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## Colonialism, Postcolonialism and the Liberal Welfare State

Gurminder K Bhambra and John Holmwood

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*Abstract: This article addresses the colonial and racial origins of the welfare state with a particular emphasis on the liberal welfare state of the USA and UK. Both are understood in terms of the centrality of the commodified status of labour power expressing a logic of market relations. In contrast, we argue that with a proper understanding of the relations of capitalism and colonialism, the sale of labour power as a commodity already represents a movement away from the commodified form of labour represented by enslavement. European colonialism is integral to the development of welfare states and their forms of inclusion and exclusion which remain racialised through into the twenty-first century.*

Keywords: class, colonialism, dispossession, immigration, settler liberalism, welfare.

The publication of Thomas Piketty's (2014) *Capital in the Twenty-First Century* has put inequality firmly back on the agenda. Inequalities – as measured by proportionate shares in income and wealth – have widened and, in the advanced democracies, have returned to levels last seen at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. None of this should have been surprising. The fact that a secular trend toward greater equality in much of the twentieth century had begun to reverse in the 1980s was well-established, not least due to the work of Atkinson (for example, 2003), mentor and collaborator of Piketty. Neo-liberal globalisation promoted by national governments and international agencies was widely seen as the main reason for this reversal.

The impact of Piketty's book derived, in part, from the fact that it was published after the financial crisis and recession of 2008, which had seemed to mark the end of neo-liberalism (Kotz 2009, Duménil and Lévy 2011). Yet the costs of the bail out of banks and its impact on state budgets ushered in a period of fiscal austerity on the part of many governments and a tightening of neo-liberal policies rather than their demise. Indeed, since Piketty wrote, neo-liberalism has been joined by populism as its 'supplement' (Boltanski and Thévenot 2006), scapegoating immigrants and ethnic minorities as undermining the position of a previously incorporated (white) working class now 'left behind'. This has been most evident in the UK referendum vote to leave the European Union in June 2016 and in the election of Donald Trump as president of the United States in November of that year. These themes, however, have wider resonance and include the on-going refugee crisis in Europe (where the image of

multitudes queuing at European borders was a resonant factor in the UK referendum, notwithstanding that few refugees have been accepted by the UK).

Many recent accounts of the welfare state in Europe (and, elsewhere) suggest that changing patterns of immigration have undermined the solidarity necessary to recognise the claims of fellow citizens to social rights (for discussion, see Alesina et al 2001, Alesina and Glaeser 2004, Goodhardt 2013). Social divisions of race and ethnicity have largely been treated as exogenous factors in their development and not as integral to them. The exception is the United States, where race has been seen as central, but has been treated as a primary factor in explanations of the ‘laggard’ nature of its welfare arrangements. In contrast, although we agree that there is a failure of solidarity, we argue that it is one that has its origins in colonialism which organised access to politics and social rights on a hierarchical and racialised basis.<sup>1</sup> This is not peculiar to the United State, describing its ‘exceptionalism’, rather they are integral to other welfare states and not simply on the basis of recent immigration. Specifically, in the 1970s (the date from which the great reversal of trends toward reduced inequality that Piketty describes begins) there is a failure to replace a pre-existing racialised domination with equality and this represents the continuing legacy of that racialisation.<sup>2</sup>

In particular, we will set out how a deeper historical sociology of coloniality can provide a more adequate understanding of the trajectory of European and other advanced welfare states than that which is provided by standard approaches. This will be focused primarily on a re-interpretation of the liberal welfare regime. This is because the ‘liberal’ welfare state has particular analytical significance as a ‘default’ against which other welfare state types are judged, as a consequence of its representation as being most aligned with market requirements (see for example, Esping-Andersen 1991). However, we will also include a discussion of the colonial formation of other welfare state types.

Our purpose is analytical as well as substantive. We argue that the liberal welfare state exemplifies a general tendency in understandings of the welfare state to separate the ‘economic’ from the ‘social’ and the ‘political’ and to assign to the former an impersonal logic of the market. The ‘social’ is then understood as the locus of ‘identities’, which are mobilised through the ‘political’ process to intervene in the ‘economy’ to moderate its outcomes. Most

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<sup>1</sup> In offering this characterisation, we are not dismissing social struggles across racial and ethnic lines (see, Virdee 2014, for the British case, and, more broadly, the essays in Ward 1970), but suggesting that they have not had a definitive role in establishing fundamental social structures of welfare.

<sup>2</sup> This coincides with a high point in movements of de-colonisation and arguments on the part of newly independent countries for a ‘new international economic order’ to redress previous inequalities. Neo-liberal structural adjustment was what ensued. We will develop the point later, but neo-liberalism abroad promoted by Western states subsequently came ‘home’.

approaches, then, represent commodification and its correlative categories of economy, market, and class to operate in a way that looks forward either to the erosion of discrimination (standard liberal accounts) or to a universalism beyond 'race' contained in class-based opposition to the commodity form (for example, as in Marxist oriented accounts). We seek to show that 'commodification' is racialised in itself and not simply by the operation of external 'social' modifications that may contingently prove stronger than any tendency to resolve them. In this way, we argue that markets are racialised *as a consequence of the commodity form, rather than despite it.*

### ***Trajectories of welfare?***

Esping-Andersen's (1991) typology of welfare state regimes has perhaps been the most influential treatment of differences among welfare states (Ferragina and Seeleib-Kaiser 2011). In an argument derived from Polanyi (1944), this typology is constructed around the idea of welfare states as representing the de-commodification of claims to income through the provision of services or welfare benefits outside standard property claims (whether of capital or labour). In common with Polanyi, Esping-Andersen regards all non-market welfare provision as 'de-commodifying' – that is, as a modification of the 'pure' form of the commodity. However, the liberal type is characterised as being the least extensive welfare regime with the primary concern being to maintain market processes. His other two types – 'social democratic' and 'corporatist-statist' - involve more extensive modifications of market-based relations.

In the period since Esping-Andersen wrote, his scheme has been subjected to considerable modification, including the development of additional types associated with Southern Europe (Ferrera 1996) and former communist countries (Fenger 2007), or by the creation of distinctions within existing categories, such as the identification of a 'radical' type within the liberal cluster (Castles 1998). Finally, there have been arguments that the types are exemplified by specific countries (the USA, Sweden and Germany) but that other cases assigned to the types are less clear-cut, such that most cases are 'hybrids' (Bolderson and Mabbett 1995, Scruggs and Allan 2006).

More recently Esping-Andersen's typology has been subjected to criticisms associated with the fragility of the arrangements that he described as incorporated within relatively robust path dependencies (Schelke 2012). A new consensus is emerging that Esping-Andersen identified a narrow range of factors – associated with class actors and de-commodification – while neglecting other factors, such as demographic ones (Lynch 2006). Here, an ageing population creates demands for particular services and benefits, while electoral conditions favour their interests against those with other claims. An ageing population also provides the basis for

increased immigration and, thus, for the fracturing of class (and other) solidarities that were central to Esping-Andersen's argument. Although, once again, immigration is presented within such an argument as arising as a contingent phenomenon connected to its immediate circumstances. Similarly, Mann (1987) associates the development of welfare states with war and the solidarities that it generates (especially in the context of the second world war), solidarities which fade over time.<sup>3</sup>

What is significant is that the critique of Esping-Andersen leads back to his default type of the (neo-) liberal welfare state. Thus, for a number of commentators, the risk is the 'Americanization' of European social policy (see, Holmwood 2000). An early commentator in these terms is Streeck (1995). He associates the UK and USA with liberal policies and proposes that, "the Maastricht settlement was a decisive British victory over the federalist welfare state-building project" (1995: 404). Streeck attributes this to the weakness of any federal system in the face of the assertion of rights by individual sovereign states and draws an analogy between European federalism and that of the USA, which he regards as a welfare laggard precisely because of the assertion of 'states' rights' over federal policies. Although he does not mention the fact, 'states' rights' is a coded reference to the accommodation of the racialised politics of the southern states in the USA. The argument is made more explicit by Taylor-Gooby (2004) in an article that directly confronts the claim that, by undermining solidarity, immigration creates circumstances for social policy convergence with the USA. His conclusion is that 'left politics' – that is, class solidarity expressed through the electoral system – can and has proven an effective counter, an argument that now appears hollow. 'Markets' have asserted themselves against 'politics' (to invert the title of an earlier book by Esping-Andersen [1988]); re-commodification has undermined de-commodification. But the raced nature of markets is not addressed.

### ***Raced markets?***

It seems obvious to us to point out that war and migration/ immigration are integral to European (welfare) state-formation, even if they are outside standard social scientific explanations. To see how this might be so, we only have to remind ourselves that the original members of the EEC were all former colonial and Imperial powers, with France, Netherlands, and Belgium entering the EEC together with colonial possessions. Germany and Italy, for their part, had lost their colonies as a consequence of their wartime defeat (Luxembourg was implicated by virtue of its economic union agreement with Belgium in 1921 and, prior to that, its participation in the Zollverein arrangements of the German Empire). Countries that joined

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<sup>3</sup> Significantly, appeals to wartime solidarities as a basis for 'taking the country back' and repudiating immigration were a major part of the United Kingdom Independence Party's (UKIP) campaign to leave the EU.

later, such as the UK, Spain and Portugal were also former colonial powers with, in the case of the UK, significant colonial commitments at the point of joining. Equally, the implicit longer historical trajectories that Esping-Andersen draws upon – the differentiated welfare benefits and status hierarchies of the corporatist-statist type, for example – were formed by those experiences. Each ‘national’ society incorporated a more extensive polity that was racially structured through hierarchies of inclusion and exclusion associated with colonial dependencies (Bhambra 2017).

The failure to recognise the significance of colonialism is itself bound up with the underlying account of capitalism as the context in which welfare state development occurs. As we have suggested, the former is understood to develop according to an ‘economic’ logic of market exchange relations. In this way, the ‘economic’ is separated from the ‘social’ and the ‘political’ with the former represented as a set of ‘impersonal’ forces.<sup>4</sup> Given that colonialism is represented as a political phenomenon, it is presented as analytically distinct from capitalist relations whose development it may facilitate, but with which it has only a contingent relation.<sup>5</sup> It is this theoretical construction that is central to social scientific accounts of liberalism (and neo-liberalism).

As already mentioned, Esping-Andersen’s overarching understanding of welfare as a process of ‘de-commodification’ is derived from Karl Polanyi’s (2001 [1944]) account of liberal political economy’s dependence on the ‘fiction’ of the commodification of labour, land and money.<sup>6</sup> According to Polanyi, liberal political economy is based upon the idea of a self-regulating market and the development of public policy to overcome obstacles to the realisation of that self-regulation (though, of course, his deeper argument is that markets were a product of political intervention). For Polanyi, land, labour and money cannot naturally take the commodity form and generate resistance to attempts to commodify them (or, in the case of money, the attempt to do so is self-contradictory; we will return to money later in the article). By and large, Polanyi adopts a Marxist definition of the commodification of labour in terms of capitalism being based upon *labour-power* as a commodity, but, unlike Marx, he has a broader understanding of resistance deriving from the ‘anti-social’ nature of commodification.

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<sup>4</sup> The difference between Marxist and non-Marxist accounts is that the latter accept the phenomenal appearances of market exchanges, whereas the former argues that a social relation can be recovered that operates beneath the phenomenal forms. However, that social relation is expressed through commodity forms.

<sup>5</sup> This is indicated by the Marxist theory of primitive accumulation and the emergence of capitalism, which, contra classical political economy, notes the significance of the enclosure movement and the creation of private property in land, but not the wider process of colonial dispossession except as a transitional issue of the accumulation of a surplus to put to work and further accumulation within capitalist relations.

<sup>6</sup> Polanyi writes that, “the postulate that anything that is bought or sold must have been produced for sale is emphatically untrue in regard to them” (2001 [1944]: 72).

It is this that underpins Esping-Andersen's understanding of different welfare regimes. After all, welfare regimes represent 'reformist' interventions of a type that Marx suggested were not consistent with capitalist social relations, which he argued were 'tightly-coupled', to use Perrow's (1984) resonant phrase, around the capital-labour relation. De-commodification, for Polanyi and for Esping-Andersen following him, can take different forms and trajectories (unlike the Marxian trajectory of capitalism-socialism-communism). Given the fact that the core of his analysis is that the commodity status of labour (and land and money) is 'fictional', even liberalism has to construct a 'residual' welfare regime that seeks, as far as possible, to maintain the primacy of market exchanges, but, nonetheless, modifies them, while reproducing a default ideology of public policy in which the market has primacy.

Esping-Andersen's primary orientation to welfare regimes is through the category of labour, as befits his interest in welfare *capitalism*. He understands the 'de-commodifying' impetus to derive primarily from the rise of the labour movement. In this context, he neglects Polanyi's category of land, notwithstanding that the commodification of land through the 'enclosure' movement is a large part of Polanyi's analysis of the creation of labour as an exchangeable commodity. Indeed, 'revisionist' accounts of the Swedish welfare state, such as that of Baldwin (1992) understand it to be the product of a 'red-green' alliance, that is an alliance of newly proletarianised workers and small farmers. We will return to this when we address the social democratic regime more directly. For the present, we want to consider, at a formal level, the relation between land and labour in Polanyi.

Initially, Polanyi seems to be developing his argument in the context of a dialectical relation between dispossession and possession. The enclosure movement represents a privatisation of collective rights in land and, in turn, creates a dispossessed class of landless workers. They are represented as self-possessed, that is possessed of the capacity to work and able to 'alienate' their labour power in return for wages. However, the idea of labour as a commodity is a 'fiction' for Polanyi precisely because, "labour is only another name for a human activity which goes with life itself, which in turn, is not produced for sale but for entirely different reasons, nor can that activity be detached from the rest of life, be stored or mobilized" (2001 [1944]: 72). Thus, self-possession provides a claim on returns to labour as a form of property right. At the same time, the 'self' cannot be reduced to labour and the very idea of a self also entails a claim to rights associated with being a person. The emergence of common conditions of labour allows the development of solidarities based upon the 'dignity' of such selves and their capacities for self-organisation and collective action.

In effect, Polanyi's argument echoes Locke's account of the individual as well as Hegel's definition of the bourgeois subject as a subject capable of property (both in terms of the

appropriation of external possessions which are put to use and the putting to use of the subject's own efforts). Esping-Anderson draws on this construction in representing the ideological substance of liberalism, but he does not pause to consider the historical context of Locke's argument and Polanyi's reconstruction of it as the historical moment of the emergence of English liberal political economy. In short, Polanyi makes little out of the significance of the fact that the enclosure movement in England is continuous with colonial dispossession and possession in the 'New World' (Holmwood 2016).

In the section on 'Market and Nature' it is true that Polanyi refers to the 'shattering' of the social and cultural system of native life that follows colonisation. There is a close analogy, he writes, between "the colonial situation today and that of western Europe a century or two ago. But the mobilisation of land which in exotic regions may be compressed into a few years or decades may have taken as many centuries in Western Europe" (1944: 178-90). However, the consequence of presenting it as an *analogy* is to suggest that capitalist dispossession can be understood within the context of Western Europe independently of colonialism and that the forms of labour it produces are those intrinsic to capitalist political economy. In effect, there are two forms of commodification - of the labourer (enslavement) and of labour power (so-called free labour). Polanyi's analysis of fictitious commodities addresses only the latter and assigns free labour to a logic of market capitalism, rather than to racialisation.

In this way, capitalist political economy is separated from the colonialism with which it emerges. This comes to be accepted in later accounts, in part, because earlier discussion of Locke (for example, Macpherson 1962) has represented him as providing a normative account of capitalism and the individual *avant la lettre*. However, as Lebovics (1986) has argued, what is much more likely is that Locke was not presenting a prefigurative account of capitalism, but reflecting on settler colonialism (in which he had a direct interest as secretary of the Board of Trade and Plantations and of the Lords Proprietor of Carolina).

Those displaced by enclosure in England (more broadly, in Europe) are offered, by Locke, the possibility of enclosure themselves in the form of settlement elsewhere. But what is important to Locke, on this analysis, is to show that *common* ownership confers no rights. The latter arise only from *private* ownership and so the displacement of common rights through private appropriation is not to be described as 'dispossession'. Locke's allowed restrictions on private property – that enough must be left for others and nothing must be left to spoil – are, in the first case, 'solved' by colonial settlement and the idea that it confronts a 'terra nullius' (or a land 'unpossessed', in the sense of not being subjected to husbandry), while unlimited accumulation without spoilage is resolved through money. Classic liberalism, then, asserts private property rights directly in the context of two of Polanyi's three categories, those of land

and money, and through the third, labour, as the expression of self-ownership as the basis of individual rights.

The enclosure movement in Europe that fuels migration, then, also creates a form of colonial enclosure through settlement and the displacement and destruction of indigenous populations. At the same time, colonialism provides opportunities for investment in enterprises that require a workforce – for example, sugar and cotton plantations of the American and Caribbean colonies. Colonial settlement cannot meet its requirements of labour from ‘self-owned’ labour (no matter how much that figures in Jeffersonian ideas of a New World yeomanry). Instead, it has resort to forced labour, specifically, chattel slavery. Here we confront another puzzle, that of Polanyi’s failure to address enslavement (there is just one brief reference to threats to security in the context of Burke’s treatment of pauperism). Capitalism emerges alongside chattel slavery where it is precisely the case that there is no separation between the human individual and his or her labour. Under chattel slavery the individual, and not his or her labour power, is treated as a commodity and is detached from the rest of life and ‘stored’ and ‘mobilised’. This separation is evident in the designation ‘slave’ which reduces (and dehumanises) the individual to their labour, in contrast to the term enslavement, which retains the separation of individual and their labour activity in the face of the inhumanity of the practice.<sup>7</sup>

In other words, whereas the idea of *labour power* as a commodity may be a ‘fiction’, the *commodified labourer* is not; for many, it is the reality of the emergence of capitalism. Enslavement is *labour as a commodity*. On this understanding, the sale of ‘labour power’ (alienable from the person of the labourer, and the very definition of its commodity form in most accounts) is already a move towards its de-commodification, most likely deriving from a specific moral economy of ‘recognition’. Complex forms of subordination of labour to capital arise – wage labour, family labour, indentured service and enslavement – and the different forms are socially constructed (and resisted) and politically regulated. However, we should not assume that ‘free labour’, or the sale of ‘labour power’, is different from the rest as somehow the ‘real’ form of capitalist labour to which other forms will come to be subordinated and subsumed as part of the intrinsic logic of capitalism (as Marx suggested).

The idea of ‘free labour’ appears to emerge as a category of disadvantaged membership in a societal community, governed by cultural norms of proper treatment, where some are excluded

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<sup>7</sup> For example, the figure of ‘slave’ is central to Berlin’s classic liberal essay on ‘two concepts of liberty’ and his elaboration of the idea of unfreedom: “I wish to be somebody, not nobody; a doer - deciding, not being decided for, self-directed and not acted upon by external nature or by other men as if I were a thing, or an animal, or a slave incapable of playing a human role, that is, of conceiving goals and policies of my own and realizing them” (1969: 151).

from membership and made subject to unfree labour. Given the well-documented debates over the humanity (or otherwise) of native Americans and Africans in the context of Spanish colonialism (Rodriguez-Salgado 2007), as well as philosophical reflections on ‘stages’ of history (Bhabra 2007), and religious involvement in the anti-slavery movement (Anderson 2014), these cultural norms were religiously inflected and racially organised. It is in this sense that ‘commodified’ labour power and its separation from human individuality might be understood as a ‘moral’, rather than an ‘economic’ category, deriving from a particular religious tradition and applied, in the first instance, only to those understood as members. Indeed, as far back as de Tocqueville, it was noted that, the enforced labour of the enslaved potentially ‘de-legitimated’ free labour because manual labour itself was understood in racialised terms (de Tocqueville 2010 [1835/40]; see also, Rana 2011 and Isenberg 2016).

The point we wish to emphasise here is that the benchmark of *commodified labour*, against which degrees of de-commodification will be measured to establish ‘types of welfare state’ is already, itself, a form of de-commodification against which further de-commodification is (problematically) assessed in a way that erases the racial construction of labour. ‘Labour power as a commodity’ is a product of *political* economy, but not in Marx’s sense of embodying a *sui generis* logic of capitalism. It is a product of a political community that divides its members from others who are subject to vicious forms of domination on the basis of their exclusion from social membership.

Indeed, we can suggest further that the idea of race as a *social* division that is secondary to the economic realities of class is, itself, dependent on a specific (and flawed) presumption of class analysis in its ordinary Marxian form, namely that of class polarisation (Marx 1976 [1867]). Marx assumes the reduction of skilled to average labour and the reduction of ‘status’ differences – whether of gender, race, or ethnicity – by the operation of the labour market, just as he argues for the impossibility of reform within capitalism (determined as it is by the logic of the capital-labour relation). Once it is allowed that the development of capitalism is associated with differentiated class positions and possibilities of reform then the initial racialisation *continues as integral to class* (for example, as subsequently conceived sociologically as a ‘structure’ of differentially advantaged and disadvantaged positions) and social reform. In other words, Marx’s analysis of class as the solvent of racial (and other) divisions depends upon class polarisation and is, indeed, theorised from the perspective of the ‘truth’ of that polarisation. To the extent that polarisation is not the ‘truth’ of capitalist development – and, of course, the development of welfare states is necessarily a denial of polarisation – then the solvent nature of class, and the processes of market exchanges with which it is associated, is undermined.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> This section derives from a reading of Abram Harris’s work, especially his ‘Pure capitalism and the disappearance of the middle class’ (1939). Like other African-American scholars, Harris was drawn to class analysis as providing an

Our point is not directed simply at the standard Marxist account, but also at how the sociological successor accounts contain the same incoherent separation of the 'economic' and the 'social' (a separation shown to be incoherent by the development of capitalism itself). The distinction operates to present the economic as representing impersonal (and rational) market processes, while the social is the source of non-rational (including discriminatory) modifications. Polanyi was not the first to see that the distinction was incoherent together with the idea of a self-sufficient logic of economic reproduction. However, in our view, he did not go far enough in repudiating the idea of labour-power as a commodity. In effect, in characterising liberalism as an incoherent theory of public policy he fails to understand it as a racialised *moral* economy and, in consequence, contributes to the idea of its 'impersonal' (that is, non-racialised character). In this way, liberalism comes to be the model of relations based on equality, and deviations from equality are contingent and not intrinsic to it. Thus, from this perspective, it becomes difficult to understand the racialised character of welfare states identified as liberal precisely because the very description of commodification that defines them is represented as 'impersonal'.

### ***Settler liberalism***

If we now return to Esping-Andersen's liberal welfare cluster, it is significant that their members include the USA, Australia, New Zealand, and Canada. These are all white 'settler' capitalist countries. The UK is also assigned to this cluster, but has a special status as the colonial power associated with settlement in the other countries of the cluster (and elsewhere, of course) which are both differentiated from and incorporated into its imperial state. This gives rise to a particular form of mutual-definition of 'new world' nations and 'old world' colonial power. So long as we ignore issues of race, the 'new world' is egalitarian, compared with the inegalitarian 'old power'. This distinction arises in Castles and Mitchell's (1993) designation of Australia and New Zealand as a sub-type of the liberal welfare state precisely because they are more egalitarian than the UK (and the USA). Equally, Rana (2011) and Prasad (2012) characterise the USA as 'egalitarian' in the nineteenth century, and, as such going on to sustain levels of progressive taxation and state intervention (frequently associated with 'anti-trust' sentiments) well into the twentieth century that are more extensive than are found in the

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alternative 'universalism' to that of 'American values' as subsequently developed by Myrdal (1944). He understands that universalism of class to be tied to the argument of polarisation and, in the absence of the latter, which the article sets out, class differentiation provides conditions for racialised differentiation rather than the basis of solidarity across racial differences. Harris's argument about class differentiation as the reality class analysis must confront was taken up by Wright (1985) as a technical issue of definition, without recognising the context of the politics of race from which Harris was writing.

countries associated with the social democratic or corporatist statist clusters (even now, corporation taxation is higher in the US than in EU states, for example).

Of course, *we should not ignore race*. The countries associated with the liberal cluster have a special status in relation to the UK as an imperial power, deriving from the nature of their settlement. The 'patrial' connection to the imperial power meant gradual accession to political autonomy including, in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (Canada was earlier), provision of Dominion status with powers of self-government within the Empire (ie subject to the authority of the monarch, but not to direct political rule). The USA might appear to be the odd one out as a fully independent republic, but its early claim to independence as a settler colony is constituted by unfair treatment by their (white) compatriots in the UK. And, of course, commentators after the war of independence – for example de Tocqueville (2010 [1835/40]) - regarded the US political community as 'Anglo-American'. In this sense, then, we are extending Rana's (2011) analysis of the United States as a settler liberal political formation to a broader set of countries, ultimately including the UK itself.

Dominion status enabled British settler colonies to set their own policies - for example, with regard to immigration, in particular managing it to maintain dominance of a white political community. Thus, all British white settler dominions maintained whites-only policies on immigration, favouring white British, or white European-descended (including American) immigration, until well into the post-second world war period (Brawley 1993). Similar policies were adopted in the US (King 2000). In the context of British dominions, the situation was particularly significant. After all, all people under imperial rule were British subjects with no distinction made between those living in the territories of the UK and elsewhere. Movement of British subjects was understood to be largely between the imperial metropole and the dominions and colonies, or between the latter territories, rather than from those territories to the metropole (with the exception of migration from the white settler dominions). It was precisely the movement of non-white subjects from the Caribbean, the Indian sub-continent and from south-east Asia that white Dominions sought to restrict by their whites-only immigration policies, while it was the movement to Britain of the same subjects – especially south Asians expelled from East Africa – that precipitated an immigration crisis in Britain in the 1960s associated with hostility to 'coloured immigration' (Hansen 1990).

In this context, then, the developing welfare states of Esping-Andersen's liberal cluster are strongly associated with a racialised politics of inclusion and domination (including their forms of labour). Each of the white settler countries had serious exclusions of indigenous - 'first nation' - people, including policies that openly acknowledged that they would cease to exist. Additionally, in the USA, what Du Bois (1903) called the 'global color line' operated internally

also to exclude African Americans from the political community, notwithstanding formal equality granted after the civil war. Labour markets and their associated welfare regimes were racially segregated. In contrast, in Britain, racial hierarchy was externally constructed, allowing the development of an apparently domestically inclusive welfare state regime, at least in the immediate post-world war two period. However, the development of that welfare state was itself dependent on a political economy of Imperial and (subsequently) Commonwealth preferences which was designed to enrich the British state while restricting the rights extended to subjects throughout its territories (see, Shilliam forthcoming). Welfare reforms were for the British domestically and not to be extended elsewhere, a principle that was adopted even by the Labour Party (Davies 1963).

Negotiation of British entry into the EU coincided with a post-war crisis brought about by the breakdown of the system of Imperial and Commonwealth political economy (Holmwood 2000). The latter involved protected, but slow-growing, markets for British manufactures and access to primary and agricultural products. This meant that British agriculture was uniquely efficient when compared with other European economies, but that capital investment in manufacture was less efficient. The high volume of food imports put a strain on British balance of payments which was a further problem after the Bretton Woods agreement of fixed exchange rates where the development of a Sterling Area - primarily of Commonwealth countries, but not exclusively and not all of them – fixed to the British pound created the need to protect the currency against any balance of payments problems. This involved deflationary measures that undercut policies for long term investment.<sup>9</sup> In this way, ‘monetary union’ without ‘political union’ in the Sterling Area prefigured similar problems of the Eurozone.

The demise of this system and the orientation to the EU as an alternative political economy, then, occurred in the context of decolonisation. One of the few to comment on this conjunction, writing of France as well as Britain, Strang, suggests that, “decolonization brought the political economy of France and Britain closer to that of the Scandinavian, Alpine or Benelux countries” (1994: 293). However, it is difficult to sustain the idea that, in the case of Britain, a convergence is manifest in a turn towards increased social spending that is made possible by the reduction in the costs of sustaining Empire. Strang writes that, “With massive de-colonization, Britain and France were reduced to second-rate powers and forced to turn inward. This inward turn may have facilitated the further expansion of metropolitan political,

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<sup>9</sup> This was the view of the EEC Commission in their ‘opinion’ on Britain’s application for membership: “the difficulties in fact seem to be mainly structural in origin, and stem either from defects in the distribution of productive resources (inadequate and misdirected investment, numerous obstacles to improvement of productivity, the pattern of employment, the tax system) or from the economic, monetary and financial burdens inherited from the country’s past, the second world war and the country’s international position in the postwar world’.” (Commission of the European Communities 1967: 38).

social, and especially welfare rights.” (1994: 292). In fact, in the case of Britain, the opposite seems to have occurred, welfare rights came under challenge. How to explain this?

Strang puts forward a version of the ‘democratisation’ thesis that is otherwise used to explain the expansion of welfare rights, suggesting that there is an ‘inner incompatibility’ between popular sovereignty and Empire. In other words, for him, the extension of democracy within the ‘metropole’ makes it hard to sustain domination in the relation between ‘metropole’ and ‘dependency’. He traces this back to sympathy in the metropole for independence of the 13 colonies of the United States, suggesting that it is a continuing process applied elsewhere. In part, it is presented as a growing understanding within the metropole that sovereignty should be extended to dependencies themselves, but it is also understood to derive from the ‘export’ of ideas of popular sovereignty which fuel movements for independence.

What Strang misses is the complex process of identification and disavowal associated with the identities of those in the ‘dependencies’ and, in particular, ‘patrial’ identification through patterns of ‘white’ settlement. In the post-war period, a process of decolonisation was underway dating back to independence for India and Pakistan after World War II and, earlier, of the granting of special self-governing Dominion status for settler colonies such as Australia, New Zealand and Canada (South Africa was a more complex case). The 1960s saw independence movements in Africa, for example, Kenya and Uganda and Rhodesia/ Zimbabwe. The expulsion of South Africa from the Commonwealth in 1961 and the declaration of independence for a white minority government in Rhodesia in 1965 had deep consequences within the UK body politic. Conservative politicians showed considerable sympathy for ‘patrial’ white settlers in South Africa and Rhodesia/ Zimbabwe, while the exodus of South Asian British subjects from Kenya and Uganda produced a crisis for immigration and citizenship policy in the UK. Just as Australia and New Zealand were open to ‘white’ migration from Zimbabwe and South Africa, but not to non-white migration from other Commonwealth countries.

Notwithstanding that the immigration of white subjects from the Commonwealth and others from Europe far exceeded that of non-white citizens, it was precisely the idea of an ‘immigrant-descended’, non-white, population that came to be regarded as a threat to national identity. This was the occasion for the redefinition of citizenship in Britain to establish those who had been non-patrial British *subjects* as *immigrants* (Bhambra 2017). This was also the context of Enoch Powell’s infamous ‘rivers of blood’ speech in 1968 in which he warned of the threat to national identity that derived from the immigration of non-white British subjects to the UK. While the possibility of more extensive immigration consequent to joining the EEC was not an issue – although other EEC members were concerned about the movement of British

Commonwealth citizens (Hansen 2000) – control of borders was a central concern associated with ‘coloured’ immigration.

One of the reasons why these events have had less salience in accounts of the development of welfare states is that they also took place in the context of a rising civil rights movement in the US, drawing some of its inspiration from decolonial movements (see, Rana 2011). The apparent success of the US civil rights movement in the 1960s gave rise to expectations that its federal welfare regime would be de-segregated and that social rights of citizenship would be extended to African Americans (see, for example, Parsons 1965), just as it led to a modification of US immigration policy and the replacement of ethnic quotas by national quotas (King, 2005).

Instead, rather than extend social rights in this way, neo-liberal public policy began to remove social rights from everyone. This is associated with the Republican Party’s ‘Southern strategy’ to detach white Southern votes from the Democratic Party. Ronald Reagan’s Neshoba County Fair speech in 1980 (at the scene of a lynching of Mississippi freedom summer activists in 1964) articulates this strategy in the context of neo-liberalism: “I believe in states’ rights. I believe in people doing as much as they can for themselves at the community level and at the private level. And I believe that we’ve distorted the balance of our government today by giving powers that were never intended in the Constitution to be given to that federal establishment.”<sup>10</sup> These words presage an attack on social rights of citizenship and the pathologising of welfare dependency within neo-liberalism, but it also continues the racialised divisions integral to liberal political communities from their earliest foundation.

Paradoxically, the neo-liberal retrenchment of social rights more generally following de-segregation in the USA has had the appearance of making ‘class’ appear more relevant in the explanation of the experience of African-Americans than ‘race’ (Wilson 1978, 2015). This is because a significant proportion of white Americans come to share a similar experience of disadvantage. However, what needs to be understood is that it is *race* that explains the re-emergence of ‘class’ and not *class* which is the underlying explanation of ‘race’. It is also the context in which the ‘white’ working class emerges as racially positioned by neo-liberalism as sharing material experiences with non-white citizens, but claiming ‘whiteness’ as a marker of difference and identity. In other words, the racialised form of populism exhibited in the recent presidential election in the US (and in the referendum vote to leave the EU in the UK) is integral

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<sup>10</sup> The speech was widely reported at the time. A transcription of a recording of the speech is available from the Neshoba Democrat newspaper website (uploaded November 15<sup>th</sup> 2007). <http://neshobademocrat.com/Content/NEWS/News/Article/Transcript-of-Ronald-Reagan-s-1980-Neshoba-County-Fair-speech/2/297/15600>.

to the racialised structures of labour markets and welfare of liberal and neo-liberal welfare states.

### ***Solidarity and welfare revisited***

But what of the other European welfare types - for example, the 'corporatist-statist' and the 'social democratic' types? Let us quickly deal with the first. As we have already observed, the core member states of the EU from the outset – Germany, France, Belgium, Netherlands, Italy and Luxembourg – were all implicated in colonialism. Indeed, the very claim of the EU to end war among European nations necessarily recognizes the global competition for colonies that defined the development of those states and is part of the explanation of both world wars in the twentieth century (Grosvogui 2002). In that sense, what would be exceptional among European states would be to not have a past of colonial entanglements. It may be that this could be argued for post-communist states joining the EU after 1989, but the EU they joined is a post-colonial Europe. Yet, the standard narrative of the EU is to assign colonialism to the national past of member states and not to the European Union itself (Bhambra 2016). This is so, even in the case of France, which in the 1960s fought a colonial war of independence with Algeria, a state incorporated into the European Union as part of France, albeit with the rights associated with membership such as free movement and welfare not assigned to its population (Hansen and Jonsson 2014).

Hansen and Jonsson (2011, 2012, 2014) and Garavini (2012) have demonstrated the connections between European colonialism and European integration, highlighting a common European project of colonialism which would come to be integral to its eventual integration. The negotiations in the post-war period that led to the establishment of the EEC, for example,, as Hansen and Jonsson argue, understood that “parts of Africa and the common market were bound together in one imperial polity” (2012: 1029). Indeed, as they argue, those negotiations for integration were predicated on the very idea of, “bringing Africa as a ‘dowry to Europe’” (2011: 455). In other words, Africa’s natural resources – namely, land, labour, and markets – were to be made available for the European project. However, this involved no consultation “within the territories to be subjected to incorporation or association” (Hansen and Jonsson 2011: 455). Not only were Europe’s African colonies unquestioningly put at the service of the incipient European project, but there was a stronger statement “that Europe’s unification could succeed only if it also was fashioned as a joint colonization of Africa” (Hansen and Jonsson 2013, 11).

As we have suggested, the assignment of colonialism to the national histories of separate European countries and not to the EU and the European 'project' itself is a flawed construction.

However, as we have seen, it is not something that enters into the accounts of the development of national welfare states of countries that were also colonial powers. We have provided one such account of the liberal welfare cluster, and we do not have the space to extend that analysis to give a similar account for the countries within other clusters. Notwithstanding, it seems straightforward that the welfare arrangements of colonial powers such as France, Belgium, Netherlands, Italy and Germany are characterised by hierarchical arrangements of inclusion and exclusion, where rights developed in the metropole are not extended to the colonial possessions and, indeed, those possessions are understood to serve the prosperity of the metropole and its 'local' hierarchies.

But, the harder case we will be asked about is how we would provide a colonial and postcolonial construction of the development of the welfare states in the social democratic cluster? It is not that Sweden, Denmark and Norway did not engage in colonial possession (including the Atlantic slave trade). Clearly they did, but, this was small scale and defeated by larger European powers relatively early in the development of European empires. For the most part, their colonial ambitions were over by the end of the eighteenth century. For Sweden and Norway (and Finland, too), there were also serious issues of 'internal colonisation' associated with northward expansion and displacement of Sami people, including their forced labour in mining operations, similar to that of indigenous people in the Americas and elsewhere.

However, the issue of settler colonialism is not only an issue of specific national policies to create colonies, but also the consequences of those colonies in terms of wider population movement. So, if Scandinavian countries did not extend formal colonies in the nineteenth century, settler colonialism afforded opportunities for their populations to migrate and that migration contributed to processes of dispossession and expansion of settlement elsewhere, especially in the United States. Scandinavian migration began in the 1840s (coinciding with the removal of native Americans from the places of Scandinavian settlement) and continued throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. These processes of migration are estimated to involve up to 25% of the population of Sweden and are associated with domestic impoverishment brought about by a fourfold increase in population since the mid eighteenth century. In the case of Sweden, this gave rise to fears about the consequences of migration for national development. An Emigration Commission met between 1907 and 1913 and raised the issue of poverty and status hierarchy in Sweden that contrasted with the (racialized) freedoms to be found in the United States.

Indeed, explanations of the development of the Swedish welfare state and its 'woman-friendly' character frequently point to a population crisis associated with reduced fertility, but it was one that had earlier been exacerbated by emigration. By the 1930s, the net reproduction rate had

fallen to the lowest of all countries for which there is comparative data. This is the context in which Alva and Gunnar Myrdal (1934) argued for policies to support women's participation in the labour force. The alternatives would have been 'natalist' policies of encouraging an increase in family size or immigration. As such, even with the social-democratic cluster it is possible to expand the adequacy of the explanation by taking seriously the colonial entanglements of the associated countries.

## **Conclusion**

Colonialism, whether through the establishment of formal colonies or through forms of settlement assimilating into the dominant variants of other colonial powers, is central to the historical construction of the welfare state in Europe. Without taking this broader history into account, our explanations for current issues affecting welfare states will be limited and parochial. Issues of race and immigration are not new phenomena with which European welfare states must now contend, but are longstanding issues albeit displaced and invisible as a consequence of how social scientific accounts have themselves been constructed.

We have tried to show that this is not simply a matter of substance – a failure properly to address race and immigration – it is also *analytical*, built into social scientific concepts. Markets are raced, once we understand that the idea of labour power as a commodity derives from moral economy and is not the *asocial* and pure form of the market relation. 'Solidarities of class' are not the antidote to racialised responses, but are themselves bound up in them. There is no automatic association of 'class' (or market) with the dissolution of racialised inequalities. Indeed, exclusive 'solidarities' have been used to represent others as undeserving and have been the basis of reducing welfare rights. 'Class' is not about 'real underlying processes', in contrast to a politics of identity that disrupts organisation on the basis of those processes. Class is race, and addressing their mutual formation will be central to any future organisation for social justice. The conjunction of neo-liberalism and populism is not accidental and, the future of inequality in the twenty-first century will be the entrenched capitalist patrimonialism that Piketty describes unless we can rise to the occasion by reconstructing our understanding of how profound inequalities have been produced and reproduced.

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