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Whose (in)security? Gender, race and coloniality in European security policies: Introduction to the Special Issue

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ABSTRACT

Building on feminist and postcolonial theoretical approaches across International Relations (IR) and security studies, this Special Issue advances an emerging research agenda within EU studies by shedding light on the gendered and racialised logics of EU security and their links to colonial histories and practices. Together, the contributions to this Special Issue demonstrate how EU security is intrinsically connected to and constituted by histories of colonialism, racism and patriarchy. At the same time, they also highlight how the colonial, racialised and gendered dynamics that underpin EU security and that are mobilised by the EU, its institutions and member states are always complex and shifting. Importantly, they do so by decentring our analysis of EU security moving our focus often away from the EU and towards different, somewhat unexpected sites and geographical locations of EU security. The current war in Ukraine underwrites the need for more historical, contextual and decentred work on EU security, while also highlighting the necessity to reflect on dominant practices of knowledge production and the experiences of people living in and with war through a feminist and postcolonial lens.

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Introduction

The European security order emerged at the time when European colonial empires came to an end. The first external policies of the European Communities, such as those related to development and trade, were strongly shaped by this past and informed by European states' interest in keeping close relations with their (former) colonies (Onar and Nicolaïdis 2013, Kinnvall 2016). This context was foundational for the ways in which the European Communities and later the European Union (EU) developed its approach to security and its position in the world. Despite this history, the wider scholarship on EU security has hardly studied the constitutive nature of coloniality in European security and the racialised and gendered relations that EU security policy reproduces.

Only recently has EU scholarship begun to acknowledge the ways in which EU security policies and practices rely on and (re-)constitute gendered and racialised inequalities, as well as colonial continuities. Existing scholarship has begun to unpack the gendered and

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racialised logics of EU security and their links to colonial histories and practices in a variety of security domains, including in EU migration and border governance (see, e.g. Bhambra 2017, Bialasiewicz 2012, Bilgiç 2018, Pallister-Wilkins 2020, 2022, Stachowitsch and Sachseder 2019, Telford 2018, Welfens 2020), the EU Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) (see, e.g. Kronsell 2016, Guerrina *et al*. 2018, Chappell and Guerrina 2020, Hoijtink and Muehlenhoff 2020, Haastrup *et al*. 2021), and EU counterterrorism policy (Anwar and İşleyen 2022).

This Special Issue advances this emerging research agenda within EU studies by centring feminist and postcolonial perspectives in our study of EU security, and highlighting the constitutive nature of gender, race and coloniality (and their interactions) for EU security policy and practice. The contributions to this Special Issue investigate how EU policies and practices of security, intervention and protection rely on, (re-)produce and alter gendered and racialised subjects, while also sustaining the notion of a progressive, civilised and white Europe. As the title of this Special Issue highlights, we are especially interested in *whose* (in)security is a matter of concern in EU security policy, and how EU security policies and practices reproduce or change gendered and racialised inequalities. These questions have become even more important within the context of the current war in Ukraine and increasing political and scholarly support for a "stronger", or more militarised EU. Against the background of these developments towards EU militarism and the militarised masculinities associated with it, gendered and racialised notions of (in)security play a central role. These notions should be studied through a feminist and postcolonial lens.

At the same time, the war in Ukraine also poses a set of new and fundamental questions to existing feminist and postcolonial scholarship on security, war and the EU's relations with the world. For example, feminist demands from Ukraine for Western arms deliveries in the face of Russian aggression have challenged Western/Northern feminist scholarship and activism (The Feminist Initiative Group 2022), which have typically been defined by an anti-militarist stance. The (early) opposition of some Western feminists to arms provisions for Ukraine has created divisions between feminist scholars and activists from Western/Northern Europe and the US on the one hand, and from Ukraine and Central and Eastern Europe on the other hand, which thus far have been difficult to mend. These debates reflect how feminist IR and security studies have long been dominated by scholarship from Western or Northern Europe, while work from Eastern or Southern Europe has been less recognised (Krulišová and O'Sullivan 2022, Mälksoo 2022).

The war in Ukraine pushes feminist and postcolonial scholarship within IR and security studies into new directions. Or, rather, it moves those discussions that were previously more marginalised to the centre of debates (see Kratochvil and O'Sullivan 2023). As scholars of Central and Eastern Europe have shown, coloniality is highly relevant in the relationship between Western Europe and Eastern Europe[1] (e.g. Mark and Slobodian 2017, Mälksoo 2022). As Maria Mälksoo writes (2022, p. 9):

> Decolonizing the study of international relations would entail attentiveness to the memory politics behind IR's standard categories of subjectivity and agency. Russia's war against Ukraine has revealed much about who has been historically able, and who not, to speak for themselves in the practice, speaking and writing on international politics.

We follow the argumentation that processes in former Eastern bloc states are akin to decolonisation as they similarly embodied "an emancipatory project, fight for freedom

and rejection of [oppressive] power systems" (Kołodziejczyk 2014, p. 124), and therefore lend themselves to postcolonial approaches. In addition, a postcolonial approach to Central and Eastern Europe also brings the racial hierarchies of whiteness within Europe into focus, as scholarship on migration and borders already showed before the war (e.g. Krivonos 2022). With the war in Ukraine, we see how what it means to be a *white* European is changing. Crudely put, only since the war, this category includes Ukrainians, although still excluding Ukrainians of colour. Hence also in this context, race and coloniality are constitutive for how the borders of the EU work, whose security is worth protecting and/or defending and who is deemed to be a threat to Europe's security. Analysing current dynamics in Central and Eastern Europe, or other places which were not formally colonised by Europe, indeed provides important insights into the transferability of postcolonial approaches and concepts (Kołodziejczyk and Huigen 2023).

Connecting to these recent debates in feminist and postcolonial IR and security studies scholarship, the contributions to this Special Issue analyse the logics of gender, race and coloniality in different security fields and across different geographical locations. The authors study "EU/European security" in different and perhaps surprising locations, and beyond a focus on the formal institutions and policies of EU security. In so doing, they do not pre-define what "EU/European security" entails or how far it reaches institutionally. Instead, their contributions demonstrate how EU security emerges through practices and relations with others in a variety of locations, including in (national) court rulings on counterterrorism (Anwar and Klosterkamp 2023), in gender trainings of policy and military officers in Niger (Berlingozzi 2023) and Tunisia (Musina 2023), or in the technical and bureaucratic practices of drafting a common strategic document (Sachseder and Stachowitsch 2023; Guerrina, Haastrup and Wright 2023).

In other contributions, the EU moves further into the background to make space for a focus on who is usually considered to be the Other by the EU and within EU scholarship. This involves research on the war in Ukraine and gendered war discourses in both Ukraine and Russia (Kratochvil and O'Sullivan 2023), and on the role of colonial anxieties within Turkey's (Işleyen 2023) or Hungary's relations to the EU (Futak-Campbell and Küçük 2023). In these contributions, the EU is still present, but mainly becomes known through how it is perceived and imagined by others. As we are witnessing in Ukraine and elsewhere, the EU influences people and places in terms of their perceptions, expectations and imaginations of the EU and Europe, even if unintended. EU security policy does not exist and act in a vacuum, but it is tied up and always emerges through the relations and histories that the EU shares with Others (see also Kinnvall *et al*. 2018). Who the Other is, is also always in flux and not necessarily limited to people and places outside of the EU (territory or member states). Sometimes, the Other relates to one of its members, as we observe in the case of Hungary (Futak-Campbell and Küçük 2023), or in the case of candidate countries such as Turkey (Işleyen 2023).

By widening our focus, we can see how gender, race and coloniality work in EU security policy, and how EU security, and the practices and policies that emanate from it, have an effect on people in local contexts. In so doing, the Special Issue makes tenable how Europe's history of colonialism is shaping the EU's relations with Others today, in subtle, but also in more blatant ways. An illustrative example of the latter was High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell's speech at the European Diplomatic Academy in Bruges in October 2022. In his speech, he called Europe

"a garden", or "the best combination of political freedom, economic prosperity and social cohesion that the humankind has been able to build", while "the rest of the world is a jungle", which is prepared to "invade the garden" (Borrell 2022).

Despite being strongly criticised by scholars and activists for these words, Borrell denied that these tropes were steeped in racism and colonialism. Perhaps unknowingly, Borrell spoke to ongoing and urgent debates in IR and increasingly also in EU studies about the need for "decentring" Europe and challenging conventional narratives that place Europe at the centre of international affairs (Bhambra 2009, Onar and Nicolaïdis 2013). Our Special Issue contributes to the decentring agenda by analysing EU security policy and practices in a variety of institutional, geographical and historical locations and relations, which includes engaging with the ways in which EU security and Europe's role in the world is envisaged by others (Onar and Nicolaïdis 2013, p. 286). The different contributions show how EU security policies are gendered and racialised, how they constitute the EU's identity (as a civilised/progressive/white Europe), how these notions and policies are shifting, and how they affect people with different gender and racial identities within different geographical locations.

Studying EU security through gender, race and coloniality

Within EU studies, research on EU security has long been dominated by institutionalist and rationalist approaches focusing on questions of actorness, capabilities and effectiveness. This is especially true for scholarship on the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), which has often been driven by the question of how the EU can become a more effective or more militarised actor (e.g. Allen and Smith 1990, Hill 1993). Early critical scholarship on EU security adopting a securitisation approach or Foucauldian lens has provided a useful alternative to this perspective, uncovering, for example, the role of biopolitics, risk, and security assemblages in EU border, migration and counterterrorism policies (see, e.g. Bigo 2002, Huysmans 2006, Neal 2009, Léonard and Francis 2011, de Goede *et al*. 2014, Pallister-Wilkins 2015, Jeandesboz 2016). However, even within the field of critical security studies, debates on EU security have, so far, largely taken place in isolation from postcolonial and feminist scholarship (for recent exceptions see Stachowitsch and Sachseder 2019, Anwar and İşleyen 2022).

Only more recently have we seen scholarship on the EU developing a feminist or postcolonial approach to EU security and the EU's wider role within the world. Most of this literature takes a feminist institutionalist perspective to analyse how EU institutions and polices are gendered. This includes feminist analyses of e.g. the European External Action Service (EEAS), or the EU's implementation of the United Nations' Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda, for instance in CSDP policy documents and operations (Guerrina and Wright 2016, Ansorg and Haastrup 2018, Guerrina *et al*. 2018). Others have taken a broader focus, examining whether and how women and LGBTIQ+ rights have been considered or "mainstreamed" in EU foreign policy, especially in the context of EU enlargement (e.g. Slootmaeckers *et al*. 2016, Jünemann 2021). Such studies often assess the EU based on its self-proclaimed image as a gender or LGBTIQ+ rights champion (Guerrina, Haastrup and Wright 2023). Within the realm of migration and border studies, feminist scholarship similarly investigates whether EU policies are "gender-sensitive" enough, i.e. whether they take the specific needs and vulnerabilities of sexual minorities,

or migrant/refugee women and men sufficiently into account. Analysing the EU's responses to the 2015 asylum crisis, this literature has shown how gender considerations have been largely absent from the EU's security policies in this field, or how they are merely reduced to a paternalising notion of "womenandchildren", legitimising migration control (Welfens 2020).

Building directly on recent feminist and postcolonial interventions in IR and critical security studies (e.g. Behera, Hinds and Tickner 2021, Bilgin 2018, Howell and Richter-Montpetit 2020, Wibben 2020), another body of literature on EU security has focused on how EU security policies and practices are themselves gendered and racialised (beyond their specific attention to gender), and how they build on, reaffirm or shift social and political hierarchies. This literature highlights how EU security relies on, reproduces and sometimes redefines notions of femininity and masculinity, homosexuality or heterosexuality, and the Self and racialised Other. Hoijtink and Muehlenhoff (2020) for instance, have taken issue with the dominant conception that the EU lacks "hard" military power and argue that the EU already *is* a military power that is constituted by multiple military masculinities (also see Kronsell 2015, 2016). Similarly, critical border scholars have shown how EU policies in reaction to refugee arrivals display different types of racialised masculinities (Bilgiç 2018) and highlighted the gendered and racialised dimensions of EU agencies' practices (Bialasiewicz and Maessen 2018, Stachowitsch and Sachseder 2019).

Thus far, however, existing studies of gender and (to some extent) race in EU security policies and the broader field of EU external relations often fall short of acknowledging the links to colonialism and imperialism (for an exception see Pace and Roccu 2020). Pushing these debates forward, this Special Issue advances a theoretical approach of studying gender and race in EU security as social categories and/or axes of power that are intrinsically connected to and shaped by colonialism and colonial continuities (Mayblin and Turner 2021). We suggest that such an approach combining a feminist and postcolonial lens is particularly fruitful for a more fine-grained analysis of security and insecurity, as feminist and postcolonial approaches take different vantage points. Feminist theory has been especially valuable in terms of unpacking how international politics are constituted by gendered relations of power which are productive of both the private and international sphere (cf. Enloe 2014). Postcolonial studies pay close attention to historical contexts questioning the "taken for granted historical biographies that underpin security studies" (Barkawi and Laffey 2006, p. 330) and challenging Eurocentrism, which, in essence, "is the assumption of European centrality in the past and present" (Barkawi and Laffey 2006, p. 331). Yet, the contributions to our Special Issue find many commonalities between feminist and postcolonial approaches to EU security, as they both analyse the structural relations of power in international politics (shaped through gender and/or colonial hierarchies) and the constructions of identity and Self-Other relations. Moreover, both feminist and postcolonial approaches challenge conventional narratives and assumptions of EU "civilisational" primacy in international security, focusing instead on how EU security plays out in everyday relations and practices, including in geographies outside of the EU's formal borders.

Through this approach, then, we connect existing studies of gender and race within EU security to some of the pioneering work in EU studies calling for the "decentring" of Europe and pointing to the constitutive role of colonial narratives and relations within

European integration (Stern 2011, Onar and Nicolaïdis 2013, Kinnvall 2016, Bhambra 2017). As Kinnvall (2016, p. 157) argues, EU integration and Europeanisation are strongly tied to a colonial narrative of European modernity and civilisation. Emphasising the material and relational conditions of Europe as a "post-colonial power", Fisher Onar and Nicolaïdis (2013, p. 284; emphasis in original) argue, in their critique of Ian Manners' concept of Normative Power Europe, that:

> this narrative marginalizes a central historical fact: the role of appropriation of non-European resources and labour in the empowerment of European states through to at least the mid-20th century, the violence this entailed and the echoes – direct or indirect – of *this* European past among those former "subjects" among whom are to be found the rising powers of today's world.

Adopting a postcolonial lens for the study of EU security means recognising that EU security policy, discourse and practice is necessarily embedded in the context of global colonial and imperial histories. As Sanjay Seth writes (2011, p. 174),

> (t)he "post" in postcolonialism (…) signifies the claim that conquest, colonialism and empire are not a footnote or episode in a larger story, such as that of capitalism, modernity or the expansion of international society, but are in fact a central part of that story and are constitutive of it.

Analysing EU security from this vantage point implies reconsidering its temporal and spatial dimensions. This means viewing EU security as developing through layers of time and place, i.e. through different and complex histories of colonialism and empire in the past *and* present, and in different geographies inside and outside the EU's formal borders.

Finally, adopting an approach that highlights gender and race in relation to colonial histories and spatiality also has implications for how we write about Europe/EU security and produce knowledge on it. It means acknowledging that our understanding of European history, integration and security is – to say the least – *limited* as long as it is dominated by Eurocentric knowledge and experiences. Again, Russia's war against Ukraine and the scholarly debates following the war underwrite this point. In these ongoing academic debates feminist scholars from Ukraine, the Balkans and Eastern Europe insist on the need to reflect on dominant practices of knowledge production, which have until recently largely obscured the experiences and the knowledge of people living in and with war. Building on people's lived experiences and knowledge has consequences for how we understand war and for the concepts and theories of security, war and militarism we use. As Kratochvil and O'Sullivan argue 2023, war might not always and only bring about counter-emancipatory politics in which women are passive victims. This reminds us of the need to pay attention to people's (in)securities within concrete contexts, but also, crucially, to the EU's own role in producing insecurity through its policies. What we learn more broadly is that coloniality, race and gender are layered, complex and function and emerge in different ways depending on their contexts. Feminist and postcolonial analysis strives to excavate these complexities, make them visible and knowable.

The different contributions in this Special Issue all build on these ongoing feminist and postcolonial debates, but they do so in different ways and by deploying different concepts. Rather than proposing one framework, the Special Issue and its contributions adopt and suggest a variety of concepts and approaches through which EU security

can be productively studied. These include notions of hypermasculinity (Kratochvil and O'Sullivan; Futak-Campbell and Küçük), affect and colonial anxieties (Işleyen; Futak-Campbell and Küçük), matters of care (Anwar and Klosterkamp), neo-colonialism, neoliberalism and militarism (Berlingozzi; Musina), and Feminist Foreign Policy (Guerrina, Haastrup and Wright). In all cases, our engagement with gender, race and coloniality requires an ethics of care and "stewardship" for the concepts that we use. As Black feminist scholar Ange-Marie Hancock (2016, p. 625) has formulated it for the use of the concept of intersectionality, such an approach entails "not only disavow ownership but to remember that while I am permitted to use [particular concepts], I must do so ethically". Moreover, acknowledging these critiques and addressing them, however imperfectly, should be an essential part of bringing feminist and postcolonial approaches to the field of EU studies and the study of EU security. As cis-gender white women working at universities in Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany, we have specific positionalities which will lead to omissions in our work and the Special Issue. Moreover, we cannot and do not seek to claim to resolve any of the complex challenges that the fusion of feminist and postcolonial perspectives nor our positionality bring about. Yet, we hope that the contributions of our Special Issue will open up space and serve as a steppingstone in this nascent and urgent conversation.

Contributions: decentring the EU in EU security

In line with the decentring agenda, our Special Issue begins with several contributions studying the relationship between Europe and its Others, from the perspective of those others. In their urgent piece, Kratochvil and O'Sullivan argue that gender is constitutive of all dimensions of Russia's war against Ukraine: Russia's gendered legitimation of the war, Ukraine's gendered resistance, the EU's gender and security policy, and the links between these aspects. In particular, understanding Russia's and Ukraine's discourses in their colonial/imperial contexts, the authors argue, sheds light on how imaginations of gender and sexuality are tied to Europe and the EU. More broadly, their contribution importantly demonstrates that gender discourses in war are layered, and that they may be emancipatory as well as regressive.

Moving on to another Other, namely Turkey, Işleyen argues that scholarship on EU border governance tends to present externalisation practices in an EU-centred way. This way, existing studies overlook non-EU countries' agency and security interests, and the role of affective attachments in EU cooperation on border control. Focusing on Turkish border guards' everyday borderwork, Işleyen shows how these affects "oscillate between feelings of desire/inspiration and anxiety/suspicion", and teases out different constructions of Self and Other that emanate from these affects, such as those related to the EU as a blame maker or paternalistic Other, Greece as the favoured Other, and Turkey as more humane. By centring the perspective of Turkish border guards, Işleyen's contribution shows how postcolonial anxiety shapes the ways in which border guards relate to the EU and how their affective attachment to Europe matters in EU migration control.

While Ukraine and Turkey, despite their aspirations to be part of the EU, lie outside its current formal borders, othering dynamics and hierarchies of Europeanness are not limited to EU membership but also exist within the EU, as seen in the case of Hungary.

Expanding on Işleyen's contribution, Futak-Campbell and Küçük explore the impact of postcolonial and masculine anxieties on Turkey's and Hungary's approaches to the refugee crisis in 2015–2016. Adopting the concept of hypermasculinity, Campbell and Küçük reveal how both Turkey's and Hungary's relationship with the EU in the context of refugee policy are shaped by postcolonial and masculine anxieties which lead to three different responses: paternalism, (in)competency and protectorship. The authors interrogate the gendered and racialised responses to refugees in Europe, which have shifted in their constructions of masculinities and femininities over time. Their contribution brings to the fore how coloniality and gender interact in how Others imagine and relate to the EU. Overall, by moving to the usually considered Other of EU security, the first three contributions of the Special Issue make visible how coloniality matters in different places, including in less obvious ones, such as in daily border practices.

Our next set of contributions examines how ideas of gender and race, having their roots in histories/legacies of colonial empires, constitute a variety of EU security practices in different places. Sachseder and Stachowitsch zoom in on the writing and making of the EU's own security discourse and strategy through its construction of the Other. Focussing on key CSDP documents, specifically the Global Strategy and Strategic Compass, they show how these strategic documents construct the EU as a white, masculine security actor, based on gendered and racialised ideas of the Other. Arguing that "Other, non-European spaces are imagined as simultaneously threatening and vulnerable, yet in both instances portrayed as inferior" by CSDP, Sachseder and Stachowitsch unpack how the EU is assuming its responsibility for global security through a form of "white man's burden" rationale. In these strategies and documents, ideas about masculinity are oscillating between military masculinities defined by strength and rational neutrality.

Anwar and Klosterkamp study EU counterterrorism policy as it develops within national courts, another often underappreciated location of EU security making. Productively fusing feminist and postcolonial IR and Science and Technology Studies (STS), they analyse court cases in Germany and the Netherlands that deal with suspects of terrorism-financing activities. Their analysis highlights how racialised and gendered assumptions define whose activities are deemed "matters of care" and/or "matters of security" and how, based on these assumptions, courts draw ambiguous distinctions between terrorism and humanitarianism when prosecuting terrorism-financing.

The contributions by Berlingozzi and Musina delve into EU security practices outside the EU's formal borders. Focussing on gender policies in EU security interventions in Niger and Tunisia respectively, they bring to light the neoliberal and neo-colonial notions of gender in "other" places and their effects on women's lives. For the case of "preventing and countering violence extremism" programmes in Niger, Berlingozzi argues that the EU's gender approach was led by neoliberal cost–benefit calculations, gendered stereotypes and colonial continuities which increased rather than decreased women's insecurity. Similarly, Musina's contribution on gender training in the context of EU security assistance in Tunisia highlights how the EU reproduces gendered militarism. Both contributions crucially move the centre of analysing EU security to women's embodied lives.

In the last contribution, Guerrina, Haastrup and Wright scrutinise calls for the EU to adopt a Feminist Foreign Policy (FFP). In fact, FFP has gained popularity among some policy-makers in Europe but also become politicised by others. Developing a "Feminist

Power Europe" approach, Guerrina, Haastrup and Wright discuss whether the EU can and should adopt a FFP, considering its potential for more emancipatory and foreign and security policies as well as wider social and political transformations. Distinguishing three frames in their analysis of key EU documents – a liberal, intersectional and postcolonial frame – they find that EU foreign and security policies mainly subscribe to a liberal frame. They contend that the EU's policy is still dominated by an understanding of power as "power over" instead of "power with" and caution against adopting a feminist approach to EU foreign and security policy that is not reflective of its own visions and practices.

Overall, while the different articles in our Special Issue study the EU and EU security from different perspectives and in different places – which includes several contributions that do not strictly focus on EU security policy or practice – this is exactly where their contribution lies. Together, the contributions to the Special Issue study EU security in a wide variety of locations showing how EU security develops through the direct and indirect relationships that the EU has with Others. By studying these different engagements through a lens of coloniality, race and gender, the authors demonstrate how EU security is intrinsically connected to and constituted by histories of colonialism, racism and patriarchy. At the same time, their work also highlights how the colonial, racialised and gendered dynamics that underpin EU security and that are mobilised by the EU, its institutions and member states are always complex and shifting. These insights and the ongoing academic debates within IR and security studies in the context of Russia's war against Ukraine demonstrate the need for more historical, contextual and decentred work on EU security, rethinking the temporal and spatial dimension of security. Our Special Issue concludes with Fisher Onar's critical discussion of the contribution of the Special Issue to postcolonial and feminist scholarship on EU security and its next steps.

Note

1. Similar logics but with their own historical and other specificities are at work in the relationship between Northern and Southern Europe, which, for instance, became visible in the Eurozone crisis but also in EU member states' negotiations over the EU pandemic recovery funds.

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