**Fanon’s Decolonized Europe: The Double Promise of Coloured Cosmopolitanism in the Age of Austerity**

**Decolonization and The Promise of Coloured Cosmopolitanism**

‘The Third World today is facing Europe as one colossal mass whose project must be to try and solve the problems this Europe was incapable of finding the answers to.’ (Fanon 2004: 238)

At a time of economic and political crisis in Europe, it may appear odd to turn to the era of decolonization for ideas about reforming, renewing or even revolutionizing ideas about ‘Europe’ and ‘European cosmopolitanism’. After all, decolonization caused nothing less than a systemic crisis of European power, economy, and identity. This not only saw the demise of European colonial empires, which through military and economic means had come to dominate vast swathes of humanity for over 400 years, but also signalled a crisis of Eurocentrism and its belief that Europe was the home of democracy, freedom and progress. Decolonization thus not only sought to evict occupying colonial powers from non-European land but also to shatter the myth, once and for all, that Europe was the cultural centre of the earth.

This shattering of the European-centred world had been driven by the rise and unity of the Third World’s ‘darker nations’ and their often violent fight for independence. The unity of the nascent Third World was initially formed around what W.E.B. Du Bois (2007) had famously called the preeminent problem of the twentieth century: the ‘colour-line’. This was the dark meridian along which Western imperialism had divided the world into blocs of light and dark races. What emerged through the formation of the Third World as a political actor was a form of ‘coloured cosmopolitanism’, which created transnational unity between continentally and culturally disparate nations and peoples in the ‘dark’ or ‘coloured’ world.[[1]](#footnote-1) This constructed unity pivoted around a common history of colonial exploitation and a political present of pursuing national independence under a climate of Western neo-imperialism.

Echoing the words of Frantz Fanon, Vijay Prashad outlines that the Third World ‘was not a place’ but a ‘project’ (2007: xv). Under the rubric of the ‘Third World’, the coloured world would come together to liberate those who had been denied access to the economic and democratic fruits of European modernity, and to avoid the *fait accompli* that was mutual nuclear destruction. The spirit of the Third World project can be traced back to the outbreak of the Haitian revolution in 1791 and the anti-colonial struggles that took place towards the end of the 19th century.[[2]](#footnote-2) The political embodiment of this spirit would take place in 1955 at the first Afro-Asian Conference in Bandung, Indonesia, where leaders such as Nehru, Nasser and Nkrumah pledged transcontinental unity in the support of anti-imperialism and the development of the darker nations. This Afro-Asian bloc would later be turned into an African, Asian, Latin American and Eastern European bloc with the formation of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) in 1961. Going forward into the 1960s and 70s, through organisations such the NAM, and later the UN Group of 77 (G77) and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the Third World would demand that the West and the USSR acknowledge the claims of the rest of humanity for economic, social and political justice. This entailed a critique of Western neo-imperialism through the assertion of national sovereignty in the Third World; the rejection of capitalist development norms and the use of dependency theory to counter modernization theory; a plan for a New International Economic Order that could provide a global economy that favoured all of humanity; and the use of the United Nations as an arena to secure planetary democracy and justice (Prashad 2013a: 1-13).[[3]](#footnote-3)

The obvious questions that might be asked are: what does that the Third World project have to do with the idea of Europe? Is the Third World project and the coloured cosmopolitanism that animated it not anti-European? And what does any of this have to do with Europe in the twenty first century? The answer to these questions centre on the fact that liberation in the Third World was based on the destruction, once and for all, of the Manichaean nature of the colonial context, and recognised that colonialism had disfigured the humanity of both the colonizer and the colonized.[[4]](#footnote-4) The underlying principle of the Third World’s coloured cosmopolitanism was therefore an inclusive humanism that would call into question and attempt to erase the colour-line. The Third World project and its core principles were therefore not only concerned about the ‘dark world’, but the whole of humanity; Europe and the West included.

In this chapter I want to draw out the double promise of the Third World’s coloured cosmopolitanism. This entails showing how the coloured cosmopolitanism of the Third World project not only offered a vision of liberation for the colonial world, but that decolonization and the Third World project also revealed an idea for a new Europe. This new Europe could not only move on and repay the moral debts it had accumulated through the dehumanising practices of colonialism and imperialism; it could also actively partake in the liberation of humanity. To recover decolonization’s vision of a new Europe, I will return to Frantz Fanon’s work in *The Wretched of the Earth*, which exemplifies the coloured cosmopolitanism of the Third World project. My intention is to show that Fanon both dismantles the Eurocentric idea of a triumphant Europe, and also offers a vision of a new Europe that could play a part in the liberation of humanity. If we take seriously the fact Fanon’s work called for a new direction for humanity, Europe and the West included, then this work should be read not only as an indictment of Europe but also as a diagnosis of its core problems and how they could be solved. My claim is that Fanon’s idea of a decolonized Europe remains both academically and politically important in the twenty first century.

This chapter thus consists of four parts. In the first, I trace how Fanon indicts Europe as a hypocritical and genocidal social order and frames his own idea of the Third World’s coloured cosmopolitanism around a new, expansive humanism. However, as I go on to show in part two, Fanon’s ideas about liberation in the Third World took into consideration a decolonized Europe that could help the Third World rehabilitate itself from the ravages of colonial and neo-imperial exploitation. In third part I briefly draw out the wider lessons that Fanon’s coloured cosmopolitanism and ideas about a decolonized Europe could have for approaching Europe as a political project. In the final part and I examine the idea of decolonized Europe in the context of the Eurozone crisis and debates about austerity. My contention is that the coloured cosmopolitanism that underpins the vision of a decolonized Europe offers a far better response to the age of austerity than those espousing the idea of a Cosmopolitan Europe.

**Fanon’s Coloured Cosmopolitanism: A new Humanism**

Frantz Fanon’s *The Wretched of the Earth*, published in 1961, marks a point in time when the Third World had begun to move with increased political confidence and vigour in global affairs. When the Bandung conference took place in 1955, the idea of the Third World project was largely embryonic. Kwame Nkrumah had not fully established an independent Ghana; Gamal Nasser had not yet opposed European powers at Suez; and Fidel Castro was still a lawyer rather than a revolutionary guerrilla. *The Wretched of the Earth* on the other hand, dictated during the latter stages of the Algerian War of Independence, was compiled with the aforementioned history fresh in the mind and at the start of the Third World’s zenith as a political actor on the global stage (Garavini 2012). Fanon thus speaks with a distinctive moxie about the ‘Third World’ as an emergent political project, which was not reducible to the Cold War protagonists of the capitalist West nor the communist Soviet Union.

Nothing sums up Fanon’s idea of the Third World project, and its distaste for European colonialism, better than the concluding pages of *The Wretched of the Earth*. These see Fanon indict the hypocrisy of Europe’s so-called humanism in the face of its colonialism. Decolonization had laid this hypocrisy bare by showing the disjunction between Europe’s humanism, which promised equality and liberation for all, and its practices of colonialism that enslaved, exploited and often exterminated non-Europeans for capitalist profit. Fanon argued that this disjunction between theory and practice was no mere coincidence. Rather, the West’s narcissistic ‘spiritual adventure’ with humanism had become a justification for Europe's colonialism and its bourgeoisie’s crimes against ‘four fifths of humanity’:

‘All the elements of a solution to the great problems of humanity have, at different times, existed in European thought. But the Europeans did not act on the mission that was designated them and which consisted of virulently pondering these elements, modifying their configuration, their being, of changing them and finally taking the problem of man to an infinitely higher plane.’ (Fanon 2004: 237)

Fanon’s indictment of Europe, however, was not just confined to its economic elites and cultural order but also included the European masses. Moreover, Fanon made a point of specifically focusing on Europe’s workers and its ideas of socialism. His argument was that humanism, refracted through colonial racism, had corrupted not only Europe’s bourgeois but also its proletariat, who had failed to heed the call for all the workers of the world to unite and who did not understand that the wretched of the earth were the most exploited elements of humanity. This led to a situation where Europe’s workers, and their brand of socialism, had benefitted and gained from the death and destruction of the colonized beyond Europe. Both bourgeois European humanism and European socialism were therefore two sides of the same coin, and their hypocrisy was indicative of a Europe which ‘never stops talking of man yet massacres him at every one of its street corners, at every corner of the world.’ (Fanon 2004: 235).

The hypocrisy of Europe, both on the left and the right, founded Fanon’s belief that Europe was now heading at ‘dizzying speed towards the brink’ and would fall apart due to its economic and political contradictions which saw it teeter between atomic destruction and spiritual disintegration (Fanon 2004: 235-237)[[5]](#footnote-5). This led him to caution that those newly independent Third World countries, and those seeking independence, would be best served by avoiding European models of economic and political development. This was because these models of development, and the technology and lifestyles that came with such a form of capitalist modernity, were premised on the denial of humanism and founded on the exploitation of man and nature. Instead, the Third World would have to combine its ‘muscles and brains’ to head in a ‘new direction’, one that moved beyond the limitations of the European project:

‘So comrades, let us not pay tribute to Europe by creating states, institutions, and societies that draw their inspiration from it. Humanity expects other things from us than this grotesque and generally obscene emulation.  If we want to transform Africa into a new Europe, America into a new Europe, then let us entrust the destinies of our countries to the Europeans. They will do a better job than the best of us.  But if we want humanity to take one step forward, if we want to take it to another level than the one where Europe has placed it, then we must innovate, we must be pioneers. If we want to respond to the expectations of our peoples, we must look elsewhere besides Europe. Moreover, if we want to respond to the expectations of Europeans we must not send them back a reflection, however ideal, of their own society and their thought that periodically sickened even them.’ (Fanon 2004: 239) [[6]](#footnote-6)

Moreover, Fanon believed that the Third World could head towards this new direction through founding a new, expansive humanism that took:

‘…account of not only the occasional prodigious theses maintained by Europe but also its crimes, the most heinous of which have been committed at the very heart of man, the pathological dismembering of his functions and erosion of his unity, and of the bloody tensions fed by class, and finally, on the immense scale of humanity, the racial hatred, slavery, exploitation and, above all, the bloodless genocide whereby one and a half billion men have been written off…’ (Fanon 2004: 238)

What Fanon suggests here is that the Third World could fashion a new humanism through learning from the ‘occasional prodigious theses’ of European humanism but also from the ‘ crimes’ of the same doctrine. As noted earlier, these ‘occasional prodigious theses’ of European humanism were its evocation of rights (democracy, citizenship) and ethics (equality, cosmopolitanism, liberation) that promised liberty for all. It’s ‘crimes’ were the way in which humanism had been utilised to split humanity through class exploitation within Europe, and racial exploitation outside Europe. Fanon uses lessons from such crimes to ground his idea of how the new humanism in the Third World could provide both the ‘dual emergence’ of democratic national sovereignty and international solidarity with those beyond its borders.

On one hand, this saw Fanon argue for a redefinition and innovation of liberal humanism within the confines of the Third World nation state. This would include a range of changes at the national and local levels such as decentralized governments and economies; a reappraisal of the relationship between the rural (peasant) and urban (worker); female equality in reality and not just legislation; the need to reign in the power of capital cities; and even how sport stadiums should be utilized for the population rather than commercial interests. These were designed to help Third World post-colonial states avoid the pitfalls of the socio-economic and political inequality of European bourgeois societies (Fanon 2004: 97-144).

On the other hand, Fanon warned that if the Third World was not to repeat Europe’s compartmentalization of humanism within ethnocentric boundaries, then it would have to realise that it is ‘at the heart of national consciousness that international consciousness established itself and thrives.’ (Fanon 2004: 180). This would see Third World nations use educative practices to ‘develop a human landscape’ for the sake of its ‘enlightened and sovereign inhabitants,’ and also see them pursue polices of economic and political cooperation with other Third World nations on regional and global levels. This was because the failure of European humanism had shown that the pursuit of humanism at home would have to be interrelated with the pursuit of humanism abroad in order fulfil the criteria of humanism in the first instance:

‘… what we want is to walk in the company of man, every man, night and day, for all times. It is not a question of stringing the caravan out where groups are spaced so far apart they cannot see the one in front, men who no longer recognize each other, meet less and less and talk to each other less and less.’ (Fanon 2004: 238)

As others have pointed out, Fanon’s calls for a new humanism were an attempt to call forth a future that had not yet come to pass (Gilroy 2005, Alessandrini 2014). The reality Fanon found himself within was permeated with conditions that he believed were impediments to a new humanism in the Third World. This included the regressive nationalism and native bourgeois despotism that Fanon saw engulfing newly independent Third World nation states. It also included the inherent neo-imperialism of Europe and its economic and political relations with the Third World. Fanon’s new humanism should therefore be read as a reflection on the Third World project and an attempt to flesh out the radical potential of its coloured cosmopolitanism. What I want to show in the next section, however, is how a new decolonized Europe was also a significant part of Fanon’s ideas about a new direction for humanity.

**Fanon’s Decolonized Europe: Reparations and Justice**

A superficial reading of Fanon’s work might give the impression that he believed Europe’s humanity had been permanently disfigured and distorted by the colonial process and therefore was irredeemable. Indeed, as highlighted above, Fanon believed Europe was heading towards disaster due to the ramifications of its own hypocritical humanism. But this anti-European reading is challenged when Fanon follows his call for the Third World to embark on a new direction for humanity with the claim that this would be ‘For Europe, for ourselves and for humanity, comrades, we must make a new start, develop a new way of thinking, and endeavour to create a new man.’ (Fanon 2004: 239).

The coloured cosmopolitanism of the Third World refused to repeat the crimes of Europe against Europe itself because its expansive humanism had learned from history. The Third World’s march forward would therefore aim to foster not only an expansive humanism for the coloured world but also march forward ‘for Europe’ and its citizens. This may seem to suggest little more than the ultimate reversal of the Manichean agency of colonialism where the Third World, and not Europe, is now the driving force of history and humanity. However, this flies against the principles of an expansive humanism, and if one examines the economic changes Fanon thought would have happen to help the Third World achieve liberation for themselves and humanity, it becomes clear that he believed Europe and its liberation would be key to such a process.

Fanon’s idea of a new humanism not only dislodged humanism from its Eurocentric moorings but also saw that the fulfilment of the conditions needed for humanism to emerge were tied up with the global economy and the global division of wealth and labour. As class exploitation in Europe and colonial exploitation outside Europe had shown, a new humanism would have to orient itself towards global economic realties that could offer the possibility of human liberation for all humanity. Whilst Fanon was against the Third World picking sides in the Cold War, and argued that it should not be ‘content to define itself in relation to values which preceded it,’ (Fanon 2004: 56), it is quite clear that Fanon’s vision for the Third World was both anti-capitalist and socialist. This can be inferred from his emphasis on how capitalist modernity, and the wealth divide it had engendered between the Europe and the Third World, would have to be addressed with a new global economic settlement before humanity could approach the idea of liberation:

‘The basic confrontation which seemed to be colonialism versus anti-colonialism, indeed capitalism versus socialism, is already losing importance. What matters today, the issue which blocks the horizon, is the need for a redistribution of wealth. Humanity will have to address this question, no matter how devastating the consequences may be.’ Fanon (2004: 55)

It is within Fanon’s discussion of a new global economic settlement that one can start to find his idea for how a new, decolonized Europe could play an active role in the formation of humanity’s new global economic settlement. Moreover, in *The Wretched of the Earth’s* first chapter, and counter to arguments about Fanon as an unrepentant advocate of de-colonial violence against Europe (Arendt 1970; Hutching’s and Frazier 2008), Fanon unpacks an argument for the cooperation and collaboration between the emergent Third World and its ex-colonial masters in the pursuit of a new humanism through founding a new global economy:

‘The Third World has no intention of organizing a vast hunger strike against Europe. What it does expect is from those who have kept it in slavery for centuries is to help it rehabilitate man, and ensure his triumph everywhere, once and for all.’ (Fanon 2004: 61)

Fanon goes on to outline what this new, decolonized Europe might resemble. It would see Europe acknowledge that it had behind the underdevelopment of the Third World and that its capitalist modernity had been founded and perpetuated on the back of the exploitation of the Third World’s natural and human resources:

‘…European nations wallow in the most ostentaious opulence. This European oppulence is literally a scandal for it was built on the back of slaves, it fed on the blood of slaves, and owes much of its existence to the soil and subsoil of the underdeveloped world. Europe’s well-being and progress were built on the sweat and corpses of blacks, Arabs, Indians and Asians.’ (Fanon 2004: 53)

As Fanon (2004:58) stated, the ‘wealth of imperialist nations is also our wealth.’ A new, decolonized Europe would have to recognize this fact and support the rehabilitation of the Third World’s humanity through forms of restorative economic justice. Europe would have provide reparation payments for its colonial crimes against non-Europeansm fund new infrastructure, and eradicate the poverty European underdevelopment had bestowed on the Third World.

Fanon’s arguments, however, were not just focused on the past economic crimes of European colonialism, but on the economic crimes of European neo-imperialism. Whilst decolonization had seen the eviction of European powers from non-European lands, Fanon understood that this did not end European imperial power. This was where the ‘apotheosis of independence becomes the curse of independence’. European powers often withdrew their armies from newly independent countries but then surrounded the new nation with an ‘apparatus of economic pressure’ that made the new country’s economy subservient to European interests. This had created a neo-imperial global economy where newly independent Third World countries were on the periphery of the global economy, still predominately providing raw materials and natural resources to industrialized countries in the West, because they were unable to develop their own industries and infrastructure free of Western interference (Fanon 2004: 53-55).

Fanon thus called for a total rethinking of global economy and the humanizing of ‘working conditions’ that neo-imperial relations had reduced to the ‘animal level’. A decolonized Europe would aid this process through putting a stop its exploitation of the Third World’s human and natural resources; preventing capital flight out of the Third World; stopping its interference and resistance to Third World industrial development and understanding that the Cold War and its arms race diverted funds from the real problem of providing ‘investment and technical aid’ to the world’s poorest people. Moreover, this new, decolonized Europe would join the Third World in moving the global economy towards the socialism that Fanon believed would provide human liberation (Fanon 2004: 51-63).

**Fanon’s Decolonized Europe Then and Now: The Problems of Neo-Imperialism and Sleeping Beauty**

What then are we to make of Fanon’s idea for a new Europe and his attempt to remodel European politics? What emerges from Fanon’s idea of a decolonized Europe is a critique of the Eurocentrism and neo-imperialism that Fanon believed plagued not only Europe’s colonial humanism but also its progressive, left wing politics. These were the interrelated problems of Europe’s neo-imperial economic relations with the Third World and what Fanon referred to as the problem of ‘Sleeping Beauty’: the failure of the European masses to wake up from their Eurocentrism. Fanon understood that the emergence of a new humanism through the transformation of global capitalism would only be possible with the involvement of a new Europe, one that would renounce neo-imperialism and capitalist exploitation once and for all. However, he was not naïve enough to believe that the ‘cooperation and goodwill of the European governments’ would bring about such a new Europe (Fanon 2004: 62).

Neither was he naïve enough to believe that the European masses would automatically see that their fate lay with the Third World. The restriction of the idea of humanism to the spatial location of Europe, both by European governments and socialists, had failed to secure liberation and democracy for humanity. This included both the idea of welfare capitalism that was becoming dominant across Western Europe and the idea of a democratic socialism that only centred on the problem of the European proletariat. Both these developments were political halfway houses because they did not seek to alter the neo-imperial conditions of the global economy so as to offer liberation to those outside Europe. [[7]](#footnote-7)

Although Fanon believed in the need for a new Europe and the ‘crucial help’ of the European masses in the pursuit of liberation, he was skeptical about whether this would come to fruition. Substituting Western Marxism’s faith in the European proletariat with a dose of harsh reality, Fanon challenged the European masses to understand the treachery of their previous beliefs and actions, and fashion a new European socialism that would recognize the humanity of the Third World within its rationale:

‘…This colossal task… will be achieved with the crucial help of the European masses who would do well to confess that they have often rallied behind the position of our common masters on colonial issues. In order to do this, the European masses must first of all decide to wake up, put on their thinking caps and stop playing the irresponsible game of Sleeping Beauty.’ (Fanon 2004: 62)

Europe’s masses needed to understand the links between their own exploitation in Europe and the neo-imperial exploitation outside Europe. Only then could they the exploitative nature of global capitalism change and to lead to liberation and democracy inside and outside Europe. The reality of these measures would mean not simply the creation of socialism in Europe but a total rethinking of Europe’s political, economic and cultural way of life through the cessation of Europe’s neo-imperialism. Only through this would Europe decolonize itself and be able to join the Third World in its project of liberating all humanity. [[8]](#footnote-8)

Despite the disappearance of the Third World project and its coloured cosmopolitanism, the power of Fanon’s idea of a decolonized Europe remains as pertinent today as it did over 50 years ago.[[9]](#footnote-9) The reason for this centres on the present day regime of neo-imperialism between the Global North (Europe and other advanced economies) the Global South (Third World). Indeed, this regime of neo-imperialism still largely resembles a global economy based on a centre and periphery model that facilitates the economic power of the West over the non-Western world, which Fanon narrated in 1961[[10]](#footnote-10). Whilst the rise of neo-liberal globalisation in the 1970s has seen the collapse of Fordism in the Global North, where select nations in the Global South, and their vast reserves of labour, have become integrated into a new geography of industrial production, the global economy is still largely controlled by the power of Western nations and their multinational corporations (Patnaik 2010; Foster 2015).

Disarticulated Fordism has seen large transfers of wealth and income from labour to capital in the Global North, and produced miraculous economic growth and pockets of extreme wealth in select Global South countries such as China and India, largely through producing export goods and services for consumption zones and consumers in the North (Harvey 2005). However, despite the rise of Southern neo-liberal powerhouse economies such as the BRICS [[11]](#footnote-11) bloc, the global economy is still based on a rough model where the Global South is the home of cheap labour, poverty and raw materials, and the Global North, which despite inducing its own deindustrialisation and structural unemployment, still holds asymmetric economic power and privilege over the Global South (Foster 2015). The neo-imperial situation is, in turn, compounded by the West’s domination of global governance institutions such as the IMF, World Bank, WTO and UN, and the supremacy of Western military powers, which aid its domination of the global economy and facilitate its access to the human and natural resources of the Global South (Wade 2013).

The link between this regime of neo-imperialism and everyday life in Europe is plentiful. It extends from the minerals, resources and labour found in the production of mobile phones; the cheap shirts that are stitched in the South and worn in the North; to the illicit flows of money from the Global South into Europe’s banking systems (see Patnaik and Patnaik 2015 Foster et al. 2011; UNECA 2014). This neo-imperial reality continues to make Fanon’s idea about a decolonized Europe, and his critique of the Eurocentrism at the heart of European politics, prescient and urgent in the age of austerity. To highlight this, in the final part of the chapter I will utilise Fanon’s ideas about a decolonized Europe to assess the response of European intellectuals such as Beck and Habermas to the Eurozone crisis, and their evocation of Cosmopolitan Europe as an alternative to austerity. My intention is to show that the problem of neo-imperialism is something advocates of Cosmopolitan Europe are yet to fully comprehend in the age of austerity.

**Colouring Cosmopolitan Europe’s Anti-Austerity**

As outlined in this volume’s introduction, Cosmopolitan Europe’s response to the Eurozone crisis opposes Europe’s turn to austerity and argues that the crisis is actually political rather than economic (Beck 2013; Habermas 2012, 2015). Cosmopolitan Europe intellectuals such as Beck and Habermas thus embrace an anti-austerity position, which rejects the neo-liberal restructuring of European welfare states in favour of a more integrated and socially democratic ‘Cosmopolitan Europe’. This reformation of Europe would include addressing Europe’s democratic deficit through reforming Europe’s democratic institutions, reaffirming the ideas of European citizenship and expanding the European public sphere. Coupled with this political integration would be an expansive economic integration of Northern and Southern European countries, and the continental expansion of European welfare capitalism (Habermas 2015: 28). This would marry continental political integration with continental economic redistribution and welfare policies to help Europe unify and become competitive within the contours of neo-liberal globalisation:

‘A political integration backed by social welfare is necessary if the national diversity and incomparable cultural wealth of the biotope ‘old Europe’ are to enjoy any protection against becoming levelled in the midst of rapidly progressing globalisation.’ (Habermas 2012: 53)

The anti-austerity of cosmopolitan writers appears a coherent response to the Eurozone crisis. Arguments for opposing austerity and the dismantling of European welfare stares through strengthening the democratic structures of the EU and the creation of trans-European re-distributive and welfare practices appear to offer a viable alternative trajectory for Europe. Moreover, this would appear to resemble the cosmopolitan desire for the EU to act as bulwark against the workings of neo-liberal globalisation. Who could disagree, for example, with the contention that in a climate of re-emergent, regressive nationalisms across Europe, which have been stirred by the immiseration and instability created by the onset of austerity, we should oppose austerity in Europe through rebooting and expanding the progressive and unifying aspects of European welfare capitalism for all Europe’s citizens?

But, if we utilise the idea of Fanon’s decolonized Europe as benchmark for Europe’s future, it quickly becomes apparent that cosmopolitan Europe’s anti austerity is still premised on the basis of a Eurocentric and neo-imperial Europe. This centres specifically on how intellectuals such as Habermas appear blind to the fact that their anti-austerity vision of a new European wide social democratic settlement is entangled with the history of colonialism and present day neo-imperialism. As pointed out in the introduction to this volume, cosmopolitan accounts of European development silence how the histories and wealth generated by enslavement, colonialism and imperialism helped to found modern European states (see Bhambra 2011, 2016). This includes the formation of the European project itself and the development of modern welfare state capitalism within Western Europe. Within the tenets of this argument, the move towards a continental social democratic settlement suffers from a form of Eurocentrism. It evades the idea of reparatory justice for the former colonised who made Western modernity possible, and does not entertain the rights and claims of non-European citizens to the fruits of European modernity. [[12]](#footnote-12)

This historical argument can be deepened and advanced by examining how elements of welfare capitalism at the national level in Europe, and elements of its current trans-European expansion, were not only founded on a history of colonialism but are still perpetuated through present day regime of neo-imperialism between the Global North and the Global South. An example of this link can be found in the ‘brain drain’ of health-care workers (doctors and nurses) from the Global South, which is key to maintenance of individual European health care systems and the trans-European health care system that allows European citizens to access health care in EU member states[[13]](#footnote-13).

Global healthcare suffers from a shortage of workers. The World Health Organisation calculates that today this shortfall currently stands at around 7.2 million and that the world be short of 12.9 million health-care workers by 2035 (WHO 2013). However, not all countries or regions in the world feel this health-care worker shortage equally. Europe navigates the current shortage of healthcare workers due to the migration of health-care workers from the poor Global South into richer countries in Europe, where demand for health care is driven by technological progress and aging populations (EC 2012). Moreover, these national healthcare systems rely on a range of non-European health-care workers in order to provide the healthcare components of European welfare states to European citizens.[[14]](#footnote-14) Migration from the Global South to Europe is driven by ‘pull’ factors such as better remuneration and living conditions, and ‘push factors’ such as the lack of infrastructure[[15]](#footnote-15) and health care spending in the source countries of migrant health workers (Jensen 2013: 8). Unsurprisingly, this migration of health-care workers to Europe mirrors cultural and linguistic ties established by European colonialism[[16]](#footnote-16) (OECD 2015: 143).

Europe’s appropriation of non-European human resources for its provision of welfare has sinister consequences for countries in the Global South, which are deprived of those resources. Across sub-Saharan Africa, where there is the greatest shortage of healthcare infrastructure and workers and the highest burden of fighting disease (WHO 2013), Europe, through the push and pull of migration, asset strips doctors from poor countries. Countries such as Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Mozambique, Angola and Liberia have expatriation rates of more than 50% of the doctors they train, with a significant number of these heading for European countries (OECD 2010). This in turn has significant impact on the ability of these countries to provide healthcare for their own citizens. For example, at the height of the Ebola crisis (2013-2015) in Sierra Leone, which was hastened by the country’s lack of trained staff and has to date claimed around 4,000 lives, the UK’s National Health Service employed 27 doctors and 103 nurses who were trained in Sierra Leone. This amounted to around 20% and 10% of the number of the doctors and nurses to be found in Sierra Leone itself (Sharples 2015). Neo-imperialism thus denies the possibility of life in the Global South, even in the midst of so called naturally occurring events, in order to sustain the possibility of life in the Global North.[[17]](#footnote-17)

The neo-imperialism that sustains European health systems ultimately reflects and sustains the staggering health inequalities between Europe and the Global South. Average healthy life expectancy in Western Europe registers at over 70 years, whilst in India it ranges between 59-50 years and across sub-Saharan Africa the range falls from 59 to below 50 years. In Sierra Leone, for example, average life expectancy is 47 (WHO 2014). Moreover, such neo-imperial brain drain leads not only to a significant inability of poor countries in the Global South to provide healthcare to their own citizens but also reinforces exploitative economic relations between rich and poor countries. This centres on the perversity that sees poor countries in the Global South providing a subsidy to rich European countries because they pay for the education and training of doctors who subsequently migrate. For example, the Sierra Leonean doctors and nurses employed by the NHS saw Sierra Leone provide a financial subsidy to the UK in between the region of £14.5-22.4 million[[18]](#footnote-18). One would find equally appalling amounts of subsides provided to rich countries in the Global North by poor countries in the Global South (Jensen 2013).

This example of the neo-imperial aspects of European welfare capitalism highlights the perniciousness nature of Euorcentrism that Fanon warned us about over 50 years ago. Habermas’ idea about the expansion of welfare practices to encompass a European wide welfare state does not take into consideration how these practises, such as healthcare, are currently are only possible because they are built on neo-imperial relations between Europe and the Global South. He makes no mention of needing to decolonise any aspect of European society but rather seeks to expand what he takes to be its strengths in order to perpetuate the European social order. This is because, unlike the tenets of coloured cosmopolitanism’s rearticulating of humanism, Eurocentrism restricts the idea of cosmopolitanism, democracy, and social welfare to Europe and Europeans. Indeed, the wider world, other than being a threat to Europe, is never really considered by such an approach to European cosmopolitanism. Habermas even admits this fact, when stating that the need for a greater social democratic, cosmopolitan Europe is really about Europe’s geo-political influence:

‘It’s about us. But it’s also about Europe’s role in the world. Given the statistically well-documented prospect that our continent will lose political influence and economic weight on a worldwide scale in proportion to its shrinking population, it is obvious that none of the European nations will have the power to uphold its social and cultural model on its own. Just as little will a decaying Europe have the strength to play a role in shaping a stratified – and hence unjust – world society. This world has not yet learned how to master the challenges of environmental disaster, famine, poverty, economic imbalances and the risks of large-scale technology. And a cantonized Europe that belongs in the muse – the best-case (but improbable) scenario –wants to withdraw from this planning and learning process?’ (Habermas 2015: 72)

Bearing in mind Fanon’s ideas about the need for a decolonized Europe, what Habermas is presenting as a socially democratic and cosmopolitan position, opposing austerity in Europe, is actually inherently undemocratic and neo-imperial for those outside Europe. Moreover, it highlights the failure of Cosmopolitan Europe to recognise how the problem of neo-imperialism was, and is, key to the idea of Europe as a political project. The idea of a more socially democratic Cosmopolitan Europe as a response to austerity thus seems not so much a step towards greater democracy but more a perpetuation of Europe’s living standards through neo-imperialism; a trajectory for Europe that is neither democratic nor cosmopolitan.

**Conclusion: The Unfulfilled Promise of Coloured Cosmopolitanism in the Age of Austerity**

This chapter has attempted to demonstrate that the Third World’s coloured cosmopolitanism was not just a project for Third World liberation but also a project of human liberation. This double promise, exemplified in Fanon’s idea about a decolonized Europe, believed that it was only through the expansion of humanism to all corners of the world that humanity could achieve liberation. As I have shown, this centred on a specific critique of the colonial regimes and neo-imperialism that engendered Europe’s capitalist modernity. This was seen to require not only the assertion of political agency and economic independence in the Third World, but also the move towards a decolonized Europe. This idea of a decolonized Europe would require Europe to turn its back on Eurocentrism and for the citizens of Europe to stop playing the irresponsible game of Sleeping Beauty.

This idea of a decolonized Europe still holds prescient value today. As shown what is often missing from the debates about ‘Cosmopolitan Europe’ in the age of austerity are the very insights that Fanon provided at the middle of the twentieth century: the problems of Europe cannot be untangled from the neo-imperialism that takes place beyond Europe. If we are to talk about what constitutes a cosmopolitan Europe then we must follow Fanon’s lead and embrace a humanism and politics that take it as standard that the reformation of European social institutions be made with the whole of humanity in mind. This sets a challenge to any conception of European cosmopolitanism to realise that the pursuit of democracy in Europe cannot be delinked from the pursuit of democracy outside of Europe.[[19]](#footnote-19) And this scenario centres, as Fanon argued over 50 years ago, on shifting Europe and its ways of life away from the structures of a neo-imperial system and towards economic and political realities that would aid the liberation of all of humanity. [[20]](#footnote-20)

This idea of decolonised Europe also holds important insights for wider ideas about anti-austerity and progressive European politics. There can be no denying that austerity in Europe should be opposed because it has disastrous consequences for populations in Southern and Northern Europe and their quality of life. But if anti-austerity in Europe is simply about saving European welfare capitalism then European anti-austerity is simply another name for the perpetuation of neo-imperialism. This is not only due to the colonial history that is responsible for European nation states and their social institutions, but also because of the neo-imperialism that continues to underpin European society. Rather than simply saving European welfare capitalism, anti-austerity in Europe must translate into the decolonization of Europe and transformation of its neo-imperial strictures.

If Europe and its citizens are to provide an anti-austerity response to neoliberal restructuring through the provision of a new social democratic settlement, which was decolonized rather neo-imperial, they must rethink the very neo-imperial means that underpin elements of their society. If we return to the example of European healthcare system, this would include the questioning of recruitment practices of healthcare workers from the Global South and the way countries in Europe fund the education and training of their own healthcare workforce forces. However, such a discussion would have to consider the point that Europe should pay compensations payments to the countries in the Global South for stealing their human resources (Jensen 2013: 38-39). On a macro level, such discussions would also have to include examining the wealth and development divide between the Global North and Global South, which engenders the very ‘push’ and ‘pull’ conditions of health-care worker migration in the first place. This would in turn, lead to questions about the reorganisation of capitalism both inside and outside Europe in order to achieve universal healthcare for all of humanity.

This anti-neo-imperial logic not only applies to issues of European healthcare systems but an array of other ‘European’ issues such as wealth inequality and the competiveness of Southern Europe. For example: can we really separate debates about wealth inequality in Europe and the need for more disposable income for European citizens from the fact that what they would be induced to spend this extra income on new consumer items such as mobile phones and cheap clothing, which are produced through exploitative and neo-imperial relations with work forces in the Global South?[[21]](#footnote-21) Can we really talk about the need to help Southern Europe become more competitive within the terms of neo-liberal globalisation without acknowledging how such a system pitches labour in the Global South against labour in the Global North?[[22]](#footnote-22) These questions are not meant to represent aporias for European politics in an age of austerity, but rather as anti-neo-imperial challenges that Europe and its citizens must meet in order to achieve a decolonized anti-austerity.

For these reasons, the Third World’s coloured cosmopolitanism and Fanon’s idea for a new, decolonized and truly revolutionary Europe still hold lessons and promise for Europe in its age of austerity. The spectre of the Third World and its coloured cosmopolitism no longer haunt Europe in the visceral manner it once did. But this doubles the need for Europe to decolonise itself, as the Third World no longer can take the lead in such struggles as it did at the mid-point of the twentieth century. Moreover, the other spectre that Fanon narrated where a Europe, unable or unwilling to decolonise, saw both itself and the rest of humanity hurtling towards destruction appears ever closer on the horizon. One can see this in the environmental, economic and political turmoil that currently afflicts humanity, and the boomeranging of neo-imperial problems back into Europe. Europe and its peoples once again find themselves at a cross roads, and maybe their only salvation will be to recover this lost idea of a new decolonized Europe. But this would require that Europe now do what it refused to do fifty years ago and place its destiny with the promise of a decolonized and coloured, rather than simply European, cosmopolitanism.

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1. The term Coloured Cosmopolitanism was coined by Nico Slate (2012), who uses it to describe the unity and cross-pollination of ideas and practices that developed between pioneering African-American Civil Rights activists and the Indian Independence Movement. As Slate shows, this pivoted on the idea of ‘darker nations’ and is exemplified in the work of Du Bois (1925) that linked the ‘problem of colour’ across national boundaries. I use the term in the same register but expand it beyond Slate’s pre-World War Two environment and shift its focus to geo-political and geo-economic issues of the post-war period. Following Prashad (2007), this sees the idea of the ‘darker nations’ as a key element of the Third World’s unity and critique of neo-imperial capitalism. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. For example, C.L.R. James (2001) Appendix to the 1963 edition of his path breaking history of the Haitian revolution, *Black Jocobins,* is entitled ‘From Toussaint L’Ouverture to Fidel Castro’. For more recent work that links the Haitian revolution with modern day conceptions of human rights see Blackburn (2011). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. For more on the details of the Third World project and its relations with both the First and Third World also see Garavini (2012), Lee (2010) Mishra (2012), and Mazower (2012). For a more critical take on the Third World project see Scott (2004). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. This is what Fanon famously called in *Black Skins, White Masks* (2008) the ‘double narcissism’ of European colonialism. See also Césaire (2000) for very similar views about colonialism’s dehumanisation of both colonizer and colonized. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Fanon here was clearing borrowing from his former school teacher Aimé Césaire’s work, *Discourse on Colonialism* (2000), which had narrated the distinct link between colonial rationality and the rise of Fascism in Europe. Whilst events such as World War One and The Great Depression had provided the class cleavages for the rise of Fascism, Europe had failed to understand that the logic of Fascism, its racist dehumanization, hatred of democracy and its creation of extermination camps, were simply the extension of colonial procedures that until then had been ‘reserved exclusively for the Arabs of Algeria, the “coolies” of India and the “niggers” of Africa.’ (Césaire 2000: 36). What Césaire and Fanon believed was that Europe was heading into further trouble because it failed to see how its neo-imperial societies had not solved the class and race contradictions that had made the rise of Fascism possible in the first place. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Fanon’s call for the Third World to create something new is not itself free from critique. For an approach that questions the Fanon’s emphasis on creating something new at the expense of the older traditions and cultures, see Shilliam (2015). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. This point was also noted by Gunnar Mydral (1970: 299) who noted that the European welfare state was a conservative institution, which saw citizens mobilized to ‘abstain from polices for underdeveloped countries’ in order to secure their own national rights and privileges. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. The highlighting of the link between the problem of the proletariat in Europe and the colonial problem is not exclusive to the work of Fanon but can also be found in other prominent black intellectuals of the period such as Césaire, W.E.B Du Bois, George Padmore and C.L.R. James. Indeed, this insight into the racialised and Eurocentric nature of descriptions of class relations and revolution within Europe was key to the intellectual tradition Cedric J. Robinson (2000) has labelled, *Black Marxism*. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. The agency of Third World project brought ‘Third Worldism’ into the vernacular of European politics during the 60s and 70s (Garavini 2012), but this was not enough to cause Europe to embark on a new direction in the twentieth century. By 1982 The Third World project and its coloured cosmopolitanism had been brought to halt with the onset of a Western manufactured Third World debt crisis (Prashad 2007). And by 1987, the Third World project’s last truly revolutionary representative, Burkina Faso’s Thomas Sankara was assassinated. This marked the final blow to a project that had suffered from internal problems, such as the hubris of national leaders and their failure to secure true democracy at home, and even more significantly from external problems such as the neo-imperialism of Europe and the US. This had seen the Third World become a site of neo-imperial military warfare through Cold War proxy wars and economic warfare through organisations such as the G7, International Monterey Fund (IMF) and World Bank (WB) (see Chossudovsky 2005; Klein 2007). [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. It should be noted that Fanon in fact anticipated quite a lot of these changes associated with neo-imperialism. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. This neo-imperial situation is complicated by the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India China and South Africa) and their rise as economic powers. The BRICS are often confused with an acronym coined by Goldman Sachs economist Jim O’Neill but their history predates this coinage. The group are best seen as geo-political bloc, which is developing its own challenge to the dominance of the Global North. This, however, resembles more a form of inter-imperialist rivalry between neo-liberal blocs than resistance reminiscent of the Third World project (See Prashad 2013a & 2013b). [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. For an account that uses this rationale to combat the racism shown towards refugees in narrations of Europe’s current ‘migrant crisis’, see Bhambra (2015). [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. This current system functions on a reciprocal agreement between EU and European Free Trade Association countries and sees a European Health Insurance Card issued to citizens, who can then utilize free or reduced price healthcare in countries they are visiting at the time. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. This dependence on foreign health care workers varies across Europe and the EU. Hungary, Italy and France have relatively low reliance on foreign medical doctors – less than 5%. Whilst moderate levels of dependence are found in Germany (over 5%). Belgium, Portugal, Spain, Austria, and Sweden have a high reliance (ranging between 11.1–18.4%). Ranging between 22.5% and 36.8%, Slovenia, Ireland and the United Kingdom are the European countries with very high reliance on foreign medical doctors (Wismar et al. 2011). Regardless of level of dependence, it is still non-EU born doctors and nurses who comprise the majority of these foreign health workers. For example, in Spain (92%), UK (82%), Portugal (81%), the Netherlands (71%), Ireland (71%) and Sweden (51%) of foreign-born doctors were from non-EU countries (OECD 2015: 144). [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. On education and training, for example, in the 47 countries of sub-Saharan Africa, just 168 medical schools exist. Of those countries, 11 have no medical schools, and 24 countries have only one medical school. This in turn makes the brain drain from this region even crueler and heart breaking. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. For example, the UK’s largest group of foreign-born doctors are from India, who make up over 10% of its doctor’s working in the NHS. The other top non-EU countries providing doctors to the UK are Pakistan, South Africa, Nigeria, Egypt, Sri Lanka, Iraq and Sudan. (Sharples 2015; OECD 2015: 143). [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Another aspect of neo-imperialism was also responsible for increased suffering and death in Western Africa before and during the Ebola crisis. Over the last decade, the IMF, through loan conditionality, has effectively forced governments in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone to cut healthcare spending in order to prioritise debt repayments and set public-wage caps which contribute to the push factors of health worker migration. As a result of the enforcement of neo-liberal polices, these countries’ healthcare systems were not prepared for the crisis, and a major reason why the outbreak spread so rapidly was the weakness of health systems in the region (Kentikelenis et al 2015). [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Sharples (2015) makes this the lower estimate based on training costs for junior doctors and nurses. The higher estimate is based on assuming the doctors are consultants. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. For more on the problematic of linking democracy at home with democracy abroad see Narayan (2016). [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Given the theoretical orientation of this piece, I unable to expand on the details of such changes but they would centre, as the Third World project and writers such as Fanon made clear, on the reconfiguration of the global economy and global governance structures to more democratic and socialist ends. From a European perspective, one primary recommendation would be cessation of Europe’s continued plundering of the Third World’s human and natural resources. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. See Foster (2011) for a wonderful narration of how labour in the Global South is exploited for goods such as IPhones and cheap clothing that retail predominantly in the Global North. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. For excellent account on the link between the conditions of Southern European labour and the conditions of labour in the Global South and the need for a more global perspective on issues such as the competiveness of Southern Europe, see Pradella (2015) [↑](#footnote-ref-22)