

## **Do International Relations scholars not care about Central and Eastern Europe or do they just take the region for granted? A conclusion to the special issue**

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I have very little knowledge of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). I have attended an academic conference in Sofia, Bulgaria, in 2019, been on a romantic gateway to Zagreb in 2013, shared an office with a specialist of Moldova and Crimea for a year, and my partner is Turkish. As a non-expert outsider, sharing my reading experience about whether the provincialising ambition of the special issue ‘worked’ for me – that is, whether it successfully decentred my perception or not – makes me somewhat of a reflexive test subject. Another reason why I may have been invited to conclude this special issue relates to my interest in questions of knowledge production and my experience studying the discipline of International Relations (IR). I have researched different questions the special issue addresses. I investigated how to make IR a less parochial/Eurocentric field of study – by probing the conditions of production and internationalisation of the discipline in Brazil and India (Alejandro 2018b). I worked to show that ‘European IR’ goes beyond what is produced in the United Kingdom and Scandinavian countries (Alejandro 2017) – by co-editing a book series that aims to de-universalise and historicise European transnational traditions in IR Theory (Jørgensen et al. 2017). I explored the conditions for formulating critiques that produce something other than the problems they seek to denounce (Alejandro 2021b). And so, I have tried to write this conclusive essay from this *outsider/connoisseur* position.

In this contribution, I review the special issue in light of the broader debates it contributes to. I structure this conclusive article around the two goals set up in the special issue's introduction: 1) investigating how CEE has been used 'in the scholarship of politics and international relations in order to account for the relative silence about CEE in the debates on "worlding IR"', and how knowledge about and from CEE has been used in the discipline more generally; 2) exploring 'what provincializing the discipline from CEE might look like' (Mälksoo 2021b).

### **How can we explain CEE's relative absence in the 'worlding IR' conversation and how has CEE been used in IR instead?**

This question emerges out of four decades of questioning IR's unequal institutionalisation around the world, which hinders its capacity to produce knowledge capable of explaining the diversity of socio-political phenomena in different contexts and potentially contributes to the (re)production of an unfair socio-political order. To engage such issues, IR scholarship started showcasing IR production in different countries/regions in an exercise sometimes referred to as 'mapping the discipline' (Holden 2002; Kristensen 2015).

This special issue takes as a starting point the general lack of interest for CEE in this debate. Apart from a few initiatives (see Drulák 2009; Drulák et al. 2009 as well as Thümmler (2014) for the influence of emigres scholars on the global thinking about the international), CEE seemed to have fallen between the cracks of a conversation structured around the largely accepted and imprecisely defined macro-categories of 'West' vs. 'non-West' or 'Global North' vs. 'Global South' (Acharya and Buzan 2010; Chimni and Mallavarapu 2012; Tickner and Smith 2020). Notably, even before the end of the Cold War, seminal mappings of the discipline have neglected the region (see, for example, Gareau 1981; Holsti 1985). Based on my reading of the special issue, I suggest four potential reasons for this relative absence.

***Local factors: the late institutionalisation and low internationalisation of IR in CEE***

The first explanation put forward by the special issue to explain CEE's relative absence in the 'worlding IR' conversation lies in the local contexts of IR production in the region. This point is most clearly presented in the paper focusing on the history of IR institutionalisation in (post)Yugoslavia (Ejdus and Kovačević 2021). With a field of IR struggling to emancipate itself from other disciplines such as law and political science up to this day, the chronology of IR institutionalisation – or lack thereof – in (post)Yugoslavia follows the timeline and faces similar challenges to those of IR in bigger European countries such as France or Italy (see Friedrichs 2004). In this context, the few scholars focusing on international affairs and political thought have mainly engaged in debates matching this disciplinary setting, making their contribution relatively invisible to scholars working in 'IR' as defined in the United States and the United Kingdom (Schweitzer 2021). Similarly, the existence of strong policy-oriented traditions is likely to have socialised IR scholars into privileging policymakers and public opinion as their target audience. This would in turn redirect their publication practices away from internationalising their production in IR transnational academic debates. In this regard, the example of (post)Yugoslavia – with a specialisation in geopolitics and diplomatic history in a context of ideological censorship – displays traditional features of international thinking in authoritarian contexts and newly independent states during the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Alejandro 2018a).

The extent to which the cases illustrated in the special issue are representative of CEE as a whole needs further investigation but other contributions seem to indicate that these patterns are generally shared in the region (Bátora et al. 2012). In the last two decades, different transnational factors such as the neo-liberalisation of criteria of research evaluation and the globalisation of 'worlding IR' discourses have led to the expanding homogenisation of IR publishing practices around the world (see Alejandro 2021a). Such processes could also explain the growing diversification of IR areas of inquiry and theoretical frameworks in CEE (Ejdus and Kovačević 2021), as well as the increase of publications in English by scholars from the region (Bátora et al. 2012).

In contrast to the relatively unique case of ‘Chinese IR’, where a dedicated IR community has been publishing and internationalising research ‘from a Chinese perspective’ in English since the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Kristensen 2016; Wang, Duke, and Schmid 2009), the lack of local factors promoting the emergence of a large, institutionalised and internationalised English-speaking IR community is likely to have contributed to the relative absence of CEE voices and representations in the ‘worlding IR’ and other IR debates. However, as illustrated by the case of IR theorisation based on indigenous thought and practices (Beier 2009; Crawford 1994), difference-seeking ‘global IR’ scholarship does not need a community to be directly involved in IR production to turn it into a ‘worlding IR’ instrument. In that sense, other explanations need to be considered.

### ***Has CEE been turned into an ‘unimportant other’?***

The second potential reason explaining CEE’s relative absence lies in the idea is that CEE is perceived as ‘insignificant’ both as an agent of world politics (Mälksoo 2021a, 2021b) and a ‘locus of knowledge’ (Budryté 2021, citing Laffey and Weldes 2008) by the communities capable of setting the terms of the global conversation in IR. This point reminds me of a phrasing used by Nossal in his analysis of IR textbooks in the United States: the existence of ‘unimportant others’ (Nossal 2001). I understand ‘unimportant others’ as the ethnocentric practice and capacity for academic communities to discursively represent other social groups, objects or states as unworthy of knowledge production. Nossal gives a few illustrations of such phenomena found within IR literature (2001: 176): ‘Sure people in Luxembourg have good ideas. But who gives a damn? Luxembourg ain’t hegemonic’ (Higgott 1991: 99); ‘Denmark doesn’t matter’ (Waltz 1993); or ‘the Solomon Islands is a political entity significant to few others than its 385,000 residents’ (Papp 1997: 350–51).

Interestingly, these excerpts point to the common IR stereotype that small states do not matter in world politics and therefore do not require our academic attention. As CEE is mainly constituted of small states in terms of territory and/or population, one can expect that such a stereotype may have affected how the region is represented in the discipline. An example of this stereotyping might be

the coining of the term ‘Balkanisation’ – understood as ‘the ethnic and political fragmentation that followed the breakup of the Ottoman Empire, particularly in the Balkans’ (Pringle 2018) – which has influenced foreign perceptions about the region (Simic 2013). This stereotype, however, needs to be put into perspective. Out of roughly 196 states, 60 states have less than 3 million inhabitants and 39 of less than 1 million in contrast with only 27 states having over 50 million inhabitants. In an unequally institutionalised discipline where IR national communities have differential access to economic and financial resources to support their knowledge production, *who* becomes constituted as ‘unimportant’ may end up representing most national contexts.

More specific to the ‘worlding IR’ debate, this special issue contributes to putting on the agenda the relative absence of IR European voices from outside the United Kingdom and a few VIP clusters in northern Europe. Doing so aligns with previous initiatives that highlight how IR in continental Europe remains IR’s ‘best-kept secret’ (Jørgensen 2000). Although understanding why a few European IR communities have been speaking for the rest of Europe requires further investigation, this question falls outside the scope of this special issue.

Another point to consider is that areas of expertise that have been traditionally developed by IR scholars in CEE – geopolitics, strategy, and nationalist realism (Ejdus and Kovačević 2021) – might be perceived as too conservative for the taste of the ‘worlding IR’ crowd. In the context of the successful promotion of postcolonial and decolonial frameworks in and beyond the ‘worlding IR’ debate, interest in studying European (including CEE) traditions might be perceived as too old school, too white, and too imperial. Is ‘Europe’ cancelled in IR 2.0/2020s, and CEE within it?

***The history of the region challenges what the trending (worlding) IR crowds want to read and see***

In contrast to Mälksoo, I do not believe that ‘zoom[ing] in on CEE understandings about and scholarship on “the international” would hardly strike many as a particularly bold normative move in making the study of world politics less Eurocentric’ (Mälksoo 2021b). On the contrary, I suggest that CEE might have been relatively neglected in the ‘worlding IR’ debate precisely *because* it challenges

the *postcolonial Eurocentrism* at the core of this conversation.<sup>1</sup> I argue that the region does not fit neatly the decontextualised macro-categories – ‘West/non-West’, ‘North/South’, ‘core/periphery’ – that structure this conversation as well as the discourses and representations associated with these binaries. As a result, the study of CEE is likely to have been avoided altogether in the ‘worlding IR’ conversation to evade questioning the terms of the debate. Indeed, the history of CEE subverts the simplistic narrative that essentialises the ‘West’ as the sole agent of world politics and non-European agents as their passive victims through a denial of their agency, and de-historicises and decontextualises the relationship between Europeans and the rest of the world (e.g. as unilateral colonisation and enslavement of the former by the latter).

In the Middle Ages, South and Eastern Europe acted as human pools of eunuchs and slave-soldiers to Arab Califates in colonised Sicily, Spain, and Morocco, as well as East of the Mediterranean sea (Rodriguez 1997; Vaissière 2007). Under the Ottoman rule, the enslavement of Southern and Eastern Europeans represented a key component of the empire’s functioning and success as slave-soldiers in the military divisions of Mamluks and Janissaries, as part of the imperial harem and in other roles in a context where ‘white slaves’ also occupied dedicated administrative functions (Freely 2000).

Such a rendering of CEE’s history might appear simplistic and essentialising. Yet, simplistic and homogenising renderings of world history form part of the function and success of categories such as ‘West/non-West’, ‘North/South’, ‘core/periphery’. The abovementioned narratives might more easily *appear* simplistic than the ones dominating the discipline, precisely because they are not naturalised. On the contrary, they tend to challenge the essentialising foundations on which the contemporary IR categorisation of the world is based. The question becomes of *who* has the luxury of imposing a global essentialising and simplistic vision of history and performing identities accordingly; and we can imagine that if the Ottoman Empire had not lost World War I, the current ‘alternative’ narratives might be the ones organising collective representations.

Going beyond this play of imagination, one can use the abundant historiographical work about the politics of the Ottoman Empire in Eastern Europe to decentre and challenge the essentialisation processes resulting from the current dominant narratives. For instance, the history of the region is considered an exemplary case of colonisation through deportation, as forced migrations between South and Eastern Europe and Anatolia represented a tenet of the empire's demographic engineering (Şeker 2013). Mass deportation and resettlement policy included moving Turkish and Muslim populations to areas perceived as 'hostile' to the empire and moving Christian populations away from conquered territories (Barkan 1951/52; İnalçık 1954). Such policies had lasting effects on both the construction of the subsequent Turkish state (that continued to implement forced migration within Anatolia), as well as in the previously occupied territories. This is, for instance, the case in Bulgaria where Muslim populations settled as a result of the Ottomans' forced migration policy and were subsequently expelled from Bulgaria-owned lands in the 1870s and 1880s, setting a precedent to what some have considered a 'recurrent feature of Bulgaria's ethno-demographic development until the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century' (Kalionski 2002 cited in Şeker 2013).

Despite the explosion of IR works relating to the politics of empire and their legacy, as well as the establishment of post-colonial studies in IR, the politics and impact of Turkish imperialism in colonised Eastern Europe have not raised major interest within IR post-colonial, decolonial and anti-colonial scholarship (see Türesay (2013) for an overview of what a postcolonial take on the Ottoman empire can look like). It is interesting to notice how easily the Eastern and Southern European colonial experience is forgotten, despite Bulgaria and Greece having been colonised for 500 and 400 years respectively, while other populations seem to be only apprehended through the lens of their colonial past.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the region became either occupied at the territorial margins of the Euro-Asian U.S.S.R. federation or under its influence. In the current context, part of CEE's population benefits from white privilege in a globalised world while being simultaneously stigmatised as undesirable immigrants by xenophobic movements in countries to which they emigrated. Roma

populations, settled in CEE in the 11<sup>th</sup> century alongside the latest stages of Turkic migrations to Europe, can be in many regards considered one of the most discriminated groups in Europe (Buchanan 2015). Again, this complexity challenges the simplistic binaries organising IR ways of thinking and requires nuanced and contextualised analysis, a step that not everyone might be willing to take.

This argument is not explicitly put forward in the special issue but the difficulty to neatly speak the region using the binary categories mentioned recurrently appears across the contributions – ‘inter-zone’, ‘in-betweenness’, ‘neither core nor periphery’, ‘complex, often contradictory positions’ being among the terminologies used in the special issue (see, for instance, Kušić 2021; Mälksoo 2021b, 2021a). Going beyond these challenges, authors of the special issue investigate whether representations of the region might influence the type of subfields in which it is investigated and vice-versa.

***CEE is contained within specific subfields and narratives associated with representations about the region***

The final reason put forward to explain CEE’s relative absence in the ‘worlding IR’ conversation refers to the idea that the study of CEE has been contained within specific sub-fields and associated with the questions and topics of these sub-fields to the exclusion of others. This line of inquiry aligns with the body of scholarship investigating how ‘a country (the Congo), a nation or community (the Kurds), a person (Saddam Hussein), or a concept (sovereignty)’ (Dunn 2006: 371) can become discursive sites onto which IR communities project representations and stereotypes, which subsequently influence the type of knowledge produced and legitimised in the field (see, for example, Steffek and Holthaus (2020) for the case of Germany).

For instance, Kušić investigates the overrepresentation of CEE in intervention studies and reconstructs the role attributed to ‘Balkan subjects’ in this body of scholarship (Kušić 2021). Through the concept of stigmatisation, Lovec, Kočí and Šabič highlight how CEE’s has been de-historicised



and homogenised to fit the existing disciplinary narratives, even in the case where the literature aimed to challenge the existing stereotypes (Lovec, Kočí and Šabič 2021). Finally, Mälksöö investigates 18 IR journals to ‘establish the ways EE [Eastern Europe] is represented as an analytical category in the subfield of ISS [International Security Studies], and IR more broadly’, and shows that CEE is relegated in the position of *an object* of security politics, and gets more frequent coverage in ISS journals than in general IR ones (Mälksöö 2021a). Doing so, the special issue engages the existing debates about knowledge hierarchies, putting forward that CEE has been kept outside the prestigious domain of IR theory and relegated to subfields and Area Studies (Kaczmarek and Ortmann 2021; Kušić 2021; Mälksöö 2021a; Schweitzer 2021). The existence of such hierarchies runs the risk of socialising scholars and students interested in CEE into not perceiving CEE as a source of IR diversification and a site from which to decentre the study of world politics. It also runs the risk of socialising scholars and students interested in certain questions – such as those pertaining to IR theory or ‘worlding IR’ – to privilege other case studies than CEE, as the region might not be represented as appropriate in regard to these questions nor as a domain of expertise to make a career in these fields of studies. As a result, knowledge hierarchies and representations of the region reproduce each other and are likely to impact the type of knowledge produced in the discipline about and beyond CEE.

### **How can we ‘provincialise’ IR from CEE?**

The introduction of the special issue raises this second question by inviting contributors to explore CEE’s untapped heuristic potential for IR and shake the discipline’s power play and epistemic inertia. In my reading, it suggests two main roads to do so: theorizing IR from CEE experiences and challenging knowledge hierarchies in the discipline.

### *Influencing IR debates and theory-building from regional experiences and perspectives*

This initiative is at the core of the ‘worlding IR’ tradition (Aydinli and Biltekin 2018; Balzacq and Ramel 2013; Tickner and Waever 2009). More precisely, the interest in theorisation aligns with the literature for it is believed that ‘whoever creates the theories, controls the agenda’ (Aydinli and Mathews 2008: 694) and that IR theory is ‘almost exclusively Western’ (Acharya and Buzan 2007: 288). Regarding theory-making and contributions to IR debates, the special issue matches its objectives with contributors setting reasonable goals that they deliver successfully.

A good example of such an endeavor is the article by Budrytė demonstrating how designing a research project by selecting cases framed as ‘weak’ or ‘peripheral’ offers a decentring platform for disciplinary debates. More specifically, the article focuses on memory politics and the study of crisis to show how discourses emerging during a crisis in a state like Ukraine (2013-2014) are capable of subverting established discourses (Budrytė 2021). A second successful initiative lies in the efforts by Schweitzer (2021) to conceptualise ‘state-to-nation incongruence’ based on the historical context of the region and the introduction of the Hungarian political thinker István Bibó to international security studies and its articulation to the work of Benjamin Miller. These endeavours illustrate different pathways to provincialising IR. They make CEE’s potential IR resources more accessible to a broader audience. They offer frameworks that not only enable a more refined understanding of the region but also can be adopted to study similar cases, for example, other small states, addressing the abovementioned problematic normalisation of ‘big states’ as ‘normal’ states in and beyond IR.

Moreover, I appreciate the constructive posture of the special issue, as I am generally tired of critique without reconstruction. This reconstructive mindset is, for instance, illustrated by the approach of ‘generative reading’ developed by Kušić who explores traces of ‘Balkan’ agencies and subjectivities in books not dedicated to this purpose (Kušić 2021). Through this optimistic initiative, the author shows that positioning towards the existing literature can go beyond either pledging allegiance to a certain community or discarding it altogether for having missed something one is championing to solve. Underpinning this approach is the liberating idea that reading is a process of

meaning-making and that texts have a life of their own, independent of the intentions of their authors. It reminds me of the excellent novel by Jose Luis Borges *Pierre Menard, Author of the Quixote* (Borges 2003) that tells the story of a man who sets himself the task of re-writing the 17<sup>th</sup>-century novel of Don Quixote verbatim in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, thus giving it a completely new meaning in the eyes of a 20<sup>th</sup>-century audience. All in all, I welcome that the authors build bridges between different traditions, demonstrate practical solutions and go beyond denouncing the usual suspects of the discipline without reconstruction.

### ***Challenging knowledge hierarchies***

I have shown that this special issue successfully delivers its main ambitions, but I do not believe this is the case with ‘challenging knowledge hierarchies’. One special issue can only do so much but I thought I would still address this point as it might help future initiatives. Despite not being familiar with the literature about the region or being exposed to the networks focusing on the region, I felt very comfortable reading the special issue – maybe *too* comfortable. Enabling the special issue to engage a non-specialist audience is a condition of its success. Yet, if its ambition is to challenge the way the world is spoken into being, it is rather expected for readers to feel a bit shaken up when engaging the material.

Surprisingly, I felt quite at home reading the special issue, which made me wonder about the sociological characteristics of the contributors, their generational diversity and the transnationalisation of their trajectories. More precisely, the conversation seemed quite close to my working environment: critical/International Political Sociology networks in the UK (and, for instance, quite distinct from other bodies of literature I am familiar with such as French-speaking and Spanish-speaking IR). The United Kingdom being one of the dominant IR communities in the world, I, therefore, wonder if the special issue has ‘come up with a more radically autonomous voice in the field’ (Schweitzer 2021). For example, without being able to back up this feeling empirically, I am under the impression that ‘Western Europe’, ‘Western audience’ and ‘the West’ are the ‘constitutive

other' and/or tacitly assumed readership across the contributions, which made me wonder if this position reflects the diversity of perspectives in CEE or more specifically reveals the pre-academic and academic socialisation of the contributors. Lastly, considering the relative neglect for economic questions in the 'worlding IR' literature and critical scholarship more broadly, I was hoping that the articles in this special issue would draw on some of the intellectual traditions present in post-communist societies – historical materialism, labour studies and south-south relations from a Marxist-inspired perspective (see Kovačević and Ejodus 2021) – to inject back these important questions into the current debates, which did not happen.

Finally, I struggled with the idea that making it into IR theory is de facto desirable as I do not think taking this for granted is challenging knowledge hierarchies. I concur that theory-making is a potential strategy to access international recognition (Wæver 2007: 294–96). I also generally believe that analytical thinking and innovative knowledge are valuable, and good theorisation contributes to producing them. However, as IR is accused of theoretical fundamentalism (Grovgoui 2006: 17), strategies other than adopting the modes of knowledge production at the top of the knowledge hierarchy pyramid might be more successful to challenge hierarchies. In a context where 'IR Theory' is commonly accused of being idiosyncratic and not making a difference in the world, the legitimisation of ways of researching and writing IR that address such limits might be more likely to take 'IR Theory' down from its pedestal. In many regards, for example, one can consider Area Studies to be superior to 'IR Theory', with a closer engagement with fieldwork, interdisciplinarity, and contextualisation – dimensions that 'IR Theory' literature often lacks. Similarly, I would be curious to know how many IR theorists ended up working in this subfield just because they lacked the linguistic and methodological skills and other comparative advantages for doing something else.

## Conclusion

The special issue approaches CEE as a discursive and representational site that reflects socio-political dynamics permeating the study of world politics in order to contribute to mainstreaming CEE within different IR debates – especially the ‘worlding IR’ conversation – beyond the communities in which it has been largely siloed so far. Doing so, the special issue engages with CEE as a repository of experiences, trajectories and expertise whose untapped potential might represent a heuristic resource for the discipline of International Relations. I hope that I have managed to show in this article that, overall, this initiative successfully matches its announced ambitions.

Furthermore, the special issue invited me to ponder a series of questions related to our professional and epistemic engagement in the production of academic knowledge about world politics. One of them is that I do not think we are (in IR and other social sciences) taking seriously enough the processes at the core of initiatives such as ‘worlding IR’ – ‘provincialising’, ‘decentring’, ‘deconstructing’ and the like. For the next generations to be better at it than the previous ones, it feels like we have to develop a more robust conceptualisation of these processes and demonstrate how to engage them in practice, both as a research activity in their own right and as part of the research practices one engages in to research traditional IR questions.

Through the comparison I drew between IR knowledge production in CEE and other regions (intra-European stratification, authoritarian contexts...), writing this article also made me wonder whether the points raised in this special issue were specific to a potential CEE knowledge production predicament. Indeed, some arguments could similarly apply to other regions and contribute to explaining their relative marginalisation in IR and the ‘worlding IR’ conversation. For example, it can be expected that, since English-speaking institutionalised IR is largely a ‘Western’ product, this field of study would generally neglect societies outside of Europe and North America and the territories subjected to American and European imperial policies. Just like CEE, the history of Central Asia does not align with IR’s traditional and postcolonial Eurocentrism; which might explain why most countries in this region are barely explored outside specialist scholarship nor do they figure in

the majority of IR programmes. Interestingly, this relative neglect also occurs in regard to regions formerly colonised by Europeans, such as North Africa. Similar to CEE, local factors and the complexity of historical trajectories that resist IR dominant binaries – illustrated for example by the processes of berberisation and de-berberisation that occurred throughout the Roman, Arab and French rulings of the region – might have played a role in the relative absence of North African voices and subjectivities in the field. While the history of CEE and these illustrative cases have in common that they do not fit neatly the dominant essentialising narratives, each offers specific points grounded in specific contexts from which to decentre the discipline. The diversity of their current higher education and research policies may also raise different challenges for IR researchers based in these regions to speak to and make themselves heard by different audiences.

Finally, another question that came to my mind relates to how many IR scholars experience themselves as working in the periphery (see for example Cornut and Battistella (2013) and Steffek and Lasshof (2021) for the cases of IR in France and Germany and Alejandro (2018b) for the cases of Brazil and India). Or, to put it differently, who does not experience themselves working at IR's periphery? What does this say about discourses of peripheralisation? And how do these discourses affect the structural hierarchies, self-esteem and identities of those working in the field? I started wondering about these questions during my PhD in an interview with a Brazilian IR scholar, who, while born and raised in Brazil, mentioned in passing that 'Brazil is still a very far country'. This sentence made me curious about all the ramifications – psychological, sociological, economic – of not experiencing one's place in the world as at the centre of this world. It made me consider whether discourses of peripheralisation actually reflect an existing core/periphery structural process or are primarily performatively constitutive of it. I share these three points to conclude this conclusion, as food for thought to continue the conversations started by the special issue beyond its interventions.

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## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> I define ‘postcolonial Eurocentrism’ as an emerging form of Eurocentrism that follows the criteria of Eurocentrism commonly mentioned in the literature – denial of ‘non-Western’ agency, teleological narrative centred on the ‘West’ and idealisation of the ‘West’ as normative referent – but whose system of value is the complete opposite of the one embodied by traditional Eurocentrism: ‘With postcolonial Eurocentrism, Europe is also considered to be the primary “proactive” subject of world politics – but, in this case, by being described as the leading edge of global oppression, not progress. Indeed, according to postcolonial Eurocentrism, European capacity to homogenise the world according to its own standards of unification is considered to be a malevolent process (i.e. the destruction of diversity) rather than a benevolent one (i.e. a show of positive leadership). In both forms of Eurocentrism, the discourse performs “the West” as the main actor capable of organising the world in its image. European exceptionalism remains the same – although, from the postcolonial Eurocentric view, Europe is not considered to be the best actor ever, but the worst.’ (Alejandro 2018b)

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