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Another Colonialism: Africa in the History of European Integration

Peo Hansen and Stefan Jonsson*

Abstract

Today's European Union was founded in a 1950s marked by its member states' involvement in numerous colonial conflicts and with the colonial question firmly entrenched on the European and international agenda. This notwithstanding, there is hardly any scholarly investigations to date that have examined colonialism's bearing on the historical project and process of European integration. In tackling this puzzle, the present article proceeds in two steps. First, it corroborates the claim that European integration not only is related to the history of colonialism but to no little extent determined by it. Second, it introduces a set of factors that explain why the relation between the EU and colonialism has been systematically neglected. Here the article seeks to identify the operations of a colonial epistemology that has facilitated a misrecognition of what postwar European integration was about. As the article argues, this epistemology has enabled colonialism's historical relation to the European integration project to remain undetected and has thus also reproduced within the present EU precisely those colonial or neo-colonial preconceptions that the European partner states, in official discourse and policy, falsely claim that they have abandoned.

Keywords: Europe, colonial history, European integration, colonial epistemology, Eurafrika

'We are, so to speak, *of* the connections, not outside and beyond them,' Edward Said wrote 20 years ago (1993, 55). The culture and society in which we live was shaped by colonial imperialism, he argued. In order to understand our present and, indeed, ourselves, we must examine how imperialism fostered certain systems of governance, definitions of humanity, paradigms of knowledge, patterns of thought and structures of attitude and reference. Simply put, this was the message in *Culture and Imperialism*, the summa of an intellectual career devoted in no small part to thinking through the various ways in which colonial modernity had put its mark on world culture and society.

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Said's addressees in this book were not primarily third-world intellectuals, to whom his concern was evident enough, but intellectuals in Europe and North America, many of them self-proclaimed custodians of the project of modernity and Enlightenment. Said reminded them that they, too, were heirs of a colonial legacy. A full understanding of their scientific and cultural traditions, national cultures and academic disciplines required awareness and knowledge of the imperial system that had set their culture of modernity in place. It was therefore all the more remarkable, Said charged, that a vast majority of European intellectuals carried on as though their focus areas were located outside and beyond the economic, political and cultural connections that had once united the world into a single interacting whole as never before in history (Said 1993, 239).¹ This blindness was in itself part of colonialism's legacy, which had installed an epistemology calibrated to avert intellectuals from identifying the connections between their own scholarly enterprises and history in its widest, imperial and geopolitical sense.

In projecting to a global scale the Benjaminian dictum – 'there is no document of culture that is not at the same time a document of barbarism' – Said typically dealt with canonised European literature, historiography, music, art and scholarship. This was to him the area in which the dialectical revelation that documents of high culture are also documents of imperial violence afforded the most precipitous insights, as when the intrinsic links between Giuseppe Verdi's *Aida* and the construction of the Suez Canal, or between the British realist novel and Caribbean plantation slavery were suddenly laid bare.

That there are intrinsic relations between the political institutions of the West and the history of imperialism was self-evident for Said. While few historians and social scientists would dispute this, they have nonetheless been selective in their choices of which political formations deserve being studied from the perspective offered by the history of imperialism. This is where Said's work turns out to be instructive in unexpected ways. For it does not only analyze epistemologies – most notably one called Orientalism – that, evolving in tandem with imperial power, have moulded Western and non-Western experience while at the same time marginalising and silencing crucial aspects of reality; it also provides elements for a sociology of knowledge which enables a systematic understanding of the processes by which academic institutions, schools of learning and groups of intellectuals have been formed and have gained their insights and reputations at the cost of such silencing and marginalisation. In this essay, our primary object is scholarship on the European Union, but our argument also pertains to historical and sociological research on European colonialism more generally, which in adapting itself to inherited epistemological preconceptions has failed to recognise historical

circumstances and relations that are crucial for an understanding of how colonialism has influenced the European integration process as well as postcolonial Africa.

1.

For a long time, studies of imperialism focused primarily on once colonised societies where the traces and consequences of imperialism lay immediately open to anyone's experience. As a result of Said's and other postcolonial critics' argument that colonising societies were just as much influenced by imperialism as the colonised ones, there has in recent decades also emerged an impressive body of research that traces colonialism's influence on the national cultures and histories of a number of European states, and not just those that had explicit imperial ambitions. Examples are too numerous to mention, especially if we add research that has gone to great length in demonstrating how the colonial legacy links up with contemporary struggles over national identity, migration, domestic ethnic and racial relations, but also as concerns the former colonial powers' current geopolitical interests. As such, this research testifies to the fact that colonialism lingers on as a touchy and salient issue in national imaginaries and cultural identities, as well as in national high politics. Concerning the ways in which colonialism has affected European culture in general and the history of Europe's various nation states there is, in sum, a body of knowledge that is expanding by the day.

Meanwhile, the urgency of a series of contemporary issues and projects should challenge research also to go beyond the methodological nationalism often inherent in such studies on colonialism. We will deal with one such area in which the role and influence of the colonial system is understudied and argue that this failure is a consequence of falling outside dominant epistemological frames of reference. That Europe *as Europe*, that is, as a politically, economically and legally sanctioned organisation in its own right – and not merely as a nebulous historical, cultural or civilisational unit – has a colonial history remains a well-kept secret. From this perspective, the detailed knowledge that we have of Europe's colonial history in no way constitutes a colonial history *of Europe*, but it is rather a set of compilations, comparisons and surveys of the various colonial projects, engagements and involvements of so many different European states. The primary unit of this historiography remains the nation state (or, better, the imperial/colonial state), which provides an organising framework for the empirical data at hand. *As cultural memory and political history*, colonialism thus exists as an object of knowledge in Europe only to the extent that this or that national culture or history can serve as its archival container or frame of reference.

If the epistemology through which colonialism is understood is linked to the narrative of the nation, then, it apparently can have little significance for the European integration project. This point is substantiated by the ways in which the history of the European Union is conceived of and disseminated. Oxford historian Norman Davies's view of the matter is archetypal, claiming, as he does in his magnum opus *Europe: A History*, that '[d]ecolonization was a necessary precondition for the emergence of a new European Community of equal, democratic partners' (Davies 1996, 1068). Likewise, William Hitchcock states that in Western Europe of the 1950s economic expansion and the dissolution of the European colonial empires were 'closely linked' phenomena: 'As Europe grew richer, its states increasingly bound together by economic and political ties, the colonies shrank in importance' (Hitchcock 2002, 162). Although acknowledging that colonialism had a bearing on European integration in the early postwar years, Walter Lipgens – the late doyen of the history of European integration – takes care to postulate such a colonial impact exclusively in negative terms. As by definition, then, postwar colonial ambitions are said to have worked to slow and obstruct the process of European integration and so can be tacitly written off as having been void of any dynamic or facilitating potential for this same process. Instead of probing the issue, Lipgens deduces it counterfactually and rhetorically by leaving the reader with a 'fruitless' yet revealing speculation as to 'how much more smoothly European unification in its first decisive stage would have proceeded if the almost total loss of empire had occurred, and had been seen to occur, at the same time as all the other losses arising from the Second World War, instead of taking a further fifteen years to complete' (Lipgens 1982, 12–13). Such a framing thus effectively eliminates the possibility of the converse relation, where empire also created an incentive for European integration.

As a consequence of such accounts, Europe as an intergovernmental and supranational political project and entity has been placed outside and beyond the history of colonialism. There is a near perfect fit between such scholarly accounts of the EU's history and the portrait in which the EU likes to mirror itself. Indeed, the EU of today endeavours to ground its current politics of identity in a popular approbation of the founding period after World War II as a time when the EU gave European leaders an opportunity to choose peace and cooperation over nationalist rivalry and imperial aspirations. We recognise this in the European Commission's dissemination of various narratives concerning historical landmarks, founding fathers and an assortment of other historical tropes, all intended to conjure up an image of the EU's allegedly noble cause and benevolent historical purpose before today's EU citizenry (see e.g. Hansen 2000; Shore 2000). During the 2007 celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of

the EU, this strategy was manifested with utmost clarity. The 2012 award of the Nobel peace prize to the EU of course only served to consolidate this image.

However, such celebrations surrounding the European integration project should be approached in the same way as critical historians and social scientists have since long learned to approach the various nation-building and nationalist projects of late-nineteenth century Europe. This is not because the EU is a nation state or can easily be compared to a nation state in the making, but because the EU in its quest for popular support and legitimacy makes use of similar methods and strategies as once did nation-building states. Historiography being one of the most powerful of these strategies, it becomes particularly important to examine the complicity of historians and EU-researchers in establishing a selective and one-sided interpretation of the EU's past. In this context, the significant cases of Davies and Hitchcock are examples of a general tendency through which the process of European integration is designated as outside the colonial realm. If this interpretation is true, it would of course explain why the topic of colonialism is absent in most accounts of the EU, and why even Gary Marks, another prominent EU scholar, endeavours to raise the question of the EU as an imperial power without saying a word about the colonial empires held by European states throughout the modern period and until the 1960s (Marks 2012; Hansen and Jonsson 2012).

We contend that this interpretation fulfils its foremost function as a myth, a foundational tale of origins, of an Immaculate Conception, which sets in place the main elements of a wishful and idealised European identity. As Mark Gilbert has observed in the more narrow context of EU-studies, this field has yet to cast off its dominant 'whiggish' approach (Gilbert 2008), too often positing European integration as imbued with a noble cause and benevolent historical purpose, much like nationalist intellectuals' refusal in earlier periods to critically scrutinize the historical origins of national projects. There is a danger involved in this replacement of history by myth. We will then be educating students and the general public to think of the European project in the least European way thinkable, namely, as unrelated to the imperialist project that is, in fact, one of Europe's major histories. However, if this version of history is feeble and mythicising, what explains its success? Let us answer this question in two steps. First, it is necessary to back up our claim that Europe as a political formation and subject in the form of the EU is not merely related to the history of colonialism but to no little extent determined by it. Second, we will suggest some factors that explain why the relation between the EU and colonialism has been systematically neglected. Here we will seek to identify the operations of a colonial epistemology that has facilitated a *misrecognition* of what postwar European integration was about. As the article argues, this

epistemology has enabled colonialism's historical relation to the European integration project to remain undetected and has thus also reproduced within the present EU precisely those colonial or neo-colonial preconceptions that the European partner states, in official discourse and policy, falsely claim that they have abandoned.

2.

The interconnection between the history of colonialism and the history of European integration is best exposed by a compelling geopolitical figure once known as *Eurafrica*. As we have shown elsewhere, early efforts to unify Europe – in the period from, say, 1920 to 1960 – systematically coincided with efforts to stabilise the colonial system in Africa (Hansen and Jonsson, 2011; 2013). Even as *Eurafrica* was transformed from a geopolitical representation with utopian overtones in the 1920s into a political reality in the 1950s, it always marked the site where interests in European integration overlapped with colonial ambitions. According to the *Eurafrican* idea, European integration would come about only through a coordinated exploitation of Africa, and Africa could be efficiently exploited only if European states combined their economic and political capacities. In 1957, these two propositions interlocked, contributing to the establishment of the European Economic Community (EEC), which in leading political circles and major news media was simultaneously perceived as the creation of *Eurafrica*.

As Belgium's Foreign minister Paul-Henri Spaak in late February 1957 summarised the intergovernmental negotiations in Paris that were about to be confirmed by the signing of the Rome Treaty, he singled out the establishment of the EEC not just as 'the most important event in the history of Europe since the French Revolution'. He also emphasized the world-historical and geopolitical importance of the EEC. A 'great historical decision' had been made in Paris on February 20, namely to 'admit into the Common Market, on certain terms, the overseas territories'. By adding the African territories, the market would include more than 200 million inhabitants and Europe would have access to the raw materials necessary for its sustainability, Spaak told his audience. For this chieftain of European integration, the constitution of a community incorporating Europe and Africa was thus the boldest part of the Rome Treaty: 'Would it not be a success, if we could realise the dream of *Eurafrica*, which, after the reunion in Paris, seems able to become reality?''²

Spaak's speech disproves the claim that imperial ambitions had little to do with the emerging common market. In fact, imperial politics motivated most of the founders of the

EEC (e.g. Spaak, Jean Monnet, Robert Schuman, Konrad Adenauer and Guy Mollet). Rather, they wanted the EEC to correspond to the geopolitical constellation that – recall Spaak’s reference – went by the name of Eurafrika. Thus, in the early days of the EEC, it was generally recognised that parts of Africa and the Common Market were bound together in one imperial polity.

Let us dig a little deeper into these by now buried sediments in EU history by turning to another of European integration’s most prominent historical figures, Konrad Adenauer, as he, on the eve of the Rome Treaty negotiations (15 January, 1957), tried to convince the minority in his cabinet to embrace Eurafrika and thus endorse France and Belgium’s plan to associate the (almost exclusively African) colonies and also incorporate French Algeria into the EEC. As Adenauer’s stance is spelled out in the cabinet protocols: ‘The Chancellor, by contrast, is of the opinion that in the long term France offers much better economic prospects than Britain. France possesses a latent wealth, just think of the Sahara with its oil and uranium deposits. Equatorial Africa also constitutes a significant reserve. In comparison, Britain’s development points to a substantial decline’ (Enders and Henke 2000, 144).

Scholarly, political and journalistic accounts at the time provide ample testimony to the fact that European integration was inextricably bound up with a Eurafrika project. The architects of European integration clearly understood that the west European landmass lacked the natural resources necessary for Europe’s rebuilding into a viable geopolitical and geo-economic power bloc able to compete with the emerging superpowers to the east and west, as well as to prevent Bandung’s anti-colonial momentum from intervening in African affairs. This preoccupation was conspicuous already during the interwar plans for European integration, where the intellectuals and politicians within the Pan-European movement perceived of Pan-Europe as essentially unworkable unless it possessed the scale that only the addition of the African colonies could provide. Or as the leader of the Pan-European movement Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi (1929, 3) argued: ‘Africa could provide Europe with raw materials for its industry, nutrition for its population, land for its overpopulation, labor for its unemployed, and markets for its products.’

After the Second World War these and similar perceptions were revived, developed and institutionalised. Immediately after the war’s end, for instance, Britain’s foreign secretary Ernest Bevin announced his ‘Third World Power’ project, which aimed to integrate particularly the African colonies and their vast natural resources into a Western European Union and sphere of influence able to challenge the hegemonic ambitions of the U.S. and the Soviet Union. Founded on a close colonial cooperation between Britain and France, such a

project, Bevin asserted in the autumn of 1948, ‘could have U.S. dependent on us, and eating out of our hand, in four or five years. Two great mountains of manganese are in Sierra Leone, etc. U.S. is very barren of essential minerals and in Africa we have them all’ (quoted in Kent 1989, 66).³ In accordance with Coudenhove-Kalergi’s formula, a Western European bloc, or a ‘Third World Power’ on a par with the US and the Soviet Union, was then to emerge chiefly as a result of a successful European joint venture in Africa. Or as Britain’s Chancellor of Exchequer, Stafford Cripps, spelled it out before the African Governor’s Conference in November 1947:

The economies of Western Europe and Tropical Africa are so closely interlocked in mutual trade, in the supply of capital and in currency systems that their problems of overseas balance are essentially one. Tropical Africa is already contributing much, both in physical supplies of food and raw materials and in quite substantial net earnings of dollars from the sterling area pool. The further development of African resources is of the same crucial importance to the rehabilitation and strengthening of Western Europe as the restoration of European productive power is to the future progress and prosperity of Africa. Each needs and is needed by the other. In Africa indeed is to be found a great potential for new strength and vigour in the Western European economy and the stronger that economy becomes the better of course Africa will fare. (Quoted in Kent 1989, 58–9)

Under the headline ‘Cripps Says Colonies Hold Key to Survival’ *The New York Times* (1947) underscored that Cripps’ contention ‘has been widely accepted by the country’s top economists and business men’.

But it was the Council of Europe (CE), also established in 1949, that endeavoured to take the Eurafrikan project to the next level. The CE grew out of the European Movement and its Congress of Europe in The Hague in 1948. Many of the Congress’ participant groupings adhered to the Eurafrikan tenet concerning the imperative necessity of developing African colonies for the collective benefit of a war-torn Western Europe striving to emerge as a ‘third force’ in world politics. For instance, in its ‘Draft of a Federal Pact’, one of the congress’ major players, the European Union of Federalists, proclaimed:

Europe as an entity will be viable only if the links which unite it with countries and dependent territories [...] are taken into account. The era of national ownership of

colonial territories is past. [...] From now onwards a common European policy of development for certain regions of Africa should be taken in hand (quoted in Hick 1991, 90).

Subsequently, Eurafrika would emerge as one of the Council of Europe's defining priorities (see Palayret 2005, 200–13; Heywood 1981). The unanimous adoption of the *Strasbourg Plan* by the CE's Consultative Assembly in 1952 reflects the Eurafrika momentum during the 1950s (Council of Europe, 1952). Built in part on the previous colonial planning within the Organisation for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC, 1951), the Plan set out to resolve Western Europe's chronic dollar deficit. As the main solution to this difficult problem the Plan pointed to the joint utilisation of colonial Africa's vast and largely untapped natural resources; or as the chairman of the CE's Committee on Economic Questions and former French prime minister Paul Reynaud had it: 'We must also, if free Europe is to be made viable, jointly exploit the riches of the African continent, and try to find there those raw materials which we are getting from the dollar area, and for which we are unable to pay' (Council of Europe 1952, 135).

By this means Western Europe could begin its ascent to become 'a third economic group standing mid-way between the Communist and the dollar areas' (Council of Europe 1952, 15). However, since the large-scale investments required could not be borne by the colonial powers alone, the Plan was adamant that all the Council members (by now 14 countries) needed to contribute. As pointed out by the UK representative to the Council of Europe, Lord Layton, 'it is clear that we have to think of these overseas territories not as the possessions of any one country [...]; they have to be integrated with all the countries of Europe and all the overseas territories' (Council of Europe 1952, 140). This chimed with practically all of the representatives. For instance, Denmark's Hermond Lannung emphasized 'the overriding importance of greater co-operation and of a major joint European effort in Africa if we do not wish to see Africa lost to European influence, culture, trade, etc., and, in the long run, for that influence to be replaced by that of another continent.' Europe had just lost the 'battle of Asia', Lannung warned, and now its nations needed to unite in order to not also lose 'the battle of Africa'. 'Here we have before us a great concrete and practical task which calls for the utmost collaboration of us all' (Council of Europe 1952, 154).

While highly indicative of the zeitgeist, the plans drawn up within the Council of Europe generated little in terms of concrete results. Much of this though, was sought to be compensated for by the Rome Treaty agreement in February 1957. Just to cite a few of many

pertinent illustrations of this we can turn to West Germany's foreign minister, Heinrich von Brentano, and his communication to Adenauer on December 8 1956, as the treaty negotiations were reaching their final stage:

In principle, the demand for inclusion of the overseas territories should be welcomed. Since many years and in numerous European organisations, as in the Council of Europe and the OEEC, plans have been worked out which have had as their aim the joint exploitation of the overseas territories by the European states. Until now the realisation of this has failed [...]. Within the frame of the Schuman Plan it also did not succeed to push through the inclusion of the overseas territories in the European Coal and Steel Community. However, in all these negotiations no doubts were ever expressed, from the perspective of the majority of the European states, and especially from the perspective of the Bundesrepublik, that the joint inclusion of the overseas territories is desirable. Precisely from the German side it has been repeatedly complained that the Schuman Plan did not provide for the inclusion of the overseas territories. The significance of this persistent demand of the European states and especially also of the Bundesrepublik has in no way been diminished by the most recent events in world politics. There can remain no doubt that a conflict is emerging over the overseas territories, especially the African territories, between on the one hand the communist states and on the other hand the western community of states. The outcome of this conflict will have a great, if not decisive importance as concerns the future constellation of power in the worldwide context. It follows from all this, that the demand for an inclusion of the overseas territories must not just be accepted, but welcomed (Brentano 1956).

This letter shows that although West Germany fought France in the negotiations on the financial details of the investment fund, it enthusiastically embraced France's demand, and the inclusion of the colonies, as a geopolitical imperative of the highest order. Most commentators dealing with the Treaty negotiations have failed to distinguish that disagreement as to the details of the association of the mostly African colonies did not mean disagreement on the principles of colonial association as such. Indeed, the Rome Treaty negotiations on Eurafrikan colonial association are replete with precisely this consensus dictum, the only delegation occasionally voicing a principled dissent being the Dutch one.

This overarching consensus also comes to the fore with great clarity in the work by the intergovernmental Ad-Hoc Overseas Territories Group, chaired by Belgian diplomat Albert

Hupperts and launched as part of the treaty negotiation on Spaak's initiative in late November 1956. On 18 December 1956 the group circulates a draft of a preamble to its final report that was presented to the Heads of Delegation of the Intergovernmental Conference two days later. It is a highly interesting document because it contains all general geopolitical, political and economic issues at stake in the Rome treaty negotiations. Hupperts presents it as a first balance sheet of the advantages of the association of the overseas territories:

Economically speaking, the European member states of the common market have an essential need for the cooperation and support that the overseas territories – particularly the African ones – are able to offer in order to establish long-term balance of the European economy. The sources of raw material, variegated and abundant, which the overseas territories dispose of are likely to ensure for the entirety of the European economy of the common market the indispensable foundation for an expanding economy and present the additional advantage of being situated in countries whose orientation may be influenced by the European countries themselves. In addition to the mineral riches of all kinds and the agricultural and exotic products of the overseas countries, it is fair to mention as a concrete incentive, the results of very recent prospections in the petroliferous area carried out in connection with the systematic inventorying of the immense African reserves of metals, phosphates, hydraulic energy, etc.

Further down in the preamble, comparison is made with the Marshall plan for Europe, and it is asserted that the association of the overseas territories should be undertaken in the same spirit. The preamble concludes:

The proposed enterprise entails consequences of major importance for the future of Europe. [...] In aiding Africa and supporting itself on her, the community of the six is able to furnish Europe with its equilibrium and a new youth. It is in this perspective that all other elements of information assembled in the present report should be understood. (Conférence intergouvernementale, 1956)

Shortly thereafter, Robert Schuman weighed in on the treaty negotiations with a forceful plea for Eurafrikan integration that partly echoed the ad-hoc group's report. 'Eurafrikan', he asserted, 'does not just signify the creation of a system of assistance; but the constitution of an

economic whole, of a true association, in the interior of which a reciprocity of advantages and a communal politics of development will be put to work.’ (Schuman 1957a) In words alluding to the Suez crisis, Schuman went on to add Eurafrica’s by now much rehearsed geopolitical rationale, arguing that since the Soviet quest for world hegemony had set its eyes on Africa, ‘we should respond through the institution of a true community between the peoples of Europe and of Africa, the notion of which is at the basis of the Eurafrican idea’ (Schuman 1957b, 21).

For the socialist-led government, under Guy Mollet, such staunch support from the opposition was of course welcomed, especially since Paris was in the midst of an international propaganda drive to seek support for its Algerian policy *precisely* by linking it to the ongoing negotiation on Eurafrican integration. On January 9, 1957 the French Government, through Mollet, issued a statement on France’s position concerning the Algerian situation that directly addressed the UN General Assembly. Mollet ends his note on Algeria with reference to Eurafrica:

France is negotiating at this time with her European partners for the organization of a vast common market, to which the Overseas Territories will be associated. All of Europe will be called upon to help in the development of Africa, and tomorrow Eurafrica may become one of the principal factors in world politics. Isolated nations can no longer keep pace with the world. What would Algeria amount to by itself? On the other hand, what future might it not have, as one of the foundations of the Eurafrican community now taking shape? (Mollet 1957a)

Soon after, on February 4, just two weeks before the agreement on the EEC’s Eurafrican association, the French foreign minister Christian Pineau presented the plans for Eurafrica before the UN General Assembly’s Political Committee. ‘Europe in its entirety’, he argued, ‘bringing to Africa its capital and its techniques, should enable the immense African continent to become an essential factor in world politics’. Linking Eurafrica to the Algerian crisis, Pineau cautioned that an estranged Algeria would ‘be pledged to fanaticism and by its very poverty, open to communism’. By contrast, he went on, ‘its participation in Eurafrica would mean for Algeria comfort, riches – in other words, the true condition of independence’ (quoted in James 1957). Pineau’s address struck a chord with *The New York Times*, whose subsequent editorial went all out to persuade the world about the significance of Eurafrica: ‘Eurafrica’ [...] is the sort of dream that other Frenchmen, like Jean Monnet, have envisaged

for Europe herself and have done much to foster. It is the sort of dream that can become reality and that, perhaps, must become reality if the world is to avoid another and greater holocaust' (*The New York Times* 1957).

It was, therefore, a jubilant French prime minister, Guy Mollet, who addressed the press in Washington DC upon the Eurafrican settlement and thus the conclusion of the treaty negotiations:

I would like to insist upon the unity of Europe: it is now a fact. A few days ago we jumped over the last hurdles that were on its way, and now an even broader unity is being born: EURAFRICA, a close association in which we will work together to promote progress, happiness and democracy in Africa. (Mollet 1957b)

3.

The quoted documents are fragments of a larger discourse that we for lack of space cannot reconstruct in any detail here (for an in-depth account, see Hansen and Jonsson 2014). It is a discourse that transforms itself into political practice in the EEC, which in the late 1950s and early 1960s seeks to work out what Robert Lemaigen, first European Commissioner in charge of Development of Overseas Countries and Territories, called a 'Eurafrican economy' and a 'Eurafrican economic symbiosis' (Lemaigen 1964, 115–60).

Why has *this* history of colonialism been consigned to oblivion? Why is it virtually unknown that most of the visions, movements and concrete institutional arrangements working towards European integration in the postwar period placed Africa's incorporation into the European enterprise as a central objective? One reason is that the history of the EU is usually bent to fit Eurocentric presuppositions or even, as we pointed out, has been elaborated into a self-legitimising myth. Another reason is that the histories of Europe and Africa are mostly conceived as endogenous continental narratives. A third one, also mentioned, is that the history of colonialism is typically told as a history of the colonial systems of the colonial/imperial states. If world history and global processes are cut up and edited by such devices, Eurafrica drops out of the picture, because it belongs to a geopolitical constellation that cannot be mapped by way of continental or national categories.

Let us analyze these circumstances in more detail, assuming that they result from misrecognitions enabled by a colonial epistemology of the kind outlined in our introductory section. We mentioned that the history of colonialism is often treated as the sum-total of the colonial systems of various colonial/imperial states. A showcase of this tendency is a recent

book entitled *L'Europe face à son passé colonial* (Europe in the face of its colonial past), which despite its promising title actually does not say a word about Europe and its colonial past. Rather, the book contains the usual inventory of the colonial pasts of France, Portugal, Italy, Germany, etcetera (Dard and Lefeuvre 2008). Historians of colonialism seem still constrained by the national and linguistic barriers laid in place by the old colonial powers; and, at best, they compensate for this by engaging in traditional exercises of comparative history that never approach the intergovernmental and supranational levels and logics of European integration.

Having said this, we should also note that there is in fact a growing field of research that is examining the impact of colonialism and decolonisation on historical as well as current notions of Europe and European identity, and which thus highlights that colonialism also needs to be approached as a shared (Western) European experience which in many ways transgresses particular national outlooks. However, this research also suffers from an almost complete lack of engagement with the question of European integration (for an example, see Chakrabarty 2000). Considering that critical explorations of notions of 'Europe' are the hallmark of postcolonial studies, this neglect constitutes a puzzle, particularly in view of the fact that no project since European colonialism has carried itself more proudly *in the name of Europe* than the historical European integration and the current European Union. As such, postcolonial studies have failed to apply its sophisticated utilisation of discourse theory and analysis to the institutional settings (Connelly 2000) – such as the EU – where 'European' policy is actually being articulated and where the official historiography is being propagated.

Additionally, the disappearance of Eurafrica also has to do with the fact that the Eurafrican project does not fit a couple of dominant historiographical paradigms, in which the postwar relation between Europe and Africa is refracted through what has been called 'the cold-war lens' (Connelly 2000) or has been told as a narrative structured around a presumed historical rupture of decolonisation. Most accounts of EU history are informed by a strict adherence to a cold-war analytical framework as developed within, inter alia, International Relations theory. In this framework, Africa and the North-South dimension are neglected as factors impacting and shaping the historical trajectory of European integration, and the import of colonialism is at best treated in a cursory fashion.

It is of course true that the path toward European integration was heavily conditioned by the cold war, as was also the paths toward independence taken by anticolonial movements in Africa and Asia. The very designation of the newly independent states as a 'third world' – supplementing the capitalist 'first world' and the socialist 'second world' – seems to have

been perpetuated by the cold-war global order. However, in the 1950s this influence was overdetermined by a concerted European effort to secure supremacy over Africa and thus establish a ‘third’ geopolitical sphere, Eurafica. This would grant Europe a measure of geopolitical leverage and secure its economic sustainability, and at the same time defend Europe’s interests against challenges posed by anti-colonial insurrections and wars of liberation – Vietnam, Algeria, Cameroon, to mention a few. It would also serve to impede the nonaligned movement of former colonies, those that convened at the Bandung meeting, or transformed the United Nations General Assembly into a platform for debating global injustices, or mobilised a united Pan-African front against Europe’s colonial powers.

Faced with these foreign-policy challenges it was rational for the six European states that founded the EEC in 1957 to develop and modernise their imperial policy, as it were. The European integration process provided an opportunity for doing that, just as the geopolitical changes affecting the imperial order in the postwar context provided an opportunity for European integration. Taken together, these processes generated an internationalisation of colonialism, what Kwame Nkrumah denounced as ‘collective colonialism’, or what Europeans may have perceived as a ‘reformed colonialism’. For it should be remembered that the EEC, in justifying the association of the overseas territories as a way of improving the social and economic development of the colonies, in many ways did not differ from an older imperialism which had justified itself in much the same way.

Yet, by bringing such a policy to an international and supranational level, the EEC’s association of overseas countries and territories allowed Europe to posit its presence and interests in Africa as a new relationship of ‘interdependence’ – a buzz word in the 1950s – or mutual association, outwardly accommodating the demands of the anticolonial movements, but keeping the European role as patron and tutor intact.

For the African countries that in the same year of 1957 began liberating themselves, Eurafica was an arrangement that allowed the political elites of what subsequently became (nominally) independent states to posit themselves as partners in a world of ‘interdependent’ states and regional formations, while at the same time loyally accommodating the economic demands and policies of their former colonial masters. This was to be conducted through arrangements – such as the Yaoundé Convention (signed in 1963), which was EEC’s new association regime with, from now on, independent African states – from which both camps would reap huge benefits, at the cost of the majority of Africans for whom decolonisation did not seem to happen or turned out to be ‘a non-event’, as Achille Mbembe puts it (2010, 58).

Thus, if the misrecognition that prevents us from relating the EU to colonial history is dispelled, and if the history of Eurafrika is put back into the picture, we understand why decolonisation never constituted a significant rupture with the past – except in states where leaders and movements explicitly tried to break with the colonial rulers. EEC's 'offer' of association to the common market here turned out to be an efficient antidote to Pan-Africanism, and this may even be said to have been its true historical purpose: to adjust Europe's foreign policy, modes of economic extraction and means of production to a nominally independent Africa, while ensuring that the continent's resources remained within Europe's reach. The success of this strategy is amply illustrated in Arnold Rivkin's (at the time Development Advisor to the World Bank) enthusiastic account (from 1966) of the EEC's 'fruitful' Eurafrika association scheme. 'Guinea's attitude', Rivkin (1966: 40) writes disparagingly, has 'been one of hostility to the association of other African states with the EEC. President Touré has viewed, not without reason, the existence of so attractive an alternative as the European Common Market as a serious obstacle to the achievement of his original Pan-African designs.' In Rivkin's view, then, Guinea and Ghana's stance on EEC association 'as a new neo-colonial application of the old "divide and rule" principle' cannot amount to anything but a mistaken obstinacy, totally at odds with these countries' own best interests. As Nkrumah had it, the Treaty of Rome and the EEC marked 'the advent of neo-colonialism in Africa' (quoted in Martin 1982: 229), whereby association represented a newfangled arrangement for 'collective colonialism which will be stronger and more dangerous than the old evils we are striving to liquidate' (quoted in Asante 1993: 740). More specifically, leaders such as Nkrumah and Touré saw the EEC's Eurafrika design not only as strategy to foil national independence in Africa per se; more importantly perhaps, they also saw it as a deliberate attempt to frustrate the formation of any types of independently organised African integration and regionalisation schemes – among numerous proposals we could mention the joint Ghana-Guinea proposals for an African Common Market.

Having fulfilled this task, Eurafrika disappeared from the political agenda by the mid 1960s, as the EEC and various other international organisations and actors by then developed more efficient and less costly arrangements through which European interventions in African affairs could continue, but now entirely in the guise of development, aid and diplomatic counseling. At this point, we understand why it makes sense to forget the history of Eurafrika and repudiate the idea that the EU has something to do with the history of colonialism. For when facts are reassembled, it becomes clear that the foundation of the EEC as well as the

establishment of independent Africa was as much a continuation of old policies as a rupture and a new start.

Perhaps, all this can be summed up by an observation that philosopher V. Y. Mudimbe made some years before Edward Said formulated similar views concerning ‘the Orient’. Enunciations about Africa or interventions in Africa say less about Africa than about European subjects of knowledge being ‘prisoners of epistemological frames that only unfold the consequences of their own postulates’ (Mudimbe 1974, 93). In this sense, the history of Eurafrica, as it marks out the intersection of the history of European integration and the history of colonialism, indicates the necessity of perceiving Europe and Africa from the perspective of a truly global history and theory. A couple of decades ago, Africa was written off as a stagnant and uneventful periphery, a black hole in the worldwide web of the network society (Castells 1998, 73). Today, Africa is extolled as a booming ‘continent of the future’, to which states, international organisations and transnational companies rush to make profits or secure resources. The history of Eurafrica helps us understand this so-called new scramble for Africa, how it can happen and which stakes are involved. For in order to think theoretically about globality today, it is fundamental to know how the global was conceived in the past, that is, in historical times. Eurafrica was an intellectual endeavor and a political project that from the 1920s saw Europe’s future survival – its continued existence *in* history as a power shaping global history – as totally bound up with Europe’s successful merger with Africa. That is, Europe could rise out of the two world wars only in the shape of Eurafrica. Today, even as the Eurafrican project is largely forgotten, the content of current EU policy-making towards its African ‘partner’ demonstrates that it has continued influence under the surface; and the only way to comprehend the deep structures of current EU-African relations is to bring this history to life.

But Eurafrica and the colonial history of the EU are of theoretical importance also because they undercut one of the most pernicious features of the geographical and historiographical paradigms that originated in the West. No serious analyst has failed to register that there is a specific historiographical category that imposes itself a priori, as it were, on any description of Africa in the modern world order. This category presents Africa and Europe as poles in a binary constellation. The polarity is reinforced by a geographical imagination that tends to cut up world history into continental units, thus confusing territorial unity with historical isolation and closure. A dichotomy is thus construed in which Europe and Africa are not just separate continents but also stand for separate histories, and these histories, in turn, are seen as polar opposites of one another. No matter what content we

inscribe in the dichotomy – be it an anticolonial war of liberation or a mixed-race love story – the binary form itself remains constant, preventing us from conceiving of Africa as anything else but, in Paul Zeleza’s (2005, 43) expression, ‘a basket case of absences’ that calls for European presence. A racist and colonial epistemology deeply ingrained in global ideology here forecloses any attempt to liberate Africa from its fate as the weaker part of the dyad, while it also forbids any attempt by Europeans to escape their civilising mission. By the same token, it compels Africans and Europeans alike to repeat a predictable script where Africans perform as victims or villains while European aid workers, diplomats, oilers, bankers and military personnel are waiting in the wings, ready to correct or eradicate anyone who seriously challenges the pattern of unequal complementarity in which the Afro-European relation is frozen.

Disclosing how this colonial binary at once enabled and corrupted the process of European integration and African decolonisation may in this context produce something of an estrangement effect that helps us to break our epistemological frame. Until that happens and we are able to create a decolonial sociology of knowledge, including a decolonisation of EU scholarship, this *other* history of European colonialism is likely to remain neglected.

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¹ 'The literary-cultural establishment as a whole has declared the serious study of imperialism and culture off limits', Said had stated already in 1976 (Said 1976, 38; see also Said 1978, 13).

² The final compromise concerning the association of overseas territories to the EEC was negotiated in Paris five days earlier. (The Rome Treaty was signed on March 25 the same year.)

³ For a full account on the relations between Britain and France as regards Africa, spanning the period from 1939 to 1956, see Kent (1992) and Deighton (2006).