

Introduction

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The unique and never-ending process of social and political evolution of the United States held in the term “unfinished” is the focus of the first issue of *USAbroad—Journal of American History and Politics*. The essays in this issue engage with the concept of “America Unfinished” and explore the ability of the United States to reinvent itself in times of crisis, driven by a traditional optimism in a better future, but they also critically approach its shadows, exploring issues such as racial discrimination and race relations, the controversial aspects of its foreign policy, and the debate on the role of the United States in the post-9/11 global scenario.

With the aim of further exploring race relations in the 1920s and the crucial role that W.E.B. Du Bois played in the construction of a positive black public image in the post-WWI years, Martina Mallocci argues in “‘All Art is Propaganda’: W.E.B. Du Bois’s *The Crisis* and the Construction of a Black Public Image” that Du Bois’s views on artistic expressions were an organic part of his program to build a black public image for political purposes. According to Mallocci’s analysis, Du Bois, the most influential African-American intellectual of the twentieth century, used the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) journal, *The Crisis*, to build an interracial dialogue on civil and political rights, which was crucial in drawing federal support in favor of black communities in the United States.

Two essays, Alice Morin’s “The Fashion of the 1960s. A New Power Shaping the American Image” and Timothy Nicholson’s “An Empire of Individuals: American Expansion, British Angst, and Tanzanian Anger,” focus on a crucial decade of crisis and reinventions for the United States, the 1960s. An “unfinished” decade itself, the 1960s reshaped the international image of the United States, its role as a superpower, and its evolving relations with the Third World. Morin argues that in the age of expanding consumerism, with the creation of attractive new styles and cultural models, American fashion emerged as a power able to intertwine economic, political, social, and cultural stakes. In her essay, Morin points out that, although fashion was crucial in designing a dominant model of a wealthy, free, and seductive country, the reality of the decade in the US was far from that idealized image, with the ferocious public debates that transformed fashion into a national preoccupation able to divide public opinion. Cultural and transnational influences and connections are also crucial in Nicholson’s essay, which explores how East African students and the young Americans involved in Teachers for East Africa and the Peace Corps interacted and collaborated in Tanzania. Nicholson also sheds lights on the complexities that the volunteers from the US encountered in relating with the new Tanzanian government after the British colonial apparatus left the East African country. Indeed, a stronger American

presence in Tanzania led to a visceral reaction from Tanzanian leaders, which made the volunteers' work to forge and maintain connections with the local population a particularly difficult challenge.

The idea of America "unfinished" clearly reverberates in Andris Banka's "Church Lessons: Revisiting America's Assassination Ban," which traces a history of the assassination ban in the United States, focusing in particular on the Church Committee and its investigations on intelligence abuses in the 1970s. Banka points out that the committee represented a watershed for the public debate on assassination as an illegitimate and unacceptable means of foreign policy, which ultimately led to the domestic assassination ban during the Ford administration. Lastly, the author shows how the ban speaks to contemporary policies, in particular those pursued by presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama, who repeatedly violated previously established normative boundaries with the use of drone strikes and targeted killings.

The Bush administration and the post-9/11 period is the focus of Alice Ciulla's essay "After Iraq: Stanley Hoffmann and the Role of the United States in the International System." Ciulla analyzes US foreign policy in the aftermath of 9/11 through a reading of the work of the Austrian political scientist Stanley Hoffmann. Focusing in particular on the Bush administration's decision to invade Iraq in 2003, the author affirms that Hoffmann's analysis represents a powerful example of how "unfinished" the debate on American foreign policy is and, as Ciulla argues, will probably always be.