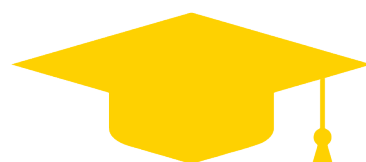


# GIES HONOURS PAPER

Volume 1 | Academic year 2021-2022

Edited by Anissa Bougrea, Servaas Taghon,  
Hermine Van Coppenolle & Dr. Tim Haesebrouck



# GIES HONOURS PAPERS

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## INTRODUCTION

Anissa Bougrea, Servaas Taghon, Hermine Van Coppenolle & Tim Haesebrouck

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Every academic year, the students of the Political Science and EU Studies Master Program at Ghent University produce exceptional master's dissertations. In 2022, we decided to provide the students that wrote an outstanding thesis supervised by a member of the Ghent Institute for European and International Studies (GIES) the opportunity to present their main arguments and findings in the "GIES Honours Paper" series. This edited volume collects the seven papers that were selected for the 2021-2022 academic year.

The first paper, by [Max Piens](#), examines NATO's potential role in addressing the multidimensional threats that China poses to Euro-Atlantic security. More specifically, the paper suggests that NATO could make a greater contribution in the areas of emerging and disruptive technologies, space and arms control, and hybrid threats, and formulates sixteen recommendations to enhance NATO's role in addressing these threats.

The second contribution focusses on the electoral fortune of populist radical right (PRR) parties during the 2019 European elections. Starting with the puzzling observation that there was a striking variation in the electoral success of PRR parties during the 2019 election, [Matthew Derycke](#) developed an innovative theoretical framework to explain the electoral fortune of PRR parties. After testing this framework with fuzzy set Qualitative Comparative Analysis, the paper concludes that PRR parties were successful in countries where the population had negative attitudes towards migrants and in countries where a high degree of Euroscepticism was

combined with the absence of successful populist radical left parties.

The third paper, by [Berk Vindevogel](#), assesses how Russia can protect its Arctic objectives against the growing presence of China. Following a thorough assessment of Russia's and China's objectives in the Arctic and the potential risks China poses to Russia's Arctic interests. The paper concludes that it is not China that poses the greatest threat to Russia in the Arctic. Instead, it are Moscow's own foreign policy decisions, including military escapades such as its brutal war against Ukraine, that constitute the greatest threats to its interests in the Arctic.

The next three papers apply a post-colonial perspective to their respective topics. In the fourth paper, [Rein Struyve](#) examines the European Union Emergency Trust Fund (EUTF) for Africa from a postcolonial cosmopolitan perspective. After conducting a discourse analysis of four EUTF projects, the paper shows that the EUTF fails the postcolonial cosmopolitan test. In conclusion, a number of reformist and revolutionary proposals are offered to align the EUTF with the EU's postcolonial cosmopolitan self-image. The fifth paper, written by [Ann-Sophie Van Baeveghem](#), examines the colonial sensitivity of the House of European History with regards to the birth of the European Economic Community. The paper argues that the House of European History presents the birth of the European Economic Community through a predominant Eurocentric point of view and is not colonially sensitive. In the sixth paper, [Sira](#)

[Blancquaert](#) examines the New Pact on Migration and Asylum from a post-colonial perspective. More specifically, the paper examines whether this pact points to a paradigm shift in EU migration and asylum policy. The author concludes that the New Pact is more than just 'old wine in new bottles' and institutionalized the differentiation between wanted and unwanted migrants as well as how these should be treated.

In the last paper, [Celien Deweerdt](#) explains the similarities and differences in the policies of Obama and Trump regarding the war in Syria. In

spite of their different characters and political backgrounds, and, consequently, different ideological views of the world, a surprising continuity in the Syria policy of Obama and Trump was uncovered, attributed to war-weariness among the American population and Congress.

Overall, this edited volume showcases the exceptional research produced by Ghent University's Political Science and EU Studies Master Program and provides important insights into a range of topics relevant to European and international studies.

# GIES HONOURS PAPERS

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## NATO AND THE CHINA-QUESTION: A NEW ROLE FOR THE ALLIANCE

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Master International Politics – Ghent University

Dissertation promotor: Prof. Dr. Sven Biscop

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*"China is not a superpower, nor will she ever seek to be one. If one day China should change her color and turn into a superpower, if she too should play the tyrant in the world, and everywhere subject others to her bullying, aggression and exploitation, the people of the world should identify her as social-imperialism, expose it, oppose it and work together with the Chinese people to overthrow it."*

Deng Xiaoping, 1974

Russia's war against Ukraine put NATO once again high on the agenda of its Member States. Whereas the Alliance was described as "brain dead" a few years ago, policymakers are now fully convinced of its relevance. The Russian aggression on the eastern flank is certainly not the only threat the Member States face. Another issue that has concerned policymakers for some time is China's growing power and influence in all kinds of security domains. The objective of this paper is therefore to answer the question of whether NATO is equipped to deal with these challenges. By means of a policy report with recommendations, I illustrate in which domains the Alliance can have a lasting impact on the increased Chinese assertiveness.

This paper serves as a set of recommendations on how to implement the 2022 Strategic Concept. The update of this Concept was urgently needed to reorient the Alliance in the thoroughly changed security environment. After all, the previous Concept dated from 2010, and since then, the

geopolitical landscape has changed significantly. In 2010, despite the fact that Russia's behaviour had already been highly problematic, the country was still considered a partner. The recent events in Ukraine, Syria and various African countries where Russia is committing well-documented crimes, combined with cyber- and hybrid attacks on several NATO Member States, clearly shows that this is no longer the case. Additionally, China can no longer be ignored in NATO's strategic planning and strategy for the future, whereas the previous Strategic Concept did not even mention the People's Republic of China. Despite its geographical location, China is having an increasingly profound impact on Euro-Atlantic security and the global trading system. Moreover, in the previous Strategic Concept, much attention was still given to crisis management and counterterrorism operations against non-state actors. Although the terrorist threat in NATO Member States has not diminished, the organisation needs to reorient itself and will have

to focus more on collective defence as its ultimate core task. Due to the increased threat posed by China and Russia, greater emphasis must be placed on full spectrum warfare against an opponent with high-tech, modern capabilities, both in the conventional and nuclear domain. NATO must find a balance between, on the one hand, the continued performance of tasks as an actor in the domain of crisis management and counterterrorism, and on the other hand, the modernisation and development of capabilities to ensure collective defence against powerful state actors.

In the run-up to the update of the Strategic Concept, NATO Allies asked Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg at the 2019 London summit to prepare the necessary reflections.<sup>1</sup> This reflection ultimately led to the NATO Agenda 2030 with eight concrete proposals ranging from strengthening collective deterrence to suggestions for increasing resilience in NATO Member States and addressing hybrid threats. Moreover, references to China were made in these proposals, which until then had been a rather rare occurrence in official NATO publications. At the NATO Conference in Brussels, which adopted the Agenda 2030, the People's Republic of China was even described for the first time as a systemic challenge.

This change in the narrative regarding China is not entirely unexpected, as many NATO members have longstanding concerns about the People's

Republic of China. The rapid military build-up of the country, the increasing grip on global supply chains, the substantial foreign direct investments in European technology companies, the Chinese Communist Party's inscrutable decision-making mechanisms, the special Chinese interest in foreign transport infrastructure, and the enormous investments in Emerging and Disruptive Technologies<sup>2</sup> (EDTs) are all reasons for unease.<sup>3&4</sup> In addition, state-led corporate and government espionage is causing growing discontent within NATO Member States.<sup>5</sup> Likewise, increasing cyber-attacks, disinformation campaigns, hybrid actions against Member States and the stronger military presence of the Chinese navy and air force in the Indo-Pacific region, are leading to serious concerns for the continued existence of free trade. In addition, growing pressure on Hong Kong and Taiwan is being closely monitored, as well as the ongoing repression in Tibet and China's Xinjiang province. Furthermore, stronger cooperation and joint military exercises between China and Russia are matters of great concern to NATO. Lastly, NATO can no longer ignore the Chinese breakthroughs in hypersonic weapons technology, and the modernisation and expansion of their nuclear triad.<sup>6</sup>

This policy paper will attempt to answer the following central research question: **"In what way can NATO contribute to enhanced security within the domains where increasing Chinese assertiveness poses a challenge to NATO**

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<sup>1</sup> "NATO 2030 making a strong alliance even stronger." NATO, Last modified June 14, 2021. <https://www.nato.int/nato2030/>.

<sup>2</sup> Emerging and disruptive technologies (EDTs) are recently developed or emerging technologies that will have a dramatic impact on industries and societies in general. Examples of EDTs include artificial intelligence (AI), quantum computers, blockchain, autonomous weapons systems, big data, hypersonic weapons and certain developments in biotechnology.

<sup>3</sup> Roger Weissinger-Baylon, Stefanie Babst, Jamie Shea, Michael Zilmer-Johns, and Caroline Baylon, "NATO-China Relations: Charting the Way Forward.", *Center for Strategic Decision Research*, January 27, 2022, <https://www.ceris.be/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/NATO-China-Relations-01032021.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> NATO, "Emerging and Disruptive Technologies", NATO, accessed August 23, 2022, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_184303.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_184303.htm).

<sup>5</sup> Robin Emmot and Sabine Siebold, "NATO Must Focus More on Challenge of Rising China", *Reuters*, November 30, 2020, <https://www.reuters.com/article/nato-diplomacy-future-idUSKBN28A1T0>.

<sup>6</sup> Meia Nouwens, "NATO and China: Addressing new challenges", Policy Brief (Brussels School of Governance, March 9, 2022), <https://brussels-school.be/publications/policy-briefs/nato-and-china-addressing-new-challenges>.

**Member States and partners?"** The intention of this policy report is to gain a better understanding of the implications of possible NATO-related strategies in these domains and how the division of labour between Member States, global partner countries and other organisations such as the European Union (EU) should proceed. The policy report also serves as a wake-up call for policymakers to engage in sustained strategic thinking with respect to the People's Republic of China.

The paper argues that there is a role for NATO to take action against the legitimate Chinese threat in certain domains. Inspired by the domains addressed by the NATO 2030 Agenda, security threats in the domain of hybrid threats, EDTs, space and weapons of mass destruction are discussed. Likewise, threats to critical trade routes will also be addressed, and a brief analysis of potential partners in the region to counter them is made. The policy paper is not blind to the Alliance's jurisdictional limitations, and therefore also pays attention to relevant partners such as the EU, with whom NATO should cooperate even better in the future. It is in these domains that this policy report makes recommendations, and enriching implications for Euro-Atlantic security are detected, since the threats in these domains are not regionally confined.

Before analysing each domain, this paper analyses both the current relationship between NATO and China, and the relationship between China and Russia. These two sections outline a certain worldview and analytical framework that informs and justifies the choices for certain recommendations in the policy report.

## The relationship between China and NATO

When writing a policy paper on the future role that China will play in Alliance planning, operations and analysis, it is not a luxury to first

analyse the current relationship. In the past, there have been several events and incidents between the People's Republic of China and NATO and its Member States, that have greatly affected the country and its Communist Party military, the People's Liberation Army (PLA). For a long time, NATO did not cause much concern in Beijing. The Alliance was seen as an instrument hijacked by Washington, mainly focused on Russia and the European southern flank.<sup>1</sup> The Alliance was seen as an unwieldy bureaucracy with too many internal disagreements and too little out-of-area capacity to be smoothly oriented towards the Indo-Pacific region. In China, the focus was on the military strength and threats posed by the United States (US) itself, rather than the alliances of which the US is a part, such as NATO. However, the subtle reference to China in official communications after the 2019 London conference instilled fear in Chinese policy circles that NATO could eventually be effectively deployed in the region to try and stop Chinese aspirations. The fact that China now put NATO - independently of its Member States- on its radar, is also proven by Russia's aggression against Ukraine. China is vehemently lashing out at the perceived role of the Alliance in this conflict, and old, unprocessed incidents are being resurfaced to justify their narrative, such as the NATO bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade in 1999.<sup>2</sup> This marks the definitive end of the cooperative atmosphere that was present between NATO and China at the beginning of this century.

## The Sino-Russian tandem

When writing about this subject, it is certainly not redundant to also pay attention to the Sino-Russian cooperation. Still, one must always keep in mind the bigger picture: China will assist Russia in certain cases if there is a net benefit, but it will by no means provide unconditional support. This

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<sup>1</sup> Helena Legarda and Meia Nouwens, "China's Rise as a Global Security Actor: Implications for NATO", China Security Project (The International Security Institute & Mercator Institute for China Studies, December 21, 2020), <https://merics.org/en/report/chinas-rise-implications-for-nato>.

<sup>2</sup> Mission of the People's Republic of China to the European Union, "Spokesperson of the Chinese Mission to the EU Speaks on a Question Concerning NATO Leader's Remarks on China", March 17, 2022, [http://eu.china-mission.gov.cn/eng/fyrjh/202203/t20220317\\_10652463.htm](http://eu.china-mission.gov.cn/eng/fyrjh/202203/t20220317_10652463.htm).

becomes clear if one analyses the consequences of the war in Ukraine and what they mean for the Chinese agenda. Whatever the outcome of the war, Russia will undoubtedly emerge weaker. China will gain a less powerful and more dependent neighbour, which is beneficial for its own regional hegemonic aspirations.<sup>1</sup> Likewise, this armed conflict forces the US to invest more resources in European security, delaying their Pivot to Asia. Thus, China has everything to gain from the continuation of this conflict, despite its narrative of peace negotiations. Moreover, this war has major economic consequences. It delays the West's economic recovery from the pandemic and may also provide a boost to China's fourteenth five-year plan of a Dual Circulation Strategy (DCS). The goal of the DCS is greater self-reliance whereby the Chinese domestic market becomes the main engine of the economy. In this way, the Chinese economy becomes less dependent on foreign trade flows and thus less vulnerable to external shocks.<sup>2</sup> This is detrimental to NATO Member States and partners, as China's dependence on foreign markets is a protective mechanism against a major armed conflict. If China is more self-reliant, the PLA could be more easily deployed to resolve threats to Chinese interest without risking huge economic costs.

Yet, we cannot expect NATO to make a major military shift towards the Indo-Pacific region. The active armed conflict on the European Eastern Front eliminates this possibility, and more importantly, unlike Russia, China currently does not pose a direct kinetic threat to NATO Member States.<sup>3</sup> The changes in the Strategic Concept regarding China will therefore not be of the nature of the Alliance developing disengagement

and defence missions to protect Member States and partner countries directly from the Chinese threat, nor will freedom of navigation operations in the South China Sea be organised under a direct NATO flag. This has been confirmed by NATO Secretary-General Stoltenberg, who explicitly stated that it is not the Alliance's intention to play an active military role in the South China Sea. NATO forces, which would be deployed forward in the Indo-Pacific, are both politically and militarily undesirable and even unfeasible for NATO Allies and regional partners.

Yet, at the same time, NATO needs to engage more with China because the People's Republic is becoming increasingly active in the European periphery and within the Member States.<sup>4</sup> NATO should, therefore, address certain specific domains in which China poses a threat to its Member States. Especially in the domains of critical infrastructure protection, social resilience, hybrid threats, EDTs, and threats in the cyber and space domain, the Alliance could play a valuable role. These domains were also mentioned in the NATO 2030 agenda. In the following overview, I outline the main challenges in these domains and the possible measures that NATO can take to respond to them as adequately as possible.

### Hybrid threats and resilience

Hybrid threats and resilience were high on the agenda of NATO's 2022 Madrid Summit. Many think tanks and academics argued to include resilience as a fourth core task of the Alliance, but this policy report reasons against it. Resilience must remain a responsibility of the Member States themselves and of partner organizations such as the EU. These, in contrast to NATO, have

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<sup>1</sup> Ricardo Borges de Castro, "The war in Ukraine: China walking amid the shrapnel", *European Policy Center*, March 4, 2022, <https://www.epc.eu/en/Publications/The-war-in-Ukraine-China-walking-amid-the-shrapnel~466d4c>.

<sup>2</sup> Center for Strategic Decision Research, "Will the Dual Circulation Strategy Enable China to Compete in a Post-Pandemic World?", *ChinaPower Project* (blog), December 15, 2021, <https://chinapower.csis.org/china-covid-dual-circulation-economic-strategy/>.

<sup>3</sup> Jens Ringsmose and Sten Rynning, "China Brought NATO Closer Together", *War on the Rocks*, February 5, 2020, <https://warontherocks.com/2020/02/china-brought-nato-closer-together/>.

<sup>4</sup> Helena Legarda and Meia Nouwens, "China's Rise as a Global Security Actor: Implications for NATO", *China Security Project* (The International Security Institute & Mercator Institute for China Studies, December 21, 2020), <https://merics.org/en/report/chinas-rise-implications-for-nato>.

the legislative powers necessary to implement institutional changes in the civilian sectors that are frequently victim of hybrid attacks. Nonetheless China is pushing hard in the domain of hybrid threats through their own the doctrine of Sang Zhong Zhanfa<sup>1</sup>, freely translated as the doctrine of the three warfares.<sup>2</sup> This is somewhat comparable to the Russian New Generation Warfare.<sup>3</sup> To better equip the Alliance and its Member States against these hybrid challenges, this policy report recommends the following:

- ⊗ *To further develop deterrence by punishment in the domain of hybrid/cyber threats in the NATO context.*

The current initiatives and collaborations to tackle hybrid threats can be situated in the domain of resilience and deterrence by denial. However, resilience has serious limitations as it is impossible to cover all weak spots within society against hybrid attacks. This would require such intensive government intervention that the very fabric of Western democracies that resilience seeks to protect would be undermined.<sup>4</sup> This policy report therefore advocates the expansion of deterrence by punishment e.g. a cyberattack, as both denial and punishment initiatives are needed for a healthy balance to deter hybrid threats.

- ⊗ *Specifying Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty in the field of cyber-attacks and hybrid attacks.*

While there are certainly strategic advantages to the ambiguity created by the current vague notions of a possible collective response to these types of attacks, it may also make for a less credible deterrent. Indeed, the broad and ambiguous nature of hybrid threats does not make it feasible to respond to all actions and could therefore lead to an erosion of Article 5. It is therefore better to agree on clear thresholds for triggering Article 5 in hybrid attacks, such as an action that results in fatalities. Of course, such clearly marked red lines may cause adversaries to seek out these thresholds and stay below them. In these cases, their effects must be countered by deterrence by denial and built-in resilience. This again illustrates the need for a balanced mix of deterrents.

- ⊗ *To further develop strategic training in the field of hybrid threats in the different NATO training centres.*

These educational institutions can help by filling the knowledge gaps among analysts and experts. This will become even more important in the future, as President Xi has recently installed a ban on foreign theoretical books in the strategic

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<sup>1</sup> San zhong zhanfa or freely translated: the doctrine of the three warfares. In this doctrine, a situation is created that is highly beneficial to China, through influence in the realm of public opinion, the social psychological fabric and in the legal realm. Strategic psychological operations are meant to intimidate opponents in the pre-conflict phase and manipulate them towards preferred outcomes. Media manipulation, in turn, is influencing domestic and international perspectives on issues where Chinese interests are present through a variety of channels such as news services and social media. Finally, the exploitation of national and international legal systems aims to cause confusion and delay and to set legal precedents favourable to China.

<sup>2</sup> Doug Livermore, "China's 'Three Warfares' In Theory and Practice in the South China Sea", *Georgetown Security Studies Review*, March 25, 2018, <https://georgetownsecuritystudiesreview.org/2018/03/25/chinas-three-warfares-in-theory-and-practice-in-the-south-china-sea/>.

<sup>3</sup> Jānis Bērziņš, "The Theory and Practice of New Generation Warfare: The Case of Ukraine and Syria", *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 33, no. 3 (July 2, 2020): 355–80, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13518046.2020.1824109>.

<sup>4</sup> Sean Monaghan, "Hybrid CoE Paper 12: Deterring Hybrid Threats: Towards a Fifth Wave of Deterrence Theory and Practice" (Hybrid Center of Excellence), accessed August 23, 2022, <https://www.hybridcoe.fi/publications/hybrid-coe-paper-12-deterring-hybrid-threats-towards-a-fifth-wave-of-deterrence-theory-and-practice/>.



design of policy makers.<sup>1</sup> It is assumable that Chinese policy makers will increasingly revisit their own strategy classics and it is therefore expected that this will also manifest itself in future strategic thinking in the field of hybrid threats. If NATO can adequately respond to this, analysts and policymakers can better anticipate future threats.

### Emerging and disruptive technologies

In the domain of emerging and disruptive technologies, China is increasingly investing resources in technologies that will determine the fourth industrial revolution. These technologies won't all have peaceful purposes and NATO could be part of the solution to ensure Member States maintain their technological superiority. Where the Strategic Concept deviates from expectations, is in the limited attention paid to this domain.<sup>2</sup> Once an established buzzword of analysts, it has now shifted to a somewhat secondary position since the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Almost as much attention is paid to women's empowerment and climate change as to EDT's; while important, there are certainly much better forums and institutions for these issues than a military defence organisation. They have rightly moved away from a global NATO but risk now taking on too many tasks in other areas while others do not deserve the required attention. The policy report advises the following:

- ⊗ *NATO should be a key actor in setting technical standards for EDTs.*

The Alliance has a long tradition in setting standards for military technology and weapon systems via the NATO Standardization Office.<sup>3</sup> It would be strongly recommended that the new Strategic Concept and subsequent documents also entrust NATO with this function in the domain of EDTs, so that interoperability is guaranteed in the future.

- ⊗ *Additional efforts in human capital investment.*

This is necessary to bridge the widening gap between people who have the technical knowledge but are less familiar with the political-military reality and people who have to make the strategic choices but lack the technical finesse.<sup>4</sup>

- ⊗ *A target should be set for R&D expenditure in the NATO context.*

At the 2014 Wales Summit, NATO reaffirmed the 2% GDP military spending norm with a pledge to put 20% of it into investment in major equipment and modernization. NATO should opt to adopt a similar arrangement and spend a certain fixed percentage of GDP on Research & Development (R&D). This is necessary as crucial R&D expenditure is otherwise a too tempting budget item for short-term minded administrations to save during a period of successive crises.<sup>5</sup>

- ⊗ *Improved coordination*

Improved coordination with partners like the QUAD on supply chain security of certain rare earth materials and other critical components, which are crucial for the development of EDTs.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Edward Hunter Christie et al., "NATO Decision-Making in the Age of Big Data and Artificial Intelligence", *IAI Istituto Affari Internazionali*, 26 Februari 2021, 44–57.

<sup>2</sup> Ed Arnold, "New Concepts but Old Problems: NATO's New Strategic Concept", *The Royal United Services Institute (RUSI)* accessed August 23, 2022, <https://www.rusi.org>.

<sup>3</sup> NATO, "Standardization", NATO, accessed August 23, 2022, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_69269.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_69269.htm).

<sup>4</sup> Andrea Gilli and Mauro Gilli, "Why China Has Not Caught Up Yet: Military-Technological Superiority and the Limits of Imitation, Reverse Engineering, and Cyber Espionage", *International security* 43, no. 3 (February 1, 2019): 141–89, [https://doi.org/10.1162/isec\\_a\\_00337](https://doi.org/10.1162/isec_a_00337).

<sup>5</sup> ACOS Strat, Personal communication with the NAVO-desk in ACOS Strat, March 31, 2022.

<sup>6</sup> Benedetta Girardi, Tim Sweijs, and Paul van Hooft, "Guarding the Maritime Commons | What Role for Europe in the Indo-Pacific" (Hague: The Hague Center for Strategic Studies), accessed August 23 2022, <https://hcss.nl/report/guarding-the-maritime-commons-europe-in-indo-pacific/>.

## Space

Space is a rather recent operational area for NATO, yet, an indispensable domain for modern warfare. The Alliance thus needs to ensure the success of operations in this area. Today this is done through an extensive network of Member State satellites. However China plays an increasingly assertive role in space and has on several occasions shown hostile behaviour towards allied space vessels. It is therefore recommended to:

- ⊗ *Achieve a treaty amendment on Article 6 of the North Atlantic Treaty so that Article 5 is also valid in space.*

As of today the geographical limitation, which is restricted to attacks on Member States and their vehicles and vessels above the Tropic of Cancer, excludes spacecraft.<sup>1</sup> In order to signal a reliable deterrent to Member States and adversaries, this gap must be closed.

- ⊗ *Purchase an own NATO satellite configuration to obtain operational resilience.*

## Arms control

The potential arms race with China causes quite a few concerns within the Alliance, which is not unwarranted given that the People's Republic of China is not bound by the current disarmament treaties. Yet in comparison with the previous Strategic Concept, there is clearly less enthusiasm for arms control as opponents are fully committed to the expansion and modernisation of their respective nuclear deterrent capacities. As the Alliance has rightfully stated in the past, NATO is and will remain a nuclear alliance as long as there are nuclear weapons. This is underlined by the absence of any reference to of the Nuclear

Ban Treaty in the new Concept.<sup>2</sup> Therefore the policy report recommends the following:

- ⊗ *NATO should establish itself as a consultative body on arms control with the People's Republic of China.*

NATO already has considerable experience in such talks, not only as an Alliance but also through the efforts of individual Member States. NATO can also use this expertise to avoid an arms race in the Indo-Pacific region.<sup>3</sup>

NATO has therefore considerable potential to enhance security in these areas in the near future. If the Alliance is sufficiently aware of its jurisdictional boundaries and enters into more intensive relations with partner organisations, a complementary security structure can emerge that fills in each other's gaps and is therefore capable of addressing multidimensional threats. For this reason, this report also makes some suggestions for potential cooperation initiatives with relevant partners. These would allow NATO to be better equipped to tackle the security challenges of this century.

## Operational division of labour with the EU

- ⊗ *The development of a pooling and sharing system in the Indo-Pacific between European NATO Allies who possess bases in the region.*

To get even more out of these bases, European countries should expand existing cooperation agreements. Currently, there are limited agreements under which states can store certain materials in the bases of other countries, such as strategically stored weapons and ammunition.<sup>4</sup> These should be expanded to include the storage of spare parts and allowing foreign ships to dock

<sup>1</sup> "NATO's approach to space", accessed August 23, 2022, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_175419.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_175419.htm).

<sup>2</sup> William Alberque, "The New NATO Strategic Concept and the End of Arms Control", IISS, accessed on August 23, 2022, <https://www.iiss.org/blogs/analysis/2022/06/the-new-nato-strategic-concept-and-the-end-of-arms-control>.

<sup>3</sup> NATO, "Arms Control, Disarmament and Non-Proliferation in NATO", NATO, accessed August 23 2022, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_48895.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_48895.htm).

<sup>4</sup> Girardi, Sweijs, and van Hooft, "Guarding the Maritime Commons | What Role for Europe in the Indo-Pacific"

and resupply so that their deployments can be extended during conflict situations.

- ⊗ *Making agreements on coordinated deployments in the Indian Ocean and surrounding waters.*

In this way, a continuous European presence in the Indo-Pacific region can be guaranteed in a more cost-efficient manner. This would also be a good signal to partners in the region that the Indo-Pacific is high on the European agenda. In addition, this autonomous European deployment, which would be independent of NATO, would also contribute to the creation of a separate chain of command, making it more difficult for rival players in the region to anticipate what actions and deployments will take place. This is good for resilience and may contribute to additional deterrence. This contributes to the safety of regional partners and the continued freedom and security of maritime routes.

- ⊗ *Working out a division of labour between the EU and NATO in the southern flank and deciding on extra efforts with regard to related strategic enablers.*

NATO and European NATO Member States will have little influence on the inevitable shift in focus of the US to the Indo-Pacific to try to contain and slow down China's growing influence in the region. The US has an enormous military capacity and only a limited part of it is inscribed in the Alliance's military planning. Nevertheless, the increased focus on the Indo-Pacific region will have consequences for the European NATO Member States, especially in the area of strategic enablers. At present, European Member States are highly dependent on these American strategic enablers to conduct operations. However, it can be assumed that in the future the US will prefer to deploy certain capabilities in the Indo-Pacific as a matter of priority. Due to the active armed conflict on the European Eastern Front and the Russian threat against (aspiring) NATO members, the need for strategic enablers is more acute in

this area today than in the southern flank of Europe, but a new crisis in the South could change that very quickly. Here the EU can play a strong complementary role, as the southern periphery of Europe will remain an unstable region. In the current plans of the EU's Strategic Compass, concrete results in the domain of own strategic enablers are only expected by the end of the second half of the decade.<sup>1</sup> This risks creating another gap where EU forces will have to rely on mainly US enablers, which will most likely be less and less available. It is therefore strongly recommended that work be accelerated to obtain sufficient strategic enablers in the European context. Ideally, work should be done on the revision of the Headline Goals, EU Member States should participate in more Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) projects and, above all, more money should be provided for these projects.

#### NATO partnerships

- ⊗ *The elaboration of an extended Asia-Pacific Four format.*

NATO should invest in the so called Asia-Pacific (x) format that could seek closer relations with India, the Philippines and Vietnam. These countries were included in my analysis on the basis of several factors which are briefly summarised below:

1. The potential partner's attitude towards China, in particular whether the potential partner also views the People's Republic of China and its actions as a strategic challenge.
2. The contribution the country can make to the Alliance and the Asia-Pacific (x) format. The quality and quantity of the military resources are assessed, but also the capacity and the will to use these resources if necessary. Other factors such as diplomatic power, infrastructure and geographical position are also taken into account.

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<sup>1</sup> Dick Zandee, "International Conference: The EU Strategic Compass", *Clingendael*, April 13, 2022, <https://www.clingendael.org/publication/international-conference-eu-strategic-compass>.

3. The third factor is the general desirability of entering into closer cooperation with the potential partner. Several risk factors are examined here, such as the status of the country in the international community, the chance that troops and equipment might be at risk, the likelihood of regime change, the domestic perception of the Member States about this potential partner, etc..

⊗ *The establishment of the NATO-Pacific Partnership Council.*

Should closer and comprehensive security cooperation, such as the Asia-Pacific (x) format, prove politically impossible, it would be wise to establish a NATO-Pacific Partnership Council. An akin but less institutionalised format can also be found in the Arctic, another strategically important area. This exists in the form of an Arctic Council, albeit outside a NATO framework. Political consultation within the NATO-Pacific Partnership Council could combine NATO's unparalleled experience in cooperative security with offering it to partners in the region.

⊗ *The creation of an Indo-Pacific centre of excellence.*

This centre would not only provide improved field knowledge for NATO Member States but could also be used to transfer knowledge and skills to regional partner countries. Within this centre, NATO Member States and partners would be able to exchange practical experience in the areas of maritime security, cyber security and social resilience, given the context and the regional challenges. As with the Hybrid centre of excellence in Helsinki, this could also involve private actors who can communicate relevant knowledge and signal undetected problems.

### Conclusion and final remarks

This policy paper demonstrates that NATO, despite its purely political-military nature, can still play a role in addressing the multidimensional threat that China poses to Euro-Atlantic security. Too often, people still think in traditional terms that the Alliance is only good for conventional and

nuclear deterrence. However, inspired by the NATO 2030 Agenda, this policy report explores how NATO can contribute to addressing Chinese threats in the areas of hybrid threats, emerging and disruptive technologies (EDTs), space and arms control. As the extensive list of recommendations, summarised above, shows, NATO has a great deal of expertise and potential to make a significant impact on security in these areas in the near future. If the Alliance is sufficiently aware of its jurisdictional boundaries and enters into more intensive relations with partner organisations, a complementary security structure can emerge that fills in each other's gaps and is therefore capable of responding to multidimensional threats. The list of recommendations is extensive and it may not be politically feasible to implement them all. Nevertheless, it was considered beneficial to present them all in this policy report, as there is a renewed enthusiasm for NATO due to the war in Ukraine. This armed conflict creates both opportunities and potential challenges for tackling security problems in other regions. The invasion of Ukraine will require the necessary policy changes within the Alliance in terms of collective defence. Nevertheless, this policy report points out that China will become an increasingly pressing issue over the next decade, whatever the outcome of the war in Ukraine. If the Indo-Pacific is going to be considered as a side issue or a long-term problem, the consequences could be far-reaching. In fact, the opposite is true: the war in Ukraine should be an incentive to think more carefully about the division of tasks in both regions. If NATO, and more specifically the European NATO Member States, were to focus too unilaterally on the threat from Russia, this could be seen as an incentive for Beijing to become even more assertive in the region.

It is important to realise that NATO is thus well placed to make a significant contribution to the security of tomorrow. In doing so, the Alliance will be treading paths that have not been explored previously within the organisation. This policy report, however, clearly shows that this will have to be done in cooperation with other

organisations. After all, the final premise of this report is not that NATO will have to transform itself into a global alliance, a so-called global NATO which will add all kinds of new domains and regions to its range of tasks in which China could pose a threat. The message that this policy report wants to send out, however, is that NATO currently has an untapped potential in some domains, such as for instance EDTs. In other domains, NATO will take a more assisting role and, in consultation with partners, tasks can even be left to others in order to achieve a more efficient and durable security structure.

Through the new Strategic Concept, NATO illustrates that it is once again fully engaged in its original task of keeping the Euro-Atlantic region secure and less attention is given to counterterrorism and military competition in the Indo-Pacific. This is the right course of action, however, it is important that the follow-up documents to the Strategic Concept, contain more concrete plans on issues that are now less well-covered in the final document, such as

resilience, EDTs and the challenges in the Indo-pacific. This will be necessary in order to achieve the full 360-degree security coverage that NATO so heavily aspires to.<sup>1</sup>

However if there is one constant to be found in NATO's history, it is its knack for evolving in time and adapting to the changing world.<sup>2</sup> The NATO structures descended from the Cold War era, are clearly working to address the Russian threat and assist Ukraine as best as possible. However, this does not mean that these structures are ideal for dealing with different types of threats as mentioned before. Other types of challenges posed by our adversaries may require another metamorphosis of the Alliance. This Strategic Concept already puts the Alliance in the right direction but additional efforts are certainly needed, because the security landscape is perpetually evolving and there is no situation that cannot go from bad to worse.

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<sup>1</sup> Arnold, "New Concepts but Old Problems", *The Royal United Services Institute (RUSI)*, accessed August 23, 2022, <https://rusi.org/explore-our-research/publications/commentary/new-concepts-old-problems-natos-new-strategic-concept>.

<sup>2</sup> Jens Stoltenberg, "Adapting NATO in an Unpredictable World." *NATO*, Last modified December 19, 2017. [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions\\_150337.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_150337.htm).

# GIES HONOURS PAPERS

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## EXPLAINING THE VARYING ELECTORAL FORTUNES OF POPULIST RADICAL RIGHT PARTIES IN THE 2019 EUROPEAN ELECTIONS

A fuzzy set analysis

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### Introduction

While a record number of members of populist radical right parties (PRRPs) secured a seat in the European Parliament during the 2019 European elections, there was a striking variation in the success of PRRPs across Europe. The far right indeed made striking gains in some European countries, such as Belgium and Italy, but in countries like Spain and the UK, the expected radical right surge turned out to be a mere ripple.<sup>1</sup> This article aims to explain the varying electoral fortunes of PRRPs in the old EU-member states (the states that joined the EU before the so-called big bang Eastern Enlargement of the 2000s). More specifically, it addresses the following

research question: “why were populist radical right parties successful in some EU member states during the 2019 European elections and not in others?” Hereby, the study addresses an important gap in the literature. Studies on the success of PRRPs in European elections are scarce. The most recent article on the issue has been published in 2007 and examines the 2004 elections.<sup>2</sup> Given that the political landscape in the EU has changed significantly in the last fifteen years, new research can lead to new insights. To address this gap in the literature, this contribution develops a theoretical framework that combines demand- and supply-driven explanations of radical right success, which is tested with fuzzy set

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<sup>1</sup> Shaun, Walker, “Far-right ‘surge’ ends in a ripple”, *The Guardian*, May 27, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/may/27/european-elections-far-right-surge-ends-in-a-ripple>; “Extreemrechts Europarlementslid uit Griekenland gearresteerd in Brussel,” *De Morgen*, April 27, 2021, <https://www.demorgen.be/politiek/extreemrechts-europarlementslid-uit-griekenland-gearresteerd-in-brussel~bcfb88bc/>.

<sup>2</sup> Michael Minkenberg, and Pascal Perrineau. 2007, “The Radical Right in the European Elections 2004”, *international political science review*: 29-55.

Qualitative Comparative Analysis (fsQCA). The result of this analysis shows that PRRPs were successful if people had negative attitudes towards migrants and if there was a high degree of Euroscepticism together with the absence of success of populist radical left parties (PRLPs).

This article is structured as follows. The first section defines PRRPs and introduces the theoretical framework. Subsequently, the research design introduces the research method and discusses the operationalization and calibration of the outcome and the conditions. The third section presents the main results of the analysis, before the conclusions recapitulate the main argument and suggest pathways for future research.

### Explaining the success of populist radical right parties

This section defines PRRPs, after which it introduces five possible explanations for the success of PRRP's in the 2019 European elections.

In line with the ideational approach of Mudde<sup>1</sup>, **populism** is defined as “an ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, ‘the pure people’ versus ‘the corrupt elite’, and which argues that politics should be an expression of the

volonté générale (general will) of the people.”<sup>2</sup> **Radical right** parties, in turn, all have in common that they have an exclusionist and ethno-nationalistic description of citizenship. Moreover, they also consider non-native elements as a threat to the homogeneous nation-state.<sup>3</sup> This characteristic corresponds to the concept of nativism, which combines xenophobia and nationalism.<sup>4</sup> A last characteristic that all radical right parties have in common is authoritarianism.<sup>5</sup> Authoritarianism stands for a belief in a strongly monitored society, where a strong authority can punish severely. PRRPs are, thus, parties that share a core ideology that combines (at least) three features: nativism<sup>6</sup>, authoritarianism<sup>7</sup>, and populism.<sup>8</sup>

Prior literature suggests **several explanatory conditions** that can lead to the success of PRRPs, which can be divided in two groups: the demand side and the supply side.<sup>9</sup> These conditions are derived from studies on the electoral success of PRRPs at the national level. Nevertheless, they can also be expected to be relevant at the European level, given that voters mainly look to the national level to cast their vote for the European elections.<sup>10</sup>

**Demand-side explanations** suggest that the success of PRRPs hinges on the grievances of

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<sup>1</sup> Cas Mudde, “Populism: An Ideational Approach”, *The Oxford Handbook of Populism* (2017): 1-25.

<sup>2</sup> Cas Mudde, “The populist zeitgeist”, *Government and opposition* 39, no.4 (2004): 543.

<sup>3</sup> Cas Mudde, “Populist Radical Right Parties”, *Cambridge: Cambridge University Press* (2007).

<sup>4</sup> Jan Willem Duyvendak and Josip Kešić, “The nation under threat: secularist, racial and populist nativism in the Netherlands”, *Patterns of Prejudice* 53, no.5 (2019): 441-463.

<sup>5</sup> Cas Mudde, “Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe Today”, *Bloomsbury Academic* (2016): 295-307.

<sup>6</sup> Jan Willem Duyvendak and Josip Kešić, “The nation under threat: secularist, racial and populist nativism in the Netherlands”

<sup>7</sup> Cas Mudde, “Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe Today”, 295-307.

<sup>8</sup> Cas Mudde, “Populism: An Ideational Approach”

<sup>9</sup> Cas Mudde, “Populist Radical Right Parties”

<sup>10</sup> Robert Rohrschneider and Nick Clark, “Chapter 5: Second-order elections versus First-Order thinking: How voters Perceive the representation process in a multi-layered system of governance”, in *Coordination between Electoral Arenas in Multi-Level Countries* (Madrid: Instituto Juan March de Estudios e Investigaciones, 2009), 143-160.

the population.<sup>1</sup> We expect three kinds of grievances to result in successful PRRPs. The first kind is linked to the economic situation in a country.<sup>2</sup> More specifically, in line with Weisstanner and Engler<sup>3</sup>, we expect that people are more likely to vote for PRRPs if they have the feeling that they are strongly affected by income inequality. The second type of grievances is linked to migration: if people have the feeling that migrants have a negative impact on their country or life, then there is a bigger chance that people will vote for PRRPs.<sup>4</sup> The last grievance is linked to the EU. Research from Lubbers and Coenders showed that there is increasingly more resistance to further European integration and the European Union.<sup>5</sup> Their research also revealed that Euroscepticism is the third strongest socio-political explanation for the success of PRRPs.<sup>6</sup>

**Supply-side explanations** suggest that the success of PRRPs depends on whether they are perceived as being able to address the grievances of the population and whether they face competition from other anti-system parties. According to Kitschelt and McGann, the ideological success formula of PRRPs is based on exclusionistic positions together with pro-liberal market positions.<sup>7</sup> Later research, however, shows that the ideological success formula of PRRPs is not fixed. More specifically, if a PRRP is capable of adapting its ideological positions to the

grievances of the population, then it can be expected to be more successful.<sup>8</sup> Lastly, the success of PRRPs also depends on whether or not other parties can be perceived as being able to address the grievances of the population. In this connection, we expect PRRPs to be more successful in countries in which they do not face strong competition for the radical left.

Five hypotheses can be derived from the above discussion, which are summarized below.

#### **Demand-side explanations**

- ⊗ *H1. PRRPs are expected to be successful in countries where the population perceives that **economic inequality** has increased.*
- ⊗ *H2. PRRPs are expected to be successful in countries where the population has more **negative attitudes towards migrants**.*
- ⊗ *H3. PRRPs are expected to be successful in countries where the population is more **Eurosceptic**.*

#### **Supply-side explanations**

- ⊗ *H4. PRRPs are expected to be successful if they **adapt their ideology to the grievances of the populations**.*
- ⊗ *H5. PRRPs are expected to be successful in countries where **PRPs are not successful**.*

The success of PRRPs is expected to be explained by five explanatory conditions linked to these hypotheses. Rather than being mutually exclusive explanations, the success of PRRPs is expected to

<sup>1</sup> Elisabeth Ivarsflaten, "What unites right-wing populists in Western Europe? Re-examining grievance mobilization models in seven successful cases", *Comparative Political Studies* 41, no.1 (2008): 3-23.

<sup>2</sup> Markus Wagner and Dennis Cohen, "The centre-right versus the radical right: the role of migration issues and economic grievances", *Journal of ethnic and migrations studies* 48, no.2 (2021): 366-384.

<sup>3</sup> David Weisstanner and Sarah Engler, "The threat of social decline: income inequality and radical right support", *Journal of European Public Policy* 28, no.2 (2021): 153-173.

<sup>4</sup> Marcel Lubbers and Marcel Coenders, "Nationalistic attitudes and voting for the radical right in Europe", *European Union Politics* 18, no.1 (2017): 98-118.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Catherine De Vries and Erica E. Edwards, "Taking Europe to its extremes", SAGE publications 15, no. 1 (2009): 5-28.

<sup>7</sup> Herbert Kitschelt and Anthony J. McGann, "The radical right in Western Europe: A comparative analysis," *University of Michigan Press* (1997).

<sup>8</sup> Maik Fielitz and Laura Lotte Laloire, "Trouble on the Far Right: Contemporary Right-Wing Strategies and Practices in Europe", *Bielefeld: Transcript* (2016); Herbert Kitschelt and Anthony J. McGann, "The radical right in Western Europe: A comparative analysis," *University of Michigan Press* (1997).



result from a complex interplay between these conditions. More specifically, while some the populations of some countries might vote for PRRPs because of economic grievances, other might vote for PRRPs because of their Euroscepticism. However, the presence of any grievance cannot be expected to result in a high radical right vote if PRRPs do not adapt their ideology to these grievances or if PRRPs are better in addressing these grievances.

Aside from the five conditions included in this research, literature suggests several other possible explanations. However, these were not taken into account because the chosen research approach (QCA, cf. infra) works best if only a limited number of conditions is included. First, the type of electoral system that is used during the elections is not taken into account. While prior research shows this is an important explanation for PRRP-success in national elections<sup>1</sup>, this is not expected to be of relevance for European elections, in which the proportional electoral system is used in all member states.<sup>2</sup> Two other conditions were not taken into account because they are difficult to operationalize in a structured way for a comparative study: the political space that centrist parties leave open for PRRPs and the strength of the political leaders of PRRPs.<sup>3</sup> Lastly, whether or not voting on European elections was compulsory was not taken into account because prior QCA-runs did not suggest it was relevant for explaining the variation of the outcome.

## Research design

This section introduces the research method and discusses the case-selection, the operationalization, and calibration of the conditions.

Methodologically, this study builds on **fuzzy set Qualitative Comparative Analysis (fsQCA)**. This configurational comparative method is particularly apt for examining why an outcome is present in some cases and not in others. This is in line with the objective of this study, which aims to arrive at an explanation why PRRPs had success in some countries during the 2019 European Elections and in others not. Moreover, the method is particularly suited for uncovering a complex form of causation: multiple conjunctural causation. In line with the idea of conjunctural causation, we expect our outcome, electoral success, to result from a combination of supply- and demand-side conditions; in line with the concept of multiple causation, we expect different combinations to result in electoral success. The fuzzy set version of QCA was preferred over the crisp set version because the outcome and the conditions vary by degree. QCA can be used to compare an intermediate to large number of cases on three to seven conditions. To be able to explain the variation in the outcome with a limited number of conditions, the study focuses on the fifteen eldest EU member states: Italy, France, Austria, Belgium, the Netherlands, Greece, Spain, Portugal, UK, Luxemburg, Ireland, Sweden, Denmark, Finland and Germany. These countries are expected to share a sufficient

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<sup>1</sup> Peter John and Helen Margetts, "The latent support for the extreme right in British politics", *West European Politics* 32, no.3 (2009): 496-513.

<sup>2</sup> "Infopagina's over de Europese Unie", *Europees Parlement*, last modified May 2022, <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/nl/sheet/21/het-europees-parlement-verkiezingsprocedures>.

<sup>3</sup> Hanspeter Kriesi et al, "*Political Conflict in western Europe*". Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (2012); Kai Arzheimer and Elisabeth Carter, "Political opportunity structures and right-wing extremist party success", *European Journal of Political Research* 45, no.3 (2006): 419-443; Filipa Figueira, "Why the current Peak in Populism in the US and Europe? Populism as a Deviation in the Median Voter Theorem", *European Journal of Government and Economics* 7, no.2 (2018): 154-170; Antonis A. Ellinas, "Chaotic but popular? Extreme-right organization and performance in the age of media communication", *Journal of Contemporary European Studies* 17, no.2 (2009): 209-221.

number of background characteristics to allow for a meaningful comparison.

The crucial for step in fsQCA is the assignment of fuzzy membership scores to the cases on the outcome and the conditions. This process is referred to as calibration. Fuzzy membership scores vary between 0 and 1. Fuzzy scores reach unity if the calibrated outcome or condition is fully present in the case. A score above 0.5 indicates the outcome or condition is more present than absent, a score of 0 indicates it is fully absent. The direct method of calibration was used to assign fuzzy membership scores. First, the raw data used to operationalise the variable is determined. Subsequently, three anchor points must be determined: [1] which corresponds to the full presence of the variable; [0] which corresponds to the full absence and [0,5] which corresponds to the theoretical point at which the variable is equally present and absent. These data and anchor points are then transformed into fuzzy scores using the fsQCA software.<sup>1</sup>

The calibration of the outcome, “**success of PRRP parties**”, first requires the identification of PRRPs

in the selected cases. In the present study, a party is a PRRP if they are a member of the right populist fraction Identity and Democracy in the European Parliament or if they are described as radical right parties in the Chapel Hill Expert Survey (2019).<sup>2</sup> In addition to these parties, the Greek Golden Dawn party is also included because it is generally described as neo-Nazis and extreme right.<sup>3</sup> The selected parties are presented in table 1, which shows that two of our cases do not have PRRP: Ireland and Portugal. To measure the success of the PRRPs, we take the percentage of votes they received in the 2019 European elections. The following anchors were used to convert this indicator to fuzzy membership scores. The 0-anchor is fixed at 1 percent, because it makes a distinction between countries where PRRP’s didn’t score at all and countries where success was limited. The 0.5-anchor is fixed at 7 percent because there is a clear division between Spain with 6,28 percent and Luxemburg with 10,03 percent. The 1-anchor is 18 percent because the PRRPs in France and Italy are clearly outperforming the PRRPs of the other countries. The raw data and calibrated scores are presented in table 1.

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Ragin and Sean Davey (2017), “*fsQCA version 3.0*”, Irvine: University of California.

<sup>2</sup> Chapel Hill Expert Survey, “*Chapel Hill Expert Survey* (2019), <https://www.chesdata.eu/>.

<sup>3</sup> “Extreemrechts Europarlementslid uit Griekenland gearresteerd in Brussel,” *De Morgen*, April 27, 2021, <https://www.demorgen.be/politiek/extreemrechts-europarlementslid-uit-griekenland-gearresteerd-in-brussel~bcfb88bc/>; Leslie Hodge, “Leider van Griekse neonazipartij Gouden Dageraad veroordeeld tot dertien jaar cel,” *VRT NWS*, October 14, 2020, <https://www.vrt.be/vrtnws/nl/2020/10/14/leider-van-gouden-dageraad-veroordeeld-tot-dertien-jaar-cel/>.

**Table 1: Fuzzy score calculation**

| Member State | PRRP                 | % votes | votes in Fuzzy scores |
|--------------|----------------------|---------|-----------------------|
| Italy        | Lega Salvini Premier | 34,26   | 1                     |
| France       | RN                   | 23,34   | 0,99                  |
| Austria      | FPÖ                  | 17,2    | 0,94                  |
| Sweden       | SD                   | 15,34   | 0,91                  |
| Finland      | Perussuomalaiset     | 13,8    | 0,86                  |
| Belgium      | Vlaams Belang        | 11,68   | 0,78                  |
| Germany      | AFD                  | 11      | 0,75                  |
| Netherlands  | FVD                  | 10,96   | 0,75                  |
| Denmark      | Dansk Folkeparti     | 10,76   | 0,74                  |
| Luxemburg    | ADR                  | 10,03   | 0,7                   |
| Spain        | VOX                  | 6,28    | 0,41                  |
| Greece       | X.A.                 | 4,87    | 0,26                  |
| UK           | UKIP                 | 3,31    | 0,14                  |
| Ireland      | /                    | 0       | 0,03                  |
| Portugal     | /                    | 0       | 0,03                  |

Source: 2019 parliamentary results<sup>1</sup>

The first condition, the (perceived) “**inequality**” in a country was operationalised with the Special Eurobarometer 471<sup>2</sup>, in which the respondents were asked this statement: today, the differences in income are too big in your country. The raw indicator corresponds to the sum of respondents that agreed and strongly agreed to with the statement. The direct method of calibration was applied with the following anchors. The 1-anchor was fixed at 90 percent. The population of Germany, Spain and Portugal clearly think that the income inequality is the biggest in their country. The 0,5-anchor was fixed at seventy-eight, the 0-anchor at sixty-eight because the population in Denmark and the Netherlands clearly experience the least income inequality.

The second condition, “**negative attitudes towards migrants**”, is operationalised using the

Standard Eurobarometer 91.<sup>3</sup> In it, respondents were asked this question: what do you think are the two biggest problems facing your country at the moment? The percentage of respondents that picked migration as response was used as the raw indicator. The 0-anchor was fixed at ten percent. The 0,5-anchor is fixed nineteen percent. This is one percent more than the European average of eighteen percent. The 1-anchor was fixed at twenty-five percent. Belgium is the only country where they see migration as the biggest problem and is also has the biggest value in the column.

The third condition, Euroscepticism, is operationalized as “**positive attitude towards the EU**”. The raw indicator is also based on the Standard Eurobarometer 91, in which people were asked whether they have a positive view of

<sup>1</sup> Resultaten Europese 2019-Verkiezingen. (z.d.). Europees Parlement. Accessed March 9, 2022, <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/election-results-2019/nl>

<sup>2</sup> “Special Eurobarometer 471: Fairness, inequality and intergenerational mobility”, *European Commission*, April 2018, <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2166>

<sup>3</sup> “Standard Eurobarometer 91 – Spring 2019”, *European Commission*, August 2019, <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2253>

the EU. The direct method of calibration was applied with the following anchors. The 0-anchor is fixed at 40 percent, because is a clear gap between the countries that score under 40 percent and the countries that score more than 40 percent. The 0,5 anchor is fixed at 49 percent. If more than 50 percent of a country is positive towards the EU, then the variable success is more present than absent. The 1- anchor is fixed at 59 percent.

To measure the extent to which the **PRRP adapted its ideology** to the grievances of the population, the Eurobarometer data was combined with the Manifesto Project Data. In the Standard Eurobarometer 91, respondents were asked this question: “what do you think are the two biggest problems facing your country at the moment?” the answer to this question reflect the grievances and fears of the population. In total, there were twelve different response options. For the operationalisation of this variable, the top five answers per country were taken. These top five answers per country are then linked to the party programmes that the PRRPs wrote before the elections. If PRRPs respond well to the

grievances of the people, these grievances should be reflected in their party programme. The countries in this research can therefore be given a score between zero and five. A score of zero is given when the party has no grievances of the population in its programme. The score of one is given when the party has one grievance of the population in its programme. The raw data was transformed into fuzzy membership scores with the following thresholds. The 0-anchor was fixed 2,5 because only three countries score less than 2,5. The 0,5-anchor was fixed 3,5; the 1-anchor point at 4,5. Four countries score five out of five and thus separate themselves from the others.

The last condition, **success of PRLPs**, is operationalised as the electoral results of the PRLPs in the 2019 European elections. The 1-anchor was fixed at twelve percent because Greece stands out from the other countries with a strong PRLP. The 0,5 anchor was fixed at seven percent. Spain and Ireland are clearly above the middle ground, but well below Greece. The 0-anchor is five percent.

Table 2 presents the raw and fuzzy data.

Table 2: Raw and fuzzy data

| Country     | Success of PRLP |       | Immigration as a problem |       | Income inequality |       | Party adapt ideology |       | Positive EU image |       |
|-------------|-----------------|-------|--------------------------|-------|-------------------|-------|----------------------|-------|-------------------|-------|
|             | Raw             | Fuzzy | Raw                      | Fuzzy | Raw               | Fuzzy | Raw                  | Fuzzy | Raw               | Fuzzy |
| Austria     | 1,04            | 0     | 18                       | 0,42  | 84                | 0,82  | 2                    | 0,01  | 45                | 0,21  |
| Belgium     | 5,57            | 0,11  | 28                       | 0,99  | 81                | 0,68  | 4                    | 0,82  | 38                | 0,02  |
| Denmark     | 5,51            | 0,1   | 24                       | 0,92  | 63                | 0,01  | 3                    | 0,18  | 54                | 0,82  |
| Finland     | 0               | 0     | 16                       | 0,27  | 72                | 0,14  | 5                    | 0,99  | 44                | 0,16  |
| France      | 6,31            | 0,26  | 17                       | 0,34  | 84                | 0,82  | 3                    | 0,18  | 36                | 0,01  |
| Germany     | 5,5             | 0,1   | 24                       | 0,92  | 92                | 0,97  | 3                    | 0,18  | 51                | 0,65  |
| Greece      | 23,75           | 1     | 18                       | 0,42  | 80                | 0,62  | 5                    | 0,99  | 33                | 0     |
| Ireland     | 11,68           | 0,94  | 7                        | 0,02  | 79                | 0,56  | 0                    | 0     | 63                | 0,99  |
| Italy       | 0               | 0     | 22                       | 0,82  | 88                | 0,92  | 3                    | 0,18  | 38                | 0,02  |
| Luxemburg   | 4,48            | 0,02  | 12                       | 0,09  | 84                | 0,82  | 3                    | 0,18  | 57                | 0,92  |
| Netherlands | 3,37            | 0     | 23                       | 0,88  | 59                | 0     | 4                    | 0,82  | 50                | 0,57  |
| Portugal    | 0               | 0     | 4                        | 0,01  | 96                | 0,99  | 0                    | 0     | 60                | 0,96  |
| Spain       | 10,17           | 0,87  | 16                       | 0,27  | 91                | 0,96  | 4                    | 0,82  | 44                | 0,16  |
| Sweden      | 6,8             | 0,43  | 22                       | 0,82  | 69                | 0,06  | 5                    | 0,99  | 50                | 0,57  |
| UK          | 0,59            | 0     | 13                       | 0,12  | 73                | 0,18  | 5                    | 0,99  | 38                | 0,02  |

Sources: Special Eurobarometer 471, Standard Eurobarometer 91, 2019 European elections results

## Analysis and results

After the calibration, a truth table can be produced (see table 3). A truth table contains a row for every possible combination of conditions. A row is assigned an outcome of 1 if it is sufficient for the outcome (i.e. always leads to the outcome); and an outcome of 0 if it is not sufficient. Whether or not a row can be considered sufficient depends on its consistency and on whether or not there are contradictory configurations. Consistency is a parameter that varies between 0 and 1; a truth table row is fully sufficient if the consistency parameter reaches unity. A truth table row corresponds to a contradictory configuration if it includes cases in

which the outcome is present and cases in which it is absent. Rows 7 and 9 in the table below correspond to contradictory configurations, given that they include cases in which the outcome is strongly present, i.e. Finland (row 7) and Luxembourg (row 9), and cases in which the outcome is strongly absent, i.e. UK (row 7) and Portugal (row 9) This study considers rows with a consistency above 0.7 as sufficient. Hereby, row 7 was considered as sufficient and row 9 as not sufficient. In consequence, the results will not explain why the populist radical right was not successful in Britain or why it was successful in Luxembourg.

**Table 3: Truth table of the analysis**

| Row | Positive image EU | Immigration as problem | Income inequality | Party adapts ideology | Success PRLP | Outcome | raw consistency | cases               |
|-----|-------------------|------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|--------------|---------|-----------------|---------------------|
| 1   | 1                 | 1                      | 0                 | 1                     | 0            | 1       | 1               | Sweden, Netherlands |
| 2   | 0                 | 1                      | 1                 | 0                     | 0            | 1       | 1               | Italy               |
| 3   | 0                 | 1                      | 1                 | 1                     | 0            | 1       | 1               | Belgium             |
| 4   | 1                 | 1                      | 1                 | 0                     | 0            | 1       | 1               | Germany             |
| 5   | 0                 | 0                      | 1                 | 0                     | 0            | 1       | 0,994           | France, Austria     |
| 6   | 1                 | 1                      | 0                 | 0                     | 0            | 1       | 0,945           | Denmark             |
| 7   | 0                 | 0                      | 0                 | 1                     | 0            | 1       | 0,712           | Finland, UK         |
| 8   | 0                 | 0                      | 1                 | 1                     | 1            | 0       | 0,617           | Spain, Greece       |
| 9   | 1                 | 0                      | 1                 | 0                     | 0            | 0       | 0,538           | Luxemburg, Portugal |
| 10  | 1                 | 0                      | 1                 | 0                     | 1            | 0       | 0,384           | Ireland             |

*Sources: Special Eurobarometer 471, Standard Eurobarometer 91, 2019 European elections results*

Subsequently, logical minimization is used to minimize the truth table. Depending on the logical remainders (logically possible combinations of conditions for which no cases were included in the study) included in the minimization process, different solution types result. This study focusses on the parsimonious solution, because this solution is guaranteed to identify causally relevant conditions. The parsimonious solution for the presence of the

outcome is presented in table 4. This solution shows that there are two paths towards success of PRRPs. First, the populist radical right will be successful if the population considers immigration as a problem. Second, the populist radical right will be successful if the population does not have positive image of the EU and PRLP's were not successful. However, there was one case that corresponds to this combination, in which PRRPs were not successful: the UK.

**Table 4: Parsimonious solution for electoral success**

|  | <b>Covered cases</b>                                     |
|--|--|
| <b>Immigration as a problem</b>                    | Belgium, Germany, Denmark, Netherlands, Italy and Sweden |
| <b>~success of PRLP* ~positive image of the EU</b> | Italy, Finland, Austria, France and the UK               |

[~]indicates the absence of a condition; [\*] indicates a combination of two conditions.

The same procedure was used for the absence of the outcome, which results in the solution presented in table 5. The solution indicate that there are two paths towards the absence of success of PRRP. First, PRRP's will not be successful if PRLP's are successful. Second, PRRPs

will not be successful if immigration is not considered a major problem and if the population has a positive image of the EU. However, there was one case that corresponds to this combination in which PRRPs were successful: Luxembourg.

**Table 5: Parsimonious solution for electoral loss**

|  | <b>Cases</b>                 |
|--|------------------------------|
| <b>success of PRLP</b>                                     | Greece, Spain                |
| <b>~Immigration as a problem* positive image of the EU</b> | Ireland, Portugal, Luxemburg |

~indicates the absence of a condition; [\*] indicates a combination of two conditions.

## Conclusions

Why were populist radical right parties successful in some EU member states during the 2019 European elections and not in others? This study first developed a theoretical framework with five conditions to explain the striking variation in success of PRRPs in EU member states. In line with demand side explanations, PRRPs were expected to be successful if the population perceived (H1) an increased economic inequality, (H2) had negative attitude towards migrants and (H3) was more Eurosceptic. In line with supply side explanations, PRRP's were expected to be successful if they (H4) adapted their ideology to the grievances of the population or (H5) did not face competition from a strong populist radical left party. fsQCA was used to test these hypotheses. The results of the analysis provided evidence for two of the demand-side explanations: a negative attitude towards migrants and the absence of a positive attitude towards the EU were indeed causally relevant for the outcome. In addition, one supply-side explanation was also important: the absence of a strong populist radical left party. In contrast, The analysis did not provide evidence for the

importance of economic inequality or the adaptation of ideology to grievances.

However, two cases were not explained in this study: the UK and Luxembourg. Although the British population had a negative image of the EU and there was no successful PRLP, UKIP was not successful at the European elections. Nevertheless, there was another party that was successful during the European elections in the UK: the Brexit party which also shares many characteristics of PRRPs. Moreover, these elections were less relevant to the British people because the country was leaving the European Union. Luxembourg, in contrast, shares many characteristics with countries where PRRPs were not successful, but nevertheless had a successful PRRP in the European elections. Explaining this contradictory case constitutes an interesting avenue for future research. Next to finding a solution for Luxemburg, it is also possible to start a new research for the thirteen other countries in the European Union. Mainly East-European countries aren't investigated in this research and could be the ideal subject for a future and similar research using the QCA-method.

# GIES HONOURS PAPERS

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## THE CHINA-ENIGMA IN THE RUSSIAN ARCTIC

How can Russia best protect its Arctic interests against a rising China?

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*“We need to save the Arctic, not because of the polar bears,  
and not because it is the most beautiful place in the world,  
but because our very survival depends on it.”*

*Lewis Gordon Pugh, 2008*

On the first day of October 1987, former president of the Soviet-Union Mikhail Gorbachev delivered one of his most underappreciated speeches. In honour of the Arctic city of Murmansk, the speech laid down the basis for the concept of Arctic exceptionalism.<sup>1</sup> A term which refers to the idea that the Arctic is immune to changes in international relations. Thus, making it ‘exceptional.’ Solely peace, cooperation and prosperity would find its way to the far North. At least, that is what the Arctic states had hoped for. In recent years, driven by the impending effects of global warming the Arctic has become not only literally, but also figuratively a hot topic.

Parallel with this rising interest there has been an increasing militarisation and a growing assertiveness within the Arctic Circle. It is almost certain that the Arctic future will be one where tensions prevail, and where Moscow will be of

paramount importance for Arctic governance. The Russian Federation is the state with the longest Arctic coastline and has the biggest territorial claims of the area. They are set to profit the most from the melting ice and permafrost as they have the beneficial prospect of a major shipping route and massive amounts of natural resources and minerals such as oil, natural gas, lithium, copper and many more.<sup>2</sup> This however makes them also the most vulnerable to the growing militarisation and arrival of all these new prying eyes yearning for the Arctic riches.

The most remarkable and influential of these newcomers is the People’s Republic of China, which is located more than 1.400 km away from the Arctic. Beijing has shown growing interest in the region since the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and has dared to call itself a ‘near-Arctic state’ in 2018 when it released its white paper on their Arctic

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<sup>1</sup> Luka Jorbenadze, “Russia holds the key to the future of Arctic exceptionalism”, *The Arctic Institute*, 2017, <https://www.thearcticinstitute.org/russia-holds-key-future-arctic-exceptionalism/>.

<sup>2</sup> Eugene Rumer, R. Sokolsky, and P. Stronski, “Russia in the Arctic - A Critical Examination”, *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, March 2021, [https://carnegieendowment.org/files/Rumer\\_et\\_al\\_Russia\\_in\\_the\\_Arctic.pdf](https://carnegieendowment.org/files/Rumer_et_al_Russia_in_the_Arctic.pdf).

policies.<sup>1</sup> The objectives of Beijing fall under its ambitious Belt & Road Initiative (BRI) that aims to connect the China with the rest of the world and manifest themselves as the global hub. With a new fleet of icebreakers and a recent strategic vision, the presence of China is expected to grow.

Two great powers that focus on the same region, routes, and resources. Both have significant military, maritime and economic interests and are increasingly being confronted with each other in institutions as well as on the field. Can Russia still escape the quandary that it has created, in particular now that, following its invasion of Ukraine, it is even more dependent on China? The current predicament is complicated for the Russians who need to balance their beneficial partnership with China together with their own Arctic objectives, specifically to remain the Arctic superpower. Furthermore, the author realizes that this is not a forgiving position to incorporate considering the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

### *Research Questions*

The research question of this paper is as follows: *How can Russia best protect its Arctic objectives against the growing presence of China?*

This research question is supported by the following two issues: *How does China influence Russian Arctic policy? What risks does China bring with it in the Arctic relation with Russia?*

### *Structure and methodology*

To define a Russian strategy against China's presence in the Arctic, this paper is divided into three parts. Firstly, an assessment will be made of the current situation, namely both Russia and China's objectives in the Arctic and how these fits within their current Grand Strategies. The second

part will be a risk assessment for the Russian government in relation to China, which will form the foundation for the final part. Within this risk assessment, the effects of the Russian invasion of Ukraine will also be considered. Last, some policy recommendations will be given as to find out if Moscow has any options at all. A challenging feat, considering the Russian invasion of Ukraine has deteriorated the Russian government's standing and options. In the conclusion of this paper, the author will draw upon his own observations and offer some thoughts.

### *Arctic ambitions*

To understand the relationship between these two great powers and how they interact with each other in the Arctic, it is first essential to discuss their ambitions. This section will therefore cover the current Arctic strategy of both Russia and China and how it fits withing their own Grand Strategy. Most states release a national security strategy or separate documents or white papers in which the Grand Strategy of that state for the coming years is uncovered, but it remains relevant to analyse their behaviour as well.

### *Putin's Arctic Troika*

The newest crisis in Ukraine gives us some image of the Russian Grand Strategy and how this translates into their Arctic ambitions, which for some time has consisted of three main aspects, making up Putin's trident or troika. Furthermore, the Russian Arctic ambitions are also made clear in two recent documents: *Basic Principles of the State Policy of the Russian Federation for the Arctic until 2035* and the *Strategy for the Development of the Arctic Zone of the Russian Federation and for National Security Provisions until 2035*.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The State Council of The People's Republic of China, "China's Arctic Policy", January 2018, [http://english.www.gov.cn/archive/white\\_paper/2018/01/26/content\\_281476026660336.htm](http://english.www.gov.cn/archive/white_paper/2018/01/26/content_281476026660336.htm) .

<sup>2</sup> President of the Russian Federation, "The Basic Principles of the State Policy of the Russian Federation in the Arctic up to 2035", 2020, <http://static.kremlin.ru/media/events/files/ru/f8ZpjhpAaQ0WB1zjywN04OgKil1mAvaM.pdf>;  
President of the Russian Federation, 'strategy for the Development of the Arctic Zone of the Russian Federation and for National Security Provisions up to 2035 (translation)', 2020, <https://www.gov.spb.ru/static/writable/ckeditor/uploads/2020/11/24/01/%D0%A1%D1%82%D1%80%D0%>



First, ever since the installation of Primakov as the minister of foreign affairs in 1995, there has been an absolute focus on retaining and sustaining the status of Russia as a great power.<sup>1</sup> Russian leaders are therefore sensitive to attacks on this status, which became clear in the famous 2007 speech of Putin at the Munich Security Conference.<sup>2</sup> This quest for status also materialises in military-technical aspects where bigger means better.<sup>3</sup> For example, the RS-28 Sarmat, a liquid-fuelled intercontinental ballistic missile possible of reaching 18.000km in perfect conditions. This rocket is also used to deter Europe and is imaged a lot on Russian news outlets during the invasion of Ukraine in 2022.<sup>4</sup>

Second, the Russian aspiration for a sphere of influence as was the case in the former USSR.<sup>5</sup> This is something made specifically clear in the most recent Russian national security strategy of 2021 where the aim is to become one of the most influential centres of the world. Starting with the ex-Soviet countries. In addition, this sphere of influence is sometimes seen as a buffer zone, which can be seen as one of Russia's ambitions in their current invasion in Ukraine.<sup>6</sup> The Arctic, Russia's Northern flank, is of paramount importance for Russia's defence and deriving

from Russian officials their rhetoric and policies, the Arctic is theirs to control. The Northern Sea Route is therefore also an internal not international passage. This claim to the Arctic is further manifested in the military field where Moscow goes to great lengths as to protect the Russian Arctic, even training their soldiers to work on sleds<sup>7</sup> and weaponizing their icebreakers.<sup>8</sup>

Last, there is the complicated relationship with the West, specifically the European Union (EU) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO). Driven by the aspiration to be a great power and having spheres of influence, Moscow frequently clashes with the West as a way of dismantling their long-term adversary.<sup>9</sup> This can be manifested diplomatically or on the battlefield as is the case in Mali, Syria and today Ukraine. The relationship is complicated because of the Russian need to cooperate with the West. Seeing that economically, the European Union is still the biggest importer of Russian gas and is the biggest trade partner for Moscow. This becomes noticeably clear in the Arctic where Russia has enormous economic ambitions because of the Northern Sea Route and the present natural resources. For this, Russia needs the West, but they are not always that willing to cooperate

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<sup>1</sup>Michael Rywkin, "Russia: In Quest of Superpower Status", nr. 30 (2008): 13–21, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10803920701854272>.

<sup>2</sup>President of Russia, "speech and the Following Discussion at the Munich Conference on Security Policy." (Speech, Munich Conference on Security Policy, München, 2007), <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/24034>.

<sup>3</sup>Julia Gurganus and Eugene Rumer, "Russia's Global Ambitions in Perspective", *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, February 20 2019, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2019/02/20/russia-s-global-ambitions-in-perspective-pub-78067>.

<sup>4</sup>Shaan Shaikh, "RS-28 Sarmat", *CSIS Missile Defense Project*, July 31 2021, <https://missilethreat.csis.org/missile/rs-28-sarmat/>.

<sup>5</sup>Michael Kofman, "Drivers of Russian State Strategy and Military Operations", *Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies*, September 2020, [https://fsi-live.s3.us-west-1.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/memo\\_6\\_-\\_kofman.pdf](https://fsi-live.s3.us-west-1.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/memo_6_-_kofman.pdf).

<sup>6</sup>Lassi Heininen, Alexander Sergunin, en Gleb Yarovoy, "Russian Strategies in the Arctic: Avoiding a new Cold War", *Valdai Discussion Club*, n.d., [https://www.uarctic.org/media/857300/arctic\\_eng.pdf](https://www.uarctic.org/media/857300/arctic_eng.pdf).

<sup>7</sup>Jamie Dettmer, "Russia Ups the Ante in the Arctic", *VOA*, November 6 2019, [https://www.voanews.com/a/europe\\_russia-ups-ante-arctic/6178900.html](https://www.voanews.com/a/europe_russia-ups-ante-arctic/6178900.html).

<sup>8</sup>Brendan Cole, "Russia Unveils "Unique" Weaponized Icebreaker as it Eyes Arctic Oil and Gas", *Newsweek*, October 28 2019, <https://www.newsweek.com/russia-arctic-ivan-papanin-icebreaker-1468057>.

<sup>9</sup>Sven Biscop, *Grand Strategy in 10 words: a guide to great power politics in the 21st century* (Bristol: Bristol University Press, 2021).

because of Russia's practices. Russia wants the upper hand in this relationship, but has a way of dismantling their own standing, because of their aggressiveness.<sup>1</sup>

### *Zhongguo: China*

China's Arctic ambitions fall in line with what they have been striving for, almost their entire existence, which is to be the Middle Kingdom, or 'Zhongguo'. This refers to the aspiration to have a central position in this world and dominate.<sup>2</sup> The Opium Wars ushered in China's century of humiliation, whereby China needed to fall back and recuperate from their losses, but seeing that they are more omnipresent, assertive, and dominant than ever, it could be said they are once again ready to take the throne.<sup>3</sup> This is pushed forward in the following Arctic ambitions:

First, the full expansion and exploitation of the so-called Polar Silk Road. As part of the Belt & Road Initiative (BRI), China wants to connect itself with other parts of the world and manifest itself as a global HUB. The melting Arctic is a perfect fit in these plans as they cut transporting routes short by thousands of kilometres.<sup>4</sup> This will positively affect the Chinese economy, which is slowing down in growth, affecting the legitimacy of the CCP in turn.

Second, as China grows, so does their hunger for energy, the fuel of economies. The Arctic stores

vast amounts of natural resources which can confidently fuel the Chinese economy for several decades or more. Manifesting in lots of investments made by Beijing in the Russian Arctic, which will be talked about later in this paper. Not only that, but in the transition to more renewable energy sources, the Arctic can be critical, with large potential for wind and geothermal energy.<sup>5</sup>

A last Chinese ambition is to remove China's military veil of ignorance concerning the Arctic. Even though the Arctic offers the shortest route from the US to China, Beijing has no concrete knowledge over this region. This is something they are destined to change soon. In addition, a military presence in the Arctic waters adds to their ambition of having a blue-water navy<sup>6</sup>, offering them the possibility to protect their precious sea lines of communication.<sup>7</sup> This aspiration is also a product of the previous ambitions, which they try to protect.

### *China's role in the Russian Arctic*

Pushed by Western behaviour and several pragmatic considerations, the overall alignment between Moscow and Beijing has also manifested itself in the Arctic. At the advent of China's arrival in the North Pole, Moscow was weary of this new visitor and viewed them with a lot of scepticism. China posed a threat to the Russian status and their capacities for manifesting itself as the Arctic

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<sup>1</sup>Michael Kofman, "Drivers of Russian State Strategy and Military Operations".

<sup>2</sup>Avery Goldstein, "China's Grand Strategy under Xi Jinping: Reassurance, Reform, and Resistance", *International Security* 45, nr. 1 (July 2020): 164–201, [https://doi.org/10.1162/isec\\_a\\_00383](https://doi.org/10.1162/isec_a_00383).

<sup>3</sup>Barry Buzan, "China's Rise in English School Perspective", *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*, April 3 2018, <https://doi.org/10.1093/irap/lcy005>.

<sup>4</sup>Kevin McGwin, "China's COSCO to stay course on Arctic shipping", *ArcticToday*, May 16 2019, <https://www.arctictoday.com/chinas-cosco-to-stay-course-on-arctic-shipping/>.

<sup>5</sup>Malte Humpert, "China Acquires 20 Percent Stake in Noatak's Latest Arctic LNG Project", *High North News*, April 29 2020, <https://www.highnorthnews.com/en/china-acquires-20-percent-stake-novateks-latest-arctic-lng-project>; Hu Min, "China's net zero future", *Race To Zero*, March 15 2021, <https://racetozero.unfccc.int/chinas-net-zero-future>; Ivan Shumkov, "Russia's Republic of Karelia plans 60-MW offshore wind park.", *Renewablesnow.com*, November 28 2016, <https://renewablesnow.com/news/russias-republic-of-karelia-plans-60-mw-offshore-wind-park-548650/>.

<sup>6</sup>A blue-water navy is a maritime force, capable of operating in deep waters and open oceans, giving it a global reach.

<sup>7</sup>Anne-Marie Brady, *China as a Polar Great Power* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017); Heather Conley and Jamie Kraut, "U.S. Strategic Interests in the Arctic", *Center for Strategic & International Studies*, April 2010.

superpower.<sup>1</sup> Moscow therefore openly lobbied against China's application for observatory status in the Arctic Council.<sup>2</sup> China had no business in the Arctic. It took years before Moscow changed its guard towards Beijing and accepted the need and possibilities for cooperation, although they remain prudent in naming their relationship. Russian foreign minister Sergei Lavrov, called China one their priority partners in the Arctic.<sup>3</sup> Former Russian minister of natural resources, Sergey Donskoy, welcomed China but only if they brought along the necessary investments.<sup>4</sup>

### *China as an investor, producer, and consumer: the energy sector*

In line with what minister Donskoy said, China placed its first investment in the Yamal LNG project in 2013.<sup>5</sup> The Chinese China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) bought 20% of shares of the Russian company Novatek, the company responsible for the project, for 960 million USD. Later, in 2015, the Silk Road Fund (SRF), created by Xi Jinping, bought 9,9% of shares of the same company. This was after a hefty diplomatic exercise by Moscow, which suffered under Western sanctions. To stay on the topic of Novatek, the company received 12 billion USD in

investments by Chinese state-owned banks in 2016.<sup>6</sup>

Novatek received all these investments and used these funds to invest back in Chinese manufacturing companies that helped build several pipelines, ships, and installations. For example, there are four LNG-tankers being built in a joint assignment by the Japanese Mitsui O.S.K. Lines and the Chinese COSCO (China Ocean Shipping Company).<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, 80% of all material needed for this assignment will be manufactured in Chinese shipping yards. China is the single-most important partner of Novatek, manifesting itself further in the Russian Arctic, whilst they can develop their domestic technology and maritime sector.<sup>8</sup>

Russia realised early that this level of involvement by China comes with certain power gains for them. It was therefore an ambition that future projects would have a more diversified investors field than the Yamal LNG project. For Arctic LNG 2, Russia would lean towards the Indian ONGC, Saudi Arabian Saudi Aramco and the South-Korean KOGAS, but once again, the largest chunks of money came from the CNPC and China National Oil Offshore Corporation (CNOOC).<sup>9</sup> Together they own over 20% of the project. This

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<sup>1</sup> Kadri Liik, "It's complicated: Russia's tricky relationship with China", *European Council on Foreign Relations*, December 2021, <https://ecfr.eu/wp-content/uploads/Its-complicated-Russias-tricky-relationship-with-China.pdf>; Eugene Rumer, "Russia's China Policy: This Bear Hug is real", *The National Bureau of Asian Research*, July 2017, [https://carnegieendowment.org/files/SR66\\_Russia-ChinaRelations\\_July2017.pdf](https://carnegieendowment.org/files/SR66_Russia-ChinaRelations_July2017.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> Tom Røseth, "Russia's China Policy in the Arctic", *Strategic Analysis* 38, nr. 6, November 2 2014: 841–59, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09700161.2014.952942>.

<sup>3</sup> TASS, "China is Russia's priority partner in Arctic cooperation", *TASS Russian News Agency*, August 24 2015, [https://tass.com/russia/816048?utm\\_source=russiamatters.org&utm\\_medium=referral&utm\\_campaign=russiamatters.org&utm\\_referrer=russiamatters.org](https://tass.com/russia/816048?utm_source=russiamatters.org&utm_medium=referral&utm_campaign=russiamatters.org&utm_referrer=russiamatters.org).

<sup>4</sup> Lenta.ru, "Минприроды поддержало участие китайцев в освоении Арктики.", *Lenta.RU*, November 19 2015, <https://lenta.ru/news/2015/11/19/chinanorth/>.

<sup>5</sup> Eugene Rumer, Richard Sokolsky, and Paul Stronski, "Russia in the Arctic - A Critical Examination".

<sup>6</sup> Tim Daiss, "China Invests in Game-Changing Arctic LNG Project", *OilPrice.com*, May 4 2019, <https://oilprice.com/Energy/Natural-Gas/China-Invests-In-Game-Changing-Arctic-LNG-Project.html>.

<sup>7</sup> Thomas Nilsen, "Novatek teams up with Chinese partner for Arctic shipping", *The Independent Barents Observer*, September 12 2018, <https://thebarentsobserver.com/en/2018/09/novatek-teams-chinese-parter-arctic-shipping>.

<sup>8</sup> Ekatarina Klimenko and Camilla T.N. Sorensen, "Emerging Chinese-Russian Cooperation in the Arctic", *Stockholm International Peace Institute*, June 2017, <https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2017-06/emerging-chinese-russian-cooperation-arctic.pdf>.

<sup>9</sup> Alexander Gabuev en Vita Spivak, "The Ice Age: Russia and Chinas Energy Cooperation in the Arctic", *Carnegie Moscow Center*, December 31 2021, <https://carnegiemoscow.org/commentary/86100>.

time the Chinese BOMESC and Penglai Jutal were part of the taskforce for the project. Future investments made by Russian companies are likely to divert to the above-mentioned Chinese companies because of the expertise they are acquiring.

Other Chinese investments in the Russian Arctic energy sector include a 10% share of the SRF in Sibur<sup>1</sup>, a company crucial for the extraction processes in several LNG-facilities. An investment of Sinomec in the Russian Karelia, which focuses on windmills and investments by Sinopec in geothermal energy.<sup>2</sup> These are only a few of the many investments, currently materialised.

#### *China as an investor, producer, and consumer: the Northern Sea Route*

As was made clear above, the Arctic is of paramount importance for future Chinese development because of the Northern Sea Route (NSR). Even though the route is far from operational, China has already put aside part of their spending budget to this route.

First, the most important aspect of maritime trade are the ports. The nodes of this globalised world and the beating heart of the global economy. However, ports in the Arctic currently serve an additional purpose as the route is still so unreliable, namely a (safe) haven. Among other places, China has vowed to invest in ports in Arkhangel'sk, Sabetta and Murmansk, already providing tens of billions of USD.<sup>3</sup> In addition, as already mentioned above, China plays a crucial role in the development of new LNG-tankers.

However, China's role in the Northern Sea Route is not only as an investor and producer, but more importantly as a consumer or traveller. As discussed above, the Northern Sea Route, cuts the distance from mainland China to mainland Europe by a third of the total distance, saving up enormous amounts of time and fuel. Although there is no formal arrangement between Beijing and Moscow over the use of the NSR it is sure that China will be one of its main users. To clarify, a deal between both great powers is not necessary for the use of this route, but because Russia considers it as an internal passage, a deal could help forward the Chinese interests seeing that the Russian Northern fleet unofficially oversees the route.<sup>4</sup>

The future of the NSR is still unsure. After consultation with the Port of Rotterdam it became clear that most shipping companies are not counting on the NSR for the coming decades and even then, there are doubts about the effect on local biodiversity. The Russian invasion of Ukraine has added an extra dimension, but this will be touched upon later in this paper.

#### *China as an ally?*

The last role of China in the Russian arctic, relates to the Chinese military developments in the area, including the Search and Rescue capacities. Here, the Vostok exercises of 2018 play a vital role<sup>5</sup>. Although the relationship between the two great powers has not evolved to a full-blown alliance, they have held joint exercises together in the Arctic in 2018, but also in the 2019 Tsentr

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<sup>1</sup> Faizan Hashmi, "Sibur Considering Ethane Extraction on Arctic LNG Facilities, With Processing in Far East.", *UrduPoint*, December 1 2020, <https://www.urduPoint.com/en/world/sibur-considering-ethane-extraction-on-arctic-1101898.html>.

<sup>2</sup> Alexander Richter, "Arctic Green Energy secures \$200m in funding for geothermal work in China", *Think GeoEnergy - Geothermal Energy News*, December 13 2020, <https://www.thinkgeoenergy.com/arctic-green-energy-secures-200m-in-funding-for-geothermal-work-in-china/>; Shumkov, "Russia's Republic of Karelia plans 60-MW offshore wind park."

<sup>3</sup> Vladimir Volgaev, "Polar Silk Road", *Sovershenno Sekretno*, April 16 2021, <https://www.sovsekretno.ru/articles/polyarnyy-shelkovyy-put/>.

<sup>4</sup> Ekatarina Klimenko and Camilla T.N. Sorensen, "Emerging Chinese-Russian Cooperation in the Arctic".

<sup>5</sup> Dave Johnson, "VOSTOK 2018: Ten years of Russian strategic exercises and warfare preparation.", *NATO Review*, December 20 2018, <https://www.nato.int/docu/review/articles/2018/12/20/vostok-2018-ten-years-of-russian-strategic-exercises-and-warfare-preparation/index.html>.

exercises.<sup>1</sup> Vostok 2018 was impressive because of the 300.000 troops, making it the biggest Russian exercise ever, but also because China issued over 3.500 troops of the People's Liberation Army. Thus, ameliorating the military interoperability. The 2018 exercises also made use of the Northern Sea Route for the first time.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, China is also set to take part in the 2022 Vostok-exercises, taking place in the Far East and the Sea of Japan, signalling fear in the West.<sup>3</sup>

The accession of the PLA in the Russian Arctic and the fact that they had the possibility to operate together with the Russian forces, shows a great amount of trust in their Southern neighbour. Now that Arctic ice is rapidly melting, so does the Russian natural buffer, increasing the dangers for Russia.

China's role in the Arctic is miscellaneous. Beijing functions as a moneylender, manufacturer, consumer and very prudently as a military partner. Although these are beneficial functions, the trained eye realises that there is another side of the medal. Certain risks have been touched upon briefly, but there is a wider analysis to be made. The following chapter aims to identify the current and future risks Russia is being confronted with in their current Arctic relationship with China.

## Risk assessments

### *Dangerous rhetoric*

A first risk that Moscow is being confronted with is the narrative it adopts about the Arctic. Although this is no direct risk, it can confront Moscow with certain difficulties. To put it briefly, Russia talks about larger parts of the Arctic, not only the Russian territory as it is theirs to control and that they are the Arctic superpower who establishes the rules of the game. This is a rhetoric that can backfire fiercely since it can only be backed up with powerful and independent policy actions. Can Russia do this? Spoiler alert: No.

### *Growing financial and material dependence*

It has already been discussed that Russia has enormous economic motives in the Arctic. The NSR, extraction of natural resources and rare earth minerals and the creation of infrastructure for renewable energy. All very lucrative, but expensive infrastructure needs to be built first. This brings enormous costs with it. In addition, because of the melting permafrost, existing infrastructure is slowly crumbling apart. Regions such as Chukotka, West-Siberia and the Kara-coast possess valuable energy-infrastructure, but when the temperature rises, the carrying capacity drops. The Norilsk oil disaster of 2020 was caused by this effect.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, many of the existing infrastructure needs to be modernised and over 80% of ports along the NSR are currently not connected to the transportation network.<sup>5</sup> The estimated cost of the port that Moscow wants to build on the Taymyr peninsula would be over 110 billion USD. A striking example of the inadequacy for domestic financing is the build of a floating

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<sup>1</sup>Sergey Sukhankin, "What Did Russia's Strategic Military Exercise Tsentr-2019 Reveal?", *ICDS*, August 6 2020, <https://icds.ee/en/what-did-russias-strategic-military-exercise-tsentr-2019-reveal/#:%7E:text=In%20addition%20to%20Russian%20armed,out%20by%20the%20Russian%20Federation>

<sup>2</sup>Valeriy Akimenko, DAVIS Petratis, en Vira Ratsiborynska, "Russia's Strategic Exercises", NATO Strategic Communications - Centre of Excellence, n.d., July 2020.

<sup>3</sup>Yew Lun Tian en Tony Munroe, "China to send troops to Russia for "Vostok" exercise", *Reuters*, August 17 2022, <https://www.reuters.com/world/china/chinese-military-will-send-troops-russia-joint-exercise-2022-08-17/>.

<sup>4</sup>Charles Digges, "Russia's Norilsk Nickel hit with enormous fine over Arctic oil spill.", *Bellona.org*, February 17 2021, <https://bellona.org/news/industrial-pollution/2021-02-russias-norilsk-nickel-hit-with-enormous-fine-over-arctic-oil-spill>.

<sup>5</sup>Abhyoday Sisodia, "Russia seals its authority over the Arctic with a \$110 billion mega-port on the Taymyr peninsula", *TFIGlobal*, February 20 2022, <https://tfiglobalnews.com/2022/02/20/russia-seals-its-authority-over-the-arctic-with-a-110-billion-mega-port-on-the-taymyr-peninsula/>.

dock by Rosatom for nuclear icebreakers. No Russian wanted to do it because of the low-price offering. Consequence being that the Turkish Kuzey Star and Chinese Jiangsu Dajin Heavy Industry Co. Ltd were competing for it.<sup>1</sup>

Even though the profits are higher, costs first must be made, and the simple fact remains that Russia simply does not have the money to pay for all of this. Notwithstanding that Moscow keeps announcing these large-scale projects. Moscow created a favourable taxing regime to attract financing, which ended in vain<sup>2</sup>. That they needed to look elsewhere was clear. Foreign investors and manufacturers are now driving the development of the Russian Arctic and China plays first violin in this story. China's presence was already discussed above, but there are numerous projects that can be added. China's presence is rising. Russia realises this, but the quest for diversification is blocked by Russia's own foreign policy.

After the Russian invasion of Georgia in 2008 and the annexation of Crimea in 2014, companies left the Russian Arctic, though temporarily. Furthermore, the economic sanctions also hurt Russia in the Arctic policy. Because China did not participate in handing out these sanctions, Russia turned eastwards for finances. With the consequence that they now have significant economic power in the Russian Arctic and that the Russian share in their own area is shrinking. Consider the fact that China has a history of using their economic leverage as they have done in Africa and risks arise.

Although this does not mean that they have become a 'junior partner' on their own turf, the increasing dependence on China is near embarrassing for a state claiming to be the Arctic superpower.

#### *A growing and obtrusive PLA(N)*

In addition, there are growing military concerns. First, espionage and the gathering of information for Chinese intelligence services. Because of the sensitivity that Russia manages the Arctic with and the economic and military ambitions it cherishes, Moscow pursues a policy of military dominance, which it has in the Arctic. Espionage however is a ubiquitous issue of which Russia cannot escape. In 2020, Valery Mitko, former president of the Arctic Academy of Sciences in Saint-Petersburg was sentenced for sharing sensitive information to the Chinese, relating to hydro-acoustics making it easier to track submarines.<sup>3</sup> A comparable situation occurred in 2016 with Vladimir Lapygin.<sup>4</sup>

Furthermore, China, unannounced, sent a Dongdiao-class spy ship to the Vostok-2018 exercises.<sup>5</sup> This fits in the Chinese ambition to acquire knowledge over the Arctic. It is however important to recognize that this knowledge can also be gained via scientific expeditions.

Lastly, China is becoming more independent of the Russian defence-industry and is acquiring larger capacities to operate in the Arctic. China is steadily building the J-20 fighter jets, Z-8G and Z-20 helicopters, but also the larger type-039A

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<sup>1</sup>Atle Staalesen, "Китайские и турецкие судостроители бьются за док для российских", *The Independent Barents Observer*, April 26 2021, <https://thebarentsobserver.com/ru/arktika/2021/04/kitayskie-i-tureckie-sudostroiteli-byutsya-za-dok-dlya-rossiyskih-ledokolov>.

<sup>2</sup>Pavel Devyatkin, "Russian Government Supports Tax Breaks for Arctic Investments.", *High North News*, February 19 2020, <https://www.highnorthnews.com/en/russian-government-supports-tax-breaks-arctic->.

<sup>3</sup>Marie Ilyushina, "Russia accuses leading Arctic researcher of spying for China.", *CNN*, n.d., <https://edition.cnn.com/2020/06/17/europe/russia-china-spying-allegation-intl/index.html>.

<sup>4</sup>Elizabeth Roberts, "Russia jails decorated space engineer Vladimir Lapygin for seven years for treason", *Mail Online*, September 23 2016, <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3804549/Russia-jails-decorated-space-engineer-seven-years-treason-won-t-say-did-wrong.html>.

<sup>5</sup>Sam LaGrone, "China Sent Uninvited Spy Ship to Russian Vostok 2018 Exercise Alongside Troops, Tanks", *USNI News*, 18 December 2018.

submarines and new aircraft carriers.<sup>1</sup> China's military unpredictability is growing, adding to Russia's risks. Although a military conflict soon is highly unlikely these developments are certainly things Russia needs to keep an eye. Also keeping in mind that the Arctic buffer is melting, China is treading on thin ice.

### *Effect of the Russian Invasion of Ukraine*

As is made clear above, Russia has some serious economic interests in the Arctic. For this to be fully exploited they are required to invest heavily in the necessary infrastructure, since they cannot cover for these excessive costs themselves. International cooperation is of the essence for the Russian Arctic. China can cover some costs, but again this leads to independence. The invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 has only worsened the Russian situation because international cooperation has become impossible for Western states and companies that play a crucial role in the Russian Arctic be it because of their technology, expertise, or money. Next are a few effects and trends that are uncovering itself because of this invasion.

First, future economic exploitation has been slowed down immensely and the unfolding of the Northern Sea Route will take much longer as previously suspected. The previously mentioned Arctic LNG-project will be partially completed, temporarily, as announced by Novatek.<sup>2</sup> The

Russian company has pulled this decision through to other Arctic projects. These decisions were made in the days after Western companies started to pull out of Russian Arctic projects.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, the French oil giant Total will no longer contribute to the Arctic LNG 2-project.

In addition, other Western companies crucial for their technology started pulling out of Russia. Baker Hughes, Halliburton, Siemens, Linde are all companies of which Novatek heavily relies for certain technology. Trafigura Group pulled out of Vostok Oil LLC, the largest oil project in the Russian Arctic.<sup>4</sup> The list goes on.

Not only projects relating to energy but concerning the future Russian nuclear ice breakers are also confronted with heavy delays and drawbacks. The Baltic and Zvezda shipping yards have started relying heavily on Western technology, from companies such as the South-Korean Samsung Heavy Industries, but which are once again cutting of ties.<sup>5</sup>

Can China cover for the much-needed finances and crucial technologies? Three problems arise at this point. First, China does not always have domestic alternatives for Western technology. Second, if they have these alternatives, dependencies would once again rise to new levels which stroke with the Russian ambitions. Last, even if Chinese companies could cover for Russia they are threatened by secondary sanctions. US

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<sup>1</sup>Paul N. Schwartz, "The Changing Nature and Implications of Russian Military Transfers to China", *Center for Strategic & International Studies*, June 2021, [https://csis-website-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/publication/210621\\_Schwartz\\_Russian\\_Military\\_Transfers.pdf?47lttXU2w57d.CobDxg1b1nGmtA1tUcU](https://csis-website-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/publication/210621_Schwartz_Russian_Military_Transfers.pdf?47lttXU2w57d.CobDxg1b1nGmtA1tUcU).

<sup>2</sup>Дятел, "НОВАТЭК сжигается с силами", *Kommersant*, March 22 2022, <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/5272310>.

<sup>3</sup>Sam Tabahriti, "The world's three largest oilfield service companies — Halliburton, Schlumberger, and Baker Hughes — are suspending operations in Russia", *Business Insider*, March 20 2022, <https://www.businessinsider.com/oilfield-services-halliburton-schlumberger-suspend-russia-operations-ukraine-2022-3?international=true&r=US&IR=T>; Siemens AG, 'siemens to wind down Russian business. Press | Company | Siemens', *Siemens*, May 12 2022, <https://press.siemens.com/global/en/pressrelease/siemens-wind-down-russian-business>.

<sup>4</sup>Joe Wallace, "The Russia-Ukraine War: March 2, 2022", *Wall Street Journal*, March 3 2022, <https://www.wsj.com/livecoverage/russia-ukraine-latest-news-2022-03-02/card/commodities-trader-trafigura-reviews-stake-in-russian-arctic-oil-project-NteH6gXbEgDVW6TIOsqg>.

<sup>5</sup>Trym Eiterjord, "What Does Russia's Invasion of Ukraine Mean for China in the Arctic?", *The Diplomat*, March 26 2022, <https://thediplomat.com/2022/03/what-does-russias-invasion-of-ukraine-mean-for-china-in-the-arctic/>.

President Biden announced three weeks after the invasion started that Chinese companies would suffer consequences if they would assist Russia in evading the effects of the current sanctions. Lenovo Group Ltd., Xiaomi Corp., and SZ DJI Technology Co. started to cut ties with their Russian partners, seeing that they are overly sensitive to disruption concerning semiconductor technology.<sup>1</sup>

Relating to the NSR this paper stated above that shipping companies are not yet keen on the usage of the route. This feeling has only risen, seeing that of the ten biggest shipping companies only COSCO is still willing to use the route. MSC, Maersk, CMA CMA and Hapag-Lloyd unofficially renewed their confidence in the Suez-route. Again, increasing dependence on China.

A last financial blow are the overall economic sanctions and departures of major companies. Royal Dutch Shell, BP, Exxon Mobil, Deutsche Banke and Goldman Sachs all cut their ties. Even though they are not related to the deployment of the Russian Arctic, because of the general loss of finances, Moscow will have to choose wisely on how they will spend their money.<sup>2</sup> In addition, the defence budget is rising, and the reserves of the Russian National Wealth Fund are shrinking. The full domestic financing of the Russian Arctic was already impossible, but it seems to have

degraded to a situation that will only take place in fairy tales.

Furthermore, Russia is suffering extreme damage to their military standing. Arctic troops and material are being deployed in Ukraine.<sup>3</sup> Synchronously NATO started their large-scale exercise Cold Response 2022 in the Norwegian Arctic, which Russia perceives as threatening. Seeing that the US and Canada have already announced to up their Arctic defences considering the Russian invasion, Moscow has created the opposite effect.<sup>4</sup> In addition, they degraded themselves and their image in Georgia in 2008, the annexation of Crimea in 2014, but have now pushed it to the extreme.<sup>5</sup> They were pushed out of the Arctic Security Forces Roundtable (ASFR) in 2014, are now fully ignored in the Arctic Council where they have the presidency till 2023 and are forced out of international organisations such as the UN Human Rights Council.<sup>6</sup> Communication with NATO and the OSCE are also cut, possible leading to miscalculation.

In short, every other Arctic state, many Western countries and many foreign companies no longer want to cooperate or even communicate with Moscow. Relating to China it can be stated that they will not actively seek a role in the invasion of Ukraine and identify itself as the 'responsible stakeholder', even though they are losing in this conflict. Since Western eyes are now extra

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<sup>1</sup>Dan Strumpf, "Chinese Tech Giants Quietly Retreat From Doing Business With Russia", *Wall Street Journal*, May 7 2022, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/chinese-tech-giants-quietly-stop-doing-business-with-russia-11651845795.d>

<sup>2</sup>Holly Ellyatt, "Russia is dominating the Arctic, but it's not looking to fight over it.", *CNBC*, December 27 2019, <https://www.cnbc.com/2019/12/27/russias-dominance-in-the-arctic.html>.

<sup>3</sup>Lee Berthiaume, "War sparks fresh calls on upgrading North America's defenses", *CTVNews*, March 5 2022, <https://www.ctvnews.ca/politics/ukraine-war-sparks-fresh-calls-for-urgency-on-upgrading-north-america-s-defences-1.5806978>.

<sup>4</sup>Thomas Nilsen, "Hundreds of Arctic troops killed, says Ukrainian adviser.", *The Independent Barents Observer*, March 26 2022, <https://thebarentsobserver.com/en/security/2022/03/several-hundred-arctic-troops-killed-says-ukrainian-adviser>.

<sup>5</sup>Alexander Crowther, "Russia's Military: Failure on an Awesome Scale", *CEPA*, n.d., <https://cepa.org/russias-military-failure-on-an-awesome-scale/>.

<sup>6</sup>Hilge-Gunn Bye, "Arctic Council, EU, NATO on Agenda as Military Leaders Addressed Arctic Security Issues.", May 12 2021, *High North News*, <https://www.highnorthnews.com/en/arctic-council-eu-nato-agenda-military-leaders-addressed-arctic-security-issues>; Michelle Nichols, "U.N. suspends Russia from human rights body, Moscow then quits.", *Reuters*, April 7 2022, <https://www.reuters.com/world/un-vote-suspending-russia-human-rights-council-over-ukraine-2022-04-07/>.



focused in Taiwan and because economically, they are also suffering, just as the other great powers. China is even doubling down on the relationship with Russia, seeing that they are buying more Russian oil and LNG and that in May they stated to strengthen ties concerning military technology and energy. The question remains how strong their 'no limits' partnership is.<sup>1</sup>

To conclude, the composition of the Russian strategic culture, poses high threats to their own economic and security interests in the Arctic region. Moscow is diplomatically and economically isolated, whereby China appears as the only capable and willing option to finance their needs. The same happened in 2014. Even though this does not yet make Russia a 'junior partner' in the Arctic, as common thought in the relationship with China, the contemporary begging position is almost humiliating for the state with the largest Arctic coast.

### A way out for Russia

Moscow is faced with a difficult future if it wants to keep its Arctic ambitions whilst remaining hostile to Western governments and maintaining their superpower-policy. Nevertheless, there remains a way out

#### *India and the United Arab Emirates*

A first possible course of action is to invest in alternative partnerships, in addition to the one with China. This to weaken the relative dependence to China and add to the financial

needs of the Russian Arctic. In this light, India and the UAE pop up as healthy options. Both states have shown significant interest in the region in recent years and have shown themselves favourable to Moscow considering the invasion of Ukraine. India and the UAE have both exempt themselves from condemning the invasion in the UN Security Council.<sup>2</sup> If it were not for the Russian invasion of Ukraine, South-Korea and Japan would have led the pack, however major companies such as Mitsui O.S.K. Lines and Samsung Heavy Industries refuse to work with Russia nowadays.<sup>3</sup>

Both the UAE and India have significant interests in the Arctic. Both states gain from the upcoming transit routes, available resources and for the UAE it helps them to diversify their economy. Both have also already invested in the Russian Arctic. The Northern Transit Corridor, Arctic LNG-3, LLC Taas-Yuryakh and JSC Vankorneft are projects which count on investments from one or both powers. It would be wise for Moscow to invest in these partnerships, seeing that both states are under heavy pressure by the West and because Russia has not much of an alternative.<sup>4</sup>

#### *A minimalistic Northern Sea Route*

A second avenue is to focus on what is needed to make the Northern Sea Route operational. There are all these projects planned for the NSR, which again costs billions of dollars to complete. Seeing that the full domestic financing is impossible, Moscow ought to reflect about which projects are

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<sup>1</sup>Hanns W. Maull, "Why China Isn't Backing Away From Alignment With Russia.", *The Diplomat*, April 20 2022, <https://thediplomat.com/2022/04/why-china-isnt-backing-away-from-alignment-with-russia/>.

<sup>2</sup>United Nations Security Council, 'security Council Fails to Adopt Draft Resolution on Ending Ukraine Crisis, as Russian Federation Wields Veto', February 25 2022, <https://www.un.org/press/en/2022/sc14808.doc.htm>.

<sup>3</sup>Cynthia Kim and Hyonhee Shin, "South Korea bans exports of strategic items to Russia, joins SWIFT sanctions", *Reuters*, February 28 2022, <https://www.reuters.com/business/aerospace-defense/skorea-bans-exports-strategic-items-russia-join-swift-sanctions-2022-02-28/>.

<sup>4</sup>Peter B. Danilov, "DP World Wants to Build Terminal in Vladivostok for Arctic Container Shipping", September 7 2021, <https://www.highnorthnews.com/en/dp-world-wants-build-terminal-vladivostok-arctic-container-shipping>; Hazem Shayah, "Economic Diversification by Boosting Non-Oil Exports (Case of UAE)", *Journal of Economics, Business and Management* 3, nr. 7 (2015): 735–38, <https://doi.org/10.7763/JOEBM.2015.V3.276>; Pavel Devyatkin and Nima Khorrami, "Dubai and the Opening Arctic: Russia's Rosatom and UAE Logistics Company to Cooperate in the Far North.", *The Arctic Institute*, November 23 2021, <https://www.thearcticinstitute.org/dubai-opening-arctic-russia-rosatom-uae-logistics-company-cooperate-far-north/>.

essential to the adequate use of the NSR. To which projects can the limited resources be sent to. This exercise would lower the needs for foreign aid, even in the future since the use of the NSR would reap new benefits. A paper by the International Transport Forum estimates that the full expansion of the NSR could take up another four decades.

### *Keep the PLA(N) away*

As a product of the ameliorating relationship between the two great powers, joint military exercises have been set up. As simple as it may seem, perhaps Moscow ought to consider to stop these exercises. Even though China could still gain military intelligence through civil scientific expeditions to the Arctic, it is best to not let them assess their military qualities in Arctic conditions. Even when spy ships approach the area, Moscow could step on the breaks and frankly order China to leave. China is developing their own defence industry, is already building new aircraft carriers and submarines, whilst the Russian Arctic buffer is melting. A fatal combination.<sup>1</sup> In addition, the military component of the Sino-Russian relation is not a fundamental aspect, meaning disruptions or hiccups hereto will not cause any friction. China is defensive about the South-China Sea and Russia about the Arctic.

### *Poseidon, Greek God in the Arctic Ocean*

In addition to keeping the PLA(N) away, Moscow needs to continue their policy of exhibiting their military strength and strengthening their nuclear pillar by investing in the Poseidon torpedo they

are so proud of. This as to keep accurately defending their grounds and waters and deterring China, or any other state, to aggress in the Russian Arctic. The Poseidon- or Status 6-Torpedo is a high-speed torpedo, capable of operating autonomously once it has been fired off.<sup>2</sup> With a supposed top speed of seventy knots (130km/h), the possibility to dive to more than 1.000m deep and the capacity of carrying a nuclear warhead of more than one hundred megaton the Poseidon is a god among other torpedoes.<sup>3</sup> It is so strong that it is believed to be able to create nuclear tsunami's whereby the triggered tsunami could carry nuclear particles with it that could spread over cities, which is of course extremely dangerous.<sup>4</sup> At least, if it lives up to the image that Russia creates of it.

Russia has invested heavily in technologies to better Poseidon and the project is supposed to be complete in 2027. The Poseidon torpedo is also fit for Arctic conditions, seeing that these waters are deep, and that torpedo's risk being detected in shallow waters. Therefore, the torpedo can dive deep, move slowly, and just before exploding, speed up so the enemy cannot act in time. Going off from a report published by the United States Senate in 2020, China still has no capacity to manage this kind of weapon.<sup>5</sup> It remains important however for Russia to keep a defensive discourse.

### *Show the need for cooperation to the West*

As perverse as this last option may sound, it is one that can be the most powerful if managed right.

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<sup>1</sup> Peter Kikkert and Whitney Lackenbauer, "The Militarization of the Arctic to 1990", in *The Palgrave Handbook of Arctic Policy and Politics*, Ken S. Coates and Carin Holroyd (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2020), 487–505, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-20557-7\\_30](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-20557-7_30).

<sup>2</sup> Brent M. Eastwood, "Meet the Poseidon: Russia's Nuclear Torpedo Could Change Everything.", *19FortyFive*, March 27 2022, <https://www.19fortyfive.com/2022/03/meet-the-poseidon-russias-nuclear-torpedo-could-change-everything/>.

<sup>3</sup>Covert Cabal, *Can Russia's Doomsday Weapon Be Stopped? Status-6/Poseidon* (Youtube, n.d.), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UQianSUpVfw>.

<sup>4</sup> H.I. Sutton, "Russia's New "Poseidon" Super-Weapon: What You Need To Know", *Naval News*, March 3 2022, <https://www.navalnews.com/naval-news/2022/03/russias-new-poseidon-super-weapon-what-you-need-to-know/>.

<sup>5</sup> United States Department of Defense, "Military and Security Developments involving the People's Republic of China" *Office of the Secretary of Defense*, (2020), <https://media.defense.gov/2020/Sep/01/2002488689/-1/-1/1/2020-DOD-CHINA-MILITARY-POWER-REPORT-FINAL.PDF>.

Russia is the biggest Arctic state and has a major impact on the world with what they do or do not do in this region. With the start of their invasion in Ukraine, the Arctic Council was at a standstill. A few months later, they decided to continue their work, but not including Russia. The immediate critique on this was that no policy or research can be effective without Russia's contribution to them. Russia needs to show what the West is missing. The scientific possibilities and climate change atrocities that can arise if Russia decides to adapt a different policy are immense. Representative to the Arctic Council Nikolai Korchunov, foreign minister Sergey Lavrov and his deputy minister Alexander Grushko are already trying to show their goodwill to work together with the West.<sup>1</sup> Russia will probably keep this up and publish reports or statements covering the possible detrimental effects of unaligned policies.

## Conclusion

That the melting ice and the growing Chinese interests poses a threat as much as an opportunity was already clear from the beginning. Therefore, the foremost conclusion that I want to make is that not China, but Russia's own foreign policy and regime are the greatest threats to Moscow's interests in the Arctic.

Military escapades such as the current invasion of Ukraine prove to be very counterproductive as they push away states, customers, financial institutions, and necessary companies. Western companies still wanting to work with Russia are booed and forced to write an artificial press release where they cut ties with Russia.

Therefore Moscow is forced to look East as China is still an able and willing partner to invest in the Arctic and to make sure the Arctic riches are uncovered. Because had Moscow held up a healthy relationship with Europe, there would be less of a need for China, whereby Russia could keep more of its power. Investors would also be more diversified. Now, Russia has let China frame itself within Arctic governance, without even owning a piece of Arctic territory. An impressive feat.

If Russia wants to fully exploit the riches and economic potential of the Arctic, and lessen the dependence on China they need to step aside from their current foreign policy and even consider a change in regime, which seems impossible today. Fuelled by history and a defensive security attitude, Moscow frequently hesitates between cooperation and security, whereby security sometimes has the winning hand. Thus, undermining their Arctic ambitions.

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<sup>1</sup> Gloria Dickie, "Russian officials call Arctic Council boycott "regrettable"", *Reuters*, March 4 2022, <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/russian-officials-call-arctic-council-boycott-regrettable-2022-03-04/>; M. Lee, "US, Russia at odds over military activity in the Arctic", *AP News*, 20 May 2022.

# GIES HONOURS PAPERS

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## TURNING THE EU EMERGENCY TRUST FUND FOR AFRICA OUTSIDE-IN, OR BREAKING IT DOWN?

A postcolonial cosmopolitan perspective on the European Union Emergency trust Fund for Africa.

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In 2015, the European Union Emergency Trust Fund for Africa (EUTF) was launched at the Valletta top to tackle the root causes of migration in order to mitigate the flow of irregular migrants towards Europe.<sup>1</sup> However, due to the emphasis the EUTF placed on ‘migration management’, such as through border control mechanisms, it quickly became one of the most criticised instruments of the European Union’s external development policy.<sup>2</sup>

At the same time, European integration – and the so-called peace project— is associated with an Enlightened cosmopolitan ideal. This claim was especially made after the Second World War, at the beginning of European integration. The idea was that by overcoming rivalry between antagonist member states such as Germany and France, solidarity on the continent would rise and

the European Union could become a peaceful and thriving organisation.<sup>3</sup> The slogan ‘unity in diversity’ reflects this ideal. The cherry on top of this cosmopolitan European Union was the Nobel Peace Prize, awarded in 2012.<sup>4</sup>

However, this virgin birth after the Second World War – as though this had nothing to do with the already powerful position of the European nation states— is subject to a lot of criticism.<sup>5</sup> Not in the least from postcolonial thinkers such as Gurminder Bhambra or Frantz Fanon. According to them, the European Union is not an example of a cosmopolitan, let alone peaceful, organisation. Firstly, cosmopolitan solidarity stops at the borders of the European continent, borders that are being externalised towards Africa in recent

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<sup>1</sup> “EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa.” *European Commission*, last modified, 2015, accessed April 21, 2022, [https://ec.europa.eu/trustfundforafrica/index\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/trustfundforafrica/index_en)

<sup>2</sup> David Kipp, “From exception to rule: the EU Trust Fund for Africa.”, no.13 (2018).

<sup>3</sup> Erik Oddvar Eriksen, “The EU—a cosmopolitan polity?” *Journal of European Public Policy* 13, no. 2(2006): 252-269.

<sup>4</sup> Gurminder Bhambra, “Whither Europe?”, *Interventions* 18, no. 2(2015): 187-202. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369801x.2015.1106964>

<sup>5</sup> Nora Fischer Onar and Kalypto Nicolaïdis, “The Decentering Agenda: Europe as a post-colonial power.” *Cooperation and Conflict* 48, no. 2 (2013): 283-303.

times.<sup>1</sup> Think about the harsh policies against migrants in the Mediterranean. Secondly, cosmopolitan solidarity within the European Union could be questioned, particularly when taking the inequalities between people inside the EU into account.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, these postcolonial intellectuals accuse the European Union of a colonial amnesia.<sup>3</sup> By using a Eurocentric historiography, and thus epistemic violence, the European Union succeeded in framing itself as a cosmopolitan organisation, which it is not. They suggest a different kind of cosmopolitanism, namely: postcolonial cosmopolitanism.<sup>4</sup>

Building on these perspectives, in this paper, I aim to answer the question:

“Does the European Union Emergency Trust Fund for Africa pass a postcolonial cosmopolitan test?”

Due to the harsh critiques on the EUTF as a ‘development fund’, I selected the EUTF as least-likely case to succeed in passing the postcolonial cosmopolitan test. In addition, as the biggest achievement of the Valletta Summit, the EUTF has been one of the most important tools in the migration and development policy of the European Union in recent years.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, 2015 was not only the year that the EUTF was founded, but it was also the start of the so called migration crisis. This research not only aims to evaluate the EUTF, but also to look at the historical structures of European external policy.

I will for example examine the beginning of European integration and question whether bringing peace on the continent was the only driver. I aim to overcome the overly simplistic dichotomisation between a normative and a realistic union by looking through a more critical lens.<sup>6</sup>

In order to answer the research question, I conduct a discourse analysis of four EUTF-projects. These four projects, namely concerning Libya, Niger, Mali, and Ethiopia, have been selected because of their prominence within the EUTF, covering most of the EUTF’s money flow.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, the four countries account for the three regions of the EUTF, and a project was selected from every EUTF-goal. To support the analysis, texts of postcolonial authors such as the works of Fischer-Onar and Nicolaïdis<sup>8</sup>, Huber and Kamel<sup>9</sup>, and Keukeleire and Lecocq<sup>10</sup> were processed into a practical framework.

## Background on the EUTF and postcolonial cosmopolitanism

### *The EUTF*

As mentioned above, the EUTF was founded at the Valletta Summit in 2015. It was planned to be in place during a five-year period, however, in 2021, it was prolonged by one year. As a crisis tool the fund is a relatively flexible mechanism. One of the biggest downsides is the lack of democratic

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<sup>1</sup> Sandra Ponzanesi, “Cosmopolitan Europe: Postcolonial interventions and global transitions.”, *Routledge International Handbook of Cosmopolitanism Studies*, (2018): 564-574.

<sup>2</sup> Gurinder Bhambra and John Narayan, “Introduction: Colonial histories and the postcolonial present of European cosmopolitanism.”, *European Cosmopolitanism*, Routledge, (2016).

<sup>3</sup> Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, “Introduction: Recentering the South in studies of migration.”, *Migration and Society* 3, no. 1(2020): 1-18.

<sup>4</sup> Gurinder Bhambra, “Whither Europe?”

<sup>5</sup> “Valletta Action Plan. La Valletta Summit, Malta.” *European commission*, last modified, November, 2015, accessed September 26, 2022, [https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/21839/action\\_plan\\_en.pdf](https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/21839/action_plan_en.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Thomas Diez, “Europe’s Others and the Return of Geopolitics.” *Cambridge review of international affairs* 17, no. 2 (2004): 319-335.

<sup>7</sup> OXFAM, “An Emergency for Whom?”, (2017).

<sup>8</sup> Nora Fischer Onar and Kalypto Nicolaïdis, “The Decentring Agenda: Europe as a post-colonial power.”

<sup>9</sup> Daniela Huber and Lorenzo Kamel, “*Arab spring and peripheries: A decentring research agenda.*”, Routledge, (2018).

<sup>10</sup> Stefan Keukeleire and Sharon Lecocq, “Operationalising the decentring agenda: Analysing European foreign policy in a non-European and post-western world.”, *Cooperation and conflict* 53, no.2 (2018): 277-295.

control from the European Parliament.<sup>1</sup> The Fund focuses on three main windows or regions, which are: North-Africa, The Sahel and Lake Chad and the Horn of Africa. The EUTF's four official goals are: (1) greater economic and employment opportunities, (2) strengthening resilience of communities, (3) improved migration management, and (4) improved governance and conflict prevention.<sup>2</sup>

The EUTF is characterised by a two-level policy structure: the strategic level, setting the objectives of the fund, and the operational level. The strategic level is led by the Trust Fund Board, which consists out of representatives from all donors (such as some the member states), the European Commission, the observers (like African countries) and non-donating observing EU member states. The operational level consists of three operational committees, each representing a window. They are responsible for selecting and assigning the projects that need financial resources. The committees consist of the European Commission and all other donors, but other organisations, like regional African organisations, can be observers as well.<sup>3</sup> In total, the EUTF had a budget of over five billion dollars, funded by various financial sources., with the largest part, €4.4 billion, stemming from the European Development Fund (EDF). Officially, this money is meant for development causes, however, it could be questioned if the EUTF respects this objective given the emphasis on migration management.<sup>4</sup>

### *Postcolonial cosmopolitanism*

In this part, I try to challenge the cosmopolitan claim of the European Union by building on

arguments of postcolonial cosmopolitan authors and drawing parallels between cosmopolitanism and colonialism. By doing so, it should become clear that the view of European cosmopolitanism as an antithesis of colonialism is false and mainly used for legitimising the colonial project. To conclude, I summarize the most important aspects of postcolonial cosmopolitanism.

A first element that should be pointed out when challenging European Cosmopolitanism, are the colonial roots of the infamous Eurafrika project. Defining figures of European integration project such as von Coudenhove-Kalergi, Konrad Adenauer or Walter Hallstein openly admitted that during the negotiations for the establishment of the European economic Community (EEC), a way was sought to transcend the national colonial projects. As stated by these founding fathers, the European Union could only fully develop by making use of the raw materials and geopolitical assets of the African continent. Furthermore, the complete appropriation of the African continent by the EEC, was a way of transcending antagonism between member states and thus achieving a cosmopolitan Europe.<sup>5</sup>

Secondly, when challenging the European cosmopolitan claim, we should not only look at the exclusion of non-European people, but also at the climate of exclusion inside the European Union. While diversity between the member states is celebrated, for example in the slogan of the European Union, diversity within the member states is rejected.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, it remains unclear for postcolonial authors why European cosmopolitanism could not be compatible with multiculturalism within the European Union. The

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<sup>1</sup> Mark Akkerman, "Expanding the fortress: The policies, the profiteers and the people shaped by EU's border externalisation programme.", *The Transnational Institute* 11, no. 34 (2018).

<sup>2</sup> "EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa." *European Commission*, last modified, 2015, accessed, may, 13, 2022, [https://ec.europa.eu/trustfundforafrica/index\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/trustfundforafrica/index_en)

<sup>3</sup> "Strategy. EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa" *European Commission*, last modified, October 2, 2017, accessed May 12, 2022, [https://ec.europa.eu/trustfundforafrica/content/strategy\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/trustfundforafrica/content/strategy_en)

<sup>4</sup> "Trust Fund Financials, EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa." *European Commission*, last modified, June 20, 2017, accessed May 12, 2022, [https://ec.europa.eu/trustfundforafrica/content/trust-fund-financials\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/trustfundforafrica/content/trust-fund-financials_en)

<sup>5</sup> Peo Hansen and Stefan Jonsson, "Bringing Africa as a dowry to Europe': European Integration and the Eurafrika Project, 1920–1960.", *Interventions* 13, no. 3 (2011): 443-463.

<sup>6</sup> Catarina Kinnvall, "Postcolonialism.", *The Routledge Handbook of Critical European Studies*, (2021): 72-84.

only reason Bhabra sees is a visible distinction based on race, or perhaps more current, a distinction based on faith.<sup>1</sup> According to Balibar, this way the European Union introduces the concept of European apartheid, in which the visible characteristics of migrants both outside and within the European Union indicate the limits of European solidarity.<sup>2</sup>

Thirdly, questions can be raised about the fact that the European Union describes itself as liberal. Liberalism resonates with cosmopolitanism in a way that everyone can challenge hegemonic ideas. However, according to Baban, it is a form of illiberal liberalism that the European Union subjects migrants to their so-called 'liberal' values.<sup>3</sup> For example, in the deployment of integration tests.

Lastly, European elites instrumentalised Enlightenment thinking and cosmopolitanism during their colonial quest. The European colonial project could hardly be justified without a theory that makes it possible to intervene in other parts of the world.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, scientific racism, pledged during the period of 'Enlightenment', was instrumentalised as a way to justify bifurcation between 'races'.<sup>5</sup> The Western capitalist liberalization further benefited from a cosmopolitan theory, which was used as a justification by policy makers. To illustrate, Kant often placed its Enlightenment thinking in a context of economic rationality. Naturally, capitalism benefits from a globalised

cosmopolitanism, among other things by enabling the global travel of the capitalist elite.<sup>6</sup>

However it is important to emphasise that eliminating the Enlightenment, or other Western schools of thought, isn't the solution. In some cases the enlightenment has been very valuable. For example, it has made people in the south aware of the contradictions of European values, as in the case of the Haitian revolution.<sup>7</sup> So of course, the European cosmopolitanism and the Enlightenment can be beneficial for our society. However, the full story must be told. The Enlightenment was a double edged sword: on the one hand, a catalyst for resistance and a promise for universal humanism, on the other hand a scientific justification for racism and colonialism.<sup>8</sup>

In conclusion, postcolonial cosmopolitanism tries to emphasise that modernity is a result of intermingled histories. Frantz Fanon, who was born in Martinique, studied in France and worked as a psychiatrist in Algeria, embodies this school of thought.<sup>9</sup> He, among others, used this shared cosmopolitan knowledge to create a true cosmopolitan ideal: postcolonial cosmopolitanism. This indicates that not only Europeans can claim Europe. Due to these shared histories, and of course the exploitation of non-European labour and resources by European countries, migrants are fully in their right to call

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<sup>1</sup> Gurinder Bhabra, "Whither Europe?"

<sup>2</sup> Etienne Balibar, "World borders, political borders.", *PMLA* 117, no. 1 (2002) : 68-78.

<sup>3</sup> Fiona Adamson, Triadafilos Triadafilopoulos and Aristide Zolberg, "The limits of the liberal state: Migration, identity and belonging in Europe.", *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 37, no. 6 (2011): 843-859.

<sup>4</sup> Jeff Popke, "Geography and ethics: spaces of cosmopolitan responsibility.", *Progress in Human Geography* 31, no. 4 (2007): 509-518.

<sup>5</sup> Ulrike Kistner, "Georges Cuvier: Founder of modern biology (Foucault), or scientific racist (cultural studies)?" *Configurations* 7, no.2(2003): 175-190.

<sup>6</sup> Feyzi Baban, "Cosmopolitanism from the margins." *Postcolonial Transitions in Europe: Contexts, Practices and Politics* 371, (2015).

<sup>7</sup> Koenraad Bogaert, "Radicale Verlichting en haar Haïtiaanse erfenis: inspiratie voor het humanisme en sociaal verzet van de 21ste eeuw?", *DeWereld Morgen*, (2020), <https://www.dewereldmorgen.be/artikel/2019/01/25/radicale-verlichting-en-haar-haitiaanse-erfenis-inspiratie-voor-het-humanisme-en-sociaal-verzet-van-de-21ste-eeuw/>

<sup>8</sup> George Fredrickson, "Racism.", Princeton University Press, (2015).

<sup>9</sup> Frantz Fanon, "Algeria unveiled." *Decolonization: Perspectives from now and then* 5, (2004).

themselves citizens of Europe, as well as citizens of their own respective communities.<sup>1</sup>

## Towards a decentring framework

Hereunder, I will give an overview of my analytical framework, also shown in table 1. I start with an explanation on decentring by using the three dimensions from Fischer-Onar and Nicolaïdis.<sup>2</sup> Next, I explain the five categories of decentring that I selected from the framework of Keukeleire and Lecocq.<sup>3</sup> To complement my analysis, I added an 'identity decentring' category based on the work of Huber and Kamel<sup>4</sup>, and modified and supplemented some of the variables in the final framework.

When conducting (research on) European external policy, it is of tremendous importance that we are not influenced by a Eurocentric worldview. There is a loss of richness of perspectives when looking only through a European lens.<sup>5</sup> Additionally, when externalising European policy it is only logical to pay attention to other worldviews. Therefore, it is firstly important to **provincialise** the European Union External policy. This means that one should be aware that there are different paths to economic and political modernity. Furthermore, as Europeans we should start to acknowledge that we did not follow our own 'Enlightened cosmopolitan' recipe to come to the Europe as we know it today, as we aggressively exploited labour forces and resources from other parts of the world. We should further realise that other societies may have different views on what

'development' means. In other words, provincialising is a way of gaining awareness about our own Western context. After this realisation there should be an intense **engagement** with these other views. It is important to interact with non-European actors. Not only to critically engage with our own worldview, but also with the worldviews of these 'others'. In this manner, we can learn from each other in our path towards a cosmopolitan ideal.<sup>6</sup> This resonates with what Keukeleire calls an outside-in perspective, where you aim to examine your own policy through the eyes of those who experience the consequences.<sup>7</sup> Lastly, the two former steps can be used to correct and redraw a 'self-destructive' European External policy. However, relevant academic contributions remain relatively vague about this last '**reconstruction**' step.<sup>8</sup> In this research I will try to fill this gap in the academic literature and try to make a postcolonial cosmopolitan reconstruction of the EUTF.

To concretise these three steps I made use of the framework of Keukeleire and Lecocq, and include five dimensions in my unique framework. These dimensions include each time the provincialising and engagement step. However, as mentioned, in this research I will try to go beyond these two steps and make some recommendations for reconstructing the EUTF. The first selected category is '**spatial decentring**'. This indicates that we learn about other infrastructural and geopolitical settings and acknowledge that not every region looks like a European setting.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Feyzi Baban "Cosmopolitanism from the margins."

<sup>2</sup> Nora Fischer Onar and Kalypso Nicolaïdis, "The Decentring Agenda: Europe as a post-colonial power."

<sup>3</sup> Stefan Keukeleire and Sharon Lecocq, "Operationalising the decentring agenda: Analysing European foreign policy in a non-European and post-western world." *Cooperation and conflict* 53, no.2 (2018): 277-295.

<sup>4</sup> Daniela Huber and Lorenzo Kamel, "Arab spring and peripheries: A decentring research agenda.", Routledge, (2018).

<sup>5</sup> Stefan Keukeleire, "Lessons for the Practice and Analysis of EU Diplomacy from an 'Outside-in' Perspective.", *The Neighbours of the European Union's Neighbours*, (2017): 227-241.

<sup>6</sup> Nora Fischer Onar and Kalypso Nicolaïdis, "The Decentring Agenda: Europe as a post-colonial power."

<sup>7</sup> Stefan Keukeleire, "Lessons for the Practice and Analysis of EU Diplomacy from an 'Outside-in' Perspective." *The Neighbours of the European Union's Neighbours*, (2017): 227-241.

<sup>8</sup> Jan Orbie, "The graduation of EU development studies: towards a post-colonial turn?" *Global Affairs* 7, no. 4(2021): 597-613.

<sup>9</sup> Stefan Keukeleire and Sharon Lecocq, "Operationalising the decentring agenda: Analysing European foreign policy in a non-European and post-western world.", *Cooperation and conflict* 53, no.2 (2018): 277-295.



Second, there is the **'temporal and normative decentring'** category. This category puts emphasis on the fact that we know and learn about Europe mostly from a Eurocentric historical framework. This affects our worldview and or norms to this day. For example, the colonial period is often left out or reframed in our history books.<sup>1</sup> Third then, the **'polity decentring'** category challenges the excessive focus of European policy makers on the structures of the Westphalian nation-state as we know it in Europe. This results in an overestimation of the importance of state structures in other regions.<sup>2</sup> My fourth category of decentring is a **'linguistic/disciplinary'** one. European external policy is often based on Western research (traditions) with English as lingua franca. As said, this leads to an incomplete analysis. Moreover, in this paper I pay attention to the role of the implementers of the projects as they often strengthen or universalise the power imbalances that are already in place.<sup>3</sup> Lastly, I opted for a **'identity decentring'** category. Most analyses are written from a top-down perspective, which is relevant, but it is equally important to recognise the role of the periphery in these processes.<sup>4</sup> In this analysis, I will pay attention to the specific characteristics of geographic, religious, gender and ethnic 'subaltern' groups, defined by Gramsci as a group of people that is often subordinated to a ruling group's policies.<sup>5</sup>

As mentioned in the beginning of this paper, it was a difficult task to transform the theoretical texts mentioned above into a practical framework. I am aware that the decentring agenda and postcolonial cosmopolitanism are not identical. However, they have a lot in common. They both put emphasis on the historical processes of colonialism and the colonial amnesia of the European Union. In this way, solely positive views on European cosmopolitanism, Enlightenment and (neo)liberalism can be challenged. Similarly, I like to believe that the dimensions and 'variables' I included are an advantage to the framework. However, there should be awareness about the downsides of a framework like this. Postcolonial cosmopolitan authors would look with suspicion at a new 'tick the box'-framework of a Western student, from a Western discipline, who, instead of people in so-called developing countries, must determine whether a policy is Eurocentric or not. Frantz Fanon, for example, would be worried that the struggles and stories of colonised people would go lost in a positivist framework.<sup>6</sup> As a conclusion, a big downside of this approach is the lack of representation from 'the subaltern' themselves.

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<sup>1</sup> Stefan Keukeleire and Sharon Lecocq, "Operationalising the decentring agenda"

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Daniella Huber and Lorenzo Kamel, "Arab spring and peripheries: A decentring research agenda."

<sup>5</sup> Marcus Green, "Gramsci cannot speak: Presentations and interpretations of Gramsci's concept of the subaltern." *Rethinking Marxism* 14, no.3 (2002): 1-24.

<sup>6</sup> Frantz Fanon, "Algeria unveiled."

Table 1: A decentring framework

| Decentring                  | Provincialising  | Engagement   |
|-----------------------------|--|--|
| Spatial                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⊗ <i>European geographical features</i></li> <li>⊗ <i>European material situation</i></li> <li>⊗ <i>Geopolitical space making</i></li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⊗ <i>Geographical features of other spaces</i></li> <li>⊗ <i>Other spatial and material contexts</i></li> <li>⊗ <i>The role of the desert</i></li> </ul>  |
| Temporal/<br>Normative      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⊗ <i>Specific historical trajectory and modernisation paradigm</i></li> <li>⊗ <i>Migration as negative</i></li> <li>⊗ <i>Neoliberal norms</i></li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⊗ <i>Other trajectories towards economical and political modernization</i></li> <li>⊗ <i>Other norms</i></li> </ul>   |
| Polity                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⊗ <i>State-centric bias</i></li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⊗ <i>Different polity types based on:</i></li> <li>⊗ <i>States</i></li> <li>⊗ <i>Ethnicity</i></li> <li>⊗ <i>Religion</i></li> <li>⊗ <i>Warlordism</i></li> </ul>   |
| Linguistic/<br>disciplinary | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⊗ <i>English as main language</i></li> <li>⊗ <i>Rough translations</i></li> <li>⊗ <i>Dominance of Western sources</i></li> <li>⊗ <i>Reliance on Western/international implementers</i></li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⊗ <i>Non-western languages</i></li> <li>⊗ <i>Different ways of communicating</i></li> <li>⊗ <i>Different concepts meanings/interpretations</i></li> </ul>   |
| Identity                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⊗ <i>European focus on norms rather than identity dimensions</i></li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⊗ <i>What features do different groups have? Religion, culture...</i></li> <li>⊗ <i>Engaging with geographical, religious, gender and ethnic peripheries</i></li> <li>⊗ <i>Perspectives of the subaltern</i></li> </ul> |

### Decentring the EUTF

As aforementioned, I conducted a discourse analysis of four Action documents that each represent a different project. It is important to understand that the results of this research cannot be generalized towards all EUTF-projects. Nor does this paper contain an exhaustive overview of the four projects that were selected. The relevance of this research lies in the discourse analysis of four EUTF-projects and their (potential) downfalls from a postcolonial cosmopolitan perspective.

The four projects that were chosen are:

- ⊗ *Libya (North-Africa): Recovery, Stability, and socio-economic development in Libya.*<sup>1</sup>
- ⊗ *Niger (Sahel): Création d'une Equipe Conjointe d'Investigation (ECI) pour la lutte contre les réseaux criminels liés à l'immigration irrégulière, la traite des êtres humains et le trafic des migrants.*<sup>2</sup>
- ⊗ *Mali (Sahel): programme de renforcement de la résilience des communautés, des ménages*

<sup>1</sup> "Action document: Recovery, Stability and socio-economic development in Libya." *European Commission*, last modified, 2017, accessed September, 26, 2022, [https://ec.europa.eu/trustfundforafrica/region/north-africa/libya/recovery-stability-and-socio-economic-development-libya\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/trustfundforafrica/region/north-africa/libya/recovery-stability-and-socio-economic-development-libya_en)

<sup>2</sup> "Action-document: Création d'une Equipe Conjointe d'Investigation (ECI) pour la lutte contre les réseaux criminels liés à l'immigration irrégulière, la traite des êtres humains et le trafic des migrants (addendum).", *European Commission*, last modified, 2017, accessed September 26, 2022, [https://ec.europa.eu/trustfundforafrica/sites/default/files/final\\_t05-eutf-sah-ne-05\\_eci\\_avenant\\_1.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/trustfundforafrica/sites/default/files/final_t05-eutf-sah-ne-05_eci_avenant_1.pdf)

*et des individus vulnérables à l'insécurité alimentaire et nutritionnelle au Mali.*<sup>1</sup>

- ⊗ *Ethiopia (Horn of Africa): Stemming Irregular Migration in Northern & Central Ethiopia (SINCE).*<sup>2</sup>

I will start with some general remarks. It is important to know that the different categories each time cover the provincialising and engagement dimension. This is done to keep the analysis as fluent as possible. Moreover, as mentioned, reconstruction is generally neglected in other research. Furthermore, some scholars state that discourse analysis often only focuses on deconstruction but does not come up with alternatives.<sup>3</sup> To answer these relevant critiques, I dedicated a separate subtitle to reconstruction .

### *Provincialising/engagement*

Firstly, the Action documents remain overall relatively vague. This could be strategic to involve a whole range of actions without clear responsibility on behalf of the EUTF.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, African actors are often framed as 'partners'. Think of the Joint Valletta Action Plan or the new commissioner for equal partnerships, whereas in reality they are mostly only receivers of the projects.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, the security frame

that is used in certain projects can be subject to criticism. Scientific research shows that framing migration as a security issue can be a tool to justify exceptional measures.<sup>6</sup> Lastly, the strategic goal 'strengthening resilience' raises questions, as the emphasis on the resilience of the populations targeted can be a means to ignore underlying power imbalances.<sup>7</sup>

When focusing on spatial decentring some critiques can be raised. Firstly, the three windows that the EUTF distinguishes can be problematised. For example, within the EUTF the 'Sahel region' is a larger region than within the Sahel Strategy. According to Zardo, this is part of the EU's geostrategic space making project from a migration management perspective, where the EU tries to define the universal borders of strategically important migration regions.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, across the Action documents, little attention is paid to the infrastructural and geographical features of the countries concerned. It is often the case that infrastructural characteristics are described with a negative connotation. As an illustration, when the Libyan action document stressed the precarious health care infrastructure in the country, this is traced back to the civil war and the role of colonel

<sup>1</sup> "Action document: Programme de renforcement de la résilience des communautés, des ménages et des individus vulnérables à l'insécurité alimentaire et nutritionnelle au Mali.", *European Commission*, last modified, 2017, accessed September 26, 2022, [https://ec.europa.eu/trustfundforafrica/sites/default/files/t05-eutf-sah-ml-01-\\_af\\_-\\_resilience\\_nord\\_mali\\_vf.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/trustfundforafrica/sites/default/files/t05-eutf-sah-ml-01-_af_-_resilience_nord_mali_vf.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> "Action document: Stemming irregular migration in northern and central Ethiopia (SINCE).", *European Commission*, last modified, 2015, accessed September 26, 2022, [https://ec.europa.eu/trustfundforafrica/region/horn-africa/ethiopia/stemming-irregular-migration-northern-central-ethiopia\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/trustfundforafrica/region/horn-africa/ethiopia/stemming-irregular-migration-northern-central-ethiopia_en)

<sup>3</sup> Aram Ziai, "The contribution of discourse analysis to development studies." *Development and Postcolonial Studies Working Paper Series 1*, (2015).

<sup>4</sup> Stefan Keukeleire and Sharon Lecocq, "Operationalising the decentring agenda"; Channe Lindstrøm, "European Union policy on asylum and immigration. Addressing the root causes of forced migration: A justice and home affairs policy of freedom, security and justice?" *Social Policy & Administration* 39, no. 6(2019): 587-605.

<sup>5</sup> Michael Strange and Bruno Oliveira Martins, "Claiming parity between unequal partners: how African counterparts are framed in the externalisation of EU migration governance.", *Global affairs* 5, no. 3(2019): 235-246.

<sup>6</sup> Daniela Sicurelli, "Framing security and development in the EU pillar structure. How the views of the European Commission affect EU Africa policy.", *European Integration* 30, no. 2(2008): 217-234.

<sup>7</sup> Terry Cannon and Detlef Müller-Mahn, "Vulnerability, resilience and development discourses in context of climate change.", *Natural hazards* 55, no. 3(2010): 621-635.

<sup>8</sup> Federica Zardo, "The EU Trust Fund for Africa: Geopolitical space making through migration policy instruments.", *Geopolitics* 27, no. 2(2022): 584-603

Khaddaffi. However, research shows that European development projects, often with a neoliberal undertone, have had a negative impact on the infrastructure of several African countries.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, the SINCE-project in Ethiopia pays little attention to the mountainous geology of the country. Similarly, the desert and the oases, which often have a very symbolic function for the indigenous population, are often framed as 'empty spaces' in the Action documents.<sup>2</sup>

Concerning the second category: 'temporal/normative decentring', some important critiques (that also resonate with the previous category) should be mentioned. Instead of linking the precarious infrastructure in several African countries with a civil war as done by the action document in Libya, one could trace this back to the colonial period. Amongst postcolonial intellectuals, it is heavily supported that after the decolonization, and the failure of the postcolonial development state, authoritarian regimes have arisen. First, there was the fear of a new domination of western imperialists. Furthermore, unity was an important source of peace for these newly independent peoples. This resulted in the fact that many authoritarian figures, including Khaddaffi, took over the colonial power structures in a new autocratic regime. This phenomenon is known as the paradox of the decolonization struggle, where resistance

movements eventually become the new autocrats.<sup>3</sup>

The Action Papers also describe several Eurocentric norms. For example, migration within a western context is often framed as a negative phenomenon. However, research in West-Africa shows that migration is viewed mainly positively within the population. Mobility is seen as a lifestyle for these West-African populations to deal with changing seasons<sup>4</sup> and with migration management strategies.<sup>5</sup> Likewise, they used space making strategies to deal with colonial structures in the past.<sup>6</sup> Additionally, Niger, Mali and Ethiopia are known for their Tuareg populations. Notwithstanding that these groups are very diverse, they have their attitude of resistance against foreign imperialists in common.<sup>7</sup> It should be enriching for the EUTF to bear the views of these people in mind. Lastly, a lack of the non-European temporal perspective in the Action documents is the strengthening of neoliberal privatisation. Langan and Price describe that the EU is pushing a neoliberal and neo-colonial agenda in North Africa with their Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreements, which holds quite some similarities with the EUTF.<sup>8</sup> As described earlier, this is not always in the interest of the local populations. According to Zardo, this externalisation of European norms mainly serves European geopolitical interests.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Mark Langan, "Neo-colonialism and donor interventions: Western aid mechanisms.", *Neo-Colonialism and the Poverty of Development in Africa.*, (2018): 61-88.

<sup>2</sup> Chiara Brambilla, "Shifting Italy/Libya borderscapes at the interface of EU/Africa borderland: A "genealogical" outlook from the colonial era to post-colonial scenarios.", *ACME: An International Journal for Critical Geographies* 13, no.2(2014): 220-245.

<sup>3</sup> Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *"Empire"*, Harvard University Press, (2001).

<sup>4</sup> Ilke Adam et al, "West African interests in (EU) migration policy. Balancing domestic priorities with external incentives.", *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 46, no.15(2020) : 3101-3118.

<sup>5</sup> Leonie Jegen, "The Political Economy of Migration Governance in Niger.", *Arnold Bergstraesser Institute, Freiburg*, (2019).

<sup>6</sup> Olivia Bakewell, "Keeping them in their place: The ambivalent relationship between development and migration in Africa." *Third world quarterly* 29, no.7(2008): 1341-1358.

<sup>7</sup> Baz Lecocq, "Disputed desert: Decolonization, competing nationalisms and Tuareg rebellions in Mali.", Brill, (2010).

<sup>8</sup> Mark Langan and Sophia Price, "Imperialisms past and present in EU economic relations with North Africa: Assessing the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreements.", *Interventions* 22, no.6(2020): 703-721.

<sup>9</sup> Federica Zardo, "The EU Trust Fund for Africa: Geopolitical space making through migration policy instruments.", *Geopolitics* 27, no. 2(2022): 584-603

Relevant to the polity decentring category, I noticed the following tendencies; firstly, the state-centric bias is noticeable in the Action documents. Bakewell argues that it would be better to focus on people. In that sense, isn't encouraging mobility more appropriate to offer people a better life, whatever that may mean for them, rather than restricting mobility? Bakewell uses the example of Nigeria, he argues that if all Nigerians can lead a happier life by migrating, Nigeria as a country is not 'developed', but the Nigerians are.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, a focus on the state ensures a generalisation of all groups within that state, while certain groups are not compatible with national borders because of the Koloniale Conference of Berlin in 1885. Moreover, a focus on migration management within states undermines the economy of regional organisations, ECOWAS as an example. Lastly, national and regional interests can differ. For example, Agadez, a region that depends on migration as a business (restaurants, motels...) does not benefit from strengthened borders.<sup>2</sup>

Moving on to the fourth category: linguistic decentring. As mentioned above, the *lingua franca* is often English or French. Notwithstanding that a part of the population in the selected countries speaks these languages, it would be more postcolonial cosmopolitan if the

EUTF bears in mind that there are big groups that do not understand these languages.<sup>3</sup>

In addition, there is the role of international organisations. Although the involvement of these organisations may seem cosmopolitan at first sight, there can be some critiques. Firstly, these organisations often do not equally represent a global community.<sup>4</sup> Secondly, the implementation of European projects by international organisations contributes to the internationalisation of European space making strategies.<sup>5</sup> Lastly, neoliberal tendencies make NGOs less independent.<sup>6</sup> This may lead to a double amnesia: on the one hand the colonial amnesia of the European Union, on the other the amnesia of radical critique from independent NGOs.<sup>7</sup>

Relevant to the identity decentring category are the following remarks. Firstly, it is striking that the word 'vulnerable' is often used when referring to migrants. According to bell hooks, groups in the margin may be disadvantaged by uneven structures, however, the position they are in also makes them powerful.<sup>8</sup> According to Bakewell, the frequent framing of migrants as victims undermines their agency. Rather, the structures that make people unwillingly or illegally mobile, are the problem.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, African civil society groups are often neglected in European projects. Nevertheless, including civil society also has

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<sup>1</sup>Olivia Bakewell, "Keeping them in their place"

<sup>2</sup>Tsion Tadesse Abebe, "Securitisation of migration in Africa: the case of Agadez in Niger.", *ISS Africa Report*, (2019): 1-15.

<sup>3</sup>Alfredo González-Ruibal, Yonathan Sahle and Xurxo Ayán Vila, "A social archaeology of colonial war in Ethiopia." *World Archaeology* 43, no. 1(2011): 40-65.

<sup>4</sup>"Basic idea of UN is euro-centric, says Iranian sociologist.", *Tehran Times*, last modified 29 June 2020, accessed on May 2 2022, <https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/449357/Basic-idea-of-UN-is-euro-centric-says-Iranian-sociologist>.

<sup>5</sup>Julia Van Dessel, "International Delegation and Agency in the Externalization Process of EU Migration and Asylum Policy: The Role of the IOM and the UNHCR in Niger.", *European journal of migration and law* 21, no.4(2019): 435-458.

<sup>6</sup>Eva Codó, "Trade unions and NGOs under neoliberalism: Between regimenting migrants and subverting the state." *Language, migration and social inequalities*, (2013): 25-55.

<sup>7</sup>Michelle Pace and Roberto Roccu, "Imperial Pasts in the EU's Approach to the Mediterranean." *Interventions* 22, no. 6(2020): 671-685.

<sup>8</sup>bell hooks, "Choosing the margin as a space of radical openness." *Framework: The Journal of Cinema and Media*, no. 36(1989), <https://sachafrey.files.wordpress.com/2009/11/choosing-the-margin-as-a-space-of-radical-openness-ss-3301.pdf>

<sup>9</sup>Olivia Bakewell, "Keeping them in their place"

downsides, seeing as a hegemonic Europe can co-opt a politicised civil society in their projects.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, while it is positive that the Action Documents acknowledge the role of specific groups with different characteristics, like women, there is the risk of an ‘add women and stir’-method, without questioning underlying structures. Scholars state that a Feminist Foreign Policy is not feminist if it doesn’t acknowledge the colonial past.<sup>2</sup> Next then, the European Union could use the externalisation of its norms as a tool to silence the periphery or as a tool to obtain geopolitical interests, which Del Sarto describes as ‘normative empire Europe’.<sup>3</sup>

### Reconstruction

With the critiques on the EUTF that are mentioned in the previous part in mind, I will hereunder make an attempt to reconstruct the EUTF from a postcolonial cosmopolitan perspective. I drew great inspiration from the common ground between postcolonial and post-development contributions.<sup>4</sup> Two big parts can be distinguished in this reconstruction exercise. The first part thinks critically about an EUTF within the current structures, via feasible reformist proposals.<sup>5</sup> However, as Frantz Fanon said, decolonisation can only come about through a tabula rasa of the current structures that define

our system. In the second part, I bear this remark of Frantz Fanon into mind and make some revolutionary proposals.<sup>6</sup> However, it should be mentioned that despite this revolutionary or radical part being more tentative, it is important to look critically at current structures.<sup>7</sup>

According to Paris and Sisk there are three ways to deal with the paradoxes of a Eurocentric European external policy in a reformist manner. Namely: retreat, reorganise and reinvest.<sup>8</sup> In this paper I will only look at the last option. The first option, that implies a total abandonment of development aid, is heavily criticised due to the survival of the fittest notion it implies. Furthermore, I have shown that the second option of “doing more of the same”, due to the colonial roots of the European project, is neither a solution.<sup>9</sup> That makes me believe that the reinvest option is the only reasonable one from a postcolonial cosmopolitan perspective. Below, I offer reformist options on how to change the current structures without starting from scratch:

- ⊗ Recognize the colonial roots of the European Union and its development policies.<sup>10</sup>
- ⊗ The decentralisation of decisions and power. In other words, ensuring that ‘subaltern’ have the power to make decisions.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> David Chandler, “Race, culture and civil society: Peacebuilding discourse and the understanding of difference.”, *Security Dialogue* 41, no. 4(2010): 369-390.

<sup>2</sup> Roberta Guerrina et al., “Building “Feminist Power Europe”? On the possibilities and missed opportunities of feminist foreign policy.” *The Loop*. Last modified October 12, 2020, accessed May 2, 2022, <https://theloop.ecpr.eu/building-feminist-power-europe-on-the-possibilities-and-missed-opportunities-of-feminist-foreign-policy/>

<sup>3</sup> Raffaella Del Sarto, “Normative empire Europe: The European Union, its borderlands, and the ‘Arab spring’.” *JCMS: journal of common market studies* 54, no. 2(2016): 215-232.

<sup>4</sup> David Simon, “Separated by common ground? Bringing (post) development and (post) colonialism together.”, *Geographical Journal* 172, no. 1(2006): 10-21.

<sup>5</sup> Aram Ziai, “Development discourse and global history: From colonialism to the sustainable development goals.”, (2016).

<sup>6</sup> Frantz Fanon, “*The wretched of the earth.*”, Grove/Atlantic, Inc., ( 2007).

<sup>7</sup> Andre Gorz, “The way forward.”, *New Left Review* 1, no. 52(1968): 47-66.

<sup>8</sup> Roland Paris and Timothy Sisk, “Introduction: understanding the contradictions of postwar statebuilding.”, *The Dilemmas of Statebuilding.*, (2009): 15-34.

<sup>9</sup> Olivia Rutazibwa, “What if we took autonomous recovery seriously? A democratic critique of contemporary western ethical foreign policy.” *Ethical Perspectives* 20, no. 1(2013): 81-108.

<sup>10</sup> Markus Kornprobst et al, “Postcolonialism & Post-development: practical perspectives for development cooperation”, *Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung*, (2020).

<sup>11</sup> Olivia Rutazibwa, “What if we took autonomous recovery seriously?”

- ⊗ Working with partners, with unequal power structures in mind. This should be radically different from the current 'partnership discourse'. The EU should engage in democratic dialogue with countries and societies in the South about how they view (alternatives to) development.<sup>1</sup>
- ⊗ Promote self-proposed projects.<sup>2</sup>
- ⊗ Promoting radical and complete transparency about the goals, means and results of projects.<sup>3</sup>
- ⊗ Get rid of the status of 'experts', since this causes a power imbalance between the 'expert' and the 'non-expert'.<sup>4</sup>
- ⊗ Radically changing structures within organisations such as the WTO, IMF, and World Bank.<sup>5</sup>
- ⊗ Promotion of cross-fertilization between global knowledge.<sup>6</sup>
- ⊗ Implementing a culture of critique, which constantly reflects on unequal power structures.<sup>7</sup>
- ⊗ The same comments should apply to all other policy areas.<sup>8</sup>

Furthermore, Bhambra suggests that speaking in terms of reparations instead of development would be beneficial. She argues that the term 'reparations' is more in line with the historical colonial and imperial responsibility of the European Union. Moreover, the term development indicates a linear process, with the West as the example of a developed region.<sup>9</sup>

When looking in a more revolutionary manner to the current structures, I came to the understanding that a postcolonial cosmopolitan world with strengthened borders is not possible. I am convinced that refusing people to cross borders, or even externalise these borders, holds no legitimacy from a postcolonial cosmopolitan perspective. As Carens mentions, strengthened borders are based on two incorrect principles: birth right and property rights. Birth right can be simply refuted if taking the universal equality of people into mind. It is illogical that people are treated differently based on their place of birth. Property rights are based on the belief that Europeans have the only right to claim Europe because they build it.<sup>10</sup> However, postcolonial cosmopolitan authors have shown that due to intermingled histories, not in the least a colonial one, this is not the case. Additionally, without borders there cannot be states. I must conclude that also the Westphalian state system should be reconsidered when moving towards a postcolonial cosmopolitan world,<sup>11</sup> considering that states are communitarian in their core, which often leads to aggressive behaviour towards outsiders.

## Conclusion

The research question of this paper was: "Does the European Union's Trust Fund for Africa (EUTF) pass a postcolonial cosmopolitan test?". The conclusion is clear. The hypothesis that the EUTF would fail the postcolonial cosmopolitan test must be confirmed. The EUTF failed to meet the

<sup>1</sup> Sarah Delputte, Jan Orbie and Julia Schöneberg, "How post development can transform EU ('Development') Studies", last modified September 11, 2020, accessed September 25, 2022, [www.convivialthinking.org](http://www.convivialthinking.org)

<sup>2</sup> Markus Kornprobst et al, "Postcolonialism & Post-development: practical perspectives for development cooperation", *Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung*, (2020).

<sup>3</sup> Markus Kornprobst et al, "Postcolonialism & Post-development"

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> David Simon, "Separated by common ground? Bringing (post) development and (post) colonialism together." *Geographical Journal* 172, no. 1(2006): 10-21.

<sup>6</sup> Markus Kornprobst et al, "Postcolonialism & Post-development"

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Gurinder Bhambra, "A Decolonial Project for Europe.", *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies*, (2022).

<sup>10</sup> Joseph Carens, "Aliens and Citizens: The Case for Open Borders." *The Review of Politics* 49, no. 2(1987): 251-273. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1407506>

<sup>11</sup> Philip Joonsuk Cho, "Reconceiving Our Community: A Cosmopolitan Case for Open Borders.", (2018).

ideal postcolonial cosmopolitan that authors suggest in any category of the decentring agenda. However, the provincialising and engagement sections were not sufficient to speak of a postcolonial cosmopolitan analysis. They were mainly used to obtain an outside-in perspective. The reconstruction section tries to go beyond that by looking at unequal structures. I was inspired by the common ground between post-development and postcolonial literature for reformist proposals about reconstructing the European development policy. However, a more revolutionary way of thinking was necessary. A postcolonial cosmopolitan world can only come about if borders are questioned. In addition, the Westphalian state system seems to be the biggest obstacle towards a world with open borders.

Nonetheless, this research has some disadvantages. Firstly, to understand phenomena such as migration and development, it is best to use an interdisciplinary approach.<sup>1</sup> Since this paper is an individual work, I have failed to do so.

Secondly, one could question the top-down character of my own paper being a western student in political science. Furthermore, postcolonialism is eurocentric itself. Why do we look at the history of European colonialism and not at other (African) processes during history?<sup>2</sup> Lastly, the biggest disadvantage of this discourse analysis is the lack of the narratives from the people who bear the consequences of the EUTF policy, namely, the subaltern.<sup>3</sup>

My biggest recommendation, with the downsides of my research in mind, is that future research should be focused on the lived experiences and stories of these 'subaltern'. The final goal should not be convincing people of the good life but letting them decide what a good life is for them. Moreover, we should keep bearing the unequal political, economical, social and cultural processes that decide whose voice is heard and whose not, in mind. Or as Trouillot said: "*Who has the power to name what?*".<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Carolina Brettel and James Hollifield, *Migration theory: Talking across disciplines.*, Routledge, (2014).

<sup>2</sup> David Simon, "Separated by common ground? Bringing (post) development and (post) colonialism together." *Geographical Journal* 172, no. 1(2006): 10-21.

<sup>3</sup> Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?," *Colonial discourse and post-colonial theory*, (2015): 66-111.

<sup>4</sup> Michel-Rolph Trouillot, "Silencing the past: Power and the production of history.," Beacon Press, (2015).



# GIES HONOURS PAPERS

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## COLONIAL SENSITIVITY OF THE HOUSE OF EUROPEAN HISTORY

Myth of Immaculate Conception regarding the birth of the European Economic Community

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The idea for the House of European History (HEH) was first suggested in the European Parliament in March of 2006, by German President Horst Köhler. Hans-Gert Pöttering, former President of the European Parliament, relaunched Köhler's idea during his inaugural speech on the 13<sup>th</sup> of February in 2007 in Strasbourg. While the idea for the HEH was launched in 2007, it would take 10 years for the museum to open its door to the public. Initially, the idea for the HEH was questioned, criticised, and sometimes even mocked by European institutions, various MEP's, historians, and academics. "A hobby project of a few men from the Brussels Bubble," "EU propaganda intended to further the European integration project," and "A pro-EU message of peace and unification" are just a few of the critical statements on Pöttering's brainchild<sup>1</sup>.

There is an imbalance regarding the academic literature on different floors within the museum. Especially the fourth floor of the HEH, which focuses on post-war Europe, seemed rather undocumented. Besides, the literature study also reveals an academic disgruntlement regarding certain historical gaps in the HEH. Apparently, the post-war exhibition devoted so little attention to the end of Europe's overseas empires that visitors might be forgiven if they left thinking either that colonialism had been over long before the EEC began, or that colonialism had never ended at all.<sup>2</sup> The former director of the HEH acknowledges and recognises these historical gaps and states that certain events were not included to avoid "a mere overview of European history".<sup>3</sup> This contradicts the HEH's mission of enhancing and understanding European history in all its complexity, encouraging the exchange of

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<sup>1</sup> Elizabeth Buettner, "What - and who - is 'European' in the Postcolonial EU? Inclusions and Exclusions in the European Parliament's House of European History," *Low Countries Historical Review*, no. 133 (December 2018): 132 – 148. James Panichi, "House of European History gets cash and a lot of flak," *Politico*, December 30, 2015. <https://www.politico.eu/article/house-of-european-history-gets-cashand-a-lot-of-flak/>.

<sup>2</sup> Elizabeth Buettner, "What - and who - is 'European' in the Postcolonial EU?"

<sup>3</sup> Andrea Mork, "Constructing the House of European History," *European Commemoration* (January 2017): 218-235.

ideas and questioning assumptions while raising awareness about the multiplicity of perspectives and interpretations.<sup>1</sup>

In an attempt to fill both lacunae - academic literature on both the fourth floor and representation of European colonial history throughout the museum - this paper seeks to answer the following question: 'How colonially sensitive is the House of European History with regard to the birth of the EEC?' This by means of a combination of both a literature study and in-situ research. To interpret the findings of the empirical analysis, an original two-dimensional conceptual framework was created. Both the composition and operationalisation of this framework are discussed in the second chapter. Prior to the in-situ research, three initial hypotheses (to be found in the third chapter) were formulated. The empirical analysis, in-situ research, and application of the original framework are discussed in the fourth chapter. The final chapter then revisits the hypotheses and formulates the conclusion.

The purpose of this research is not mere problematising. While the central research question and earlier mentioned lacunae might suggest otherwise, this paper truly intends to contribute to the HEH and its exhibitions. By problematising certain lacunae, problem solving simultaneously occurs since the museum could pick up on certain suggestions and thus become more colonially sensitive. However, the objective of this research remains analysing the colonial sensitivity on the fourth floor of the museum regarding the EEC's birth – not creating a list of suggestions for the HEH.

## Chapter 1: From dental clinic to safe haven for European identity

The HEH, located in the Eastman Building, officially opened its doors to the public on the 6<sup>th</sup> of May 2017. The building was constructed in 1931 by George Eastman, an American philanthropist and inventor of the Kodak camera. Originally, it served as a dental clinic for disadvantaged children. Ever since 1985, the European Parliament has rented the building to accommodate several administrative services. As of 2017, the Eastman building is used to accommodate the HEH: a museum with a 4000 m<sup>2</sup> permanent exhibition, 1370 items, and a corresponding audio guided tour that is accessible in all 24 official EU languages. The museum consists of six exhibitions on five different floors, each focusing on a particular timeframe. This paper will specifically focus on the fourth floor of the museum, 'Rebuilding a divided continent', discusses post-war Europe and the tension on the European continent during the Cold War.

The start of this paper briefly touched upon the widespread criticism that the HEH had to deal with over the years. Especially right-wing groups never missed a chance to criticize, attack, and condemn the museum. While critics were to be found everywhere in the EU, some of the European Member States seemed to take the blue ribbon in this case. British MEPs from UKIP (UK Independence Party) referred to the HEH as 'the House of Horrors' or 'the House of the Smallest Common Denominator' - terms eagerly adopted by British tabloids – while portraying the museum as an expensive, ill-conceived palace of propaganda<sup>2</sup>. In 2011, an article published in the Telegraph stated that "[t]he British taxpayer's contribution to the museum, founded by MEPs 'to cultivate the memory of European history and unification', will be £18.6 million at a time when

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<sup>1</sup>House of European History, "Mission & vision," *Historia-europe.ep.eu*. n.d. <https://historia-europa.ep.eu/en/mission-vision>.

<sup>2</sup>Laurens Bluekens, "Maarten van Rossem en Geert Mak op stap in Brussel," *Maartenonline.nl*, April, 2017. <https://www.maartenonline.nl/maarten-van-rossem-en-geert-mak-op-stap-in-brussel/>; Jennifer Rankin, "Brexit through the gift shop: museum of European history divides critics," *The Guardian*. August 12, 2018. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/aug/12/museum-past-critics-divided-house-european-history>.

many museums and galleries in Britain are facing painful cuts in their funding”<sup>1</sup>.

Along with the UK, Poland was frequently featured in the debate against the HEH. Shortly after the official opening of the museum, the European Parliament dedicated a conference to the museum, organized by Polish MEP Anna Fotyga and the PiS delegation: the Polish right-wing Law and Justice Party. At this conference, former Polish President Kaczynski stated that the HEH did not meet the ‘two conditions that are necessary for a common European project to succeed’: common roots and the abandonment of imperialist and neo-imperialist aspirations<sup>2</sup>. Next to the HEH’s exhibition, the financial aspect of the project caused massive upheaval<sup>3</sup>. Still, the realisation of the museum ended up costing ‘several millions’ below the originally estimated expenses<sup>4</sup>. The annual costs for the security and operation (close to €11.5 million, paid by the European Parliament), however, increase every year.

Aside from the political criticism, the museum’s usefulness and purpose has been questioned by various academics and historians. For instance, professor van Weyenberg (Leiden University) is not in favour of prioritising a European common history, which is according to her a myth. Instead, she calls for a critical look at this museum and an analytical look at the European perception of history. Rigney agrees with van Weyenberg by describing the HEH as a museum that narrates European history in a top-down manner which is not compatible with the museum’s mission<sup>5</sup>. Despite the European Parliament’s strong emphasis on a diverse, inclusive, and nuanced HEH, several authors<sup>6</sup> seem to agree that the HEH contains historical gaps. While the HEH succeeds in illustrating how the European colonial superpower was guilty of exploitation and racism in the 19th century, it simultaneously fails to acknowledge that these colonial relationships and structures remain relevant to this day and therefore fails to display an inclusive history that leaves room for debate and pays

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<sup>1</sup> Bruno Waterfield, “House of European History’ cost estimates double to £137 million,” *The Telegraph*. April 3, 2011. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/eu/8424826/House-of-European-History-cost-estimates-double-to-137-million.html>.

<sup>2</sup> European Conservatives and Reformists, “House of History or House of ideology? In the EP about the House of European History,” *ECRgroup.eu*. September 7, 2017. [https://ecrgroup.eu/article/house\\_of\\_history\\_or\\_house\\_of\\_ideology\\_in\\_the\\_ep\\_about\\_the\\_house](https://ecrgroup.eu/article/house_of_history_or_house_of_ideology_in_the_ep_about_the_house).

<sup>3</sup> Chris Doidge, “Does Europe need a £44m history museum?,” *BBC*, February 12, 2013. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-21383375>; Europa Nu, “Ophef over financiering museum voor Europese geschiedenis,” *Europa Nu*, March 16, 2011. [https://www.europa-nu.nl/id/vinopulfnfx9/nieuws/ophef\\_over\\_financiering\\_museum\\_voor?ctx=vh6ukzb3nnt0&s0e=vhdubxdwqrzw](https://www.europa-nu.nl/id/vinopulfnfx9/nieuws/ophef_over_financiering_museum_voor?ctx=vh6ukzb3nnt0&s0e=vhdubxdwqrzw); Daily Mail Reporter, “Row brewing as cost of new Brussels history museum soars,” *The Daily Mail*, April 6, 2011. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/travel/article-1373596/Brussels-HouseOf-European-History-museum-Row-brewing-escalating-costs.html>;

James Panichi, “House of European History gets cash and a lot of flak,” *Politico*, December 30, 2015. <https://www.politico.eu/article/house-of-european-history-gets-cashand-a-lot-of-flak/>;

Astrid Van Weyenberg, “Europa als verhaal? Een kritische lezing van het Huis van de Europese Geschiedenis,” *Vooyo*, no. 35 (January 2017): 20 – 30; Bruno Waterfield, “House of European History’ cost estimates double to £137 million”

<sup>4</sup> Klaus Welle, “The making of the House of European History: How was it possible?,” In *Creating the House of European History*, edited by Andrea Mork and Perikles Christodoulou, 12 – 13. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2018.

<sup>5</sup> Ann Rigney, “Transforming memory and the European project,” *New Literary History*, no. 43 (October 2012): 607 – 628.

<sup>6</sup> Elizabeth Buettner, “What - and who - is ‘European’ in the Postcolonial EU”; Filip Ejodus, “Anxiety, Dissonance and Imperial Amnesia of the European Union,” *Uluslararası İlişkiler Dergisi*, no. 19 (March 2022): 1 – 16; Jakub Jareš, “The House of European History: In Search of a Common History and its Future,” *Cultures of History*. October 12, 2017. <https://www.cultures-of-history.uni-jena.de/exhibitions/the-house-of-european-history>; Astrid Van Weyenberg, “Europa als verhaal?”

attention to different experiences and stories within the EU<sup>1</sup>. On top of that, there's a lack of regard for the memories of those who have lived through the European colonial vicissitudes: a remarkable blind spot given the museum's emphasis on shared memories. Especially since these memories and experiences are both part of the shared history of European citizens as well as the shared history of those who lived in the former colonies<sup>2</sup>. Despite this academic criticism, little has been written about the representation of European colonial activities in the post-war era – especially the Inner Six's remaining colonial ties at the time of the EEC's birth.

## Chapter 2: Decolonising strategies and the Myth of Immaculate Conception

To analyse the colonial sensitivity of the HEH regarding the birth of the EEC, a theoretical framework was sought within postcolonial literature. However, none of the proposed frameworks specifically measured colonial sensitivity. Therefore, a unique, two-dimensional conceptual framework was created. The first dimension was developed by using Sabaratnam's Typology of Decolonising Strategies (2011).<sup>3</sup> Four decolonising strategies were used to determine how HEH should portray 'the other' (all regions and countries that were still colonised by or under the rule of founding members of the EEC by 1957) and 'the self' (the Inner Six, the founding EEC members) to be considered colonially sensitive. Given the objective of this research, a second dimension was added based on 'Eurafrica' by Hansen and Jonsson (2014) in order to define the Myth of Immaculate Conception and applies this concept to the 'other' and 'self'.<sup>4</sup>

### 2.1 Sabaratnam's typology of decolonising strategies

In an attempt to rethink world politics by focusing on alternative research topics, Sabaratnam developed a theoretical framework that resulted in an innovative typology of six different decolonising strategies that can be used to further structure the overall decolonial perspective.<sup>5</sup> The first dimension of the original conceptual framework was created by using four of these decolonising strategies and applying them to the question of how the HEH should portray 'the other' and 'the self' to maintain a colonially sensitive approach. By using 'the other' and 'the self', and especially by juxtaposing these two constructions, the notion of 'othering' is introduced. Brons states that the concept of othering originates from Hegel's dialectic of identification and instantiation in the encounter of the self with some other in his Master-Slave dialectic.<sup>6</sup> Othering has grown into a theoretical school of thought through feminist and postcolonial theory and thanks to critical theorists such as Spivak, Said, Bhabha and Fanon. Given the central objective of the HEH ("exploring how history has produced a common European memory and continues to influence the lives of EU citizens today and in the future"<sup>7</sup>) it is likely that the practice of othering is used throughout the HEH. When exploring and analysing a so-called common memory, 'the self' is at the centre of this analysis which makes the presence of 'the other' undeniable.

#### ⊗ 'The other'

Sabaratnam's first principle, pointing out discursive Orientalism, is strongly based on the insights of Edward W. Said on how Orientalism subordinates the East to the West and how it laid

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<sup>1</sup> Van Weyenberg, "Europa als verhaal?"

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Meera Sabaratnam (2011). "IR in Dialogue... but Can We Change the Subjects? A Typology of Decolonising Strategies for the Study of World Politics," *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 39(3), 781 – 803

<sup>4</sup> Peo Hansen and Stefan Jonsson, *Eurafrica*. (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014).

<sup>5</sup> Sabaratnam, "IR in Dialogue".

<sup>6</sup> Lajos L. Brons, "Othering, an analysis," *Transcience, a Journal of Global Studies*, no. 6 (January 2015): 69 – 90.

<sup>7</sup> Antonio Tajani, "Foreword," In *Creating the House of European History*, edited by Andrea Mork and Perikles Christodoulou, 9 – 10. Luxemburg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2018.

the foundation for Western colonialism. According to Said, the contribution of Western academics, writers, and intellectuals to the image of the Subordinate East has also strengthened “the idea of a European identity that is superior to all non-European peoples and cultures”<sup>1</sup>. Agency, the ability to act or to choose how to act, is also inextricably linked to this. According to Said, the established discourse perceives all non-Western countries as those that “beseech domination”<sup>2</sup>. Therefore, countries that have been colonised in the past are treated as objects of another subject, the West, which in turn perceives those countries as areas with a lack of agency that are in some paternalized need of external control. Sabaratnam’s first decolonising strategy attempts to raise awareness of how Western political discourses and systems of knowledge objectify and thus minimise the South.

Sabaratnam’s fourth strategy draws attention to the human experience of the subaltern, those that are normally excluded or suppressed by modernist history. Inspired by Fanon’s engagement with the importance of phenomenological aspects of colonialism, Sabaratnam pleads for analysing world politics from various alternative and subaltern perspectives while incorporating Spivak’s ideas on subaltern experiences. Sabaratnam also relies heavily on the standpoint theory which stems from the feminist school of thought and assumes that knowledge systems are strongly attached to a social hierarchy stratified by personal characteristics such as race, gender, and class<sup>3</sup>. According to Harding, the top of social hierarchies lose sight of real human relations and the true nature of social reality whereas those at the bottom have a unique and more insightful standpoint because their marginalised positions

make it easier to explain social and natural problems.<sup>4</sup>

#### ⊗ ‘The self’

Sabaratnam’s second and third principles, the deconstruction of historical myths of European development and challenging Eurocentric historiographies, are used to signify ‘the self’. With the deconstruction of historical myths of European development, Sabaratnam attempts to get rid of the long-standing view of the European superior and enlightened continent that had an overall advantage over the rest of the world. She questions and challenges this Eurocentric perception of the world by using Hobson’s ideas on the relations between East and West. By challenging Eurocentric historiographies, Sabaratnam criticises the assumption of Hobsbawm that colonial territories only become relevant from the moment their fate intertwines with the fate of their coloniser. Sabaratnam also advocates for reasoning through connected histories rather than various geographically delineated histories reproduced from a Western perspective.

#### 2.2 *The EEC’s birth: Myth of Immaculate Conception or cunning geopolitical plan?*

In ‘Eurafrica’, Hansen and Jonsson examine the relationship between European integration and colonialism while elaborating on the complete exclusion of this relationship from both EU studies and histories of colonialism. Colonialism and decolonisation have been crucial in the European quest for a collective sense of European identity among the citizens of the EU. However, this influence is yet to be recognised and prioritised in European identity politics. By scrutinising the historiography of European integration and recovering its colonial and geopolitical dimension, the authors want to

<sup>1</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978).

<sup>2</sup> Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*. (New York: Vintage Books, 1994).

<sup>3</sup> Sally G. Harding, *The feminist standpoint theory reader: Intellectual and political controversies*. (London: Psychology Press, 2004).

<sup>4</sup> Elizabeth Borland, “Standpoint theory,” *Britannica*. April, 5, 2022. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/standpoint-theory>

address the lacuna in studies of Europe and place the history of European integration on a new foundation. They claim that all discourse that portrays European integration as an anti-colonial project is a myth, a foundational tale of pure origins, of an Immaculate Conception, which sets in place the main elements of a wishful and idealised European identity<sup>1</sup>. The authors perceive this as a threat to critical thinking since it reduces the European project to something unrelated to the European imperialist project - which it is not. They believe in the inseparable connection between Europe and Eurafrika: the one could not have existed without the other. This belief aligns with Coudenhove-Kalergy's dictum: 'To save Africa for Europe, is to save Europe by way of Africa'<sup>2</sup>.

Hansen and Jonsson are unanimous that Eurafrika was indispensable for both Europe's geopolitical and economic survival: a dynamic that was nurtured by Founding Fathers of European integration and convinced Eurafrikanists like Guy Mollet who believed that Eurafrika was the solution to the world's problems<sup>3</sup>. The authors designate the Paris Conference of February 1957 as the decisive moment of the EEC's colonial settlement while delivering the EEC as such - meaning that without a colonial agreement, there would not have been a European integration agreement and vice versa<sup>4</sup>. As regards the European states, pre-EEC, they believe that Eurafrika enabled them to legitimise their remaining influence over the African continent concerning the matter of anticolonial movements, whilst never abandoning their role as patronising protector<sup>5</sup>. Simultaneously, Eurafrika enabled African states to make a compromise with their former colonial rulers

from 1957 onwards: advantageous for both parties, but at the expense of the majority of the African population who experienced decolonisation as non-existent<sup>6</sup>. Hansen and Jonsson believe that the real agenda behind the EEC's birth was to adapt international relations and economic means of production to a new world order in which African states remained dependent so European states could maintain their control over African resources<sup>7</sup>. Afterwards, Eurafrika disappeared from the political agenda as the EEC facilitated European intervention on the African continent in a more efficient and less costly way: by using development aid and diplomatic advice.

Hansen and Jonsson describe the relation between the foundation of the EEC and the African decolonisation as a gradual process that made the old system seamlessly transform into a new one, without changing the fundamental parameters determining the relation of Africa and Europe<sup>8</sup>. Eurafrika's disappearance from history thus enabled the Myth of Immaculate Conception of the EEC: the idea of the latter and later the EU as a pure origin and fresh start<sup>9</sup>. While Eurafrika may be underexposed in the current history books, it has never been more relevant. Hansen and Jonsson claim that a basic understanding of Eurafrikan history is crucial in any attempt to understand the 'new scramble for Africa' and the role of the EU in this dynamic<sup>10</sup>.

### *2.3 Original conceptual framework for the colonial sensitivity of the House of European History*

For an exhibition to have a colonially sensitive approach, two out of six conditions from the first dimension of the framework should be present:

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<sup>1</sup> Hansen and Jonsson, *Eurafrika*, p. 5.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, p. 234.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, p. 194.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, p. 234.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, p. 15.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, p. 16.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*, p. 15 – 16.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, p. 257 – 258.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*, p. 258.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*, p. 275 – 278.

one from each category ('other' vs. 'self'). The HEH undoubtedly had to adhere to certain limits, both in terms of space and quantity of information. This could result in the rebuttal that meeting all six conditions is too demanding. When the application of the first dimension categorises an exhibition as non-colonially sensitive, chances are slim that a debunking of

the myth will follow since a colonially sensitive context is crucial. However, a colonially sensitive exhibition does not guarantee a debunking of the myth. Following the conceptual framework, an exhibition debunks this myth and is therefore colonial sensitive regarding the EEC's birth when meeting two conditions, one in both categories of 'the other' and 'the self'.

Figure 1: Original conceptual framework for the colonial sensitivity of the House of European History

|             | Colonially sensitive approach  | Myth of Immaculate Conception of the EEC  |
|-------------|--|---|
| 'The other' | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⊗ <i>'The other' is never objectified, patronised, or portrayed as in need of something only 'the self' can provide.</i></li> <li>⊗ <i>'The other' has agency.</i></li> <li>⊗ <i>'The other' and their human experience regarding what was imposed on them by 'the self' are treated with respect.</i></li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⊗ <i>Recognition of the subaltern's share in the EEC's birth.</i></li> <li>⊗ <i>Representation of the subaltern experience as regards territorial decisions following the Treaties of Rome.</i></li> </ul> |
| 'The self'  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⊗ <i>'The self' is deconstructed as the primary subject of world history.</i></li> <li>⊗ <i>'The self' is not portrayed as superior.</i></li> <li>⊗ <i>The connection between the histories of 'the self' and 'the other' is recognised and respected.</i></li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⊗ <i>Recognition of European motivations for Eurafrica.</i></li> <li>⊗ <i>Recognition of remaining inequality after the EEC's birth.</i></li> </ul>  |

Source: Own synthesis, based on Meera Sabaratnam<sup>1</sup> and Peo Hansen & Stefan Jonsson<sup>2</sup>.

### Chapter 3: Initial hypotheses

#### 1: The perspective of 'the self' is all-important

If the HEH does indeed adhere a predominant European point of view, this should be questioned and problematized since interaction with 'the other' were crucial to develop a common European identity. The histories of all Inner Six members and therefore the history of the EEC itself have been influenced tremendously by 'the other' ever since the beginning of Western colonialism. Therefore, 'the other' should at least be represented. This aligns with Sabaratnam's second and third decolonising strategies: challenging Eurocentric historiographies and the presumption of the West as the primary subject

of modern world history and international relations.

#### 2: Little to no attention to the human experiences of 'the other'

Whereas the previous hypothesis assumes the absence of a general subaltern stance, this hypothesis concentrates specifically on the representation of subaltern experiences and consequences of colonisation. There must be no subaltern stance to mention 'the other's' distresses and sorrows as regards suppression. That is of course only if the fourth floor mentions the European colonial atrocities. Colonialism needs to be approached as a shared European experience<sup>3</sup>. Therefore, the human experiences

<sup>1</sup> Meera Sabaratnam, "IR in Dialogue"

<sup>2</sup> Hansen and Jonsson, "Eurafrica"

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, p. 261.

of those who were colonised contribute to the common European history and identity. If the HEH indeed aims to represent a shared European identity, human suffering caused by European colonialism should be represented.

### *3: The Myth of Immaculate Conception is not debunked*

The preservation of this myth equals a perception of the EEC which discerns European integration as something that is irrespective from European colonial influence. It approaches the EEC as pure, immaculate, and free of colonial possessions. This third hypothesis can be divided into two sub-elements: the non-recognition of the EEC's colonial possessions, and therefore the nonrecognition of Eurafica as geopolitical conception. The first part of this hypothesis assumes that the fourth floor doesn't represent the Inner Six's colonial possessions as part of the EEC, neither in the present nor the past. If this is indeed the case, it is likely that Eurafica is not mentioned on the fourth floor. This non-recognition can be perceived as a preservation of the myth. Failing to debunk the myth wouldn't make sense if the HEH truly wants to represent the common European history and identity since Eurafica was indispensable for both Europe's geopolitical and economic survival<sup>1</sup>.

## Chapter 4: Empirical analysis

*The fourth floor of the HEH consists out of five smaller exhibitions. Since this paper is a shortened version of a more extensive study, this chapter only provides the application of the conceptual framework to the relevant exhibitions. The thorough description of these exhibitions, together with the analysis of the exhibitions that didn't mention the EEC's birth, and an additional analysis of the representation of European colonialism on the third floor of the HEH can be found in the original study of this paper.*

### *4.1 Rebuilding Europe*

The first exhibition on the fourth floor focuses on post-war Europe, a continent in ruins, and puts a

strong emphasis on the bipolar climate of world politics at the time. It should be no surprise that this kind of exhibition is dominated by 'the self' and the related European point of view. Still, this could easily go hand in hand with a certain level of representation as regards 'the other'. It is safe to say that this representation is non-existing, which results in an exhibition that fails to deconstruct 'the self' as the primary subject of world history. This Eurocentric approach is also confirmed by the maps that are used throughout this exhibition. All of them exclusively show the European continent, without mentioning countries and territories that were considered part of the European national territory such as French Algeria or the Belgian Congo. Even more so, when a map did include one of these countries or territories it was nowhere indicated as an actual part of Europe. Instead, it was covered up by other elements like a map legend. While 'the self' is not explicitly portrayed as superior in this exhibition, the silence as regards the multiculturalism of Allied troops during both World Wars has a superior feel to it. Especially the French promises of basic human rights such as voting rights in return for military service of 'the other'. By neglecting this multicultural dimension, the exhibition also fails to recognise the human experience of 'the other' as regards these historical events. Given all this, it is impossible to argue that 'the other' is awarded the slightest amount of agency. The only condition of the first dimension of the framework met by the first exhibition is the one concerning portraying the other' as in need of something only 'the self' can provide. According to the conceptual framework, the first exhibition on the fourth floor does not adhere to a colonially sensitive approach. It is debatable whether the second dimension of the framework is applicable. However, the conception of Eurafica was already established before the post-war era. At the time, some OCT's were considered part of the European national territory, knowing that these areas could be of great importance as regards a geopolitical Eurafica. Therefore, the second

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid, p. 194



dimension is indeed applicable to the first exhibition. When applying this dimension, none of the conditions seemed to be met. Eurafrica is never mentioned in the first exhibition. Consequently, there is no recognition of the European motivation for Eurafrica or the subaltern's share in the EEC's birth or the remaining inequality afterwards. Lastly, there is no attention to the subaltern experience of being considered part of the European territory. In short, the conceptual framework assessed the first exhibition as a non-colonially sensitive exhibition that didn't debunk the Myth of Immaculate Conception.

#### *4.2 Cold War*

The second exhibition illustrates the emergence of a bipolar world order characterised by two actors: the US and the USSR. The exhibition does recognise the existence of countries that didn't seek to join one of the two existing blocks. This could have been the impetus for a colonially sensitive exhibition. Unfortunately, this fell through by the maintained, predominant European stance: discussing the Swiss neutrality rather than the Non-Aligned Movement or the subaltern quest of independence, and portraying Dag Hammarskjöld as a political figure who was 'particularly intent in bringing peace to Congo', instead of using the specific cartoon to include the Congolese perspective on and experiences regarding their history of (de)colonisation. In the case of the Belgian Congo, the placement of the Lumumba painting (a dark recess of the bipolar corridor), and absence of some background information illustrates the HEH's attitude towards this part of history and the human experiences of those who lived through it.

In general, these examples portray 'the self' as superior and the primary subject of world history. The cartoon on Hammarskjöld, a white male and political figure who aims to restore peace in Congo, can be perceived as patronising and portray 'the other' as in need of something only 'the self' can provide. This also means that there

is no representation of the subaltern share in histories, their agency, or experiences. The second exhibition on the fourth floor of the HEH fails to meet a single condition of the first dimension of the conceptual framework. Various parts of the second exhibition, like a 14-minute video montage on building various ways of European unity, provided several opportunities to acknowledge Eurafrica, the subaltern role in the EEC's birth and the subaltern stance in general. This was, however, not the case. Given the fact that none of the conditions of the second dimension are met, the conceptual framework assessed this exhibition as a non-colonially sensitive exhibition that didn't debunk the Myth of Immaculate Conception.

#### *4.3 Milestones of European integration I*

Of all exhibitions, this one is best suited for debunking the Myth of Immaculate since it features the emergence of the EEC and the role of the Founding Fathers: political figures who played a crucial role in the creation of Eurafrica as geopolitical conception. The OCTs were perceived as the last hurdle the Inner Six had to overcome to reach an agreement on the Treaties of Rome<sup>1</sup>. It all started out quite promising when the exhibition mentioned several OCTs on a displayed page of the Treaties of Rome, explaining the new customs procedure from the moment the Common Market was created. Despite this explicit reference, there's a lack of explanation on the OCT's or their role in the geopolitical structures of both the EEC and the Common Market which strongly benefited the European continent in the past and present. As a result, the connection between the histories of 'the self' and 'the other' (and the latter's share in the EEC's birth) is neither recognised nor respected. In addition, there is no recognition of the subaltern experience regarding European decisions on OCTs in the context of the Treaties of Rome. The persistent inequality after the EEC's birth also remains undiscussed which contributes to the lack of agency for 'the other'.

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid, p. 166.

As for the exhibition on the Founding Fathers, the HEH goes to great lengths to glorify these political figures: the exhibition praises them for their pragmatic approach and striving towards European peace, human rights, and democracy which adds to the image of a superior Europe, a primary subject of world history. While their envisaged sphere of influence was not limited to mere continental Europe, Eurafica is not mentioned once. By not recognising this Eurafican dream, it is not possible to address or condemn the European benefits of such a geopolitical structure. The application of the conceptual framework revealed a lack of recognition towards the subaltern in combination with the glorification of 'the self'. The framework assessed this exhibition as a non-colonially sensitive exhibition that didn't debunk the Myth of Immaculate Conception. Despite all opportunities to recognise 'the other' or the subaltern share in the EEC's birth, the exhibition failed to do so, making it the least colonially sensitive of all exhibitions on the fourth floor of the HEH.

## Chapter 5: Conclusion – “Some things we want to remember, some things we like to forget”

### 5.1 Initial hypotheses revisited

#### 1: *The perspective of 'the self' is all-important*

Prior to the start of the in-situ research, a more European-minded stance seemed evident since the HEH aims to explore how history has produced a common European memory. The empirical analysis has indeed confirmed this predominant European point of view. None of the exhibitions succeeded in deconstructing 'the self' as the primary subject of world history. The European continent, perspective, and values were often portrayed as superior. This Eurocentric attitude was expressed in various ways such as the inappropriate use of certain maps that only covered the European continent,

or the glorification of 'the self' as was the case with Dag Hammarskjöld or the Founding Fathers. The HEH is supposed to be a museum that represents European history “based on solid academic research in an open and larger framework of international and global historical developments, rather than a “narrow EU museum”<sup>1</sup>. It is safe to say that the findings of the empirical analysis cast doubt on this goal.

#### 2: *Little to no attention to the human experiences of 'the other'*

Next to a predominant European stance, a lack of representation of subaltern experiences regarding European colonial suppression was assumed. Despite the low threshold, the empirical analysis revealed that none of the exhibitions passed the test of the first dimension. Of all conditions from the first dimension, acknowledging subaltern experiences and the intertwined histories of 'the other' and 'the self' were the least present. This resulted in neglecting the subaltern share in the EEC's birth, the non-recognition of possible subaltern struggles following the Treaties of Rome or integration into the Common Market. The lack of context on certain displayed pieces can also be perceived as a way of not recognizing subaltern experiences. According to the three criteria formulated by the museum in the 2013 brochure, the recognition of subaltern perspectives should be included in the permanent exhibition of the HEH since it concerns a process that originated in Europe (European integration facilitated the relation between 'the self' and 'the other'), is spread across Europe (all Inner Six member made an agreement on the OCTs and thus the subaltern in the context of the Treaties of Rome) and is relevant to this day (OCTs still exist, as is the inequality between 'the other' and 'the self').

#### 3: *The Myth of Immaculate Conception is not debunked*

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<sup>1</sup>Oliver Rathkolb, “Negotiating Europe’s past and the building of two Houses of History,” In *Creating the House of European History*, edited by Andrea Mork and Perikles Christodoulou, 39. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2018.

The last of the three hypotheses formulated a provisional answer to the central research question. The first sub-element of this hypothesis was confirmed since the HEH failed to recognise the geopolitical importance of these countries and territories. For example: in the first exhibition, 'Rebuilding Europe', Algeria was not assigned a sphere of influence even though the country was considered an integrated part of the French national territory. According to the 2013 criteria, this recognition should be included since it concerns a process that originated in Europe (French Algeria as part of the French national territory), is spread across Europe (all other EEC countries recognised French Algeria) and is relevant to this day as the historical relation between these two countries remains influential. Next to the case of French Algeria, the maps used on the fourth floor, specifically the non-representation of the African continent, also strengthen the claim of non-recognition of these countries and territories. On top of that, there was no mention of Eurafrica, neither as geopolitical conception at the time of the EEC's birth nor in any other capacity. However, according to the 2013 criteria, the HEH should make mention of Eurafrica in the permanent exhibition. After all, the development of Eurafrica as geopolitical conception can be perceived as a process that originated in Europe, was spread across Europe, and remains relevant to this day (among others, in the context of the new scramble for Africa).

## *5.2 Findings and conclusion*

The HEH pursues two goals: stressing the importance for modern Europeans of historical awareness and confronting the deep-seated assumption that European history is no more than the sum of its constituent national histories.<sup>1</sup> Davies argues that "the fathers of the European movement were inspired by the idea that we have learned from our past" and that "the HEH must expose the evil alongside the

achievements"<sup>2</sup>. The findings of the empirical analysis indeed reveal an extensive representation of these achievements. The evil, however, is continuously kept in the dark. As for the content of the exhibitions, the HEH has two objectives: the promotion of a coherent historical and comprehensible narrative, on the one hand, and raising awareness about the existence of a multitude of different historical interpretations, points of view, and nuances of perception and memory on the other. While this paper cannot assess the first objective, it is safe to say that the fourth floor of the HEH failed in providing the envisaged plurality as stated in the second objective.

The empirical analysis showed that, following the first dimension of the conceptual framework, none of the exhibitions is colonially sensitive: an alarming conclusion given the very reasonable threshold. In case of a non-colonially sensitive exhibition, a debunking of the Myth of Immaculate Conception seemed unlikely. Therefore, following the assessment of the exhibitions, any debunking seemed virtually impossible. This assumption turned out to be correct as the empirical analysis revealed that none of the three exhibitions came close to questioning the Eurocentric perception on the EEC's birth, let alone a debunking the myth. Considering these findings, the conclusion of this research is that the fourth floor of the HEH is not colonially sensitive as regards the EEC's birth. The empirical analysis resulted in a confirmation of the initial hypotheses: the fourth floor of the HEH is characterised by a predominant European point of view and the non-recognition of subaltern perspectives and experiences. Throughout the fourth floor, colonial ties between the EEC and OCTs (but also countries as Algeria) were systematically silenced. On top of that, Eurafrica was not even mentioned once on the fourth floor of the HEH, even though key figures in the road towards European integration like Guy Mollet publicly admitted their Eurafrican vision on

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<sup>1</sup> Norman Davies, "A mission statement," In *Creating the House of European History*, edited by Andrea Mork and Perikles Christodoulou, 82. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2018.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

multiple occasions. Why conceal every aspect that could possibly harm the image of Europe as something pure, immaculate, and free of colonial possessions? Especially since the existence of Eurafrika meets all three criteria from the 2013 brochure and should thus be featured in the HEH. The process of creating the geopolitical conception of Eurafrika is originated in Europe, related to all Inner Six members, and continues to be relevant to this day: in postcolonial studies, and contemporary dynamics such as the 'new scramble for Africa'. On top of that, there is the inseparable connection between the European continent and the geopolitical conception of Eurafrika and how the one could not have existed without the other. Eurafrika's disappearance from the history of European integration and the history of colonialism highlights that colonialism, too, needs to be approached as a shared (Western) European experience<sup>1</sup>. Shared European experiences: the very thing that is claimed to be of paramount importance in the HEH. Therefore, neglecting the history of colonialism and the importance of Eurafrika in the EEC's birth goes against all claimed objectives of the HEH. Given all this, the third initial hypothesis was also confirmed.

"Some things we want to remember, some things we like to forget", a quote from Italian MEP Antonio Tajani that was included in the preface of the book 'Creating a House of European History'. With the conclusion of this research in mind, these words come across as wry and tone-deaf. Frantz Fanon once said that the European spirit is built on strange foundations. Yet, I refuse to believe that the European spirit propagated by the HEH is based on the conscious or deliberate silencing of historical events that do not fit into the museum's intended narrative. In saying this, I am not condoning the silences. I am merely trying to provide some nuance in the debate. I realise that this research, as well as the conclusions, are very sensitive to the positionality of the researcher. This sensitivity could be perceived as an empirical weakness of the research. However, all research within social sciences is subject to the one conducting it and subjectivity should not detract from the empirical findings of a study. As for this research, intersubjectivity was sought by means of regular consultation with third parties such as my supervisor, professor Jan Orbie.

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<sup>1</sup> Hansen and Jonsson, "Eurafrika", p. 261.

# GIES HONOURS PAPERS

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## WE ARE HERE BECAUSE YOU WERE THERE

A Postcolonial Critical Discourse Analysis of the New Pact on Migration and Asylum

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On the 23rd of September 2020, the European Commission (EC) presented its 'New Pact on Migration and Asylum' (hereafter, the New Pact or simply 'pact'). The pact builds on previous legal instruments that have guided EU migration and asylum policy from the 1990s onwards.<sup>1</sup> For this reason, the framing of the pact as 'new' has been critiqued by many scholars.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, the EC has attempted to push negotiations forward on several 'hanging' proposals that have been stuck in a political deadlock since 2016.<sup>3</sup> Nonetheless the EU has promised that the New Pact entails a 'fresh start on migration', bringing together policy in the areas of migration, asylum, integration and border management. It promises a comprehensive 'end-to-end European approach' for the management of migration and asylum. Importantly, according to Ilva Johanssen, within

this 'fresh start on migration', the EU will "fundamentally protect the right to seek asylum". Moreover, Johansson promised 'no more Moria's'.<sup>4</sup>

These promises stand in stark contrast with the critiques from civil-society-; human rights organizations, press and academia. The EU has been condemned because of its violent responses toward asylum seekers and migrants with many authors pointing towards an 'exclusionary and restrictive turn' in EU migration and asylum governance. The exclusionary politics of asylum include policy measures aimed at preventing asylum seekers from arriving and preventing those who do manage to cross the EU's external

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<sup>1</sup> European Commission, "A Fresh Start on Migration: Building Confidence and Striking a New Balance between Responsibility and Solidarity (Press Release)," September 23, 2020, [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip\\_20\\_1706](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_20_1706).

<sup>2</sup> Izabella Majcher, 2020, "The EU Return System under the Pact on Migration and Asylum: A Case of Tipped Interinstitutional Balance?," *European Law Journal* 26, no. 3–4 (2021): 199–225. <https://doi.org/10.1111/eulj.12383>

<sup>3</sup> European Commission, "Common European Asylum System," *Migration and Home Affairs*. n.d., [https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/migration-and-asylum/common-european-asylum-system\\_en](https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/migration-and-asylum/common-european-asylum-system_en).

<sup>4</sup> European Commission, "A Fresh Start on Migration: Building Confidence and Striking a New Balance between Responsibility and Solidarity (Press Release)," September 23, 2020, [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip\\_20\\_1706](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_20_1706).

borders from claiming asylum.<sup>1</sup> Asylum seekers are prevented from working, traveling or living in a city of their choosing. Those whose claims are deemed unfounded are detained and deported back to unstable countries with poor human rights records.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, the general response to asylum seekers and migrants translated into extreme practice of border violence such as push backs, involuntary detentions, abuse, hot spots, neglect, the 'letting die at sea' by criminalizing search and rescue operations (SAR)...<sup>3</sup> It is argued that any notion of the international protection standards for asylum seekers, as established under the Geneva Conventions, seems to be abandoned. The result is a complete downgrade of the supposedly universal human right to asylum.<sup>4</sup>

So how are we to make sense of this contradiction? If the EU is to really and fundamentally protect the right to seek asylum, we might suspect that 'real change is underway' and that the EU will make a 'U-turn' regarding their treatment of migrants and asylum seekers.

The objective of this research is simple: to establish whether or not the EU can live up to this ambitious task. Concretely, this paper seeks to examine whether or not the New Pact will fundamentally change the EU migration and asylum regime in the sense that it will fundamentally protect the right to asylum, as Johansson has promised. Following postcolonial arguments this right has never been actually protected by most European institutions and member states.<sup>5</sup> If the New Pact really promises to fundamentally protect the right to seek asylum, then this would require a paradigm shift of the 'third order'.<sup>6</sup> In other words, this would mean that the New Pact entails a significant breakaway from the current paradigm in the sense that it would challenge the (colonial/) ideological underpinnings on which current policies are built.<sup>7</sup>

Therefore, the research question is as follows: does the New Pact on Migration and asylum point

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<sup>1</sup> Jari Pirjola, "European Asylum Policy - Inclusion and Exclusions under the Surface of Universal Human Rights Language," *European Journal of Migration and Law* 11, no. 4, (2009): 347 - 366, <https://doi.org/10.1163/157181609789804277>.

<sup>2</sup> Lucy Mayblin, *Asylum after Empire: Colonial Legacies in the Politics of Asylum Seeking* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2017).

Barak Kalir, "Departheid': The Draconian Governance of Illegalized Migrants in Western States," *Conflict and Society* 5, no. 1, (2019): 19–40.

<sup>3</sup> Elspeth Guild, "Promoting the European Way of Life: Migration and Asylum in the EU," *European Law Journal* 26, no. 5–6, (2020): 355–70. <https://doi.org/doi:10.1111/eulj.12410>.

Barak Kalir, "Departheid': The Draconian Governance of Illegalized Migrants in Western States," *Conflict and Society* 5, no. 1, (2019): 19–40.

Violette Moreno-Lax, "The EU Humanitarian Border and the Securitization of Human Rights: The "Rescue-Through-Interdiction/Rescue-Without Protection" Paradigm," *Journal of Common Market Studies* 56, No. 1, (2018): 119–40. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcms.12651>.

Julien Brachet, "Policing the Desert: The IOM in Libya Beyond War and Peace," *Antipode* 48, no. 2 (2016): 272–92. <https://doi.org/10.1111/anti.1217>.

<sup>4</sup> Nicolas De Genova, *The Borders of "Europe"* (Amsterdam University Press, 2017).

<sup>5</sup> Ibid; Lucy, Mayblin, *Asylum after Empire: Colonial Legacies in the Politics of Asylum Seeking*. (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2017)

<sup>6</sup> Schmidt in Sarah Delputte and Jan Orbie, "Paradigm Shift or Reinventing the Wheel?: Towards a Research Agenda on Change and Continuity in EU Development," *Journal of Contemporary European Research*, 16 no. 2 (2020): 234–56. <https://doi.org/10.30950/jcer.v16i2.1084>.

<sup>7</sup> Nicolas De Genova, *The Borders of "Europe"* (Amsterdam University Press, 2017); Lucy Mayblin, *Asylum after Empire: Colonial Legacies in the Politics of Asylum Seeking* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2017); Barak Kalir, "Departheid': The Draconian Governance of Illegalized Migrants in Western States," *Conflict and Society* 5, no. 1, (2019): 19–40; Lucy Mayblin, Mustafa Wake, and Mohsen Kazemi, "Necropolitics and the Slow Violence of the Everyday: Asylum Seeker Welfare in the Postcolonial Present," *Sociology* 54 No. 1, (2020): 107–23. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038519862124>.

to a paradigm shift in EU migration and asylum policy?

In the next section the EUs migration and asylum governance will be discussed from a postcolonial perspective. While in section two the current policy paradigm will be mapped-out from a postcolonial framework building on Lucy Mayblin's book 'Asylum after Empire: Colonial legacies in the politics of asylum seeking'. In section three the New Pact itself will be examined using Postcolonial Critical Discourse Analysis (PCDA) and analysed against the current policy paradigm.

### A postcolonial reading of the EUs migration and asylum governance

On the one hand the EU claims that it has guided its policy developments on the Geneva convention thus fulfilling its duties as prescribed by international obligations. More harmonization would lead to a more effective asylum system and thereby benefiting the right to seek asylum.<sup>1</sup> On the other however, that exact right to seek asylum is said to be violated on a daily basis

through the 'translation into practice' of the policies installed by the EU to govern the mobility of people from the global south seeking refuge or a better life within Europe's borders.<sup>2</sup> Diving into all the different explanations given for this 'downgrading' of the right to seek asylum is beyond the scope of this paper. However, and more importantly when we approach the EUs migration and asylum governance from a postcolonial perspective, it becomes clear how firstly policy is devoted to keeping as much people from the global south out at all cost to ensure that the mobility of people from within the EU is protected and secondly how this is legitimized through discourses in which some people are deemed more worthy than others. In other words, it is argued that what is said to be 'a universal human right to asylum' was never intended for people from the global south but merely for the 'prima facie refugees', namely Europeans fleeing both world wars as well as Cold War refugees fleeing communism.<sup>3</sup>

Davies and Isakjee argue that in order to make sense of these contemporary inequalities, social

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<sup>1</sup> Dimiter Toshkov and Laura de Haan, "The Europeanization of Asylum Policy: An Assessment of the EU Impact on Asylum Applications and Recognitions Rates," *Journal of European Public Policy* 20, No. 5 (2013): 661-683, DOI: 10.1080/13501763.2012.726482.; Christian Kaunert, "Liberty versus Security? EU Asylum Policy and the European Commission," *Journal of Contemporary European Research* 5, no. 2, (2009): 148-170; Timothy J Hatton, "Asylum Policy in the EU: The Case for Deeper Integration," *Centre for economic policy research*, (2014) <http://repository.essex.ac.uk/14920/1/Asylum%20Cooperation%20Revised.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Florian Trauner, "Asylum Policy: The EU's "Crises" and the Looming Policy Regime Failure," *Journal of European Integration* 38, No. 3, (2016):311-325, DOI: 10.1080/07036337.2016.1140756; Sandra Lavanex, "Failing Forward" Towards Which Europe? Organized Hypocrisy in the Common European Asylum System," *Journal of Common Market Studies* 56, no. 5 (2018): 1195-1212; Jari Pirjola, "European Asylum Policy - Inclusion and Exclusions under the Surface of Universal Human Rights Language," *European Journal of Migration and Law* 11, No. 4, (2009): 347 - 366, <https://doi.org/10.1163/157181609789804277>; Rosemary Byrne and Andrew Shacknove, "The Safe Country Notion in European Asylum Law," *Harvard Human Rights Journal* 9, (1996): 185-226; Matthew Hunt, "The Safe Country of Origin Concept in European Asylum Law: Past, Present and Future," *International Journal of Refugee Law* 25, no. 4 (2014): 500-535, <https://doi.org/10.1093/irjl/eeu052>; Violette Moreno-Lax, "The EU Humanitarian Border and the Securitization of Human Rights: The "Rescue-Through-Interdiction/Rescue-Without Protection" Paradigm," *Journal of Common Market Studies* 56, No. 1 (2018): 119-40, <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcms.12651>; Eiko R Thielemann, "Why Asylum Policy Harmonisation Undermines Refugee Burden-Sharing," *European Journal of Migration and Law* 6 (2004): 47-65; Francesca Ippolito and Samantha Velluti, "The Recast Process of the EU Asylum System: A Balancing Act between Efficiency and Fairness," *Refugee Survey Quarterly* 30, no. 3, (2011): 24-62; Aladag Görentas, "FROM EU-TURKEY STATEMENT TO NEW PACT ON MIGRATION AND ASYLUM: EU'S RESPONSE TO 21ST CENTURY'S HUMANITARIAN CRISIS," *International Journal of Afro-Eurasian Research, Special issue Migration*, (2020): 25-33; Elspeth Guild, "Promoting the European Way of Life: Migration and Asylum in the EU," *European Law Journal* 26 no. 5-6 (2020): 355-70. <https://doi.org/10.1111/eulj.12410>

<sup>3</sup> Mayblin, *Asylum after Empire: Colonial Legacies in the Politics of Asylum Seeking*.

theorists must look back to those histories of governance that were characterized by racial exclusion and racist discourse.<sup>1</sup> When doing so, one can trace Europe's 'migration crisis' as part of its ongoing encounter with the world of empire, colonial conquest and slavery, it created over 500 years ago. A connection that is made all the more tangible through migrants' resistance, chanting 'We are here because you were there'.<sup>2</sup> We thus have to look at those histories of colonialism, when race was the principle marker of subjectification if we are to make sense of a regime of governance often claimed to be humane but of which the practical translations show a different story.

First and foremost, it is important to acknowledge the fact that non-Europeans were purposefully excluded from the Refugee Conventions. Put differently, the legal framework for protecting refugees was only intended for and applicable to those displaced in Europe.<sup>3</sup> Secondly, the legacies of colonialism for mobility and immobility also tend not to be acknowledged. The models of restricting people's movements were invented in the colonies to restrict the movement of the colonized.<sup>4</sup> As Kalir also argues colonial practices involved restricting the mobility of colonized peoples and facilitating the mobility of the colonizers. Even though the world, and consequently also the formerly colonized, had become more mobile through processes of globalization, legal and practical barriers have been put into place to re-inscribe the very immobility of the formerly colonized.<sup>5</sup> Mayblin explains how citizenship itself depends on controlling mobility because the sedentary

ideology of the nation state cannot co-exist with the reality of human mobility.<sup>6</sup> De Genova has called this reality 'the autonomy of migration' of which he argues has been a constant throughout human history.<sup>7</sup> The nation state on the other hand, needs borders and immobility in order to exist. However, when the image of stability of the nation-state is established, the growing mobility of a particular group of people (ie: citizens) can be facilitated on the prerequisite that the mobility of others, 'the non-belonging' (ie: non-citizens) is restricted.

Importantly, Mayblin argues that immobility is not only about non-movement, it requires restricting people's access to human rights. Legacies of colonialism have produced the ideas of undesirable and excludable asylum seekers.<sup>8</sup> Restricting certain people from accessing their human rights ultimately requires assigning differential value to the lives of human beings. Generally postcolonial literature states that the hierarchical conceptions of human worth, produced for and by colonial conquest, remains a dominant (and colonial) worldview in the realm of international politics. Within this worldview some societies are modern while others are 'traditional' and 'backward', always delineated on 'them' being racially and culturally alien to Europe. Decolonial scholars have termed this coloniality/modernity, which not only refers to whole countries or regions as being backward but also to people from the Global South, in this case the migrants themselves, in the sense that they embody the backwardness and are always perceived as being racially and culturally alien to Europe. Through the awarding of a sense of

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<sup>1</sup> Thom Davies and Arshad Isakjee, "Ruins of Empire: Refugees, Race and the Postcolonial Geographies of European Migrant Camps," *Geoforum* 102 (2019): 214–17, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2018.09.031>.

<sup>2</sup> New Keywords Collective, "Europe / Crisis: New Keywords of "the Crisis" in and of "Europe," *Near Futures Online* 1, "Europe at a Crossroads" (2016) <http://nearfuturesonline.org/europecrisis-new-keywords-of-crisis-in-and-of-eu-rope/>.

<sup>3</sup> Mayblin, *Asylum after Empire*.

<sup>4</sup> Davies and Isakjee, *Ruins of Empire: Refugees, Race and the Postcolonial Geographies of European Migrant Camps*.

<sup>5</sup> Kalir, *Departheid*, 2019.

<sup>6</sup> Mayblin, *Asylum after Empire*, p. 25.

<sup>7</sup> De Genova, *The borders of Europe*.

<sup>8</sup> Mayblin, *Asylum after Empire*, p. 26.



'unmodernity' to the bodies of migrants and asylum seekers, they become the disposable, their lives 'expandable', the easily impoverished and exploitable. On these grounds they are denied their humanity. Importantly, it is argued that this way of thinking is inherent to liberal western values, and not, as if often claimed, something of the past.<sup>1</sup>

Even though it is true that the undisguised brutality of colonial governance is something of the past, the subtler and lesser visible forms of denying the humanity of certain peoples continues. Thus the idea of white-superiority is a worldview in itself that is still very much part of European reality.<sup>2</sup> To this extent Kalir argues that these beliefs are still deeply embedded in contemporary discourses on asylum seekers. The differential valuation of lives by which human rights are only 'universal' when they apply to white lives and seem to lose any notion of universality when applied to black and brown, mostly Muslim lives lies at the very core of Europe's contemporary treatment of asylum seekers and migrants. The difference with past

To make up the current policy paradigm five criteria were identified. The regime or structure is given a name, its objective and the method to achieve that objective are also identified. Then the most dominant ways in which migrants and migration are framed by European politics are identified as well as the binary oppositions through which EU citizens and the EU itself are described. The framing of migrants and migration

colonial governance is that these restrictions on certain populations' mobility can no longer be achieved in the context of colonially defined spaces of immobility. However contemporary restrictions can be achieved and are aimed to be achieved through the racial politics of border governance. Within European border governance, mobile black and brown bodies still represent these subject races.<sup>3</sup> They become legally re-categorized as 'migrants'.<sup>4</sup> This was thus produced by and re-produces an unequal and profoundly racialized mobility regime in which the movement for some depends on the containment of others.<sup>5</sup> This basic distinction between awarded mobility and imposed immobility lies at the core of the EU's migration and asylum regime and has been institutionalized through the Schengen treaties. The creation of the EU's Schengen zone of free movement of persons, goods and capital for European citizens had as its direct consequence a reinforced exclusion of citizens of the global South.<sup>6</sup>

### The current EU migration and asylum policy paradigm: the non-entree regime

serves as a framing of 'the problem' and the binary oppositions serve as the given reasons as to why these pose a problem for the EU and its citizens. The fourth criteria then are the given solutions on how the EU and its member states should deal with these problems. Lastly an overview of the practical translations of the current policy paradigm, presented in figure 1, are discussed.

**Figure 1: The current policy paradigm**

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<sup>1</sup> Lucy Mayblin, Mustafa Wake, and Mohsen Kazemi, *Necropolitics and the Slow Violence of the Everyday: Asylum Seeker Welfare in the Postcolonial Present*.

<sup>2</sup> Catarina Kinnvall, "The Postcolonial Has Moved into Europe: Bordering, Security and Ethno-Cultural Belonging," *Journal of Common Market Studies* 54, no. 1 (2016): 152–68, <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcms.12326>.

<sup>3</sup> Kalir, *Deapartheid*.

<sup>4</sup> Davies and Isakjee, *Ruins of Empire: Refugees, Race and the Postcolonial Geographies of European Migrant Camps*.

<sup>5</sup> Deborah Cowen, "Infrastructures of Empire and Resistance," *Versobooks* (blog), January 25, 2017, <https://www.versobooks.com/blogs/3067-infrastructures-of-empire-and-resistance>.

<sup>6</sup> Charles Heller and Bernd Kasperek, "The EU's Pact against Migration, Part One," *OpenDemocracy (Blog)*, 5 October 2020, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/can-europe-make-it/the-eus-pact-against-migration-part-one/>; Céline Cantat, Hélène Thiollet, and Antoine Pécoud, "Migration as Crisis. A Framework Paper," 2020 <https://www.magyc.uliege.be/about/wp3/>.

| Criteria                 | Current policy paradigm   | Objective of policy paradigm   | Method to achieve  |
|--------------------------|---|--|--|
| Structure                | (Post)-colonial, unequal and racialized mobility regime   | To prevent undesired people from entering and residing on EU territory | The establishment of a 'non-entr e regime' through the production of an exclusive and restrictive migration and asylum policy  |
| Framing of problem       |   |  |  |
| 1) Framing of migrants   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Embodiments of threat</li> <li>• Unmodern and non-belonging</li> <li>• Bogus refugee</li> <li>• Terrorists and criminals</li> <li>• Victims (of own migratory aspirations)</li> </ul>              | ⇔ Framing of EU citizens   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Genuine bearers of universal human rights and right to be mobile</li> <li>• These rights need to be protected by the rendering immobile of racialized 'other'.</li> </ul> |
| 2) Framing of migrations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Security risk</li> <li>• Permanent Emergency</li> <li>• Should be controlled</li> <li>• Cannot be unauthorized</li> <li>• Illegal for racialized others</li> </ul>                                 | ⇔ Framing of EU  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Victim of abuse and crisis</li> <li>• Needs protection</li> <li>• Self defence of European sovereignty, security and stability.</li> </ul>                                |
| Solutions                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Containment of undesired in countries of origin</li> <li>• Constant control and crisis management of migration flows = reactive policy making</li> <li>• Increased border controls, ...</li> </ul> |  |  |
| Practical translations   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Border violence</li> <li>• Death</li> <li>• Incarceration</li> <li>• Involuntary returns</li> <li>• Push backs</li> <li>• Dehumanization, ...</li> </ul>   |  |  |

As explained above, through the unequal and racialized mobility regime, certain peoples are awarded the privilege of being mobile while others are not. Their immobility then becomes a prerequisite for the mobility of others. Much in the same way as the mobility of EU citizens within the EU depends on the immobility of non-Europeans, namely migrants and asylum seekers from the Global South. The objective of the unequal and racialized mobility regime is thus to prevent the undesired, the disposable, the non-belonging from entering and residing on EU territory.<sup>1</sup> This is achieved through the development of a restrictive and exclusionary migration and asylum policy which has been in the making ever since the 1990s.<sup>2</sup> This is aided through discourses on migrants and migration in which discursive classifications are used to frame both as problems. These problems then should be

solved through proposed solutions taking the form of reactive policy developments.<sup>3</sup> Both the framing of migrants and migration have their own binary oppositions namely a discursive framing of EU citizens and their 'mobility rights' and a framing of the EU as to how a restrictive and exclusionary migration and asylum policy is legitimized and why it is necessary.

*Framing migrants and migrations as a problem and how to solve it.*

Davies and Isakjee argue that mobile black and brown bodies are framed as the visual embodiments of threats to European sovereignty. The logics of modernity, mobility and citizenship are fundamental rights for the 'native' European while they remain "a precious and scarcely distributed gift to those outside its political borders."<sup>4</sup> Moreover, the binary

<sup>1</sup> Mayblin, *Asylum after Empire*.

<sup>2</sup> Charles Heller and Bernd Kasperek, *The EU's Pact against Migration, Part One*; Kalir, *Deapartheid*.

<sup>3</sup> Charles Heller and Bernd Kasperek, *The EU's Pact against Migration, Part One*.

<sup>4</sup> Davies and Isakjee, p. 215

opposition between modern and unmodern also serves to reproduce the classification of a group of people as the 'non-belonging', those that will never earn or gain those rights.

Postcolonial thought shows that this framing of migrants and dominant logic of the politics of asylum always occurs on racialized lines. As De Genova explains in the context of the 'migration crisis' people were first seen as refugees and became an object of compassion and protection. However, this quickly changed into a discourse turning refugees into 'mere migrants'. Herein the term asylum seekers itself is always predicated upon a basic suspicion that the majority is lying about their asylum claims producing the image of the 'bogus refugee'. On the one hand the EU victimizes itself, being a victim to the countless people accused of abusing their "humane hospitality".<sup>1</sup> On the other however, it is important to acknowledge that it seems as though these people are not seen as the "genuine bearers" of any presumptive and supposedly universal human right to asylum. Instead they are always under suspicion of deceit. This all occurs against the background of a European asylum system that *"routinely and systematically disqualified and rejected the great majority of applicants, and thereby ratifies anew the processes by which their mobilities have been illegalized"*.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, De Genova argues that the depiction of refugees as migrants was a crucial discursive manoeuvre which has caused European authorities to promise the expulsion of those who became migrants. They were deemed

unwelcome, presumed to be irregular, making them deportable. Finally, 9/11 and several terrorist attacks within the EU have prompted the framing of refugees as terrorists. Moreover, the fact that most are now seen as illegally having entered the EU has invoked the sense that they are also criminals.<sup>3</sup> Lastly, authors within the debates on military humanitarianism have pointed to the discursive framing of migrants as being victims of their own migratory aspiration by which they fall victim to human trafficking.<sup>4</sup> The complete lack of legal pathways into Europe and its often deadly consequences are thereby obscured.<sup>5</sup> The framing of migrants as victims also serves to reproduce the image of a humane and caring EU-rope. It serves to justify calls for more protection in the region, or in other words containment, because if migrants are contained and offered enough humanitarian assistance in their own regions they do not have to take dangerous routes and cross dangerous borders and expose themselves to the many risks these entail. In that way it is not the EU that is to blame for the countless deaths at its borders, but the migrants themselves who attempt those crossing.<sup>6</sup>

Migration itself, especially African migration was often framed in media and political discourse as an 'invasion' or a 'plague'.<sup>7</sup> Ultimately all migration became seen as a security risk to the stability of the EU, even becoming a contradiction to the EU-ropean space of fundamental freedom, security and justice and threatening the survival of Schengen.<sup>8</sup> This has led to the growing need to

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<sup>1</sup> De Genova, *Borders of Europe*, p. 1 - 35

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, p. 8.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, p. 1 - 35

<sup>4</sup> New Keywords Collective and Inken Bartels, "We Must Do It Gently": The Contested Implementation of the IOM's Migration Management in Morocco," *Migration Studies* 5, no. 3 (2017): 315–36, <https://doi.org/10.1093/migration/mnx054>.

<sup>5</sup> Jeff Crisp, "A New Asylum Paradigm? Globalisation, Migration and the Uncertain Future of the International Refugee Regime," *UN High Commissioner for Refugees* 1, no. 1, December 15, 2003, <https://www.refworld.org/docid/4ff2abf92.html>.

<sup>6</sup> De Genova, *The Borders of Europe*.

<sup>7</sup> Hein de Haas, "The Myth of Invasion: The Inconvenient Realities of African Migration to Europe," *Third World Quarterly* 29, no. 7, (2008): 1305 – 1322.

<sup>8</sup> Anna Santos Rasmussen, "When Sovereignty and Solidarity Collide The European Migration-Security Nexus (Dissertation)," *New Keywords Collective* (2018). <https://lup.lub.lu.se/luur/download?func=downloadFile&recordId=8956758&fileId=8956759>.

control and manage migration. This management rhetoric gained premise under the New Asylum Paradigm.<sup>1</sup> Containment measures were proposed to achieve the aforementioned goal of limiting access to specific group of asylum seekers and thereby restricting access of the majority of people. Cantat et al then argue that this securitarian framework evolved into perceiving migration in terms of crisis, referring to a state of permanent emergency.<sup>2</sup> The need to 'manage' and 'control' migration then evolved into a constant governance of 'crisis management', becoming the routinized and normalized way of dealing with and responding to migration. This has also prompted postcolonial scholars to argue that this mode of governance has made the development of the policy domain itself to be driven by crisis and is therefore inherently reactive.<sup>3</sup> Importantly Cantat et al hint at the fact that the crisis-talks and consequently need to manage the crisis only seems to apply to South-North mobility. When migration is only perceived as a crisis when defined in terms of South-North mobility it provides a legitimization for shrinking responsibilities in refugee protection.<sup>4</sup> This becomes clear when looking at the externalization of migration management and control. The New Keywords Collective shows how the EU, while claiming that the 'crisis' always originates from outside its borders, produces a justification for externalizing the responsibilities to deal with the crisis in the form of 'safe third countries' and protection in the region. In this discourse the EU presents itself as an innocent victim that needs to protect itself from the personification of external crises, namely migrants. Non-Europeans bear with them dangerous, possible crisis inducing traits. Leaving them to move unauthorized would cause

instability. This can be prevented by containing, managing and controlling their mobility within the territory of the Union or simply preventing them from ever setting foot on that territory. The framing of migration as a 'security risk'; a 'permanent emergency'; as something that needs to be controlled and should never be unauthorized serves to produce the exact mode of governance that makes being mobile or having any 'migratory aspiration' illegal for racialized others.<sup>5</sup> This is what Mayblin calls the 'non-entrée regime'.<sup>6</sup>

These discursive framings thus provide the basis of the current policy paradigm. They each serve to legitimize proposed solutions of which the ultimate result is that the right to seek asylum is being downgraded on every level. Moreover, the lack of legal pathways into Europe make sure that there is no other option than to apply for asylum even when the applicant in questions does not have the right legal reasons to do so.

### The New Pact and its promises.

The New Pact has been presented by the Commission as the much needed 'comprehensive approach' to migration. Consisting of the European solutions for the abovementioned problems, while also ensuring that the right to seek asylum is fundamentally protected through its implementation. The New Pact will now be analysed against the backdrop of the current policy paradigm. The ways in which migrants and migration on the one hand and the EU and its citizens on the other are framed will be compared with those displayed in figure 1 and as explained above. As well as the ways in which the proposed solutions will or will not fundamentally protect the right to seek asylum. As has been argued in the beginning of this paper: If the New Pact really

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<sup>1</sup> Lizz Schuster, "The Realities of a New Asylum Paradigm," *Oxford, UK: University of Oxford, Centre on Migration, Policy and Society (COMPAS)*, 2005, <https://openaccess.city.ac.uk/id/eprint/2589/>.; Jeff Crisp, "A New Asylum Paradigm? Globalisation, Migration and the Uncertain Future of the International Refugee Regime," *UN High Commissioner for Refugees* 1, no. 1, December 15, 2003, <https://www.refworld.org/docid/4ff2abf92.html>.

<sup>2</sup> Cantat et al, *Migration as crisis*.

<sup>3</sup> Heller and Kasperek, *The EU's Pact against Migration, Part One*.

<sup>4</sup> Cantat et al, *Migration as crisis*.

<sup>5</sup> New Keywords Collective, p. 8.

<sup>6</sup> Mayblin, *Asylum after Empire*.

promises to fundamentally protect the right to seek asylum, then this would require a paradigm shift of the 'third order'.<sup>1</sup> In other words, this would mean that the New Pact entails a significant breakaway from the current paradigm in the sense that it would challenge the (colonial) ideological underpinnings on which current policies are built.<sup>2</sup>

Delputte and Orbie who wrote on policy paradigms within EU development policy discuss what is needed in order for a paradigm shift to take place. Important to note here is that one can only claim a paradigm shift has taken place when the change is of a 'third order'. This refers to Hall's classifications of first, second and third order changes. The first and second order changes, with the former referring to adjustments in the settings of existing instruments and the latter to innovations at the level of the instruments themselves, should be considered as 'normal policy making'. Meanwhile, a 'third order change' entails 'radical changes in the overarching terms of policy discourse associated with a 'paradigm shift'.<sup>3</sup> This thus refers to a change within the 'underlying philosophies' that guide public policy.<sup>4</sup> These underlying philosophies are stubborn and therefore rarely contested. For a change of such a nature to take place Delputte and Orbie identify three necessary conditions. Namely the existence of a sense of policy failure, the search for alternative policies to solve the failure of the existing policy and lastly a power shift through which supporters of the new paradigm gain the authority to institutionalize it

through the development of new policies and instruments.

To a certain extent, these do apply to the New Pact. The current composition of the European Commission took office in November 2019. Both Juncker and von der Leyen expressed the need for a 'new policy on migration'<sup>5</sup> and a 'fresh start on migration'.<sup>6</sup> Some changes to the previous Commission are notable. For example, Commissioner Avramopoulos was replaced by Ylva Johansson. Even though their responsibilities and goals seem more or less the same, Johansson has promised to 'fundamentally protect the right to seek asylum'. Within its communication, the Commission has acknowledged the current failure of the Dublin II regulations and has pointed out that the ways in which the EU and individual member states responded to the 'migration crisis' of 2015 lacked a comprehensive approach which led to ad-hoc decision making and even put the survival of the Schengen Zone in question.<sup>7</sup> The New Pact then serves as the answer to the abovementioned problems in that it "*contains a number of solutions through new legislative proposals and amendments to pending proposals to put in place a system that is both humane and effective, representing an important step forward in the way the Union manages migration*".<sup>8</sup> While it would be fruitful to analyse to what extent the New Pact entails a first or second order change this is beyond the scope of this paper.

*Not just 'new wine in old bottles'*

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<sup>1</sup> Delputte and Orbie, *Paradigm Shift or Reinventing the Wheel?: Towards a Research Agenda on Change and Continuity in EU Development*.

<sup>2</sup> De Genova, Nicolas. *The Borders of "Europe"*; Mayblin, *Asylum after Empire*; Kalir, *Deapartheid*; Mayblin et al, *Necropolitics and the Slow Violence of the Everyday: Asylum Seeker Welfare in the Postcolonial Present*.

<sup>3</sup> Hall 1993, p. 279 quoted in Delputte and Orbie 2020, p. 237

<sup>4</sup> Schmidt 2011 in Delputte and Orbie 2020, p. 237

<sup>5</sup> Etienne Bassot and Ariane Debysier, "Setting EU Priorities, 2014-19 The Ten Points of Jean-Claude Juncker's Political Guidelines," *European Parliamentary Research Service*, (2014), p. 10.

<sup>6</sup> Ursula von der Leyen, "A Union That Strives for More: My Agenda for Europe," 2019. [https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/political-guidelines-next-commission\\_en\\_0.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/political-guidelines-next-commission_en_0.pdf), p. 19.

<sup>7</sup> Heller and Kasperek, *The EU's Pact against Migration, Part One*.

<sup>8</sup> European Commission, "*Commission Recommendation (EU) 2020/1366 of 23 September 2020 on an EU Mechanism for Preparedness and Management of Crises Related to Migration*," September 23, 2020, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32020H1366>.

In its entirety, the New Pact should provide the EU and its Member States with the ability to provide 'European solutions' It is stated that *"the challenges of migration management, including those related to irregular arrivals and return, should not have to be dealt with by individual Member States alone, but by the EU as a whole. A European framework that can manage the interdependence between Member States' policies and decisions is therefore required"*.<sup>1</sup>

The New Pact is made up of nine goals (p. 2)<sup>2</sup>:

- ⊗ *a robust and fair management of the EU's external borders;*
- ⊗ *fair and efficient asylum rules, streamlining procedures for asylum and return;*
- ⊗ *a new solidarity mechanism for situations of SAR, pressure and crisis;*
- ⊗ *stronger foresight, crisis preparedness and response;*
- ⊗ *an effective return policy and an EU-coordinated approach to returns;*
- ⊗ *comprehensive governance at EU level for better management and implementation of asylum and migration policies;*
- ⊗ *mutually beneficial partnerships with key third countries of origin and transit;*
- ⊗ *developing legal pathways for those in need of protection and to attract talent;*
- ⊗ *supporting effective integration policies.*

The analysis is centred around these goals because the New Pact is presented in such a way that these goals make up its constitutive elements promising *'an end-to-end approach'* and the needed *'European solutions'* the current stalemate and ad-hoc policy developments that taunt current asylum and migration management (p. 28).<sup>3</sup> The whole of the New Pact should *"ensure a seamless link between all stages of the migration procedure from a new pre-entry procedure to the return of third-country nationals and stateless persons without a right to remain in the Union"*.<sup>4</sup>

The first goal on a 'robust and fair management of external borders' is said to be crucial in the fight against unauthorized movements and to ensure a well working 'integrated border procedure' which relates to the second goal of implementing 'fair and efficient asylum rules, streamlining procedures for asylum and return'. The first is focused on irregular migrants already residing in EU territory while the latter is focused on irregular arrivals. Both are part of the same overarching goal. Namely to prevent their entry onto EU territory and to return those who did manage to allude border controls and are now 'moving unauthorized' within the territory of the Union.

Unauthorized movements are framed as a 'danger', as 'affecting the credibility of the entire EU system' (p. 10 - 11) and mainly seen as a

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<sup>1</sup> European Commission, *"Proposal for a REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL on Asylum and Migration Management and Amending Council Directive (EC) 2003/109 and the Proposed Regulation (EU) XXX/XXX [Asylum and Migration Fund]"*, September 23, 2020, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52020PC0610>.

<sup>2</sup> Citation of pagenumbers without a source all refer to the source: European Commission, *'COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION on a New Pact on Migration and Asylum (52020DC0609)'*, September 23, 2020

<sup>3</sup> European Commission, *"A Fresh Start on Migration: Building Confidence and Striking a New Balance between Responsibility and Solidarity (Press Release)"*, September 23, 2020, [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip\\_20\\_1706](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_20_1706).

<sup>4</sup> European Commission, *"Amended Proposal for a REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL on the Establishment of 'Eurodac' for the Comparison of Biometric Data for the Effective Application of Regulation (EU) XXX/XXX [Regulation on Asylum and Migration Management] and of Regulation (EU) XXX/XXX [Resettlement Regulation], for Identifying an Illegally Staying Third-Country National or Stateless Person and on Requests for the Comparison with Eurodac Data by Member States' Law Enforcement Authorities and Europol for Law Enforcement Purposes and Amending Regulations (EU) 2018/1240 and (EU) 2019/818,"* September 23, 2020, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52020PC0614>.

consequence to the 'current shortcomings in the management of borders' (p. 3). Within the New Pact the discourse 'ingenuine refugees' is used to paint an image of 'scheming asylum seekers' who are well aware of the current weaknesses and loopholes in the system. They are seen as abusing that system and by doing so they are framed as a threat to the sustainability of the Schengen Area. The Schengen area then is said to be the greatest achievement of the EU that is now being 'put under strain by unauthorized movements'. Therefore, the New Pact proposes a 'New Solidarity Mechanism' to close those loopholes and to ensure that *"the rules on responsibility for examining an application for international protection are refined to make the system more efficient, discourage abuses and prevent unauthorized movements"* (p. 6).

The second goal, streamlining procedures for asylum and return, serves to achieve the apprehension of irregular arrivals and preventing them from moving unauthorized on EU territory. It is centred on the implementation of 'an integrated border procedure' which is said to be closing *"the gaps between external border controls and asylum and return procedures"* (p. 4). Again migrants and asylum seekers are framed as taking advantage of those gaps, thereby consciously abusing the EU-ropean migration and asylum system and putting national systems under pressure. The EU is a victim of that abuse and the New Pact serves as the answer to close the existing loopholes in such a way that no asylum seeker or migrant can continue abusing it. Within the proposed 'integrated border procedure' a pre-entry screening will determine whether or not a person is allowed to seek asylum. It is claimed that only those really in need of protection will remain after the asylum procedure is concluded. Those with no right to stay will be 'swiftly returned' under the return procedure. The Commission states: *"This would eliminate the risks of unauthorized movements and send a clear signal to smugglers. It would be a particularly important tool on routes where*

*there is a large proportion of asylum applicants from countries with a low recognition rate"* (p. 4). The asylum procedure then applies only to those 'who might have founded claims'. During the entirety of the procedure the applicant does not 'legally set foot on EU territory'. In this light, Mouzourakis has argued that the main objective of the Screening and Asylum Procedure Regulation is to prevent people from entering the EU, and that detention becomes an automatic necessity to provide Member States with the ability to 'swiftly return' those with 'misleading' or 'unfounded' claims.<sup>1</sup> The whole system centres around the belief that *"EU migration rules are only credible when those who do not have a right to stay in the EU are effectively returned"* The underlying rhetoric here is again the belief that most asylum seekers are ingenuine. The sooner they are apprehended, the smaller the risk of unauthorized movements and irregular stays. It is clear that the migrants themselves and migration in general are framed as the causes of the 'crisis' the EU has undergone since 2015. The EU does not take any blame in the matter. On the contrary they blame those of who it is said that they abuse and circumvent the system which puts pressure on member states and their national asylum systems. Within this discourse the Commission produces a binary opposition between 'genuine and ingenuine refugees' since the 'abusers' of the system are framed as preventing those really in need of international protection.

However, as postcolonial theory shows the basic suspicion that the majority is lying about their asylum claims and producing the image of the 'bogus refugee', happens against the background of a European asylum system that *"routinely and systematically disqualified and rejected the great majority of applicants, and thereby ratifies anew the processes by which their mobilities have been illegalized."*<sup>2</sup> This thus points to the argument that even those really in need of international protection are 'routinely and systematically

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<sup>1</sup> Minos Mouzourakis, *More laws, less law*, 2020.

<sup>2</sup> De Genova, *The borders of Europe*.

rejected'. Thereby downgrading the 'presumptive and supposedly universal human right to asylum'.

The third goal relates mostly to the new solidarity mechanism, which allows Member States to choose in which way they will fulfil their compulsory solidarity. However, what is notable here is the recommendations made by the Commission regarding SAR. It is said that the arrivals following SAR disembarkations puts a strain on coastal Member States. Again the binary opposition between the EU as a victim of the migratory aspirations of those 'having no right to stay' is produced.<sup>1</sup> The same applies for the Regulation addressing situations of crisis and *force majeure* and recommendation on a crisis blueprint, mostly represented within the fourth goal. It is said that the EU needs: "*actively engaging in conflict prevention and resolution as well as to keep each other alerted of a potential crisis in a third country, which could lead to a migration crisis within the EU.*"<sup>2</sup>

Again the EU is the innocent victim that needs to protect itself from migrants who, also in the abovementioned quote are framed as the personification of external crises. The crisis refers to migration crisis defined by the Commission as: "*any situation or development occurring inside the EU or in a third country having an effect and putting particular strain on any Member State's asylum, migration or border management system or having such potential*".<sup>3</sup> Importantly, this framing hides an important critique. Namely, as Cantat et al. have shown, crisis-talk serves to the establishment of particular forms of governmental intervention that have more in

common with authoritarian measures than with policies developed within the normal procedures of democratic debate and deliberative processes.<sup>4</sup> This is represented by the Regulation addressing situations of crisis and *force majeure* because it allows for a temporary derogation from normal procedures and timelines in times of crisis. Mouzourakis has argued that this would allow Member States an extensive margin to shrink their responsibilities under loosely defined circumstances of crisis and *force majeure*.<sup>5</sup>

The fifth goal is an overarching one that stresses again the need for a European Approach through which national policies are coherent to the European approach. The Commission plans to introduce several EU-level coordinators and instruments. The focus lies mainly at preventing unauthorized movements and guaranteeing an effective return policy. This is to be achieved through the instalment of a EU return coordinator and a High Level Network for return. Also fitting within the 'prevent and return' logic is the proposed 'change in paradigm' in cooperation with non-EU countries. This refers to the 'whole route approach' and is clearly situated within the 'prevention and return' objective of the current policy paradigm.<sup>6</sup> It is stated that one of the key gaps is the difficulty to return those who do not voluntarily return (p. 21). The Commission intends to deepen current partnerships with non-EU countries in order to prevent and return those 'having no right to stay' before they attempt 'dangerous and life threatening' crossings. Thereby the discourse of victimizing migrants is reproduced and feeds into the logic of preventing

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<sup>1</sup> European Commission, "*Commission Recommendation (EU) 2020/1365 of 23 September 2020 on Cooperation among Member States Concerning Operations Carried out by Vessels Owned or Operated by Private Entities for the Purpose of Search and Rescue Activities*," September 23, 2020, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32020H1365>.

<sup>2</sup> European Commission, "*Commission Recommendation (EU) 2020/1366 of 23 September 2020 on an EU Mechanism for Preparedness and Management of Crises Related to Migration*"

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, p. 2.

<sup>4</sup> Cantat et al, *Migration as crisis*.

<sup>5</sup> Minos Mouzourakis, 'More laws, less law', 2020

<sup>6</sup> European Commission, "*COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS on the Report on Migration and Asylum*," September 23, 2020, p. 18, <https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/report-migration-asylum.pdf>.



deathly border encounters by reducing the number of people able to make those crossings by apprehending them 'on route'. This justifies cooperation with non-EU countries for protection in the region, the 'joint management of mixed migration flows' and the fight against smuggling. In connection to migrants as the personification of crises explained above, the New Keywords Collective stated that this discourse allows the EU to externalize its responsibilities through partnerships.<sup>1</sup>

Regarding the seventh goal an interesting new category of asylum seeker is developed. That of the 'privileged asylum seeker' being awarded an exemption from the border procedure, not having to prove their genuineness. This shows most clearly how the differentiation between wanted and unwanted migrants is translated into practice through the integrated border procedure. This procedure is mainly intended for irregular arrivals, and highly focused on return.<sup>2</sup> However, the Commission promises to provide legal pathways to a distinct group of asylum seekers. Namely the most vulnerable of which children are a key priority. These most vulnerable make up a section of the wanted migrants with attracting skilled and talented migrants making up the other. While unwanted migrants are illegalized and framed as abusers of the system these wanted migrants are awarded legalization. Talented and skilled migrants are to be attracted through the development of 'talent partnerships' with third countries.<sup>3</sup> Attracting those 'talents' has become a key priority in the New Pact as the EU risks to lose "the global race for talent." On the other hand, there is the group of 'privileged asylum seekers' or the most vulnerable who are

to be offered the needed protection through an exemption from the border procedure on the one hand and through the introduction of the immediate protection status. This is based on the current temporary protection directive (TPD). This is important because the TPD has only recently been used for the first time since its creation to respond to the Ukrainian refugees. Ciger, working on the TPD and the question 'why now' came to the simple conclusion: "Ukrainians are Europeans but Syrians, Afghans, Tunisians, Libyans, Iraqis were not..." This makes all the more sense when seen within the light of a postcolonial analysis of whom were seen as the intended beneficiaries of the Refugee Conventions and who were not.<sup>4</sup>

Within the New Pact it is argued that the whole end-to-end approach is based on fairness and humane-ness fully in line with European values and morals. However, those same values are then framed as being under threat due to unauthorized movements and irregular migrants. They then serve as a justification to inflict inhumane treatment on those irregular migrants in which detention becomes the norm. Instead of fundamentally protecting the right to seek asylum, as Ylva Johansson promised, the New Pact causes the right to seek asylum to deter substantially.

## Conclusion

This dissertation sought to uncover in what ways the New Pact offers a 'fresh start on migration' in the sense that it 'fundamentally protects the right to seek asylum'. To do so I have developed a framework that maps the current policy paradigm against which the New Pact can be analysed.

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<sup>1</sup> New Keywords Collective, 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Majcher, *The EU Return System under the Pact on Migration and Asylum: A Case of Tipped Interinstitutional Balance?*

<sup>3</sup> European Commission, *Commission Recommendation (EU) 2020/1364 of 23 September 2020 on Legal Pathways to Protection in the EU: Promoting Resettlement, Humanitarian Admission and Other Complementary Pathways*, September 23, 2020, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32020H1364>.

<sup>4</sup> Meltem Ineli Ciger, "5 Reasons Why: Understanding the Reasons behind the Activation of the Temporary Protection Directive in 2022," *EUmigrationlawblog* (blog), March 7, 2022, <https://eumigrationlawblog.eu/5-reasons-why-understanding-the-reasons-behind-the-activation-of-the-temporary-protection-directive-in-2022/>.

Based on secondary literature, existing theories on paradigms within the EU's migration and asylum regime and postcolonial theory it became clear that all movement from the global South to the EU is perceived in irregular or illegal terms. Illegal means unwanted, as the European Council has made clear during the Tampere Summit of 1999<sup>1</sup> and most recently in June of last year.<sup>2</sup> The EU started to adopt a discourse in which all asylum seekers were presumed to be illegal and ingenuine until proven otherwise. This discourse finds its origins in the colonial histories of racial hierarchization and the need to govern the mobilities of the colonized. In the New Pact these discourses remain present as the primary goal of the New Pact is the differentiation between wanted and unwanted migrants. The treatment these two opposing groups of people deserve is made clear through the distinction between providing legal pathways on the one hand and increasing border controls, the introduction of the Solidarity Mechanism and the integrated border procedure on the other. The unwanted migrants are to be apprehended at the border, 'on route' and inside EU territory. When apprehended they should be prevented from entering the EU until their applications are completed. If the person in question has 'no right to stay' everything should be done to return that individual as 'swiftly as possible'. The institutionalization of wanted versus unwanted migrants will result in a continued illegalization of South-North mobility, will continue to prevent people from exercising their right to asylum and will 'open' the EU only to the 'really deserving'.

Moreover, through the Regulation addressing situations of crisis and *force majeure*, the Commission institutionalizes the differentiation between 'normal-', 'pressure-' and 'crisis-' times.

It allows for a deviation from normal procedures in times of crisis. However as has been shown crisis operates as a discursive category of power underpinned by assumptions of what is good or bad and desirable or undesirable. Coining something as a crisis has a productive dimension in the sense that it structures the world and calls for certain ways to govern it. This 'crisis management' then invokes the justification for extraordinary modes of government. The fact that the Commission wants to implement different 'routinized ways' of dealing with migration depending on the produced level of crisis points to the institutionalization of the crisis discourse. Which as Cantat et al have argued has become inseparable from debates around migration, now finding its way into legislation. Moreover, as the New Keywords Collective have shown this discourse has as its binary opposition the image of an EU that is the innocent victim of 'crises' happening outside its borders. Migrants and asylum seekers originating from those 'crisis places' bear with them those same 'crisis inducing traits', they are unpredictable, unauthorized and threatening and their mobility should therefore be constantly controlled. Within the New Pact this is reflected through the institutionalization of the differentiation between those who are seen as bearing those traits and those who are not. Or in other words, and as mentioned above, a differentiation between wanted and unwanted migrants. Through the introduction of a 'privileged asylum seeker' and the clear goal of attracting talented and skilled migrants on the one hand and the deepening of an asylum system that routinely and systematically rejects the majority of applicants, the Commission makes clear who has a right to stay and who doesn't or who is framed as wanted and who as unwanted.

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<sup>1</sup> Cantat et al, *Migration as crisis*; Lavanex and Kunz, 2008.

<sup>2</sup> European Council, "European Council, 24-25 June 2021," 24 June 2021, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/european-council/2021/06/24-25/>.

# GIES HONOURS PAPERS

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## OBAMA AND TRUMP IN SYRIA

Similarities and Differences in Their Foreign Policies

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Since the outbreak of the war in Syria, it has become clear that first under President Obama and later under Trump, the United States (U.S.) struggled to develop a coherent strategy that primarily balances US interests with the resources (financial, military, diplomatic, political) at its disposal. US policymakers have been faced with a series of difficult choices that will affect not only Syria, but also geopolitics and US policy in the Middle East for years to come.

This paper examines the similarities and differences between former presidents Obama and Trump and their foreign policies towards the Syrian war, which started in 2011. It contributes to a better understanding of third-party interventions in wars, and of US interventions in a post-Iraq/Afghanistan era. A change of government inevitably leads to changes in the design and implementation of foreign policy. Therefore, the transition from the Obama to the Trump administration had consequences for the way US foreign policy was made. The calm and relaxed outlook of Barack Obama was replaced by the bad-tempered perception of Donald Trump, who seemed to impose a more rigorous foreign policy perspective, with the aim of turning the United States into a more isolationist country but viewing China and Iran as the main 'threats'. Obama was anything but an appeaser, but

managed to pursue a proactive foreign policy, even entering a working relationship with a 'rogue' state such as Iran. Trump, on the other hand, tried to strengthen Washington's foreign policy by reasserting sovereignty and competing with China and Iran rather than focusing on dialogue (he did however talk with North Korea's Kim Jong-un). One might conclude that both presidents differed in their foreign policy approaches, but did they really? This paper seeks the answer to that question in the context of the Syrian war. This war will be used as a case study so that the presidents and their foreign policies can be compared in terms of similarities and differences. The ultimate goal is to analyse the foreign policies of both governments with regard to the Syrian war and to answer the central research question: "How can similarities and differences in the policies of Obama and Trump with regard to the Syrian war be explained?"

To be able to provide a substantiated answer to this research question, this paper uses the methodology of a comparative case study research. The research will be carried out by means of a thorough literature study with additional document analysis in which both primary sources and secondary literature will be reviewed with the aim of providing an answer to the research question. Some examples of primary

sources that will be consulted are government documents, speeches, press conferences of the presidents, and news media. In addition, this paper will be guided by the theoretical framework of neoclassical realism. This theoretical framework will be complemented in an integrated way by theory concerning the concepts of proxy wars, presidential doctrines, and the rhetoric of red lines.

Subsequently, some specific conflict lines in Syria will be studied to answer the central research question. For each conflict line a comparison will be made between Obama and Trump and their reaction to particular situations or events. Congress, the international community, and public opinion will also be discussed for each conflict line if relevant developments took place at the level of these actors. The research will be followed by the testing of the theoretical framework and a general conclusion that will refer to the central research question.

### (Dis)Continuity?

What is central to this paper is a comparison in Trump's and Obama's foreign policy towards Syria. In what areas do we see continuity and in what ways do the presidents differ in their policy choices? The most common way to assess continuity versus change in US foreign policy is to focus on the specific policy choices presidents make. On the one hand, presidents can choose to change policy to pursue different goals. On the other, policies can be changed to use other means. In addition, each president devotes time and attention to different issues or regions. For example, we see that Obama wanted to bring about a *Pivot to Asia* and Trump rather prioritized the homeland with his *America First* platform. However, identifying policy change is a difficult task.<sup>1</sup> It can "evolve over time, not through presidential intervention but through

bureaucratic drift or changing circumstances."<sup>2</sup> Presidents can also change policies in subtle ways that are difficult to detect. They may pursue the same objectives but be willing to incur greater costs or run greater risks to achieve them.

There are several reasons why one might expect **discontinuity** in US foreign policy from one administration to another.<sup>3</sup>

First, all US presidents have different backgrounds and logically also have different ideological visions of the world, which may lead them to pursue different policies. A growing literature on leaders in international politics highlights how a person's age, gender, career background and experiences can shape his or her approach to foreign affairs.<sup>4</sup> As Saunders highlights, presidents' attitudes towards international affairs are often formed before they take office and usually do not change once they are in office. The US constitutional system, in which the president traditionally has considerable autonomy in foreign affairs, reinforces the importance of these factors at the individual level. The more one president's personal background and beliefs differ from those of another, the greater the degree of policy change we expect.

Second, according to MacDonald, changes in staffing and turnover of bureaucracies can also lead to policy changes. When members of the cabinet and other top officials take up their posts, they bring with them new priorities and ideas, which they try to translate into practical policy changes. Even when there is continuity in basic objectives, new senior officials may bring new ways of 'doing business.'

Third, MacDonald's work highlights that there may be domestic political incentives for presidents to make policy reversals. When the White House transitions into new ownership, the

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<sup>1</sup> Paul K. Macdonald, "America First? Explaining Continuity and Change in Trump's Foreign Policy," *Political Science Quarterly* 133, no. 3 (2018): 401-434.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Macdonald, "America First?," 401-434.

<sup>4</sup> Philip BK Potter, "Does experience matter? American presidential experience, age, and international conflict," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 51, no. 3 (2007): 351-378.

new president can use policy changes to differentiate himself from his predecessor and to deliver on campaign promises. "For most new presidents," Clinton and Lang stated in 1993, "the goal that gets priority is ... a flying start." When President George W. Bush took office, his administration adopted an "anything but Clinton" approach to foreign affairs, "rejecting foreign policy positions simply because the previous administration had taken them."<sup>1</sup>

At the same time, there are many factors that also push foreign policy in the direction of increased **continuity**.

Firstly, policies can receive consistent support from different governments because they promote a clear national interest. The idea that the United States should ensure a free flow of oil from the Middle East, for example, has had the support of both Democrats and Republicans since World War II.<sup>2</sup> Presidential candidates may make general criticisms of US foreign policy during their campaign, but once in office, they tend to accept the continuing interests of the US in certain areas and submit to their more experienced officials. In cases where there is a broad consensus among foreign policy elites, considerable policy stability can be expected from one administration to the next.

Secondly, because international politics is a complex and unpredictable field, there is a possibility that presidents may be reluctant to deviate drastically from their predecessors. Presidents may be dissatisfied with the status quo, but this may not make them inclined to change policy too quickly or too decisively. They may lack a clear understanding of the interests at stake for the US. They may lack a clear idea of what policy alternatives are available. As Lindsay notes, "changing strategies, revising priorities

and renewing missions is politically painful and potentially dangerous."<sup>3</sup> In complex situations where change requires the consent of others, we would expect presidents to be more reluctant to spend political capital on drastic policy changes.

Thirdly, bureaucratic organisations can resist a president's attempt to chart a new course. Foreign policy bureaucracies have standard operating procedures and deep-rooted organisational cultures that persist across governments. As a president, it is therefore difficult to simply break through that for the sake of one's own policy perceptions.

As already stated, a comparison between Obama's and Trump's foreign policy towards Syria will be central. In what way can similarities and/or differences between these two presidents, a Democrat and a Republican, be explained? One could hypothesise that the foreign policy of both presidents greatly differs, both in general and regarding Syria. In addition, it will become clear that other factors besides political preference play a role in policy making. Donald Trump is quite a special president in terms of background and temperament. He is such an extraordinary personality, so seemingly immune to the usual pressures and incentives, that it is tempting to assume that foreign policy under him will simply be the projection of his will. But "like presidents before him, Trump will learn that going solo is not the recipe for an effective and sustainable foreign policy. Domestic foreign policy, always fraught and frustrating, has become even more difficult for presidents to manage in recent years. Trump will be no exception."<sup>4</sup>

### Conflict lines in Syria

To be able to provide a solid answer to the central research question of this paper, this research

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<sup>1</sup> James Steinberg, "The Bush foreign policy revolution," *New perspectives quarterly* 20, no. 3 (2003): 4-14.

<sup>2</sup> Macdonald, "America First?," 401-434.

<sup>3</sup> James M. Lindsay, "George W. Bush, Barack Obama and the future of US global leadership," *International Affairs* 87, no. 4 (2011): 765-779.

<sup>4</sup> Hendra Manurung, and Albert Barita Sihombing. "US Policy & Geopolitical Dynamics in the Middle East: Shifting Decision from Barrack Obama (2012-2016) to Donald Trump (2017)," *AEGIS: Journal of International Relations* 1, no. 2 (2018).

highlights several fault-lines or conflict lines that were and are important in the Syrian war. To each of them, the US, with its interests and policies, relates in a certain way. Both presidents are placed next to each other, and are empirically compared on the same conflict lines, which gave the opportunity to discern continuity or discontinuity. In addition, each conflict line follows a certain pattern: the presidents are treated chronologically, leaving room for the role of Congress, the international community and (American) public opinion. Depending on their relevance, the latter are not always mentioned, or at best only briefly.

### *Assad vs. rebels*

11 years ago, thousands of Syrians crowded the streets when the Arab Spring took hold in the country. The regime of Bashar al-Assad responded with repression and violence, causing various oppositional groups to unite and take up arms themselves. After this rapid escalation of violence and because of the scale of the protests and the support received by various rebel groups, such as the umbrella organization, the Free Syrian Army, the Assad regime initially lost a lot of ground. But as the war proceeded, the Syrian regime increasingly had to deal with a divided and fragmented internal adversary. The rebels are ethnically but also ideologically divided. Moreover, the rebels are not only fighting against Assad, but also against each other and extremist terrorist groups such as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) that had emerged from this chaos.

There is ample evidence that the United States wanted to oust Assad from power. Both Obama and later Trump took a stand against the Syrian government and called on Assad to step down. But during the Syrian conflict little concrete

action was taken to achieve this goal.<sup>1</sup> Both Obama and Trump lacked sound policy plans for the removal of Assad. Still, this conflict line was initially the most important for the US. Later on, the emergence of ISIS and the chemical weapons issue became more important, as will be seen in later paragraphs.

The issue of whether to provide (lethal or non-lethal) support to the Syrian opposition groups was a focus of debate in Washington for a long time, especially during Obama's tenure. In early 2012, Obama found himself in a contradictory situation, which he had largely created himself: on the one hand, he had called on Assad to step down. It was perhaps partly through wishful thinking and partly through inaccurate intelligence that the US government thought Assad's departure was imminent.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, the government showed little sign of a strategy to facilitate this, leading to a phase of ambiguity. This was wrongly interpreted by the US's regional allies as the build-up to further US intervention. Nevertheless, in terms of arming the rebels, there were some striking choices.<sup>3</sup> On the one hand, we saw Obama rejecting the Clinton-Petraeus plan in 2012, which was supported by many policymakers in Washington. On the other hand, Obama then chose to secretly endorse a plan by the CIA to assist the rebels in their fight against Assad. This plan was adopted back in 2012, at the beginning of the crisis.<sup>4</sup>

Fundamentally, the US government struggled with three issues. First, the reluctance of the US public to engage in a new direct or indirect intervention in the absence of a clear national

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<sup>1</sup> David Jervis, "Barack Obama, Syria, and the exertion of American military power," *TEKA of Political Science and International Relations* 12, no. 1 (2018): 41.

<sup>2</sup> Jeffrey Goldberg, "The Obama Doctrine," In *The Best American Magazine Writing 2017*, pp. 243-302 (Columbia University Press, 2018).

<sup>3</sup> Mark Mazzetti and Matt Apuzzo, "US relies heavily on Saudi money to support Syrian rebels," *New York Times* 23 (2016).

<sup>4</sup> Mona Yacoubian, "Critical Junctures in United States Policy toward Syria," *An Assessment of the Counterfactuals. Simon-Skjoldt Center for the Prevention of Genocide Series of Occasional Papers* 3 (2017).

security interest.<sup>1</sup> Second, which rebels were able to defeat a government that was armed by Russia, and how could they be supported? From 2015 on, the Russian army itself entered the theatre in a massive way, further reducing the chances of the rebels. Three, the White House was concerned about some battle groups' alignment with jihadism.<sup>2</sup>

It is also notable that with the advent of IS from 2014 onwards, the issue of providing support to the opposition groups got reframed. Groups supported by the US had to join the fight against ISIS. This can be explained by the American tradition of fighting terror and the perennial War on Terror that is also going on in Syria. Yet, by 2015 Obama's support program proved to be a failure. Trump chose to halt the program.

From a theoretical point of view, this first phase shows a clear interaction between the individual, domestic and international levels. At the *personal* level, the cautious Obama oscillated between the principled cause to support rebels against Assad's massive repression of dissent on the one hand, and on the other the realization that neither the public nor Congress were ready for deep engagement. With this caution, Obama opposed his Secretary of State Hilary Clinton (2009-2013), who was in favour of stronger commitment. The longstanding tradition of liberal interventionism as well as its growing contestation in society and politics are determining elements at the *domestic* political level. Moreover, the Obama administration worried about the military suitability and ideological alignment of the rebels, and Russia's increasing military support to the Assad regime. These were key *international* factors to consider. Given the larger domestic

support base to fight terror, the emergence of ISIS sparked more willingness in Washington to intervene – at the same time completely pushing aside the removal of Assad as a priority. The much more isolationist Trump was consistently not interested in regime change in Syria motivated by democracy and human rights concerns. He actually accepted how Russia and the Assad regime had regained control over most of Syria's territory since 2015.

### *Chemical weapons: the red line*

Since the beginning of the Syrian conflict, the US had been very concerned about Syrian chemical weapons and their possible use against opposition groups and civilians. In 2012, Obama warned the Syrian government and other parties in the conflict that the use of chemical weapons would change the calculus of the US approach in Syria. Thus, the use of chemical weapons in the ongoing war would cross a "red line" that would be met with "enormous consequences." However, exactly what those consequences were was not clearly defined. It is interesting to note that this statement was made before the effective allegations of the use of chemical weapons in Syria began.<sup>3</sup> Then, a year after Obama's statements, evidence surfaced that Assad had used chemical weapons against his own people.<sup>4</sup>

At a meeting of Obama's national security team on 24 August 2013, the president appeared to have decided on a limited military strike against the Assad regime to punish it for the chemical weapons attacks of 21 August.<sup>5</sup> Later, on 30 August, then Secretary of State John Kerry publicly called Assad "a criminal and a murderer",

<sup>1</sup> "Public Remains Opposed to Arming Syrian Rebels," *Pew Research Center - U.S. Politics & Policy*, Pew Research Center, May 31, 2020. <https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2013/06/17/public-remains-opposed-to-arming-syrian-rebels/>.

<sup>2</sup> Ben Hubbard, "Turning point in Syria as Assad regains all of Aleppo," *The New York Times* 22 (2016).

<sup>3</sup> Ebrima Jatta, "The Use Of Chemical Weapons In Syria And The United States Strategy In Response 2013-2018," Bachelor's thesis, Fisip UIN Jakarta.

<sup>4</sup> "Attacks on Ghouta," 2016, *Human Rights Watch*, 6 June 2016. <https://www.hrw.org/report/2013/09/10/attacks-ghouta/analysis-alleged-use-chemical-weapons-syria>.

<sup>5</sup> Ben Smith and Vaughne Miller, "US Government and Congress Response to Syria," *House of Commons Library*, September 3, 2013. <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/sn06721/>.

leaving little doubt that US military action was being readied.<sup>1</sup> Obama then consulted Congress but was met with serious backlash regarding the idea of a strike. However, in less than 24 hours, President Obama appeared to change his position when he entered the Rose Garden on 31 August to address the American people in response to suspected chemical attacks in Syria. Many were surprised by his words that day. The announcement of the policy decision itself – that President Obama had decided that the United States should take military action to punish the Syrian regime for using chemical weapons – was expected<sup>2</sup>. But to the surprise of many, President Obama did not implement his earlier threat of military action.<sup>3</sup> Instead, he praised himself with “bringing about an agreement without an attack to get rid of those chemical weapons... a result that would not have been possible with air strikes.”<sup>4</sup> A final vote in Congress never took place, as Russia showed up with an alternative option and through an agreement the chemical weapons stockpile would be removed under the auspices of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.<sup>5</sup>

A few more reports of the use of chemical weapons appeared during President Obama’s tenure. Obama’s established red line was crossed with the use of these weapons. How did Trump respond to the new violation of the old red line?

In any case, President Donald J. Trump’s policy on the use of chemical weapons was not consistent. Before becoming a presidential candidate, Trump did not support any intervention in Syria based on the use of chemical weapons. He even called Obama’s decision to draw the red line a humiliation for the US. Trump did not support Obama’s decision in 2013 to intervene in Syria after the chemical weapons attack in Ghouta that killed about 1,500 people. Trump opposed the idea of intervening via Twitter: *President Obama do not attack Syria. There is no upside and a tremendous downside, save your “powder” for another (and more important) day.* Trump’s anti-intervention stance came to an end in 2017, during his own tenure, after the chemical weapons attack in Khan Shaykhun. He blamed the attack on the previous administration not taking more aggressive action against the Assad regime, claiming that he would have announced military intervention with a “big league response.”<sup>6</sup>

Many observers felt that, as a presidential candidate and president, Trump had no interest in military intervention in Syria or a global initiative against the use of chemical weapons. He even argued that a US intervention in Syria could turn the conflict in Syria into World War III.<sup>7</sup> In 2016, Trump was still seen by Assad as a potential ally “in the fight against terrorism” in the Middle East.<sup>8</sup> But Trump’s attitude towards Syria and

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<sup>1</sup> “US Set for Syria Strikes after Kerry Says Evidence of Chemical Attack Is ‘Clear,’” *The Guardian*, Guardian News and Media, August 31, 2013. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/aug/30/john-kerry-syria-attack-clear-evidence>.

<sup>2</sup> The Obama White House, “President Obama Speaks on Syria,” *YouTube*, 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QeYDhMmVLXI>.

<sup>3</sup> Jacob Behmer, “The Legality of President Trump’s Missile Strike on al-Shayrat Air Force Base in Syria,” *U. St. Thomas JL & Pub. Pol’y* 13 (2018): 83.

<sup>4</sup> Greg Jaffe, “The problem with Obama’s account of the Syrian red-line incident,” *The Washington Post* 4 (2016).

<sup>5</sup> Jeffrey Lewis and Bruno Tertrais, “The thick red line: Implications of the 2013 chemical-weapons crisis for deterrence and transatlantic relations,” *Survival* 59, no. 6 (2017): 77-108.

<sup>6</sup> Michelle Bentley, “Instability and incoherence: Trump, Syria, and chemical weapons,” *Critical Studies on Security* 5, no. 2 (2017): 168-172.

<sup>7</sup> James Kirchick, “Trump Once Claimed Syria Could Lead to ‘World War III.’ Good Thing He Wised Up,” *Washington Post*, 18 April 2018. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/posteverything/wp/2018/04/18/trump-once-claimed-syria-could-lead-to-world-war-iii-that-idea-has-soviet-origins/>.

<sup>8</sup> Helene Cooper and Eric Schmitt, “Syrian President Calls Donald Trump a ‘Natural Ally’ in Fight Against Terrorism,” *The New York Times*, 17 November 2016. <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/17/world/middleeast/assad-donald-trump-syria-natural-ally.html>.



Assad was said to have “changed very much” as a result of new chemical attacks in 2017.<sup>1</sup> Trump was moved by the videos and images of dying children and women and he claimed to be outraged by the way the regime was killing its people.<sup>2</sup>

During a press conference in April 2017, Trump claimed that the chemical attacks on civilians crossed many lines for him. However, he refused to mention the term “red line” and shifted responsibility pretty much entirely to the previous administration, arguing that the crisis in Syria could have ended years ago. He said Obama made a “blank threat” at the time when he called the use of chemical weapons a red line that Syria could not cross without consequences.<sup>3</sup> However, when Barack Obama himself was still president, Trump publicly urged him not to take military action in Syria.<sup>4</sup> A few days after the press conference, on 7 April 2017, President Trump ordered a US intervention in response to the chemical attacks in Khan Shaykhun a few days earlier.<sup>5</sup> The US attack took place at 3:40 am local time, targeting specific parts of the Syrian al-Shayrat airbase, where intelligence agencies believed the sarin 39 attacks came from.<sup>6</sup>

It is interesting to see how both presidents during their term of office made a complete U-turn in their position on Assad and his use of chemical weapons. First, we have Obama, where after the Ghouta attack on 21 August 2013, the hard red line threat was ultimately never enacted with the military consequences that were initially attached to it. Then we have Trump, who during Obama’s tenure clearly disagreed with the idea of military action in Syria after the red line was crossed. Trump’s anti-interventionist stance came to an


end during his own presidency, and he ended up being the president who launched the first US airstrikes against the Syrian government. In addition, it is also noteworthy that Trump called on Obama to involve Congress in his decision on whether to respond to the chemical weapons, while Trump himself never consulted Congress in his decision to launch counterattacks in 2017 and 2018. Moreover, there was also a significant shift in public opinion and its support for military action to punish Assad for the use of chemical weapons. How can we approach this interesting turnaround? Each president took a different approach to the decision-making processes, which significantly influenced the US response to Syria’s use of chemical weapons.

The red line episode can also be explained through several components of neoclassical realism. Here again we see *personal* differences between Obama and Trump. The cautious Obama had doubts about the effectiveness of a strike, consulted Congress, felt resistance, and shied away from military action even more. The more impulsive and less predictable Trump, loyal to his isolationist stance, first opposed Obama’s initial idea to strike, but then – confronted with a chemical attack in Syria himself – emotionally recurred to the first American strike on Syrian forces. Given widespread *domestic* reluctance about large and dangerous US military engagement abroad, a strike, if any, could only be punctual, even symbolic. At the *international* level, presidential policymaking was constrained by Syrian and Russian military might, and the risk for a wider escalation in case of a larger US operation.

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<sup>1</sup> Mikael Blomdahl, "Changing the conversation in Washington? An illustrative case study of President Trump’s air strikes on Syria, 2017," *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 30, no. 3 (2019): 536-555.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> “Trump: Syria Chemical Attack ‘crosses Many, Many Lines’  Video,” *The Guardian*, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/video/2017/apr/05/trump-syria-chemical-attack-video>.

<sup>4</sup> “Trump: Chemical Attack in Syria ‘Crossed Many, Many Lines,’” *POLITICO*, 5 April 2017. <https://www.politico.com/story/2017/04/trump-chemical-attacks-in-syria-crossed-many-many-lines-236920>.

<sup>5</sup> “Trump orders military strike against Syria,” *CNN* (2017), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HEEmXLSC0jI>.

<sup>6</sup> Barbara Starr and Jeremy Diamond, “Trump Launches Military Strike against Syria,” *CNN*, 7 April 2017. <https://edition.cnn.com/2017/04/06/politics/donald-trump-syria-military/index.html>.

The red line in Syria shows that red lines throughout history cannot always be interpreted in the same way. Moreover, to be effective, it is important that red line diplomacy does not become a hollow concept when rhetoric does not match actions. Red lines are indeed a strong policy instrument when they are stated and promoted in the right way.<sup>1</sup> However, this red line caused the US with president Obama to suffer reputation damage as the threatening rhetoric did not match the preparedness to act.

### *Islamic State*

In the last two years of Obama's term, US policy shifted from supporting rebels against Assad to a more focused counterterrorism strategy to destroy ISIS, which seized control of large parts of Iraq and Syria in 2014. In the beginning of his term Trump continued to pursue this goal. The international efforts to defeat the group were largely successful.<sup>2</sup>

ISIS's armed offensive in Iraq and Syria in 2014 prompted a US response. When US journalist James Foley was beheaded in August and a video of this was leaked to the media, the US launched a more comprehensive strategy. In early September, US authorities announced the creation of a broad, international coalition to fight ISIS.<sup>3</sup> Suddenly, the US policy lines were clearly delineated and communicated in an official manner, something that was previously unseen in Washington's Syria strategy.

Factors on the ground gave rise to a more forceful approach to ISIS than had been pursued earlier in Obama's presidency. The fight against Assad did not seem to succeed, while the ISIS phenomenon could not be ignored either due to local atrocities and terrorist attacks outside Syria and Iraq. The administration was, as it were, overtaken by the

reality and complexity of the war on terror. President Obama, deploying the US air force, for the rest retained the strategy of assisting local forces and limiting the number of US troops, but the operations against ISIS continued to be a costly undertaking. Obama's approach succeeded in thwarting progress of, and largely isolating, ISIS operations, "but the asymmetric tactics the group enacted in response created a whole new set of problems."<sup>4</sup>

During the election campaign, candidate Trump insisted that his presidency would lead to a fundamental change in Washington's approach to counterterrorism. Despite Trump's idiosyncratic style, he did not deviate from the counterterrorism 'playbook' inherited from his predecessor.<sup>5</sup> Biegon & Watts write that this applied not only to the objectives of US counterterrorism efforts, but also to the prominence of counterterrorism practices within the broader objectives of the US state system.<sup>6</sup> Of course, the transition from Obama to Trump brought with it some changes in the tactical details of US counterterrorism policy. These generally kept pace with Trump's more bellicose discourse. For example, Trump's administration expanded the use of armed drones and increased the deployment of special operation forces. But the lack of a fundamental shift in US counterterrorism policy suggests that Trump's ability to radically reorient US policy was limited. This would be partly due to the "structural imperatives associated with US imperialism, which not only prevent presidents from revising US policy in line with their own agendas, but also provoke interventionist policies in the Global South that seek to stabilise existing patterns of political-economic relations. These structural factors, reflected in changing executive-level strategies (in Trump's case around his *America*

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<sup>1</sup> Bruno Tertrais, "The Diplomacy of Red Lines," *Fondation pour la recherche strategique* (2016).

<sup>2</sup> Robert Barron and Joe Barnes, "Trump policy in the middle east: Syria," *Issue brief* 3 (2018).

<sup>3</sup> Department of State, 2020.

<sup>4</sup> Luke Phillips, "The future of ISIS and US counterterrorism: A study of ISIS, Boko haram, Al-Shabaab, and the US policy response," *Honors Theses*, no. 597 (2017).

<sup>5</sup> Rubrick Biegon and Tom FA Watts, "When ends Trump means: continuity versus change in US counterterrorism policy," *Global Affairs* 6, no. 1 (2020): 37-53.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

First agenda), continue to influence US foreign policy in profound ways.”<sup>1</sup>

Seen through the classical realist lens, it can be concluded that fighting a large-scale international terrorist phenomenon like ISIS is deeply rooted in a long-standing *national* tradition, reinforced by the 9/11 attacks in 2001, with bipartisan support. In other words, the war on terror has become part of US strategic culture. Even though Damascus and Moscow opposed the US-led coalition’s intervention on legal grounds, the former welcomed the shift in Western focus away from Assad. The coalition made sure not to enter in conflict with Syrian and Russian forces, respecting the constraints posed by the *international system*.

### *The Kurdish issue*

The start of the war in 2011 pitted Assad against many internal non-state actors and external foreign powers committed to overthrowing his regime. In the early stages of the war, government forces lost large tracts of land and effectively withdrew all troops from north-eastern Syria to focus on a strong rebel presence in other parts of the country.<sup>2</sup> In 2014, with the government virtually absent from Kurdish-dominated northern Syria, the newly formed Kurdish Democratic Union Party of Syria (PYD) gained ground. The PYD declared autonomy with the establishment of the Democratic Autonomous Administration of Northern and Eastern Syria, commonly referred to as Rojava.<sup>3</sup> The PYD and its paramilitary wing known as the People's Protection Units (YPG) remained neutral in the war between Assad and the coalition of Syrian rebels. Assad was tolerant concerning the Kurdish experiment in north-eastern Syria if it did not mean strengthening the growing ranks of the

Syrian rebel groups.<sup>4</sup> The Kurds of Syria increased their international prominence with their efforts in fighting the rise of ISIS and were even able to connect with key players such as the United States, Russia, and even the Syrian government, all of whom considered ISIS to be the bigger enemy.<sup>5</sup> Although the PYD/YPG received much support from the international community, they faced a constant threat from the north from Turkey, which insists that it will never accept a PYD-controlled autonomous region in Syria.<sup>6</sup>

Only after ISIS invaded Iraq in mid-2014, carried out a genocide of the Yazidi community and beheaded foreign hostages, did Washington decide to intervene directly in the war in Syria from September 2014 by launching airstrikes and supporting the YPG on the ground. In the wake of these efforts, the US kept a military presence in North-East Syria until this day. The United States abandoned the plan to rely on Arab rebels to tackle ISIS – in part because of the rebels’ refusal to commit to fighting ISIS alone while ignoring the Assad regime, responsible for most civilian casualties and destruction in Syria. Tactical assistance to the YPG later shifted to a partnership, with the Americans deploying special forces in areas under the group’s control. The US encouraged the YPG to include non-Kurdish fighters in their ranks – leading to the creation of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF).

Given the already mentioned *domestic* opposition to large-scale US involvement in a foreign war, both Obama and Trump relied on the Kurdish YPG and its extension SDF as ground forces to combat ISIS. However, by arming the YPG, they entered into a political conflict with the Turkish government, who opposes this policy given the ties between the YPG and the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK), which wages a war with the

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<sup>1</sup> Biegon & Watts, 13-14.

<sup>2</sup> Mohannad Al-Kati, "The Kurdish movement in the Arab world: The Syrian Kurds as a case study," *AlMuntaqa* 2, no. 1 (2019): 45-61.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Orit Perlov and Gallia Lindenstrauss, "Syria’s Civil War: Kurdish Success, Turkish Dilemma," Institute for National Security Studies, 2016. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep08750>.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

Turkish state since 1984.<sup>1</sup> Yet, this factor did apparently not pose a major *international* constraint to the two US administrations. The tactical advantages of working through the YPG outweighed the disadvantage of Turkey's anger, even though the latter is a NATO ally. In addition, when Trump partly withdrew US troops from North-Eastern Syria late 2019 as he – prematurely, according to critics – deemed the fight against ISIS fought, Turkey's President Erdogan immediately decided to invade part of that border area to expel the YPG.

### *Iran*

After the overthrow of Saddam Hussein in Iraq, Iran and Syria became the only two states in the Middle East with an openly anti-American stance.<sup>2</sup> Iran is also, along with Russia, the main state supporting Assad's government in Syria. Moreover, Iran's alliance with Syria is strategic in nature: the political alliance dates to the period of the Iran-Iraq war in the 1980s. Syria, which was hostile to Saddam at the time, sided with Iran.<sup>3</sup> Mutual contempt for Saddam Hussein's Iraq brought Syria and Iran together in 1980, and mutual fear and loathing of the United States and Israel has helped sustain their alliance.<sup>4</sup> In addition to being a political partner, Syria is also of crucial importance to Iran because it provides a geographical passageway to the Lebanese Shia militia Hezbollah, "one of the crown jewels of the Iranian revolution."<sup>5</sup> Both Syria and Hezbollah are crucial elements of the Iran-led alliance and much of Hezbollah's armaments, which pass through Damascus airport, is said to come from Iran.<sup>6</sup>

From the perspective of the systemic level and US strategic culture, the hypothesis can be formulated that the US would support the rebels to overthrow Assad to weaken Iran. The following

paragraph further discusses how both presidents viewed this Iranian dimension in Syria.

Obama wanted anything but boots on the ground. But why? Among other motives, such as US war fatigue, one was never mentioned: the fear of treading on Iran's toes. It was long assumed that Obama made no connection between his Iran policy and his Syria policy. But that was not entirely the case: to secure the 2015 Joint Plan of Action (JPOA) with Iran to dismantle Iran's nuclear weapon program, he also showed respect for Iranian interests in Syria. In contrast, Trump resolutely chose a tougher policy towards Iran and rejected the JPOA. But US policy on the ground remained largely identical to that of his predecessor, leaving it to Israel to deal with the Iranian build-up in Syria. Moreover, the presence of US troops in Syria served both as an obstacle to the ambitions of Iran (and Russia), and as a source of influence for Washington in a possible political settlement of the conflict. But with Trump's decision to partially withdraw US troops, Russia and especially Iran – which sent thousands of proxies and its own elite troops to Syria – threaten to emerge as the dominant players in a country that shares a border with Israel.

### Conclusion

In general, it is seen that both the Obama and Trump administrations tried to develop a strategy for Syria. A direct and large-scale military intervention such as in Kosovo, Afghanistan, Iraq or Libya was not considered by the Obama administration, in line with its promises to pull the US out of the Middle East. The idea of total non-intervention was quickly left when Obama started to (covertly) support opposition groups in their fight against Assad. Obama, however, was dubious, as he understood that even minimal

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<sup>1</sup> Amanda Sloat, "The US played down Turkey's concerns about Syrian Kurdish forces. That couldn't last," *The Washington Post* (2019).

<sup>2</sup> Hisae Nakanishi, "The construction of the sanctions regime against Iran: political dimensions of unilateralism," in *Economic Sanctions under International Law*, pp. 23-41. TMC Asser Press, The Hague, 2015.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Bryan Price, "Syria: A Wicked Problem for All," *New York Times* (2013).

<sup>5</sup> Karim Sadjapour, "Iran unwavering support to Assad's Syria," (2013): 12.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

intervention, such as arms delivery, could be construed as renewed foreign adventurism. The last thing Obama wanted when the 2012 election campaign got underway was “another complicated US military involvement in the Muslim world.”<sup>1</sup> But when, after three years of war, ISIS became stronger and stronger in Syria, the US position changed, and the administration opted for a policy that focused on defeating ISIS in the region. Helping anti-Assad rebels was dropped as a priority. The fact that the US pursued a faster and more decisive policy with the arrival of ISIS, is in line with the US strategic culture of fighting terror. Yet this was a difficult policy exercise for Obama, given that he had made a promise to get the Americans out of the Middle East.

When Trump took office, he inherited from his predecessor an unstable region. From the outset, Trump’s focus was on counterterrorism and Iran, which meant that few decisive policy choices were made regarding Assad or chemical weapons. Although Iran was a priority for Trump, anti-Iran policy on Syrian territory was actually left for Israel, which regularly carries out attacks against pro-Iranian militias. In addition, during Trump’s term, we saw a withdrawal of support and troops from YPG/SDF-controlled territory, which also had further repercussions in the region. On other conflict lines, Trump initially continued Obama’s policy. This is quite remarkable, given that when he took office, he gave a very different impression and mainly expressed an anti-Obama rhetoric.

After another gas attack in 2017, though, Trump ordered a punctual US military operation against installations of the Syrian government, which was a first in the policy towards Syria. Another striking change took place regarding the rebels. During Trump’s presidency, it was decided to reduce support to opposition groups and to halt the CIA’s *train-and-equip* program, which in this case is in line with Trump’s promises to end costly

entanglements abroad. Nonetheless, the war had progressed to such an extent that the international and systemic levels began to come into play. New actors appeared on the scene, logically shifting US priorities.

At the beginning of this paper, the question was raised how similarities and differences in Obama’s and Trump’s foreign policies towards the Syrian war could be explained. A change of power always brings change to a certain degree, and both presidents were so different in their general policies and characteristics that the hypothesis was formulated that their policies on Syria would be very different. This expected discontinuity stems from the fact that Obama and Trump had different characters and political backgrounds and consequently different ideological views of the world. The more the personal background and beliefs of one president differ from those of the other, the greater the degree of policy change we would expect. In addition, one might expect discontinuity as Obama and Trump had a completely different team behind them. Although the objectives may have remained the same, new staff bring with them another way of ‘doing business’.

Yet, after analysis, a certain continuity can be found, which can be explained by several factors. In the first place, public opinion has played a role in bringing continuity between both presidents and their policies. The sentiment of war-weariness still appears to be strongly present during the terms of office of Obama and Trump. This may well have played a decisive role in terms of policy choices. In any case, every administration has an eye on its electoral base and must therefore be sensitive to domestic public opinion. As Watkins already wrote in 1997, any government must therefore at least try to maintain the appearance of a balanced policy to retain its electoral base and stay in power.<sup>2</sup>

In this respect, it would not have been wise for Obama or Trump to make drastic policy shifts on

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<sup>1</sup> Colin Dueck, *The Obama doctrine: American grand strategy today*, Oxford University Press, 2015: 85.

<sup>2</sup> Eric Watkins, “The unfolding US policy in the Middle East,” *International Affairs* 73, no. 1 (1997): 1-14.

Syria. Yet, they found it difficult to make drastic foreign policy shifts and were carried away by the developments in Syria and more generally at the international level. Both administrations had to be mindful of the military balance in Syria: with Russian arms deliveries and since 2015 massive involvement on the ground, directly confronting the Syrian army, suffering American losses, and entering into a clash with Russia was not an option.

In addition, during their terms in office, US policymakers and Congress also played a role, which as well contributed to continuity in foreign policy towards Syria. Throughout this research, it was shown that on various conflict lines, Congress did not appear to be unimportant in the

president's decision-making. The war-weariness from public and Congress cannot be ignored, and it is therefore difficult for a president to break through this for the sake of his own policy perceptions.

It can be concluded that under two very different presidents, Obama and Trump, US Syria policy took on a life of its own, often appearing almost immune to the executive branch in Washington. Both administrations were overtaken by reality and developments in the region and in Syria. Washington is thus once again committing itself to indefinite involvement in a civil war in the Middle East, even though the conflict broke out under a president who came into office promising the opposite.