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**Remembering the New International Economic Order**  
*On the Loss of the Global Socialist and Anticolonial Revolutionary Project*

By Sparsh Jain  
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Faculty Advisor: Adom Getachew  
Preceptor: Linnea Turco

But after Bandung, after the end of anticolonialism's promise, our sense of time and possibility have altered so significantly that it is hard to continue to live in the present as though it were a mere transitory moment in an assured momentum from a wounded past to a future of salvation. The horizon that made that erstwhile story so compelling as a dynamo for intellectual and political work has collapsed. It is now a superseded future, one of our futures past.

– David Scott, *Conscripts of Modernity*, 210

## **Introduction**

While it is difficult to pinpoint the exact moment in which it happened, it is overwhelmingly clear that the end of the twentieth century saw the collapse of the global socialist and anticolonial revolutionary project. In its wake, citizens across the world, especially on the Left, found themselves without a future to look forward to, stranded in the present, amidst the ruins of the past. As the memory of the revolutionary past receded, utopian futures became unimaginable, and the eternal present of the neoliberal era became the end of history. What began as a Thatcherite slogan became the reigning ideology of our times: there is no alternative. This paper attempts to lead us out of this pessimism, presentism, and melancholia through the faculty of remembrance, the resources of memory, and the work of mourning.

This proposal stems in response to one particular effort at addressing our present malaise. As the failings of the post-Cold War neoliberal economic order have become increasingly clear, there has been growing interest in the idea of reviving a now forgotten policy from almost half a century ago: the New International Economic Order (NIEO). The NIEO was a set of proposals forwarded by global south countries intended to end economic colonialism, dependency, and global north hegemony, which was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1974. The NIEO called for: “(a) an absolute right of states to control the extraction and marketing of their domestic natural resources; (b) the establishment and recognition of state managed resource cartels to stabilize (and raise) commodity prices; (c) the regulation of transnational corporations;

(d) no-strings-attached technology transfers from north to south; (e) the granting of preferential (nonreciprocal) trade preferences to countries in the south; and (f) the forgiveness of certain debts that states in the south owed to the north” (Gilman 2015, 3).

The NIEO represented the culmination of the project of global anticolonial and socialist revolution. Adom Getachew (2019) calls the NIEO the “last and most ambitious project of anticolonial worldmaking” (175). Bret Benjamin (2015) argues that the NIEO is best understood as “the final expression of a period that might be called ‘the Bandung era,’” which is generally thought to have begun with the 1955 Asian-African conference held in Bandung, Indonesia (33). Finally, Jason Hickel (2018) writes that the “adoption of the NIEO at the UN represented the highest achievement of developmentalism – the very summit of Third World political consciousness” (166). However, while the NIEO embodied the dream of anticolonial and socialist emancipation, it also provided the impetus for the death of that very dream as the NIEO’s ambitious demands were one of the direct inspirations for the neoliberal counterrevolution that culminated in the end of the revolutionary global socialist and anticolonial project. Therefore, the NIEO sits at the intersection of two distinct historical eras: the past era of revolutionary possibility and the present era of hopelessness.

While I begin by discussing the prospect of reviving the NIEO, it is this tension between the Bandung era and its romantic yearning for total revolution and our neoliberal era and the accompanying loss of futures that I am especially interested in. I argue that the project of reviving the NIEO relies on a set of concepts, terms, and temporal arrangements that are no longer available to us in the postcolonial neoliberal present. Thus, the central motivating question of this paper regards the type of relationship we can have with a past that no longer speaks to our present. While I believe revival is no longer an option, I also argue against

forgetting projects like the NIEO and the tradition of global socialist and anticolonial revolution that they drew from. Instead, I make an argument for remembrance, which exists within a space between reviving and forgetting that allows us to maintain a connection with the past while freeing us to develop new ways of dealing with the challenges of the postcolonial neoliberal present.

In part one, I explore the idea of reviving the NIEO. I show that the NIEO was a product of its distinct historical era, and that reviving the NIEO requires us to confront whether the historical conditions that produced the NIEO are still prevalent today.

In part two, I show that the neoliberal era has made projects like the NIEO not only impossible to realize, but also impossible to imagine. I link this to a broader trend: the loss of the global socialist and anticolonial revolutionary tradition.

In part three, I explore different responses to the loss of this revolutionary tradition in the neoliberal era. I show that the standard response to crisis on the Left, namely the redoubling of our commitment to reform or renew Left critique, relies both on an underlying temporal structure that is no longer available to us and an Enlightenment project that no longer speaks to our present, thus continuing to exhibit a melancholic desire to revive an unavailable political tradition of the past.

In part four, I propose remembrance as a solution to the loss of futures in the postcolonial neoliberal present. By allowing us to preserve the past without being enslaved to it, remembrance allows us to denaturalize the eternal present and develop new personal and political attachments. I end the paper by touching on new political directions that help us navigate an era in which the necessity of establishing global justice is paramount, while the means of doing so have vanished.

## Reviving the NIEO

The first, and most obvious, way to assess whether we should revive the NIEO is to study its strengths and weaknesses. As mentioned earlier, the NIEO was an incredibly ambitious project of worldmaking which established solidarity between the governments of Asia and Africa and attempted to apply genuine constraints to the global capitalist economy. However, the NIEO was beset by several contradictions that are also important to note.

In *Worldmaking After Empire: The Rise and Fall of Self-Determination*, Adom Getachew (2019) argues that the central tension contained within the NIEO was “the analogy between domestic and international economic relations” (167). In this analogy, the domestic economy’s structure is imposed onto the international economy, making rich countries the capitalists and poor countries the workers and farmers. Getachew outlines three ways in which this tension weakened the NIEO.

First, by characterizing states as workers and farmers, the NIEO “evaded the question of the workers and farmers within postcolonial states” (Getachew 2019, 167). Furthermore, underpinned by the “principle of absolute respect for the economic sovereignty of nations,” the NIEO only demanded “socialism among states” while remaining “studiously agnostic about the proper form of internal organization of national economies, being quite amenable to capitalism within states” (Gilman 2015, 4). In fact, many states that supported the NIEO continued to oversee repression at home (Getachew 2019, 168; Thornton 2022).

Second, Getachew (2019) points out that “the domestic analogy obscured the obvious disanalogy between the national and the international—the absence of a state with the coercive power and processes of legitimation that had enabled the emergence of national welfarism” (168). In the absence of a world state or any clear way to turn the NIEO’s demands into

obligations, the Third World would have to renegotiate dependence themselves, “but with hardly any bargaining power to do so” (Addo 1984, 11).

Third, by portraying postcolonial states as workers and farmers, the NIEO saw itself as, in the words of Tanzanian president Julius Nyerere, a trade union of the poor. However, as Getachew (2019) notes, “the idea that the developing world was akin to the working class of the world that could organize as a trade union ignored the political and economic schisms between developing nations” (169).

A harsher critique of the NIEO comes from dependency and world systems theorists who immediately recognized that the NIEO was “Marxist in its diagnosis of economic dependence, drawing on traditions of dependency and world systems theory,” while ultimately articulating its prescriptions “within the terms of a liberal political economy” (Getachew 2019, 145).

Broadly speaking, world systems and dependency theorists critiqued the NIEO for three reasons. Firstly, they argued that the NIEO would only integrate the global south more into the world-economy, rather than de-linking from it, as most world systems and dependency theorists suggested. This would only continue an “unequal partnership with the central economies in the capitalist world-system” (Addo 1984, 9). To Andre Gunder Frank, the NIEO was “capitalist pure and simple” (Addo 1984, 10). Echoing Frank, Immanuel Wallerstein called the NIEO “reformist and capitalist” (Bockman 2015, 118).

In whose favor was the reshaping? This leads into the second critique made by dependency and world systems theorists, which argued that the NIEO was an elitist alliance. Frank saw the NIEO as a “political conflict between the governing classes in the Third World and the political representatives of international capital in the capitalist world-economy” (Addo 1984, 11). This view accused Third World elites of attempting to “institutionalize their

collaboration with foreign capital” for the purposes of controlling the national resources, strengthening their weak states, and exploiting local labor in the periphery (Addo 1984, 10-11).

Third, dependency and world systems theorists critiqued the NIEO for its belief in linear modernization theory and Western-style industrialization. A key tenet of world systems and dependency theory was that the “development of underdevelopment” had generated a “a peripheral capitalism with its own logics” (Getachew 2019, 149). Thus, despite the wishes of the NIEO, it would be “impossible to turn peripheral capitalism into central capitalism” without seriously challenging the structure of the global economy (Addo 1984, 12).

While these critiques of the NIEO are certainly valid and helpful, they are not alone able to fully answer the question of reviving the NIEO. This is because what may be a “strength” or “weakness” of a project is historically specific and may not apply to a different historical era. Furthermore, even if we agree that the NIEO was an effective mode of anticolonial struggle, it may still not be possible to revive it if the historical conditions that produced it are no longer present today. These concerns suggest that the question of revival must be framed as a historical and temporal inquiry: revival is the attempt to bring something from the past into the present. Given this, the more pressing question to consider is not the extent of the NIEO’s flaws, but the extent to which the historical conditions that produced it are still present and relevant today.

This inquiry into historical and temporal change is necessary because the NIEO was inseparable from the era that produced it. To understand this, it is helpful to briefly recount the historical conditions within which the NIEO emerged. The vision of the NIEO is rooted in the idea of the Third World. In Vijay Prashad’s history of Third Worldism, *The Darker Nations*, he explains that the Third World “was not a place. It was a project” (2007, XV). Its first leaders included India's Jawaharlal Nehru, Egypt's Gamal Abdel Nasser, Ghana's Kwame Nkrumah, and

Cuba's Fidel Castro, who met at a series of gatherings during the middle of the twentieth century, the most notable of which was the Bandung Conference of 1955. In these gatherings, the leaders of newly independent postcolonial nations devised a set of hopes and institutions that would ensure dignity, basic necessities, and justice for their populations.

Third Worldism was deeply shaped by the process of gaining independence that preceded it. The fight against colonial and imperial forces demanded unity among various political parties and across social classes, often leading to workers and peasants allying with the landlords and emergent industrial elites (Prashad 2008, XVII). While these widely popular social movements and political formations were able to secure freedom for the new nations, once in power the new regimes protected the elites among the old social classes. Instead of promoting the socialist program, the people of the Third World received the compromised ideology of developmentalism, which was a state-driven project that encouraged industrialization in hopes of catching up with the West. This was often accompanied by domesticating, outlawing, and massacring Communists who threatened the discordant unity of these coalitions (ibid.).

This elitist turn to the state is also identified by Aijaz Ahmad who argues that 'Three Worlds Theory' privileged "the nation-state and international systems over class struggle or systems of production" (Benjamin 2015, 37). More importantly, Ahmad portrays the Bandung project as "an ideological formation which redefined anti-imperialism not as a socialist project to be realized by the mass movements of the popular classes but as a developmentalist project to be realized by the weaker states of the national bourgeoisies in the course of their collaborative competition with the more powerful states of advanced capital" (Ahmad 1992, 293). Ahmad's crucial insight reveals two features of the Bandung era: a "turn to the state and the interstate system as its final political horizon" and the "the gradual displacement of a socialist workers



movement in favor of a developmentalist project” (Benjamin 2015, 43). Ultimately, as Bret Benjamin argues (2015), “if this turn to the state was evident at the moment of Bandung, it was all but complete by the moment of the NIEO Declaration” (43).

Underlying all these developments was a romantic narrative of revolutionary overcoming. Borrowing from David Scott’s *Conscripts of Modernity*, the Bandung era had a distinctly romantic view of anticolonial revolution which relied on themes of overcoming, vindication, salvation, and redemption and “largely depended upon a certain (utopian) horizon toward which the emancipationist history is imagined to be moving” (Scott 2004, 8). The romantic emplotment is clear in Ahmed Sukarno’s speech at the Bandung conference, in which he encouraged the Third World to remember that “the highest purpose of man is the liberation of man from his bonds of fear, his bonds of poverty, the liberation of man from the physical, spiritual and intellectual bonds which have for long stunted the development of humanity's majority” (Prashad 2007, XVII). Therefore, the Third Worldist agenda of the NIEO was driven by a romantic narrative of anticolonial revolutionary overcoming that was unique to the Bandung era.

This detour into the historical and intellectual developments of the Bandung era is important because it clarifies how deeply intertwined the NIEO was with the material and ideational developments of the Bandung era. Given this, the question of reviving cannot simply be a matter of weighing the “pros” and “cons” of the proposal, as even those must be historically situated. Instead, the best way to understand whether we could, or would want to, revive the NIEO is to ask if the historical conditions that produced the NIEO have persisted in the neoliberal era, or if historical change has foreclosed the possibility of resurrecting such a project.

The collapse of the NIEO signaled the end of the Bandung project and the beginning of the neoliberal era. The neoliberal era, however, rather than naturally following the Bandung era, was “an explicit project articulated by Hayek and others, to kill off the NIEO...Neoliberalism set out to destroy this project, which it did extremely efficiently” (Gago and Brown 2018). Thus, the neoliberal counterrevolution can be interpreted not only “as a way of regimenting the global south after decolonization,” but also as a way of regimenting the global south after the NIEO (ibid.). Crucially, from the outset, the goal of the neoliberal era was to make the claims, vision, and historical outlook of Bandung and the NIEO impossible. This is the context that we must grapple with when exploring the idea of reviving the NIEO.

### **The NIEO in the Neoliberal Era**

In the neoliberal era, the project of the NIEO did not only become impossible to implement, but it also became impossible to imagine. This occurred on every level of global neoliberal society: the material basis of the international economy, the hegemonic discourse of human rights that accompanied it, and the presentist and pessimistic outlook it engendered in the way ordinary people think about politics, justice, and temporality.

The material basis of the international neoliberal economy has changed significantly to discredit and disarm the vision of the NIEO. Quinn Slobodian’s *Globalists: The End of Empire and the Birth of Neoliberalism* is particularly instructive for understanding how and why this change occurred. Slobodian argues that neoliberalism must be understood as a global project that aimed to “redeploy the regulatory powers of nation state at a global level, to let capital flow freely” (Gago and Brown 2018). This involved weakening national restrictions on capital and strengthening supranational institutions like the IMF and the WTO, making capital a “truly

global project” which was insulated from democratic decision making within nation states (ibid.). Thus, unlike the NIEO, which envisioned an international economic order that could ensure the sovereignty of nation states to protect democracy from global capital, the neoliberal international order sought to restrain the nation state and override democracy in service of private property and global financial capital (Tooze 2018).

The international economic order of the neoliberal era was accompanied by three additional changes that worked against the vision and demands of the NIEO. The first change is the depoliticization of the global economy, which transported questions regarding the international economy into an “arena of technical and legal expertise, better left to economists and lawyers rather than politicians” (Getachew 2019, 173). As neoliberal economics became the dominant language of the global economy, discussions of poverty became depoliticized, individualized, and centered around the “basic needs approach,” which prioritized sufficiency and absolute poverty over relative inequality (Getachew 2019, 174-5). At the core of these shifts was the “view that global equality was either too far off or impractical” (ibid.). The depoliticization of the global economy under neoliberalism is also related to a second change: the rise of “productionism,” which, as defined by Utsa and Prabhat, is the “the view that [capitalism] has brought about a massive development of productive forces over much of the third world, measured in terms of the growth rate of the Gross Domestic Product, and is still capable of doing so” (Patnaik 2021, 337.). “Productionism” is one of the central arguments justifying the superiority of a neoliberal global economy. The third change is the disappearance of Third World solidarity, which was not able to weather the depoliticization of the global economy, the disempowerment of the nation state, and the decline of the United Nations General Assembly as an arena for global activism. These changes make reviving the NIEO severely challenging.

Apart from the material structure of the international economy, the NIEO was also severely discredited by the new paradigm of human rights that emerged as the “dominant ideology of capitalist democracy after the collapse of Communism in 1989” (Meister 2011, 7). While changes in the material structure of the neoliberal economy may make the NIEO an unlikely empirical reality, human rights discourse took this project one step further by making the NIEO unthinkable. It achieved this by presiding over three cognitive-political changes that disarmed, delegitimized, and criminalized its political vision.

First, contemporary human rights discourse makes the demands of the NIEO illegible through its rejection of sovereignty. Samuel Moyn (2010) has argued that contemporary human rights discourse is distinct from earlier forms of human rights in its attitudes towards the state. According to Moyn, human rights, both in the Enlightenment and the era of decolonization, were irreducibly bound to the state. The anticolonial movements built upon this by tying human rights and state sovereignty to the collective entitlement to self-determination.

The contemporary form of human rights that originated in the 1970s was a substitute for the emancipatory politics of the decolonization era: “[h]uman rights thus emerged on the ruins of one sort of hope for former colonial areas and the search for some alternative” (Moyn 2010, 116). These new human rights were inextricably tied to the liberal internationalist tradition and sought to ‘transcend’ the state, which is “why they are most often promoted and embodied by NGOs and civil society” (Pendas 2012, 116). For Moyn, what was denoted by the term ‘rights’ within the NIEO appealed to the protection afforded by sovereign statehood and economic sovereignty. This conception was left behind and replaced by a different, and conflicting, utopia: an anti-sovereigntist cosmopolitan utopia, fundamentally at odds with the NIEO. Thus, like Slobodian, who portrays neoliberalism as an attempt to override the economic decision making

of the state, Moyn also portrays human rights discourse as an attempt to override the nation state on political matters, severely inhibiting the NIEO's quest for self-determination and sovereignty.

Second, contemporary human rights discourse privileges ethics over politics, and thereby condemns the NIEO's revolutionary demands. According to Robert Meister (2010), contemporary human rights discourse is a "counterrevolutionary" project that supplanted "the revolutionary conception of human rights that dominated the period between 1789 and 1989" (7). One particularly important consequence of this emerges from Meister's analysis on 'cruelty.' For Meister (2010), the "crux of the twenty-first-century conception of human rights" is that "that there is nothing worse than cruelty and that cruelty toward physical...bodies is the worst of all" (16). With this belief at its heart, the "revolutionary is no longer the standard paradigm of a militant for human rights; his willingness to inflict suffering on enemies raises too many questions about politically motivated cruelty" (ibid., 20). Instead, this human rights discourse aims to rescue those who suffer on all sides, "even if that suffering is inflicted in the name of revolution" (ibid.). While the NIEO was not a violent movement, it drew from conceptions of justice, struggle, and revolution that were deeply political, in which violence can sometimes be justifiable. A return to this violent and evil past is the greatest fear of contemporary human rights discourse, which takes its foundational premise to make future cruelty unthinkable (ibid., 39).

Third, contemporary human rights discourse, and the transitional justice that often accompanies it, disarms socialist and anticolonial revolutionary politics by treating liberal democracy as the "obvious conclusion of the historical march of political civilization" (Scott 2013, 138). Scott (2013) argues that the central issue of justice in the post-Cold War era is "a 'transition' away from illiberal rule in the direction of liberal democracy now understood as the single direction of an acceptable political future" (128). Under this discourse, all non-liberal

democratic forms of social organization become “illiberal” and “evil regimes” (Scott 2013, 138). This has the effect of destroying “any affirmative appreciation of the revolutionary past and the political traditions out of which it came” (Scott 2013, 149). By making liberal democracy the “background assumption of political discourse” (Scott 2013, 129) and the “seemingly single and natural horizon” (Scott 2013, 4) of worldwide politics, contemporary human rights discourse portrays the socialist, anticolonial, and revolutionary agenda of the NIEO as an unacceptable regression from liberal democracy.

In summary, contemporary human rights discourse emerged alongside, and to enable, the “re-hegemonization of the world by a cynical imperial and neoliberal agenda” (Scott 2013, 28). These new ways of thinking about the purpose and limits of the political world not only led to the demands of the NIEO being discredited and disarmed, but they also made it impossible to revive political projects from the socialist past, which can now only be thought of as a criminal one.

While these economic and political changes complicate the prospect of reviving the NIEO, the most devastating blow to this project is the presentist and pessimistic outlook it has engendered in the way ordinary people think about politics, justice, and temporality. In *Concrete Utopianism*, Gary Wilder (2022) argues that the bleak neoliberal era has led to a tendency “to treat the given as unsurpassable” which amounts to “accepting the real as rational” (2.) Such thinking, Wilder argues, makes impossible the prospect of “imagining, let alone realizing, anti-imperial and anticapitalist futures” (ibid.). Thus, on the topic of reviving the NIEO, the most problematic changes that have occurred in the neoliberal era exist in the realm of imagination as that revolutionary horizon of overcoming evaporates as a future we can aspire to.

In *Omens of Adversity*, Scott provides an account of the 1979–1983 revolution in Grenada. Scott writes that for that generation of Grenadians, this revolution was “the vindication and culmination of a certain organization of temporal expectation and political longing” (20). However, upon the failure of the Grenada revolution, those same revolutionaries came to feel that “[h]istory had betrayed them” and “robbed them of the progressive future for which they had so long labored” (Scott 2013, 108). With this realization came the traumatic “collapse of the very conditions of a generation’s experience of political time in which past-present-future were connected in a chain of progressive succession...It marked the loss of futures” (ibid., 109).

For Scott, the dejection of the Grenadian revolutionaries is one instance of the “profound—perhaps uncanny—sense of temporal rupture and collective disorientation brought about by the collapse in our time of the socialist revolutionary project” (ibid., 125). Essentially, Scott identifies our present era with “the general eclipse of belief in transformative political futures” (Wilder 2022, 92). In this era, “emancipation has given way to accommodation, and reconciliation has displaced revolution as the language of social and political change where the future has been reduced to a mirror image of the present” (ibid.). Because “the past is no longer imagined as a time that can be overcome,” we become stranded in the present, completely paralyzed by “the ruin of time and the accompanying loss of futures” (ibid.).

Literary critic Lauren Berlant’s *Cruel Optimism* also picks up on the sense of temporal rupture that is replete in the neoliberal era, where the loss of utopian futures has been replaced by an endless present. They portray the neoliberal era as a postpolitical world with no prospect of mass movements for societal transformation, where we can only hope to keep scavenging for survival in an unsurpassable now (Wilder 2022, 91). They argue that “the neoliberal present is a space of transition” that “impose[s] historical consciousness on its subjects as a moment without

edges, and recent pasts and near futures blend into a stretched-out time that people move around” (ibid.).

Apart from temporal rupture, another theme that pervades the neoliberal consciousness is the sense that capitalism is natural and that no alternatives exist. For example, historian Enzo Traverso (2016) identifies 1989 as an epochal turning point, particularly regarding the fate of Marxist and socialist imaginaries. He argues, “[o]nce capitalism is naturalized, to think of a different future becomes impossible...The twenty- first century...opens in a world without utopias, paralyzed by the historical defeats of communist revolutions” (2016, 57). Without a “visible ‘horizon of expectation,’” Traverso concludes, “the utopias of the past” disappear and we are left with “a world withdrawn into the present.” (2016, 7, 57).

Mark Fisher’s *Capitalist Realism* (2009) also touches on the naturalization of capitalism and the loss of alternatives. Fisher opens with a phrase attributed to Fredric Jameson and Slavoj Žižek: “it is easier to imagine the end of the world than it is to imagine the end of capitalism” (2). For Fisher, the neoliberal era is characterized by “the widespread sense that not only is capitalism the only viable political and economic system, but also that it is now impossible even to imagine a coherent alternative to it” (ibid.).

Like Traverso and Fisher, Susan George also notes the loss of alternatives in the neoliberal era. In an 1999 speech at the *Conference on Economic Sovereignty in a Globalising World* in Bangkok, she invokes Italian Marxist thinker Antonio Gramsci’s concept of cultural hegemony to argue that the ideological and promotional work of the right has made “neo-liberalism seem as if it were the natural and normal condition of humankind,” so that regardless of the devastation and havoc it may create, “it is still made to seem inevitable, like an act of God, the only possible economic and social order available to us” (George 1999).



The final theme that characterizes the neoliberal era is the replacement of “political reason” with “economic reason” in everyday life. While Berlant briefly touches on the postpolitical world of the neoliberal present, Wendy Brown provides a detailed exploration of it by interpreting neoliberalism “as a governing rationality through which everything is ‘economized’” (Brown and Shenk 2015). Brown draws from Foucault’s notion that neoliberalism is a “reprogramming of liberalism,” in which the dimensions of us imagined and cultivated in political, cultural, religious, or familial life, what we might call *homo politicus*, are vanquished in favor of *homo oeconomicus*, which entrepreneurializes itself at every turn (ibid.).

This has profound implications on democratic politics. According to Brown, neoliberalism as a governing rationality switches “the meaning of democratic values from a political to an economic register” (ibid.). Thus, liberty is disconnected from political participation and reduced to market freedom, while equality is replaced by the idea of an equal right to “compete in a world where there are always winners and losers” (ibid.). As the belief in politics to hold and direct the powers that otherwise dominate us diminishes, the source of the good becomes individual activity within markets rather than shared political deliberation: “where there are only individual capitals and marketplaces, the demos, the people, do not exist” (ibid.).

Brown’s devastating critique of neoliberalism reason is essential to understanding the prospect of reviving the NIEO. According to Brown, neoliberalism is not simply an economic policy, but a form of “political reason and governing that reaches from the state to the soul” (ibid.). As neoliberal reason continues to make us hostile to the political itself, the idea that a project like the NIEO, which relies on the ability of *homo politicus* to regulate and control global market forces to establish political sovereignty, runs contrary to the fundamental tenets of neoliberal reason.

Ultimately, these changes that occurred in the neoliberal era have foreclosed the possibility of reviving the NIEO not only on the level of global economics or political discourse, but also, and perhaps most importantly, on the level of imagination. Furthermore, these changes also show that the difficulty of reviving the NIEO is not only due to the practical challenges associated with implementing its specific vision but is instead linked to a broader trend: the collapse of the global socialist and anticolonial revolutionary project. This vision that once inspired citizens across the globe has been vigorously delegitimized, criminalized, and discredited, completely foreclosing our capacity to believe in the possibility or desirability of a future distinct from this postcolonial neoliberal present.

To illustrate the extent to which this project has been defeated in the neoliberal era, consider this passage from Nils Gilman's introduction to *Humanity's* 2015 special edition dedicated to revisiting the NIEO:

What made the NIEO remarkable was not so much the content of its program as the fact that political and economic leaders throughout both the postcolonial world and the industrial core of the global economy took seriously the possibility—the former mainly with Wordsworthian hope, the latter often with Lovecraftian horror—that they might be witnessing the downfall of the centuries-long hegemony of what was coming to be known simply as ‘the north’ (1).

Thus, the NIEO was remarkable because it believed in the possibility of revolutionary politics to generate a socialist and anticolonial future. The political-cognitive shift that occurred in the neoliberal era has diminished our belief in the global socialist and anticolonial revolutionary project, and in doing so has made it impossible to revive the NIEO in the postcolonial neoliberal present. Thus, we see that calls to revive the NIEO remain attached to political concepts and frameworks that are not relevant in the neoliberal era.

## Revival as Melancholia

By now it has become clear that reviving the NIEO is not possible, but if the majority of the twentieth century was driven by a political project that is no longer available to us today, how can we think about political action in the present and the future? One answer to this question can be found in Wendy Brown's widely read 1999 essay, "Resisting Left Melancholy." In this essay, Brown explores the challenges of political action in times at which the political traditions of the past are no longer available. She builds upon the work of Walter Benjamin, who was concerned with the nihilistic avant-garde of the German 1920s, and Stuart Hall, who was concerned with the calcified Left of 1970s Britain, while she herself was living in the era proceeding the "literal disintegration of socialist regimes and the legitimacy of Marxism" (22). Hence, Brown's goal is to revitalize meaningful political action in a neoliberal era in which the global socialist and anticolonial revolutionary tradition is dead. In the following passage, Brown provides a moving description of a political and historical era that is characterized by loss:

We are awash in the loss of a unified analysis and unified movement, in the loss of labor and class as inviolable predicates of political analysis and mobilization, in the loss of an inexorable and scientific forward movement of history, and in the loss of a viable alternative to the political economy of capitalism. And on the backs of these losses are still others: We are without a sense of an international, and often even a local, left community; we are without conviction about the truth of the social order; we are without a rich moral-political vision to guide and sustain political work. Thus, we suffer with the sense of not only a lost movement but a lost historical moment; not only a lost theoretical and empirical coherence but a lost way of life and a lost course of pursuits (ibid.).

Brown argues that this crisis, rather than encouraging the development of a political critique appropriate to the character of this new age, has given rise to "Left melancholia" and "Left traditionalism." Regarding the former, she draws upon Sigmund Freud's 1917 essay, *Mourning and Melancholia*, in which he defines melancholia as a state in which the "attachment to the object of one's sorrowful loss supersedes any desire to recover from this loss, to live free

of it in the present, to be unburdened by it” (Brown 1999, 20). In the wake of the collapse of the global socialist and anticolonial revolutionary project, Left melancholy becomes a “conservative, backward-looking attachment to a feeling, analysis, or relationship that has been rendered thinglike and frozen in the heart of the putative leftist” (ibid., 22). For Brown (1999), this coincides with the rise of “Left traditionalism,” which describes “a Left that is...caught in a structure of melancholic attachment to a certain strain of its own dead past” (26).

To overcome this rigid attachment to outmoded ideals, Brown calls for “the Left to invigorate [itself] with a radical. . . critical and visionary spirit . . . that embraces the notion of deep and indeed unsettling transformation of society” (ibid.). She ends her essay by asking, “[h]ow might we draw creative sustenance from socialist ideals of dignity, equality, and freedom, while recognizing that these ideals were conjured from historical conditions and prospects that are not those of the present?” (ibid.). For Brown, the response to the political crisis of the neoliberal era is not to revive dead projects of the past like the NIEO, but to revise and update Left critique to reinvigorate our revolutionary spirit.

What if, however, Brown’s arguments continue to display the characteristics of a melancholic attachment to the politics of the past that she herself criticizes? While Brown argues against the revival of the revolutionary projects of the past, she continues to believe that the fundamental tenets of those politics are valid if they are updated according to the conditions of their era. The persuasiveness of this argument diminishes if we are convinced that the epochal shift we are discussing is qualitatively different from earlier ones. According to this new perspective, the break that occurred between the Bandung era and the neoliberal era (or perhaps even between the Age of Revolution from 1789 to 1989 and the neoliberal era) is so profound and different from previous breaks that simply “updating” Left critique will not resolve our sense

of crisis. Being, for the first time in modern history, without a utopian horizon of expectation, we must ask ourselves whether we can truly rely on any aspects of a political tradition that was inextricably linked to those now unavailable futures?

This concern is aptly voiced in a set of passages from David Scott's *Omens of Adversity*, in which Scott responds to Wendy Brown's 1999 essay. Although Scott (2013) can see the virtue of Brown's critique of Left traditionalism, he explicitly insists that "this is not [his] concern here in thinking about the ruins of time" (125). Instead, Scott argues that "the ruin of time and the accompanying loss of futures cannot be redressed by the mere redoubling of our commitment to the reform or renewal of critique (as Brown seems to think)" (ibid.). According to Scott, the creation of new political practices fit for our era must re-assess "the temporal structure of [past] critique...the propositional way it organizes, in the interval of the present, the dialectical prospect of immanent futures emerging from injurious pasts" (ibid.).

To understand what Scott means when he insists on reconsidering the foundations of Left critique rather than updating them, we can turn to a 1995 essay titled "Revolution/Theory/Modernity." Scott opens this essay by describing the crisis of Marxism and Third World socialisms, and their replacement by various forms of liberalism and neoliberalism. He notes that the cognitive-political crisis this era has generated has made many think that giving up Marxism entails "embracing liberalism or at any rate criticizing or correcting Marxism *in the name* of liberalism's familiar principles" (1995, 2). However, Scott insists we take one step back, arguing that "[t]he hinge of this connection between Marxism and liberalism...is to be sought in the project of the Enlightenment, the cognitive-political and epistemological-institutional establishment of the forms of the modern" (1995, 3).

Scott draws on John Gray's definition of the "core project of the enlightenment," which was the "displacement of local, customary or traditional moralities, and of all forms of transcendental faith, by a critical or rational morality, which was projected as the basis of a universal civilization" (ibid.). Thus, Scott argues, "the salient feature of the modern is the inauguration of a form of power that has as its fundamental target the conditions of social life as such: its task is the creation of conditions in which old choices are increasingly disabled and new ones enabled. It is a form of power, therefore, that is radically destructive (of "irrational" social forms) and reconstructive (of rational-secular-progressive ones)" (ibid). Therefore, the first part of Scott's argument in this essay is to depict Marxism and liberalism as anchored in the "restructuring project of the Enlightenment" (1995, 5) and embodying the "ethos of a distinctively modern and modernizing world" (1995, 4).

To exemplify what it means to historicize our political vocabulary by rooting it in the project of the Enlightenment, Scott turns to the "political-theoretical problem of revolution" (1995, 5). In particular, Scott is concerned by discussions of revolution that treat it like a transhistorical concept. Instead, Scott (1995) wants to argue that the "narrative of revolution is inseparable from the larger narrative of modernity" (7). Scott notes that up to around 1700, "civil war" and "revolution" were used interchangeably. In contrast, the modern version of the term "revolution" has its roots in the last half of the 18th century, as the "rise of the social" generated the "dehumanizing spirit of modern society," and reconstructed the concept of total revolution as social emancipation (16).

Using the example of "revolution," Scott has shown us that many of the conceptual categories we use to understand the political world, including Left/Right, reactionary/progressive, revolutionary/conservative, are rooted in the larger narrative of

modernity and the Enlightenment. This is a problem for Scott because these concepts may not be “useful or feasible or desirable” in a present “in which the conceptual underpinnings of the Enlightenment project have been so profoundly eroded (1995, 13).

The reason for this lengthy excursion is to illustrate the ways in which Brown and Scott’s response to the crisis of the neoliberal era differ. According to Scott, Brown’s call to detach ourselves from the politics of the dead past in order to revive Left critique is still essentially a project of revival. While Brown may be critical of “Left traditionalism,” she continues to rely on the language of the Enlightenment project as well as the temporal structure of its critique. For Scott, these concepts “are no longer adequate to the historical presents we inhabit” (1995, 22). Thus, Scott sees Brown’s desire to update Left critique as exhibiting a melancholic attachment to ways of envisioning politics that are no longer relevant. While she may denounce the revival of the NIEO as an instance of “Left traditionalism,” her desire to revive Left critique is still a project of “revival” and therefore does not adequately take into the account the profundity of the cognitive-political and world-historical shift that occurred after the collapse of the global socialist and anticolonial revolutionary project.

In summary, what we get from Scott is a profound rejection of the project of revival, which for him is intertwined with a melancholic attachment to an unavailable past. If we cannot revive the politics of the past, however, should we simply forget them? One of the central claims of this paper is that there is a middle point between reviving and forgetting: remembering. The next section presents the argument that remembrance can be a critical and generative enterprise, and that it may help us resolve the dilemma of being stranded in the present without a political tradition from the past to rely on.

## Remembering the NIEO

Reviving, forgetting, and remembering are not only three distinct ways through which we come to terms with the past, they are also different ways to bear loss. This section argues that remembrance is the only way in which we can come to terms with the loss of the global socialist and anticolonial revolutionary tradition that allows us to find new ways to envision political action. This argument about the importance of remembrance draws from the work of Hannah Arendt, who also wrote in hopes of finding meaningful spaces for political action in times of crisis and broken traditions. The concept of remembrance is explored in two distinct places in Arendt's work: her use of Benjamin's idea of fragmentary historiography and her theory of action.

Arendt's use of fragmentary historiography is in direct response to living in the wake of a broken tradition. For Arendt, "[t]he past that claims authority on us because it is the way things were done is 'tradition'" (Benhabib 1990, 187). However, the events of the twentieth century had caused Arendt to believe that the past, "while still present, is fragmented and can no longer be told as a unified narrative" (ibid.). While the break in tradition and the loss of authority was irreparable, Arendt insisted that the past is still present, and that "even when the threat of tradition is broken, even when the past is no longer authoritative simply because it has been, it lives within us and we cannot avoid placing ourselves in relation to it. Who we are at any point is defined by the narrative uniting the past and present" (ibid., 188).

As we can see, for Arendt, narrative, or in other words, storytelling, is a fundamental role of the political theorist. In times of crisis, however, we must ask ourselves, "what guides the activity of the storyteller when tradition has ceased to orient our sense of the past?" (ibid.). Arendt's answer is to compare the theorist-as-storyteller to a pearl diver, who "after the



storm...converts the memory of the dead into something rich and strange” (ibid.). In the words of Seyla Benhabib (1990), this method of political theory as storytelling is “a form of storytelling which, in Arendt’s hands, is transformed into a redemptive narrative, redeeming the memory of the dead, the defeated and the vanquished by making present to us once more their failed hopes, their untrodden paths, and unfulfilled dreams” (196).

The second place in which Arendt invokes remembrance is her theory of action. For Arendt, action is one of the “fundamental categories of the human condition” (d’Entreves and Tömmel 2022). However, action is deeply dependent upon its articulation retrospectively by historians and poets. In the following passage, Arendt beautifully reminds us of the power of remembrance:

For if it is true that all thought begins with remembrance, it is also true that no remembrance remains secure unless it is condensed and distilled into a framework of conceptual notions within which it can further exercise itself. Experience and even the stories which grow out of what men do and endure, of happenings and events, sink back into the futility inherent in the living word and the living deed unless they are talked about over and over again. What saves the affairs of mortal men from their inherent futility is nothing but this incessant talk about them, which in its turn remains futile unless certain concepts, certain guideposts for future remembrance, and even for sheer reference, arise out of it” (Arendt 1963, 220).

According to Arendt, narrative and storytelling are the primary tools through which we can remember the deeds of the past and enable them “to become sources of inspiration for the future, that is, models to be imitated, and, if possible, surpassed” (d’Entreves and Tömmel 2022). Moreover, because, for Arendt, remembrance, narrative, and storytelling are intricately linked, remembrance also requires an audience and community of hearers who can become “transmitters of the deeds that [have] been immortalized” (ibid.) In Sheldon Wolin’s reading of Arendt, the “audience is a metaphor for the political community whose nature is to be a community of

remembrance” (Wolin 1977, 97). Therefore, the theorist as storyteller can only exist in association with a “community of memory” (d’Entreves and Tömmel 2022).

At this point, a crucial distinction should be made between Arendt’s concept of remembrance and the conception remembrance outlined in this paper. While Arendt’s thought on remembrance is illuminating, it speaks to the specific crisis of her time: Arendt’s work was written in response to the break in tradition that “became irrevocable after the tragic events of the twentieth century and the triumph of totalitarian movements East and West” (ibid.). Thus, Arendt’s conception of remembrance is often concerned with uncovering “the original meaning” of our political categories or finding models to be “imitated” or “surpassed” (ibid.). These are not the concerns of the conception of remembrance outlined in this paper. The break in tradition that this paper focuses on, namely the collapse of global socialist and anticolonial revolutionary futures, is distinct from the break that occurred in Arendt’s time, and for this reason her insights must be adapted to fit this new and unprecedented crisis.

The conception of remembrance proposed in this paper is written in response to the two most pernicious intertemporal problems that emerge in the neoliberal era: the naturalization of capitalism and liberal democracy and the melancholic attachment to political projects of the past. The two solutions embodied in this conception of remembrance are remembrance-as-denaturalization and remembrance-as-mourning.

Remembrance-as-denaturalization is the use of remembrance to combat the sense that capitalism and liberal democracy are the natural condition of humankind, the inevitable end of the long march of civilization, and the only possible economic and social order available to us. This attitude towards the present is truly unique to the neoliberal era, which over the last century defeated all its enemies and emerged as the seemingly only acceptable political horizon.

In this case, remembrance serves to denaturalize the postcolonial neoliberal present. By remembering the global socialist and anticolonial revolutionary project, we not only remember the many courageous attempts to create a different and better world, but we also remember the fact that our present, rather than emerging naturally, was also the product of a deliberate and concerted strategy to create an unequal and unfair world. At the heart of this remembrance is a rediscovery of the power of political action. When we remember the political projects of the past, we remember the consequences of political action, and we can awaken from the idea, central to neoliberal reason, that humans have no need, desire, or capacity for political action.

The roots of remembrance-as-denaturalization can be seen in Benjamin's (2002) assertion that remembering and awakening are intimately related: "[a]wakening is namely the dialectical, Copernican turn of remembrance" (388). Arendt identifies this connection in Benjamin's work on fragmentary historiography, where the fragments of the past develop a power to "settle down, piecemeal, in the present and to deprive it of 'peace of mind,' the mindless peace of complacency" (Benjamin and Arendt 1968, 38). Thus, remembrance becomes a way in which we can awaken from the "illusory dream of the present" (Wilder 2022, 103). Today, this "illusory dream" is the sense that capitalism and liberal democracy are the singular and natural horizon of global civilization.

Arendt's work on action, narrative, and storytelling can also help us understand remembrance-as-denaturalization. Arendt's insistence on remembrance stems from her belief that "one of the principle drawbacks of action...is to be extremely fragile, to be subject to the erosion of time and forgetfulness" (d'Entreves and Tömmel 2022). The fragility of action is perhaps even more pertinent to our time than it was for Arendt's, because to truly naturalize the present the neoliberal era must constantly delegitimize, criminalize, and marginalize the

revolutionary action of the past. Remembrance counters this by encouraging “incessant talk” about the stories of the past, so that we never forget them. While the neoliberal era may make us feel stuck in an eternal present, with no past or future, the faculty of storytelling can remind us that history is composed of stories, and that the past and present are parts of a “coherent and continuing life story” that will not end as long as humans don’t give up their capacity for political action and the corresponding duties of remembrance (Benhabib 1990).

In practice, remembrance-as-denaturalization is simply the reluctance to stop thinking and talking about the past. Whether through personal education, day-to-day conversation, or large-scale forums, refusing to forget events like the NIEO allows us to denaturalize the present by remembering one of the most ambitious projects of worldmaking in the anticolonial period, and by remembering that one of the reasons it failed was because it threatened the interests of elites in the First World. Remembrance-as-denaturalization, then, does not only show us that the postcolonial neoliberal present was not the only present available to us, but it also allows us to rediscover the potential of political action.

Because remembrance-as-denaturalization can inspire a desire to revive a past time in which political possibilities felt endless, a second element of remembrance must also be considered: remembrance-as-mourning. Remembrance-as-mourning counters our desire to revive the past by encouraging us to mourn it. By acknowledging that the break in tradition that occurred in 1989 may be irreparable, and, more importantly, that we may be stranded in a historical moment without an immediately accessible tradition to orient or guide us, remembrance becomes a recognition of the depth of the political and historical crisis in which we find ourselves in the present. While our position may seem hopeless and directionless at first, acknowledging this break can be the very thing that frees us to form new personal and political

attachments. Remembrance-as-mourning, then, is essentially a call to build new political practices that derives from the admission that the political projects of the past no longer speak to our postcolonial neoliberal present.

This aspect of remembrance can be linked with mourning following Freud's (1957) insight that melancholy and mourning represent two different approaches to loss (243). Applying this to the loss of the revolutionary project, I argue that if revival is a symptom of melancholic attachment, remembrance may be analogous to mourning. For Freud, melancholia is an aggressive fixation that makes it impossible to let go of the lost object, which results in the melancholic dwelling on the past with pathological nostalgia. Thus, Freud (1957) writes, the loss of the object becomes "transformed into an ego-loss" and a hopeless sense of worthlessness and failure marks the melancholic's demeanor (246).

In contrast, mourning is the process of "reparative remembering that over the course of time enables release from an attachment that is no longer plausible or realistic to hold on to" (Scott 2013, 100). Mourning consists of the grief-stricken person slowly withdrawing their investment of desire from the long-lost object: however, this process must be "carried out by bit, at great expense of time and cathectic energy, and in the meantime the existence of the lost object is psychically prolonged" (Freud 1957, 245). The work of mourning occurs in the site of memory, as each single memory and expectation is called up to facilitate the withdrawal of desire and the detachment of libido. As painful as this process may be, when the work of mourning is completed "the ego becomes free and uninhibited again" (ibid.). In mourning, the world becomes "poor and empty," whereas in melancholia it is the ego itself that suffers this fate (ibid., 246). Thus mourning, by acknowledging loss and seeing the empty world for what it is, allows the ego to finally become free and form new personal and political attachments.

Remembrance-as-mourning encourages us to mourn the loss of the global socialist and anticolonial revolutionary project through a process, which unlike the unconscious attachment of the melancholic, is deliberately and consciously driven by remembrance. Like remembrance-as-denaturalization, remembrance-as-mourning is a process of historical investigation through which we engage with the global socialist and anticolonial revolutionary project. However, while remembrance-as-denaturalization aimed to remember this project to contextualize the present, remembrance-as-mourning aims to acknowledge that this project was linked to historical conditions which no longer exist. Thus, remembrance-as-mourning counters the desire for revival by allowing us to acknowledge loss, withdraw attachment, and free ourselves to create new ways of coming to terms with the postcolonial neoliberal present.

Remembrance-as-mourning is often the crucial element that distinguishes projects of revival and melancholia from projects that can adequately speak to our present. This can be illustrated using the example of a project that has contributed towards the recent surge of interest in the NIEO: the set of conferences, articles, and events hosted by *Progressive International* (PI) to mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the NIEO. The central motivation for this campaign is that the inequalities that the NIEO sought to rectify persist today, and therefore we must revive the spirit of the Bandung era and create a new NIEO to confront this polycrisis.

Through its constant allusions to the speeches of figures like Thomas Sankara and Julius Nyerere, its choice to host its conference in Havana, and its drive to revitalize an interest in Bandung era projects such as the NIEO, PI's vision, at times, meets the requirements of remembrance-as-denaturalization. However, this project is ultimately still one of revival, sustained by a melancholic attachment to the politics of a past that longer speaks to our postcolonial neoliberal present. In this sense, PI's project does not achieve remembrance-as-

mourning because it refuses to acknowledge the ways in which the events it remembers belong to a different “problem-space,” defined as a discursive context of argument.

PI’s recently published document, “The Havana Declaration on the New International Economic Order,” illustrates this point perfectly. The declaration begins by “[a]cknowledging that the project of decolonization remains incomplete” and that north-south divergence today is “characterized by the same dynamics that defined the international economic order five decades prior” (The Havana Congress 2023). Thus, the declaration urges the completion of this project through a “renewed campaign of Southern cooperation” whose demands include renewing the Non-Aligned Movement, renovating the NIEO, and building a planetary bloc that can lead this struggle. This romantic and utopian narrative of revolutionary overcoming is evident in the call to “[seize] the opportunity of the present historical juncture, when the crisis of the existing world system can either entrench inequalities or embolden the call to reclaim Southern protagonism in the construction of a new world order based on justice, equity and peace” (ibid.).

The absence of remembrance-as-mourning in PI’s vision is also clear in its call to find “new answers to the same old questions from the prior polycrisis” (Gandikota-Nellutla et al. 2022). One of the central claims of remembrance-as-mourning, and the conception of remembrance outlined in this paper more broadly, is that the projects, visions, and hopes of the past were conceived in conditions that were radically different to our postcolonial neoliberal present. Linking this back to PI’s desire to find “new answers to the same old questions,” the framework of remembrance-as-mourning “proposes not that we give better answers to the old questions, but that the questions themselves are no longer relevant—because they belong to a different “problem space” and need to be radically refashioned” (Hall 2005). Thus, by neglecting

to use remembrance as a way of mourning loss, PI's project continues to rely on language, concepts, and visions associated with a romantic temporal structure and narrative that is no longer available to us. What PI's project ultimately fails to do, then, is develop new ways of theorizing the relationship between the colonial past, the neoliberal present, and the uncertain future that follows them.

If the failure of PI's project is its attachment to an unavailable tradition of the past, how can we theorize meaningful political practice without any tradition to guide us? This answer can also be found in remembrance. Remembrance, despite its reliance on the morbid language of mourning and loss, is ultimately aimed at freeing us to generate new political practices that can speak to the postcolonial neoliberal present. This 'positive' aspect of remembrance is the natural conclusion of both processes of remembrance outlined earlier. Remembrance-as-denaturalization negates the sense that the postcolonial neoliberal present is the natural and singular political horizon available to us. In doing so, it not only revitalizes our faith in the possibilities of political action, but also allows us to maintain a connection to the past. Remembrance-as-mourning, however, while encouraging us to remember the past also insists that the traditions of that past may no longer speak to our present. Thus, remembrance-as-mourning is a call to develop new ways to envision the connection between the past, present, and future that can generate meaningful political action that is specific to the present we inhabit.

The final question, then, is what kind of political project speaks to the specific problem-space of the present? One example of a project that encompasses the conception of remembrance outlined in this paper is the multi-state Caribbean Community's (CARICOM) Ten-Point Plan for Reparatory Justice. Established in 2013, CARICOM has been seeking reparations from Britain, France, and Netherlands through the International Court of Justice in The Hague on behalf of the



region's "indigenous and African descendant communities who are the victims of Crimes against Humanity...in the forms of genocide, slavery, slave trading, and racial apartheid" (Caricom Reparations Commission 2023).

CARICOM's project exhibits remembrance-as-denaturalization by continuing to make the argument that the global north is the structural beneficiaries of colonialism. CARICOM's vision denaturalizes the present by redescribing "the past's relation to the present in such a way as to foreground the sense in which Caribbean debt is the other side of European theft" (Scott 2014, IX). According to CARICOM, rather than emerging as the natural (and rational) horizon of history, the modern world came into existence through debt, theft, and injustice (ibid.).

In this sense, CARICOM maintains a meaningful connection with the past politics of the Bandung era and the NIEO. This can be seen in the several similarities between CARICOM's Ten-Point Plan and the NIEO's demands. For example, both plans contain similar clauses for the cancellation of debt, the transfer of technology, and development assistance that can be used for education and health programs. Most importantly, however, the NIEO also included a reparation clause, stating the "right of all States, territories and peoples under foreign occupation, alien and colonial domination or apartheid to restitution and full compensation for the exploitation and depletion of, and damages to, the natural resources and all other resources of those States, territories and peoples" (Bell and Forrester 2019). Thus, CARICOM achieves remembrance-as-denaturalization by revitalizing narratives of how the colonial encounter has shaped the modern international order.

While CARICOM maintains this connection with the anticolonial politics of the Bandung era, it is crucial to note that its vision of reparatory justice is a unique response to the political conjuncture of our present: in this sense it also achieves remembrance-as-mourning. According

to Scott, the reparatory vision of CARICOM's demands for reparations defines the problem-space of the present in two ways. First is the sense that the "that the developmentalist model of the postcolonial nation-state...has arrived, exhausted, at a dead end" (Scott 2014, IX). Central to this era was a "heroic model of anticolonial sovereignty that depended on the idea that the new nation-state could progressively transcend the colonial past, leave it behind, on its way to a liberated, independent future" (ibid.). Second is the "exhaustion of the great modernist narratives of social and economic and political progress, principally Marxism and liberalism" (Scott 2018, IX). The project of the Enlightenment, upheld by a confidence in the powers of reason to offer a rational path to emancipation, envisioned the future as "an assured prospect" and the past as "a time to rapidly leave behind" (ibid.). Reparatory justice emerged as that hope in the revolutionary overcoming of the past became a no longer viable way of thinking about the future.

What is crucial about reparatory justice is that it relies on a temporal structure that is radically different to the romantic narratives of the Bandung era and the NIEO, and which is uniquely suited to our postcolonial neoliberal present. Reparatory justice emerged alongside the post-Cold War human rights revolution and presided over a similar "retemporalization of history" (Scott 2014, X). Demands for reparations and repair store "no utopian hope in the long-deferred futures of a reconciliatory emancipation" (Scott 2018, X). Instead, they attune themselves to a "reenchanted past understood as a time not yet past that continues to disfigure the present and foreclose the future" (Scott 2014, X). One example of how this retemporalization manifests into concrete demands is the eighth point of CARICOM's Ten-Point Plan: "Psychological Rehabilitation as a Result of the Transmission of Trauma" (Caricom Reparations Commission 2023). According to Scott, "[i]t is perhaps this revised temporal sensibility that has made the language of trauma—and the memory-work that sustains it—so arresting for thinking

about the persistence of harms resulting from the perpetration of historical wrongs” (Scott 2014, X).

While calls for reparations have existed for a long time, these new arguments for reparations, repair, and redress feel intimately linked with the postcolonial neoliberal present and its tragic emplotment of the relationship between past-present-future. Within such a view, history is not leading us anywhere and the past is a wound that may not heal or be clearly overcome or evaded (Scott 2004, 166). Thus, CARICOM’s reparations plan is a fundamental movement away from the temporal structure of Bandung era projects such as the NIEO. This is abundantly clear in the shift between the language of the NIEO, which stresses worldmaking and revolutionary overcoming, and the language of the reparations program, which stresses repair, redress, truth, and reconciliation.

It is possible to argue that in this new age of reparations, reconciliation, and repair we have lessened the scope of our demands and consequently allowed the enemies of justice to retain more than what is fair. Perhaps within the problem-space of the Bandung era this objection would be certainly true. It is the difficult and painful work of mourning to slowly detach ourselves from this view of history and political action, and to recognize that those objections may belong the lost dreams of the past, rather than the real conditions of the present. Thus, CARICOM’s project for reparations shows a deep commitment to remembrance-as-mourning, as it pursues new languages, concepts, and frameworks of justice in the wake of the promise of revolutionary and romantic anticolonialism.

CARICOM’s call for reparations, then, represents the facets of remembrance outlined in this paper by carefully balancing a connection with the past, while acknowledging the profundity of the shift that has occurred in the postcolonial neoliberal era.

## **Conclusion**

The central question in this paper has been about the relationship we maintain with a past that no longer speaks to our present. I argue for remembrance as a critical faculty in moments of historical crisis and transformation when the certainties and securities of the past have fallen apart and disappeared. Remembrance, however, is not only the desire to preserve the past without being enslaved by it. More than this, remembrance is a way of forming new attachments that is deeply rooted in the resources of memory and the constant reappraisal of the past.

I have attempted to show that in an era in which political action feels futile, liberatory futures have evaporated, and the eternal present feels like the natural and inescapable condition of global civilization, we must remember projects like the NIEO so that we can denaturalize the malaise of the neoliberal postcolonial present. At the same time, however, I have argued that while the memory of the past can shed light on the present, the revival of the past is not possible today. The second meaning of remembrance, then, is mournful and dedicated towards moving on from the past towards new political attachments.

Because our memory of the past continues to unconsciously configure the way we think about our present and our future, remembrance provides a method of carefully coming to terms with what the past can provide and what it cannot.

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