

Fanon's Theory of the Nation as the Locus of Anticolonial Revolution

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Martiniquais philosopher Frantz Fanon's theory of revolution breaks with that of 19th century economic theorist Karl Marx's on a number of accounts and none greater than the role of the nation in the revolution. Fanon's and Marx's divergence on the importance of the nation to the revolution against capitalism/colonialism (the distinction and similarities between these two systems will be traced below) raises the following questions: why does Fanon advocate so vehemently for national rather than international revolutions? Why, unlike Marx and in a similar vein as India's Jawaharlal Nehru, does he believe that the construction of independent nations will help ensure socialist projects, or at least one in which will permit colonized persons to slip free of the clutches of European colonialists?

This paper will examine how Fanon reconciles Marxist ideas, most notably the notion of an international uprising against capital, with his emphasis on the importance of national consciousness and national culture as the launching point for anticolonial insurgencies. It will likewise question how Fanon defined a "nation" and whether he dealt with how Europeans arbitrarily designated national boundaries in regions they colonized like Africa and the place of minority groups would have in these nations post-revolution.

Through this investigation, the present work will argue that Fanon advocates for a national rather than international revolution due to his notion of national culture and the essential role it plays in freeing the colonized peoples of the world. Unlike Marx, he perceives national culture as the key to revolution and thus as something more than a mere product of economic relations between peoples, stronger than the international ties between oppressed persons, and a way of thwarting the rise of dangerous

“tribalism.” At the same time, however, he also believes the nationalist struggle will give rise to a new national culture, a fact that will assist in building cohesion among the residents of the territory participating in the revolution. Finally, Fanon is able to argue for the predominance of the nation in the struggle against colonialism because he disavows revolution on an international scale. References to Sanjay Seth’s analysis of Indian nationalist Nehru’s reconciliation of Marxism and nationalism will also provide for a framework of comparison throughout the piece.

Fanon’s Revolutionary Context: 1950s Algeria

Prior to discussing Fanon’s ideas on uprisings, it is important to acknowledge that, like Marx at times and like Nehru, Fanon was writing while living through an actual revolution- the Algerian War of Independence against France, 1954-1962. Also, taking into account the case of Algeria will help to moor some of Fanon’s theories within a real world context and actual events. One cannot write of Martinique, Fanon’s home country, moreover, because this territory never experienced an independence struggle on the same scale as witnessed in Algeria (indeed, despite nationalist efforts, until this day the Caribbean island remains a French *département d’outre-mer*). Fanon also did not reside in the Island after initially leaving it in 1943 except for a brief time in 1946.

The question of national unity was primordial in the case of Algeria, the nation in which Fanon resided in for four years prior to his deportation in 1957. While Fanon had published his work *Black Skins, White Masks* from Lyon, France, he produced the rest of his major publications in Algeria. Even the topic of *Black Skins, White Masks* derived directly from the philosopher’s experience as a man of African descent living in France during and after World War II. Fanon’s theories of revolution did not surface until Fanon relocated to Algeria in 1953, only a year prior to the outbreak of a movement to free that territory from France’s imperial hold. Upon the outbreak of the conflict, Fanon, a psychiatrist, began treating patients who were suffering psychologically from the effects of the war. In 1956, Fanon decided to quit his post at the hospital in the Algerian city of Blida where he worked to devote himself fulltime to the struggle of the *Front de Libération Nationale*, Algeria’s

main pro-liberation organization. From these activities and experiences with the Algerian nationalist movement, Fanon composed his major tracts on the revolt against colonialism (Poulos, "Frantz Fanon"). These pieces included *The Wretched of the Earth*, *A Dying Colonialism*, and *Toward the African Revolution*.

National cohesion was anything but evident for Algeria nationalists. As historian James McDougall explored in his book, *History and the Culture of Nationalism*, the Association of Algerian Muslim 'Ulamā (AAMU), a religious movement that emerged during the 1920s, formulated many of the myths of the Algerian nation that the future movement for independence would promote to help them found a unified state. Most notably, the leader of the AAMU, BenBādīs, articulated his notion of the Algerian nation that would weigh heavily upon Algerian generations to come: "Islam is my religion, Arabic is my language, Algeria is my country." Yet, this claim ignored the reality that part of the population that was not of European origin consisted of Jews and non-Arabic-speaking Amazigh (Horne, 2006, 58; International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs, "Indigenous Peoples"). But Ben Bādīs's words were subsequently taken up by the nationalist movement and then the post-independent state. Of course, the French Muslim personal status laws, which determined who was a Muslim and thus ineligible for French citizenship as Jews were, helped to create the basis around which the nationalists could construct a national identity that was inherently Muslim (McDougall, 2006, 66). While the idea of what exactly constituted the Algerian nation evolved throughout the revolution, in the end, BenBādīs's delineation of Algerian identity ruled the day. Fanon could not have known this at the time he was penning *The Wretched of the Earth* and his other pieces on revolutions but, as an insider of the revolutionary movement, he would have been aware of these tensions.

Fanon and Marx

Although in his introduction to Fanon's *A Dying Colonialism*, the Argentinean journalist Adolfo Gilly disavows Fanon's connection with Marxism, several elements of the powerful theoretical school inform Fanon's work. Gilly writes that:

Fanon was not a Marxist. But he was approaching Marxism through the same essential door which for many "Marxist" officials and diplomats is closed with seven keys: his concern with what the masses do and say and think, and his belief that it is the masses, and not leaders nor systems, who in the final analysis. (Fanon, 1965, 2)

Fanon may have not been a self-proclaimed Marxist but he does frequently reference Marx and his works and his oeuvres bear the mark of the 19th century philosopher. For example, when Fanon moves to deny that national movements should be put aside in favor of an international revolution, he declares:

And now it is time to denounce certain Pharisees. National claims, it is here and there stated, are a phase that humanity has left behind. It is the day of great concerted actions, and retarded nationalists ought in consequence to set their mistakes aright. We, however, consider that the mistake, which may have very serious consequences, lies in wishing to skip the national period. If culture is the expression of national consciousness, I will not hesitate to affirm that in the cases. (Fanon, "Reciprocal," 8)

Fanon most likely refers to Marxist theory here, as is discernible by his reference to "the phase humanity has left behind" (i.e., Fanon cites Marx's idea, adapted from Hegel, that the non-Western parts of the world are not at the same stage of history as the West because they have not undergone industrialization; Seth, 1995, 12). Also, in his discourse concerning the threat of the rise of a national bourgeoisie in the post-independence era, Fanon demonstrates his familiarity with Marx's ideas about production and how colonialism has exploited the country. Even his use of the term "bourgeoisie" indicates Marxism's influence on his ideas. Additionally, as was the case in Marx's 1853 letters on India from the *New-York Daily Tribune*, the connection between imperialism and capital appears clearly in Fanon's work. When talking about the potential role of the middle class, he speaks about how these colonized persons do not control the real capital and means of production and that instead these mechanisms lie beyond the colony's borders in the imperial metropole (Fanon, "Chapter Three, The Wretched of the Earth," 1-9).

Above all, in addition to merely referencing Marx and his theory in Fanon's work as Gilly notes, like Marx Fanon sought through his works to incite a revolution of the "people" against capital's arbitrators. A comparison of his ideas for an international revolution to those of Marx's could thus prove a fruitful exercise and illuminate some of the rationale behind Fanon's decision to forefront the importance of the nation in his treatises on the insurgency against capital and colonialism.

Marx, the Revolution, and the Nation-State

Even though Marx composed some of his works prior to the creation of the nation-state and wrote from Germany, still a disunified set of states at this time, Marx was familiar with cases of complex national administrations like Great Britain. For Marx, the nation was the mere result of economic forces. In "The German Ideology," Marx outlines his belief that economic interests and the need to produce propel all of human history and human relationships. In this essay, he notes:

It is quite obvious from the start that there exists a materialistic connection of men with one another, which is determined by their needs and their mode of production, and which is as old as men themselves. This connection is ever taking on new forms, and thus presents a 'history' independently of the existence of any political or religious nonsense which would especially hold men together. (Marx, 1978, 157)

Here, Marx actually alludes to political relations, such as those one could find within a country among members of a national community, as "nonsense" and not actual relations but the mere manifestations of economic circumstances. For Marx then, political relationships like the ones nations supposedly foster prove superficial.

What is more, Marx had occasion to critique colonialist ventures and tie them to his overall theories of capital and its exploitative nature and History (Marx, "The East India Company"). His letters on British parliament's 1853 India debate provide an example of such a work. Yet, as Sanjay Seth explains, Marx views the non-Western world, the Orient, as outside the realm of "world history," a step or two behind the West (Seth, 1995, 226). Marx did not, therefore, predict the proletariat revolt emerging from

these countries which, after all, held no real proletariat according to his definition.

Just as Marx sees the constructed nature of nations, he points out the latter's weakness when discussing the impact of industrialization on the urban working classes. He does this when explaining in the "Manifesto of the Communist Party" how capitalist production exploits the proletariat. Through this exploitation, workers become little more than machines in the capitalist mode of commodity creation. They thus begin to take on similar appearances and characteristics across cultures and thereby lose their national character. The consolidation of bourgeoisie power actually undercuts the nation and national identities according to Marx, thereby revealing the weakness of these ideological categories (Marx, "Manifesto," 20). Therefore, Marx believes the capital system will cut away at shared national traits among proletarian workers.

Where does the nation fit in then with Marx's concept of a proletariat revolution? Concerning the latter, Marx advises in "The Communist Manifesto" that the revolt against capital occur first on a national level. That is to say, the proletariat in a nation should stand up to their own bourgeoisie before uniting with the oppressed working classes of other countries to overturn capitalist regimes everywhere. Yet, Marx gives no indication as to why he advocates for this order of events. Perhaps the philosopher believed it would prove too difficult for local members of the proletariat to band together on an international level. In any case, given that Marx posits that the industrial production has eaten away at the national character of the proletariat, he foresees workers around the world being able to unite and thus cast nations and nationhood aside. In sum, when it came to the revolution, Marx saw it quickly transforming into a pan-proletarian rejection of capital spanning across national boundaries.

Fanon's Reconciliation of the Nation and the Revolution: National Culture as a Given

To begin with, Fanon is only able to argue for the nation as the site of revolt because he defends the idea of a unified national culture that existed prior to colonial conquest. Because he sees national culture as existing prior to colonization and being real and

coherent, Fanon is able to argue that a revolution would have some basis for articulating and launching a united insurrection against European control of a colony. The discourse Fanon gave to the Congress of Black African Writers in 1959 champions the notion of national culture as an entity which came into being long before the arrival of Europeans. As Fanon remarked during the elocution, "The colonial situation calls a halt to national culture in almost every field. Within the framework of colonial domination there is not and there will never be such phenomena as new cultural departures or changes in the national culture" (Fanon, "Reciprocal," 1). One could assume then that the cultures the colonial regimes attempted to eradicate had been frozen in time; thus, the culture one sees in colonized territories would be that which existed prior to colonization. The presence of this national culture proves so strong that Fanon claims even the colonialists who try to suppress it fail to persuade themselves of its nonexistence. As Fanon writes "...the oppressor does not manage to convince himself of the objective non-existence of the oppressed nation and its culture" (Fanon, "Reciprocal," 1).

Of course, in the case of Algeria, some common characteristics ran a thread through the territory's diverse populations. Local populations were mostly Muslim and spoke Arabic. Scholars such as Alistair Horne among others have also credited popular anger at the French and their conduct of the war as the reason for which the FLN eventually won the conflict, despite losing it militarily; distaste for French control over the region likewise bound the various peoples of Algeria together (Horne, 2006, 18-19).

Fanon's theory of the importance of a long standing national culture matches well with Nehru's acceptance of India's cultures as firm and sound. Only, as will be seen, Nehru more readily acknowledged the diversity of within the colony he was looking at (India) and ended up arguing that India's particularly laid in its cultural diversity for the sake of advancing a unified national project (Seth, 1995, 200-201).

As with the Algerian *'ulamā*, Fanon then weaves threads of similarity through the Algerian population, in his case to make it seem as if this colonized territory stands as a united front

throughout the war (Fanon treats the Algerian nation as completely unanimous in the struggle against French colonialism throughout *A Dying Colonialism*; 1965). Nehru similarly accepts the idea that India could rally together under the banner of cultural plurality (Seth, 1995, 200-201). However, unlike the Algerian religious leaders and Nehru, Fanon is instead looking to speak about how colonized peoples on an international level; he thus has to address a number of nations instead of one specific colony seeking independence.

Marx does see nations as having different characteristics but he contends that the existence of the nation itself and these qualities stemming from economic relationships between people. Fanon, though, does not really delve into the mechanisms which gave rise to the national culture he so fervently believes exists in each colonized territory. Rather, he seems to simply accept that each nation possesses its own unique and coherent culture. Indeed, Fanon did not explore the origins of the national culture he thought would help accelerate the revolution.

Fanon's Elision of Ethnic Diversity within Nations

Most importantly, Fanon's unwavering belief in the reality of a national culture is only possible if Fanon ignores or talks around the potential reality of a colonized territory not being quite as united as it would appear. Fanon does recognize that divisions can arise within the communities of a colonized territory. In his chapter from *Wretched of the Earth*, "The Pitfalls of National Consciousness," Fanon notes that without the fostering of a highly advanced notion of national consciousness, a responsibility he places on the national elite, national unity will falter and the national community will break down into "racial," "regional," and "tribal" groups. He writes:

The faults that we find in it (national consciousness as a result of the national elite's failure to develop it) are quite sufficient explanation of the facility with which, when dealing with young and independent nations, the nation is passed over for the race, and the tribe is preferred to the state. These are the cracks in the edifice which show the process of retrogression that is so harmful and prejudicial to national effort and national unity. (Fanon, "Chapter Three," 1)

Fanon's awareness that intellectuals and local elites must foster national consciousness and that this consciousness does not merely stem from national culture serves as a rupture from what he noted in other parts of *The Wretched of the Earth* about the strength of this culture to resist colonialism (Fanon, 1963, 167-189). Indeed, his work "The Reciprocal Bases of National Culture and the Fight for Freedom" does not question the unified nature of national culture as he does in this essay (Fanon, "Reciprocal").

In any case, rather than seeing divisions among Africans as stemming from historical difference between peoples residing in the same colony or from Europeans' previous arbitrary delineation of these colonies' borders, Fanon believes many of them deriving from the experience of colonialism. To begin with, the power vacuum left by fleeing European elites would cause Africans to vie for these positions of power upon independence. In other words, this process would give rise to a national bourgeoisie whose greed would cause class conflicts to occur. Fanon also predicts that Europeans favoring certain regions during period of colonization and that this preferential treatment of some regions over others, if taken up by a nationalist bourgeoisie, could lead to lingering cleavages in the national fabric post-independence. Finally, the theorist concedes that fights between Africans and Arabs and Christians could break out in the post-independence era, but he also claims Europeans have done much to aggravate tensions between these groups during their rule (Fanon, "Chapter Three," 7-9).

Fanon does not address the problem of national unity beyond the religious, regional, and supposedly "racial" divisions that colonialists fostered. He does not deal for example with how the liberation advocates in Mali, which was known during the colonial period as "French Sudan," were going to handle the challenges of having to bring together the myriad ethnic groups (Bambara, Soninke, Khassonké, Malinké, Fula, Voltaic, Songhai, Tuareg, and Moors) that lived within the nation's borders. Each of these groups had their own distinct sense of identity. While some of them shared similarities, backgrounds, and histories, Fanon's lack of acknowledgement that nationalists might struggle to keep all of these different groups together proves glaring. Fanon

actually neglected the threat the existence of multiple ethnicities residing in the same country could pose to national unity even though he had a prime example of a sizable ethnic minority in the country out of which we was operating- the Amazigh of Algeria. While most Amazigh had converted to Islam, they did not speak Arabic. In a chapter of *A Dying Colonialism*, Fanon postulates strategies for accommodating the Jewish and European populations in the national community after the end of colonialism. Yet, like the FLN which embraced the formula Ben Bādīs developed, Fanon ignores the Amazigh population in his work. Perhaps, like the FLN leaders, he believed Islam and the other facets of Algeria's "national culture" would be strong enough to keep the nation from falling apart once the French administration fell.

It is additionally interesting to remark that Fanon only begins to treat the issue of potential ethnic disunity among national citizens while talking about how African may struggle to find a place in other countries on the continent if they choose to emigrate from their own nation. It is at this point and remarkably not others that Fanon recognizes that independent nations may struggle to incorporate all of the residents within its borders into the national community (Fanon, "Chapter Three,"6). Fanon so greatly believes in the national that the only other possible source of conflict among members of a national community that could emerge in the post-independence era he recognizes is between the pseudo-bourgeoisie and the rest of the population.

Fanon may have genuinely feared that the fission of African nations into ethnic groups that could prevent the continent from releasing itself from colonial powers' grip. For this reason, he encouraged national elites to foster a sense of unity among all classes in the territory. Also, Fanon limits his discussion to potential ethnic conflicts arising from the presence of immigrants hailing from other African countries on the national soil; he is thus able to discuss these matters without offering a counterargument to his own belief in the cohesiveness of the nation. Possible reasons for Fanon's failure to address this matter of internal divisions in "nations" will be speculated upon further below.

Revolution Creating New National Community?: Fanon's Solution for European Settlers

The way by which Fanon handles the question of whether post-independence states should allow European settlers to remain in their territory and integrate into the national community reveals one method they could employ for accommodating varieties of groups into their community. As Fanon explains in *Wretched of the Earth*, "Decolonization, which sets out to change the order of the world, is, obviously, a program of complete disorder" (Fanon, 1963, 29). The philosopher explains how national culture, while existing prior to the onset of colonialism, is shaped and reshaped by this disordering (Fanon, "Reciprocal," 4). The recreation of the nation through a violent rejection of the colonialist project allows for nationalists to admit new members into their national community. Fanon's explanation of how Algerian nationalists have chosen to manage the thousands of pro-FLN Europeans reveals this possibility. In a chapter of *A Dying Colonialism* dedicated to the question of the future of Algeria's European community, he seemingly cites an FLN document (Fanon does not make his source clear) regarding the place of the latter in the country after the end of the liberation struggle, "*For the F.L.N., in the new society that is being built, there are only Algerians. From the outset, therefore, every individual living in Algeria is an Algerian. In tomorrow's independent Algeria it will be up to every Algerian to assume Algerian citizenship or reject it in favor of another*" (my emphasis; Fanon, 1965, 152).

The revolution thus provides a place for all who participate in it in the post-independence nation. Fanon does not describe for the Algerian case, however, what would happen to the cultures and customs of this rather heterogeneous community (most of the Europeans living in Algeria were of Maltese, Spanish, or Italian descent). Do they transform into part and parcel of the post-independent nation's social and cultural fabric? And how would their inclusion in the national community reconfigure national culture? Fanon's work does not provide answers to these important inquiries.

Finally, since Fanon does not address the problem of multiple ethnic groups inhabiting the same colonized space, he

does not explain how the revolution will lead to national cohesion. Partially, Fanon seems not want to deny the existence of a national community and culture prior to the revolt as to do so would reinforce colonialist attempts to undermine the culture and history of colonized peoples (Fanon, "Chapter 3"). This resistance to accept ethnic diversity may have something to do with his position as an FLN spokesperson during the Algerian War of Liberation.

Fanon's Belief in the Inability of International Movements to Incite the Anti-Colonial Revolution

Concerning the integration of nationalist revolts into the international arena, Fanon's works do allocate room for communication and collaboration between different nationalist projects, but he categorically refuses to admit that an international revolution could take the place of nationalist ones in liberating colonized peoples. Fanon's work particularly speaks back to the ideas of Pan-Africanism and the Negritude movement. Pan-Africanism called for the unity of the African continent while the Negritude movement, strongly advanced by Fanon's compatriot Aimé Césaire, espoused the idea of the need for Africans and Africans in the Diaspora to unite against French colonialism and French racism. Regarding Fanon's views of Pan-Africanism and Negritude, as political scientist Paul Nursey-Bray explains:

The treasures culled from Africa's past cannot, Fanon believes, measure up to achievements that are defined in western terms, and so the native intellectuals are left in a highly vulnerable position: they seek to confront an alien culture, but on the basis of criteria inherited from the West. It is a project doomed by its own definitions, because when the native intellectuals fail to confront the basic elements of colonial ideology, and when they limit the protest to the terms it allows, they fall its victims. (Nursey-Bray, 1980, 139)

Fanon sees pan-Africanism and Negritude then as a tropes used to tie all men of color together into one people with common attributes and common traits by drawing upon racist colonialist ideologies (it should be noted, however, that Europeans did distinguish between different groups of Africans). As Fanon writes, "The Negroes of Chicago only resemble the Nigerians or the Tanganykans (today's Tanzanians) in so far as they were all

defined in relation to the whites” (Fanon, 1963, 174). Furthermore, since the notion of “Black” derived from colonialist mechanisms for oppressing, it will break down in his view whenever people of African descent from around the world begin to dialogue with one another. In hypothesizing on the encounter between those of African descent living in Chicago, Nigeria, and modern-day Tanzania, Fanon quips:

But once the first comparisons had been made and subjective feelings were assuaged, the American Negroes realized that the objective problems were fundamentally heterogeneous. The test cases of civil liberty whereby both whites and blacks in America try to drive back racial discrimination have little in common in their principles and objectives with the heroic fight of the Angolan people against the detestable Portuguese colonialism. (Fanon, 1963, 174)

Fanon does not envision that efforts to unite individuals across national borders will work. Instead, he declares that each group must fight for independence from colonial powers instead of first inciting an international fight against European control of the world.

National Revolts as Pre-Requisite for International Ties according to Fanon

Although much of Fanon's canon deals with the importance of national liberation movements, Fanon does foresee these various working in tandem. While Fanon believes that only national revolutions can pave the way towards international revolution, this does not imply that Fanon eschews communication between different liberation movements at an early stage in their uprisings against colonialism. As Fanon writes, “It is in the national struggle against the oppressor that colonized peoples have discovered, concretely the solidarity of the colonialist bloc and the necessary interdependence of the liberation movements” (Fanon, 1967, 145).

In turn, international conditions will also buttress national revolts. Fanon remarks, “International events, the collapse of whole sections of colonial empires and the contradictions inherent in the colonial system strengthen and uphold the native's combativity while promoting and giving support to national

consciousness" (Fanon, "Reciprocal," 3). Fanon also recognizes that revolutions had only become feasible in the era in which he was writing because the international community had become more open to the possibility of decolonization (Fanon, 1963, 167). Perhaps, he could be referring to diplomatic initiatives like Chapter XI of the 1945 United Nations Charter, typically supported by the U.S. to the chagrin of colonial powers like France and Great Britain.

At the same time, though, Fanon insists on the necessity of the national insurgencies before intellectuals and other activists for independence turn their attention can jointly sound the death knell of global European imperialism. As Fanon notes:

The nation gathers together the various indispensable elements necessary for the creation of a culture, those elements which alone can give it credibility, validity, life, and creative power. In the same way, it is its national character that will make such a culture open to other cultures and which will enable it to influence and permeate other cultures. (Fanon, "Reciprocal," 6-7)

The philosopher then cautiously warns against attempting to skip over the creation of independent nations in favor of an international revolt: "National consciousness... is the only thing that will give us an international dimension" (Fanon, "Reciprocal," 8). Yet, as Fanon continues,

This problem of national consciousness and of national culture takes on in Africa a special dimension. The birth of national consciousness in Africa has a strictly contemporaneous connection with the African consciousness. The responsibility of the African as regards national culture is also a responsibility with regard to African-Negro culture. This joint responsibility is not the fact of a metaphysical principle but the awareness of a simple rule which wills that every independent nation in an Africa where colonialism is still entrenched is an encircled nation, a nation which is fragile and in permanent danger. (Fanon, "Reciprocal," 8)

For Fanon then, Africans in liberated nations had the responsibility to ensure the end of colonialism on a universal scale by having their national consciousness; if they failed to do so, Fanon reasoned, then their own nationhood would find itself in peril. Thus, despite Fanon's focus on the nation as the locus of

uprising against colonial powers, he does believe that disparate nationalist movements should support and assist one another but never to the detriment of the cause of their own national liberation.

As mentioned previously, Marx also insists that the revolt against capital be launched first on a national rather than international scale but then it should quickly morph into an international movement. The difference in the teleology of Fanon's and Marx's projects could lie in the difference of their positionality. The Martiniquais philosopher, who never escaped being a colonized subject, at least on a political level, seeks to launch an inter-national insurgency against colonialism rather than all forms of capital. The success of the revolution will wound capitalism, since, as mentioned above, Fanon recognizes that colonialism is fundamentally a capitalist venture. On the other hand, the creation or reinforcement of a national identity was not as important for Marx since he believed capitalism was already eating away at the national identities of the proletariat and, unlike Fanon, did not have see "national culture" as inherent or inevitable.

Finally, Fanon does not account for the possibility of connections between proletariat of colonizing nations and colonized peoples and these exchanges culminating in a revolt against capital. Unlike the colonized Marxist protagonists of Brent Hayes Edwards's article, "The Shadow of Shadows," Nguyen Ai Quoc and Lamine Senghor, Fanon does not envision an alliance forming between workers in the metropolises of Europe and the nationalist resisters in the colonies (Edwards, 2003, 25-26). The question of the difference in the aim of colonized people's revolt against and the proletariat's revolt again also arises here as well. Historian Sanjay Seth explains that the Marxism in the Western world, i.e. that of the colonizers, deal with Marxism in the colonized "East" but, "By contrast, nationalists engaged with Marxism where it became a movement to be reckoned with; or because of the support they received from the Soviet Union; or because they found some of it useful... Marxism was never a central question for nationalists" (Seth, 1995, 12).

As Seth notes, one of the major reasons for which Marxism's call for an international revolt never resounded with nationalist leaders was the simple fact that individuals residing in

the same nation tended to have more in common than those of the same economic class living as far as oceans away. Fanon's comments on failure of Pan-Africanism shows that he thought as well that the shared characteristics of populations not residing in the same geographic location were not sufficient to lead people through a revolution.

Fanon's Context

Prior to passing judgment on Fanon for not being critical enough of the nation as a constructed rather than inevitable entity, academics should consider the context from which Fanon was developing his ideas. Fanon is writing without having access to texts such as Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* that underline the constructed nature of nation-states. This work put into relief for a generation of academics and philosophers the contrived nature of European nations and the mechanisms behind the creation of nation-states in Europe in the 19th century. As mentioned above, Fanon was also writing during the era of decolonization as an activist highly embedded in the Algerian struggle for independence. If Fanon was not so deeply entrenched in a nationalist revolution, would he have still ardently debated for the primordial position of the nation in anticolonial struggles? Could he have admitted the challenges of ethnic diversity if he was not attempting to sell to the world the idea of Algeria as a coherent national entity without any internal divisions? Fanon died, furthermore, prior to the FLN victory and the creation of a new Algeria on July 5th, 1962 (*Toward the African Revolution* and *The Wretched of the Earth* were both published posthumously). It is not entirely impossible that Fanon may have backed away from the primordial place of the nation in an international revolution against colonialism and racial inequality if he had seen the world post-independence. Yet, Fanon's text predicts many of the misfortunes that would haunt countries post-independence: a national elites quabbling for power and filling in the role of the previous exploitative rulers and neocolonialism's rise, among others (Fanon, "Reciprocal"). Theorists will never know, however, how the realities of the post-independence era could have weighed on his thoughts about the predominance of the national in the anticolonial struggle.

The question of Fanon's epistemological position should be considered in as well. Fanon received his academic training in the French academy of the 1940s and 1950s; he studied in Lyon, France where the university would have been predominately influenced by Western thought. Moreover, as historian Dipesh Chakrabarty explains, Enlightenment notions inevitably shaped the thinking of theorists living outside of Europe and the United States:

Concepts such as citizenship, the state, civil society, public sphere, human rights, equality before the law, the individual, distinctions between public and private, the idea of the subject, democracy, popular sovereignty, social justice, scientific rationality, and so on all bear the burden of European thought and history. One simply cannot think of political modernity without these and other related concepts that found a climactic form in the course of the European Enlightenment and the nineteenth century. (p. 4)

Thus, it is important to remember that Fanon is writing out of an enlightenment tradition. It would have been difficult for him to escape the predominance of the idea of the nation state and its importance for inaugurating political change in the world. Although the Soviet Union was supporting the spread of communism around the world, even it had a central nation-state-esque structure and colonial projects in Central Asia and East Europe.

Conclusion

Fanon develops a number of arguments and rhetorical devices to allow him to insist on the nation as the best site from which to challenge almost global colonial authority. Through his works on anti-colonial revolution, Fanon insists that colonized peoples take up arms against the colonial powers ruling their territory by drawing upon their inherent "national culture." National culture for Fanon, then, has to exist and be sufficiently strong enough to challenge the influence of colonialism and it is exactly this definition that the Martiniquais philosopher espouses throughout his work. Fanon is also only able rhetorically to make this idea work by eclipsing the very real separations between

different within the supposedly unified “national community” such as ethnic and linguistic divides between peoples inhabiting the same colonized territory. Although, at times, Fanon does allow some space in his theory for the inclusion of certain minority groups in the nation post-independence, he typically limits this to settler groups (even the Jews of Algeria, unlike the Muslim community, had been made French citizens in the latter part of the 19th century). Indeed Fanon goes against Marx’s thoughts on this matter, mostly because of the pronounced purposes of the two different philosophers’ works. Marx work speaks primarily to the circumstances of post-industrial revolution Europe, Fanon writes to convince colonized persons around the world to overturn their colonial systems. His reliance on the nation as the political system through which the revolt against colonialism should take place may derive from his fear that any other ways of trying to overturn colonialism would fail. All in all, Fanon vigorously defends that the idea that the colonized peoples would be better served by overturning the colonial regime in their nations and then banding together to rid the world of nefarious imperialism all together.

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