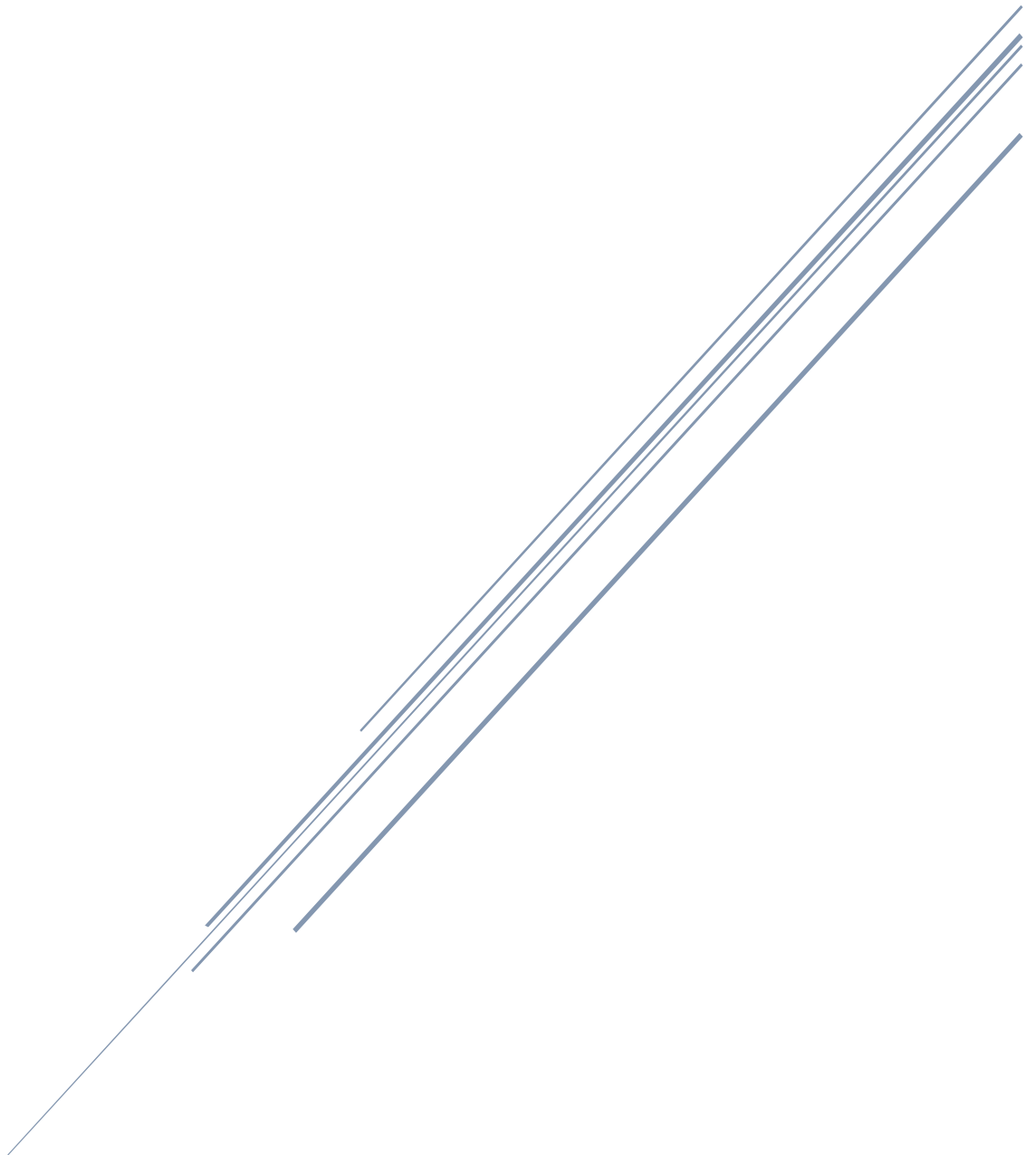


SUMMARY

The Role and Place of Postcolonialism in Explaining the Construction of the EU's Global Normative Power Identity - Perspectives from the Andean Subregion



Ioana Pantilimon
Bucharest, 2024

The doctoral thesis "The Role and Place of Postcolonialism in Explaining the Construction of the EU's Normative Global Power Identity - Perspectives from the Andean Subregion" assumes that we live in a postcolonial world that is represented as post-colonial. In other words, it starts from the assumption that there is a postcolonial condition that cannot be interpreted in terms of the "transcendence" of colonialism but rather in terms of a world fundamentally shaped by colonialism (Seth 2000, 215). The aim of the thesis is not to provide a universal explanation for the multiple ways in which elements of colonialism have escaped formal *decolonizations* but is more narrowly focused on analyzing how normative power (Europe) is marked by the postcolonial condition, based on the relationships between the EU and the Andean Community of Nations.

The main question the thesis seeks to answer is: *How can postcolonialism explain the construction of the EU's normative global power identity?* Complementing the main question, the thesis also addresses two secondary questions:

- *How is the idea of normative power discursively constructed in the relationship between the European Union and the Andean Community of Nations?*
- *How can the European normative power be analyzed from a postcolonial perspective, starting from the relationship between the European Union and the Andean Community of Nations?*

As the research questions indicate, the doctoral thesis is post-positivist in inspiration and proposes an interpretative approach, aiming to deeply understand a phenomenon and contribute to theory development rather than testing hypotheses. The work is not, however, a manifesto against positivist approaches, but a reminder that the diversity of the world that International Relations (IR) assumes to represent can also be studied in ways other than applying grand theories. The assumption of the thesis, as mentioned, is that instead of being a moment of clear rupture, formal decolonization has left a world still shaped by colonial structures and mentalities, which manifest at different levels in International Relations/international relations. The work aims to explain how these colonial remnants manifest in the discourse of normative power. To do this, it progressively constructs the argument from general theoretical directions to proposing a dyadic analytical framework of normative power/colonial discourse. Thus, the main contribution of the thesis is linked to the dyadic approach of discourse of normative power/colonial discourse, providing an innovative model for analyzing normative power.

To reach this analysis, the first five chapters outline the contexts in which the model is proposed. The first chapter broadly presents the contribution of postcolonialism to both deconstructing International Relations and reconstructing the field. It aims to bring arguments for why postcolonialism is a relevant approach for studying international relations and to establish the general theoretical assumptions of the work. In this chapter, I argue that postcolonial and decolonial approaches in IR represent not only a paradigmatic shift but also a call to action for a more just, inclusive, and equitable international order. For postcolonial and decolonial researchers, International Relations as a field is currently marked by Eurocentrism, that is, the manifest or subliminal belief that Europe is autonomous and superior to any other entity. As shown in the second chapter, there is room for postcolonial approaches even concerning a concept that is apparently fundamentally Eurocentric. The key questions the thesis has recovered from various postcolonial approaches to the concept of normative power do not relate to direct equivalences between the norms promoted by European normative power and colonial practices, but to how colonial ideas and practices have persisted after decolonization. Thus, the thesis builds from questions related to how the EU operates as a global model and whether this implies a kind of "ideational imperialism" or, instead, promotes a symmetrical and emancipatory normative power for its external partners.

To explore and answer the derived question ("How can postcolonialism explain the construction of the EU's normative global power identity?"), the thesis focuses on the relationships between the EU and the Andean Community of Nations - one of the most enduring European contacts with Latin America. From the literature review on these relationships (and from the perspective of normative power (in the third chapter), we observe that the main objective of the EU in the region has been to promote its own integration model, to the detriment of other norms and values. Additionally, there is a *presentist* tendency in the literature, and a series of gaps regarding perceptions of the EU as a normative power from the CAN's perspective.

Regarding the presentism of the literature, Chapter 5 aims to introduce EU-CAN relations, starting from the historical evolution of the Andean Pact to the Andean Community and, subsequently, from presenting how its inter-regional relations with the EC/EU have evolved. The historical reconstruction of the Andean integration project's evolution was made by using documents produced by the actors involved in the Andean integration project and looking into the ambitions behind it. In reconstituting the historical evolution of relations with the EC/EU, I tried to present a more complete story, beyond the donor-beneficiary logic and the logic of

positioning the Andean Pact/Andean Community as a permanently passive actor in inter-regional relations. Launched in the 1970s, cooperation began with the signing of bilateral agreements and the implementation of the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP), marking a crucial stage with the signing of the Cooperation Agreement in 1983. The 1990s brought a diversification of relations through the GSP-Drugs and political dialogues on drugs, highlighting the strategic relevance of the Andean region in the EU's common foreign and security policy. Despite these developments, efforts to conclude an Association Agreement faced difficulties and failed in 2008, although negotiations were repeatedly resumed. In this context, from civil society, the EU was criticized for hypocrisy. Additionally, Fritz (2010) called the trade agreements signed with Peru and Colombia "the second conquest", as they reproduce the same unequal dynamics and endanger human rights and sustainable development in the Andean states. Amid the failure of inter-regional negotiations, the Andean Coordinator of Indigenous Organizations (CAOI) - a coordination body of Andean indigenous organizations from Bolivia, Ecuador, Peru, and Colombia - claimed that this was:

"A negotiation process that not only took place behind closed doors but also meant a serious attack on Andean integration. The European Union and the governments of Colombia and Peru are responsible for the dissolution of the CAN. Bolivia's isolation due to its sovereign position and Ecuador's withdrawal from negotiations show the capitulation of Álvaro Uribe and Alan García's governments and the inconsistency of the EU, which initially assured that the negotiation would be 'block to block' to consolidate Andean integration." (CAOI 2009)

The last chapter of the thesis – representing the main contribution of the work – aims to operationalize the dyadic analysis of the discourse of normative power (explained in chapter four) produced simultaneously with the colonial discourse, based on strategic documents produced by the EC/EU from 1984 (when one of the first European strategies regarding Latin America can be identified) to 2023. In the context of this work, colonial discourse is not an analytical category but is treated as a manifestation of constructing the dark side of normative power. In other words, it encompasses all those manifestations of constructing otherness as inferior, incomplete, that is, the various ways of (re)presenting this otherness. If normative power is rationalized as a result of normative difference, i.e., the EU's ability to be fundamentally different from any other international actor, I argued that colonial difference (the radical exclusion of the other) is implicit and is marked by the manifestation of various "strategies" of colonial discourse (e.g., othering, essentialism, binarism, paternalism, mimicry, ambivalence). Thus, the ontological uniqueness of the EU has a double discursive

manifestation: normative power (the ability to change conceptions of normality) and colonial discourse (the ability to create conceptions of abnormality through othering).

To reach the application of this analytical framework, I clarified the approach of critical discourse analysis on which it is built. The work started from the CDA assumption that discourse is intertwined with power: there is power behind discourse and power within discourse (Fairclough 2001). I considered Norman Fairclough's triadic model as the most easily adaptable to the ambition of this work, as it assumes that the text is only part of the discourse. The relationships it creates constitute a second dimension of discourse. Compared to Fairclough, however, I consider the context to have a greater material load, which is why I situated the dimension of explaining the framework in which discourse is produced and interpreted in the broader context of hierarchically ordered international relations, within the dynamics of modernity/coloniality. Thus, the context of discourse is encompassed in the broader context of how modernity is created in relation to coloniality.

Applying the dyadic analysis model was done over three sections structured around the triadic critical discourse analysis approach, starting from the text (description), moving through relationships (interpretation), and reaching the context (explanation) in which discourse is produced. At the descriptive level, I have identified several ways in which Andean alterity is simultaneously produced within the process of European self-representation. Initially, by applying content analysis, I demonstrated that the power to name is manifested in the ways European documents ascribe a common identity to the entire Latin American region. Concurrently, there is a tendency for the European Union to adopt the name "Europe". In this context, I argued that the power to (re)name creates a broader imaginary where the actors involved in the discourse are interconnected. Subsequently, from the analyzed documents—which notably present the unilateral European vision of Latin America (with the exception of two regional strategies exclusively developed for the Andean subregion)—I subjected the direct references to the Andean Pact/Andean Community to dyadic analysis, aiming to identify how normative difference simultaneously produces colonial difference (the radical exclusion of the other's subjectivity). Implicitly, I examined which categories of colonial discourse are simultaneously produced by the discourse of normative power. In this regard, I identified the use of grammatical and vocabulary elements that maintain the Andean Pact/Andean Community in a subordinate relationship to the EC/EU. Generally, normative difference is reflected in the way the European Union perceives itself and presents its actions as being in line with its own values and standards (presented as universal), promoting the idea of regional

integration and mutually beneficial cooperation. On the other hand, colonial difference is evident in the way the Andean Community is represented in European discourse: as a passive partner, dependent on EU support and assistance, characterized by permanent difficulties and shortcomings. The analyzed strategies and documents highlight an asymmetric relationship where the EU primarily acts as a donor and expert, to some extent dictating the agenda and direction of cooperation. This perpetuates a form of paternalism and essentialism, attributing essential and defining traits to the Andean Community while promoting its own authority and uniqueness in the proposed solutions for the region. In this dynamic, recognition of the other as a subject is often only partial, with the Andean Community being seen only in terms of mimicry: a similar integration project to the European one, but not quite.

At the second level of analysis, related to the interpretation of discourse in relation to the conditions of its production and interpretation, I was able to identify partial responses regarding the conditions under which these asymmetric relationships are maintained. From the perspective of discourse production, the documents result from institutional interactions within the EU, thus focusing on the roles and relationships among different entities and institutions. Conversely, discourse interpretation is marked by the lack of active involvement of the Andean Pact/Andean Community in the interpretation process, thereby accentuating a form of colonial difference (radical absence) compared to the normative difference manifested through the presence of the EC/EU as the emitting subject of knowledge about the Andean Pact/Andean Community and Latin America in general. Finally, the analysis emphasizes that, despite the efforts of co-production specific to more recent documents, decision-making and consultative processes remain opaque regarding the inclusion and integration of feedback from civil society in LAC and particularly from the Andean Pact/Andean Community. This opacity may contribute to the perpetuation of a dynamic of unilateralism and colonial difference in these relationships.

Finally, the third section applies the explanatory dimension and considers the structural conditions that make discursive self-representation as normative power possible alongside othering representations grounded in colonial difference. The section advances two explanations. The first pertains to the coloniality of knowledge, namely that the discourse of normative power is made possible by the dominance of Eurocentric knowledge and the marginalization of alternative perspectives on regional integration. Ideas about regional integration have existed in the Andean subregion since the independence wars, but they are not recognized as valid because they are "made invisible or overshadowed by European theories"

(Briceño Ruiz 2018, 50). Thus, by ignoring local historical antecedents related to thinking about regional integration, the path is opened for consolidating the historical uniqueness of the European project. Related (also) to knowledge production, the second explanation concerns the persistence of economic dependency, facilitated by the unequal insertion of Andean states into the global economy after gaining independence. Thus, the argument is that the generalization of the idea that the EU is a model of integration is possible as long as references to the deficiencies of the Andean integration project ignore the structural inequality that disproportionately affects the Andean states. In other words, when European documents state that "Throughout the subregion, the task of ensuring that wealth is equitably distributed has never been satisfactorily addressed" (Regional strategy 2001, 15) without providing the context marked by coloniality and how extractivism—on which, incidentally, unequal trade relations between the EU and the Andean Community are built—determines the concentration of wealth in the hands of a minority, we are talking about ignoring those structural conditions and, implicitly, the power to ignore them.

The proposed dyadic analysis model has a series of limitations, some related to its formulation and others associated with its application. One of the main limitations of applying the analysis model is the minimal use of triangulation, namely that the analysis lacks at this point a more active engagement with other data sources. This limitation can be overcome in future research by using other methods. One direction could be applying content analysis or document analysis of materials produced in the Andean subregion states. At the time of the research, this was difficult as I could not identify complete digital media or institutional archives, for instance, that would provide enough data for analysis. The model could also be improved by conducting interviews with experts, aiming at their perceptions regarding inter-regional relations. At the time of the research, the lack of access to experts from the subregion represented an obstacle to advancing this approach. Another limitation concerns the selection of documents for analysis which, although relevant, could be complemented with other sources. This limitation, however, can only be overcome by opening up to other forms of discourse manifestation beyond official texts, but it also requires adapting the broader framework of the CDA model adopted in this study. Despite the limitations, the dyadic analysis model remains relevant and can be refined and applied to other cases, with the caveat that it is most likely easier to adapt to unilaterally produced documents (such as strategies). Otherwise, in the case of jointly developed documents, a solid analysis of the perspectives brought by each side is needed.

Finally, postcolonialism and the postcolonial agenda regarding normative power open several study directions, especially after the decade-long debates that led to the "arrival" (Manners 2024) of normative power in planetary politics and the possibilities of direct engagement with the "postcolonial Other" and with the knowledge produced from the other side of Eurocentrism. This work contributes to advancing these agendas.

Sources

- Briceño Ruiz, Jose. 2018. „El estudio de la integración regional y del regionalismo en América Latina: entre la influencia europea y el pensamiento propio”. *Analisis Politico* 31 (September):49–74. <https://doi.org/10.15446/anpol.v31n94.78239>.
- CAOI. 2009. „Pueblos Indígenas andinos no reconocen TLC con la Unión Europe”. *Enlazando Alternativas | Red Birregional UE-ALC*, 21st September 2009. <https://enlazandoalternativas.tni.org/spip1ac8.html?article512>.
- Fairclough, Norman. 2001. *Language and Power*. London ; New York: Routledge.
- Fritz, Thomas. 2010. „The Second Conquest. The EU Free Trade Agreement with Colombia and Peru”. Berlin & Amsterdam: Forschungs- und Dokumentationszentrum Chile-Lateinamerika și Transnational Institute. https://www.tni.org/files/download/Fritz-2010_The%20Second%20Conquest_Colombia-Peru-EU-FTA.pdf.
- Manners, Ian. 2024. „Arrival of Normative Power in Planetary Politics”. *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 62 (3): 825–44. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcms.13505>.
- Regional Strategy: Andean Community of Nations, 2002-2006. 2001. https://aei.pitt.edu/38359/1/Andean_strategy_2002_2006.pdf
- Seth, Sanjay. 2000. „A‘Postcolonial World’?” În *Contending Images of World Politics?*, ediție de Greg Fry și Jacinta O’Hagan. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.