Amy Jacques Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA).[32] Jones's father, Charles Cumberbatch, edited a short-lived paper, the *West Indian American*, dedicated to Caribbean immigrants. Both of Jones's parents worked low-paying jobs. Her mother's work at a garment factory was particularly grueling: she died from exhaustion a few years after moving to New York. The economic situation in Harlem only worsened with the onset of the Great Depression as black workers were the first to be laid off.[33]

Impressed by the CPUSA's advocacy for the nine African American boys falsely accused of raping two white women during the Scottsboro trials of the early to mid-1930s, Jones joined the Young Communist League (YCL) in 1936 and became active in the junior National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). From the early 1930s, the CPUSA's legal division offered financial and other support for those incarcerated in US prisons, with at least 30 percent of funds dedicated to black inmates by 1936.[34] By the mid-1930s, the CPUSA worked to forge broad coalitions with organizations including the NAACP, the National Urban League, and the newly formed National Negro Congress. Jones was not alone in finding this activism attractive. By 1939, the CPUSA's Harlem branch counted 2,800 black members and seven black members on its Central Committee.[35] Jones's involvement in the Scottsboro protests was limited by ill health. Aged seventeen, she was diagnosed with tuberculosis and spent a year at the Sea View Sanatorium on Staten Island. While her teachers encouraged her to apply for college, Jones went straight into jobs in laundry and millinery after graduating from high school in 1935. She had ambitions to become a social worker or doctor.[36] But "I had to help support myself and contribute to the family larder," she explained.[37] Working full-time, Jones still remained involved in black activist organizations and the CPUSA.

[31]Brittney C. Cooper, *Beyond Respectability: The Intellectual Thought of Race Women* (Illinois, 2017); Taylor, "Street Strollers"; Blain, *Set the World on Fire*.

[32]James, *Holding Aloft*, 358.

[33]See Stephen Robertson, Shane White, Stephen Garton, and Graham White, "This Harlem Life: Black Families and Everyday Life in the 1920s and 1930s," *Journal of Social History* 44/1 (2010), 97–122.

[34]M. Fitzgerald, M. Furmanovsky, and R. Hill, "The Comintern and American Blacks 1919–1943," in R. Hill, ed., *The Marcus Garvey and the UNIA Papers*, vol. 5 (Berkeley, 1986), 841–54, at 849.

[35]Gerald Horne, "The Red and Black," in Michael E. Brown et al eds., *New Studies in the Politics and Culture of US Communism* (New York, 1993), 199–238, at 214.

[36]Claudia Jones FBI File, 25 May 1942, 4, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Claudia Jones/Marika Sherwood Research Collection, Box 2(2) US FOIA 2/8.

[37]Claudia Jones, "Dear Comrade Foster, The Following Is the Autobiographical (Personal, Political, Medical) History that I Promised … Comradely, Claudia Jones (December 6, 1955)," *American Communist History* 4/1 (2005), 85–93, at 89.

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On an institutional level, the CPUSA was not particularly welcoming to black members until the 1930s and its more concerted efforts towards recruitment and engagement. Separate radical black organizations such as the African Blood Brotherhood (ABB) emerged in the immediate aftermath of the First World War and individual activists adopted a Marxist praxis.[38] While black radical traditions may have emerged in the "social cauldron of Western society," they nevertheless reflected a specifically African response to European oppression, a tradition that reaches back centuries.[39] Following the First World War, prominent black Harlem radicals such as the ABB founders Grace P. Campbell, Cyril Valentine Briggs, Richard B. Moore, and Otto Huiswood read and circulated the *Communist Manifesto*. They developed their readings in the context of racial and imperial exploitation, expanding Marxist theory.[40]

Black thinkers attracted to the CPUSA in the interwar period were, as Robin D. G. Kelley has phrased it, "deeply touched by the Bolshevik Revolution as well as by workers' uprisings and racial violence in American cities during and after World War I."[41] Their Marxism was underpinned by an analysis of racial inequality and thus they often led Marxist theoretical innovation.[42] From 1917, Chandler Owen and A. Philip Randolph's newspaper *The Messenger* provided socialist analyses of the contemporary crisis whilst the ABB's short-lived *The Crusader* offered Marxist perspectives on racial questions. Indeed, Cyril Briggs and Eugene Gordon, a Harlem Renaissance writer, CPUSA activist, and later Jones's colleague at the *Daily Worker*, formulated early arguments on the intersection of gender, race, and class.[43] Likewise, Maude White, an organizer for the CPUSA Needle Trades Workers Industrial union, published two articles in *Labor Unity* on the relations between class and racial discrimination.[44]

More generally, the African American press was a key outlet for black intellectual work, including on the relationship between geography, peoples, and resources.[45] Since at least 1915, leading African American intellectual and activist W. E. B. Du Bois conceived international relations in these terms, understanding the First World War as an inter-imperial struggle for the resources of African territories.[46] The West Indian socialist Cyril Briggs vehemently criticized the US for its

[38]The ABB was short-lived and ultimately absorbed into the CPUSA. Many of its key members went on to join key black organizations such as Marcus Garvey's UNIA and the American Negro Labor Congress, as well as the CPUSA itself.

[39]Cedric J. Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (Chapel Hill, 2005; first published 1983), 69, 72–3.

[40]See Minkah Makalani, *In the Cause of Freedom: Radical Black Internationalism from Harlem to London, 1917–1939* (Chapel Hill, 2011).

[41]Robin D. G. Kelley, *Race Rebels: Culture, Politics, and the Black Working Class* (New York, 1994), 105.

[42]Dunstan, *Race, Rights and Reform*, 48–85.

[43]Cyril Briggs and Eugene Gordon, *The Position of the Negro Woman* (Pittsburgh, 1931).

[44]Maude White, "Special Negro Demands," *Labor Unity* 6 (May 1931), 10–11; "Fighting Discrimination," *Labor Unity* 7 (Nov. 1932), 27–8; Boyce Davies, *Left of Karl Marx*, 33, 247.

[45]Robert Chrisman, "Preface," in Theodore G. Vincent, ed., *Voices of a Black Nation: Political Journalism in the Harlem Renaissance* (San Francisco, 1973), 20.

[46]See W. E. B. Du Bois, "The African Roots of War," *Atlantic Monthly*, May 1915, 707–14; Du Bois, "Chapter 1: Interpretations: The Black Man and the Wounded World," *Crisis*, 27 (Jan. 1924), 110–14; Du Bois, W. E. B. (William Edward Burghardt), 1868–1963, Africa, Its Place in Modern History, ca.

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efforts towards "getting an empire of vassal states" in the Caribbean and Latin America, and saw the struggle for land as the determining cause of the war.[47] In 1919 he argued that peace could only occur if "[g]eography is to be no more merely the expression of imperialistic greed and plunder."[48] In a different way, Marcus Garvey saw the strategic importance of controlling Africa, urging his supporters to fight for the cause of black control of the continent.[49] Jones was an heir to and an active creator of these overlapping legacies of black journalism and interwar radical internationalism, particularly in her work in the late 1930s and early 1940s. She moved in the same circles as many of these thinkers; we can be confident that she knew Briggs, Gordon, and White, and she certainly read Du Bois.

Jones remained active in black organizing during the late 1930s, writing a column, "Claudia Comments," for the "Negro nationalist" newspaper of the Federated Youth Clubs of Harlem.[50] By this time, her activism had transitioned into full-time work: she was employed in the Business Department of the CPUSA periodical *Daily Worker*. Her writing in this period primarily focused on the activities of "Negro youth" organizations, but her job also involved writing summaries of the editorials on fascist Italy's invasion of Ethiopia in the mainstream press, as well as black and trade union outlets. "To my amazement," she later recalled, "I saw my boss reading my précis to the applause and response of thousands of community people in Harlem … [and] the next day … come in and tell me what a 'big Negro' he was."[51]

During 1937, on becoming the secretary of the executive committee of the Harlem YCL, Jones completed six months at the CPUSA's training school in New York.[52] Initially established in the early 1920s to offer workers a primer in Marxism, by the time Jones attended the school offered courses ranging from the core "Fundamentals of Communism" to "Citizenship and Naturalization" and practice-based workshops on running newspapers. The school printed cheap versions of Marxist texts, as well as general textbooks for students. Though we cannot locate Jones's student records, we can be confident that she took the core course. It is also likely that she engaged with the work of those who taught at the school when she attended, including the Jewish American literary critic and

1930, W. E. B. Du Bois Papers (MS 312), Special Collections and University Archives, University of Massachusetts Amherst Libraries.

[47]Cyril Briggs, "What Does Democratic America in Haiti? [*sic*]", in *The Crusader I* (New York, 1987), 329–30.

[48]Cyril Briggs, "If It Were Only True," *The Crusader I* 1:7 (New York, 1987), 228.

[49]Marcus Garvey, "Address by Marcus Garvey in Brooklyn," *West Indian*, 28 Feb. 1919, in Robert A. Hill, ed., *The Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Papers*, vol. 1 (Berkeley, 1983), 374–5.

[50]Jones, "Dear Comrade Foster," 89. It had a circulation of 4,000–5,000, but no further details of the publication are available.

[51]Ibid., 89. This is likely the then editor of the *Daily Worker*, the Harvard-trained African American lawyer Benjamin J. Davis Jr. See Claudia Jones, "Ethiopian Aide and Wife Rally Help Here for People," *Daily Worker*, 26 Jan. 1937, 5; Jones, "NAACP Youth Delegates Map Program: 200 Discuss Special Problems Confronting Negro Youth," *Daily Worker*, 2 July 1937, 3; Jones, "Negro Youth Pamphlet," *Daily Worker*, 17 June 1938, 7.

[52]Marvin E. Gettleman, "The New York Workers School, 1923–1944: Communist Education in American Society," in Michael E. Brown, Randy Martin, Frank Rosengarten, and George Snedeker, eds., *New Studies in the Politics and Culture of U.S. Communism* (New York, 1993), 261–80.

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novelist Mike Gold, the Marxist scholar of African American history Herbert Aptheker, and the Russian-born CPUSA activist and editor Alexander Bittelman. Jones returned to give lectures at least once.[53]

Claudia Jones is thus positioned at the intersection of a long tradition of black print radicalism and CPUSA institutional training, as well as black internationalism.[54] She brought these traditions to her work when she joined the editorial board of the YCL journal the *Weekly Review*, and as associate editor in 1938. According to its black executive secretary Harry Winston, the YCL itself was "first and foremost an educational organization … based upon the teachings of Marxism–Leninism … combined with practical activity."[55] The *Weekly Review*, which was published between 1938 and 1943, was an instrument of this explicitly educative purpose, designed to inform YCL members (and potential members) of Marxist–Leninist views on world events and compel them to action. The founding of both the YCL and the *Weekly Review* also coincided with a broader move within the CPUSA to "raise the ideological level of its membership."[56] Officially, neither the YCL nor its journal were part of the CPUSA but the editorial team for the *Weekly Review* were often CPUSA members like Jones.

Jones began writing for the paper in the summer of 1940, at the age of twenty-five. By 1941, she had also become the national educational director of the YCL, pushing forward youth education programs and combining this work with involvement in a number of black activist organizations such as the National Council of Negro Youth, the Southern Negro Congress and the National Negro Congress. At this time membership of the YCL was reported as 14,000, with over half of these members based in New York and many in Harlem.[57] CPUSA leaders worried, however, that the YCL was becoming a "cadre organization of the progressive, mass youth organizations" rather than an explicitly communist movement.[58] The *Weekly Review*, and thus Claudia Jones as an editor, were tasked with turning this situation around.

Jones had risen to the position of editor in chief of *Weekly Review* in 1942, the year before publication was suspended to prepare for a "new, bigger, broader anti-fascist magazine" in the summer of 1943 to coincide with the dissolution of the YCL and the creation of its replacement organization, American Youth for Democracy.[59] This new magazine was *Spotlight*, which launched in December 1943.[60] Membership of the YCL had increased dramatically in the wake of the

[53]Announced in "Negro Women in the Struggle for Peace and Democracy," *Daily Worker*, 15 Feb. 1952, 8.

[54]See, for example, McDuffie, *Sojourning for Freedom*, 126–59.

[55]Harry Winston, "An understanding of the YCL Convention," *Party Organiser*, July 1937, 17–19.

[56]William Z. Foster, "Editorial," *Party Organiser*, Feb. 1938, 5, cited in Mark Sylvers, "American Communists in the Popular Front Period: Reorganization or Disorganization?", *Journal of American Studies* 23/3 (1989), 375–93, at 388.

[57]John Earl Haynes and Harvey Klehr, "The CPUSA reports to the comintern: 1941," *American Communist History* 4/1 (2005), 21–60, at 32.

[58]Eugene Dennis, quoted in ibid., 32.

[59]"A Statement from the Editors," *Weekly Review*, 6 July 1943, 2.

[60]Walter Goldwater, *Radical Periodicals in America 1890–1950: A Bibliography with Brief Notes* (New Haven, 1963), 170. Jones left *Spotlight* in 1945 to become the Editor of the "Negro Affairs" unit at the *Daily Worker*.

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Great Depression and *Spotlight* was an attempt to cater to this growth. Yet Jones had taken on the role of editor of *Weekly Review* at a moment when racial justice was deprioritized within the CPUSA. Activism on behalf of black civil rights in the 1930s had not been twinned with comprehensive efforts to eliminate racism within the party despite consistent criticism from black members. CPUSA leaders were grappling with the reconcilability of black nationalism and Marxism. Its general secretary, Earl Browder, was unpersuaded that African Americans could be integrated into the class struggle.[61] Tackling Jim Crow was far from a priority for many CPUSA leaders, especially as events in Europe threatened a radical reorganization of world politics.

In 1939, the CPUSA adopted the Comintern position of support for the non-aggression pact between the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany. Its refusal to engage a multi-pronged platform including fighting National Socialism and racism in the US eroded the image of antiracism created during the Scottsboro trials. Prominent black communists or fellow travellers, such as the novelists Richard Wright, Chester Himes, and Ralph Ellison, broke with the CPUSA over this issue, and some, like Cyril Briggs, were expelled for continuing to work against racism.[62] Jones chose to stay to reform the party from within, but she was no less critical of efforts to downplay racial injustice. She sought to persuade both black communities and the CPUSA of the commensurability of class struggle and antiracism. Yet she placed loyalty to the CPUSA over allegiance to the NAACP; early writings criticized middle-class NAACP leaders.[63] Here we follow Boyce Davies, treating Jones as both a product and a driving force of the CPUSA, a thinker who saw more potential for justice, change, and black internationalism in the radical politics of the CPUSA than in the NAACP.

In this phase of the "second imperialist war," Jones's writing articulated black internationalist positions in solidarity with "oppressed peoples, be they Irish, Chinese, or West Indian."[64] As Naison has pointed out, the Harlem party's "international analysis resuscitated a critique of Western imperialism that had been central to the '20s and early '30s, but muted in the Popular Front, and a renewed call for colonial independence."[65] West Indian intellectuals such as Jones were at the forefront of this anticolonial political and intellectual work. She educated her readers about Frederick Douglass, Paul Robeson, and Clara Zetkin, marshaling their thinking to support anticolonial struggles abroad and against the war industry at home.[66] The Soviet Union's non-aggression pact with Germany, Jones argued,

[61]Mark Solomon, *The Cry Was Unity: Communists and African Americans, 1917–1936* (Jackson, 1998), 83.

[62]Chester Himes, "Now Is The Time! Here Is The Place!", *Opportunity* 20/9 (1942), 272–3; Carol Posgrove, *Divided Minds: Intellectuals and the Civil Rights Movement* (New York, 2001), 66–9. See also Manfred Berg, "Black Civil Rights and Liberal Anticommunism: The NAACP in the Early Cold War," *Journal of American History* 94/1 (2007), 72–96, at 80–81.

[63]Boyce Davies, *Left of Karl Marx*, 76.

[64]Claudia Jones, *Jim Crow in Uniform* (New York, 1940), 19; Jones, "In the Spirit of Frederick Douglass," *Weekly Review*, 17 March 1941, 3, 21.

[65]Mark Naison, *Communists in Harlem during the Depression* (Urbana, 2005), 293.

[66]A heavily annotated copy of Zetkin's 1934 book *Lenin on the Woman Question* is among Jones's papers. Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Claudia Jones Memorial Collection, Box 3 (3).

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was an attempt to "defend its own borders … to limit the sphere of World War."[67] She duly argued against US entry into this inter-imperialist war, which "was then … a predatory war," Jones later wrote, "of two rival imperialist groups of powers—British imperialism versus German imperialism, for the redivision of the world, for new markets, [and] subjugation of peoples."[68] At this point, Jones described and analyzed world politics as structured by competing empires, engaged in inter-imperial conflict and cooperation supporting the interests of the capitalist classes within the imperial core; that is, largely congruent with the contemporary Marxist–Leninist assessment of international relations.

Germany's invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941, and Hitler's subsequent war of annihilation against his "Slavic" racial enemy, caused a further schism in black socialist internationalism and a shift in Jones's approach to international theorizing. Following Moscow's lead, most communist parties quickly overturned their refusal to support the Allies' war against the expanding Nazi empire. Operation Barbarossa was a threat to the survival of socialism itself. Writing one month later, Jones's fellow Trinidadian historian C. L. R. James dissented. "Hitler is not oppressing Negroes in Chicago, in San Francisco or in Birmingham. Negroes were oppressed before Hitler was born. They will be oppressed after he is dead—unless they overthrow their oppressors, the American ruling class."[69] To support US entry into the war in Europe, James argued, would necessarily "push the American workers and the Negro people into the jaws of the American ruling class."[70] Jones disagreed. "We must face realities."[71] "This is a test of everything we are fighting for."[72] The bourgeois democracies were still waging an inter-imperialist war, but the absolute priority was to put an end to Hitler's attempt at world conquest. This entailed antifascist unity, a popular front with non-working-class, bourgeois forces, and temporarily subordinating socialism to the immediate task of preventing the fascist overthrow of the USSR.

The new realignments

Claudia Jones's main interest between the summers of 1941 and 1943, comprising the bulk of her writing for *Weekly Review*, was to argue for the United States to open a second front in the war against the Axis powers. Hitler "can only be met with … fire and steel."[73] Jones's response to what she called "the new realignments which took place in the world, on an international as well as on a domestic scale,"

[67]Jones, *Jim Crow in Uniform*, 13.

[68]Claudia Jones, "Quiz: Wasn't the Bourgeois Democracy of the British …", *Weekly Review*, 9 Dec. 1941, 14. Jones's most powerful arguments against the US joining the inter-imperial war is in her 1940 pamphlet *Jim Crow in Uniform*. Tam132 CPUSA, Box 113. According to Jones, this pamphlet "had a popular distribution of 100 thousand copies." "An Interview with Claudia Jones, Associate Editor," *Weekly Review*, 3 Feb. 1942, 5.

[69]Written under the penname J. R. Johnson, "Beware of Those Pushing You into the War," *Labor Action* 5/27 (1941), 4, available at www.marxists.org/archive/james-clr/works/1941/07/beware.htm, accessed 18 Oct. 2019.

[70]Ibid., 4.

[71]Jones, "How Is Morale in America's Army?", *Weekly Review*, 26 Aug. 1941, 6, 15.

[72]Jones, "What We Must Now Do about India," 10.

[73]Jones, "How Is Morale in America's Army?", 6.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1479244321000093 Published online by Cambridge University Press

combined a Marxist–Leninist lexicon of historic stages and social forces with a geopolitical language focusing on the relations between territory, populations, and resources, centering on the material and political power of colonized populations.[74]

Classical geopolitical thinking, which emerged in the imperial core at the turn of the twentieth century, emphasized "geographical causation in universal history," connecting geographical elements with the evolution of competing and inevitably conflictual empires as they grew and expanded in a closed system that had become worldwide in scope.[75] Geopolitical thought was a response to the closing of frontiers in both the American West and globally; to more intense inter-imperial rivalries and increasing contacts across racialized populations; and to anxieties about threats to global white supremacy from anticolonial resistance, socialist revolution, and women's suffrage. As the English socialist economist Beatrice Webb wrote in her diary in 1918, "the uprising of the manual workers … is an uncomfortable shadow" across Halford Mackinder's "admirable maps of the rise and fall of empires."[76] Jones did not prioritize geographical explanations, or even the effects of physical geography, but sought to account for the urgency of a second military front in terms of the spatial location of particular populations and their resources at a time when the US government itself was commissioning new geopolitical thinking.

Although emerging from a very different kind of politics, Jones's writings from the summer of 1941 grappled with a similar problem to that motivating the wider return to geopolitical thinking in the United States in the early 1940s, the initial successes of Nazi geopolitical strategy. In the Nazi case, ideas that the German people needed *Lebensraum* were justified using the concept of *Geopolitik* elaborated by Karl Haushofer and put into practice under Hitler's government by the politician and Haushofer student Rudolf Hess. In 1942, the United States Military Intelligence Service created a Geopolitical Section and the US National Defense University Press reissued Mackinder's 1919 work *Democratic Ideals and Reality*, with its analysis of "the uneven distribution of fertility and strategical opportunity."[77] As Jeremy Black has written, US entry into the war "led to a sustained need to explain the conflict to what was … a mass democracy at war, and in a more wide-ranging conflict than any of its previous wars … The explanation involved both an account of Axis geopolitics, specifically an interconnectedness of threats and advances, and an active propagation of a rival US geopolitics."[78] Mass media coverage of geopolitical analyses increased, often explicitly responding to Haushofer's ideas.[79] As Jones's contemporary, Merze Tate, put it in 1947, the "German theory of Geopolitics leads to war." The "broader interpretation," which Tate innovated, centered on the "geographic study of the state from the

[74]Ibid., 6, 15.

[75]Mackinder, "The Geographical Pivot in History," 422. See also Halford J. Mackinder, *Democratic Ideals and Reality* (Washington, 1942; first published 1919), 1; Haushofer, *Geopolitik des Pazifischen Ozeans*; Semple, *Influences of Geographic Environment*.

[76]Quoted in Mark Polelle, *Raising Cartographic Consciousness: The Social and Foreign Policy Vision of Geopolitics in the Twentieth Century* (New York, 1999), 69.

[77]Mackinder, *Democratic Ideals and Reality*, 1.

[78]Jeremy Black, *Geopolitics and the Quest for Dominance* (Bloomington, 2015), 167–8.

[79]Matthew Farish, *The Contours of America's Cold War* (Minneapolis, 2010), 16.

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view point of foreign policy." The elements of international "history are man, place, and time, while the elements of geopolitics are the earth and state. The dynamic nature of geopolitics is found in the adjustment of the state to the natural environment."[80]

In her popular writings for *Weekly Review*, Claudia Jones did not engage directly with academic proponents of geopolitics. She was in an explicitly educative and political role. Much of her writing was presented in the form of a dialogue with her young readers, framed as a "quiz" or responses to their questions. In this way, she explained to her audiences why they should support sending troops to Europe, drawing together the geopolitical, class, racial, and anticolonial developments and implications of the expanding Nazi empire. In seeking to articulate what was at stake in Hitler's invasion of the Soviet Union, Jones pointed to the USSR's geopolitical as well as ideological position as leader of the communist world. In her words, but echoing elements of Mackinder's "heartland theory," the overthrow of the Soviet Union "would provide German fascism with the supplies necessary to launch it fully on the road to complete world conquest. Both geographically, as well as militarily and materially, it would place Hitler in the strategic position of controlling two continents, to dictate terms to all countries of the world, including our own."[81]

Given Germany's alliance with Japan, and Japan's successful land offensives across Asia, Jones also analyzed India's strategic significance and vulnerabilities in the global war. "India is in the path of Axis aggression. Hitler is moving in the direction of Asia Minor, helped by [Field Marshall Erwin] Rommel in the East, thus hoping to conquer the Caucasus. Japan is showing signs of moving upon Soviet Siberia and India … For the aim of the Axis powers is to separate the Soviet Union and China from their allies."[82] Jones also read Allied policies through a geostrategic lens. In support of US entry into the North Africa campaign, she praised the degree to which its success "paved the way for the complete encirclement and destruction of Rommel's armies; it has opened up new possibilities for using North Africa as a base for launching the drive toward Europe."[83]

Jones not only articulated popular geopolitical framings of the war with a Marxist–Leninist lexicon of historic stages. She combined this with an anticolonial political ethos and analysis centering on the agency of the colonized; "the national and colonial peoples the world over, are in motion, correctly viewing this war as a war in which advancement must come for them."[84] Rather than the stage on which great power conflict was set, as in the classical geopolitical analysis of Ellen Churchill Semple and others, colonial peoples themselves—"more than two thirds of the world's population"—were "major actors" in determining their own fate.[85] Thus, Jones wrote, "any correct approach to the question must flow from the

[80]Merze Tate, "Teaching of International Relations in Negro Colleges," *Quarterly Review of Higher Education Among Negroes* 15 (1947), 149–53, at 150, 151.

[81]Claudia Jones, "Is Socialism the Issue in This War?", *Weekly Review*, 2 Sept. 1941, 12.

[82]Jones, "What We Must Now Do about India," 8.

[83]Claudia Jones, "Full Speed Ahead to Victory," *Weekly Review*, 25 Nov. 1942, 2.

[84]Jones, "Your Questions Answered: Where Do the Colonies Stand?", 13.

[85]Ibid., 13. Cf. Ellen Churchill Semple, "Japanese Colonial Methods," *Bulletin of the American Geographical Society* 45/4 (1913), 255–75.

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realization that the national and colonial peoples are a vital factor … The war is raging in regions inhabited by victims of colonial exploitation."[86]

Jones's most developed case study of the geopolitical significance of colonial populations was India. In one of her lengthiest *Weekly Review* articles, "What We Must Now Do about India," she analyzed its strategic importance. India "abounds in natural resources," she wrote. "In 1939, India turned over 3,000,000 tons of iron and steel … It has important coal deposits, cement, paper, wool and textile and shipbuilding industries. India is strategically located, both with regard to the Southwest Pacific and the Middle East, and can thus serve as a nearby and key arsenal to a vast sector of the world front."[87] As Merze Tate would also write in 1943, "Englishmen and Americans … [who] think primarily in terms of Europe and European civilization, should reflect on the fact that India, China, and Russia form a contiguous triangle of 13,534,945 square miles—a great enough aggregation of the earth's space to be the center of gravitation."[88] Tate's contemporary, Johns Hopkins scholar Owen Lattimore, also urged Americans to realize that "the most important consequences of victory may yet be the consequences in Asia."[89] At the time, Tate and Lattimore's geopolitical work represented innovative approaches to international relations. Reading Jones's alongside them highlights her more radical alternative orientation of geopolitical strategic thinking.

The victory of "Hitler's barbarous race theories," Jones insisted to her readers, would eliminate the independence of existing nation-states and thwart the possibility of further decolonization and thus worldwide socialism.[90] Jones also argued that a triumphant Hitler "would have implications for progressive politics the world over, giving "a green light signal to the reactionaries … in every country … to destroy the labor movement, the peoples organizations, the democratic and civil liberties."[91] Thus she was adamant that to support the Popular Front was not to abandon "the century old struggle of the workers against capitalism." The war itself would "create those conditions for the future solution of all problems arising from capitalism."[92] Indeed, while Jones argued that socialism and anti-imperialism were temporarily subordinated to defeating Hitler "in the *present historic stage* of the war," she claimed to refuse this compromise in the struggle against racism.[93] Antiracism and antifascism were mutually reinforcing. An Allied victory against fascism could still portend revolutionary change. In contrast, a Nazi victory would be "the basis for re-enslavement."[94] The threat to workers, women, and people of color was unprecedented. "Fascism's roll call of murder, plunder and ruin

[86]Jones, "Where Do the Colonies Stand?", 13.

[87]Ibid., 13.

[88]Merze Tate, "Review: Krishnalal Shridharani, Warning to the West," *Journal of Negro Education* 12/4 (1943), 654–5, at 654.

[89]Owen Lattimore, *America and Asia* (Claremont, 1943), 32.

[90]Claudia Jones, "Why Not Negotiate Peace with Hitler?" *Weekly Review*, 9 Sept. 1941, 13.

[91]Jones, "Is Socialism the Issue in This War?", 12.

[92]Claudia Jones, "Quiz: Does Support for the National Front Mean an End to the Struggle against Capitalism?", *Weekly Review*, 4 Nov. 1941, 14.

[93]Jones, "Is Socialism the Issue in This War?", 12, emphasis added.

[94]Claudia Jones, "Quiz: Is Not the Question for the Struggle for Negro Rights Equally an Important Issue as the Defeat of Hitler?", *Weekly Review*, 18 Nov. 1941, 13.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1479244321000093 Published online by Cambridge University Press

from Ethiopia to Madrid, from Paris to Libya; from Kharkov to Sevastopol, is one unparallalled [*sic*] in the history of all mankind."[95] For Jones, it was clear that "Hitler victorious would exterminate the Negro people, as is proven in the case of the Jewish people."[96] The expansion of Axis power risked worldwide Jim Crowism or worse.

In an essay on the implications of the "growing threat of the axis powers to the colonial peoples in the Far East," Jones wrote of both "*national* and colonial peoples."[97] In the context of concrete political struggles, Jones was comfortable fusing socialism and nationalism.[98] Informed by her political-economic analysis of the origins of Nazism and its relation to the racial economy in the American South, Jones argued in 1946 that African Americans in the "Black Belt" of the American South objectively constituted an oppressed nation with the right of self-determination. If they so wished, African Americans could secede from the United States and form a Black Belt republic as an expression of "proletarian internationalism."[99] Jones's stance here also constituted a direct intervention into internal party politics. In 1944, Earl Browder had transitioned the CPUSA from a political party into the Communist Political Association (CPA) on the basis that American unity was key to winning the war.[100] As part of this shift, Browder disavowed the racial-justice platform and, in particular, the Black Belt thesis because it threatened the united front. Within a year, the CPUSA was re-formed and Browder was ousted from the leadership. The question of the Black Belt thesis and its role in the party platform remained open. Hence Jones's 1946 article constitutes her intervention in party political policy as well as her intellectual position on black self-determination in the United States.

In her wartime writings for *Weekly Review*, Jones differentiated support for national struggles in the concrete historical moment of World War II from bourgeois forms of nationalism that consolidated capitalist state power. In her words, "all national struggles that are developing today … will not as in the 19th century lead to a new high for capitalism." Instead, Jones argued, they "take place in the period of full capitalist development … which … is unable to solve the manifold problems of the people, due to its very structure. That is why these struggles can only lead to the creation of the pre-conditions for mankind's advancement to Socialism."[101] Depending on the concrete historical and political circumstances, anticolonial nationalism, including among African Americans, and socialist internationalism were not in contradiction. Yet the ultimate objective remained "not only to abolish the present division of mankind into small states, not only to bring nations closer to each other, but ultimately to merge them."[102] This position

[95]Claudia Jones, "Know What We're fighting! Hitler's New Order," *Weekly Review*, 30 June 1942, 11, 14.
[96]Jones, "Quiz: Is Not the Question," 13.
[97]Jones, "Where Do the Colonies Stand?", 13, emphasis added.
[98]Cf. Rosa Luxemburg, *The National Question: Selected Writings by Rosa Luxemburg*, ed. Horace B. Davis (New York, 1976).
[99]Claudia Jones, "On the Right to Self-Determination for the Negro People in the Black Belt" (1946), in *Claudia Jones: Beyond Containment*, ed. Boyce Davies (Oxford, 2011), 60–70, at 68.
[100]Earl Browder, "A Great Ordeal … A Great Opportunity," *People's Voice*, 8 July 1944, 14.
[101]Jones, "Is Socialism the Issue in This War?", 12.
[102]Jones, "On the Right to Self-Determination," 67.

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was consistent with the classical Marxist analysis that worldwide revolution would dissolve nation-states and, in consequence, international relations itself. It contrasts with Jones's contemporary Amy Jacques Garvey, the Jamaican-born activist who had become a prominent leader in the UNIA from the early 1920s but whose intellectual contributions have been overshadowed by those of her more famous husband, Marcus.[103]

As Keisha N. Blain elaborates, it seemed obvious to Jacques Garvey that Africa itself would be the source of racial rejuvenation.[104] African American settlement in Liberia, for example, would ultimately allow for the development of an independent black nation-state economically strong enough to guarantee black rights in a world order of competing empires.[105] Like many black nationalist leaders, Jacques Garvey's thinking in this regard hinged upon the development of indigenous Africans by an African American professional class.[106] Jones, in contrast, was wary of Garvey's civilizational discourse, instead advocating for the dismantling of the capitalist world system of empires that exploited working-class and racialized peoples.

Scholarly delusion?

There is an obvious lack of ideological affinity between Marxism–Leninism and the classical geopolitical tradition, with the latter's account of "geographical" rather than historical-materialist "causation in universal history" and emphasis on the inevitability of violent racial conflict.[107] Indeed, geopolitical thought emerged in opposition to both Wilsonian internationalism and Marxist–Leninist theories of imperialism, to which Jones largely subscribed. On these grounds, perhaps we should read Jones's geopolitical thinking as her international theory equivalent of the political compromises necessary for the Popular Front. On such a view, we should no more take seriously Jones's *Weekly Review* essays on this subject than her support for wartime wage stabilization as necessary to the domestic political economy of total war or temporary support for Poland's "reactionary" government in defence of "the very rights of nations to exist."[108] However, such a reading would misconstrue how and why Jones could innovate a seemingly non-Marxist lexicon, which also had roots in black internationalist critiques of empire. It also ignores the

[103]For her earlier work see Amy Jacques Garvey, 'What Some Women of the Race Have Accomplished,' *Negro World*, 7 June 1924, n.p.; Jacques Garvey, "Women as Leaders Nationally and Racially," *Negro World*, 24 Oct. 1925, 7; Jacques Garvey, "Black Women's Resolve for 1926," *Negro World*, 9 Jan. 1926, n.p.; Jacques Garvey, "A Woman's Hands Guide the Indian National Congress," *Negro World*, 28 Aug. 1926, n.p.; Jacques Garvey, "Scanty Clothes Make Hardy Women," *Negro World*, 27 Nov. 1926, n.p. See also Ula Yvette Taylor, *The Veiled Garvey: The Life and Times of Amy Jacques Garvey* (Chapel Hill, 2003); Judith Stein, *The World of Marcus Garvey* (Baton Rouge, 1986), 151; Tony Martin, *Marcus Garvey, Hero* (Dover, 1983), 67.

[104]Blain, *Set the World on Fire*, 110.

[105]See also Taylor, *The Veiled Garvey*, 158–9.

[106]Blain, *Set the World on Fire*, 127–8.

[107]Mackinder, "The Geographical Pivot," 422.

[108]Claudia Jones, "The Political Score," *Weekly Review*, 27 April 1943, 10; Jones, "Quiz: The Polish Government Was So Reactionary in the Past. How Can We Support It Today?", *Weekly Review*, 11 Nov. 1941, 12.

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extent to which Jones was both a product and a driving force of theoretical innovation in the CPUSA.

While Jones later condemned the Popular Front for betraying black workers, there is no evidence that her writings for *Weekly Review* did not represent her considered positions on the global conflagration. Certainly, Jones's senior position within the CPUSA raises the question of how to intellectually evaluate figures loyal to political parties, and parties such as the CPUSA who were loyal to a foreign power. Obviously, institutions matter to the production, circulation, and reception of intellectual work. Without formal higher education, Jones came to intellectual maturity through deep immersion in activist and editorial work. She found support and worked through the CPUSA and the multiple newspapers for which she wrote and edited. This was a moment when Jones was growing into her ideological platform and making her way professionally.[109] Nonetheless, she became an active shaper of CPUSA positions as much as she was shaped by them, particularly around questions of race, gender, and anticolonialism. At a moment when the CPUSA struggled to appeal to black communities, Jones advocated for organizational and theoretical approaches that effectively challenged the classical Marxist subordination of race (and gender) to class. In so doing, she operated at the intersection of the intellectual life of the CPUSA and of contemporary black internationalist thinkers, like Du Bois, Briggs, and Jacques Garvey. If we are able to evaluate the international thought of figures deeply immersed in scholarly traditions, then we can also take seriously the intellectual rigor of Jones's ideas, especially when they pushed at, shaped, and challenged the intellectual boundaries of party policies. As Carol Boyce Davies has argued, and we further illustrate below, Jones's "ideas rivalled many of those produced in the universities at the same time," despite the different genres in which she wrote.[110]

Jones's adoption of geopolitical language was not only a result of its popularization in the early 1940s and the audiences she wished to educate and mobilize through her journalism and political essays. The earliest geopolitical thinkers articulated what Marxism–Leninism then lacked, a historical–sociological explanation for the existence of more than one polity, of international relations itself.[111] For classical geopolitical thinkers, worldwide political plurality was generated from the interaction of uneven geographical features, the "grouping of lands and seas, and of fertility and natural pathways," and the evolution of different racial and civilizational groups.[112] Drawing on an alternative tradition of black theorizing of the relations between colonized territories, racialized peoples, and exploited resources, Jones developed a "geopolitical" framework for her own intellectual and political purposes.

To illustrate, we can read Jones's *Weekly Review* writings alongside and in contrast with an African American contemporary, the diplomatic historian and geopolitical thinker Merze Tate, who is now only belatedly receiving the attention she deserves in the (at least) three fields in which she should be central: black women's

[109]Boyce Davies, *Left of Karl Marx*, 76.

[110]Ibid., 10. On the black press as an essential source for histories of international thought see Musab Younis, "The Grand Machinery of the World: Race, Global Order and the Black Atlantic" (PhD thesis, University of Oxford, 2017).

[111]For the most developed later such attempt see Benno Teschke, *The Myth of 1648: Class, Geopolitics, and the Making of Modern International Relations* (London, 2003).

[112]Mackinder, *Democratic Ideals*, 2.

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intellectual history, histories of international thought, and the disciplinary history of international relations.[113] Born in 1905, Tate grew up in the *relatively* privileged context of rural Michigan on a large farm settled by her great-grandparents, a different economic and national background to Jones. As historian Barbara D. Savage has noted, this "spared [Tate] from a childhood steeped in racial segregation … or abject poverty."[114] She excelled at high school and teachers' college, becoming the first black person to receive a BA from Western Michigan College and the first black woman to earn a BLitt from Oxford and a PhD from Harvard. Tate was educated in the major centers of early twentieth-century international studies, including the Lucie and Alfred Zimmern Geneva School, Oxford, and Harvard, and was possibly the "most accomplished international relations scholar" at Howard University, where she taught between 1942 and 1977.[115]

More consistently than Jones, Tate explicitly framed international relations in the "broader" geopolitical terms developing in the United States in the 1940s.[116] Yet, almost uniquely among geopolitical thinkers within the academy in this period was Tate's explicit antiracism and anti-imperialism. World War II, "when considered realistically," she argued, was "a militarist and imperialist struggle for freedom and power—power for some at the expense of others."[117] The world was divided into competing states and empires, sustained by racial hierarchies, engaged in "rivalry over political and economic spheres of influence."[118] As she wrote in 1943, "Today the Yellow–Brown–Black–Red menace lurks within the field of the white power."[119]

Influenced but by no means limited by her training in the then leading academic centers for the study of international relations which, in the interwar period, concentrated on new international institutions, Tate's geopolitical approach prioritized power-political competition between empires and states over the class antagonisms of the global capitalist economy. In her highly acclaimed first book, which international relations "realist" Hans J. Morgenthau called "definitive," Tate argued, "Armaments are merely the means by which a state seeks to give effect to its national policies in a system of 'Power Politics.' What is of primary importance in history," she wrote, "is the policies of the states."[120] As Barbara D. Savage has

[113]The most extensive treatments are Barbara Savage, "Professor Merze Tate: Diplomatic Historian, Cosmopolitan Woman," in Mia Bay, Farah J. Griffin, Martha S. Jones, and Barbara D. Savage, eds., *Toward an Intellectual History of Black Women* (Chapel Hill, 2015), 252–69. Savage, "Beyond Illusions"; Robert Vitalis, *White World Order, Black Power Politics: The Birth of American International Relations* (Ithaca, 2015), 12–19, 158–68.

[114]Savage, "Professor Merze Tate," 255.

[115]Vitalis, *White World Order*, 161.

[116]Lattimore also advanced a noncommunist anti-imperial position. See Owen Lattimore, *The Mongols of Manchuria* (New York, 1934); and Lattimore, *America and Asia* (Claremont, 1943). Also see Or Rosenboim, "Geopolitics and Empire: Visions of Regional World Order in the 1940s," *Modern Intellectual History* 12/2 (2015), 353–81.

[117]Tate, "War Aims," 523. Her two most important early works were Merze Tate, *The Disarmament Illusion: The Movement for a Limitation of Armaments to 1907* (New York, 1942); and Tate, *The United States and Armaments* (Cambridge, 1948).

[118]Tate, "War Aims," 526.

[119]Ibid., 532.

[120]Tate, *The Disarmament Illusion*, 27–8. Hans J. Morgenthau, "Reviewed Work: *The Disarmament Illusion* by Merze Tate," *Russian Review* 2/2 (1943), 104.

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noted, W. E. B. Du Bois rebuked Tate for such "scholarly delusion" in his review of this book.[121] As far as Du Bois was concerned, "To leave out this economic basis of the destructive wars in recent European history is to leave out Hamlet from his tragedy." Holding her academic training at the Harvard-Radcliffe Bureau of International Research responsible, rather than Tate herself, Du Bois bemoaned that "Harvard University ignores the epoch-making philosophy of Karl Marx."[122]

We raise this example not to suggest that Tate was "decidedly not a radical," for in many ways she was, but to highlight the distinctiveness of Jones's geopolitical thinking.[123] To be sure, Tate's account of core international relations questions included imperialism and "the scramble for world markets and spheres of economic penetration." The main theoretical approaches that all international relations students should understand, Tate maintained, included laissez-faire liberalism and "scientific socialism or Marxism."[124] Economy obviously "mattered." Indeed, she noted that her 1965 work, *The United States and the Hawaiian Kingdom: A Political History*, might better be subtitled, "An Economic Interpretation of the Hawaiian Revolution."[125] But in her account of international relations' core topics, Tate's emphasis was on Marxist ideas rather than on how capitalism itself might be understood as a fundamental determinant of modern geopolitical relations, the condition of possibility for the modern state itself. The organization of the economy was one among many other sources of a state's world power, subsumed within "location, size and shape, population and manpower, natural resources and industrial capacity, and social and political organization."[126]

On first reading, Jones appeared to adopt Tate's "broader interpretation" of geopolitics as the interstate or inter-imperial struggle over the control of territory and resources. After all, it offered such a compelling language in which to articulate what was at stake for American communists in World War II. But underlying Jones's account of the geopolitics of Nazi expansion was a Marxian rejection of the separation between economics and politics in both "classical" and "broader" geopolitical theory and, moving beyond classical Marxism, the unity of class, racialized, and geopolitical struggles. The relationships between states and empires, and the wars they fought, were fundamentally shaped by the worldwide capitalist system in which they occurred. The significance of the contrast is clear from Tate's reading of the most significant outcome of World War II: "the defeat[s] of Germany, Italy and Japan … were only incidental events." Of overwhelming significance was "the rise to preeminence in world affairs of Soviet Russia."[127] Adapting Mackinder's heartland theory, Tate evoked aggressive Russian expansion in which the global "balance of power has been overset in favor of the pivot state, which is now expanding over the marginal lands of Euro-Asia. The Empire of the world may soon be in

[121]Savage, "Beyond Illusions", 275.

[122]W. E. B. Du Bois, "Scholarly Delusion," *Phylon* 4/2 (1943), 189–91, at 191.

[123]Vitalis, *White World Order*, 166.

[124]Tate, "Teaching," 149.

[125]Merze Tate, *The United States and the Hawaiian Kingdom: A Political History* (New Haven, 1965), 308; also see Tate, *Hawaii: Reciprocity or Annexation* (East Lansing, 1968).

[126]Tate, "Teaching," 151.

[127]Ibid., 151.

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sight."[128] For Jones, the survival of the Soviet Union meant the survival of the possibility of worldwide socialist revolution. Indeed, the act of fighting in World War II itself might generate new collective security mechanisms to allow for the possibility of peaceful coexistence with the United States.

Unjust causes … in a predominantly just war

That was not to be. After the war, there was enormous debate within the CPUSA over its decision to adopt Popular Front policies which entailed collaboration with capitalist interests and a tempering, if not a silencing, of criticism of the bourgeois democracies. Jones later condemned Popular Front policies for their betrayal of black populations, the "cynical manipulation of Negroes."[129] Yet, while Jones had claimed that the Popular Front was not at the expense of anti-imperial critique, she did not always live up to this in practice. Responding to Britain's violent reaction to the Quit India movement, she lambasted "the reviving of the old whiplash and terror rule of British colonial rulers … against the Indian people."[130] Jones condemned the Nazis' concentration camps in Europe and the Allies' camps in North Africa holding Spanish prisoners of war, but she remained silent on the internment camps holding Japanese Americans.[131] This has led Mislán to read Jones as "an imperialist" herself. Because World War II strengthened US capitalism and extended its imperial reach, Jones's support for the war "served" this "global expansion."[132] Previously, Erik S. McDuffie had similarly argued that Jones's writing in this period was "compromised" by "her adherence to the Party's line."[133]

Jones should not have remained silent on the forced relocation and internment of Japanese Americans. She did not, however, privilege allegiance to the United States or imagine that the Allies would be at the forefront of postwar decolonization. She centered her arguments in favor of the Popular Front on what was at stake for the anticolonial and black left. She deployed geopolitical language precisely to show that a defeat of the USSR "would decide the issue of world power in favour … of fascism."[134] Jones did not argue for black citizens to join in defeating Hitler for the sake of US global power. To the contrary, she feared the consequences of the overthrow of the Soviet Union for the possibilities of postcolonial socialist democracy. As noted above, it would literally "provide German fascism with the supplies necessary to launch it fully on the road to complete world

[128]Ibid., 151. Tate evoked Mackinder in her "strategic appraisal" of Africa's role in the Cold War: "Africa is apt to assume primary strategic importance … because it lies against the great 'World Island' without being part of it … The Dark Continent has area enough to provide '"defense in depth' and possesses large sparsely populated spaces in which certain war industries might be hidden." Merze Tate, "Reviewed Work: *Africa, A Study in Tropical Development* by L. Dudley Stamp," *Journal of Negro History* 38/3 (1953), 338.

[129]Rebecca Hill, "Fosterities and Feminists, or 1950s Ultra-Leftists and the Invention of AmeriKKKa," *New Left Review* 1/228 (1998), 75.

[130]Jones, "What We Must Now Do about India," 8.

[131]Claudia Jones, "The Political Score," *Weekly Review*, 13 April 1943, 10.

[132]Mislán, "The Imperial 'We'," 1427, 1417, 1426.

[133]McDuffie, "Long Journeys," 345.

[134]Jones, "Quiz: Since Great Britain and the United States Are Imperialist Powers, How Can We Support Them in This War?", *Weekly Review*, 16 Sept. 1941, 13.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1479244321000093 Published online by Cambridge University Press

conquest" given its "strategic position of controlling two continents."[135] Black liberation, in Jones's view, was only possible after the coming of socialism in the United States and the creation of a postcolonial world order based on collective security. Supporting Indian independence during World War II whilst simultaneously waiting until 1946 to make the case for the national character of the struggle for Negro rights in the United States was thus a tactical rather than a strategic position. At that point, with Hitler defeated, Jones argued that "the main danger of fascism to the world [now] comes from the most colossal imperialist forces which are concentrated in the United States."[136] Earlier, Jones had already equated Jim Crowism with fascism.

In her *Weekly Review* essays, Jones intellectually justified the compromises necessary for a temporary and tactical alliance with antifascist forces, classes, and parties. In addition to geopolitical language, she also turned to a classical ethics of war discourse, evoking the elementary and "essential distinction between just progressive wars and unjust reactionary wars."[137] With the invasion of the Soviet Union, "the character of the war has basically changed, making all those who wage a fight against Nazi Germany today, fighters for a just cause."[138] The wider war remained a conflict between imperial powers, but their "unjust aims" could be "offset." In any case, they were "subjective factors," of lesser significance to the objective fact "that the main enemy today … is Hitler fascism."[139] The basic fact of "unjust causes" in a "predominantly just war" could not in itself disqualify military action. Jones claimed that the same logic applied in the imperialist phase of the war in which "there were many just causes—the just fight of the Ethiopian, Grecian and Jugoslav peoples."[140] Yet those just causes did not mean that Communists should have supported US military intervention because these "were small powers, and moreover were used as fuel to fire the cause of the imperialist powers."[141] The material conditions and structure of social relations—the "objective" factors—were different. More generally, Jones insisted, "nothing is static … inherent in every phenomenon is the concept of change. Hence, no issue is purely one thing or another. Applied to wars, similarly there are no 'pure wars' and unjust wars may become just wars and vice versa.[142]

In addition to historical-materialist positions and argumentative logics, Jones argued that the constitutive power of organized reciprocal violence could create the postwar conditions that would justify the Popular Front. The moving force of history was not only the material productive forces and the relationships of production, but also the clash of armed forces and the new forms of consciousness and solidarities that this produced. War itself could create the conditions in which political compromises might retrospectively be justified. There are several dimensions to this motif in Jones's writings here, "when the weapon of criticism gave way to

[135]Jones, "Is Socialism the Issue in This War?", 12.
[136]Jones, "On the Right to Self-Determination," 60.
[137]Claudia Jones, "He Had a Dream of Freedom: The Young Douglass," *Weekly Review*, 24 Feb. 1942, 7.
[138]Jones, "Quiz: Since Great Britain," 13.
[139]Ibid., 13.
[140]Ibid., 13.
[141]Ibid., 13.
[142]Jones, "Is Socialism the Issue in This War?", 12.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1479244321000093 Published online by Cambridge University Press

criticism by weapon."[143] They include commentary on the nature of war itself, its contingency and unpredictability; the reordering of international relations through the effects of global war; and the shared sacrifice necessary to defeat fascism as productive of new postwar forms of collective security.[144] New anti-imperial and pro-socialist political realities themselves were being created through military and political struggles, with Jones pointing to the 1942 Anglo-Ethiopian Agreement reestablishing Ethiopian statehood as evidence.[145] She made similar arguments in relation to the underlying conflicts and tensions between the United States and the USSR over the nature of postwar international order. For Jones, these "can better be settled after more solid ties have been established through the mutual fighting that alone can bring victory … The DEED of collaborating fully with the Soviet Union NOW … is the necessary indispensable foundation-stone for the erection of the post-war structure."[146] Global war itself would generate the circumstances in which a post-colonial socialist world order based on collective security might come about.

Conclusion

Claudia Jones died from a heart attack on 24 December 1964. She was forty-nine. Members of African and West Indian diplomatic corps attended her funeral and memorial services, and political figures the world over sent tributes.[147] There should be little doubt that political persecution from the United States government was a major contributor to her early death. From 1947, when President Truman signed an executive order to screen all federal employees for links to fascist, communist, or subversive organizations, through to the late 1950s, hundreds of US residents were aggressively prosecuted for their political associations. Black activists and/or noncitizens like Jones who were openly affiliated with either the CPUSA or trade unions were among the primary targets, alongside academics, including Owen Lattimore.[148]

During and after her multiple trials and imprisonments, Jones suffered heart failure, was diagnosed with hypertensive cardiovascular disease and hypertension. Her first arrest in 1948 was an ill-conceived attempt at deportation, wherein the trial was ultimately adjourned. In June 1951, she was arrested under the Smith Act for authoring an article describing rights for African Americans and women as contrary to the interests of US foreign policy. She served eighteen months in prison before her deportation to Britain under the McCarran Internal Security Act in December 1955. Despite her seniority in the CPUSA, the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) offered Jones menial administrative positions in

[143]Jones, "He Had a Dream of Freedom," 7.

[144]Jones, "Quiz: Wasn't the Bourgeois Democracy of the British …," *Weekly Review*, 9 Dec. 1941, 14.

[145]Jones, "Your Questions Answered: How Can We Win the Peace?", *Weekly Review*, 7 April 1942, 11, 14.

[146]Jones, "The Political Score," *Weekly Review*, 6 April 1943, 10.

[147]Sherwood, *Claudia Jones*, 164.

[148]See Denise Lynn's series on the African American Intellectual History Society's blog, *Black Perspectives*: "Claudia Jones and the FBI Harassment of Black Radicals," 3 Oct. 2018; "Black Radicalism and the Trial of Claudia Jones," 4 Oct. 2018; "The Deportation of Claudia Jones," 5 Oct. 2018. On anti-communism see Jeff Woods, *Black Struggle, Red Scare: Segregation and Anti-communism in the South, 1948–1968* (Baton Rouge, 2004).

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no way commensurate with her experience and skills, first with the New China News Agency and then as a clerical worker.[149] Chafing at its racism and pro-imperialism, Jones quickly parted with the CPGB to work with West Indian communities, work later described as "establish[ing] political thinking for minority people in Britain."[150] Loyal to the end, she never publicly disavowed the CPGB and retained Marxist–Leninist positions.[151]

Though she wrote powerfully on its core subject matter and in its dominant locations of Britain and the United States, as a black anticolonial communist woman journalist Claudia Jones could never have appeared in the canon of international thinkers as defined in international relations's intellectual and disciplinary history. From its earliest inception in the late nineteenth century, the study of international relations in the academy was largely a racial and racist science, the study of interracial relations to explain and justify overseas imperialism and domestic immigration policy. Leading African American thinkers in the academy, men and women like Merze Tate, were "the major sources of dissent," but, to varying degrees, were marginalized from international relations.[152] From the 1950s, American international relations theories were developed in the academy precisely to counter the "rising tide" of left and anticolonial peoples theorized by Jones, including through the creation of an all-white all-male international-relations canon of intellectual "greats" and their "major" books.[153] Hence Imaobong Umoren's identification of the "usual separation" between the fields of global intellectual history and black women's intellectual history.[154]

As an activist intellectual outside academe, Jones's absence in histories of international thought that do not center black women is consistent with black feminist historiography. Black women are absent in the vast majority of intellectual histories due to the highly gendered, racialized, and classed contexts that shape the selection and reception of intellectual work.[155] The privileging of longer treatises and academic works in wider (largely white male) histories of international thought sustains the neglect of black women intellectuals and the diverse genres in which their thinking was expressed and circulated. However, Jones is also a compelling and instructive figure for recent efforts to recover and analyze women's international thought, which includes but is not limited to the history of "white women's international relations."[156] While understandable in some recent attempts to write women back into this field, recent works focusing on canonical thinkers is

[149]Sherwood, *Claudia Jones*, 73, 74.

[150]*Looking for Claudia Jones*, documentary, dir. Nia Reynolds. 2013, London, Black Stock Films; Sherwood, *Claudia Jones*, 67–71.

[151]Boyce Davies, *Left of Karl Marx*, 224–5.

[152]Vitalis, *White World Order*, 19.

[153]Nicolas Guilhot, ed., *The Invention of International Relations: Realism, the Rockefeller Foundation and the Rise of IR Theory* (New York, 2011). Cf. Patricia Owens, Katharina Rietzler, Kimberley Hutchings, and Sarah C. Dunstan, eds., *Women's International Thought: Toward a New Canon* (Cambridge, forthcoming 2021).

[154]Umoren, "Anti-fascism," 151.

[155]Bay et al., *Toward an Intellectual History of Black Women*.

[156]Owens, "Women and the History of International Thought"; Valeska Huber, Tamson Pietsch, and Katharina Rietzler, "Women's International Thought and the New Professions, 1900–1940," *Modern Intellectual History* (2019), https://doi.org/10.1017/S1479244319000131.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1479244321000093 Published online by Cambridge University Press

consonant with (white male) international intellectual history's emphasis on the book as the central genre for serious work on international relations.[157] Jones's class, racial, and national position, as well as her dual identity as intellectual and organizer, did not permit her to write book-length treatises on international relations. Yet she developed her scientific account of world politics through the medium of black radical and left journalism and in a manner that was theoretically innovative in refusing to divorce the relations between geography, peoples, and resources from the mechanisms of capitalism, the struggles of colonized peoples the world over, and, in later work, gendered hierarchies. Jones's writing reminds scholars that classical geopolitics was not a stand-alone imperial discourse but a reaction, in part, to anticolonial and antiracist intellectual and political movements. Her intellectual work offers a source for reimagining future practices and possibilities for histories of international thought and contemporary international theory.

Acknowledgements. Support for this work was supported by the Leverhulme Trust Research Project (RPG-2017-319) Women and the History of International Thought. We are extremely grateful to the editors and four reviewers of earlier versions of the article, as well as comments from Earl Gammon, Kimberly Hutching, Vanessa Ogle, Katharina Rietzler, Or Rosenboim, Benno Teschke, and Joanna Wood.

[157]Patricia Owens, *Between War and Politics: International Relations and the Thought of Hannah Arendt* (Oxford, 2007); Glenda Sluga, "Madame de Staël and the Transformation of European Politics, 1812–17," *International History Review* 37/1 (2015), 142–66.

Cite this article: Dunstan S, Owens P (2022). Claudia Jones, International Thinker. *Modern Intellectual History* **19**, 551–574. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1479244321000093

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