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# The Global South as 'Europe's Jungle': A Postcolonial Critique of EU Foreign Policy in a Changing World Order

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## Abstract

*The global world order has been transforming, becoming increasingly less Europe-centred. In this context, the paper critically examines how European Union (EU) foreign policy narratives are structured by the coloniality of power, as conceptualised by Quijano, with a focus on Josep Borrell's 2022 'Garden and Jungle' speech. The empirical analysis is situated in the post-2022 geopolitical context, in which the EU's foreign policy narrative has shifted from positioning itself as a 'soft power' to adopting the 'language of power'. The EU's relative weight in global geopolitics is declining and the EUropean leaders strategically mobilise colonial tropes in political discourses to signal a dominant position over the Other and mark a clear border between the imagined Europe and the 'Jungle'. Drawing on postcolonial theory and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), this study seeks to empirically reveal how official EU foreign policy narratives reproduce asymmetrical power structures rooted in Western European colonialism, within the post-2022 geopolitical context. Borrell's framing of EUrope – using colonial tropes of moral and developmental superiority, especially in its relations with Latin America – reinforces the coloniality of power contributing to the EU's attempt to reassert the global dominance Western Europe lost after the collapse of the colonial empires.*

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*Those that do not know their history run the risk of revisiting it.*
Elie Wiesel (Lewis 2022: 3)

*We're so used to this reality*
*that we forget it is no historical accident.*
Kehinde Andrews (2022: xii)

## Introduction

*Europe is a garden . . . the rest of the world is a jungle, and the jungle could invade the garden. The gardeners should take care of it, but they will not protect the garden by building walls.* (Borrell 2022b)

These are the words of Josep Borrell, the high representative/vice president (HR/VP) of the European Union (EU) between 2019 and 2024. He addressed the speech to an audience of young European diplomats in Bruges, intending to pass on old wisdom from one generation of European diplomats to the next.

In this study, I argue that this narrative shift towards a 'more geopolitical EU' that defends itself from Others outside the imagined European terrain has become normalised in mainstream foreign policy discourse post-2022. Borrell's strategic use of colonial narratives serves geopolitical positioning and reinforces the EU's coloniality of power in relation to Latin America, which also exerts an influence on framing current conflicts between Russia and Ukraine and Israel and Palestine (Oleart & Roch 2025: 3). Introducing the concept of coloniality helps capture 'the long-standing patterns of power that emerged as a result of colonialism, but that define culture, labour, intersubjective relations, and knowledge production well beyond the strict limits of colonial administration' (Maldonado-Torres 2007: 243).

In this light, the Garden-Jungle distinction is understood as the core of power, based on the racial division between Europeans and non-Europeans and on the myths of the superior European civilisation (Quijano 2000: 533, 542). These elements, as Quijano argues (2000: 533) are fundamental to the Eurocentric rationality that defines the corroding, yet still globally hegemonic power which inherently implies coloniality. To capture the coloniality in EU foreign policy discourse, I first critically examine the Eurocentric truth and knowledge production with a

special focus on the logic of Othering and the role of stereotyping which inform the century-old Jungle trope in discursive practices present in HR/VP Josep Borrell's narrative (Wilkens 2017: 5; Bhabha 1994; Bhambra 2007; Gandhi 2020, etc.).

Based on the empirical findings, I further argue that despite the end of direct colonial administration in the 1960s, the collective social and political consciousness still has not undergone a transformative historical disruption at the EU level. This is due partly to the widespread historical amnesia (Pasture 2018) in mainstream EU policymaking, European public discourse and academia regarding the historical context in which the EU's predecessors were conceived – namely, the collapse of the European colonial empires. Moreover, the colonial narrative endures partly because of the 'forgetting and forgiving' of the founding Member States (MSs) that accumulated wealth through colonial systems. The EU's reinforced hegemonic rhetoric remained a tool attempting to present itself as a dominant actor in the shifting global world order (Böröcz 2021).

Before introducing the logic of colonial discourse and its reproduction in 21st century EU foreign policy discourse, I define how the concept 'Europe' is understood in this paper and reflect my research position as a woman from Budapest, Central-Eastern Europe (CCE). Generally, postcolonial literature often portrays colonisers as synonymous with 'Europeans', treating the region as a homogenic entity. It is, however, imprecise because European societies have vastly different experiences with colonialism. Since Western MS benefit from the privileges and the power associated with imperial legacy, the wealth and the enduring sociocultural and cognitive dominance manifest in EU governance regarding, for example, migration and border policies, the 'Eastern Enlargement' and the foreign policy (Böröcz 2001).

Therefore, building on József Böröcz' works (2009) I use the word *EUrope* to depict the concept of Europe as Borrell understands it in his speeches: It refers to EU member states, more precisely, to those Western societies that have been historically shaped by the material and cognitive implications of imperial colonialism. EUrope is, thus, a concept linked to the collective EU identity that merges different European histories, with a default emphasis on Western Europe's hegemonic role in the world. (Pasture 2018).

I wish to contribute to the body of critical knowledge on contemporary European identity construction and global power hierarchy reproduction between former colonies and colonisers from a historical perspective. Both endeavours are influenced by my research position, rooted in a Central-Eastern European socio-economic background and a feminist analytical lens which critiques cemented and normalised power structures from the standpoint of the 'oppressed'. Similarly to the feminist point of view on the oppressive system of patriarchy, the decolonial thinking sees 'projects of inclusion into existing dominant orders' critically as well (Orbie et al. 2023: 6).

From this standpoint, both social entities exist in a state of 'exclusion with access', a concept that also informs my analytical lens (Vivekanandan 2020). In a EUropean sense, it means inclusion in privileged places formed by the Western EUropean and male power, such as that in the EU polity and Western European academic spheres; however, mechanisms of exclusion are in play when it comes to transformative access for Central-Eastern European or female actors. These social and cognitive positions of the researcher inform postcolonial critique of EU foreign policy specifically in understanding the process and nuances of Othering. Postcolonial and feminist standpoints are mutually helpful when deconstructing the naturalised and neutralised White European and male points of views and power.

Based on the empirical and theoretical understanding of *exclusion with access,* I apply this concept to the complex relationship between Latin America and the EU. Vivekanandan (2020: 5) defines *exclusion with access* based on the empirical case of a museum in the former colonial centre which displays works of art previously appropriated from the ex-colonies in the ex-colonial place, which is the paradox of accessibility and exclusion. When locals gain access to view the exhibited colonial history, they can never truly reclaim ownership of the objects; moreover, the colonial seizure itself remains unacknowledged in the process of glorifying the common heritage in the present (Vivekanandan 2020: 5).

This logic is also apparent in Borrell's discourse towards former Latin American colonies because he frequently recalls the 'rich cultural and linguistic similarities between Europe and Latin American countries' and highlights the 'common history' and, consequently 'Latin America's closeness to Europe'. This seemingly inclusive mode of speech, used by the Spanish-origin HR/VP, highlights the 'similarities' in speeches frequently delivered in Spanish, but fails to address the root of these shared – or rather, imposed – cultural features: brutal European colonialism. Meanwhile, he constructs difference and exclusion through Othering in his speeches and imposes Europe's supposed civilising power onto his Latin American addressees.

Following this introduction, I outline the historical context in which the European Union emerged in the 20th century. Contrary to the mainstream discourse which holds that Western European countries established the EU's predecessor, the European Economic Community (EEC), to 'overcome internal conflicts on the continent', I argue that the 'forgotten history of the EU's conception' is crucial for developing a critical understanding of how colonial logic has been adapted into EUropean institutional and academic discourses enabling enduring legacies of colonial structures to sustain.

*Whatever Europe is,*
*cannot be understood outside of its imperial relationships.*
Gurminder Bhambra (2007: 19)

## The European project: From Eurafrica to the universal goodness

The European Union's self-proclaimed foundations are rooted in a selective historical narrative in which the European community is based on the 'cultural, religious and humanist inheritance of Europe, from which have developed the universal values of inviolable rights of the human person, freedom, democracy, equality, and the rule of law' (European Union 1992). The mention of the common European inheritance on which the future of the Union lies presupposes some historical awareness of the MS' past.

However, as pointed out by Böröcz, the Eurocentric narrative of the European Union's history is constructed through 'forgetting and forgiving' those member states – Belgium, Denmark, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Italy, Spain and Portugal – that actively practised brutal colonial oppression in the past (2021). This selective memory is what Nicolaïdis (2015: 285) calls a 'virgin birth' and Pasture (2018: 7) defines as 'institutional amnesia'.

Many scholars (Böröcz 2021; Nicolaïdis et al. 2015 and Hansen & Jonsson 2015) apart from the mainstream EU studies, argue that the genesis of the European Union was largely induced by the collapse of the former colonial Empires and bound to the collective colonial project of Eurafrica. The 'imperial enterprise', called 'Eurafrica', was Europe's endeavour to step up as a third global power next to Cold War–era rivals – the United States and the Soviet Union (Hansen & Jonsson 2015: 217). The ultimately unsuccessful objective of EUropean integration in the 1950s was framed with the slogan: 'promote progress, happiness, and democracy in Africa' (Hansen & Jonsson 2015: 209), which showed a clear civilising mission ideology right at the start of the joint European project.

The endeavour to maintain EUrope's hegemonic position in the world once afforded by the expanded colonial empires has been present in the HR/VP's speeches, legitimised by the universalist frame, promoting democracy and human rights (Andrews 2022: 24).

### *The colonial past has passed . . . or not entirely?*

This paper argues that coloniality remains deeply embedded in EU policy discourse. The power over Eurocentric knowledge production has adapted to changing global political dynamics. The currently shifting liberal international order is based on the presumption that European colonialism was only a historical episode in the past, and now the global system relies on rules which bind equally the sovereign states of the world (Cox 1996; Nicolaïdis et al. 2015: 2). It is suggested in mainstream discourses that with the end of administrative colonialism in the 1960s, imperial rule ceased to exist in the EUropean consciousness (Nicolaïdis et al. 2015: 6). This narrative is present in Borrell's foreign policy discourse as well, exemplified when he confidently declares that Western powers have 'overcome the hegemonic temptations of the old European countries that marked the world with

their colonial empires' (Borrell 2023a), suggesting that the EU does not consider the former imperial and colonial order that keeps shaping many of its MS' current societies' economic, political and cultural realities. Colonial empires fell in the middle of the 20th century; therefore, Western European colonial countries began losing the hegemonic positions they had held in the global order. According to a growing body of critical scholarship, two main incentives backed the establishment of the transnational European Union.

The first was the relatively small global economic weight of individual Western European states (Böröcz 2009: 51–52). The second was the geopolitical power shrinkage which followed Western Europe's loss of expanded economic, political and social control over large overseas territories. To cure the disappearing source of Europe's hegemonic power position, a joint exploitation of the African continent seemed a lucrative solution not only to the main advocate, France, but to other European MS as well (Hansen & Jonsson 2015: 210). So, at the very conception of the European Economic Community, the Eurocentric and imperial narrative constructed Africa as a civilising project for Europe, justifying Africa's dependence on Europe, thereby cementing the continent's relative underdevelopment.

In conclusion, these two notions about the foundation of the EC/EU indicate clearly that the Union has, from early on, had global geopolitical and economic incentives to preserve its global relevance and Eurocentric identity. This historical development is the reason why current EUropean discourse on geopolitical positioning and power still holds onto elements of coloniality, such as the classification of world population around the idea of race and naturalised Eurocentric perceptions of the world (Quijano 2000: 533).

### *Fading EUropean hegemonic power: 'Merry crisis'*

By the time the EU won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2012, the success story of European integration had been dissolving. Mainstream EUropean public discourses have normalised the notion of 'crisis' year after year. The optimistic narrative that has surrounded eight decades of the EUropean project has begun to rust. Borrell himself unfolds his speeches around the conviction that 'We, the EU' live in a constant crisis management, repeating that what the EU has to face today is 'crisis, crisis, crisis' (Borrell 2022a). Although the sequence of sudden political, economic and social events in the last two decades have caused instability in the world, and consequently in Europe, crisis has been constructed in EUropean discursive spheres as a permanent state which justifies paradigms of hard power.

Critical researchers on the world order, such as Cox (1996) and Böröcz (2009), argue that what is framed narratively as a 'crisis-ridden world' is indeed the non-Europeanisation of the world order since the 1970s–1980s. It means that EUrope has been losing its credibility as an actor of hegemonic nature, including the

corroded ability to shape what is deemed 'normal'. In the post-2022 geopolitical context, systemic rivals – such as China, Russia and potentially the United States – are challenging EUrope's ability to 'maximise its power by influencing other actors' (Pardo 2012: 6) (Oleart & Roch 2025: 4). So, EUropean leaders imply that this conflict-ridden environment calls for a strengthened European sovereignty and defence against those not considered part of the European 'We' (2025: 4). This discursive shift is also evident in HR/VP Borrell's speeches, where he highlights the importance of the 'fight with narratives' (Borrell 2022a). An example of this discursive battle is when he called for persuading 'swing states' to join 'the right side of history' (Borrell 2022a; 2022c) in international institutions such as the United Nations (UN).

To explore the discursive expressions of attempts to re-establish EUropean hegemonic influence – rooted in Eurocentric rationality and coloniality – in the following, I outline the postcolonial theoretical framework and the method of Critical Discourse Analysis.

## Postcolonial theoretical frame and critical discourse analysis

We live in an era – according to postcolonial scholars – which does not simply chronologically follow centuries of direct European dominance, economic exploitation, systematic racism and violence against natives (Loomba 2015). On the contrary, from a postcolonial theoretical perspective, the new 'architecture of the world' has not entirely replaced the colonial past (Gandhi 2020: 6). Thus, in a postcolonial frame, questions are asked about present issues while considering the historical structures, colonial dependencies and cultural codes that continue shaping global relations after the end of direct colonial rule (Wilkens 2017). Robert J. C. Young (2001: 4) defines postcolonialism as a critical theory which is 'united by a common political and moral consensus towards the history and legacy of western colonialism'.

Young (2001) and other postcolonial scholars (Bhabha 1994; Bhambra 2007; Gandhi 2020; Go 2013) claim that global capitalism emerged and entangled deeply with the European conquest missions to Latin America, Asia and Africa. European colonisers restructured non-capitalist economies in the conquered territories to consolidate European capitalism and economic powers in the metropoles (Loomba 2015). Hence, the current global economic world system features asymmetrical economic ties between formerly colonised territories and European centre economies. Based on these material power structures, vivid and resistant imperial and colonial discourses, cultural stereotypes, representations and ideologies constitute Western economic and symbolic dominance. Elements of power manifest in Western-centred public knowledge, artworks, scientific literature, trade agreements, treaties and diplomacy (Go 2013; Nicolaïdis et al. 2015; Young 2001). Thus, concludes Quijano, (2000: 548) the coloniality of power

is 'tied up to the concentration in Europe of capital, wages, the market of capital, and finally, the society and culture associated with those determinations'.

Since the postcolonial theorists are interested in cognitive power structures in the first place and challenge historically normative narratives, the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is often applied in this field of research. CDA is a methodological approach that aims to unravel the hidden as well as more visible 'structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control as manifested in language' (Wodak 2009: 10). Although the unit of analysis is semiotic data, such as policies, text or talk, CDA investigates the deeper ideologies and power manifested in language as a social practice (Wodak 2009: 2–3 and 5–6).

Discourse, in this sense, is not only a language in use but also a social practice which dialectically constitutes political situations, knowledge and social relationships between different identities (2009: 6). Therefore, political discourses carry a certain control and power within them which reflect the dominant ideologies in the social structures that frame the linguistic expressions. CDA critically deconstructs the often neutralised and naturalised meanings in mainstream discourses pointing out the hidden power structures and asymmetrical power relations.

In the following, I establish the logic of colonial discourse, then analyse Borrell's Garden and Jungle speech to empirically show how his narrative reflects and reinforces power relations and cognitive patterns echoing colonial ideas adapted to the 21st century geopolitical environment (Bhambra 2007).

## *The colonial discourse and its reproduction in the 21st-century EU foreign policymaking*

Bhabha (1994: 67) defines colonial discourse as a 'form of discourse crucial to the binding of a range of differences and discriminations that inform the discursive and political practices of racial and cultural hierarchisation'. The process of colonial discursive framing and articulation entails social codes, shared perspectives and expectations that link individual perceptions and choices into a wider semantic context (Carta 2020: 50).

Furthermore, colonial discourse can also be defined as a narrative, according to Bhabha (1994: 70–71), 'whereby the productivity and circulation of subjects and signs are bound in a reformed and recognisable totality. It employs a system of representation, a regime of truth, structurally similar to realism'. The system of representation is constructed by stereotypes, which cannot be considered only a simplified version of reality because their meanings are fixed and told by the position of the powerful – i.e. the coloniser's point of view (1994: 75). Moreover, stereotypes are not mere false images either that create a basis for discrimination, as many moralist critiques of the colonial discourse point out, but an ambivalent body of projection, metaphoric strategies and fantasies that result in opposite positions (Bhabha 1994: 81–82).

Colonial discourse used to seek to establish a form of governmentality that controls and dominates social narratives, politics and the economy within colonial regions (Bhabha 1994: 83). The basic logic behind this colonial mindset entails the perceived otherness of the native non-European – as informed by racial and cultural hierarchisation – portrays the colonised as incapable of self-governance and progress in the Western manner (1994: 82–83). Consequently, the civilising mission of the European 'White Man' is seen as necessary and justified both morally and normatively from a Western perspective (Sachseder & Stachowitsch 2023: 412). In conclusion, the colonial narrative uses the stereotype of the racialised Other to legitimise the paternalising role in which the West tends to regularly position itself (Bhabha 1994: 83).

In the analytical frame based on postcolonial recognition of colonial rhetoric, what is analysed here is not the direct meaning or the morality of the statements in the High Representative's speeches, but the strategic use and the power structure of symbolic representations (Bhabha, 1994: 36). As the Jungle and Garden express in this discourse the most blatant categorisation of 'the two-class population of the world', non-Europeans and the Europeans, I continue with the conceptualisation of the function of Othering.

> *No one has ever seen a peach that smelled like that,*
> *this is not the scent of a peach but the idea of the scent of a peach.*
> Édouard Louis (2018: 131)

### *The strategic role of stereotyping the 'other'*

The dominant way of constructing the European Other usually involves 'a diffuse sense of threat emanating from chaotic, dysfunctional non-European spaces and described in particularly racialised terms with reference to postcolonial regions including South America' (Sachseder & Stachowitsch 2023: 412-413). Keeping the process of Othering in focus, I begin by conceptualising the Other, and then reconstruct the narrative of the 'Jungle speech', which encapsulates the coloniality of power that positions non-Europeans as naturally inferior.

The most sympathetic strategy to the colonial logic is to split the world into two 'inherently opposite' spheres, as well as their populations. Over the centuries of direct European colonial rule, the division realised materially when the colonisers set the metropoles and settlers' town apart from the colonised places and the natives (Fanon 1963). This practice of dividing places between the settlers' town and the colonised reservation has largely ended, although this logic is still in function for instance in the case of Palestine. In hegemonic Eurocentric discourses, however, mentally differentiating the Other remains the fundamental logic and an essential basis of the coloniality of power after the end of direct colonial administration (Böröcz & Sarkar 2012).

In the postcolonial world, it is at the cognitive level where the image of the Other is produced, and where the distance between the European self and the 'rest of the world or Other' has been cemented through stereotypes (Bhabha 994: 45). Although it is not inherently colonial to point out certain cultural, social, political and racial differences, in a colonial sense, the difference is deliberately kept and functions as a manifestation of power relations (Memmi 2003: 115). Thus, while EUrope is in the position of inherited power and economic wealth and can construct its identity based on modernity, high moral standards, social discipline and rationality, the Other is conceived as inevitably inferior because of the supposed lack of virtue, order and modernity (Memmi, 2003: 115). Therefore, the colonial rhetoric embodies power relations between the perceived culturally and technically, economically superior European culture and the 'rest of the world' (Spurr 1993: 6).

The function of these rhetorical modes and the colonial logic of representing the Other was to justify the maintenance of colonial rule and administration. In contemporary global affairs, the continuous reproduction of these stereotypical and antagonistic binaries between EUrope and the rest of the world reinforces EUrope's claim to power and influence as a global actor. Polarity and the discursive construction of the Other are central elements of the coloniality of power, which filters through political practices in the non-discursive field as well.

Since the study seeks to demonstrate how HR/VP Josep Borrell constructs the EU's role in the current geopolitical global environment while strategically attempting to control and influence Latin American countries by colonial power, the empirical analysis draws on his speeches. Due to the limits of the paper, I focus mainly on the most infamous speech of his late career, the 'Jungle speech' (Borrell 2022b).

> *Among ourselves we operate on the basis of laws . . . but when we are operating in the jungle, we must also use the laws of the jungle.*
> Robert Cooper (2002)

## The Jungle speech sets the tone

The Garden and Jungle trope has been a quintessential portrayal of the division between the civilised and the uncivilised places – in this case, Europe and the 'rest of the world' for centuries (Weisberg 2015). The reason I find the Jungle speech key in examining the discourse on EUropean foreign policy is that these statements do not function in isolation from statements in Borrell's other speeches. I base my main argument on one speech because I regard it as an integral part of Borrell's overall narrative, because a speech or trope does not function separately from the whole EU foreign policy discourse. In the Foucauldian tradition, the true sense of a statement is formed based on its coexistence with other statements in the

same narrative (Foucault 1972). Also, one statement, whether it be a sentence, a passage, a trope or a stereotype, inherently presupposes other statements in different speeches because it is embedded into the discursive field, as in a net, where every statement is surrounded by 'coexistence, effects of series and succession, a distribution of functions and roles' of other statements (Foucault 1972: 99).

Choosing the HR/VP as the speaker is a decision rooted in the CDA that emphasises the significance of who has the opportunity to speak and who decides what is considered legitimate knowledge. However, the analysis does not dwell on the subjective speaker but rather considers the speaker's position in the social, political, economic and cultural hierarchy (Carta 2020). Josep Borrell does not produce his discourse individually. His role as the high representative of the Union, or as he refers to himself, the 'Foreign Affairs Minister of Europe' (Borrell 2022a), is embedded into a broad institutional setting of EU foreign policy and diplomacy. Thus, the HR/VP has the legitimacy to speak and manage the shared knowledge and narrative within the discourse he produces. Therefore, he constructs a certain discursive space according to which certain policies, and external actions can be carried out.

In his 2022 speech, Josep Borrell stated:

> Europe is a garden. We have built a garden. Everything works. It is the best combination of political freedom, economic prosperity and social cohesion that humankind has been able to build - the three things together. And here, Bruges is maybe a good representation of beautiful things, intellectual life, and well-being. (Borrell 2022b)

The HR/VP's Eurocentric point of view regards EUrope as distinguished from 'the rest of the world' exceptionally and hierarchically: 'We are privileged people . . . and we cannot pretend to survive as an exception' (Borrell 2022b) because EUrope stands above the rest (Bhambra 2007: 5). He continues to emphasise that in his narrative the 'the rest of the world' metaphorically equals the jungle which not only represents the inability for self-government, but also a threat to the rule-based orders, such as EUrope (Borrell 2022b). In the following, I empirically walk through the logic of the coloniality of power based on the process of Othering, dividing spaces and consequently justifying intervention into native societies.

### *Civilised Europe vs. dangerous jungle*

Borrell's statements on the Jungle and Garden set the tone because they indicate an institutional narrative strongly inspired by a specific historical period when European powers dominated and exploited major parts of the world. In Western consciousness, the Jungle represents a mythical sphere in a pre-civilised condition: It is wild and dangerous for those who are not native to the '*Jungle's Book*' and thus the jungle symbolises both a threat and a source of desire in the Western mind

(Said 1978). This cognitive pattern is undoubtedly present in HR/VP's narrative when he explains that:

> The jungle could invade the garden. The gardeners should take care of it, but they will not protect the garden by building walls. A nice small garden surrounded by high walls in order to prevent the jungle from coming in is not going to be a solution. Because the jungle has a strong growth capacity, the wall will never be high enough in order to protect the garden. (Borrell 2022b)

According to this narrative, the 'nice garden, Europe' can be destroyed, despite its distinction from the 'brutes' which is so concrete and prominent as to be a physical wall. Later, in another speech, the trope of the alarmed EUropean mindset appears when Borrell refers to Africa, from where, according to him, the 'problems came' and which 'destabilise Europe' by causing migration crisis (Borrell 2023a). This narrative similarly projects the image of the invasive jungle analogically onto masses of refugees and immigrants from outside Europe.

Fanon (1963: 30) remarks on the psychological effect of forcefully claiming native territories, dividing the world into two opposite zones with 'reciprocal exclusivity' and setting up a 'strongly built colonial town with stone and steel'. When reconstructing the settler colonisers' narrative of how the excluded people supposedly look at the privileged European places, Fanon (1963: 30) argues that it is an envious glance; moreover, the native constantly dreams of taking the settler's town. This is reflected in Borrell's words when he emphasises: 'the rest of the world will invade us, by different ways and means' (Borrell 2022b).

### *Controlling the bad grass*

The underlying power structure is consistently present in the narrative because it reinforces the political vision of reality, promoting maximum difference and discrimination between the 'normal' (the Europeans) and the 'foreign' (the Orient) (Said 1978: 43; Bhabha 1994). This has implications in the colonial discourse and the non-discursive political field too: By establishing the Other as inferior to EUrope, it is justified to establish an administrative system and Western influence in the 'uncivilised' Global South. This is the logic behind the HR/VP's words when he orders young European diplomats to go outside EUrope and take care of the unstabilised regions of the world (Borrell 2022b). Just like the gardeners tame the jungle, according to Borrell (2022h). This conviction is rooted in the Western narrative of modernisation, according to which the civil state is the inevitable sign of human rationality and morality far from the unruly state of nature (Bhabha 1994: 43).

The Jungle trope has captured the fantasies of travellers, writers, artists and philosophers who constructed the foreign place that needs Europe's guidance to finally arrive at modernity and a higher level of governance. It mirrors the follow-

ing lines, where he once again explicitly backs the binary opposition and implies that the EUropean economic, political, legal, social, educational and democratic systems place EUrope in a superior position:

> There is a big difference between Europe and the rest of the world – well, the rest of the world, understand me what I mean, no? - is that we have strong institutions. .. The big difference between developed and not developed is not the economy, it is institutions. Here, we have a judiciary – a neutral, independent judiciary. Here, we have systems of distributing the revenue. Here, we have elections that provide a free vote for the citizens. Here, we have the red lights controlling the traffic, people taking the garbage. We have these kinds of things that make the life easy and secure. (Borrell 2022b)

Interestingly, the disappearing rubbish as a marker of high-level civilisation was already present in Fanon's (1963) explanation of the differences between the settler's town and the 'uncivilised' native's town during the direct European colonial rule. (It is quite ironic for the HR/VP to say this from the EU's symbolical capital, Brussels, where the public rubbish situation has famously been an odyssey.)

In the garden metaphor, which stands for the civilisation mission, the gardeners, who have the authority to bring order and civilisation into the wild, are sent to bring institutions and administrative systems to the native land as he states: 'But your duty will not be to take care of the garden itself but [of] the jungle outside' (Borrell 2022b). This motif of sending experts, as English diplomat Balfour states in the peak era of British colonialism, sending 'our very best to these countries' has always aimed to direct and force the country of influence according to European standards (Said 1978: 35). The attitude is rooted in the Orientalist knowledge production of the Eastern Other from the position of power. This is also a discursive strategy to portray 'us', Europeans, as the masters of knowledge of the controlled territory, as it appears in the Orientalist, English politician, Balfour's words: 'never in all the revolutions of fate and fortune have you seen one of those nations of its own motion establish what we, from a Western point of view, call self-government' (Said 1978: 33). The presumed lack of ability of self-government in the East calls for EUropean action in this narrative, 'the world needs Europe' as their 'beacon' to tame the unruly jungle (Borrell 2022b).

Fanon (1963: 201) observes the same logic of the dominant portrayal of the Algerian scenery, very much jungle-like, which according to the colonial mind, justifies the French colonial presence: 'Hostile nature, obstinate and fundamentally rebellious, is in fact represented in the colonies by the bush, by mosquitoes, native and fever, and colonisation is a success when all this indocile nature has finally been tamed. Railways across the bush, the draining of swamps'. In Borrell's speech (2022h), this type of modernisation and infrastructure development of the

Jungle appears in a self-contradiction by him rejecting the idea of neo-colonialism. First, he declared that:

> We can build a road. We can go with a bulldozer and money and workers, and we can build a road (Borrell 2022b).

However, then he continues with attempting to dissolve his rhetoric's orientalist undertone, by stating that he 'cannot go to emerging countries and build institutions for them [because] otherwise it would be a kind of neo-colonialism' (Borrell 2022b).

Attempting to dismiss the orientalist undertone of his rhetoric of the Jungle trope he explicitly denies neo-colonial objectives of EUropean foreign policy. In Critical Discourse Analysis, however, it is important to acknowledge the denial of certain truths of the (colonial) discourse in certain historical periods because it is in itself an important part of creating the discourse – the role of taboos. Nevertheless, in the closing remark of the Jungle speech, he keeps justifying the EU's intervention while failing to acknowledge the imperial process that strengthened Europe's position of power (Bhambra 2007):

> Believe me, Europe is a good example for many things. The world needs Europe. My experience of travelling around the world is that people look at us as a beacon. Why [do] so many people come to Europe? Are there flows of illegal or irregular migrants going to Russia? Not many. No, they are coming to Europe but for good reasons. (Borrell 2022b)

This quote also showcases another feature of Othering, already addressed above, namely the strong grammatical distinction between 'We/Us' and 'They/Them' in the narrative of the EU foreign policy. Forming the opposite of 'Us' and 'Them' reproduces unbreakable distance and signifies otherness.

## A broader perspective on European hegemonic worldview

Moving on from colonialism, a historical period ending in the mid-20th century, enduring cognitive, social, political and economic power structures of that era are still functioning in the post-2022 geopolitical environment. To understand why these expressions of old EUropean power resist the changes of different time periods, I introduce the concept of hegemony.

Robert W. Cox (1996) argues that historical time consists of certain periods in which three forces – material capacities, ideas and institutions – define the hegemonic world order (Cox 1996: 98). Institutions 'reflect the power relations prevailing at their point of origin', while the stabilisation of an order works through certain values, ideas and shared meanings of social relations (1996: 98–99). Analysing the HR's narrative, all three factors are important; however, the influence of norms and institutions in shaping what is considered acceptable and normal thinking

is particularly essential. Borrell speaks from an institutionalised power position, representing economic power and a hegemonic understanding of a Western-led world order.

The Gramscian concept of hegemony depicts power as a combination of coercion and consent, where the latter is more prominent (Cox 1996: 127). Bieler and Morton (2004: 87) suggest that being in a hegemonic role, as some European powers were at their at peak of their colonial imperialism (Spain, France and the Great Britain) is an 'opinion-moulding activity' where hegemony ensures conformity in people's behaviour (Cox 1996: 127) and values that constitute the hegemonic social or world order (Bieler & Morton 2004: 87).

In the HR/VP's narrative, the 'shared notions of the nature of social relations' are historically conditioned in the period when the colonial difference used to order relationships between European powers and the 'rest of the world' (Cox 1996: 98). Although this colonial logic of social order between different groups of people (Cox 1996: 99) has lost its legitimacy in political, cultural and social discourses due to decolonising social forces, the renewed hegemonic discourse still can normalise the conviction of difference (Böröcz 2009). Not by accident, this is the central logic of the EU foreign policy narrative: To reproduce the garden-jungle narrative with the help of the underlying material structures rooted in the extraction of colonial wealth from states in the Global South.

The main sources of justification for a distinction between the peaceful inside and the threatening outside from which the logic 'hardening up' originates, are events that frame as 'crisis, crisis, crisis' (Borrell 2022b). These crises are usually framed as existential threats to the liberal, multilateral world order for at least a decade, and are exemplified as irregular migration, terrorism, global pandemic, the Russian war against Ukraine and the humanitarian crisis in Palestine. Discursively, these 'dangers' are the main legitimation for a more active engagement on the part of the EU, to protect and maintain the hegemonic status quo in the fading Western-centred international world order. In the face of great crisis-narratives, prominent EU leaders construct a discursive context in which they can formulate political objectives and interests (Cox 1996: 146).

For example, Borrell reasons for the necessity of evolving a strategic partnership with Latin America in most of his speeches, emphasising that improving from a 'natural partnership' (Borrell 2023b) is a natural process, particularly in the current geopolitical environment. From this Eurocentric perspective, the depth of the relationship between Europe and Latin America is attributed to their close 'alignment in terms of interests and values', with the notion that 'Latin America is a product of European civilization' (Borrell 2023b). This case highlights that when the EU seeks to maintain a historically conditioned hegemonic power – particularly in relation to former colonial counterparts – it utilises obvious civilising motifs rather than critically reflecting on the legitimacy of long-standing colonial power relations.

The narrative of the EU as an economically, socially superior and politically consolidated entity omits the fact that the current status has been achieved through lasting economic exploitation of the European colonies and wealth accumulation through value extraction and slavery. This unreflectiveness is clearly present in the HR/VP's framing of the EUropean self as an exceptional model 'where everything works' in all social spheres. His boldest example of this logic is the garden-jungle metaphor: The garden, the symbol of EUropean order, built by 'Europeans' is narratively the best combination of political, social and economic progress (Borrell 2022b). Accordingly, the rest of the world is phrased as mere opposition to this ideal garden: It is ruled by the brute force of nature, and it is just as chaotic as a jungle (Borrell 2022b).

It is a rhetorical strategy featured by both historical amnesia – failing to recognise European colonialism's role in the dependencies of former colonies – and denial, that Borrell explicitly exercises when he misses out the fact that the colonial legacy somewhat contributed to 'high fiscal pressure, extreme poverty, and social inequality' in Latin America and the Caribbean (Borrell 2023a). Cox (1996: 89) points out that those prominent actors at certain institutionalised positions and reproducers of knowledge about the world would think 'in fixity' regarding universal values and social, political and symbolic order and 'are biased and are comfortable within the given order'.

Historical structures and shared meanings of EUrope's historical relation to Latin America are thus pre-set, with specific colonial and imperial codes (Diez 2001: 90). So, the speeches given by the HR/VP on a micro-interpersonal level can only be understood and strategically applied because they were constructed into a widely consented social order.

## Conclusion: Disrupting the hegemonic framing of the Jungle

In this study, I argued that the coloniality in EU foreign policy discourse realised in Josep Borrell ex-HR/VP's speeches functions through deep cognitive paradigms rooted in inherited hegemonic structures, called colonial imperialism (Nicolaïdis et al. 2015: 9). Metaphors of such discourse, like the jungle and garden, are understood as hegemonic because they are widely recognised as the *normal* and *neutral* order of the world. Dominant meanings are transmitted through these hegemonic visions even long after the official end of direct European colonial administration and still function as markers of the colonial difference.

The essentialised hegemonic logic is argued to be present in the EU foreign policy discourse post-2022, and it centres on the construction of EUrope as an authority of current historical events and the stereotyped Other (Said 1978). The suggested developmental difference in Borrell's speeches eventually justifies why 'the rest of the world' must follow the 'European recipe of prosperity' (Borrell 2022a; 2023a). These examples illustrate how discursive hegemony works: No coercion is needed

to prompt other international actors to act according to the challenged hegemonic worldview that is reflected in Borrell's narrative as the *natural* way of order.

The imperial nature of enforcing 'nineteenth-century standards of civilisation' is recognisable in these EU institutional behaviour patterns towards former colonies (Nicolaïdis & Onar 2016: 116). The Western European colonialism marks the period when Western powers consolidated their hegemonic position in the world order. So, in a Gramscian sense of hegemony, Western European states rose into hegemonic status which was cemented by economic structures and 'broader social discursive terms' (Manners 2013: 200). This was the era when certain social and cultural meanings became fixed. Moreover, it was also the historical period, when colonial discourses distinguished the Other by alienating groups of people and societies from Europe on a racialised and culturalist basis through 'displacements, violence, silencing, humiliations and dispossessions' (Sabaratnam 2013: 272 in Sebhatu, 2020: 45).

The strong binary opposition between the competent EUrope and 'the rest of the world', as argued in previous chapters, condenses in the symbol of the jungle metaphor expressed in Borrell's 2022 speech. This trope is remarkable because it very clearly captures the very essence of the colonial logic of difference. However, it did not puzzle the research initiative because of its obvious and discriminatory Eurocentric projection onto the non-European world, nor because its reckless use in contemporary EU foreign policy so clearly demonstrates the EUropean project's failure to live up to its own values. This trope consists of functions in a web of other statements of the same institutionalised discourse; therefore, the expressions are understood in relation to each other. That is how the coloniality of power functions through language, revealing itself in the most obvious references to colonial rule; however, control and domination filter through more hidden meanings as well.

Furthermore, this speech is the crown jewel of the Borrell's power discourse because it *works*. The single word 'jungle' invokes in a split second a mixture of strong visuals and sensations of what unmistakably *is* a jungle. Without any further explanation, which is key in political rhetoric, a vision of a mysterious, dense, humid and dark place is provoked in the imagination of the Western audience. It is assumed that everyone *knows* that the jungle is an untamed mass of nature beyond the familiar order of human civilisation, which both dangerously lures and repels the outsiders into the unknown.

This rich, layered imaginative terrain (Weisberg 2015: 171), the Jungle can in fact set the tone for the complete EU foreign policy discourse because it is a hegemonic term that encapsulates four centuries of the dominant European perceptions of the world order. It is understood from the perspective of the late colonial explorers, travellers who imprinted the Jungle as the 'outer extreme of colonial expansion' into the collective Eurocentric consciousness (Weisberg 2015: 171). The contemporary non-European agency over their own experience is not backed by cemented

economic and discursive structures. Thus, even when the rich and critical body of knowledge outside Europe has long existed, the non-EUropean intellectual and political agency has been pushed to the margins in Eurocentric knowledge production. According to the EUropean narrative, therefore, it is the EUropean masters who presume to define how the Jungle should be understood; consequently, EUrope sets the forms of relations with its counterparts in the Global South, aligning with hegemonic EUropean narratives.

In conclusion, the constructed extreme nature of the Jungle and its deep embeddedness into the classic European culture and symbolic spaces facilitate the hegemonic associations and eventually the delivery of a clear political vision of reality. This metaphor gained meaning in the nineteenth-century colonial discourse – 'the apparatus of power' (Bhabha 1994: 70) – and it now functions as a vessel of the coloniality of power in the 21st century EU foreign policy narrative.

One thing remains clear, the European Union is facing a non-EU, not-Western-centred world order. So, the post-2022 geopolitical context could mark a postcolonial turning point in the EU's foreign policy strategies, which currently echo Eurocentric and colonial narratives in the discursive process of self-positioning and interest realisation. Without a critical and self-aware understanding of the EU's colonial past and its complex historical legacies in the Union's external (and internal) relations, the EU might risk, quoting Böröcz' (2022) drastic yet actual metaphor, becoming an 'open-air museum to a Europe-centred phase of global history' which clings to its own fading coloniality of power.

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