

**‘NEOCOLONIAL POWER EUROPE’?
POSTCOLONIAL THOUGHT AND THE EUROZONE CRISIS**

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Résumé

L'article se réfère aux relations de pouvoir asymétriques au sein de l'Union Européenne au cours de la crise de la zone euro, à travers le cadre analytique de la gouvernance (néo)coloniale et des expériences postcoloniales. Comparé à la 'puissance normative en Europe' et à d'autres termes semblables qui ont servi de source d'inspiration pour le titre de cet article et qui concernent la présence internationale de l'UE, le récit d'une 'puissance néocoloniale en Europe' est construit sur les caractéristiques de la gouvernance européenne. Quelques remarques liminaires se rapportent aux études postcoloniales ainsi qu'aux défis de l'intégration européenne en tant que telle, suivies par une référence particulière à la crise récente. Une attention particulière est accordée aux arguments des 'pays de l'UE comme colonies de dette', à la problématique de 'la reconstruction de l'Europe du Sud' ainsi qu'à 'l'encadrement des PIGS' dans les discours politique et médiatique. Parallèlement, les tendances et les comportements néocoloniaux, même à l'intérieur des frontières de l'UE, devraient être étudiés et analysés. Autrement dit, l'essence de l'UE ne prétend pas être nécessairement néocoloniale, mais la prudence est de mise quant à la possibilité de l'émergence de telles pratiques.

Mots-clés

Intégration européenne, néocolonialisme, études postcoloniales, crise de la zone euro

Abstract

The article refers to asymmetric power relations within the European Union especially during the crisis of the Eurozone, through the analytic framework relating to (neo) colonial governance and (post)colonial experiences. Compared with the term 'normative power Europe' and similar ones, which served as a source of inspiration for the article's title and which pinpoint the concerns about the EU's international presence, here a narrative of a 'neocolonial power Europe' is constructed regarding the features of European governance. Initially, a few introductory remarks are made concerning postcolonial studies as well as the challenges of European integration *per se*, followed by special reference to the recent crisis. Attention is given to certain cases such as the 'EU states as debt colonies' argument and the problématique about 'the reconstruction of the European South' as well as about 'framing the PIGS' in political and media discourse. Given that from a certain point of view it makes sense to speak of a postcolonial moment of Europe, the nobleness of this endeavor is not refuted. At the

same time though, neocolonial tendencies and behavior – even within the EU’s borders – should be researched and analyzed. Differently put, the EU’s essence is not claimed to be necessarily neocolonial, however caution is raised on the possibility of the emergence of such practices and processes.

Keywords

European integration, neocolonialism, postcolonial studies, Eurozone crisis

INTRODUCTION

Does it make sense to speak of a ‘neocolonial power Europe’ and if so how? The term is used drawing as a source of inspiration on the terms “‘civilian power Europe’” (Bull, 1982) or “‘normative power Europe’” (Manners, 2002) and similar ones like ‘ideal’ or ‘imperial’ or ‘market’ or ‘military’ or ‘patchwork’ or ‘pragmatic’ or ‘realist’ ‘power Europe’. Those refer basically to the European Union’s (EU) role and identity *vis-à-vis* its external affairs; that is, its international presence and its position and stance/behavior as an international actor. Attention is thus given there to whether and in what way the EU might have emerged globally as a power in a normative (value or ideas-laden) context. In fact, “‘in the late 1950s, the notion of a ‘colonial power Europe’ would have made some sense’”, since half of the founding states of the EEC were colonial powers. The relations between this international organization and the colonies of member states were “‘from the very beginning institutionalized’” (Jørgensen, 2006: 32).

At this article however, the former term is used in a related yet another respect; the one concerning the exact nature of the EU. In particular, what sort of ‘animal’ is the latter as an emerging polity? Is it characterized by unique or special features regarding governance, policy making and legitimacy? How are these features related to (post)modernity? A series of various answers have been put forward. Here, emphasis is given to the Euro-crisis or its management and particularly to hierarchical and power relations, which have been exposed through the financial and economic crisis and which force analysts to problematize the notion of the EU as a normative power.

In the first place, this crisis and the respective response to it have had serious implications for furthering European integration, with regard to features such as the changing nature of the EU polity and decisions for the Economic and Monetary Union in conjunction with constraints of member state politics. The incremental process of centralizing redistributive policies and the debates about financial transfers have altered permissive consensus for integration and exposed territorial cleavages, which became a key constraint in responding to the crisis (Vilpišauskas, 2013). Overall, there have been broader types of implications for the EU concerning integration and policy or public opinion change; the triggering of events regarding proposed and actual change of policies and of institutions as well as the impact on how citizens perceive the EU and its legitimacy. It would be reasonable to see the crisis as having impeded integration. According to a bold view, however, the former might have created an opportunity structure for integration rather than an obstacle, at least in the short run (see the *Journal of European Integration*/2014, vol. 36, is. 3 and particularly Tosun et al., 2014). Another set of questions then comes up. Does the crisis represent a rupture for the

presumably postcolonial characteristics of the EU or a manifestation/expansion of its colonial nature?

Aiming thus to examine a suggested answer among many to the aforementioned questions regarding the EU's nature, the article refers to asymmetric power relations within the EU especially during the crisis of the Eurozone, with an emphasis on the Greek case, through the analytic framework relating to (neo)colonial governance and (post)colonial experiences. As far as the structure of the article is concerned, a few introductory remarks are made in the next section with regard to postcolonial studies as well as to the challenges of European integration, followed by a section referring to the recent crisis. Certain examples are analyzed such as the 'EU states as debt colonies' argument and the problématique about 'the reconstruction of the European South in a postcolonial Europe', including the latter's content, as well as about 'framing the PIGS' in political and media discourse. To be sure, restraints on sovereignty in light of both integration and the crisis may still be discussed and illuminated through various tools and concepts. Discourse analysis anyway reveals the diversity of narratives inside and outside states/societies facing the crisis.

The article's argument lies neither in that the EU should be definitely seen as a (neo)colonial power or entity nor in that Europeanization equals colonization, but in that certain aspects of European governance's mechanisms and logics seem to be reminiscent of the colonial legacy and they may consciously or not reflect it. If such a case holds, then a reflexive critique and a constant awareness of colonial and exclusionary practices, which seem to be manifested through the crisis and its management, would be required. Differently put and given that from a certain point of view it makes sense to speak of a postcolonial moment of Europe especially in light of its international presence, the article doesn't offer a denial of the nobleness of the respective endeavor. Indeed, the latter may well be embraced. However, it is argued that, at the same time, neocolonial tendencies and behavior, even within the EU's borders (boldly put: a possible re-entry of neocolonialism or a neocolonial moment of Europe), should also be an open issue at the respective research/analysis. So they could be thoroughly examined –if indeed they exist– without a normative predisposition or prejudice. In any case, understanding the EU power relations is a complex endeavor. It is thus subject to a pluralist dialectic, entailing various perspectives and analytical lenses. Adding to it a postcolonial studies informed analysis or several ones for that matter doesn't necessarily aim at discrediting the European integration project, but the very least at being used as yet another means for analyzing asymmetric power relations.

1. Remarks on postcolonial studies and on the challenges of European integration

The issue of neocolonialism is part of the postcolonial studies/agenda. In a nutshell, one of the latter's starting points is the complexity and variety of colonizer-colonized relations, along with the fact that decolonization –or else the emancipation from empires– has had its own challenges, controversies, intricacies, issues, potential and problems. For instance, control (or dominance) in its imperial guise often seemed to have gone from the front door, only to make its appearance from the back door in other forms; sometimes subtler but still intense and obvious. In the first place, decolonized entities had to usually face hierarchic and hegemonic or imperialist behavior from the ex empires. If not that, they certainly had to

move on economic and socio-political institutional, material or intellectual paths already designed in the framework of the international system and society, with a fairly limited ability to influence them, even though a decentering of power to their benefit might at times be attempted or even achieved. On top of that, although they had gained some short of freedom by the ex-rulers, they soon had to face serious challenges to it as well as to democracy. Expectations and ideals were often failed. In that regard, the ruler-ruled structure seemed to have been replaced by a core-periphery one or a reshaped colonizer-colonized structure within and among societies. In fact, the complexity of how elements of imperial cultures are accepted or resisted is indicatively illustrated by a seemingly ‘light’ yet quite clear example; the evolution of cricket as a sport that offered a milieu for the competitive engagement of an empire and its ex colonies and especially India, which eventually achieved a shift of power within the game towards her (Holden, 2008).

Moreover, the controversy over the organization of the world is just a part of a wider issue: the organization of society. Specific beliefs and models about economic and socio-political life have been highly influential or even dominant, mirroring the interests of the respective gatekeepers. In this line of reasoning, which defends the possibility and desirability of advancing alternatives to established-traditional thought and practices, current power relations as well as established objects of study should be put under scrutiny. Evidently, the postcolonial agenda is a contribution to the discussions about how various models reflect patterns of hierarchy and domination or resistance (e.g. Chowdhry & Nair, 2002; Darby, 2004). In the International Relations discipline (IR), overall, postcolonialism (linking the critique of reason and progress with anti-colonial struggles and the ‘non-West’) is seen along with pluralism (opening up a space of parallel stories) and particularism (prioritizing local or cultural standpoints or strands of thought) to be a major dimension of forging some short of post-Western and possibly post-Westphalian IR, aiming at the decentring of the West and at an anti-hegemonic stance. It is linked with the promise of offering the discipline’s deconstruction in a radical manner and of being the most successful in exposing the political and ideological nature of positivist and Western IR (Vasilaki, 2012: 5-11).

Regarding ‘Europe’ itself, an obvious target is Eurocentrism which is after all related to colonial modernity. As a matter of fact, one of the main points of focus of the postcolonial perspective is Europe’s double move during the imperial era: domestically towards a consensus built upon liberal norms while globally towards an expansion that directly violated other societies and their autonomy (Jabri, 2007: 721). In light of various contributions including postcolonialism, at present times there is no shortage of critique against Eurocentrism and of attempts to provincialize Europe; that is to dislodge the latter from its privileged place in political discourse. Bluntly put, it is about putting into question Eurocentric certainties and about illustrating alternatives to traditional or established thought and practices (Chakrabarty, 2009; Seth, 2009: especially p. 334; Vasilaki, 2012: 11-18). Concerns over the prevalence of Eurocentrism specialized to the dominance of western/European experiences in the beliefs regarding international politics, sharply presented as “the Eurocentric conception of world politics” (Hobson, 2012). Moreover, the respective attack also includes as targets homogeneity and consequently the universal of which the former is usually perceived to be an intrinsic element, although a claim has been raised in favor of ‘redeeming’ it, via seeking “an alternative theory of modernity as part of a holistic social theory” often ignored by postcolonial discourse (Matin, 2011: 359).

In fact, attention has been brought to the expansion or reconfiguration of exclusionary racist and culturalist logics across Europe (Arat-Koç, 2010) as well as to the relationship between

colonialism, decolonization and European integration. There are two relative dimensions. Firstly, the EU's formative period coincided with (and was influenced by) the decolonizing dynamic. Secondly, the project of European integration and identity involves states with colonial or imperialistic experiences (Hansen, 2002). So, the colonial legacy of Europe for its external relations is heavy, even if it is somewhat hidden. In this respect, N. Fisher Onar and K. Nicolaidis, who have been engaged to a project about the postcolonial moment of Europe (Cooperation and Conflict, 2013/ vol. 48, is. 2), note the effectiveness of the denial of Europe's pre-world-war colonial past, since the inception of the EU project (Fisher Onar & Nicolaidis, 2013: 284. Also see Arat-Koç, 2010: 183-184). Their own focus relates to a so-called decentering agenda *vis-à-vis* Europe and the respective international relations. Evidently, the postcolonial character of Europe entails anti-colonialism and anti-eurocentrism, for good reason, as long as it involves (p. 286):

- a) questioning Eurocentric accounts of world history/politics or civilizational accounts,
- b) engaging others' perspectives or assumptions in light of a mutual engagement,
- c) recognizing historical patterns of the EU's external relations.

Here, a crucial question emerges concerning the aptness of the analogy between the legacies of colonialism or the 19th-century standard(s) of civilization (the criteria through which the international society of European states expanded, insofar as other states were judged fit) and the EU's narratives or modes of action. The standard(s) of civilization is a theme developed primarily but not exclusively within the English School of IR, thus intersecting with other strands of thought such as postcolonialism (see the Review of European Studies/2012, vol. 4, is. 3 and indicatively Stivachtis, 2012). It has been employed –among others– as a set of practices, that are constitutive of the identity of states and their society (international society) by shaping conceptions of rightful membership for this society, or of legitimate patterns of conduct, among its members, and as an analytical framework built on conditions that help scholars to reveal the material and normative asymmetries of power and hierarchies (Stroikos, 2014: 549-550).

Viewed from those perspectives, the movements of the EU (like every international society) can be deciphered as forms of asymmetric ignorance and violence exerted from a core of states of such society over its peripheries. The emerging geographical imaginations of core and periphery are not neutral but charged with hierarchical thinking, which assigns to the peripheries a sub-altern role. In this sense, the EU scholarship with a primary European and policy oriented focus is found to carry on a colonial/imperial narrative of Europe as the subject of history. It is thus compelled to remain Euro-centric, due to the neglect of Europe's historically grounded contingency. The redemption of the latter and overcoming political and cultural centrism or hierarchies rests upon the transformation of Europe's and the EU's 'Self(s)' via an openness towards non-European 'Others' (Behr, 2012). So, attention is raised on identity construction in both contemporary Europe and the ex-European Empires. Only this time, a European empire is constructed through the EU's continuing pursuit of expansion and consolidation via a collective/continental consciousness of 'Civilised' and 'Other'. An indicative example of the constant reification of such identity is cartography contributions; "a media bombardment of unchallenged maps" (Foster, 2012: especially pp. 397-398). More generally, both the EU's external and internal policies are linked to a 'post-imperial' condition, whereby multiple meanings of the imperial past of various countries prevail (Nicolaidis & Fisher Onar, 2016).

In this regard, Europeans seem to have only partially succeeded in transcending their colonial impulses, despite Europe's transformation from a 'metropolis' (a cluster of colonial capitals) to a 'microcosmos' (an EU that contains many of the world's tensions within itself). They often continue to see their microcosmos as a capital rather than as a province of the world, despite having at large come to terms with the loss of the metropolis status. Consequently, the EU offers ground for developing a 'new standards typology' articulated around agency denial and hierarchy; meaning respectively the unilateral shaping of standards applicable to others and the salience of Eurocentricism in the way the standards are enforced. The first element refers to the tendency of denying agency to new members, while the second refers to the inequality related to some agents systematically having more power than others and being institutionally recognized to have higher worth. EU membership and the relations with other regions depend upon convergence with those new standards. Thus, remembering historical legacies and reflecting upon the standards that inspire action in the EU's name is necessary for the latter's ability to become a postcolonial power (Nicolaidis et al., 2014).

In this sense, the relations between the EU and the Third World countries are an interesting case study about the formation of neocolonial mechanisms. For example, the European provision to African states with budget support to facilitate poverty eradication is claimed to have turned out to function as a form of neocolonial arrangement, given that regressive liberalization essentially resulted to closing down genuine avenues for poverty alleviation (Langan, 2014). After all, an analysis of African perceptions of the EU's policy towards Africa (the organization's promotion of democracy and human rights, its role in trade relations and its policy in the field of peace and security) reveals only a partial acceptance of the EU's self-ascription as a civilian/normative power, in light of coexisting views of it in terms of both soft power and neo-colonial power (Schmidt, 2012).

Furthermore, the EU is a formidable example of how joining a society of states requires the fulfillment of certain standards. In particular, the EU policy of membership conditionality clearly manifests the role of the civilization dimension as an international practice as well as a benchmark against which the attitudes and policies of states are assessed. In this framework, the enlargement's importance is claimed to lie to the outwards expansion of the homogeneous European international society (the EU), gradually transforming the heterogeneous European international system, in which it is embedded, into a more homogeneous international society (Stivachtis, 2008. Cf. Böröcz, 2001). This "process of EU enlargement is not very different from the process of the historical expansion the European international society" (p. 87). Specifically, the EU accession politics have operated in the legacies of the 19th-century imperial rule, along three features; namely, the authoritative definition of political standards of international cooperation and membership along with the respective requirements, unequal treaties and geopolitical strategies. Of those features, the first refers to the general self-perception of European states as those who authoritatively define the standards. The second relates to regulations which define different paces and steps of cooperation between European and non-European states. The third impinges upon a geopolitical model projecting a world order with European states at the centre and zones of less politically developed states at the peripheries (Behr, 2007). For example, the EU's eastern enlargement in the 2000s involved a "civilizing mission" for Central and Eastern Europe, in the sense that the respective countries would be considered equal to the EU's member-states and worthy of highly set standards (Triandafyllidou & Spohn, 2003: 11).

On the other hand, European integration has inspired a lengthy and multi-faceted research agenda for the EU's nature and evolution. At its early stages, perceptions of the European endeavor oscillated between the hard realities of international politics or organization to the expectations for a federal entity. Later, they have multiplied in light of the EU's historical and potential development. Is it after all a case of the "European rescue of the Nation-state" (Milward, 1992) or of a "new political system" (Hix, 2014)? The emerging Euro-polity has combined various logics and forms/sources of governance and legitimacy. For many, it seems to have defied treatment as a clear equivalent of a national polity in its modern guise. In this respect, it has been characterized, considered or discussed as a highly diversified, mixed and multi-dimensional entity; indeed a postmodern or post-national or post-liberal or post-sovereign one. There, multi-level or network mechanisms and logics might entail a full-fledged political transformation, including different conceptualizations of neither only political organization nor imagination but of democracy itself as well.

This issue is succinctly illustrated through various concepts and concerns. In this framework, the EU has indicatively been understood or analyzed as a "new medieval postmodernity" or "a complex mixture of old, new and hybrid forms—territorial, transterritorial and functional forms of association and authority coexisting and interacting" (Anderson, 1996: 146 & 149), a "network society" emerging into a "post-national polity" (Axford & Huggins, 1999), a "directly deliberative polyarchy" (Cohen & Sabel, 1997), a manifestation of "synarchy" (Chrysochoou, 2009), a "self-contained regime" (Phelan, 2012), a form of "post-Weberian 'governance'" (Wiener, 2000: 319) or of "multi-layered governance without clear lines of demarcated jurisdiction and identity" (Schmitter, 1996: 132) or a "loosely coupled" system of multi-level governance among governmental institutions, civil society organizations, and the 'interests' represented by them" (Piattoni, 2010: 260). Actually, most of these cases acutely reflect a "governance turn" in EU studies" (Kohler-Koch & Rittberger, 2006). Taking into account the fact that here 'Westphalia' represents an anarchic system of states whose sovereignty is presumed to be typically respected, several of these conceptualizations relate to a reconstruction of the Westphalian order and model and they thus reflect a post-Westphalian anxiety.

An example, which describes the aforementioned 'messiness' of the EU as a political entity and draws explicitly from coloniality-related themes refers to the focus on the EU as a form of empire. If one accepts such relevance, then the question comes down from whether the EU is an imperial system to what kind of empire it is. The 'Europe as empire' discourse has indeed included features already discussed in the beginning of this section, such as the EU's politics of conditionality, a geopolitical center-periphery model reflecting asymmetric relations of wealth, power or rights, and a discourse with respect to European civilization and the EU as a global actor (for an overview see Behr & Stivachtis, 2016a and especially Behr & Stivachtis, 2016b: 1-2). Indicatively, the application of conditionality not only to the EU's enlargement policy but also to the respective neighborhood and development policies are claimed to having pointed to the direction of the emergence of a less aggressive than in the past form of empire; a 'non-imperial empire' (Stivachtis, 2016).

Another relative example originating from the postcolonial problématique, has eloquently been offered by N. Polat in terms of "European integration as colonial discourse" (Polat, 2011). In particular, emphasis is given to the fact that the EU's supranational and colonizing authority has been subverted by the nation-state. That is so, even if the latter is confined to the mimetic site or exactly because it still functions at this site. Efforts to overwhelm it have

conceded to the incorporation of symbols tied to it, such as flag or currency. In this way, the EU has anyway incorporated the Westphalian logic, to which many scholars have presented it as an alternative. In Polat's blunt terms, the former has been trapped to the latter. Evidently, a novel polity formation doesn't mean the shifting away from logics and rationalities related to the modern state.

Overall, European integration has met postcolonial studies in various dimensions such as Eurocentrism, enlargement via conditionality and its effect on identity, the EU's international role and the prospect for the emergence of a postmodern entity possibly in a post-Westphalian or imperial mode. This is not to say that such prospect is necessarily strong or irreversible and a good thing too. At the very least however, asymmetric power relations within Europe are subject to a pluralist dialectic and they entail various perspectives and lenses, including postcolonial studies informed pieces of analysis. In light of this, the next section emphasizes the particular challenges posed by European economic governance and the contemporary respective crisis.

2. The crisis of the Eurozone and colonizing mechanisms

How might postcolonial thought or issues over colonialism and neocolonialism be employed for the understanding of the EU's economic governance and particularly of the Eurozone crisis? From certain points of view, colonizing mechanisms are claimed to exist at various aspects related to this crisis as well as the North-South distinction. One important caveat; there is neither monolithic nor single EU and Europe or even institutions entangled in the management of the crisis. In fact, within those institutions in the long run, there have often appeared internal disagreements and aspects of critical evaluation. However, key points of the original arrangement of the crisis (memorandum of understanding and so forth) have remained more or less intact, embodying in actual practices a rather low degree of self-reflection regarding the general philosophy of the crisis management. As a result, there seems to be an issue not only of a specific form of economic governance but also of a transformation of certain nation-states as unequal partners which have found themselves at the low chain of asymmetric power relations, in the framework of this governance and conditionality.

A recent example of such a 'charge' includes the 'EU states as debt colonies' argument □□ specifically "Greece, debt colony" □□ set by professor N. Kotzias (2013), who is currently Greece's Foreign Minister. According to him, obvious affinities and analogies can be drawn between the imperial rule and recent European responses of the debt and economy crisis in certain states (e.g. Greece) at bureaucratic, economic and intellectual levels. Following this argument, the management of the respective crisis –through specific loan arrangements– is not a classical case of the European challenge to state sovereignty in general. It is a particular set of conditions and methods of undermining sovereignty in a way regrettably reminiscent of the colonial ruling system. Through a detailed historical analysis, it is claimed that the imperial rule entailed an "imperial triangle" consisting of corporations, administration and states. In the EU and the Eurozone context, this triangle is reflected on a so called "European imperial triangle" comprising of multinational enterprises or markets, European administration/Brussels bureaucracy and a hierarchical chain of states, whereby a specific one (Germany) has played a leading role (pp.18-19).

Then again in the same aforementioned context, what is a ‘debt colony’? It is a state positioned at the lower lever of the EU governance chain, with a limited sovereignty and directly supervised by other parties. A distinctive amount of relevant decisions do not stem from its own domestic decision making system, which finds itself at a position of being hashed through a variety of administrative cultures and economic interests rather than of being enriched with third parties’ knowledge/experiences. At best, others’ decisions are just sanctioned. Internal political life/agenda is constantly influenced and co-shaped by powerful actors such as bureaucracy, financial capital and key member states through respective interventions. The latter have principally taken place in the name (and under the framework) of conditionality, but they may even go beyond it (a notable example is the fierce comments from European high officials about the participating parties and the synthesis of the new government after the first elections in 2015/January, including criticism for non-memorandum related decisions, in the sector of defense). The same state covers the colonial costs, while national economy is under the control of other parties. Development is designed to meet and match the latter’s needs instead of national ones. Key elements of the market, the financial system and the public sector are essentially controlled and supervised by creditors. Special types of loan agreements, which resemble classical imperialism, are claimed to be used as a tool of transforming a typically equal member into such a debt colony. This includes measures like amnesty of corruption-related acts, direct access to and control of natural resources and a favorable framework on privatizations. Also, methods of capital accumulation tend to resemble those of nascent capitalism. Finally but certainly not less importantly, the state and its society are caught on specific ideological and racially laden mechanisms regarding the economy and its function (pp.15-16 and ch. 4). The latter dimension will be explored a bit furthermore, since it is on the focus of other specific arguments. Overall, this argument came up a few (about three) years since the beginning of the management of the Greek crisis, in light of a specific fact; the substantial loss of the gross national product and an increasingly growing ratio of public debt/national income. Notably, this feature continues to be the case. So the followed policy has yet to be proven a remedy.

The neocolonial connection of European integration has also been reflected upon the problématique about “the reconstruction of the ‘European South’ in a postcolonial Europe” (Leontidou, 2012. Also see Leontidou, 2014). In this case, emphasis is given on a discursive formation of the European South through a North/South distinction not only at an economic level but at a cultural one as well. Even if new border conceptualizations emerge in light of globalization and supposedly to the detriment of the nation-state, new or reconstructed forms of uneven development or social inequality in a neoliberal context are still at hand. It is a movement towards a post-hegemonic (à la Gramsci) condition, insofar as the role of consent decreases, while the role of suppression increases. But it still refers to power relations and in particular to a nexus among knowledge, power and geography which privileges specific ratios of sharing costs and benefits as well as a utilitarian logic over one which promotes solidarity, cohesion and care. In this nexus, forged by the global financial crisis and the socio-economic and demographic challenges of globalization, a European South has found itself stigmatized, rhetorically and materially marginalized as the North’s Other and trapped in a set of anti-welfare state and capital-friendly rules encouraged by a Self, that upholds the European standards to its benefit. The latter (Kotzias, 2013: ch. 4.5.3) consists of various direct and indirect economic gains, such as cheaper borrowing, profits from bonds bought through the European Central Bank, consolidation of markets etc, but mainly of maintaining a competitive advantage for enterprises.

This argument is compatible with the concern about the non-neutrality and hierarchy of the geographical imaginations of core and periphery assigned with a sub-altern role, which “is as true for colonial and post-colonial relations between Europe and the world as it is true for the relations even within the European Union as several politics of membership graduation and unequal treaties demonstrate” (Behr, 2012: 13. See pp. 13-14). It is also consistent with the claim that the public authority of the EU might have served as an instrument of a strategic coalition among West and Central European capital as well as among state apparatuses with the aim of optimizing their geopolitical positions (Böröcz, 2016). In fact, a notable feature of the specific crisis is the recent newcomers’ adamant position for sticking to high standards, that they had been confronted with in the process of enlargement. During the time of writing the last lines of this article after the reviewing process, an incident came up, showing the emerging shifts; Greece revoked her ambassador in Prague for consultation, as a sign of protest for certain statements of the president of the Czech Republic, concerning the EMU and the Greek imbroglio (in a nutshell, a Czech participation to the EMU would be better with Greece’s exclusion), which were considered offensive to the former.

Moreover, the focus on the discursive construction of the debt crisis has also been discussed explicitly as an issue of discriminatory framing in political and media discourses for the EU’s peripheral member states and particularly of “framing PIGS to clean their stable”, succinctly put. Examining political and media discourses, a relation has been observed between the core and the periphery of the Eurozone. According to this line of reasoning, the respective system is found to be based on neocolonialism as well as on uneven development and racism. By the latter is meant a narrative blaming the PIGS (Portugal, Ireland, Spain, and Greece) and their inhabitants for the crisis, based upon certain cultural characteristics and habits such as laziness, non-productivity, corruption, wasteful spending and lying. The crux of the matter comes down to the reduction of political and economic divergences into a cultural problem; that is, a culture of productivity *vs* a culture of laziness. So discourse wise, the explanation of the Euro-crisis is primarily kept on a racial/cultural dimension and less on existing economic divergences, in light of an increasing de-politicization. The latter refers to the removal of a political phenomenon from the comprehension of its historical emergence and the powers that produce it. In order to address such a situation, a politicization and the conceptualization of all citizens as equal would be required (Van Vossle, 2013). On this issue, it should be noted that ‘corruption’, ‘lack of credibility’ and ‘irresponsibility’ have been found to be three of the dominant themes that gave shape to the negative global discourse regarding Greece at the outbreak of the crisis (Antoniades, 2013: 20-23).

By now, three specific examples have been offered, pointing to the direction that the European economic governance □□—especially in light of the Eurozone crisis□—□ has been characterized by some sort of colonizing, imperial and neocolonial mechanisms economically and politically as well as culturally. Yet, it is worth noting that discussing the currently evolving EU system in terms drawing on empires or imperialism is not an intellectual temperament of the respective authors and especially Kotzias, who has been quite adamant in employing such terms. With regard to Germany’s role to the handling of the crisis, for instance, the country’s *ordo-liberal* emphasis on stability culture has been found to be a strategic resource for securing national objectives, however in light of the requirements of domestic politics (Bulmer, 2014).

European integration theory has indeed been enriched by analysis of the EU as some form of empire or imperial system. In the previous section, reference was made to ‘Europe as

Empire’ discourse including the politics of conditionality, center-periphery geopolitics and civilizational discourse. In light of the EU’s eastern enlargement, after all, a warning was succinctly made that a European suprastate-making process is on the way and it manifests core symptoms of empire and coloniality, which can be interpreted as “a testimony to the ubiquity of global structures of power, unequal exchange, dependence and patterns of exclusion under global capitalism as we know it today” (Böröcz, 2001: 36. Also see Foster, 2012). Giving a notable example regarding imperial-like analysis, according to J. Zielonka’s argument (2006), the EU’s enlargement would result to the emergence of a neo-medieval empire rather than of a classical Westphalian type of federal state. This emerging form entails the multilevel or multcentred governance in concentric circles as well as the interpenetration of various types of political units, operating in a system without a clear power centre and hierarchy. Such a polycentric polity would penetrate rather than control its environment. The medieval dimension thus consists of concentric circles, fuzzy borders, and soft forms of external power projection, whereby authority is shared and spread rather than unified or exclusive. It is contrasted to a neo-Westphalian empire regarding the latter’s centralized governance structure, perpetual asymmetry and hierarchy in metropolis-periphery relations, military and political means of control and a high degree of universalism. Compared with this specific argument, the ones mentioned previously have linked the crisis and its management to the increase of such asymmetries/hierarchies, to different forms of ‘political geometry’ (e.g. governance conceptualized as imperial triangle rather than as concentric circles) as well as to exclusive (as opposed to shared) forms of authority.

What is underscored here, through notions such as debt colony and racial framing of societies-victims of the crisis, is the general issue of mechanisms that pose a growing challenge towards sovereignty and its mitigation. This time, such challenge is not single/uniform for all the EU’s member states (whose sovereignty is indeed mitigated, but only some of them are ‘caught’ to the debt colony status). Interestingly enough, Greece –one of the most challenging cases for the management of the crisis so far– has already been noted as a typical example of facing restraints to sovereignty, in light of the 19th century contractual arrangements involving sovereign loans (Krasner, 2001: 27-28). In similar vein and in light of recent developments, it has also served as a source of inspiration for introducing concepts to denote such restraint, of which “stateness and sovereign debt” (Lavdas et al., 2013a) and particularly “stateness under strain” (Lavdas, 2013) stand out as an obvious example. Like Kotzias’ argument, this line of reasoning offers an understanding of the interactions in the framework of Europeanization and globalization; □mainly the impact of financial and economic conditionality□ and adjustment, whereby specific conditions privilege the choice for certain options over others. Specifically, if the transformation of stateness weakens the prevalent domestic institutions and policy coalitions, then the impact is more direct and less mediated. But if stateness is transformed through shifting pacts and changing coalitions, a negotiated outcome may be possible (Lavdas et al., 2013b: 181). Although this perspective isn’t part of a neocolonial or postcolonial problématique, it too underscores a scape-goating process in regard to Greece for a failure that was not only national but systemic as well (pp. 175-176).

Continuing with the same case, it has also given ground for an increased focus on both domestic and external/institutional factors that led to the burst of the sovereign debt crisis (Bitzenis et al., 2013), on the effects of the combination of weakened institutions and the predatory behavior of aggressive rent-seeking groups (Mitsopoulos & Pelagidis, 2011), or on deep structural causes such as falling profitability and overaccumulation crisis (Mavroudeas,

2014). This is also true with “remapping ‘crisis’ in Greece” as a method of unfolding hidden or repressed stories regarding the crisis (Tsilimpounidi & Walsh, 2014. Also see Brekke et al., 2014) as well as the “politics of extreme austerity” (Karyotis & Gerodimos, 2015), notably including “framing contests and management crisis” (part I. Cf. Sklias & Tzifakis, 2013: part I; Clarke et al., 2015). In this framework, diversity in the respective narratives during the last years is revealed. From the vantage point of discursive institutionalism, the Greek implosion posed a challenge for the discursive foundations of the Eurozone since its inception, identifying three shifts regarding the credibility of the Euro, the impartiality of the rules of the game and the possibility of a Euro-exit. Thus, in the emerging polarization processes, an originally formed politics of denial gave its place to an understanding of Greece as a special case and then to a politics of blame, combined eventually with breaking the taboo of a Greek exit from the Eurozone (Papadimitriou & Zartaloudis 2015). This should be seen in combination with a general trend of the transformation of Greece into a negative signifier in global public discourse □at the beginning of the debt crisis□ and used as such by economic, political and media elites (Antoniades, 2013). Even if it is accepted that responsibility for the Greek imbroglio lies mainly within the country and significantly less in external factors (Tzogopoulos, 2013: ch. 2-3), the respective international coverage of major European as well as American newspapers has been found to be characterized by stereotyping, such as the outright focus on negative rather than positive stories, a certain use of excessive generalities and ironic comments as well as a minimal interest in internal debates or alternative voices (ch. 4-7).

On the other hand, shifting the focus from European crisis narratives for Greece to crisis narratives in Greece, an analysis of editorial pieces and readers’ letters in a series of Greek newspapers reveals stereotype-inducing frames and the presence of affective expressions: anger, fear, hope and pride (Capelos & Exadaktylos, 2015). In this vein, data from Eurobarometer surveys are found to confirm an increase of negative sentiment of the Greek society towards the EU in recent years. However, the decline in the general support for the EU has been combined with an increase in support for the Euro. In this sense, the disenchantment of the Greek public opinion regarding the EU has not led to a choice of leaving the Eurozone or renouncing membership altogether. That stance is acutely reflected by the phrase “we no longer love you, but we don’t want to leave you” (Clements et al., 2014). Similarly, Greece’s Europeanization has been proven to be a considerably persistent project so far; yet the degree of this persistence depends on a complex variety of interactions in domestic, European and international levels (Lavdas & Mendrinou, 2013).

In light of all the above and given that the colonial legacy of Europe for its external relations is heavy, there is good reason to suggest that this legacy might influence or may be reflected upon the EU’s inner processes, especially in light of the crisis management, at least so far. Then, the existence of neocolonial mentalities or practices within the EU or in other words the possible re-entry of neocolonialism is yet another criterion for assessing sovereignty within the European framework as well as the respective governance itself. What is at stake here is that the EU doesn’t emerge as an a priori anti-colonial entity but might do possibly as a neocolonial one, insofar as it transforms certain states to debt colonies and reproduces the colonial dependence and the dominance of a superior Northern core towards an inferior Southern periphery, not unlike other historical cases. This is not to deny that a postcolonial moment of Europe could be on the way. But it entails keeping Eurocentrism and neocolonial tendencies and behavior even within the EU’s borders an open issue.

Conclusion

The article started with a graphic term ('neocolonial power Europe'), inspired by equally indicative terms used especially at the discussion of the EU's external role, but introduced in yet another context: the one about the nature of the EU as a polity in terms of governance. In particular, certain insights were drawn from the framework relating to (neo- or post-) colonial governance or experience, in order to address power relations within the EU especially during the crisis of the Eurozone and of the European South.

The link between European integration and postcolonial studies has anyway come up in a variety of guises/issues such as Eurocentrism along with the need for dislodging Europe from its privileged place, the EU's international role combined with the challenge of overcoming European powers' colonial legacy in international politics, enlargement via conditionality and its effect on identity, and finally the prospect for a postmodern Euro-polity whose messiness begs various interpretations, including a post-colonial reading.

Evidently, there have been a few relevant arguments tackling the impact of European integration to political entities and particularly the challenges set by the Euro-crisis for the function of sovereignty and for the cohesion of European societies; namely the arguments regarding 'debt colony' (about the colonizing effects of European governance), the 'reconstruction of the European South' (over the discursive formation of the latter through a North/South distinction *vis à vis* not only the economy but culture as well) and 'framing PIGS' (referring to a narrative which constructs political and economic divergences as a cultural issue), along with others such as 'sovereignty under strain' (about the intricacies of conditionality and the need for reform). Bluntly put, framing practices of a colonial nature seem to be an important part of the emerging Europe, in all the latter's complexity. From a certain point of view, the multilevel or multicentred governance may well constitute a neo-medieval imperial system (juxtaposed to a model of neo-Westphalian empire), especially in light of the continuing enlargement of the EU. Yet, a crucial challenge for the management of the ensuing crisis is how such a system does indeed present features of certain states' transformation to debt colonies and of exclusive and hierarchic (rather than shared) forms of authority, forging reconstituted core-periphery relations.

If a question of such an audacious connection between colonial mechanisms and the power relations within the EU, regarding the Eurozone crisis and its management, was put rather boldly, the answer here is probably less bold. For example, is it claimed that the EU is a neocolonial polity or system or form of governance, whereby Europeanization is by definition colonization? No, although every reader is entitled to her/his conclusions. Or, is it claimed that every restraint on sovereignty or any post-sovereign governance are by definition of a neocolonial nature? No, again. However, is there a margin for the existence of certain aspects of EU governance mechanisms and logics that are reminiscent of the colonial/imperial legacy and may consciously or not reflect it? The answer to this specific question is bit more controversial. To be sure, the EU's essence is not claimed to be necessarily neocolonial, however caution is raised on the possibility of the emergence of such practices and processes, especially in light of the crisis. A critical line of reasoning regarding the management of the latter necessarily entails the discussion of post- or neo- colonial themes; especially insofar as governance could or would unfold in terms more of imperial triangles rather than of concentric circles. Equally importantly, in no way should the focus on colonizing or framing

mechanisms serve as an alibi for a lack of self-reflection and self-critique on behalf of the involved parties, including the targets of those mechanisms.

European integration has in any case posed significant challenges for state sovereignty such as a serious degree of the latter's mitigation. In IR and particularly in European Studies, the instances of the characterization and analysis of EU governance in postmodern terms seem to have outweighed the ones in explicitly (neo- or post-) colonial terms. Indeed issues of power asymmetries, of hidden hierarchies, of establishing or reshaping authority, of framing etc have given the chance to many scholars for discussing the EU developments in a postmodern manner or *venire*. Emphasis on colonial terminology and concerns need neither a priori mean nor lead to a pre-modern or an early modern or a colonial-modern understanding of the EU. However, those issues are not entirely new/path-breaking; they may point to a different future but certainly they are not cut from the past. For example, cultural and racial framing was a significant issue of colonial modernity. So, the awareness of the respective elements in current developments should demonstrate a significant degree of self-reflection. Such awareness requires an emphasis not only on how the EU has perceived and managed the crisis but also on what the crisis or its management can tell us about the evolving EU and the ongoing inter-subjective processes.

Boldly put, the possibility of a re-entry of neocolonialism or of a neocolonial moment of Europe cannot be denied on the spot. On the one hand, European governance is indeed a complex and multi-faceted phenomenon raising multiple normative and empirical issues. On the other hand, it is a matter of empirical investigation and not of normative disposition whether the EU would experience nowadays and in light of the Eurozone crisis a reversal of the double move that Europe experienced during imperial times: only this time globally towards a consensus built upon liberal norms while domestically towards a violation of the member states' societies in terms of having them culturally or racially framed and rhetorically or materially marginalized. Addressing and confronting this move is the necessary step for forging a genuinely postcolonial Europe.

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