



Colonial karma? Identity and failed postcolonial reconciliation in Europe

Understanding ontological insecurity as shaped by
narratives of colonial societal beliefs

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Abstract

Following postcolonial thought, this thesis argues that colonialism can be reconceptualized as an identity conflict. Consequentially, reconciliation theories concerned with identity creation and societal beliefs can be applied to better understand postcolonial relations. Through a discussion of sociopsychological reconciliation and ontological (in)security, this thesis discusses perceived insecurity in Europe as due to remaining narratives of colonial societal beliefs that shape European ideas of self and other. An illustrative comparative case study of the United Kingdom and Sweden, using narrative analysis on migration discourse, election manifestos, and secondary school textbooks, shows how dominant narratives of self, other, and relationships build on a European identity of neutrality, morality, and righteousness. Connected to previous research on sociopsychological reconciliation, this thesis finds that the narrative tends to depoliticize past atrocities and present colonialism as part of a neutral European past, which is insufficient to further reconciliatory tools such as truth and justice and reconstructing self-identity. While some narratives do propose reconciliatory measures, the dominant narrative is one of protecting European values against the other – leading to perceived insecurity of self when globalization and migration have brought multiculturalism to Europe.

Keywords: postcolonialism, European identity, sociopsychological reconciliation, ontological security, narrative analysis

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1 Introduction

As Eurocentrism has shaped much academic development in international relations and security studies, critical scholars with a postcolonial perspective and conviction have spent much time scrutinizing and deconstructing dominant concepts and theories built upon Eurocentric understandings. The perception of Europe and the so-called ‘West’ as a self-generating, developed endpoint of modernization has for much too long been taken for granted as an objective fact rather than acknowledged as a normative perspective (Barkawi and Laffey, 2006:331–333).

This thesis aims to understand present-day insecurities in a Europe held together by ideas and narratives founded on a colonial logic of moral superiority – when previously colonial subjects have moved into Europe. By understanding colonialism as an identity conflict, a discussion of dimensions of sociopsychological reconciliation can provide new perspectives on the heightened insecurity in Europe. Postcolonial thought widely accepts that European identity is shaped mainly through its relation to its others, not the least the former colonies of Europe (Al-Rodhan et al., 2011; Said, 1978; Mir, 2019), through which progress, rationality, and ideology are contrasted. Even so-called progressive strands of research, such as human security and critical approaches, are often still based on emancipation, in which Western ideas are conceived as progressive and morally superior (Barkawi and Laffey, 2006:347, 350).

With globalizing mechanisms merging previously foreign places, people, and perspectives into our everyday lives, this thesis argues that incomplete, or even a lack of, sociopsychological reconciliation on behalf of the perpetrator of

colonialism contributes to the perceived insecurity of identity in Europe. As this heightened level of anxiety has been made visible through more xenophobic and hostile responses to immigrants and non-white Europeans, this thesis hopes to discuss how these underlying societal beliefs are recreated and open new paths to create peaceful relations and postcolonial identities.

1.1 Research problem

In decolonizing the concept of war, Barkawi argues that there is a need to critically consider the Eurocentric foundation of political and social categories and discourses; for instance, by scrutinizing the categories of war and peace, which are based on Western and European experiences (Barkawi, 2016:200). This binary has been criticized before, for instance, by scholars studying different categories of violence and repression and discussing positive and negative peace. Hull, however, points out how “the colonial situation itself was identical to war” (Hull, 2005:332), which this thesis takes a step further, by analyzing the societal beliefs that were shaped by the conflict and how post-conflict developments and reconciliation are creating the present. By not accepting colonialism as simply a historical era and reconceptualizing it as an identity conflict, insecurity in Europe, and its causes, can be better understood.

While discussions of postcolonial reconciliation are prevalent in the context of settler-colonial states, where reconciliation between the indigenous population and the settler state has been a pressing issue for generations, less consideration has been devoted to the sociopsychological reconciliation between colonizer and colonized where the two have not continued to live side by side. In states which have won their independence from colonial powers, reconciliation is often approached more as an in-state concern between various ethnic groups or competing religions, rather than in relation to the former colonizer, or is focused

on public apologies and improving political relationships – not on changing relationships and perceptions on a societal level.

When migration routes have brought Europe's former colonial subjects into Europe to a more considerable extent, scholars have discussed new trends of securitization, ontological insecurity, and the rise of the far-right, as consequences of globalization and a multicultural Europe (Kinnvall, 2016). This thesis builds on the premise that European identity is still built on its others, and follows the thought that identity is not only the outcome of group-making practices but also reflexive in determining the very same practices (Kinnvall and Nesbitt-Larking, 2011:5). Therefore, the constituting mechanisms and ideas hindering reconciliation must be understood to change the way insecurity is created in Europe based on its others and to move forward in restructuring relationship with other parts of the world, as well as creating a peaceful postcolonial society in Europe.

Aiming at theoretical advancements, a postcolonial discussion diverging from the fields of ontological insecurity and sociopsychological reconciliation is the primary purpose of the thesis. A comparative case study of narratives aims to illustrate how the lack of postcolonial sociopsychological reconciliation is shaping European perceptions and narratives of itself, others, and insecurity, and – to this day – hindering moving beyond Eurocentrism and white saviors in its relationships with others. First, narratives within migration discourse in Swedish and British media during the so-called 'refugee crises' of 2015-2016 have been analyzed in relation to self-assertion and othering. Second, election manifestos of the larger political parties in Sweden and the UK for the most recent parliamentary election have served as more static material on self-narration. Third, inspired by studies of narratives in post-conflict societies, secondary school history literature has been analyzed to deepen the discussion of colonial societal beliefs and reconciliation. Much scholarly attention has been devoted to the

influence of colonialism on the identities and cultures of former colonized – less so on the influence of colonialism on the colonizers and their societies.

1.2 Research question

How can insecurity in Europe be understood as part of an incomplete postcolonial reconciliation process?

Guiding questions for the analysis are

What narratives of self and others are present in migration discourses in Sweden and the United Kingdom during 2015 and 2016?

What narratives of self and others are present in election manifestos in Sweden and the United Kingdom during 2018 and 2019?

What narratives of colonialism, self, and others are prevalent in secondary school history literature in Sweden and the United Kingdom in 2022?

1.3 Outline of the study

Starting with background, chapter 2 will establish the context of the study. The following theory section, chapter 3, is quite extensive and separated into four parts to facilitate the reading. The last part of chapter 3 presents some previous research relevant to contextualizing the sample selection for the analysis and positions this study in multiple research fields. Chapter 4 develops the study's methodology and presents the material, which in chapter 5 is analyzed and structured into themes based on the theoretical argument made in chapter 3. Lastly, in chapter 6, the study ends with a discussion and some concluding remarks, including recommendations for future research.

2 Background

Before diving into theory, this brief chapter sets the stage with historical developments and Europe's present challenges. Starting with European imperialism, it gives an overview of British and Swedish colonialism and the current state of the populations, and their sentiments that have warranted this scholarly interest.

2.1 European colonization and decolonization

During the colonial era, ranging from ca 1500 to 1960, all but five countries were impacted by European colonization and imperial ambitions (Fisher, 2015). While the last colony gained its formal independence a few decades ago, the imperial colonialization by European countries has had lasting implications not only on the formerly colonized states and peoples but on Europe and present-day relations and identities. The political, cultural, and social persistence of the colonial condition has been argued to underline the fabric of modernity in European societies – shaped by, and built upon, European racism (Gutiérrez Rodríguez, 2018:20–21).

While cross-world travels and excursions have originated from various civilizations throughout history, systematic European colonialization started when the first colonies were established in Northern and Southern America in the 1500-1600s and then gradually covered the world. Therefore, postcolonial independence movements range from colonies forming the United States of America in the late 1700s, to the independence wars and revolutions in Northern Africa in the 1960s, to Hong Kong becoming independent in 1997. Further, decolonial movements are still present in the cases of settler-colonial states, in which coloniality is still unfolding and directly affects the indigenous populations (Young, 2020). In general, however, when discussing imperialism as a historical

trajectory, it has been argued that imperialism exported racism and Eurocentric ideas of modernity and development to other parts of the world (Gutiérrez Rodríguez, 2018:21), for instance, by justifying colonial violence and structure in discourses of the ‘civilizing mission’ (Fekete, 2019:164). While Britain and France are the most recent prominent colonizers, other European countries, such as Belgium, Portugal, the Netherlands, Germany, and Italy, all had significant colonies at the turn of the 20th century (Beauchamp, 2015). A key observation should be noted in the aspect of colonial difference; each colonized and colonizing country has its own experience of colonialization, which cannot be generalized across the board. However, colonialism as ideology, physical dominance, hegemony over a political organization, etc., with the establishment of Eurocentric values and disciplines as superior (Young, 2020), could be argued to be common traits of colonialism in its broad sense as an identity conflict. As this study uses the UK and Sweden as illustrative examples, a brief overview of their respective ties to colonialism follows below.

2.1.1 The British Empire

The term ‘British Empire’ has been used to describe the colonies, territories, and protectorates under formal British influence starting in the 16th century. Discussed as four phases, British Empire has ranged from the first Empire of American colonies, to the second based on territorial and profitable trade expansion in South Asia, to the third establishing the white base of settler colonies forming the original Commonwealth, to the fourth in which Africa and South-East Asia became vital to Britain’s economy (Jackson, 2013:71–72). In the 19th century, the Empire had developed towards a systematic approach of discipline and administrative pressure, steered by the Colonial Office in London. At the turn of the 20th century, more than 25% of the world’s population were part of the British Empire (Britannica, 2022), much due to an increased pace of colonization and a heightened concern to maintain Britain’s superior position in the world (Jackson, 2013:93). There is a growing perception that the Empire sustained itself for so

long because of the model of state violence being presented as liberal reform. From a scholarly point of view, it is striking that many accounts that have led to the dominant understanding of the colonial experience under Britain come from Western, white eyes – i.e., from missionaries, administrators, and travelers (Khilnani, 2022), which undoubtedly taints the narrative of what British colonialism was.

Increasingly, research has revealed the violent underpinnings of the British colonial legacy, with Elkins, among others, piecing together declassified documents and communication to deconstruct and re-narrate the whitewashed history that has been presented to the public (Duffy, 2015; Khilnani, 2022). A repertoire of suppression, torture, and imperial legal impunity made maintaining and controlling such vast territories possible; policies that tended to stay behind even after the British formally left (Khilnani, 2022). Notably, several colonies of Britain enforced emergency laws targeting indigenous peoples after attempted insurgencies long before independence. Duffy exemplifies this by pointing to the case of Kenya, in which so-called enemies of the crown who did not “demonstrate loyalty” were detained in a network of camps. Besides direct physical violence, colonial investments grew immensely during the colonial era while forcing indigenous people away from profitable markets (Duffy, 2015:490–491). While these researchers have attempted to shed academic light on colonial history, there could be a growing public awareness in the UK of colonial history. As recently as 2021, the UK government rejected a petition with over 260 000 signatories that suggested compulsory lessons on Empire to solve the issue of the curriculum failing to educate students about Britain’s role in colonization (Merrick, 2021).

The reasons for the dismantling of the British Empire are debated and likely to vary across such a timeline and geographical span. Elkins has argued in favor of liberal imperialism finally culminating in calculations on a high policy level regarding the benefits of pursuing influence rather than direct control. At the same time, Khilnani points to the vast number of protests, nonviolent mobilization,

nationalist movements, non-cooperation, and backlash effects from excessive violence, forcing Britain to make concessions (Khilnani, 2022). British decolonization started after two economically devastating world wars, with South Asia and Palestine, and then unfolded over the following decades. Jackson points to the environment no longer being permissive; economically, morally, practically, and internationally – Empire grew unviable. Nonetheless, Britain was not abandoning its ambitions to influence other parts of the world, and the Empire swiftly turned into a Commonwealth led by the UK, a sphere of Western authority through which former colonies remained tied to Britain (Jackson, 2013:97–99).

2.1.2 Swedish colonies

While Sweden made some futile attempts at joining the European colonization race, through the trade posting Cabo Corso on the North African coastline, St. Barthélemy in the Pacific, and New Sweden in North America, Swedish external colonization has been described as somewhat irrelevant and almost a failure. This later allowed for a narrative of Sweden as a state without a violent colonial past, which could position itself in favor of the states gaining their independence. However, a growing body of literature has investigated the internal colonization of Sápmi, ascertaining that the Swedish crown established colonial control over Sámi areas in the North of Scandinavia at the end of the 16th century. This expansion has been argued explicitly comparable to European colonialism elsewhere. For instance, Sweden contributed exotifying imagery of the Sámi and their culture to the colonial imaginary, which was shared within a pan-European colonial culture (Fur & Hennessey 2020:376–379). Sámi people were forcefully moved and assimilated, and racial biologists conducted extensive documentation and examinations to establish the Sámi as a lower standing race to the Swedes (Össbo, 2020:430–431).

Scholars have further posited that the Sápmi – Sweden relationship should not be understood as postcolonial, but rather still as settler-colonial. However, narratives

of the indigenous history play into creating a perception of a colonial past and a postcolonial present, despite the settler-colonial situation. Swedish and Norwegian border agreements still regulate the rights and movements of the nomadic Sámi, and although the Sámi have their own political and legislative body, it is secondary to the national parliament (Össbo, 2020:430, 434). A recent example of conflict between the Swedish state and Sápmi concerns the rights to conduct mining in Gállok, which the Sámi themselves, as well as organizations such as Amnesty International, UNESCO, and the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency, have stated has limited economic bearing but risk lasting damage to Sámi culture and nature. The state approved the mining rights in March 2022 while listing several adaptations that had been made to limit the damage to Sápmi. However, similar projects have been declined elsewhere globally, referencing The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Amnesty International Sweden, 2022).

As for many other settler-colonial societies where the colonizers remain among the indigenous population, various reconciliation processes have been proposed to heal the continuous trauma stemming from the situation. In Sweden, steps in this direction have just begun on a political level, but Össbo points out how these processes can also be used to justify the settler state's future actions if not carefully aimed at transforming the relationship into one of equal partnership. Education and knowledge have been argued to be instrumental for structural change and reconciliation, but research on elementary school curriculum shows that Sápmi knowledge remains marginalized (Össbo, 2020:438–439). The Swedish Church publicly apologized in 2021 for the first time for the part the Church played in the forced assimilation and dehumanization of Sámi people over a long time, acknowledging its normative role, responsibility, and guilt (Svenska Kyrkan, 2021).

However, Sweden's role in European colonialism also entails culturally contributing to the ideology of European superiority and modernity. Swedish

scholars of racial biology and Swedes partaking in European colonial excursions and settlements – for instance, mercenaries, missionaries, and administrators in Belgian Congo and settler Swedes in North America – have all contributed to an idea of Sweden as part of the European sphere (Fur and Hennessey, 2020:380–382). Further, the connections to Eurocentrism and perceptions of modernity versus others have more profound implications. The Swedish idea of homogeneity has been instrumental in building its welfare state, self-image, and the perception of ‘Swedishness’ as essentialized modernity. Swedes consider themselves modern and free of cultural ties, in contrast to culturally tied immigrants. The superior idea of modernity is also reflected in the Swedish belief that their values are neutral and that all countries could or should adopt them (Geugjes, 2021:25–28). Therefore, also noting the rather interwoven history of societies in the North of Sweden, attempts to decolonize Sápmi differ from the decolonization of external colonies kept for resource extraction (Össbo, 2020: 443) and challenges Sweden’s self-image as that of a humanitarian, peace-loving state.

2.2 Europe today

Today’s Europe is vastly multicultural compared to the Europe that set out on sea and land to imperialize. Forces such as globalization, migration routes, and the European Union have both blurred the lines of Europe and fortified it against the world. Fekete argues that colonialism has left a mark on so-called modern approaches to migration management, in which the economic interests and needs of the state take precedence in policy-shaping (Fekete, 2019:164). Gutiérrez Rodríguez further states that European nation-states were established based on racial classifications, which have been maintained throughout the 19th century through regulation and control of migration. The colonial system created and upheld a global structure of labor, which intersected with creating historical identities, social roles, and geopolitics. These fundamental axes of modern hierarchy between people and states persisted even after the abolishment of

formal colonialism (Gutiérrez Rodríguez, 2018:20). While European identity is often vaguely conceptualized, Mitzen has pointed to the European Union positing a civilizing identity in its relations to external parties – originating from a self-conception regarding its relationship with, and treatment of, non-European others. As a collective identity, it is anchored in intra-European routines. While Mitzen posited some fifteen years ago that this did not necessitate a neocolonial EU (Mitzen 2006:275, 280), later developments have shown how the EU locates otherness externally; as inferior, unwanted, and in need of transformation and inclusion, and how the rejection of the civilizing mission becomes potentially threatening (Browning and McDonald, 2013:249) - echoing coloniality.

Most Europeans alive today never partook in direct colonialism themselves, but many benefit from and disregard the continued reproduction of normative superiority and institutionalized practices built by imperial norms. Migration is a central example through which an imperial discourse and security logic posits that populations of others must be protected for our own and their sakes; the belief of moral responsibility and responsibility serving as justification for actions and practices (Jabri, 2016:28). For instance, in 2011, both French and Danish borders closed due to non-European migrants being securitized as illegal. In the French case, they were perceived as a threat to the sense of belonging, while in Denmark, a cosmopolitan rhetoric was maintained of Denmark as a protector of morality and law, as they claimed to close borders to hinder vulnerable persons from human trafficking (Scuzzarello and Kinnvall, 2013:99, 101).

2.2.1 Who is European? Diversity in Sweden and the UK

Today, 23 million non-EU citizens live in the EU¹. Sweden registered a percentile of 19,7 foreign-born population, not counting asylum seekers. Among the top countries of origin are Syria, Iraq, Finland, Poland, Iran, Somalia, and the Balkan

¹ As of 1/1/2020

countries (SCB, 2021a), with 11,3% of the foreign-born population being born outside of Europe. While 33,5% of the population has a ‘foreign background’² (SCB, 2021b), this measurement does not capture third-generation immigrants. The Sámi population in Sweden is self-estimated to be around 20 000 – 40 000 (Sametinget, 2021). It is sufficient to draw the conclusion that significant diversity exists in Sweden, which has previously been known for its liberal immigration policies.

This diversity is not uncontested; growing anti-immigration sentiments and discourses have been made explicit by the rise of nationalistic parties and politics. Not the least is this reflected by the Swedish Democrats’ entry into parliament in 2010 and their rise to being the third largest political party in the 2018 elections. The Swedish case has been a popular example in international media since a drastic turn was made in both policy and discourse after taking in over 160 000 refugees in 2015. An article titled *‘Even Sweden Doesn’t Want Migrants Anymore’*, concluded that “Over the last 20 years, an ancient and homogeneous culture subjected itself – without any prior intention or even public debate – to a demographic transformation of breathtaking proportions” (Traub, 2021). However, prior research on attitudes in 2014 showed that resistance towards accepting refugees had decreased over the last decades, with 4 out of 5 being of the view that immigrants should be made ‘Swedish’ (Demker, 2016:189–190) – indicating that some level of assimilation was favored.

In the UK, 14% of the resident population in 2020 were non-UK-born or non-British nationals. Of these, 9% were non-EU. The most common countries of origin were India, Poland, Pakistan, Ireland, and Romania (Office for National Statistics – Annual Population Survey, 2021). The attitudes on migration have been in the spotlight, not least connected to Brexit. In 2019, 44% favored reducing immigration to Britain, while 39% would prefer it to stay at the same

² By SCB classified as at least one parent being born outside of Sweden

level. The British Election Study has studied public opinion on immigration since 1964, when concerns were first rising about ‘New Commonwealth’ immigration. Notably, in its first years, so-called “colored” respondents were not included in the sample. The opposition can be shown to have remained relatively high, from over 80% until the 1980s to 66%³ in the British Election Study 2017. European Social Survey records much lower numbers, around 26-32%⁴ between 2016-2018, but also phrases the question differently and asking whether immigrants of another ethnicity should be allowed to live in the UK (The Migration Observatory, 2020).

The Migration Observatory notes that Brits distinguish between immigrants through what has been called an ethnic hierarchy, where persons who are, for instance, white, English-speaking, and Christians are preferred, while non-white persons, non-Europeans, or Muslims are the least preferred. Skill level is also a factor (The Migration Observatory, 2020). This matches well with the understanding that European migration regulation is locked in the logic of ‘othering’, through which migrants are ordered in social classification along colonial racial hierarchies and perceived to be, increasingly, fundamentally different, and inferior. The mere presence of former colonial subjects within Europe challenges the myth of a self-sufficient and cut-off Europe (Gutiérrez Rodríguez, 2018:24). The UK immigration policy has also shifted over the years, from a Commonwealth approach in which subjects of the Empire were stated to be equally British to an approach favoring skilled immigration and devaluing the right of former colonies (Somerville and Walsh, 2021). Amin argues that citizenship in the UK is still being built on normative whiteness, although local negotiations and encounters in highly diverse areas have pointed to the reconciling effects of connecting over group lines (Amin, 2002:959–960).

³ Yes/No answers to “Do you think that too many immigrants have been let into this country or not?” (The Migration Observatory 2020)

⁴ Combined responses of “None” and “A few” to “Allow immigrants of a different race/ethnicity to come and live in the UK” (The Migration Observatory 2020)

3 Theory

This section makes the case that the insecurity currently experienced in Europe, visible through rising far-right and xenophobic political parties, polarization, and migration discourses, is the consequence of a lack of sociopsychological postcolonial reconciliation. The first section will draw upon key postcolonial thought in understanding contemporary European identity as shaped by colonial conflict and collective societal beliefs of Europe. The second section argues that European colonialism can be read as an identity conflict and discusses various takes on reconciliation in relation to colonialism. The third section ties together the argument by discussing how ontological (in)security can be understood as being recreated through remaining colonial societal beliefs and perceptions of the other. Lastly, some previous research is presented to tie over to the empirical chapters.

3.1 Conceptualizing Europe – postcolonial and post-conflict

3.1.1 Deconstructing the colonial legacy

Furthering a relational approach to global relations from a postcolonial perspective, Europe is understood as developing in tandem with its former colonies (Barkawi and Laffey, 2006:349); equally as shaped by being colonizers as the former colonized are by having been colonized. Following Hall (2011:4–5) in understanding identities as being shaped within specific discourses, produced in institutional and historical sites, and emerging from power dynamics, the postcolonial identity of Europe could be argued to be the product of its constructed differences and exclusions; of its margins. Wrapped in the narrative of modernity, as understood by Robins, the so-called ‘West’ has distinguished

itself through polarizing the world into enlightened versus benighted, in which the other has been alienized as pre-modern and immobile. Through these discourses, Europe “closed itself ... to the reality of these other cultures” (Robins, 2011:62).

Similar lines of thought have been influential in studies of globalization, in which, for instance, Appadurai used five different conceptual landscapes to analyze global flows. For this thesis, the concept of ideoscapes is the most relevant, pointing to the fluid and irregular structure of imaginaries, ideologies, and ideas prominent in shaping perceptions of individuals and groups (Appadurai, 1996:33). As understood by Steger & James, Appadurai argues that the imaginaries flowing through globalization mechanisms constitute a new basis for identity and subjectivity, which is no longer anchored only in nation-states or traditional tribes (Steger and James, 2019:10). Drawing on this, one can understand the basis of European identity as irregular imaginaries and ideas based on collective memory, shaping perceptions of self and others. Reasoning further, Mir has argued in favor of understanding how these ideas are interpreted through local contexts, pointing at how the Enlightenment discourse is influencing postcolonial states. He proposed that supraterritoriality should be understood as imagined worlds (Mir, 2019:42–44, 49), not unlike the idea of ideoscapes. Scholte, among others, has argued for understanding globalization as a force that is deterritorializing culture and identity through supraterritorial changes in social space. He argued that, while having the potential to emphasize any dominant discourse, the mechanism is currently promoting westernization, universalism, and ideas of modernity through social influencing forces (Scholte, 2009:57–61, 77, 210) – normalizing the Western imaginary as dominant and normative.

Attempting to decenter the West, an outside-in perspective has been furthered to discuss how Europe is shaped by its encounters and others, to counter its image of being contained and self-generating (Weiss and Hanssen, 2015:29). Prominent postcolonial thinkers, such as Said, have argued that the European imaginary is defined by its contrasts, most notably its construction of the ‘Orient’ – the place of

its oldest colonies – to preserve a self-image of European identity as the desirable status quo; virtuous, rational, etc. Said argued that the British and the French shared intellectual power in constructing a set of ideas and values that constituted the Oriental other (Said, 1978:9, 48–49) and subsequently what constituted Europeanness. Western rationalism, as imposed on the rest of the world, has been argued to discount and devalue knowledge deriving from people of color and the Global South, why formerly colonized people continue to strive for the Western ideas of progress (Young, 2020).

Therefore, decolonizing knowledge production has been a vital interest of those attempting to move beyond colonialism (Young, 2020). As part of this, deconstructing and reconceptualizing theoretical concepts and definitions has been one way to undo Eurocentric assumptions in academia. Seth, for instance, points to the representations of the West's history of development as a cornerstone in development discourse, as proof that progress has taken place, and as a source of suggested blueprints on how development should proceed. Scrutinizing this narrative, he shows how the past of Europe is depoliticized, while the violence that made the development of Europe possible is part of the explanation for the political present in so-called development countries (Seth, 2009:377). Similarly, Barkawi has emphasized how the portrayal of Western history is disconnected from the rest of the world, both normalizing and depoliticizing perceptions originating from Europe. These narratives have created an assumption of Europe playing a neutral role in the world, having a moral high ground, while structural repression through imperial force has shaped relationships and ideas (Barkawi, 2016:199–200, 205; Barkawi and Laffey, 2006:336, 341). Building on Barkawi's reconceptualization of the war-peace dichotomy enables an analysis of colonialism and imperialism as conflicts. While this is not controversial in critical academic circles, the further implications for world politics and contemporary identities might be.

3.1.2 European identity and collective memory

The collective legacy of the colonizers, as such, is closely intertwined with the European consciousness and its culture, and as Sartre proposed in the age of postcolonial independence movements: decolonization of minds is a necessity for moving forward. While in the preface of Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*, he argued in favor of rather violent methods, he also pointed to the uncomfortable but crucial moment in decolonizing identity, of deconstructing the discourse of Europe's humanism and recognizing it as an ideology that justifies aggression and oppression (Sartre, 1961:9–12). The shared psychological context of having a colonizing history has been argued by Halperin et al. to create a shared repertoire of beliefs, emotions, and psychological patterns (Halperin et al., 2010:62), together forming the societal beliefs of the European ideoscape. Indeed, many have argued that current stereotypes of non-Europeans draw upon colonial racism and Orientalism, in which migrants originating outside of Europe are still perceived as subordinate subjects. Met with paternalistic structures and seen as threatening the civilization (Schilling, 2015:432), asylum seekers could be argued to be re-colonized in their encounter with Europe in a continuity of coloniality that serves the humanitarian cause of white Western states (Parashar, 2016:374).

When understanding the collective memory of Europe to be based on self-confidence from defining itself against the non-European other through expansion and civilizationalism, the globalizing patterns of the present can be understood as posing as an obstacle to status quo. As the collective memory does not account for the influences of other regions in shaping Europe's traditions and culture (but instead sees itself as self-sufficient), its central ideas are now being challenged (Robins, 2011:80–81). Following Kinnvall in understanding Europe as a postcolonial space, in which colonialism is still a part of the European imaginary at the same time as former postcolonial subjects enter Europe to a greater extent, rising narratives of security and survival play into not only physical safety but a perception of what she calls the "cultural survival of Europe" (Kinnvall,

2016:153). Indeed, many scholars have pointed to the continuation of colonial mentalities long after colonialism ended on paper. By turning the spotlight back to the colonizers, they have shed light on the pervasive colonial culture as partly a pan-European mentality. Schilling proposes thinking about postcolonialism “as a collective psychological process of ‘working through’” (Schilling, 2015:428), which she anchors in a temporal sense, proposing three stages; reliving the loss, trying to forget, and taking responsibility and critically engaging with history – in many ways similar stages to individual grief (Schilling, 2015:427–428, 434).

3.1.3 Working through – postcolonial reconciliation

Much of the scholarly attention in postcolonial studies has been focused on the struggle of postcolonial states in breaking free from European or Western influence, whether it be concerning economic dependence or freeing the mind. There is a normative commitment within postcolonial theory to engage subaltern voices, re-establish balance in postcolonial relationships and illuminate how colonial history has shaped present power relations. Tomicic and Berardi have argued that postcolonial theory could greatly benefit from new theoretical insights by anchoring it within sociopsychology. As a perspective in the social psychology field, they argue that postcolonialism has been relatively marginal, but propose that cross-fertilization would enable thoughtful unpacking of the role of colonial discourse and legacy in making postcolonial subjects and understanding the pervasive racism in society (Tomicic and Berardi, 2018:152–154). Bobowik et al. state that “the link between colonialism and present-day relations between cultural majorities and minorities has been constantly and repeatedly overlooked, ignored, or denied” (Bobowik et al., 2018:2). Previous research on colonialism in social psychology has centered on collective memories/social representations and social identity formation, group-based emotions as factors in societies dealing with the past, and colonial mentality; the lasting influence of colonialism on the formerly colonized (Volpato and Licata, 2010:6). Tomicic and Berardi, however, point to the significant role cultural identity plays as an ontological orientation in

postcolonialism, and note how postcolonialists tend to view identities not as nationally bound but multiple and in a constant process of change, noting this as a common thread between the fields (Tomicic and Berardi, 2018:154–157).

To advance this field, it would also be fruitful to consider the theoretical advances of sociopsychological reconciliation, another field concerned with the impact of societal beliefs and collective memory and emotions on present-day intergroup relations. While some research has been done on reconciliation in relation to the postcolonial, attention has been angled toward settler-colonial contexts, where indigenous populations and settlers have lived side by side (Allpress et al., 2010; Sibley, 2010; Verdeja, 2017), towards political figures' apologies (Bentley, 2015), levels of collective guilt and shame in individual communities (Bonnot et al., 2016; Figueiredo et al., 2010; Leone and Mastrovito, 2010; Licata and Klein, 2010), and the impact of representations, imaginary and collective memory in multicultural Europe (Bobowik et al., 2018; Volpato and Licata, 2010). It is this last strand of research that this thesis argues bridges over to the field of reconciliation in identity conflicts.

3.2 Reconciling postcolonial relations and identities

3.2.1 Colonialism as an identity conflict

Identity conflicts have received widespread attention in peace and conflict studies, security studies, IR in general, and the field of psychology – not only are their resolutions often complicated and entangled in a variety of issues, but they are also accompanied by sociopsychological dynamics that likely take decades to resolve. They have been discussed in the context of the changing war landscape, in which asymmetrical conflicts, non-state actors, and values are growing more present, and are often brought up in relation to protracted intrastate conflicts involving ethnic or religious groups. In relation to colonialism, they have been referenced as consequences of European powers' insensitive borders drawn at the

Berlin conference, effectively leading to multiple communities being split or grouped in the Westphalian state system forced upon them. However, as it has received less attention as a conflict outside postcolonial advances, colonialism itself has previously not been considered an identity conflict.

Considering the above and connecting back to Hull's and Barkawi's reading of colonialism as a conflict, one could note that the explanation for this can be credited to the Eurocentric conceptualizations of conflict, and war, more specifically. As studies of war originated, it was centered on conflict in a Clausewitzian sense as a continuation of politics with other means, focused on states and the rules of war – distinguishing between civilians and combatants, clear goals; victory and defeat, honoring international law. As Barkawi notes, war has been understood as a clearly distinguishable, exceptional disruption to peace (Barkawi, 2016:201–202). It is since the critical turns brought in new security referents and began the analysis of a multitude of layers of violence, that minority-majority relationships and other ways to wage conflict have been gaining new attention in academia. Some have argued for new epistemological orientations (for instance, post-structural studies), and others have questioned the ontology of previous hegemonic thought traditions – bringing in normative questions, new security definitions, questioning dominant perceptions of peace and conflict, etc. Using these rethought definitions of conflict, one must consider how world events seen as exploration or trade developments in the European context could be read as conflict.

In decolonizing war, Barkawi notes how European concepts of nation-state formations have informed the categorizations of war and peace. Following Hull, he points to how the colonial situation instead could be read as permanent war, in which battle/repression makes a more relevant distinction – arguing that the threat of force has shaped the relationship between the global north and south after direct non-reciprocated violence shaded into coercion and suppression (Barkawi, 2016:205). Demmers has argued that a protracted sense of groupness can often be

the consequence of violent conflict rather than the cause, and this thesis follows her lead in noting that conflict waging organizations have to be separated from the collectives they claim to represent (Demmers, 2017:25), and who are influenced by their narratives. Nonetheless, a constructivist take on social identity notes the social processes of identification and ascription, creating an imagined community based on social interaction and developing an “emotional and self-evident frame of reference” (Demmers, 2017:28, 33). Therefore, an identity conflict is centered around the subjective perceptions of self and others and requires reconciliation beyond material conflict resolution – it requires tackling identity formation and the narratives upon which it is built (Auerbach, 2009:294).

This security perspective – focused on identity – follows an ontology concerned with social productions, shining a light on conflicts beyond so-called ‘hard’ military threats (Jarvis and Holland, 2015:32–33). This does not mean that a conflict does not have material aspects that influence people’s physical insecurity but entails that it is not reconciled when direct violence ends. While many identity conflicts are also considered intractable, as in perceived as irresolvable and existential, colonialism has to a certain extent been ‘solved’ politically – the case being made is that it is the reconciliation of peoples that has been lacking. Security and identity, in this respect, are closely linked as cultural, social, and discursive constructions. Jarvis and Holland argue that perceptions of security are as much about survival as they are about whom we are – as a process of meaning-making, often constructed on binaries of others (Jarvis and Holland, 2015:113–115). Understanding colonialism, therefore, as an identity conflict, entails focusing on the colonial societal beliefs that recreate othering and insecurity and acknowledging how long-lasting imperialism has impacted the identities of both colonized and colonizers. The case has been made earlier in 3.1 that European perceptions of the other are overwhelmingly built through colonial encounters and therefore recreating the security/identity linkage in the present. However, recalling that these are socially constructed – identity perceptions can change. Inspired by Bar-Tal’s research on societal beliefs and representations and the

literature on identity-building narratives, this thesis turns to sociopsychological reconciliation to tackle the ontological insecurity of Europe.

To reiterate, this thesis makes the case that not only was colonialism a conflict; it was an identity conflict, from which lack of sociopsychological reconciliation is causing contemporary ontological insecurity. While direct violence, requiring conflict resolution, has ended, structural and cultural violence remains embedded in a global society. Here it might be beneficial to note the very asymmetric level of this identity conflict, in which some might argue that it was not a conflict but rather oppression with genocidal tendencies. However, by understanding how this shaped collective memory and societal beliefs as an identity conflict, postcolonial reconciliation in the present and ongoing insecurities in the European population might be better understood.

3.2.2 Connecting identity conflict reconciliation to present Europe

Identity is widely accepted as a critical factor in so-called ‘thick’ reconciliation, influenced by theology and psychology and a process-oriented approach. This perspective is less about putting a check in a box and focuses on long-term relational change (Lederach, 1997:26–30; Småberg, 2017:307). Following Kriesberg’s and Rothstein’s conceptualization of identity conflict reconciliation, it can be understood as “a long and deep process which aims at radical changes in the hearts and minds of the communities involved” (as interpreted in Auerbach, 2009:292). Lederach, a highly influential reconciliation scholar, notes four elements of reconciliation: truth, mercy, justice, and peace. These are widely agreed upon, with some further arguing that change in conflictive ethos is a central component of the reconciliation process. In Bar-Tal’s understanding, this change comes from replacing societal goals, viewing both one’s in-group and adversary in a more balanced and heterogeneous way, and creating new beliefs

about the relationship between the two groups and what peace entails (as interpreted in Auerbach, 2009:292). However, postcolonial critique has been raised towards the heavy focus on forgiveness and therapeutic models within Western studies of reconciliation; Rouhana points at the rather Christian moral connotations reconciliation take in some studies and warns of the possible implications of overlooking group identities shaped by generations of conflict. Instead, he places focus on historical responsibility and social and political restructuring to transform relationships through psychological changes as well as social and political ones. He further notes that there must be a willingness to reconcile, illuminating that in asymmetric relationships, one side might have things to lose through taking reconciliation seriously (Rouhana, 2004:174–176, 182–183).

Building on this, one might argue that ‘serious’ reconciliation has not been of interest to major European or Western powers, as the power asymmetry is currently working in their favor. However, it has been noted that the latest decades’ increase in terrorism and asymmetric warfare originating in non-Western parts of the world has increased the anxiety and fear of the ‘other’ in Europe and the West (see literature on securitization, such as Doty, 1998; Huysmans, 2000; McDonald, 2008; and new war and terrorism, such as Münkler et al., 2005). Following theories on social belief structures, Demmers points to how people use self-esteem-enhancing strategies when group comparison leads to psychological discomfort (Demmers, 2017:46). It has further been argued that psychological defenses reduce guilt and avoid shame post-conflict, as the mind strives for positive distinction. The same line of thought also notes that emotional orientations tend to reproduce if the root causes are not addressed (Staub, 2006:872–874). This might show that social and political restructuring of relationships has not been prioritized, and since the relationships are anchored on the same societal beliefs, sociopsychological reconciliation has not taken place to any significant extent.

In the reconciliation of identity conflicts, public discourse and narratives are often used to interpret societal beliefs and collective emotions, noting how collective memory and social representations are used to maintain identity and in-group/out-group perceptions after the formal conflict resolution – which in this case might be viewed as postcolonial independence. Reconciliation is viewed as a gradual process, as ideologies, identity markers, and cultures are entrenched in the fabric of society, and the building of a new sociopsychological repertoire that society members accept takes long after such a long-lasting conflict (Bar-Tal and Vered, 2016:249–250). There are numerous studies on school literature from, for instance, Bosnia-Herzegovina and former Yugoslavia (Bartulovic, 2008; Torsti, 2007; Troch, 2012), Cyprus (Papadakis, 2008), Northern Ireland (Hancock, 2014), and South Africa (Pingel, 2008), analyzing how the representations and narratives of conflict, identity, and memory differ in textbooks, and how these are deliberately used to shape national identity.

3.2.3 A continuum of colonial beliefs

In reference to sociopsychological change in societal beliefs, it is relevant to note both the relatively low degree of colonial apologies and reparations and the discussion of the development/aid dogma as a modern-day continuation based on similar beliefs as past colonialism. Bentley has shown how even official political apologies tend to persist in sanitizing or even glorifying colonial elements and, importantly, tend to reaffirm the paternalistic discourse of the postcolonial relationship (Bentley, 2015:625). A wide range of studies has pointed to discourses and ideologies in Europe still echoing the *mission civilisatrice* narrative in their relationships with the rest of the world. Even the 1973 Copenhagen Declaration on European Identity builds on the civilizing mission, speaking of the responsibility of Europe in world affairs (Mitzen, 2006:271), and much of the concern with ethical foreign policies can be read in relation to how national identity is constructed (Jarvis and Holland, 2015:37). Concerning social representation, Jahoda, for instance, who analyses the European imaginary over

the colonial era, shows that after colonization ended, the representation of the other changed from barbaric/savage to the imagery of the other as “child-like, primitive, and lacking intelligence, morality, and emotional control” (Volpato and Licata, 2010:6). Studies have consistently shown the effects of these narratives and collective beliefs on perceptions of ethnic minorities as less competent (Volpato and Licata, 2010:6).

Here it is worth reiterating the tendency of European identity to make invisible the colonial and racialized order that has provided the basis for Europe’s self-realization, while continuously affirming its sense of difference (Bhambra, 2014:118) and promoting its humanitarian objectives. Connecting this to sociopsychological reconciliation, it has been argued that new narratives of the other must humanize the rival and recognize immoral acts within the in-group (Bar-Tal and Vered, 2016:250–251). One could argue that the narratives of European humanitarian action and responsibility in the world can be understood as a shift in the narrative of self and others from colonial times. However, the underlying societal beliefs of superiority do not seem to have changed significantly.

Taking seriously both the psychological and cultural processes which organize and reiterate identities, and having noted the historical trajectory of colonial discourses in melting together modernity/progress with structural oppression/exploitation (Cash and Kinnvall, 2017:267) – this thesis thus argues the ontological insecurity noted in Europe in the wake of globalization and a growing number of postcolonial subjects in Europe, could be understood as a consequence of incomplete, or even disregarded, postcolonial sociopsychological reconciliation.

3.3 Ontological insecurity in Europe

3.3.1 Anxiety due to identity

The foundation of the field of ontological (in)security was popularized through the work of Giddens, who described ontological security as a sense of shared reality, building on the foundations of societal perceptions of time, space, identity, and continuity that are taken for granted in everyday practices. Psychologically speaking for the individual, Giddens argues that the anchoring mechanisms of collective emotional orientations and social structures protect against the anxiety which could come from questioning our ‘being in the world’ (Giddens, 1991:37–38). Reliability in one’s surroundings and its components is argued central in feeling ontologically secure, and ontological insecurity is understood as having confidence in the continuity of one’s self-identity (Giddens, 1990:92). In contrast to traditional notions of security in International Relations, in which a change in power distribution could drive structural change, ontological security is security as being rather than security as survival. It is concerned with how the sense of self is secured against identity threats that produce anxiety. Building on the insights of Huysmans (1998) – that since ontological security rests on fear and an undefined sense of threat, it leads to anxiety when faced with strangers – Steele points to how a structural change in ontological security comes about through routinized critical moments that lead to change in self-identity, and later change in the routines of agents (Steele, 2008:51–52).

In relation to IR theory, studies on ontological security have focused on states and relationships between states, effectively problematizing dogmas of realist and liberal security conceptualizations. However, other scholars have built more upon sociological aspects and discussed how individuals and groups respond to uncertainty through identity constructions. Cash and Kinnvall point to the self being regarded as in constant motion in the latter strand of studies, referring to ‘security-as-becoming’, in which narratives, memories, and imagery become

social and emotional representations that groups ascribe senses of self and purpose. They further note how these can be used by elites and leaders to set boundaries and further a collective identity (Cash and Kinnvall, 2017:269) – not unlike the way narratives and collective memory are discussed in the reconciliation of identity conflicts.

3.3.2 Recreating an insecure European identity

There has been some scholarly attention directed at the ontological insecurities emerging from the current processes of what Kinnvall and Cash call the (re)bordering of cultures, communities, states, and, not the least, identities. In their discussion of postcolonial structures and practices, they argue that serious concern should be given to the ways ideas and perceptions are being recreated and framed through symbolic imaginaries and how these recreations influence imaginary communities as well as the imagination of security and secure futures (Cash and Kinnvall, 2017:267–269). In addition, recent research has illuminated how the ontological security of postcolonial states is dependent on how they situate themselves in relation to the Western other (Vieira, 2018), how host societies navigate the search for ontological security under sudden rise in immigration (Gazit, 2019), how diasporas navigate belonging and identity (Alakija, 2021), and how coloniality of power has shaped EU-Africa relations (Haastrup et al., 2021).

Connecting this argument to the previous sections on postcolonial societal beliefs and reconciliation, it could be argued that the critical moments in which the sense of identity is threatened have been growing in number while not leading to a fundamental change in the self-identity of Europe. Instead, Europe seems to be holding on to the reflexes and routines shaped through coloniality, effectively recreating its sense of insecurity. Cash and Kinnvall mention how the values, norms, and social structures that enabled imperialism are scrutinized and questioned with growing intensity today (Cash and Kinnvall, 2017:270), leading

to a loss of what many would call certainties in the European ideoscape. They note that this development and the efforts to hold on to past truths tend to create anxiety, confusion, and ontological insecurity, which in turn lead to attempts to uphold ideational and emotional borders against what is causing the anxiety (Cash and Kinnvall, 2017:270). At the state level, Steele argues that agents use narratives to shape the understanding of the nation-state and points to how helping other states might be understood as a behavior that fulfills self-identity needs. He notes how self-reflexivity at a state-level refers to both self-awareness – as in how states build on their past and present to imply who they are – and produce knowledge about the state. As such, foreign policy decisions of states in regard to humanitarian or so-called good state actions can be understood as ways to secure self-identity (Steele, 2008:148–150). In relation to this, in Rumelili's discussion of the EU's search for ontological security, she mentions how the EU's identity construction of Europe builds on the othering of its past; on establishing moral superiority by owning up to complicity in historical wrongs (Rumelili, 2018:290, 292). However, for sociopsychological reconciliation, much more is needed to alter these societal beliefs that seem to have found a somewhat different anchoring point. As Vieira points out, cultural ethnocentrism, along with the racism that provided logic to Western colonialism, survived post-independence through internalization in the minds of both parties and is alive today through present-day practices and perceptions (Vieira, 2018:152).

3.3.3 Meeting the other – migration into Europe

In the last few years, perceived insecurity in Europe has often been studied and connected to the refugee crisis of 2015, with research analyzing patterns of securitization, media discourses, and societal responses to a migration influx. Gazit argues that few pieces within the ontological security literature have dealt with the sociocultural mechanisms at work in the experience of losing and recreating ontological security when a society is faced with immigrants (Gazit, 2019:573). Kinnvall approached the topic in 2004, connecting it to globalization

and migration patterns, and discussing how security can be understood as a thick signifier in which structural relations are masked through security discourse and linked to identity mobilization. While globalization could have made it inherently difficult to consider identities as singular and harmonious, it challenges pre-existing definitions of collectives and identities as inequality grows and deterritorialization of time and space makes its way into people's daily lives. Kinnvall argues that the search for or reaffirming of a stable and collective identity is a coping mechanism to deal with globalization's effects. Approaching this through a thick signifier perspective entails analyzing what narratives shape the story of the self and others in order to unravel structural causes for experienced insecurity and existential anxiety (Kinnvall, 2004:742–745, 748). The effects of globalization could be argued to be most clearly noted in the case of migration – in the sense of disorientation for both arrivers and host communities. Gazit points to the loss of the familiar world, questioned identities, symbols, and frameworks of meaning, and to a search for alternative stable points of reference for securing one's identity. In this search, an exclusion discourse is constructed to make sense of the relationship with the stranger, through which the other is both made into an enemy and delegitimized (Gazit, 2019:575–576). Kinnvall quotes Kristeva to discuss how the other is constructed in our imaginary, although not even present, noting her suggestion that xenophobia and racism could be cured by recognition of “the foreigner in ourselves” (Kinnvall, 2004:753), i.e., moving beyond the identity built upon colonial concepts.

3.4 Previous research on self and other in Europe

3.4.1 Perceptions of self and other and the role of media

The colonial other was in the past defined through dichotomies between the civilized and ‘savages’, utilizing narratives of race, culture, ethnicity, and religion to apply value standards to distinguish the European from its subjects. Hellgren & Bereményi argue that racialization, thus, became central to how Europeans,

especially white Europeans, viewed themselves, the world, and their others, and that the European silence regarding race in the last decades has led to European states being able to posit themselves as non-racist while maintaining policies and perceptions in which Europeanness is assumed to be whiteness. They further point to the unreflective but persistent racism that this has led to, in which white people are considered more competent, preferable, and more European, which in turn influences the general living conditions for all people living in Europe (Hellgren and Bereményi, 2022:1–2). In terms of narratives and perceptions of the rest of the world, a common approach noted, for instance, in the UK, has been collectivization and quantification of stories and narratives emerging from ‘the other’, constructing a collective nature of conflicts and peoples from, e.g., the Middle East – stringing together countries such as Libya, Syria, and Bahrain as one space and location (Ozdora-Aksak et al., 2021:291).

The years 2015-16 are significant when discussing Europe’s relationship with its others and have warranted much scholarly interest. The vast number of refugees entering Europe, fleeing from conflict and war in Africa and the Middle East, have been explained as producing a ‘crisis’ in the normative white national population. Gutiérrez Rodríguez argues that this crisis reactivated colonial constructions of a racialized other and drew on racism to govern the ‘other’ in new ways within Europe. Media discourse on refugees is well researched and has been argued to play a sizeable normative role in shaping perceptions of immigrants (Gutiérrez Rodríguez, 2018:17–18), with significant research going into the analysis of representations and frames in major newspapers across Europe, as well as on social media. Changes during 2015 have been associated with critical events being broadcasted across the continent, such as the Paris terrorist attacks in November and the sexual assaults on New Year’s Eve in Cologne. Analysis of UK media frames indicated a shift during the latter half of 2015 from humanitarian frames towards securitization and frames of threat. Swedish media used the humanitarian frame and maintained positive framing to a greater extent than other European newspapers (Yantseva, 2020:3–4).

In relation to the shift in policy in European immigration politics, media construction of the crisis has been argued to be central to the sense-making of new policy directions. Research shows that the different constructions in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark led to policy implications. More extensive quantitative studies note that media coverage in Scandinavian countries generally took a less problem-oriented stance on immigration than in countries such as France, Germany, and the UK (Hagelund, 2020:6–7). Even prior to the refugee crisis, however, it should be noted that the UK and Sweden had different media discourses on migration, with Swedish media being more inclined to use terms such as ‘refugee’ or ‘asylum-seeker’, and UK media favoring ‘migrant’ and tending to cite economic factors (Pruitt, 2019:387).

Sweden had one of the largest numbers of arrivals during the refugee crisis, starting with a solid humanitarian approach reflected in the media. For example, an early 2015 editorial read, “Shall we save humans’ lives – or let them drown?” (Aftonbladet 21-04-2015, as quoted in Hagelund, 2020:8). A strong humanitarian narrative was prevalent, rather than a regulatory one, with the subsequent policy shift being dramatically portrayed with the deputy prime minister in tears as the government announced stricter regulations on migration. While the changes were presented as temporary (Hagelund, 2020:9), history has since been rewritten to indicate that the previous policies were unsustainable remnants from the center-right government (@socialdemokrat, 2017).

A discourse analysis of UK high circulation media shows that the dominant discourse was represented as a border crisis, with people’s movements being constructed as the source of crisis and threat to people in Europe. One key takeaway was the crisis as being depicted as a European experience, as a threat to European social identity, order, people, and border, while marginalizing the different kinds of insecurity and danger experienced by refugees and asylum seekers (Pruitt, 2019:384–385). Securitization of migration has been widely

studied, showing that the framing of migrants and minorities as threats to in-group identity is prevalent both with national identities and a broader ‘western’ concept of self (Sjöstedt, 2017:8) and that narratives of security in migration debates have furthered a distinction between European self and other, while simultaneously upholding the idea of European morality (Scuzzarello and Kinnvall, 2013:99–101). Gutiérrez Rodríguez exemplifies this by reiterating Hall’s research on how British media during Thatcher’s rule used colonial, racializing vocabulary and contributed to shifting the focus to a fabricated other on whom social and economic issues and individual insecurity could be blamed” (Gutiérrez Rodríguez, 2018:17–18). In addition, research on the UK press showed securitizing constructions and interpretations of refugees and asylum seekers already during the early 2000s (Baker et al., 2008:282).

4.3.2 Narratives of coloniality in school literature

As previously mentioned, research on narratives in textbooks is prominent in post-conflict societies. In relation to colonialism, some research has been done on school literature in European former colonizing states, analyzing the narratives used to describe the colonial past and self-identity. Leone & Mastrovito note in their research on Italian textbooks that the use of abstract or concrete language to communicate in-group offenses seem to be a crucial divider between advancing sociopsychological reconciliation or promoting coping with loss. While some textbooks spoke openly and frankly about atrocities committed, revealing shameful historical facts, others described it more in military terms and shifted the blame to the European imperialistic trend of the time; effects on colonized peoples were largely ignored. Leone and Mastrovito further suggested distinguishing the approaches to sociopsychological reconciliation between generations, arguing that young people today might be more receptive to reflexive narratives as having not lived during the colonial conflict (Leone and Mastrovito, 2010:12, 19, 22–23). A study of socialization in Belgium supports this, adding that the newer generation has grown up in a more critical ideological

surrounding than their grandparents, in which also the most brutal aspects of colonialism are well-remembered. Importantly, this research by Licata and Klein indicates that older generations held a more positive imaginary of colonialism and that this was positively correlated with the level of national identification they held – however, in the younger generation, strong national identification did not seem tied to more positive depictions of the colonial past (Licata and Klein, 2010:54).

However, more recent research by Bonnot et al. points to contemporary France not promoting what has been called a ‘culture of guilt’ concerning colonial conflict, and on the contrary, French students did not think they should feel guilty for colonialism. This view was extra prominent among students with strong national identification and an orientation towards right-wing politics, and Bonnot et al. argue that the present normative context in France is not prone to negative group-based emotions such as collective guilt. Instead, the colonial ambition is still described as a mission executed based on well-meaning; civilizing the indigenous, guiding lost people, etc. (Bonnot et al., 2016:531, 536, 548). As noted by Leone and Mastrovito, these differences in the portrayed historical narrative also become more relevant with the increasingly diverse classroom (Leone and Mastrovito, 2010:13), in which descendants of colonized people now learn about colonialism among descendants of former colonizers. In the French case, Bonnot et al. argue that this strand of research can improve the understanding of how the conflictual past echo in present relationships between French of Algerian origin and the native French population (Bonnot et al., 2016:533). Moreover, the collective memory of colonialism heavily influences intergroup relations between immigrants, or descendants of immigrants, and their host communities (Volpato and Licata, 2010:5).

3.4.3 Immigration challenging the idea of society

As countries in Europe have experienced increased immigration over the last decades, during which immigrant issues and their sheer presence have been growing more and more politicized, fears of disrupted social cohesion and discourse of incompatible cultures have been utilized by political parties. However, it has also been demonstrated that the effects of political frames depend on contextual and individual factors – for instance, prior political opinions, the perceived trustworthiness of the political elite, and access to alternative political frames. In sociological research, intergroup contact has been theorized to various extent, including how sociological processes of changing emotions, learning about the other, and finding similarities through intergroup contact, can counter negative out-group attitudes (Bohman, 2015:1–3). Previous research on intergroup relations in Europe, while noting that tolerance is often called for as a quality for democratic societies to develop, further points to that only actual appreciation of difference has prejudice-reducing potential (Hjerm et al., 2020:915). Media representations of refugees and immigrants have been shown to have dehumanizing effects on the perceptions of the other and have enabled narratives justifying extreme behavior to protect the in-group from the threat of the other, especially among those with little contact with members of the other group. These perceptions have been argued to maintain a self-image of the in-group, as the other is perceived to be deserving of adverse outcomes, and the self does need to adapt to include the newcomer (Esses et al., 2013:531).

Previous studies have also found that large immigrant populations are triggering feelings of being threatened, especially among native-born populations that lack contact with immigrants. People who have friends who are immigrants are much less likely to experience these feelings, possibly because prolonged contact has reduced cultural distances (Bohman, 2015:4). These anxieties have been conceptualized differently in postcolonial studies, pointing to how it is the colonial and racist imaginaries of the immigrant ‘other’, viewed as inferior and

animalistic, that cause what Gutiérrez Rodríguez calls moral panic (Gutiérrez Rodríguez, 2018:18). While most of the above-mentioned findings point to a combination of contextual and individual factors in experiencing feelings of fear, this study focuses on the contextual level of in-group and out-group narratives and their connection to societal beliefs of self and others.

Connecting this back to the approach of sociopsychological reconciliation of identity conflicts and the societal beliefs European ideoscape and identity remain built upon, one could argue that the European postcolonial identity is incapable of recognizing the foreigner in ourselves, as the identity is built primarily on the notion of distinction from the other. Without the undoing of the colonizer's identity and perceptions, through new narratives and uncomfortable encounters to challenge the sense of self, racism and experiences of ontological insecurity will remain strong in the European context. A continued lack of sociopsychological reconciliation, of scrutinizing the thought structures that lead to anxiety, hostility, and patronizing other countries and the 'other' in Europe, will reconstruct the very same situation. Europe's past has caught up in the age of globalization and needs reconciliation to move forward.

4 Methods

4.1 Research approach

Being concerned primarily with how social representations construct and impact societal beliefs underlying security perceptions, this thesis follows a discursive and social constructivist ontology in understanding identities as social productions (Jarvis and Holland, 2015:38). Using a critical interpretative epistemology, elements such as perceptions, beliefs, and ideas are understood as entities that make up the social world, of which critical interpretation can generate knowledge (Mason, 2017:5–8).

Understanding the societal beliefs of a society, i.e., its organizing frameworks concerning knowledge, main features, and distinctiveness, as a discourse that is produced, transformed, and reproduced through rituals, myths, and narratives (Scuzzarello, 2010:15–17), this analysis focuses on the role of narratives and networks of narratives as joint social productions on a macro level.

4.2 Methodological choices

4.2.1 An illustrative comparative case study

This study is comparative to the extent that the two cases are thought to narrate and contribute to European identity and insecurity in different ways. While a comparison between the two is not the primary aim, there are comparative elements in understanding how they construct and reproduce narratives of Europe and ‘Europeanness’.

4.2.2 Narrative analysis

In this epistemological approach, narratives are deemed a source of knowledge, social life, and communication, helping us make sense of our surroundings – through them, we are subconsciously interpreting our own experiences. Narratives, according to Robertson, confirm our own and others' positions in political and cultural landscapes. Therefore, understanding narratives as shaped by a constellation of power provides insights into societal power dynamics (Robertson, 2018:219). Hammack and Pilecki point to the critical role of narratives in resolving the link between mind and society and its advantage of transcending traditional disciplinary limits, as narratives are multi-level in both describing cognitive meaning-making but also organizing “personal coherence and collective solidarity” (Hammack and Pilecki, 2012:76, 78). Similarly, Lee et al. have argued that narratives can challenge unresolved questions, being used historically by various storytellers who utilize imaginaries to approach identities and relationships (Lee et al., 2011:38). Studying narratives thus provides an opportunity to analyze what a group deems relevant and essential in making sense of themselves, others, and their relationships.

In relation to studies of identity, the methodology grew popular when narratives started to be understood as shaping identities and action – indicating that narratives function as a basic interpretation frame (Robertson, 2018:220). Narrative analysis has been argued suitable to grasp identity's changing nature, capturing agency, and underlying perceptions. Somers argues that narrativity in this regard is not only representational but ontological; a condition of social life through which people construct identities, experiences, guided action, etc. (Somers, 1994:613–614). Narratives have also been argued to uncover the ideological memory content and the motivational basis for social practice (Hammack and Pilecki, 2012:77). By studying narratives, insights into the shaping and preservation of identities can be gained, understanding how collectives have worked mentally with social history to make sense of their

present. More recently, narrative analysis has been used to make academia more aware of marginalized voices and challenge dominant power hegemonies (Robertson, 2018:220–221), making it suitable for postcolonial approaches and a good match for the theoretical argument of this thesis.

Building on the advancement of narrative research in political psychology – and acknowledging the key part that societal beliefs, social representations, and collective memory have in both sociopsychological reconciliation, ontological security, and narrative analysis – this thesis follows Hammack and Pilecki in understanding narratives as “*the sensible organization of thought through language, internalized or externalized, which serves to create a sense of personal coherence and collective solidarity and to legitimize collective beliefs, emotions, and actions.*” (Hammack and Pilecki, 2012:78). Narratives have been argued to serve as a source of maintaining inner solidarity of the ideals and identity of a group, noting the role national discourse plays in how individuals create personal narratives to achieve a feeling of self-sameness (Hammack and Pilecki, 2012:83). In discursive psychology, scholars have shown how a narrative performs a social action, indicating that the social and ideological contexts must be taken into consideration in interpretation (Stanley and Billig, 2011:160). Somers also argues that to understand narrativity, one needs to account for temporal and spatial relationships, noting that a narrative

“renders understanding only by connecting (however unstably) parts to a constructed configuration or a social network of relationships (however incoherent or unrealizable) composed of symbolic, institutional, and material practices.” (Somers, 1994:616)

Building on this, narratives sharing a conceptual framework could be understood as a narrative network – rather than looking at each narrative as an independent unit, they are regarded as ontologically related. Therefore, meaning should be ascribed in relation to other narratives (Scuzzarello, 2010:17). In narrative

analysis, this has been referred to as casual emplotment, by which narratives are given meaning due to their relation to other events and ideas (Scuzzarello, 2010:17; Somers, 1994:616). This thesis argues that by analyzing multiple narratives, the conceptual framework they are embedded in could be better understood. Therefore, micro and personal narratives are interpreted as contributing to, or being influenced by, the larger meta-narrative of coloniality and Eurocentrism.

When narrating the past, casual emplotment can also include the creation of ideological dilemmas, in which contrary ideological values are navigated to manage conflicting ideas rather than choosing one. Stanley & Billig illustrate this with politicians expressing sympathy for the poor while simultaneously critiquing their life choices. They argue that “the wider processes of ideology have to be caught within the observable and hearable detail of talk and text” (Stanley and Billig, 2011:160–161). One should further note the aspect of agency within a narrative, in which narratives are internalized, processed, and interpreted by people in different positions and places. Therefore, individuals and groups play a part in accepting or rejecting alterations in a narrative (Scuzzarello, 2010:19), with personal adapted narratives playing into a larger meta-narrative. Importantly, agency and navigation further point to the enabling and potentially transformative role of narratives in altering controversy or overcoming hostile group relationships – and the potentially damaging role they can play in recreating insecure relations.

4.2.3 Tools of analysis

Foundationally, a narrative can be understood as an account of something that has happened or is happening. As narrative analysis has its roots in literature analysis, much of the early usage concerns stories and how bits and pieces relate to a whole. In more structuralist branching, the series of events and how a narrator tells these were separated. Still focused on complete stories, narratives in this

perspective were made up of abstract, scene, action, resolution, coda, and valuation. Importantly, for comprehensive historical narratives such as those in question for this study, valuation, coda, and abstract might be most relevant; what values and perceptions are underlying the narrative, how it connects to the present, and who claims the right to tell the story (Robertson, 2018:222–223). In addition, connecting personal narratives to historical ones has built upon psychological literature on how individuals and groups understand cultural meanings (Harbison, 2007:146). However, studying narratives in disciplines outside of linguistics has been understood as a combination of history and discourse; history referring to ‘what’, and discourse to ‘how’. This draws upon only some of the structuralist elements mentioned above while making it more suitable for a broader range of narratives (Robertson, 2018:224).

Robertson argues that there are no so-called best practices, as the methodology chosen should be guided by the research questions, the material, and the theoretical stances of the researcher in question. Narratives have and can be researched in a wide range of material, such as in policy texts, rituals, reconciliation commissions, etcetera, which all have varying sets of data for the interpretation. While some narratives are easier to distinguish; for instance, a storyline, some narratives exist on a more abstract level, in the assumptions people operate from or what is taken for granted or left out. These are more difficult to point at empirically but bring value to research (Robertson, 2018:225, 228–229). To ensure validity when analyzing and interpreting these kinds of narratives, Harbison argues that the analysis should be well-grounded in data and supported by raw examples, while developed by shuttling between the categories of analysis and the empirical material (Harbison, 2007:147).

In this study, narratives are understood more in line with values and assumptions, noting how narrative analysis can uncover collective cultural references, codes, and understandings of how what is taken for granted in the context is passed on through narratives. Acknowledging, therefore, in line with Robertson, the general

discourse narrative plays a part in, it becomes possible to outline how something is being told to give an event or an idea a specific significance. This entails focusing on denotation and connotation; how something is understood directly, and the associations it gives. However, there has been a critique of these modes of research that give power to interpretation, as interpretations are bound to change, and narratives can be read differently depending on the recipient's context (Robertson, 2018:235–236, 242).

Deriving the narrative themes from the theoretical argument of this thesis, the categories of analysis are built from 'perception of self', 'perception of the other', and 'perception of relationship', while also allowing for narrative themes to emerge from the material.

4.2.4 Sampling strategy and case selection

The illustrative sample is three folded, theoretically driven, and purposive. While the cases of the UK and Sweden differ in that the states have very different colonial pasts (and presents), they are similar in that they share the Western European ideoscapes, the canon of identity shaping, a relatively large population of immigrants, and a recent rise in far-right political sympathies. Further, for practical reasons, this choice offers material readily available and directly interpretable for the researcher.

The history of the UK is woven with imperialism, with present-day connections and politics very much influenced by the colonial past – the Commonwealth still being a political organization and the Queen being the head of state in numerous countries, for instance. Having recently left the European Union, the UK has expressed dedication to European ideals while wishing not to be influenced or ruled from outside of its borders. Although acknowledging that the UK is made up of four different constituent countries, and that there is a separate – not undisputed – history of how the United Kingdom came to be and the role of

English imperial ambitions in creating the UK (Noonkester, 1997), nonetheless, the UK is the current political entity that is heading the Commonwealth, and whose previous political leaders have been instrumental in building and dismantling its Empire.

Sweden, being less expansionist worldwide, has few overseas colonies to its name. Its colonial history and present are often more connected to the treatment of and rule over the indigenous population of Sápmi in northern Sweden. It remains in the EU, positioning itself as a champion of European cooperation and ethical foreign policy. Nonetheless, it has a place in the Eurocentric development of thought by starting the world's first institute of Racial Biology, for instance. Sweden has been argued to have developed a collective self-identity on notions of ethnocultural homogeneity and key Eurocentric pillars; of being hypermodern, rational, and secular (Geugjes, 2021:25–27), making it a highly relevant case for discussing prevailing societal beliefs from colonial times.

Bringing narratives on migration, self, and others from these contexts can enrich the theoretical discussion and enable an analysis of the postcolonial European identity. Purposive sampling of discourse is applied.

The analysis will analyze narratives of other and self in migration discourses and election manifestos before analyzing narratives of colonialism and imperialism in secondary school textbooks to enable discussions of sociopsychological reconciliation. The first is instrumental in deciphering narratives as they unfold from dominant sources in society, shaped by politics and by the socialization of its actors. The latter will deepen the discussion to analyze if foundational narratives play out in textbooks today, shaping the next generation, or if a process of change is visible in the narratives. As the ideoscape of Europe has undefined edges, in line with the theoretical argument, the web of societal beliefs is widespread, not always apparent, and varying in intensity and frequency. These three samples aim to illustrate how European states could be interpreted to

reproduce colonial logic, beliefs, and ideas; hindering sociopsychological reconciliation and recreating insecurity.

4.2.5 Limitations

As an illustrative case study, the data scope has been limited to sufficiently provide material of the societal representations and beliefs that this study aims to uncover to discuss the understanding of insecurity and postcolonial reconciliation. While critical discourse analysis also would have been an option, had the research focus been more angled towards the relationship between social groups and power exertion (Halperin and Heath, 2017:339), analyzing the narratives of identity creation connects better to the theoretical argument. As this research is concerned with beliefs and perceptions, it would have been interesting to study these based on first-hand experiences. However, due to the sensitivity of the topic and the risk of subjects wishing to position themselves favorably, as well as the (often) unconscious nature of societal beliefs, interviews and other first-hand accounts have been decided against.

In future research, it would be valuable to do ethnographic research in classroom settings and possibly more extensive comparative content analysis on textbooks in line with the work by Leone & Mastrovito, either analyzing changing narratives over time or between different countries. Further, comparing perceptions across different regions and schools with different demographics could highlight the impact and role of frictional encounters with 'the other' in reducing ontological insecurity. Finally, a broader study would have benefitted from utilizing data from, e.g., French, Belgian, Portuguese, Italian, and Danish sources to infer from a larger sample of different colonial pasts and presents. However, as this is a limited study and the purpose of the sampling is illustrative, this thesis argues that the UK and Sweden offer different enough cases to discuss a European identity crisis and the argument of the thesis.

‘Author’s translation’ applies to all Swedish sources throughout the analysis. Quotes have been shortened due to space limitations. Links to the complete media source material in the original languages are found in the appendix.

4.3 Material

4.3.1 Sample 1 – Media

The first sample contains selected news articles on migration from 2015 to 2016. The time frame has been chosen as it is a well-studied case with vast data available. As media discourse on the refugee crisis is well-researched, the contribution of this part of the narrative analysis will be on how this corresponds with societal colonial beliefs, framing of the other, and ontological insecurity.

Based on the reader base, political affiliations, and popularity, three news sources per case have been chosen. The sample is a selection of opinion pieces, editorials, and news articles, published during the periods of 2015-09-01 – 2015-09-30 (the month following the death of Alan Kurdi), 2015-11-01 – 2015-11-31 (during which Sweden changed its migration policy), and 2016-01-01 – 2016-01-31 (the month following the attacks at Cologne train station) containing the search words ‘refugee’, ‘migrant’, ‘immigrant’, or ‘asylum’.

Notably, The Guardian had the largest number of articles containing the search words, which is why a more extensive sample has been selected from that source. While the more local newspaper in Sweden, Göteborgsposten, allowed a similar sample size to the other Swedish sources, Manchester Evening News had very few articles within the search scope, so nearly all articles containing a search word have been included.

The UK*Daily Mail UK*

22 articles

One of the largest circulated newspapers in the UK.

Average monthly reach of 36 million in 2020 (Statista, 2022), with a conservative editorial stance.

The Guardian UK

37 articles

The UK's biggest newspaper website, averaging 13,9 million daily views in 2020 (Turvill, 2020). Known to be socially liberal and mainstream center-left (Ozdora-Aksak et al., 2021:287).

Manchester Evening News

6 articles

Local newspaper for the UK's second largest city, Manchester, and Greater Manchester. Not politically affiliated (Manchester Evening News, 2022).

Sweden*Svenska Dagbladet*

21 articles

Daily reach of approximately 740 000.

Not politically tied, but defined as

'unattached moderate'

('obunden moderat' in original)

(Nationalencyklopedin, 2022).

Aftonbladet

18 articles

Independent social democratic

newspaper. Daily reach

approximately 3,5 million

(Aftonbladet, 2020).

Göteborgsposten

18 articles

Local newspaper for Sweden's second largest city, Gothenburg, and the region of Västergötland. Independent liberal. Daily reach approximately 500 000 (Karlén, 2021).

4.3.2 Sample 2 – Election manifestos

As migration narratives in media tend to focus more on the 'other' than the 'self', to discuss further the narratives of 'self' in relation to 'other, election manifestos from the three largest political parties in the Swedish parliamentary election of 2018 and the UK parliamentary election of 2019 will provide a second sample.

The three election manifestos have been chosen to capture the traditional party lines of right to left and the growing libertarian–authoritarian division. Listed here in order of election results, one should note the discrepancy between the two cases, as the largest party in Sweden is traditionally left-wing, and the following two are increasingly right-wing, while in the UK, the largest party is right-wing, and the following two are left-wing.

The UK

The Conservative and Unionist Party – “Get Brexit Done. Unleash Britain's Potential”

The Labour Party – “It's Time for Real Change”

The Scottish National Party – “Stronger for Scotland”

Sweden

Socialdemokraterna / The Social Democrats – “The largest safety reform in modern time”

Moderaterna / The Moderates – “Now we take hold of Sweden.”

Sverigedemokraterna / The Swedish Democrats – “The Swedish Democrats’ election manifesto 2018”

4.3.3 Sample 3 – Secondary school textbooks

To further the discussion and connect the analysis to research on narratives in sociopsychological reconciliation, the third sample will consist of present-day school literature for secondary school (ages 12-15), which will be analyzed to illustrate how narratives of the self and others are portrayed today, influencing identity creation. In the case of the UK, primarily textbook passages of colonialism and imperialism and their resolution will serve as material, while in the case of Sweden, passages referring to Sápmi will also be analyzed. Two textbooks per case will be the basis for analysis. The latest available editions will be used.

For the UK, two of Wilkes’ textbooks in the History Key Stage 3-series have been accessed through Lund University; *Revolution, industry and Empire, 1558-1901*, and *Technology, war and independence, 1901-Present day*. For Sweden, two accessible sources have been accessed; Gleerup’s series Utkik, *Hi: Historia 7-9*, through Lund University, and the National Encyclopedia’s teaching material *Historia 7-9*, accessed through the researcher’s contacts, as online material is primarily connected to school libraries.

4.4 Ethical considerations

As a researcher, I aim to be transparent with the purpose and normative commitment of this study and how this influences the findings. Being an interpretative study, separating raw material from interpretation will be key in assuring confidence in the results. In terms of selection bias, I have attempted to include sources that both align with the theoretical argument and some that

challenge it. Following Robertson, the reader should be guided through the analysis and interpretation, with primary sources being truthfully accounted for and summed up if the material is in abundance. Ironically, a narrative will be formed to guide the narrative analysis, in which choices of quotes and examples should be made explicit (Robertson, 2018:242–243). My interpretation is undoubtedly influenced by being a white woman with Swedish family history, although I have been personally involved in antiracist and decolonial political movements.

Drawing upon postcolonial criticism of ethical governance in academia (Israel, 2015:23), this thesis posits that it is European forces' turn to be scrutinized, despite the discomfort of deconstructing what has been taken for given, to decolonize practices that are recreating harm. This also relates to me, the researcher, and involves being aware of and questioning the interpretations I make to ensure that unconscious Eurocentrism is not an influencing factor. Further, substantial postcolonial ontological debates have been taking place regarding the possibility of even conducting postcolonial research within academia built upon disguised colonial and Eurocentric ideas (Jazeel, 2019:10), discussions that have shaped the drafting of this research. However, even more, the ethical stance taken here follows the responsibility to question power, to unveil harm, to do good instead of simply doing 'no harm', and critiquing what has been privileged as objective in the understanding of Europe's experience of insecurity (Bourdieu, 1990:388; Israel, 2015:134).

5 Analysis

5.1 Interpreting the UK

5.1.1 Perceptions of self

In this broad range of material, multiple narrations of the British self emerge. Starting with media, two relatively clear understandings develop; the self as a moral agent and the self as under pressure or threatened. In some texts, they appear side by side, pointing to ideological dilemmas being navigated in the debate. Both narratives connect to other ideas of Europe and of British civilizationalism to cultivate their idea of self, i.e., “*successful civilizations survived because they were protected from invasion*” (Hitchens, 2015), “*Germany emerged as the moral conscience of Europe*” (Beard et. al., 2015), and “*The need for Europe to develop a coherent account of its place in the wider world*” (The Guardian, 2015).

The narrative of self as a moral agent was most potent in September 2015, but remains dominant in The Guardian until January 2016. Also, in the few pieces from Manchester Evening News, the moral agent narrative dominated, focusing not only on British duty but specifically on individual responsibilities. For instance, they state: “*These destitute, terrified people are... ..a test of our humanity*” (Manchestereveningnews.co.uk, 2015). The narratives of self in the Labour manifesto echoed the moral obligations and values of internationalism, based on which they further proposed the need to “*Conduct an audit of the impact of Britain’s colonial legacy to understand our contribution to the dynamics of violence and insecurity across regions previously under British colonial rule*” (The Labour Party, 2019:96). This entails a more reflective self-image, in which the responsibility is to correct past wrongs. Referencing values and obligations,

Labour pointed to upholding rights for refugees and migrants and ensuring an end to the hostile environment the Conservatives allegedly had created.

A concept often used in both narratives is ‘our values’. First, the crisis is something that European or British values entail responding to, as in “*a test of our values, our spirit, our ingenuity, our generosity*” (Viner, 2015) – emphasizing compassion and ‘doing what’s right’. This narrative often occurs in articles quoting UN organizations or drawing upon personal stories. In the context of Britain not accepting as many refugees as other countries in Europe, the self-image is used to call upon authorities, i.e., “*Are we going to allow refugees to stand in freezing rivers at our borders this winter, to live in freezing tents with their children?*” (McVeigh, 2015). Second, values are referenced concerning how they must be protected from the chaos and the cultural threat migration is perceived to entail. In the manifesto of the Conservatives, British values are narrated as something to defend and uphold. In media, it is expressed by noting “*the damage that can be done to societies that prize sexual equality, and a peaceful, stable way of life, when so many migrants are young men*” (Afzal, 2016).

This narrative of pressure is concerned with a changing demographic and the insecurities this pose to the UK, and grew increasingly more assertive with a masculinist protectionist turn after the assaults in Cologne. Daily Mail discussed the implications of London’s new demographic as unrecognizable – “*More than half of Londoners are now not ethnically British... ...The English upper classes no longer inhabit the splendid townhouses... ...Suburbs... ...are no longer home to the aspirational, largely unionised, English working-class*” (Sargeant, 2016) and “*In some parts of London, close to half the population are now Muslims... ...they will be the majority in those areas within a decade*” (Beckford, 2016). In this narrative, white British people are gradually being pushed back. Not protecting the values of the UK from a cultural merger with North Africa and the Middle East is seen as “*letting the great house and estate go to ruin*” (Hitchens,

2015). One opinion piece stands out, in which the author references himself as part of a ‘different’ and less threatening generation of immigrants – one who migrated to the UK with their families after having worked with the British overseas (Afzal, 2016). In the Conservative manifesto, the self is a “*modern Britain – a diverse and tolerant country with confidence in its own identity and values*” (The Conservative and Unionist Party, 2019), referenced before introducing measures “*that brings the immigration system... ..into line with the British people’s own sense of what is right*” (The Conservative and Unionist Party, 2019). British Brexit supporters are described in one of the textbooks as worried about British identity, arguing that “*Britain is unique and different from other European countries*” (Wilkes, 2020a:171).

In the SNP manifesto, the self is different – a diverse and progressive Scottish self centers the narrative. However, narratives of values and a sense of duty echo the Labour manifesto in commitment to international obligations. It is also a self that wishes to identify with Europe, and interestingly, it could be read as a narrative in which Scotland identifies more with the EU than with the UK, whose Westminster is presented as power-grabbing and unstable (The Scottish National Party, 2019).

In the Key Stage 3 history books, the self is ambiguously narrated – concerning Britain’s colonial role; a self-aware paternalistic image emerges – “*Britain saw itself as a ‘mother country’ that should not only protect its colonies, but help them develop*” (Wilkes, 2020b:180). The racist underpinnings of the colonial project are mentioned, i.e., in which British settlers felt superior to the native population and did not care for their thoughts. However, it is made part of a general European powers narrative, pointing more to the brutality of other European colonizers, in which who to blame is unclear. The textbook notes that Britain’s “*status in the world was under threat*” (Wilkes, 2020a:8) at the turn of the 20th century, and the decline of Empire is narrated as due to a lack of economic and military means. Asking the question, “*Why did some colonies demand to rule themselves?*”

(Wilkes, 2020a:177), the answers are presented in line with nationalism and wishes for self-determination. The steps taken in the present to remove some remnants of British colonialism in former colonies are explained to target specific individuals; “*Rhodes had racist views about Britain’s superiority*” (Wilkes, 2020a:177) rather than a general image of the UK as a colonizing state.

5.1.2 Perceptions of other

Two emerging narratives of the other are subjects of compassion and objects of fear. For the latter, a key feature in Daily Mail was the genuineness of the refugees. The migrants’ claims were made suspicious by phrases such as “*eyewitnesses claim fewer than a third... ..are Syrian – and some are even ISIS infiltrators*” (Reid, 2015a). Focusing on stories of passport fraud and jihadists, the idea of the other as dangerous was strengthened by, for instance, heavy reporting of violent border clashes and sketches of armed dark silhouettes and rats crossing into Europe. This narrative dehumanizes and generalizes the other into something distant and threatening. In January 2016, the other was narrated as law-breaking, aggressive, sexual, and almost exclusively male, with Daily Mail focusing on the threat that young, foreign men in groups pose to security and culture. The few stories where the other’s voice is present paint a picture of migrants as ungrateful and calculating. For instance, excerpts like “*We refuse to stay there... .. it’s dirty, and they serve pasta every night, which we don’t like*” (Reid, 2015b) and “*many of the so-called child migrants... ..are... ..cynically pretending to be under 18*” (Reid, 2015b) furthered the idea that the refugees were not ‘genuine’.

On the contrary, the Guardian almost exclusively used a humanizing narrative, cultivating a more nuanced image of the other by publishing personal stories, focusing on the contextual reasons for migration in different countries of origin, the psychological effects of refuge, and the consequences of British and European responses to the crisis. Also, Manchester Evening News furthered concepts of the

other as people in need and drew upon personal imagery to narrate the other, such as “*terrified Syrian girl clings desperately to her mother*” (Manchestereveningnews.co.uk, 2015).

In the Conservatives’ election manifesto, the other is mainly political opponents and the EU, and the world is presented as uncertain – terrorism and malign non-state actors being a constant threat to the British. Refugees are mentioned only in passing as a problem to solve – noting that genuine refugees will receive protection “*with the ultimate aim of helping them to return home if it is safe to do so*” (The Conservative and Unionist Party, 2019:23). Migrants, however, are mainly mentioned in ensuring that they do not access welfare until they contribute – building on the idea of migrants exploiting the system. In both the Labour and SNP manifestos, however, to the extent people outside of Britain are referenced, they are connected to British or Scottish responsibility, as in refugees to welcome and asylum-seekers to save from unsafe migration routes.

In the second textbook, ‘soldiers of the Empire’ are acknowledged for involvement in “*some of the bloodiest battles of the entire war*” (Wilkes, 2020a: 48) and the voluntary enlistment of millions of colonial soldiers. One source claims that before the first world war, the colonies had been understood as dependent on Britain, but “*during the war, Britain became dependent on them!*” (Wilkes, 2020a:49), furthering a narrative of gratitude to those ‘others’ for serving the UK, while overlooking the many other ways Britain was influenced by and dependent on its colonies. Concerning decolonization, the other is somewhat generalized, and those whose independence was a bit more complicated are missing in the narrative – the Middle East is barely mentioned. The territories the UK continues to govern, such as the Falklands, are only mentioned in reference to defending it. The Empire Windrush in 1948 is described as the start of modern-day multicultural UK, while noting how newspapers and Britons were alarmed, some being suspicious of “*people of another race and culture*” (Wilkes, 2020a:187). The textbook then describes the significant contributions immigration

has made to British society in culture, sports, and cuisine and claims that while the first immigrants were treated as outsiders, they have now become part of the UK, furthering a narrative of divisions and racism as a thing of the past.

5.1.3 Perceptions of relationships

Interpreting the relationships between these narratives entails navigating a rather complex network. For instance, ‘values’ are understood differently by different actors and are drawn upon to explain the relationship to the other. Both Daily Mail and The Guardian rely heavily on the employment that ‘value’ and history bring to their arguments, but in contrasting ways. Daily Mail draws upon how the values of the Middle East and North Africa are irreconcilable with European values and how past immigration has resulted in a significant demographic change, rising crime, and an unrecognizable London. Migration is argued to be needed to keep low since “*Mass immigration means we adapt to them, when they should be adapting to u*” (Hitchens, 2015). This line of thought favors a narrative in which foreign equals threatening, why the relationship needs to be controlled.

On the other hand, values are used to further a larger responsibility to help refugees, with The Guardian drawing upon other exceptional times when the UK has opened its doors and arms. For instance, an opinion piece posits that “*During the early 2000s, refugees arrived and settled in Britain from many wartorn places, most of our making*” (Mckenzie, 2015), pointing out that migration always has been a vital feature of working-class communities. However, fear of resource competition is furthered as a reason for caution – something that also Daily Mail draws upon frequently, although with a different connotation than the Guardian. Nevertheless, the latter still rounds its narrative with notions of compassion: “*Britain cannot open its borders to everyone... ..but this does not excuse the government’s shameful determination to keep our borders closed to as many refugees as possible*” (The Guardian, 2015). It further brings community-level stories to the public, focusing the narrative on the positive effects and possibilities

of intercultural relationships due to migration rather than producing imagery of threat. Manchester Evening News also focuses on narratives of community and feelings of responsibility: “*Manchester has a history of welcoming those fleeing persecution and oppression. Our existing Syrian community, our Chinese community, our Jewish community – they are all testaments to that*” (Manchestereveningnews.co.uk, 2015).

In terms of historical narratives, an essential notion is found in the Conservative’s election manifesto. With no mention to colonialism, imperialism, or the Commonwealth, the manifesto states, “*As Conservatives, we are immensely proud of the UK’s history and its standing in the world... ..we view our country as a force for good... ..The Armed Forces, our alliances... ..and our willingness to act are all reasons for the UK to hold its head high*” (The Conservative and Unionist Party, 2019:51). It continues to shape a narrative in which the UK should continue to champion international obligations and expand its influence and soft power reach. Among other examples, the manifesto states how the UK helped end the slave trade.

Labour has a very different narrative, stating that they “*recognise the need to address historic injustices and will reset our relationships with countries in the Global South based on principles of redistribution and equality, not outdated notions of charity or imperialist rule*” (The Labour Party, 2019:103). They further a narrative of duty to right past wrongs, for instance, by issuing formal apologies for the Jallianwala Bagh massacre and compensating British colonial armies for discrimination. SNP, in turn, focuses heavily on the relationship between England and Scotland, emphasizing the rights of the Scottish people concerning Westminster. On the relationship with the world, both Labour and SNP point out their wish to remain in the EU with their “*European neighbours*” (The Scottish National Party, 2019).

Throughout the textbooks, British agency is in focus in the narration of colonization and decolonization, hardly narrating it as a relationship at all. In the first book, covering 1558-1901, British imperial control is mentioned mainly in passing as neutral references – “*During the Georgian era... ..the British controlled areas of land in many other countries*” (Wilkes, 2020b:119). The narrative is agency vs. passivity, in which “*Britain built up a vast empire... ..ruled about 450 million people*” (Wilkes, 2020b:142) and made large profits which advanced the industrial revolution. Britain is described as a successful and influential trading actor; the slave trade is brought into the narrative as “*a dark side to this trade*” (Wilkes, 2020b:172). Initially, only a small fact box refers to the resistance of those forced into slavery. Students are encouraged to assess the role of white anti-slavery campaigners, financial reasons, slave rebellions, and “*the racists were proved wrong*” (Wilkes, 2020b:182) in the abolishment of slavery in 1833, creating more of a narrative of different spheres of relationships and changing societal beliefs.

Settler colonialism is narrated in terms of land conflict, noted primarily as a minor issue prior to the war between France and Britain on American soil, and the narrative is quickly turned back to European conflicts. Other settler-colonial contexts, such as with the Aboriginal peoples in Australia, for instance, are neither explained nor acknowledged. The development of the British Empire is presented as a specialization study, in which the four ‘ways’ Britain got its Empire are presented; war (against another country with colonies), discovery, settlers, and trade. The indigenous or local people are narrated as something the British ignored or only needed to control – few even mentioned, while the section on why Britain wanted an empire also acknowledges that they “*believed that colonizing various countries was a means of helping others to become like Britain and therefore improve*” (Wilkes, 2020b:202). The act of colonization itself is not understood as an act of conflict.

African resistance is mentioned first in textbook two, noting that “*European invaders wiped out the African forces and destroyed their traditional way of life*” (Wilkes, 2020a:181). Both books include a specialization on India, with the Sepoy rebellion narrated as a moment of shock for the British; “*many people were taken aback by the ferocity of feeling... ..against the British*” (Wilkes, 2020b:208). Not until in the last section, however, do the last paragraphs note that “*The issue of British control and influence in India has always been controversial and has often been interpreted differently*” (Wilkes, 2020b:211), acknowledging widespread exploitation and the enforced British customs. Even later, in the section on independence in the second textbook, is it acknowledged that “*the vast majority of experts agree that India suffered greatly during... ..the British Empire*” (Wilkes, 2020a:178).

In general, independences are narrated as mostly British decisions, noting that they fought to keep some colonies but peacefully transferred power where “*they felt they were stable enough*” (Wilkes, 2020a:182) – again furthering a one-sided paternalistic narrative. In contrast, it is mentioned how other colonizing European states were “*determined to hang onto its African colonies*” (Wilkes, 2020a:183). The books mentioned only one case of apology from the UK— for the handling of a Kenyan uprising. Present relations are described in the Commonwealth as “*independent, free countries with close cultural, trade and sporting links to Britain*” (Wilkes, 2020a:182). While briefly acknowledging that colonialism has “*resulted in ongoing problems in many independent African nation*” (Wilkes, 2020a:183), the new Africa is described as struggling to create its political systems, build up industries, trade, and navigate differences between groups.

5.2 Interpreting Sweden

5.2.1 Perceptions of self

For Sweden, similar narratives of self are expressed, while having different connotations to the moral agent narrative. The newspapers at the start were all rather outspoken about the moral duty of welcoming refugees. Referring to values and freedoms as something to be proud of and as the very reasons refugees were aiming for Sweden, the moral angle of Sweden's stance and self-identity was defended. Values also serve as a strong employment in the Swedish case, with cultural values playing a crucial part in the self-image of being open and righteous. "*Most of the Swedish values are universal*" (Sandelid, 2015), argued a scholar in Svenska Dagbladet. As time progressed, however, more writers noted the need to protect them, that Sweden needed to stand up for its values and be "*harsh but fair*" (Ludvigsson, 2016) in the face of other cultural norms.

There is a recurring narrative of Swedish exceptionalism in Sweden opening its arms at the crisis's beginning. Some noted the legal obligations of asylum, and the narrative of Swedes doing what is *right* is prominent, especially in Aftonbladet, which also listed how other countries were deviating from this. One columnist, for instance, on the right to asylum, pointed out that "*there is nothing in these agreements that say this obligation ceases after... ..a certain number*" (Hansson, 2015). This is further exemplified through stories of Swedes organizing themselves at train stations, the Swedish railway company allowing refugees onboard without tickets, and writers proposing bringing refugees straight to Sweden. This narrative slowly shifted towards a narrative of wanting to help but being unable to, as papers started reporting on overcrowded housing, congested social services, and overwhelming cues to the Migration agency. This feeds into a narrative of Sweden on the defense; as having done enough. When restrictions were being reported, it tended to be in tandem with lines such as "*We need not be ashamed of our humane policy*" (Svensson, 2015), often noting how the rest of

Europe is failing refugees – blame is shifted to uphold the narrative of humanitarianism.

Self, therefore, in the Social Democrats' election manifesto, is narrated as a responsible force of good. Notably, in the first election after the refugee crisis, the self is not narrated as a welcoming or a moral agent but as one in need of safety and stability. In the Moderate's manifesto, the self is understood as inclusive if one contributes to "*the society we build together*" (Moderaterna, 2018:36) and does not threaten societal functions, implying that extremists who do not share Swedish fundamental values cannot be accepted. Sweden, as such, is further narrated as a "*world-leading welfare nation*" (Socialdemokraterna, 2018: 5), as a country to be proud of but in need of care to not "*destroy what has been built up by generations*" (Moderaterna, 2018:5). The Swedish Democrats, however, narrate Sweden as "*divided between immigrants and Swedes*" (Sverigedemokraterna, 2018: 5) and note their wish to build on Swedish shared identity for societal cohesion. Their debate pieces stand out also in media in their narration of 'the Swedish', noting e.g. that Sweden should not change and "*adapt to immigrants' preferences*" (Bieler, 2015).

The textbook narratives of Sweden are one part European expansionism and one exception. Hi 7-9 notes the Cabo Corso trade station and the colony in North America as attempts that Sweden lacked the military power to defend from other colonialists, while claiming that Sweden mainly tried to become a great European power through expansion around the Baltic Sea. The growth of nationalism combined with the racist conviction of white superiority and the need for cheap resources are furthered in NE.se to explain the European wish to expand its power in other parts of the world. Through the focus on European expansion and its canon of enlightenment, it is narrated as essential history also for Sweden, while navigating the narrative of exceptionalism. Carl von Linné is mentioned as Sweden's foremost scientist at the time, world-famous for his systems of flora and fauna – his racial biologist divisions are, however, not mentioned. NE.se notes the

contradiction of the time's ideas of equity in the West with the suppression of other peoples, and the testimony of a Swedish missionary in Belgian Congo, who witnessed the brutality, is narrated as an example of why protests erupted in Europe.

5.2.2 Perceptions of other

A humanizing narrative is prevalent also in Swedish media, focusing on individual stories of refuge. Aftonbladet wrote, "*Little Silda, 4... ...whines, as children do when they are really tired*" (Israelsson, 2015), furthering a narrative of refugees being similar to the self. Multiple writers emphasized the inhumane treatment refugees faced throughout Europe. There are narratives of gratefulness and ungratefulness connected to this, although the latter is not as prominent. The first one is seen through comments regarding the Swedish effort, such as "*their gratitude when they understood we had saved their lives*" (Larsson Rosvall, 2015), and the second one through stories of refugees turning down their designated housing.

In the Swedish case, other European states are othered by how they are narrated as shameful to the European image by preferring Christian or non-Arab refugees. The Swedish prime minister is quoted with "*My Europe receives people fleeing war... ...together*" (Aftonbladet.se, 2015), effectively saying that it is un-European to do nothing. In the election manifestos of the Social Democrats and the Moderates in 2018, however, the EU is mentioned as a positive other, ensuring European security and development – indicating a shift in othering towards the narrative of defending certain Europeaness.

The exclusionist stances that were othered in 2015 echoed in the later growing narrative of the other as male and culturally different, i.e., threatening. Especially unaccompanied refugee children "*who might be, or maybe are not, minors*" (Hudson, 2016) became the center of attention, discussing the threat that young

men in groups pose to society, equality, and safety. Furthermore, multiculturalism is narrated as a weakness for Europe's security, as terrorists easily can blend into multicultural cities. The threat narrative is further noticeable in the examples that the newspapers post of social media comments, such as "*These pigs from these crappy cultures are useless animals that must be removed from our civilization*" (Kerpner, 2016). This narrative has connotations to the Swedish Democrats' manifesto, in which insecurity is "*a result of uncontrolled immigration, terrorists with war experience roam the streets and squares and take advantage of our welfare and asylum system*" (Sverigedemokraterna, 2018:8). The Swedish Democrats propose only to accept asylum seekers from neighboring countries, furthering a narrative throughout the manifesto of protecting what is Swedish and Nordic.

In Hi 7-9, most peoples are described as developed prior to European colonization. Africa, for instance, is narrated as hosting multiple powerful and resourceful kingdoms that were impossible to defeat until more advanced weaponry arrived. South American peoples through decolonization are described in NE.se as having "*the same dream as the French: the one about freedom, equity and brotherhood*" (NE.se, 2022a). Non-European peoples are generally narrated as doing well before European influence, but mostly as historical civilizations, part of the narrative as referents to Europe and then in relation to Europe.

The Sámi people are barely mentioned in Hi 7-9. In NE.se, the Sámi history is a little more developed, promoting a slightly more humanizing narrative and noting that "*at the start of the 18th century it was only Sámi people who lived in upper Norrland*" (NE.se, 2022d). It elaborates on their fight for rights, political organization, and Sweden's acknowledgment of them as indigenous people in 1997. An in-depth article is offered on the impact of racist ideology on the perception of the Sámi; for instance, "*they could not live as 'civilized' people in real houses*" (NE.se, 2022d). In a summation, NE.se writes that "*Sweden's five acknowledged minorities... ..have long been discriminated but their rights are*

now inscribed in the country's constitution" (NE.se, 2022d) – furthering a narrative of this inequity being a thing of the past.

5.2.3 Perceptions of relationship

The narrative of relationships in media moves from solidarity to control and defense. A prominent blogger stated, “I’m *tired of hearing about ‘us’ and ‘them’*. *There’s no such thing, there’s just an us*” (Thomsen, 2015). Svenska Dagbladet, however, featured pieces already in September asking how long the solidarity will last, noting that this wave of refugees is both more culturally different to Swedes than previous cases and more prone to staying. This narrative grew slowly as the fall went by, and few other EU states stepped up to share responsibility. Culture and gender moved to be in focus, framed as issues caused by the influx of refugees and prior immigration. Multiple articles debated the new skewed gender ratio, using immigration to explain the number of young men and framing it as limiting women’s freedom. Cultural differences were called upon to explain assaults made by newcomers.

This growing narrative increasingly called upon Europe, identifying the crisis as Europe’s responsibility to solve, not Sweden’s. Furthermore, it called for rationality and reason, that there was a limit to what Sweden could do. It is expressed through a decreased focus on individual stories and an increase in stories of challenges. It reached its peak in January, just after ID controls at the Swedish border were instated, when Aftonbladet commented on their narrative throughout the fall. They noted the unreasonableness of Sweden upholding the right to asylum by itself, saying that they took a clear stance for asylum rights but that unregulated immigration could not be at the cost of the national state; that Swedish policy only has functioned due to EU border regulations.

A similar narrative is found in the Social Democrats’ election manifesto. This narrative focuses predominantly on the comfort and safety of self while

discounting the rights of the other. It emphasizes maintaining a strong societal cohesion based on shared values while creating a shared asylum system within the EU. International solidarity is framed in realist security terms, as “*we are safe if others are safe*” (Socialdemokraterna, 2018:31). The Moderates also point to an EU quota of asylum and note that “*Integration... ...is about values and community*” (Moderaterna, 2018:15). The Swedish Democrats take this narrative the furthest by stating how they see Sweden as part of a Nordic, European, Western, and global community – in that order – and stating the need for “*our country to gather around common norms and values, collective memories,customs and traditions*” (Sverigedemokraterna, 2018:25). However, as the only party, they mention securing “*our minorities’ cultural heritage*” (Sverigedemokraterna, 2018:25). In the Social Democrats’ manifesto, minorities are mentioned only in prioritizing the work against hate crimes. Notably, none of the manifestos mention the Sámi.

As in the case of the UK, the narrative of a relationship that crystallizes is one of agency on one’s own behalf, to control something that is narrated as unsustainable. The Swedish Democrats claim “*ambulances cannot rush out into immigrant-dominated areas without armed escorts*” (Sverigedemokraterna, 2018:8) and emphasize their work for a Sweden where one should be able to feel safe, indicating that immigration and other cultures are reasons not to.

The textbook narratives point to the consequences of European excursions, acknowledging that “*for many of the peoples [the Europeans] encountered the meeting meant a catastrophe*” (Nilsson et al., 2021:80). NE.se writes

“*We will never know what these cultures might have looked like if they had continued to develop. The indigenous peoples were instead allowed to live their lives in the shadow of the mighty conquerors of Europe and their culture.*” (NE.se, 2022b)

Again, narratives of Swedish exceptionalism and European expansion are navigated – noting racism, beliefs of superiority, and the slave trade as European traits but pointing to Sweden’s lesser role; “*the Swedish slave trade, however, was not at all as extensive as that of the great colonial powers*” (NE.se, 2022c). India and British colonialism are in focus also in the Swedish textbooks, noting how British colonialists were convinced of their cultural superiority and how Indians organized themselves for non-cooperation to force the British away. The brutality of imperialism is exemplified with Belgian Kongo. African resistance is narrated as consistent, noting riots almost all over the continent, and Hi 7-9 gives multiple examples. However, Swedish contributions to the imagery and logic of racism and imperialism and the benefits reaped by European imperial trade go unmentioned. In a specialization section of Hi 7-9, racial biology is developed upon, explaining how “*Sweden early was leading in the area*” (Nilsson et al., 2021:276) and pointing out that this science now has been proven wrong. A 1902 school poster of ‘races’ is pictured, but the story does not tell how long these beliefs were taught or how these images were changed after racial biology was discredited. NE.se, however, furthers a narrative that corrects language use originating in previous history telling; for instance, noting that calling native Americans ‘Indian’ is no longer appropriate and acknowledging that although it is commonly said that European ‘discovered’ other parts of the world, they were already known by those living there.

The Swedish expansion into Norrland (the most northern part of Sweden) and Sápmi is narrated mostly as a demographic change and placed in the section of Sweden’s democratization and development. A smaller segment in Hi 7-9 notes that “*today there are historians who describe... [it] ...as a ‘colonization’ of Norrland*” (Nilsson et al., 2021:195) – not fully acknowledging the similarities to coloniality. In NE.se, the narrative of the impact of Swedish industrialization on Sápmi is more profound, noting how, in the 17th century, “*Swedish authorities began to forcibly Christianize the Sami*” (NE.se, 2022). It further briefly notes

that the relationship between Sweden and Sápmi is not always free of conflict, even today.

Sweden's growing economy is narrated as dependent on the fast economic growth of other countries in the West and labor immigration. Immigrants are narrated as coming for work or fleeing persecution and bringing new cultural influences to Sweden. However, it is also mentioned that while some grew to be viewed as 'Swedish', others were faced with hostility and suspicion (Nilsson et al., 2021).

To a more significant extent than in the UK, the Swedish textbooks narrate present-day international relations as shaped by colonialism. For instance, NE.se notes that some view present-day South America, Asia, and Africa as subject to a new colonialism, in which rich countries continue to exploit the economic benefits reaped by colonialism, but that others believe that these countries can only develop through exchange with the West. The effects of colonialism on new states are further explained as a reason for prolonged conflicts and economic issues, as industries had been angled towards European resource extraction.

6 Concluding remarks

When interpreting the narratives that emerge in the analysis, the silences are almost equally important to understand the recreation of ontological insecurity – most evident in relation to narration of the Sámi, which was unexpectedly scarce in the material. The media narratives are predominantly coherent with previous research on the refugee crisis (Ozdora-Aksak et al., 2021), but the comparison between Sweden and the UK indicates that the image of self plays a significant role in how the relationship to others is understood and why their presence is leading to ontological insecurity. Rooted in the colonial logic of self as self-contained and connecting back to Hall (2011) and the understanding of identities being shaped within specific discourses, a takeaway might be how narrowly 'self' is perceived, as threatened group identity tends to become more exclusive. Connected to societal beliefs in maintaining an in-group image, it is interesting how European values and belonging play out in both cases; connecting their values to Europeanness shows a perception of a shared ideoscape, history, and trajectory.

Seeing these narratives as part of a reconciliation process, the competing public narratives could be viewed as various stages in-group, with some being open towards the other and some being very protective of self. Concerning sociopsychological reconciliation, some of the narratives of responsibility do tie into humanizing the rival and the recognition of in-group wrongs. Unfortunately, the dominant narrative in both Sweden and the UK instead seems to be the one of threat/pressure, which appears one-sided and general in its understanding of the other. Not the least, the imagery in Daily Mail and the quotes from Swedish social media fall in line with Jahoda's work on social representations of the other as immoral, furthering narratives of both self and other that trigger insecurity of being and a sense that the European self is culturally threatened. Ethical

navigations are essential, as all narratives draw upon morality in how the other and the insecurity should be handled.

Connecting back to prior studies of colonialism in textbooks, both the Swedish and UK textbooks use abstract language and reference the European ideas of the time when referring to colonial acts and imperialism, which Leone and Mastrovito (2010) argued promotes 'coping with loss' rather than advancing reconciliation. While the Swedish ones appear to have a more concrete narrative regarding colonial crimes in general and colonialism as a force influencing the present, they lack self-reflectiveness concerning Sweden's settler-colonialism and navigate an ideological dilemma by playing into Swedish exceptionalism, as being European, but *good* European. They dismiss colonization of Sápmi as something different through evasive phrasing and placing it in sections of democratization rather than connecting it to colonialism. In both cases, the books further a naturalizing narrative of the colonial condition – the UK specifically – and its decolonization is depoliticized and narrated as concluded. Interestingly, narratives of settler-colonialism are rare, while the need for reconciliation tend to be the most acknowledged in those societies today. The colonial past is othered instead of owned up to, as in Rumelili's (2018) analysis of EU identity. Perspectives of truth and justice – key concepts of reconciliation – are rarely touched upon, and in the cases where they are, they refer to specific incidents that are narrated as exceptions. The same goes for the narration of violent features of colonialism, in which Belgium's treatment of Kongo is narrated as something the 'self' would never do.

Of course, it should be considered that these textbooks are for 12-15-year-olds, which might impact how atrocities are narrated. However, it is well known that education and textbooks do play a central and intentional role in shaping national identity. The narration of the past, of the other, colonialism, and the Sámi conflict, for instance, must therefore be seen as conscious choices, reflecting dominant perceptions.

Reiterating Steele (2008), both othering the past and glorifying it – as the Conservatives seemed to do – could be read as psychological responses to preserve self-image and strive for positive distinction compared to the other. Faced with the other, as people in both the UK and Sweden have been for some years now, the routinized critical encounters may have changed self-identities on individual levels and in some communities. However, most of the narrative still upholds a colonial perception of self as better, righteous, and developed, leading to ontological insecurity when forced to handle critical encounters that challenge that.

This thesis posits that a more reflexive and truthful account of the past would enable seeing the other not as inferior and threatening to European values but as an equal with whom the structural relationship should change. The closest the material comes to this is the Labour manifesto's proposal to reset relationships with the global south – indicating that there is public opinion in favor of reconciliatory moves. However, the textbook narratives indicate that there is insufficient general knowledge of past atrocities; by furthering a narrative where this is understood as neutral history, disconnected from the present, proposals of reparations or structural change are not based on a shared understanding of responsibility and the willingness to reconcile is thus lacking. The other is not presented as an equal party but as subjects that furthered European development or fulfill European self-identity. Students are taught Europe's self-identity as moral, developed, and humanitarian, which is echoed in dominant election manifestos and public debate. The anchoring mechanisms that are shaped by this lead to anxiety and ontological insecurity when self is met with other and the perception of their relationship is challenged. The anxiety-controlling dominant response becomes exclusivity and protectionism, rather than self-reflexivity and willingness to reconcile – effectively locking Europe in a spiral of insecurity, as globalization and multiculturalism are here to stay. The influence and presence of

the other will continue to be deemed threatening if Europe's self-perception does not change.

Future research on postcolonial reconciliation would benefit from analyzing obstacles to these self-reflexive narratives, to better understand possible paths forward. In addition, the understanding of ontological insecurity could be advanced through research on personal narratives of self and others, possibly connecting this to different levels of multicultural encounters. Lastly, feminist postcolonial perspectives could nuance the self-understanding of Europe even more, as masculinization and feminization is prominent in the material.

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