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THIS IS AMERICA

Examining the International Press Coverage of Black
Diplomats in the United States

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University of Mary Washington Honors Thesis | May 2021

Introduction

The State Department reserves primary responsibility over the U.S. Foreign Service, the nation's diplomatic corps entrusted with representing America and its interests in over 270 countries. Yet an overwhelming majority of Foreign Service officers fit the white male demographic. White foreign service officers make up 75 percent of the U.S. Foreign Service despite growing nearly 3,500 over a 16-year period from 2002 to 2018.¹ Racial and ethnic minorities formed the remainder of Foreign Service employees in this statistic, totaling to 24% of the entire Foreign Service workforce.²

This disparity becomes considerably glaring when reviewing the stagnant growth of African American FSOs in the corps. Whereas Hispanic and Asian representation increased both increased two percent over a 16-year period, African American representation in the Department of State rose only one percent in the same period, amounting to 6 percent of total foreign service officers, concerningly disproportionate considering that 14 percent of U.S. population that identifies as “black”, or “African American.”³ These numbers indicate a problem with recruiting and retention of minority foreign service officers. This inconsistency is especially significant in the African American context accounting for the tireless campaigning and lobbying in the 1950s and 1960s to dismantle the formal structures and install African American diplomats in U.S. embassies. All told, these figures reveal the unfinished work necessary for the State Department to create a diplomatic corps that “looks like America.”

The leads to the logical question: Why are there so few African Americans in the State Department? The answer is many-fold and requires an exploration of the history of African Americans as foreign policy actors and agenda setters. Throughout the 1950s, civil rights organizations and African American newspapers such as the NAACP, the *Crisis*, *The Pittsburg*

Courier, *Chicago Defender* the *Baltimore Afro-American*, and African American FSOs themselves pushed the State Department to end discriminatory practices designed to preserve white dominance in the Department. These practices existed since Clifton Wharton Sr. became the first African American to pass the Foreign Service exam in 1925. Since then, thirty-three African Americans out of the State Departments 13 thousand foreign service officers worked primarily as “couriers,” the majority of which were stationed in Liberia, infamously known as “Black circuit,” where Black FSOs careers “began and ended.”⁴

Similarly, the Cold War placed increasing pressure on the Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon administrations to address racial inequality, segregation and strife in the United States.⁵ The fear of valid, fact-based Soviet propaganda on this issue spurred these U.S. presidents and their respective State Departments to marginally consider the concerns and proposals the NAACP suggested. Even then, cosmetic, token changes like appointing an African American ambassador to Romania ultimately encapsulated a Department that would rather globally broadcast glossy photos and radio features of idyllic race relations and “model African Americans” rather than do the work necessary to change the homogeneous composition of the State Department.⁶

The sub-par increase in African American representation from 33 to just under one thousand Foreign Service Officers introduced unique challenges for this underrepresented cohort, which have amassed renewed and unprecedented attention following the murder of George Floyd in May 2020. Narrative accounts from African American consular officers describe the bewildering experience of non-resident visa applicants from their host countries saying that they want to speak to a “real American,” specifically a white or fair-skinned American portrayed in American films and advertisements.⁷ Needless to say, many white diplomats do not have the

same encounters and this inherent “suspicion” of African American foreign service officers and other diplomats of color presents challenges for these diplomats in doing their jobs effectively and building connection with their host countries.⁸ Plus, as of 2017, there are only three African American U.S. ambassadors, indicating a problem with retaining and promoting African Americans to senior levels in the Foreign Service ranks.⁹

Although there is ample documented evidence of the unique challenges and experiences African Americans encounter during their service, there is no comprehensive scholarly work or analysis of these accounts beyond the government statistics and personal accounts discussed above. Similarly, there is little scholarly analysis on the host countries’ reactions or perceptions of African American diplomats serving in their countries. While this may lead one to assume that African American diplomats and other diplomats are perceived as “American,” the accounts above demonstrate that this is not the case.

Unfortunately, the examination of the host country experiences of African American foreign service officers experience is a herculean effort that could not be accomplished in this project due to the time constraints. Tracking down potential interview subjects alone would assume a lion’s share of the research process, though there are many oral history accounts from African American Ambassadors which the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training provides on its website. Luckily, White House appointments and cabinet level officials provide a manageable alternative examining this issue. Therefore, this project will analyze the domestic and international news coverage of three of the five African Americans to serve in senior foreign policy positions: General Colin Powell, Dr. Condoleezza Rice and Dr. Susan Rice. This project represents preliminary attempt to review and chart the domestic and international reaction to African Americans serving in foreign policy capacities through a scholarly lens. Ultimately, this

work intends to demonstrate how the lack of black people in foreign affairs fails to dispel powerful problematic narratives propagated globally by U.S. film and culture that fuels a never-ending cycle that can only be broken if there are more African American diplomats representing the United States.

In conducting this research, I discovered that the U.S media coverage provides more nuanced coverage of these figures than the international news media outlets, which appears to conflate their appointments with the surrounding politics of the administrations they serve. However, both news collections implicitly attempt to discount their qualifications through extensive concentration on the political machinations surrounding their appointments in addition to prevalence of gendered language that masquerades as a defense of Dr. Condoleezza Rice's and Dr. Susan Rice's qualifications but starts under the premise of uncertainty of their abilities to succeed in the job. In the aggregate, these insights led me to conclude that the international foreign media coverage of General Powell and Dr. Condoleezza Rice and Dr. Susan Rice somewhat reflects the U.S. media coverage of these figures, but ultimately creates its own global narrative of these figures to present to its home audiences.

The analysis will begin with a discussion of the relevant literature on the history of African Americans representing the United States internationally; media stereotypes of African Americans and other minorities in film and music; and the content analyses of the newspaper and magazine coverage of Dr. Condoleezza Rice and General Colin Powell. The following section will examine in great detail the findings of the research, including excerpts from relevant news articles to highlight relevant themes while considering what these representations mean for black diplomats going forward. Finally, the paper will conclude with a discussion of relevant findings and their implications for the State Departments efforts to diversify its ranks.

Literature Review

In concert, the relevant literature accomplishes three foundational objectives necessary for completing this project: Firstly, they explain the importance of diversity in foreign affairs. These works highlight the state of inclusion in the U.S. State Department and identify areas of potential growth, while and most importantly defining and illustrating the experiences and perspectives of African American diplomats relying on interviews, personal accounts and historical archives, defined overarchingly as black diplomacy. These narratives emphasize the importance of Black inclusion in American Foreign policy even during times where it was not appreciated or valued. Where pertinent, the literature agrees that more scholarship on this topic is necessary for African American's contributions to U.S. foreign relations to be truly appreciated.

Secondly, they contextualize the research by offering the basis to critical analyze the primary source material. The background provides guidance through examinations of previous portrayals of gender and race that can be applied to the present research to deepen and enrich the findings. Thirdly, the literature provides a basis to analyze the subjects themselves, which also serves to deepen and contextualize the research.

Despite the increasing relevance of diversity and inclusion in current discourse, there is not much information on the relationship between diversity and diplomacy. Melissa Conley Tyler's work on provides the only peer reviewed scholarly work that addresses this relationship explicitly, yet she provides some interesting insights for analysis justifying considerations of diversity in recruitment for diplomats in the Australian Foreign Service. Citing the London School of Business, Conley Tyler argues that diversity provides the cross-cultural understanding, networking, language proficiency skills necessary to succeed in diplomatic circles in addition to furthering public trust in societal institutions.¹⁰ Additionally, Conley Tyler recognizes that

gaining diverse diplomatic corps is not only a matter of recruitment but also a matter of retention, which highlights the need for organizational programs to support minority diplomats' unique experiences and prepare them for promotion.¹¹

Although the explicit literature is virtually absent, there is a small cache of literature addressing minority perspectives and experiences as diplomats to fill this information vacuum. This literature largely concentrates on the experiences of African Americans from Frederick Douglass onward travelling abroad for a variety of reasons, and thus practicing “black diplomacy,” defined as the impact of African American on U.S. foreign policy.¹² Daniel Brantley makes the only attempt to explain the nature of black diplomacy out of all the literature examined, describing it as “coalitionist, diplomatic, re-locationist and interventionist.”¹³

Plainly-speaking, the coalitionist-diplomatic schools set to elicit overseas sympathy and support to influence U.S. public opinion and public policy, while the interventionist strain sought out external agencies and actors to “formally investigate and correct the Negro condition in the United States.”¹⁴ Conversely, the re-locationist approach advocates for African Americans to emigrate abroad and advance the race.¹⁵ Charles Stith echoes this point but also comments that as the power and societal status of African Americans has evolved the array of foreign policy focuses have broadened, allowing them to influence multiple foreign policy realms.¹⁶ In Stith's words, “the unique quality that African Americans have brought to the foreign policy mix is to see America's geopolitical interests through the lens of human rights,” as exemplified in movements to abolish slavery, decolonize territories in Asia and Africa, and ban apartheid.¹⁷

Additionally, the literature on black diplomacy offers insight into the merits of a diverse diplomatic corps for international perspectives on America which emerges through its discussion on the Cold War. Images and accounts of racial strife and discrimination presented a “foreign

policy liability” for the United States as it tried to juxtapose itself from the Soviet Union through its values of “beacon of freedom and equality.” Michael Krenn relates the failure of this endeavor in light of the seminal events in the Civil Rights Movement such as the Little Rock Nine incident and the Birmingham Church Bombing which aroused universal outrage and concern in European, Asian and African countries and compelled the U.S. State Department to launch a global propaganda campaign to highlight African American cultural and societal contributions and spread images of racial harmony and progress.¹⁸

Krenn’s narrative captures the global interest in America’s race relations and the African American experience that continues into present day. One year ago, the world erupted in protests for racial justice following the public murder of George Floyd, an unarmed African American man, by a white police officer. Such paradigm-shifting events show that the world scrutinizes the domestic events in the United States, especially as it relates to U.S.’s values of freedom, human rights and democracy which it champions in its interactions with other countries.

Additionally, Krenn’s piece on journalist and director of the United States Information Agency, Carl Rowan, considers Rowan’s speeches and writings to highlight his experience negotiating maintenance of the U.S.’s image abroad and the blatant racism of the 1950s and 1960s America. Krenn argues that Rowan’s actions and statements reflected the former USIA director’s own naïve optimism about the United States but also the stifling constraints black diplomats faced in speaking freely and critically about the United States in their official capacities.

In the aggregate, the historical literature stitches a narrative that qualitatively and quantitatively charts a history of African Americans in the foreign policy making arena. They rely on ample archival and autobiographical records to demonstrate and critically analyzes the

diversity of experiences African Americans have had as formal and cultural ambassadors for the United States. The literature supports the overall theme of diversity in foreign policy without making broad sweeping claims and assumptions that overlook the complexity of the African America experience while also challenging mainstream narratives about the Civil Rights Movement and the Cold War. Ultimately, the historical insight supplies important examinations into the structures and context in which these diplomats began their careers and operated in as they did their jobs.

Although the publications provide insight and multiple examples of black diplomacy, they fail to answer two crucial questions. Firstly, how do communities overseas react to African American diplomats representing the United States? Krenn notes in both his signature work and his feature on Carl Rowan that senior State Department officials refused to assign black diplomats outside of Africa until the 1960s, and even then only as “symbolic appointments,” under the assumption that their non-African host countries would be “resentful” or poorly “evolved socially to overcome racial prejudice,” a claim that remains unsubstantiated based on the lack of effort to defend these claims.¹⁹ Yashuro Okada’s report on African American encounters with the Japanese at camp Gifu in the years after World War II seems to add a possible answer to this question, as it describes the existence of racial prejudice towards Black GI from the local Japanese population arising from the discourse of Social Darwinism imported from Europe and integrated into modern Japanese understanding of racial hierarchies.²⁰

Moreover, David Schindler and Mark Westcott pursue a long-range approach, linking the locations where many Black GIs served in the United Kingdom to decreased anti-minority prejudice in the sixty years after their service.²¹ According to the scholars, this trend translated into fewer votes and memberships for the UK’s flagship far right party and less anti-Black

implicit bias and racism, which they attribute to “intergenerational transmission from parents to children.”²² Schindler and Westcott’s analysis leads to the equally plausible consideration that the reaction varies based on the host country/region, or based on some other indiscernible factor, as Europe reigned victorious in WWII but Japan suffered humiliating national defeat that colored their view of Americans.

The second unaddressed question concerns the impact on American foreign policy objectives. Namely, how does inclusion of African American diplomats affect the image of the United States projected towards other countries in the post-Cold War era? This qualification is significant as there is no longer a cataclysmic, all-consuming ideological war requiring the United States to “clean up its act.” Nonetheless, technological progress in social media and news have enhanced global connectivity and by extension, the number of “eyes” on the United States. In combination with the U.S.’s continued promotion of human rights in its foreign policy, gauging the international response to these domestic rifts in American society is crucial to understanding whether other countries view this concern as legitimate or another way of the United States trying to play the world’s policeman.

This matter dovetails nicely with the second class of literature relevant to this study, which concentrates on the representations of gender and race in the media. Kimberly Bachechi in a piece on Dr. Condoleezza Rice, refers to K. Sue Jewell’s assertion that “mass media play an important role in maintaining a social hierarchy of discrimination {through the transmission} of images and information {based on ideology}.”²³ Bachechi marries this argument to Patricia Hill Collins’ position that the “media generates class specific images of Black Women” to accommodate racism in a changing America that is desegregated and “color-blind”²⁴

The problematic role of the mass media also extends to American film, which maintains a global outreach, and claims to portray “real American life” through sex comedies, horror films and crude reality shows.²⁵ Bayles’ inquiry into the connection between popularity of these American cultural exports and its campaign to promote democracy and finds instead that they promote degraded pop culture values that center around sex, violence and vulgarity through film and music.²⁶ Most films exported like *Fast Times at Ridgemont High* primarily present the white experience high school and “real American life,” largely limiting black people to extras or undeveloped side characters. The portrayal is negatively skewed when African Americans are featured, either in music or in film. Bayles observes the 20-year period in which music videos featuring sexualized content increased 16 percent.²⁷ Bayles even notes how the outsized and negative reputation of “Western Rap” as “misogynistic, materialistic, vulgar and violent” convinced Muslim rappers in Egypt and Morocco protesting oppressive regimes to “distance itself” from it, despite the fact rap and hip hop in the United States have provided avenues for informal political expression against oppressive structures.

Bayles includes a quote from a Moroccan interviewee included here as a recognition that the fiction and reality of these images can be hard to distinguish between:

“I went around saying, it’s not what you see in TV and movies from U.S. what is happening in US. It’s not the same. People in America, they are not so vulgar, they are just talking like us, about real topics.”²⁸

Bayle’s analysis supports previous research contending that film and television rely on stereotypes and tropes of Black men and women and other people of color resulting solely from a profit motive. Mario Barnett and Joseph Flynn discuss the problematic implications of the stars of *Love and Hip Hop Atlanta* and *Real Housewives of Atlanta* on the perception of African Americans in the pursuit of high ratings.²⁹ Consequently, such portrayals pinpoint small cohorts

of rap songs and television shows to generalize about not only the entire African American experience, but race relations in the United States. This literature creates a compelling case in understanding why more African American need to be in the Foreign service to challenge these problematic images.

The final cohort of literature focuses on the case study itself, namely General Powell and Dr. Condoleezza Rice's work during their time in the Bush Administration. As mentioned previously, Powell joined the Bush Administration in 2000 as the first African American Secretary of State, and at the same time Dr. Rice served as National Security Advisor, the first woman to ever serve in that position. There is a lot of literature focusing on their policies, such as the General Powell's directives for U.S. military intervention and Dr. Rice's ideas on force and America's role in the world. Additionally, academics also focus on the symbolism of their appointments through a variety of methods and measurements. Kimberly Bachechi reviews articles from *Newsweek*, *Time* and *U.S. News and World Report* to expose the sanitized and modernized "mammy presentation" of Dr. Rice and compares it to the "conservative ideology of color blindness."³⁰ Bachechi's thesis provides a useful lens through which to analyze the foreign newspaper coverage of Dr. Condoleezza Rice and that of her successor, Dr. Susan Rice, who does not garner much scholarly attention.

Additionally, Nikol G Alexander Floyd relies on Dr. Rice's representation in satirical pop culture videos to conclude that the diverse representations of the Bush advisor "reflect deep anxieties about re-defining and reconstituting nationhood in terms of race- and gender based identity"³¹ Plainly speaking, Rice's mere presence and power as a senior advisor to a U.S. president as an African American woman disrupts the national identity as predominately White and therefore these illustrations reflect frenzied and often contrasting attempts to define her using

generic tropes applied to African American women such as the easy going and loyal “mammy”, the strong, overbearing matriarch, and the over-sexed Jezebel that justified Black women’s oppression.³² Effectively, this content directly applies the literature on representation of African American women on the studies, a much appreciated and welcome effort.

There is not as much content analysis of the media coverage of General Powell, but the symbolism of his racial background and military service and popularity amongst black and white Americans excites enough materials for scholars to examine. Donald Kinder and Corrine McConnaughey consider data from the National Election Study and the National Black Election Study to develop two theses explaining the former general’s popularity, one based on his military service and the other based on his racial background.³³ On the later topic, Kinder and McConnaughey quantitatively model the impact of race on evaluations of General Powell and find that racial stereotyping has no effect White American’s opinions on the former Secretary of State, compared to its effect on their opinions Civil Rights leader Jesse Jackson.³⁴ These statistics breed the idea that General Powell symbolizes America’s progress on racial issues and its entry into a “post-racial society” in which racial and gender categories do not drive American’s prospects for success.

Finally, Clarence Lusane explores both figures, specifically examining the relationship between their appointment and the implementation of an anti-hegemonic U.S. foreign policy under the Bush Administration. Ultimately, Lusane concludes that General Powell’s and Dr. Rice’s racial background influences African American’s perception of both figures but it does not affect the Bush Administration’s foreign policy initiatives, especially as it relates to the “War of Terror.” In Lusane’s words, General Powell’s and Dr. Rice’s presence “distracts from substantive part they play in the ongoing reconfiguration of U.S. global power.”³⁵ Lusane’s

analysis directly contrasts with Stith's assertion, mentioned earlier, but still provides basis for the hypothesis that the racial identity of both officials generates expectations for their foreign policy initiatives that they will champion during their tenure.

The literature and general background knowledge of the individual subjects introduces the possibility that the coverage will surely feature information about the African American experience that dispels stereotypes presented in these films. The life stories of these figures in themselves present an alternate view of America than commonly shown in the horror films, reality TV and sexual comedies exported from the US, not to mention the diversity of the African American experience. General Powell grew up in a racially diverse neighborhood in the Bronx relatively untouched by racism as a child, while Dr. Condoleezza Rice witnessed the horror of the 1960s racial unrest as a child living in Birmingham and attending segregated schools and enduring 2nd class treatment sanctioned by Jim-Crow. Dr. Susan Rice is removed from this era as she was born and raised in Washington D.C. during the mid to late 1960s and came of age during the post-Civil Rights era.

Methods

Below are the seven African Americans have occupied executive branch level foreign policy positions in the past thirty years:

- U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations (UN) Edward J Perkins
- Deputy Secretary of State Clifton Wharton Jr.
- Secretary of State Colin Powell
- National Security Advisor-turned Secretary of State Dr. Condoleezza Rice
- President Barack Obama
- U.S. Ambassador-turned National Security Advisor, Dr. Susan Rice

- Current U.S. Ambassador to the UN Linda Thomas-Greenfield.

This study will focus on three of those figures, General Powell, Dr. Condoleezza Rice and Dr. Susan Rice as they are the most widely known figures in this cohort, aside from former President Barack Obama. General Powell served as Secretary of State during President George W Bush's first term from 2000 to 2004. General Powell's colleague, Dr. Condoleezza Rice worked alongside him as National Security Advisor in the same administration and during the same period before succeeding Powell as Secretary of State. Finally, Dr. Susan Rice served as National Security Advisor under the Obama Administration from 2013 to 2017 after being U.S. ambassador to the United Nations during President Obama's first term.

The study reviewed domestic and international coverage of General Powell and Dr. Condoleezza Rice and Dr. Susan Rice from their appointments as Secretary of State in December 2000, National Security Advisor in December 2000, and National Security Advisor in June of 2013. English language publications in the United Kingdom, France, India, Canada and Australia and were chosen for their strong reputable media eco-systems, geographic location, and demographic composition. The publications were selected based on a simple Google query of the most popular newspapers in each countries and availability in the news search databases at the University of Mary Washington. The list of publications viewed and their nationalities are below and total to eight. Additionally, Ad Fontes Media regularly publishes a Media Bias Chart evaluating international news sources for their bias and reliability, and these ratings are listed in the table below also., web guides and scholarly articles provided information for the media publications not reviewed in Ad Fontes Media, marked with an asterisk.

| Newspaper | Country | Reliability | Alignment | Background |
|----------------------|---------|---------------|-----------|--|
| Agence France Presse | France | Most reliable | Middle | Paris-based global news agency that publishes in |

| | | | | |
|-----------------------------|----------------|---------------|----------------------------|--|
| | | | | 6 languages and has a regional center in Washington DC ³⁶ |
| <i>The Telegraph</i> * | United Kingdom | Most reliable | Center Right ³⁷ | <i>The Telegraph</i> is a UK based newspaper founded in 1855. ³⁸ |
| <i>The Independent</i> | United Kingdom | Most Reliable | Center Left | <i>The Independent</i> is a UK based online newspaper founded in 1986. |
| <i>The Financial Times</i> | United Kingdom | reliable | Center Right ³⁹ | London based international newspaper that reports on economic and business issues. ⁴⁰ |
| <i>The Times</i> * | United Kingdom | Reliable | Center Right | <i>The Times</i> is a UK-based newspaper owned by Rupert Murdoch. |
| <i>The Hindu</i> * | India | Reliable | Center Left | <i>The Hindu</i> is a print publication in India, founded in 1889. ⁴¹ |
| <i>Times of India</i> * | India | High Accuracy | Center Right | <i>The Times of India</i> is a print publication founded in 1838. ⁴² |
| <i>The Canadian Press</i> * | Canada | High accuracy | Center | Canadian news wire service ⁴³ |
| <i>The Australian</i> * | Australia | Reliable | Center Right | <i>The Australian</i> is one of 2 national newspapers in Australia. ⁴⁴ |

Articles were located through the *Nexis Uni (Lexis Nexis)* and *Factiva* news search engines using the official's name and then the name of the position they were appointed to. The date range was limited to the month of and the month after Powell's, Rice's and Rice's appointments were announced. For example, the incoming Bush Administration announced General Colin Powell's appointment on December 18, 2000, therefore the search parameter timeline spanned from December 1st, 2000 to January 31, 2001. This period was judged to be the

most logical point to mention the racial backgrounds of these, as usually these announcements provide the opportunity to introduce these figures' personal and professional and backgrounds lives to the world. Choosing any other period would not provide sufficient and/or consistent volume to conduct a clear analysis of the coverage and would skew the experiment based on global events. Furthermore, I predicted that the appointment of Dr. Condoleezza Rice and Dr. Susan Rice to National Security Advisor, though at different points during the presidential life cycle, would add a control variable that would provide an interesting lens through which to compare the news coverage of both figures, seeing that they are Black women who held the same position yet the former under a Republican and the latter under a Democratic administration.

That said, despite the inventiveness of this study, there are some limitations that should be recognized. The first shortcoming concerns the small, minimally diverse sample size of the country coverage. Efforts to achieve parity in the representation of Western and non-Western sources fell through due to time limitations on the archive availability for newspapers from South Africa, Kenya, and other countries whose populations that may find more meaning in these appointments. Moreover, I exercised loose limits on the number of publications from each country as many proved insightful and supported the observation from other publications. Consequently, no legitimate sweeping assertions can be made as to the extent the countries chosen values or disregards the identity of General Powell, Dr. Condoleezza Rice and Dr. Susan Rice. Similarly, this paper cannot capture the publication's audience's reactions to these figures and their coverage. It is not a public opinion survey and therefore is not a representative sample of international attitudes toward these figures, yet it analyzes the coverage of the listed case subjects, which may influence public opinion.

Media Coverage in the United States

These articles follow a similar structure with minimal variations, introducing the appointees, comments from the president and their acceptance speeches, their backgrounds, and the implications of their appointments. They reflect a variety of opinions about the appointees and their policy positions and their assets to the presidential administrations they served. Generally, they discuss the implications of this appointment for foreign policy of the relevant presidential Administration. However, the politics of the day often influence the coverage of these figures. For example, the 2000 presidential election controversy overshadows the international press coverage Condoleezza Rice's and Colin Powell's appointments as national security advisor and Secretary of State respectively. Oftentimes, the coverage groups Rice and Powell together as their appointments occurred in relatively short order, a point that will be discussed later. Secondly, the coverage of both National Security Advisor appointees included a lot of gendered language that linguistically demoted their importance or expressed doubt about their prospects for succeeding in their new jobs.

First, it is crucial from a methodological standpoint to review the foreign policy credentials these figures bring to the table, beginning with General Powell. Born and raised in the Bronx, General Powell, of Jamaican heritage, joined the military in 1958 after completing 4 years of ROTC while attending City College to obtain a degree in Geology.⁴⁵ Powell served in many capacities over the course of his 35-year military, including two military tours in Vietnam which shaped his positions on U.S. military engagement and commitment of U.S. troops with clear definitions of objectives and metrics for success and withdrawal, known as the "Powell Doctrine." Diplomacy and containment should lead first in such situations, which has let him to frequent clashes with the foreign policy rank and file, most memorably with former Secretary of State Madeline Albright but also with former Vice President Dick Cheney who Powell worked

with closely.⁴⁶ Initially reluctant to enter the policymaking ranks, General Powell's rise into the senior military ranks propelled him to serve in the Reagan Administration, first as Deputy National Security officer and then later as National Security Advisor during the Reagan Administration, the first African American to hold this post.⁴⁷ President George H.W. Bush then selected General Powell to head the Joint Chiefs of Staff as the body's chairman in 1989, garnering national attention and popularity for his collected leadership during the 1991 Gulf War in Iraq leading some to speculate on a potential presidential run. The four-star general continued in this role during the first year of Clinton Administration before retiring from military and public life to write his biography, *My American Journey* and serve as a motivational speaker and founder of America's Promise, an organization dedicated to mentoring disadvantaged youth.⁴⁸

Dr. Condoleezza Rice, Powell's colleague, and ultimate successor as Secretary of State, grew up in Birmingham, Alabama during the 1950 and 1960s, tumultuous times for the American South in terms of race relations. Rice herself details her own childhood experiences with racism in her speeches and her book, *Ordinary, Extraordinary People*, detailing her childhood experiences in segregated schools and everyday racism. Initially trained to be a concert pianist, Rice decided as a 15-year-old college student to pursue international affairs at the University of Colorado, studying under the tutelage of Dr. Joseph Korb, a renowned international affairs scholar and father of Secretary of State Madeline Albright who Rice credits with her interest in Russian history, politics and culture and becoming a realist.⁴⁹

After receiving her doctorate at 26, Dr. Rice earned an internship with the State Department and proceeded to teach at Stanford University in California and cultivating her knowledge of the Soviet Union in writing two books before a chance meeting with Brent Scowcroft in the mid-eighties led to her appointment as an Advisor to the Joint Chiefs of Staff on

strategic nuclear policy and later as special assistant to President George H.W. Bush on National Security affairs and Senior Director for Soviet Affairs at the National Security Council.⁵⁰ Her instrumental work following the collapse of the Soviet Union brought democratic reform in Poland and shaped the elder Bush Administration's foreign policy approach to the Soviet.⁵¹ Dr. Rice accepted a position as Stanford University's provost and performed in this role in the intervening years between her service in the George H.W. Bush's administration to that in George W. Bush's presidential campaign in 2000, yet her foreign policy prowess quickly attracted attention from the Republican Party, which grew following her speech at the 1996 Republican National Convention.⁵² The integral role she played in advising the younger Bush on foreign affairs launched her to be the hands-down choice for Bush's National Security Advisor from 2000 to 2004, and later Secretary of State from 2004 to 2008, the first African American woman to serve in either position.

Finally, Dr. Susan Rice grew up in the suburbs of DC during the mid 1960s and early 1970s. A graduate of Stanford University and a Rhodes Scholar, Dr. Rice's obtained her first foreign policy position in 1993, serving in the Clinton Administration's National Security Council through the duration of President Bill Clinton's term and ultimately becoming Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs from 1997 to 2001.⁵³ Following a tenure at the Brookings Institution, Dr. Rice joined the Obama presidential campaign as a foreign policy advisor and ultimately earned a spot in his administration as US. Ambassador the United Nations in 2009, before becoming National Security Advisor in 2013.⁵⁴

The next subsection will address the coverage of each of these individuals in the two U.S. newspaper publications selected, the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*.

Condoleezza Rice

Condoleezza Rice does not garner as much media praise and coverage as Colin Powell, since she is a relatively unknown figure compared to the former head of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Rather, the more significant profile pieces fulfill their primary intention of defining Rice as a person outside of her significant role in the Bush Administration as a foreign policy advisor. Elaine Sciolino is most successful in this endeavor, portraying Dr. Rice as a hard worker that embraces her femininity and secure in her life choices. Moreover, Sciolino notes that Dr. Rice's "impeccable style" and "girlish laugh" disguise a "steel spine" that allowed her to break barriers as a young Black woman working in Soviet affairs and lead Stanford to overcome a \$43 million deficit in her role as provost.⁵⁵

The coverage tends to separate Dr. Rice's race from her gender and consequently places more explicit emphasis on Dr. Rice's gender rather than her race. Her presence, dominance, intelligence and coherence often surprises, amazes, and earns respect because she does not fit the mold of male policymakers and foreign policy scholars, as Steve Mufson notes in Brent Scowcroft's¹ account of their first meeting at a dinner in the 1980s:

There were some of the best brains in the business," Scowcroft recalls, "and here in this group was this young slip of a girl. And she spoke up. She wasn't cowed by the company she was in. And she made sense. I thought I better get to know her." Later, when Scowcroft was named the elder Bush's national security adviser, he said, "one of my first phone calls was to Condi Rice."⁵⁶

Scowcroft's recollection of this encounter demonstrates the respect Dr. Rice earns from her poise and her presence but also indicates the bias women encounter in a male dominated field regarding their reasoning and forcefulness. Mufson himself leans into this trope in his article questioning whether Rice can perform the multifold task of steering the Bush' administration's foreign policy priorities, while overseeing her own foreign policy education and finding her

¹ Brent Scowcroft served as National Security Advisor under the Gerald Ford Administration.

place between General Powell and Vice President Cheney, described as “hard hitters.”⁵⁷ While Mufson ultimately answers this question in the affirmative, citing her experience as the Stanford Provost and relying on interviews from her previous colleagues. Nonetheless, his premise perpetuates the idea that women must have people who can vouch for their qualifications before they are believed to be qualified for this position. On the other hand, General Powell’s drawbacks are mostly related to his foreign policy outlook and its effect on the direction of U.S. foreign policy

Mufson himself even acknowledges how Dr. Rice’s gender requires her to cope with the inherent exclusion of the old boys’ club, stating that her love of sports “helps make her one of the boys.”⁵⁸ Yet, Dr. Rice is still the subject of gendered language, as the newspapers, simultaneously describe her as “Bush’s private foreign policy tutor” and “intellectual quarterback.”⁵⁹ While the latter is more masculine and accords Dr. Rice a more critical role in the administration, the former dually diminishes George Bush’s intelligence *and* Dr. Rice’s role as a policymaker deciding on the allocation of resources to various foreign policy issues and controlling access to the president. This ultimately speaks to the unequal and unusual relationship which these articles continue to construe to create a narrative that derides the president elect as a buffoon in foreign policy affairs. Furthering Bachechi’s argument that such language limits her to roles “serving the president”, these portrayals represent an attempt to “knock Dr. Rice down to size,” a clear recognition that her foreign policy experience is way superior to President Bush, yet a signal that a white man is still in charge and running the United States.

On the other hand, race maintains a significant, but less explicit part in her profile. Her youth in segregated Birmingham consequently lends to “breaking barriers” narrative that

underlies the coverage of her colleague, General Colin Powell. However, Dr. Rice's opposition to affirmative action, per the Republican party platform, also garners her more interest as it is implicitly considered as a "unicorn" position for an African American to have for a policy designed to overturn systemic discrimination against them. This position is especially poignant to the press as it is directly opposite to General Powell's support of affirmative action. Moreover, this point tends to raise suspicion of Dr. Rice regarding her bona fides in the African American community.

Colin Powell

The coverage is unified in its praise of General Colin Powell. His military career, African American identity and popularity render him practically untouchable, as captured in the following excerpt from Thomas Friedman in the *New York Times*:

Mr. *Powell* is three things Mr. Bush is not -- a war hero, worldly wise and beloved by African-Americans. That combination gives him a great deal of leverage. It means he can never be fired. It means Mr. Bush can never allow him to resign in protest over anything.⁶⁰

Friedman's observation hints at a breach the idea that Bush desperately needs Powell to have a moderately successful presidency and make inroads in the African American community. Other features also seize on this unusual power dynamic between President elect Bush and General Powell, noting the former's dependence on talking points while the latter spoke extemporaneously and fluidly to the press about wide-ranging foreign policy issues. Altogether, this contrast contends to illustrate Powell as his own man, out to serve his country, as opposed to Dr. Rice, who is characterized as a tutor bringing the president up to speed. Yet there is no obvious fear that the former general will not defer to his training and follow orders like a "good soldier." General Powell fills out and broadens President Bush's foreign policy campaign promises, and the president-elect, recognizing his weakness, provides him the space with which

to do so. While the articles zone in on this dynamic to highlight Bush's foreign policy ineptitude, this fails to hurt General Powell in any way and is generally viewed as a smart decision to thwart any preventable gaffes in the Bush presidency.

Steve Mufson, a staff writer for the *Washington Post*, acknowledges the threat and criticism Colin Powell's popularity, policy positions and reputation for cautious military engagement arouse for the Bush Administration but concludes that General Powell's military service insulates him from these barbs.⁶¹ General Powell's reputation for caution and clarity in military engagement precedes him, but there is full confidence in his abilities as Secretary of State to deal with the challenges ahead, including extricating American forces from Colombia as it fights its civil war. Furthermore, there is no "surprise" about his presence. He has a valiant backstory through his service Vietnam, which many acknowledge the effect on his military philosophy, but through the lens of 2021 there is little focus on the personal and emotional scars that experience bore. Instead, Powell is held up as an unflappable model, a personification which nearly edges into micro toxic masculinity.

The historic significance of Powell's nomination is not lost in these articles, and there is some mention to the former general's appointment as an outreach to African American voters, who overwhelmingly voted against Bush. General Powell addresses the Black community as he accepts the appointment, remarking that the appointment signifies that there are "no limitations upon you {the African American community}."⁶² By Alison Mitchell's account, General Powell "defends" Bush with the following statement on the controversy surrounding voter disenfranchisement in the 2000 Presidential election:

"He will be president for all people, all the time. I know that this is the deepest emotion in his heart. The American people will see that in due course."⁶³

African American's react to the General Powell's appointment favorably but do not extend warm fuzzy feelings towards President Bush as Steve Vogel and Sari Hugel for the *Washington Post* note. Those interviewed for the article viewed Bush's choice as "patronizing" and "insincere," in perpetrating the assumption that the former general of Jamaican heritage would automatically turn African Americans in Bush's corner. Moreover, the Secretary of State nominee's comment serves as a telling instance of coopting Black policymakers in white administrations' glaringly circuitous "I'm not racist" messaging, which ultimately renders the opposite effect on minorities and people of color especially when their policies do not align with their words. Gratefully, these publications expose these dynamics rather than seeking to make a societal commentary that maintains the status quo.

Susan Rice

Susan Rice's appointment arouses a spectrum of reactions and impressions from the news staff at the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times*. Some authors view the appointment as a snub of the Obama Administration's Republican detractors who villainized Rice in the press following the Benghazi Consulate attack in 2011 and foiled her confirmation as Secretary of State in 2013 as a result. Indeed, to many, Dr. Rice's appointment is part of a slew of judicial and cabinet nominees that signal President Obama's willingness to challenge a Republican Senate. Ultimately, Dr. Rice owns the Benghazi scandal and therefore earns much of the scrutiny for "misleading" Americans in the days following the attack that President Obama himself does not receive. The dominant view perceives her appointment as a "reward" for enduring the media crucible after repeating erroneous CIA talking points in the aftermath of the Benghazi attack, which killed 4 Foreign Service Officers. While some remain neutral on the subject, others, such as Ed Rogers and Jennifer Rubin for the *Washington Post*, are quick to express their cynicism

and opposition Obama's appointment as evidence of its corruption, lending to the idea that Dr. Rice did not earn the position on her merits, but solely for her complicity in a "coverup" plot in which she willingly and repeatedly engaged in deception of the American people. The view of Dr. Rice's appointment as her "redemption" from the Benghazi scandal lies somewhere in the middle of this argument, though it is more moderate and factually based.

One article by Jena McGregor challenges the narrative entirely, considering her appointment to be a "recognition of her value to the Obama administration" with a position arguably even more powerful and prestigious than Secretary of State.⁶⁴ In this sense, McGregor's apolitical assertion highlights the effect of media hyperbole that politicizes every decision in Washington.

The second major theme from the U.S. print media coverage forwards the possibility for an interventionist foreign policy redirection in the Obama Administration. This discussion focuses substantially on Dr. Rice's tenure in the Clinton Administration during the genocide in Rwanda, which she credits with molding her views on humanitarian issues. Yet, the dominant view discounts the possibility of a pivot solely because of President Obama's public reluctance to intervene in Syria, a demonstration of the strong relationship Power and Rice maintain with the Administration.

Rice maintains a reputation of being a "tough" and outspoken diplomat. The latter trait alludes to her support for human rights, but as will be discovered in the next section, this illustration assumes a negative slant against Dr. Rice in terms of her personality. A *New York Times* United Nations correspondent believes her "brusqueness" and "undiplomatic expletives" contributes to the mixed legacy she leaves at the United Nations, though it was ultimately brushed aside because of her proximity to President Obama, a badge of honor in the diplomatic

world.⁶⁵ Similarly, David Ignatius in a *Washington Post* article believes Dr. Rice's direct and "provocative" approach will ultimately prove an asset in translating the taciturn and diplomatic president's into clear policy messaging.⁶⁶ Alternatively, relations with the State Department under John Kerry are the only context in which Susan Rice's toughness stands to impede her success as national security advisor.

Media Coverage around the World

General Colin Powell and Dr. Condoleezza Rice: Cold War Warriors and President Bush's Racial Body Blocks

There are articles that approach the appointment of Rice and Powell as a reboot of Cold War foreign policy approach present in George H.W. Bush's administration. Dejevsky also notes that all Bush's appointments "point to a Cabinet that looks less like America than like George Bush Snr's administration, in which they all served" and none "evinced new thinking."⁶⁷ It is unclear what these features sought to highlight other than the implication that George W. Bush's appointments reflect his foreign policy inexperience, which makes him dependent on Cold-War veterans in the creation and implementation of the Bush foreign policy agenda, according to Dejevsky. Dejevsky's article reflect clear wariness about the capacity of Bush's so called "Cold War warriors" to address 21st century challenges through a nuanced lens, despite Bush's and others' statements to the contrary.

Matthew Lee, writing for *Agence France Presse*, details the ideological fissures between General Powell and Vice President-elect Dick Cheney, along with his mentor and Defense Secretary nominee, Donald Rumsfeld. Lee points out that Cheney and Rumsfeld "share nearly identical, elite, patrician backgrounds" while noting that Dr. Rice and General Powell would be the highest- ranking African Americans in government to date. Lee appears to align Dr. Rice

with General Powell regarding issues of reworking U.S. foreign policy in the Balkans and teaming up against Rumsfeld's national missile system.⁶⁸ Further research demonstrates that Dr. Rice and General Powell disagreed respectfully during Bush's first term and that Dr. Rice's views of "unreconstructed realism," served as a middle ground between the general's "traditional conservative moderation" and Vice President Cheney's neoconservatism, though they leaned towards the latter.⁶⁹ Overall, these articles reflect a general apprehension and wariness about the Cold War experiences of Bush's team. However the specific reasons remain unclear, leading many to speculate that the president-elect would defer to Dr. Rice and General Powell and others in discussion of foreign policy issues, leading to a shadow presidency.

Two predominate themes overarching concern race as both General Powell and Dr. Rice were the first African American and woman in their roles respectively.⁷⁰ An article from *The Daily Telegraph*, a United Kingdom based newspaper, relates Powell and Rice's appointments to the President-elect's efforts to reach out to minorities under his unique brand of "compassionate conservatism" through the construction of a diverse cabinet, similar to promises Biden made during the 2020 presidential election.⁷¹ According to the Republican Party platform for the 2000 U.S. presidential election, "compassionate conservatism" is a concept that is as "old as the pioneers heading West in wagon trains, in which everyone had responsibility to follow the rules, but no one would be left behind."⁷² Many policies fall under the "compassionate conservatism" brand, such as immigration reform that champions assimilation, reflecting the Republican Party's wider efforts to reach out to minorities, as demonstrated in this excerpt from the Republican Party Platform during the 2000 election:

We offer not only a new agenda, but also a new approach — a vision of a welcoming society in which all have a place. To all Americans, particularly immigrants and minorities, we send a clear message: this is the party of freedom and progress, and it is your home.

The diversity of our nation is reflected in this platform. We ask for the support and participation of all who substantially share our agenda. In one way or another, every Republican is a dissenter. At the same time, we are not morally indifferent. In this, as in many things, Lincoln is our model. He spoke words of healing and words of conviction. We do likewise, for we are bound together in a great enterprise for our children's future.

We seek to be faithful to the best traditions of our party. We are the party that ended slavery, granted homesteads, built land grant colleges, and moved control of government out of Washington, back into the hands of the people. We believe in service to the common good — and that good is not common until it is shared.⁷³

Conversely, other articles embrace a more cynical perspective of the announcements, between insensitive, cheeky, angst filled headlines appearing to derisively mock and heckle the incoming Administration's diversity push and conflation of these appointments with Bush's outreach campaign. A *Sunday Suteleaph* article notes the timing between the announcement of Powell's nomination and a meeting between George Bush and Civil Rights leader Reverend Jesse Jackson as an effort to thwart, in the reverend's words, a "civil rights explosion" following reports that poll workers barred African Americans from registering to vote on the day of the election and discarded "invalid" ballots in predominately African American Florida precincts, which potentially cost Democratic Presidential Candidate Al Gore the presidency.⁷⁴ However, there remains a consensus about the futility of these endeavors in light of Bush's dismal performance among African Americans during the 2000 election. An article from the *Independent* by Mary Dejevsky offers an problematic insight neither Dr. Rice nor General Powell "have the civil rights record that is seen as the litmus test of a black politicians," nor can they relate to many African Americans as a result of their the former's educated background and the latter's Jamaican parentage.⁷⁵ While anecdotal evidence may support this assertion, it denies the diversity of the African American experience and assigns Bush's policy shortcomings to General Powell and Dr. Rice.

Articles from Agence France Presse English present a unique look into reactions leaders of other countries from other countries normally excluded in press records. A wire captured reaction from a Nobel Prize Winner and former President of East Timor, Jose Ramos Horta in the following statement to a newspaper based in Singapore:

I was so pleased and touched by President-elect Bush's announcement of the appointment of the new secretary of state and **national security adviser**," he said, speaking in Singapore" There could be no more sensitive, reliable people at the helm of US foreign policy because of their particular background," he said in a speech organized by the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies. "I believe we will also have a very sensitive engagement by the US at least in regard to East Timor, if not in regard to the rest of the world."⁷⁶

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Horta's statement implies a clear allusion to General Powell's and Condoleezza Rice's racial identities, seeing as Colin Powell and Condoleezza Rice had not given any public statements or any policy position supporting East Timor or against colonialism prior to their appointments, and neither maintains a background in Southeast Asian Affairs. Yet Horta's comments make significant assumptions about General Powell and Dr. Rice's policy positions on East Timor's fight for sovereignty and self-determination based on their racial identity and their experiences as growing up during the Jim Crow era. Moreover, it demonstrates clearly the extent to which the African American experience resonates globally, specifically with ethnic minorities, though it is impossible to pinpoint exactly where Horta derives his reasoning specifically related to the two figures.

Studies on this topic have addressed this casually, and even Lusane's piece fails to provide a plausible explanation. Yet, applying his earlier mentioned thesis throws in the possibility that Horta fell for the Bush Administration's decoy of installing General Powell and Dr. Rice in their positions. Indeed, Lusane notes in a book extending his thesis that the historic solidarity with marginalized African Americans has led to the international perception that

African Americans are socially progressive and supportive of victims of U.S. hegemony and foreign actions, branded as a “black foreign policy consensus” that espouses anti-racism; political, civil and human rights; anti colonialism, economic equality and women’s rights.⁷⁷ Furthermore, Lusane observes the implicit expectation that additional African Americans representing the United States in Congress and the foreign policy sector would lead to expression of these values and thus a bolstered position to align U.S. foreign policy with these values.⁷⁸ But as history remembers the Bush years’, it is clear that the broad brush portrayed is not always precise.

A point of particular interest concerns the authors’ discussion of Dr. Rice’s and General Powell’s life stories. For Condoleezza Rice in particular, Segregation, Russia policy and Rice’s personal relationship with the Bush family overshadow the discussion of Dr. Rice’s background, as evidenced by the two profile pieces on her life and background. The first, a shorter piece by Ian Brodie of *The Times* in London, offers a headlong glimpse into Dr. Rice’s journey from her childhood in Alabama in the 1960s to her work during the Reagan and H.W. Bush Administrations. Meanwhile, the second piece, written by Stephen Collinson and published in *Agence Presse France* spends much more time detailing Dr. Rice’s rise to prominence in elder Bush’s administration. Collinson also glancingly addresses the segregated environment in which Dr. Rice grew up, in favor of discussing her journey from concert pianist to Soviet Union scholar.

From Stephen Collinson:

Raised in Birmingham, Alabama, where she attended segregated schools, Rice proved an exceptional student, graduated from college as a precocious 19 years old, earned her doctorate at 26 and became a leading Soviet scholar.

From Ian Brodie

Growing up, Dr *Rice* felt the sting of racism, being forced to go to a segregated school in Alabama. Her family was dedicated to her education and her mother taught her to play Bach when she could barely reach the piano keys. She entered university at 15 and graduated at 19.

Both articles emphasize Dr. Rice's linear rise to power as a result of her intelligence, determination and ambition, as demonstrated by her decision to attend college at 19. Brodie, more than Collinson, acknowledges segregation's presence in Dr. Rice's origin story in terms of her education and present it as a handicap or a chip to her prospects that education deflected. In doing so, Brodie constructs an "American Dream" narrative in which Dr. Rice overcame a racist system through education and hard work to achieve success, an arc that lends itself to a post-racial society. Collinson echoes Brodie's arc in the following passage in which he discusses the Russia scholar's former aspirations to become a pianist:

But the intricacies of global arms talks were a far cry from Rice's childhood dream -- she wanted to be a concert pianist.

She says she switched to foreign policy when she realized she'd never be a virtuoso, and though it was a "big disappointment" was relieved to give up a life she found too solitary.

"Five hours a day alone in a practice room, that's just not who I am. I like people," says Rice, who never looked back on the decision which started her dizzying climb up the career ladder.⁷⁹

Her simple presence in discussions on arms control has always sparked curiosity and wonder from some. Collinson cites a 2000 interview with Dr. Rice about arms control and the Soviet Union, in which she states: "Once the Soviets stopped asking me 'what was a nice girl like me interested in missiles for' ... they overcame their own ethnocentrism."⁸⁰ Though snarky, hints at idea of bewilderment for Dr. Rice's presence, a point that an article in the *Canadian*

Press extends in the following excerpt detailing the *Moscow Times* response to Dr. Rice's presence during a seminar at the U.S. ambassador's residence almost 12 years prior:

"The Moscow Times wasn't sure what to make of Condoleezza Rice when the 34-year-old Stanford professor came to town in 1988 to inaugurate a series of seminars at the U.S. ambassador's residence.

She spoke of arms control policy and of a coming summit with the United States, but the writer could not quite get past the notion of a young black woman as expert on Soviet affairs.

"The men ... couldn't help wondering: 'She should be busy cooking and driving her admirers mad. But instead, she aptly juggles numbers of missiles and tanks, names of marshals and dates of summits,'" the paper wrote."⁸¹

The article lends to a wider idea of the lack of women in arms policymaking limits imagination the spaces and topic areas women inhabit and accumulate expertise.

Once more, the image of Dr. Condoleezza Rice "tutoring" the president elect appears, although it is not as prevalent as in the coverage from the United States. However, the "serving" metaphor emerges again, this time to note the intergenerational connection between Dr. Rice's service in the elder and younger Bush administrations the following Collinson excerpt:

Condoleezza Rice, the National Security Adviser-designate, is a highly qualified academic who earned political kudos helping former president George Bush, engineer a soft landing to the Cold War.

Rice, 46, will now serve his son, president-elect George W. Bush, and with his nominee for secretary of state, retired general *Colin Powell* form an historic African American duo in charge of US foreign policy.⁸²

As demonstrated, the images of Dr. Rice's "helping" and "serving" transferring intergenerationally, evoking the concept of the family house-servant that served until the young master's son assumed ownership of the plantation and therefore the house-servant themselves, who possesses no agency in this situation. Similarly, Collinson does not provide Dr. Rice with the true agency she warrants by saying she "will now serve" President George W. Bush, continuing

the notion that she "owes" the Bush family for her success and is eternally tied to them. Collinson also combines this language with seemingly unnecessary qualifiers like "highly qualified," effectively preempting the idea that Bush selected her to check a diversity box.

Other articles simply focus on her personal relationship with the Bush family. These focus on the meeting that launched their long friendship engineered by former President George H.W. Bush between Dr. Rice and George W. Bush who was running for reelection as Governor of Texas before running for president.⁸³ This is something not shared with General Powell, who will be discussed in the next section.

Colin Powell

Conversely, General Powell's appointment appears as an inevitability because of his military service and relatively high public standing. Often assign hero status to General Powell, stemming from his military career, a trope that is evident in Stephen Fidler's feature written four days following Powell's confirmation as Secretary of State. Fidler goes as far to suggest that "the charismatic 65th Secretary of State represents the best chance in years of a renaissance" for a "demoralized State Department" whose role in foreign policymaking has been overridden by the National Security Council and lacks "internal cohesion."⁸⁴ Fidler's claims, as well as his reference to Powell's vow to be a "come in as a leader and a manager" cast General Powell as a decisive and competent general that will boost the low "troop" morale at the State Department, that is "enthusiastic for Powell's arrival."⁸⁵ Consequently, the optimism and absence of criticism for Powell's plans conveys the idea that Powell will save the Department from its descent into irrelevancy and lead it into the 21st century.

Similarly, there are differing takes on his appointment. Most articles agree General Powell's appointment eases trepidation about the incoming administration's foreign policy

outlook. However, some, like the author of the “Powell Doctrine” article in the *Guardian Weekly*, view General Powell’s non-interventionalist views borne from his experience fighting in Vietnam as evidence of the Bush Administration’s retreat from a multipolar world of the 21st century.⁸⁶ Rupert Cornwell, at that point a ten-year veteran of the *Independent*, a British Newspaper echoes the same sentiment in his response to the general’s appointment. Cornwell points to the nominee’s desire to reduce the U.S.’s role in the Balkans following the Bosnian-Serbian Civil War.

Other articles avoid making pronouncements and stick to the facts. Toby Harden in his article for the *Independent* quotes a Republican source as reflection that the “grown-ups are back in charge.”⁸⁷ Unlike the coverage of Dr. Rice, there is confidence about the Secretary of State nominee’s ability to construct a policy on Iraq under Saddam Hussein. Collinson celebrates the general’s appointment as an achievement for African Americans and argues that his “wide appeal and reputation as a man of honor aloof from the political fray” will benefit the incoming administration’s ability to explain U.S. foreign policy initiatives.⁸⁸

All contribute to idea that General Powell is a model citizen that the world can trust and hope in. Many articles implicate General Powell as a non-complicit political prop for the Bush administration and the wider Republican Party resulting from his support for affirmative action and abortion rights for women, though it appears that he is aware of his appeal.⁸⁹ Nonetheless, Powell is his own man, and the gendered “teacher-student” language is noticeable absent from the discourse on Colin Powell.

Susan Rice

The treatment of the final subject, Susan Rice, differs from Condoleezza Rice and Colin Powell for several reason, not in the least because of the number of sources from developing

countries. The coverage focuses more on Susan Rice herself and there are two reasons for this. The first concerns timing. The Obama administration announced Rice's appointment as National Security Advisor in the summer of 2013, a slow news day compared to the election of a president.

Although there is discussion about the potential for a shift in Obama's foreign policy approach following a more interventionist thread, especially in the context of the Syrian Civil War, following Bashir al-Assad's documented use of sarin gas in Homs, Aleppo and Damascus.⁹⁰ But the expectations for an agenda shift arises from Rice's outspoken views on humanitarian intervention, not from her racial identity.

The second reason concerns the 2012 Benghazi consulate scandal that led to the murder of 4 foreign service officers, including Ambassador Kris Stevens. The Benghazi scandal resurfaces routinely in the coverage and ultimately shifts the focus to Dr. Rice, who Republican lawmakers accuse of misleading the American people in the initial assessment of the attack. Articles from the *Guardian*, *the Independent*, and the *Daily Telegraph* considers Rice's appointment as President Obama's appreciation for bearing the brunt of the negative fallout from Benghazi, noting its impact on her campaign to succeed Hilary Clinton as Secretary of State. Rupert Cornwell of the *Independent* describes Dr. Rice's appointment as a "resounding vote of confidence," and Peter Foster of the *Daily Telegraph*, as a "act of defiance" and a "reward for loyalty" for his "confidant."⁹¹ Essentially, Rice's appointment is viewed as a consolation prize in light of her failed bid to become Secretary of State, though many articles underline that National Security position has more access to the President than the Secretary of State.

The second cache of articles centers around Dr. Rice's background and reputation. There is a discussion about Dr. Rice's temperament. A *Financial Times* article mentions Rice's

“abrasive and uncollegiate” reputation as a concern that would possibly impede her ability to serve as the “smooth conductor” required by the National Security Advisor position.⁹² Cornwell in his article furthers this thesis through his implication that Rice may have a “tough act to follow” in reference to her predecessor, Tom Donilon.⁹³ Cornwell describes the former NSA as “low key”, listing his accomplishments in shaping the Obama administration’s foreign policy towards Asia and smoothing relations between the Defense and State Departments.⁹⁴ In contrast, Cornwell notes “observers”’ concerns about Dr. Rice’s “outspoken and forthright” style causing problems.⁹⁵ Aside from being borderline sexist and racist and reflecting an experience that minorities have that views their expression of any emotion as a threat or, these “insights.”

Rice’s reputation precedes her an article penned by Indrani Bagchi for the *Times of India*. Bagchi describes Dr. Rice as “feisty and assertive,” but also references comments from the former Indian Ambassador to the United Nations, Hardeep Singh Puri, in response to “folklore” surrounding Dr. Rice’s use of “colorful language.”⁹⁶ Puri contends that these depictions are “inaccurate” adding that, “In the tough world of international diplomacy, you can’t get work done by obfuscating the issue.”⁹⁷ Though she acknowledges the close relationship between Dr. Rice’s predecessor and Shivshankar Menon, India’s National Security Advisor, Bagchi forecasts that Indians will be “happy” with Susan Rice “supervising” John Kerry’s State Department and refrains from wild inferences about the relationship between Dr. Rice’s personality and her effectiveness as a NSA.⁹⁸

Dr. Rice’s autobiography *Tough Love* addresses many of the commentary reflected in the aforementioned articles. She attributes her straightforwardness mostly from her father’s sage advice: “Don’t take crap off of anyone.”⁹⁹ However, Dr. Rice acknowledges that she has learned to be patient with others while also remaining her honesty and high standards. Additionally, she

refutes a claim made against her that she led the resistance against intervening in Rwanda during the 1994 genocide, also referenced by David Taylor. At the time Dr. Rice worked at the National Security Council for Global Issues and Multilateral Affairs and maintains that she did not reject the possibility of intervening in Rwanda despite many saying otherwise.¹⁰⁰ She also embraces the close relationship between her and President Obama, stating that they maintain similar outlook on the United States' role in the world.

The coverage does not center around race as Rice is not the first woman or African American inhabit this role, but it is mentioned. Chidanand Rajghatta of the *Times of India* groups the appointment of Dr. Rice and her successor as UN ambassador Samantha Power as a counter to criticism of President Obama's mostly white male second term cabinet.¹⁰¹ Bagchi includes a quote from an article written in *Foreign Policy* by James Traub stating the following:

“Washington is full of people who are very self-confident and very impatient, people who seem to be clad in sandpaper. Almost all, however, are white men; Rice is one of the few black women who belong to this particular club, and her membership can be seen as a sign that, at least in the elite world she has always occupied, neither race nor gender need be defining.”

This quote continues to lean into the concept of a “post racial America,” but twists it slightly to say that this society only exists for the elites, not for the lay, middle class African American. There is not much to say that Dr. Rice would agree with this comment, but it points to Rice's overall image in the media. Dr. Rice's race comes in as an afterthought in much of the coverage, and the only advantage her appointment appears to present to President Obama is through silencing the criticism of his all-male second term foreign policy cabinet.¹⁰² In this sense, she mirrors the role General Powell and Dr. Rice played in serving as presidential blockers against criticisms on matters of diversity and inclusion. Hypothetically, one would expect the obligation to include more minorities and underrepresented groups would dissipate

when a minority is in office. However, President Obama still has this obligation as a male, and a recognition of his male privilege that cohabitates with his absence of white privilege.

Furthermore, Dr. Rice still maintains the moniker as an “Obama confidant” like her non-familial namesake, Dr. Condoleezza Rice possess as Bush’s advisor. However, this is as far as the resemblance goes. This is likely because the former’s views on intervening in cases of violations of human rights aligns with the “black consensus agenda” Lusane references in his work. The relationship between Dr. Susan Rice and President Obama is portrayed as more egalitarian, where the latter is still in control and possesses a deep command of the foreign policy challenges compared to his predecessor. Still, it is unclear whether the signal that a man is still in charge is counteracted by the fact that the man in charge is African American and not white.

Conversely, President Obama appears to have earned Dr. Rice’s loyalty and the image of being “happy to serve” like Dr. Condoleezza Rice disappears resulting from the absence of a racial hierarchy, as both the president and the advisor are of the same race and the result is the image of a chummy relationship bolstered by the image of the 44th president leaving the podium with his arm around the newly appointee’s shoulders and that of her colleague Samantha Power. Nonetheless the identification of both Dr. Condoleezza Rice and Dr. Susan Rice as their respective president’s confidants and the absence of such a qualifier in raises the question: Can women/female identifying individuals succeed as National Security Advisor without a personal connection to the president? This question is for another paper to examine.

Discussion

Three overarching themes emerge from this research. Firstly, the foreign media coverage draws from the U.S coverage but also repackages the information to suit their own objectives which ultimately diminishes the nuance in these stories. This phenomenon is especially present

in the coverage on General Powell and Dr. Condoleezza Rice, which conflates their appointments with Bush's effort to reach out to African Americans following the contentious November 2000 election. Essentially, these appointments are construed as political which diminishes the fact that they are qualified for and worked hard to achieve their positions.

These observations lead to the second overarching theme concerning the infiltration of the United States' representation of race relations and gender hierarchies bleeds into foreign media coverage as well. The gendered language present in the coverage of both Condoleezza Rice and Susan Rice has the same affect that the November 2000 elections have on the former and General Powell in that they downplay their qualifications while uplifting their flaws and shortcomings. Arguably, the ratio between race and gender is about equal for Dr. Condoleezza Rice and predominantly gender- skewed towards Rice. This demonstrates the complicated experience of women in leadership positions and the need for reform in how these leaders are covered.

More positively, coverage of these figures allows the opportunity to demonstrate not only the United States' diversity but also the diversity of the African American experience, in which segregation does not always feature heavily as we see in General Powell and Dr. Susan Rice's life stories. This does not mean that they have not experienced discrimination, as both of their biographies note, but it breaks the common narrative that state sponsored discrimination is a universal constant in the daily lives of African Americans.

(Compare the international and the U.S. coverage)

Conclusion

This research validates the experiences African American diplomats have serving the United States and goes further to explain the State Department's issues with retaining African American

diplomats. Identifying this issue and exploring it further unlocks opportunities for the Department to take more whole-hearted actions to support African American diplomats when they encounter discrimination and intolerance in their host countries. Future research should focus on the coverage of U.S. ambassadors of color when they are received in their host countries, and attempt to study the personal accounts of this cohort listed on the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training. Undertaking this project would put the focus on the actual center of the problem, namely the U.S. State Department, and include more of the experiences of other ethnic minorities representing the United States as well, therefore allowing the State Department to attract more people of color to forge deeper connections with host communities and raise the United States' image one diplomat at a time.

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