

Europe, Let's Come Together! - The Eurovision Song Contest and the
European Colonial Legacy

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Introduction

The main argument behind this thesis is that the colonial legacy of Europe has shaped not just the European institutions that dictate who and what is considered to be European and the ideology, norms and values that they should follow, but that the colonial legacy also has had a lasting impact upon how culture is seen and celebrated within European nation-states that were both colonised and colonisers.

Eurovision, as an inter-European event with an international audience, provides valuable insight into pop-culture and cultural politics within Europe. It has mimicked the enlargement of Europe and the growth in the idea of a 'European ideology' since its creation. Founded in 1956 by the European Broadcasting Union¹, Eurovision originally emerged as a collaboration of broadcasters in the Post World War 2 period.

By using critical discourse analysis, primary sources such as EBU statements, statistics provided by Statista and eurovisionworld.com and the European Union², statements by broadcasters and government figures and secondary sources such as journalist reports and academic sources will be used to analyse the cultural and ideological impact of the European colonial legacy through the lens provided by Eurovision.

¹ This will also be referred to as the 'EBU'

² This will also be referred to as the 'EU'

The first chapter of this thesis will analyse culture and the colonial legacy. This section will be broken down into three sections. The first section will analyse how language has been impacted by the colonial legacy through using the case study of the Irish language and British colonialism. The second section will analyse Indigenous identities through the case study of Aboriginal Australia and the approach towards former colonies and overseas territories. As . The third section will analyse Estonia, and how cultural capital and reputation has become an influential part of how culture is viewed within a global event such as Eurovision.

The second part of this thesis will examine how the colonial legacy has become embedded within Western European politics and institutions. The relationship between Eurovision participation and ideological goals will be analysed through using the examples of the Balkan states and Turkey. Both of these examples have become more relevant due to European Union enlargement policy and interest within Eurasia and the Balkan states.

Research Question

“How can we understand the legacy of colonial Europe, in reference to cultural politics and ideological politics, through analysing the Eurovision Song Contest between 2000-2025?”

Within this research question, it identifies the colonial legacy and what this thesis will be analysing. The choice of Eurovision is due to its prominence as one of the largest inter-European contests, with international viewership. The contest is one that has a large, active fan base and has a long history of being used as a tool of propaganda and nation branding. It provides a visual representation as to how the European colonial legacy still exists, and how we can understand this legacy through analysis of not just the media of the song contest, but the historical and cultural significance that the contest, participating broadcasters as representatives for their nation states, and the performers themselves then provide. In deciding to analyse between 2000-2025, it keeps the time frame that is being analysed in regards to the performances as one that remains within a smaller time frame and provides a clear time line of what years will be focused on when analysing this legacy.

Sub-Questions

1. *“How can we asses the impact of European colonial legacies in terms of culture by analysing the Eurovision Song Contest?”*

This sub-question aims to analyse the role that the colonial legacy has had upon culture within Ireland, Indigenous populations and Estonia.

The case study of Ireland was selected due to the decline of the Irish language and influence that British culture has had since the colonisation of Ireland. Using exclusion and othering of the Irish language, and Irish language speakers, English was able to establish itself as culturally dominant. This includes the attitudes towards the Irish language today, and how they have been reflected in the

behaviour of the Irish broadcaster towards language preservation and the crafting of the state after Ireland gained independence.

The case study of Indigenous populations includes analysis on the performance of Australia, The Netherlands and France. Within this case study, the performance of the Australian group Electric Fields and how colonial cultural binaries have contributed to how Aboriginal identities are perceived and assimilate with western European culture will be analysed. How former colonial powers have included or excluded performers from their former colonies will also be analysed in this section, with analysis looking at the performance of The Netherlands in 2021, and France in 2023. This includes issues such as the white-washing of French performances and the French attitude towards the Arab population.

The case study of Estonia is being used in reference to the 2025 entrant, Tommy Cash, and the song “*Espresso Macchiato*”. This section will discuss the idea of cultural capital and reputation, and how cultural capital impacts upon the performance of former colonial nation states. This case study also includes some analysis into how Estonia used the concept of othering against its former colonisers, and the significance of Cash’s background as a Russian-Estonian following his second placing in the competition.

2. “*In what way has European ideology been shaped by the legacy of colonialism?*”

This subquestion addresses the ideological elements of Europe, and how they have become intertwined with the Eurovision Song Contest. The two case studies used in this section are Turkey and the Balkan states.

The case study of Turkey will analyse the position of Turkey as an ‘other’ to Europe, and address why Turkey has faced European exclusion. This includes how Turkey, as a former colonial power, has faced potential exclusion due to being deemed to be a threat to modern Europe as well as the influence that Turkey still has over some Balkan states. It will also analyse the Turkish withdrawal from Eurovision, and the wider context behind this withdrawal.

The case study of the Balkans will analyse how the ideology of Europeanisation is one that has many of the features of colonial ideology, including the use of exclusion and assimilation to become part of participation. This section will further analyse how the divide between the Balkan states, and how this reflects with their participation within Eurovision. This will also analyse potential biases within EBU press releases regarding the Balkan states.

Historiography

1. Eurovision scholarship

To examine Eurovision as a key event within the cultural politics of Europe is one that has been previously explored by Mari Pajala³ and Jess Carniel amongst others⁴. There are several key areas that have emerged when it comes to the study of Eurovision. Irving Wolther identifies there as being 'seven dimensions of the European Song Contest'⁵. This work provides a short framework of an overview as to the different elements to consider when it comes to doing any work within the contest, however the article is brief and there is a difference when it comes to the level of analysis provided to each identified dimension. The 'national-cultural dimension' receives the shortest section in Wolther's work. Paul Jordan identified this⁶ in his own work on Eurovision as nation branding within Estonia, however the gap regarding research into the use of Eurovision as a way of forming a national identity and nation branding is one that has been researched by various authors. The role that nation branding provided to Russia in providing a platform for

³ Mari Pajala, "Mapping Europe," *Europe on and Behind the Screens* 1, no. 2 (2012): p 3-10, <https://doi.org/10.18146/2213-0969.2012.jethc013>.

⁴ Jess Carniel, "Towards a Theory of Participatory Diplomacy via the Eurovision Song Contest," *Media, Culture & Society* 46, no. 5 (2024): 925–41, <https://doi.org/10.1177/01634437231224080>.

⁵ Irving Wolfer. "More than Just Music: The Seven Dimensions of the Eurovision Song Contest." *Popular Music* 31, no. 1 (2012): 165–171. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23325837>.

⁶ Paul Jordan, "The Modern Fairy Tale: Nation Branding, National Identity, and the Eurovision Song Contest in Estonia" (2014), https://doi.org/10.26530/oopen_474310.

propaganda has been analysed by Yana Meerzon and Dmitri Priven⁷. Similarly, the role of Eurovision as cultural diplomacy has been researched through the work of Lea Welslau and Torsten Selck⁸, that explores how propaganda has allowed for Russia and Ukraine to use the contest as a cultural battlefield. As a televised event broadcast to a growing audience, Eurovision has provided a platform for smaller nations to compete with the established, secure nations on what can be considered to be close to an equal stage.

Murad Ismayilov further looks into this concept of nation branding within the smaller, unknown, non-Western nation with his work ‘State, identity, and the politics of music: Eurovision and nation-building in Azerbaijan’⁹. Marko Pavlyshyn uses the case study of Ukraine and self-identity¹⁰ and how for many non-EU and recent EU member states, appearing on the Eurovision stage is an important part of building themselves up and advertising themselves to Europe. Ukraine’s success in the competition has led to it being a popular research case study, especially as Ukraine is a non-western and non-EU member. Yair’s various works on cultural diplomacy and the use of nation branding also tie it in with the concepts of cultural diplomacy and the importance that is placed on being pro-Europe and pro-integrated Europe. The theme of a pro-Western and a move toward the West is another theme that appears in many of the works that discussing cultural impact¹¹. Motsenbacher is

⁷ Yana Meerzon and Dmitri Priven, "Back to the Future: Imagining a New Russia at the Eurovision Song Contest," in *Performing the 'New' Europe: Identities, Feelings, and Politics in the Eurovision Song Contest*, ed. Karen Fricker and Milija Gluhovic (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 111, https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137367983_6.

⁸ Lea M. Welslau and Torsten J. Selck, “Geopolitics in the ESC: Comparing Russia’s and Ukraine’s Use of Cultural Diplomacy in the Eurovision Song Contest,” *New Perspectives* 32, no. 1 (2024): 5–29

⁹ Murad Ismayilov, “State, Identity, and the Politics of Music: Eurovision and Nation-Building in Azerbaijan,” *Nationalities Papers* 40, no. 6 (2012): 833–51, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00905992.2012.742990>.

¹⁰ Marko Pavlyshyn, “Ruslana, Serduchka, Jamala: National Self-Imaging in Ukraine’s Eurovision Entries,” in *Eurovision: Identity and the International Politics of the Eurovision Song Contest since 1956*, ed. Julie Kalman, Ben Wellings, and Keshia Jacotine (Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 145–161, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-13-9427-0_7.

¹¹ Gad Yair, “Douze Point: Eurovisions and Euro-Divisions in the Eurovision Song Contest – Review of Two Decades of Research,” *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 22, no. 5–6 (2019): 1013–1029

able to expand on the idea of being western oriented through his work discussing language and language policy within Eurovision¹².

Galina Miazhevich identifies the importance Eurovision has provided when it comes to nation branding and the national identity of Ukraine in its post-USSR years¹³. Ukraine has consistently used Eurovision as a way to promote itself to Europe, and distance itself from Russia. Welslau and Selck¹⁴ in their study regarding the relationship between Russia and Ukraine between 2014-2017 in terms of cultural diplomacy examine the period after the beginning of the Crimean War, using Ukraine's winning entry in 2016 (1944 by Jamala) as an example of how the televoting system is also one that is used to punish and reward countries. Despite there being no official political affiliation between broadcasters and nation states, when it comes to the voting when it is given to the public, this idea seems to be one that is often forgotten about by fans. In 2016 the Russian act was boo'd by the audience, as a way of showing opposition toward Russia, their participation and current government policy¹⁵. Voting within Eurovision can also be used as a way to determine current political influence, or hegemony between nation states. Yair and Maman identify the role that the voting plays when it comes to hegemony in their 1996 work¹⁶ and Adrian Kavanagh has done significant work into the voting patterns of Eurovision, and for many years voting blocs were something that was

¹² Heiko Motschenbacher, "The ESC's Language Policy and the Language Ideologies It Indexes," in *Language, Normativity and Europeanisation: Discursive Evidence from the Eurovision Song Contest* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016)

¹³ Galina Miazhevich, "Ukrainian Nation Branding Offline and Online: Verka Serduchka at the Eurovision Song Contest," *Europe-Asia Studies* 64, no. 8 (2012): 1505–1523, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09668136.2012.712274>.

¹⁴ Lea M. Welslau and Torsten J. Selck, "Geopolitics in the ESC: Comparing Russia's and Ukraine's Use of Cultural Diplomacy in the Eurovision Song Contest," *New Perspectives* 32, no. 1 (2024): 5–29

¹⁵ Maria Kyriakidou, Michael Skey, Julie Uldam, and Patrick McCurdy, "Media Events and Cosmopolitan Fandom: 'Playful Nationalism' in the Eurovision Song Contest," *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 21, no. 6 (2018): 603–18,

¹⁶ Gad Yair and Daniel Maman, "The Persistent Structure of Hegemony in the Eurovision Song Contest," *Acta Sociologica* 39, no. 3 (1996): 309–325, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4194833>.

one of the most common areas of study amongst Eurovision scholars¹⁷. This line of scholarship briefly hints at the ideas behind why there are these types of relationships and connections, and Akšamija is able to expand on this through how the differences between culture and points of reference are understood and how this translates within the contest¹⁸.

Dean Vuletic's work has also influenced how Eurovision is viewed in terms of the democratic process behind the voting system¹⁹, and the relationship this has with many of the studies into the relationship between Eurovision and queer politics. The impact of the queer community within the Eurovision fanbase and history is something that cannot be ignored. Kyriakidou et al. touch upon the LGBTQ+ representation within Eurovision when discussing the concept of 'playful nationalism'²⁰. They identify that queerness is celebrated, and seems to have become adopted as part of the Eurovision world or 'bubble' despite there not being a general consensus amongst competing countries regarding gay rights.

One of the areas that has not been studied regarding Eurovision is the relationship that Eurovision has with the colonial legacy, and how the European colonial legacy has impacted upon the type of performances and reception received by performances, as well as how the colonial backgrounds of the institutions involved such as the governing systems of nation-states and organisations like the EBU has impacted upon Eurovision.

2. European and colonial scholarship

¹⁷ Adrian Kavanagh, "Politics, Ireland and the Eurovision Song Contest," in *Proceedings of the Political Studies Association of Ireland Conference*, Dublin, (2010), p 3-4.

¹⁸ Azra Akšamija, "Eurovision Song Contest: Between Symbolism of European Unity and a Vision of the Wild, Wild East," in *Europe Lost and Found*, ed. Debbie Lisle, William Callahan, and Cynthia Weber (2005): 4

¹⁹ Dean Vuletic, "Public Diplomacy and Decision-Making in the Eurovision Song Contest," in *Popular Music and Public Diplomacy*, ed. Mario Dunkel and Sina Nitzsche (Bielefeld, Germany: transcript Verlag, 2019), 302-303.

²⁰ Maria Kyriakidou, Michael Skey, Julie Uldam, and Patrick McCurdy, "Media Events and Cosmopolitan Fandom: 'Playful Nationalism' in the Eurovision Song Contest," *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 21, no. 6 (2018): 603-18,

The article by Sierp discusses the attitude that the EU holds towards the colonial history of Europe, and how amnesia has contributed to the relationship that the EU and Europe has towards its colonial history²¹. Bayert and Bertrand argue as to what culture is by using the examples of architecture and other factors that are unique to part of identity, and that these all have been shaped by colonialism and imperialism in both former colonised nation-states as well as the former colonisers²². European colonialism is not built solely on the colonialism outside of Europe, as Cavanagh addresses the colonial history of Ireland²³ whilst Lehtola provides an in-depth analysis as to the relationship between the Sámi and colonialism²⁴. Scholars such as Tebble are able to give more of an idea as to the importance of culture, and culture as part of the identity of the nation state itself²⁵.

Studies by Alfarhan²⁶ and Crowley²⁷ further explore the role of language and linguistics, and how these processes are part of the colonisation and then the colonial legacy through how language presents itself. This is also something that is present in the work of Motsenbacher, discussed within the Eurovision section of the historiography. Language education, and how language is shaped by colonial

²¹ Aline Sierp, "EU Memory Politics and Europe's Forgotten Colonial Past," *Interventions* 22, no. 6 (2020) <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369801x.2020.1749701>.

²² Jean-François Bayart and Romain Bertrand, "De quel 'legs colonial' parle-t-on?," *Esprit*, no. 12 (December 2006): 137-138.

²³ Edward Cavanagh, "Kingdom or Colony? English or British?: Early Modern Ireland and the Colonialism Question," *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History* 14, no. 2 (Summer 2013), <https://doi.org/10.1353/cch.2013.0031>

²⁴ Veli-Pekka Lehtola, "Sámi Histories, Colonialism, and Finland," *Arctic Anthropology* 52, no. 2 (2015): 25, <https://doi.org/10.3368/aa.52.2.22>.

²⁵ Adam James Tebble, "Exclusion for Democracy," *Political Theory* 34, no. 4 (2006): 463-66, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0090591706288519>.

²⁶ Ibrahim Alfarhan, "English as a Global Language and the Effects on Culture and Identity," *American Research Journal of English and Literature* 2 (2016), <https://doi.org/10.21694/2378-9026.16010>.

²⁷ Tony Crowley, "Colonialism and Language," *Scripps Faculty Publications and Research, Scholarship @ Claremont*, January 1, 2008

legacies is further discussed by Shin and Kubota in their work analysing post colonialism and globalisation²⁸.

Ramesh Krishnamurthy further discusses how the language we use to talk about colonialism and connotations as part of that language have become an important part of how we regard the relationship and colonialism²⁹. In recognising that language has a role within how narratives are constructed, the work of Mechkarini, Rutherford and Sébe discusses how memory politics and the control of narrative and legacies have become part of how we view the colonial legacy and develop it as a concept that becomes easy to understand³⁰. Farzana Shain identifies how within British schools, the attitudes and thoughts towards the British history of colonialism is supported in how they are socialised, using the example of how it was Churchill who considered using the 'Keep Britain White' slogan in the 1955 General Elections and Churchill has become a revered figure within British history due to his efforts in the Second World War³¹. The work of Indigenous scholars such as Kim TallBear provides a valuable perspective when it comes to the experience of Indigenous people and how they view their colonial history, as it takes the focus away from a western leaning and western oriented bias³².

In identifying what makes up what we consider 'Europe' there are multiple different lines of scholarship that discuss what could be considered to be the

²⁸ Hyunjung Shin and Ryuko Kubota, "Postcolonialism and Globalization in Language Education," in *The Handbook of Educational Linguistics*, ed. Bernard Spolsky and Francis M. Hult (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), 208, <https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470694138.ch15>.

²⁹ Ramesh Krishnamurthy, "Ethnic, Racial and Tribal: The Language of Racism?" in *Texts and Practices: Readings in Critical Discourse Analysis*, ed. Carmen-Rosa Caldas-Coulthard and R. Malcolm Coulthard (London: Routledge, 1996),

³⁰ Sara Mechkarini, Dega Siân Rutherford, and Berny Sébe, "Unmasking the Colonial Past: Memory, Narrative, and Legacy," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 51, no. 5 (2023): 829-830, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03086534.2023.2262873>.

³¹ Farzana Shain, "Race Matters: Confronting the Legacy of Empire and Colonialism," *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 41, no. 2 (2020): 277 <https://doi.org/10.1080/01425692.2020.1717104>.

³² Kim TallBear, "Making Love and Relations beyond Settler Sex and Family," in *Making Kin Not Population: Reconceiving Generations*, ed. Adele Clarke and Donna Haraway (Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press, 2018

European framework. It is important to note that the background of many of the more prominent scholars of behind the idea of there being a shared European ideology are from western Europe, and largely have a pro-EU stance. John McCormick identifies seventeen different qualities that become part of what he calls 'Europeanism'³³, however as part of this definition McCormick also equates Europeanism with the imagery of the symbols of the EU. When it comes to European ideology, a distinction should be made between an ideology that is shared by Europe, and the individual ideologies of European states. Petrović makes the argument that within Europe, the growth of what he calls the 'EU Ideology' is one that comes from the growth of the European Union and sees a broader and possibly more general ideology applied to European nation-states³⁴. The surveys carried out by Nano, Zapryanova and Toth regarding the expansion and ideological content of the EU also shows the ideological leanings of EU policy, as well as their geo-economic impact. The indices created mean that it is then possible to see how policy leans left or right, and how it ties in with the idea of the ideology of policies and how EU member states tie in with ideology³⁵.

Biebuyck argues that the idea of the EU and the European Ideology is one that stems from a constructed imaginary, and identifies how one of the problems with the imaginary and the idea of 'Theoretical Europe' is that this version of Europe needs the governance of 'Official-EU Europe' to be able to enact policy³⁶. Jonathan White identifies how historically Western Europe has always been driven by ideology, and the very nature of integration is one that forms ideologies itself, he identifies that the current ideology of the EU is one that emerged from the Christian

³³ John McCormick, *Europeanism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010; online ed., Oxford Academic, 1 September 2010): 217–20, <https://doi-org.eur.idm.oclc.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199556212.001.0001>.

³⁴ Nikola Petrović, "EU Ideology," *Innovation: The European Journal of Social Science Research* 29, no. 1 (2016): 57

³⁵ Kyriaki Nanou, Galina Zapryanova, and Fanni Toth, "An Ever-Closer Union? Measuring the Expansion and Ideological Content of European Union Policy-Making through an Expert Survey," *European Union Politics* 18, no. 4 (2017): 678–93,

³⁶ William Biebuyck, "European Imaginaries and the Intelligibility of Integration." *Journal of Contemporary European Studies* 18, no. 2 (2010): 164–172. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14782804.2010.486967>.

Democrats, and largely has its basis within German and western Europe post-WW2 however despite this, the ideology of the EU is one that is established but also that tries to be anti-ideology as part of its ideology³⁷. Matthew Blackburn supports this view through how there is a level of ideology as being a constructed imaginary, and within this imaginary there will then be changes depending on who it is that is behind the construction. Therefore for there to be an ideology, there must be an imaginary to begin with³⁸.

Jelena Subotić's work on the Balkans and the concept of europeanisation within the Balkans provides a good resource in terms of studying how the Balkans have become integrated within Europe³⁹. Through authors such as Subotić and Lika it allows for the beginnings of patterns to emerge in terms of how the Balkan states are viewed and othered by the rest of Europe⁴⁰. The process of othering is something that is discussed by scholars such as Ertuğrul and Yılmaz⁴¹ through their work on Turkey, and how othering has played a role within the Turkish identity. Ayhan Kaya furthers this with their work concerning how Islamophobia and right wing populism has shaped the relationship that Turkey has with the EU and Europeanisation⁴². There is extensive studies on Turkey, and the relationship that Turkey has with Europe. Morozov and Rumelili discuss Turkey in the context of Russia and Turkey as Europe-makers, and how the position of Turkey as a rival has become part of the resistance to the idea of Turkey within Europe and how this has built a mutual

³⁷ Jonathan White, "Europeanizing Ideologies," *Journal of European Public Policy* 27, no. 9 (2020) <https://doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2020.1753799>

³⁸ Matthew Blackburn, "The Morphology of Putinism: The Arrangement of Political Concepts into a Coherent Ideology," *Journal of Political Ideologies* (2024) <https://doi.org/10.1080/13569317.2024.2431864>.

³⁹ Jelena Subotić, "Europe Is a State of Mind: Identity and Europeanization in the Balkans," *International Studies Quarterly* 55, no. 2 (2011): 311, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2478.2011.00649.x>.

⁴⁰ Liridon Lika, "The Meaning of the Western Balkans Concept for the EU: Genuine Inclusion or Polite Exclusion?" *Journal of Contemporary European Studies* 31, no. 1 (2023): 2-4, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14782804.2022.2060382>.

⁴¹ Kürşad Ertuğrul and Öznur Akçalı Yılmaz, "The Otherness of Turkey in European Integration," *Turkish Studies* 19, no. 1 (2018): 50-51, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14683849.2017.1396895>.

⁴² Ayhan Kaya, "Right-Wing Populism and Islamophobia in Europe and Their Impact on Turkey-EU Relations," *Turkish Studies* 20, no. 1 (2019):

distrust⁴³. One of the elements in studying Turkey and the Balkans and the impact of colonialism is the impact that concepts such as orientalism has had upon how they are viewed, with Rana Kabbani's work further discussing orientalism⁴⁴ In denying the relationship that Turkey has had with how it frames Europe, it also creates an image into how neocolonialism still holds influence through how the institutions react with perceived threats to their own ideology, something that Calypso Nicolaïdis expands upon⁴⁵.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework.

The main theory that is being used within this thesis is postcolonial theory. The choice behind this theory is due to the analysis of the colonial legacy, and how colonialism has led to societal imbalances. In using this theory, it also allows for Eurocentric narratives to be challenged as to their own bias, and to challenge the power dynamics between states, identity, culture and ideology. By using this theory, it allows me to analyse how the role of a concept such as exclusion has been used as part of colonial ideology to maintain control, and how this is still used within modern Europe.

The main concept that is being used within this thesis is exclusion. The idea of 'othering' falls into exclusion through how othering is employed as part of exclusion. By constructing an 'other', it differentiates and allows for exclusion to become part of how different actors interact. Exclusion and othering have become one of the main concepts within postcolonial theory, and how postcolonial theory is used to asses the extent that colonialism has left an impact.

⁴³ Viatcheslav Morozov and Bahar Rumelili, "The External Constitution of European Identity: Russia and Turkey as Europe-Makers," *Cooperation and Conflict* 47, no. 1 (March 2012): 28–48, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010836711433124>.

⁴⁴ Rana Kabbani, *Imperial Fictions: Europe's Myths of Orient* (London: Pandora, 1994)

⁴⁵ Kalypso Nicolaïdis, "Turkey is European... for Europe's Sake," in *Turkey and the European Union: From Association to Accession?* (The Hague: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, 2004).

Scholars such as Edward Said have used postcolonial theory to explain how othering and exclusion has been used as part of a colonial ideology, and within postcolonial theory it helps to understand how these concepts have impacted upon the culture, economics, governance and relations between actors⁴⁶. Through his work *Orientalism*, he further develops this concept in how othering also results in the exoticism of colonised populations, and what exoticism means when it comes to understanding the divides between East and West.

To give further context as to what is meant by culture within this thesis, Bayart and Bertrand recognise culture to be the architecture, cuisine, clothing and fabrics and urbanisation⁴⁷. This definition has been broadened to also include culture as something that defines the idea of the person, and the identity of the person and personhood. This idea is then further extended to statehood, and how states can use and designate their own culture through cultural narratives. National identity is often linked to culture, and how a nation state celebrates their culture. This is also seen through how the idea of a national culture is developed, one that is usually the dominant culture within the state.

Defining ideology itself becomes more difficult as there is no set formula for determining what can be considered to be an ideology⁴⁸. If the nature of an ideology is something that fluctuates, then it is possible to also argue that the argument in support of a European ideology is also one that fluctuates and is not fixed. Despite this, discourse has emerged regarding what is really considered Europe, and what is

⁴⁶ Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1978.

⁴⁷ Jean-François Bayart and Romain Bertrand, "De quel 'legs colonial' parle-t-on?," *Esprit*, no. 12 (December 2006): 137-138.

⁴⁸ Lilliana Mason, "Distinguishing the Polarizing Effects of Ideology as Identity, Issue Positions, and Issue-Based Identity" (paper presented at the Center for the Study of Democratic Politics Conference on Political Polarization: Media and Communication Influences, Princeton University, May 1, 2015).

really considered European. Scholars such as Freedon have tried to identify ideology as something that is often manipulated to fit within a collection of facts⁴⁹. Biebuyck identifies that to create ideology, there must be an imaginary⁵⁰, and often culture is included in part of this imaginary in what is regarded as the 'cultural imaginary'.

However, ideology will be used in this thesis as a way of examining how Europe is able to continue the colonial ideology that exists, and this has then become part of the legacy of colonial Europe. For the purposes of this thesis, there will be attempts to make a distinction between culture and ideology, rather than viewing them as products of each other. In using these terms to define what is considered to be culture and ideology, it allows me to further explore how exclusion has been used as part of the legacy, and the role that exclusion has upon other aspects related to colonialism, such as globalisation and integration.

Sources and Source Criticism.

The European Broadcasting Union.

The statements made by the EBU will be used as one of the main primary source. As a regulatory union, the EBU has a clear outline of their rules and values, as well as information about their governing body. This will provide valuable information when it comes to understanding the origins of their values, as well as

⁴⁹ Michael Freedon, "Ideology and Political Theory," *Journal of Political Ideologies* 11, no. 1 (2006): 18-19, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13569310500395834>.

⁵⁰ William Biebuyck, "European Imaginaries and the Intelligibility of Integration." *Journal of Contemporary European Studies* 18, no. 2 (2010): 164–172. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14782804.2010.486967>.

how the governing body makes their decisions and what biases may be present in their decisions.

The EBU also regularly issues statements regarding Eurovision participation, their concerns about the governments of member-states in regards to journalistic practice and their own self-performance as an organisation. These statements can all be used as part of critical discourse analysis regarding the body responsible for the organisation of the contest and decisions regarding participation of broadcasters.

The Eurovision Song Contest.

The contest itself will be used as both a visual reference, and a source of information. Many EBU official statements regarding the contest are published via the official Eurovision website rather than by the EBU, and the website provides some statistics regarding how voting points are awarded during the contest. The official rules of the contest, as well as the code of conduct are published via the official Eurovision website and their amendments and changes will be used in the analysis of both culture and ideology, largely focusing on their approach to language and the approach to inclusion.

Official broadcaster statements

Official statements regarding participation and any other matters relating to the contest will be used as a primary source. Broadcasters often put out an independent statement to that of the EBU, and often the official statements contain

much more political language. Specifically in the case of Turkey, this will be used as the Turkish broadcaster has made several statements regarding Turkish participation and the ideological differences between Turkey and Europe. Official broadcaster statements can also be analysed in terms of potential bias and in how they contrast with the statements made by the EBU and how these can be interpreted.

Official statements from governments and government ministers

Statements made from governments and government ministers regarding Eurovision, culture and European inclusion will be used as a primary source to further analyse how culture and ideology are viewed within governmental spheres. This will become part of the discourse surrounding inclusion, and the approach taken by former colonial powers vs. colonised nation states.

Government statements regarding the relationship between Western Europe and Turkey and Western Europe and the Balkans will be used, as well as statements made by Western European countries such as France and other former colonial powers and inter-European bodies such as the EU.

These statements will further analysis, and analysis of potential bias will also play a role in how the European colonial legacy is viewed and supported within Europe. They also will provide information regarding the founding of many European projects such as the EBU, the EU, the Council of Europe and similar bodies, as well

as their stance on inclusion. The EU provides a valuable resource for providing statistics, as well as their own regulations, policy and criteria for membership.

Interviews with Eurovision Participants

By using interviews with Eurovision participants, it allows for there to be a wider context added to the performances, as well as allowing for the voices of participants to be expressed and analysed. These interviews will provide information that is not released by the broadcasters, and will give the personal feelings and experiences of the artists. This allows for further analysis into how statements and policies are reflected in the lived experiences of those competing, and how this relates to the relationship between colonialism and Eurovision.

Methodology

Critical discourse analysis will be the main form of analysis used within this thesis. Fairclough describes language as being a key part of discourse, and so in analysing the statements made within the primary sources it allows for the language and content of statements made within the primary sources to be analysed⁵¹. This method will allow for concepts such as exclusion and inclusion, as well as hegemony and hierarchy, to be applied as criticisms as part of the analysis of whether the colonial legacy within Europe is one that still exists. Using critical discourse analysis also allows for Eurovision to then be included as the visual

⁵¹ Norman Fairclough. "Language and Globalization." *Semiotica*. 2009. 10.1515/SEMI.2009.014.

representation for this discourse, through the reception to performances and interpreting what can be understood from these receptions.

This method also allows for analysis of not just the language and content of texts, but also the methods regarding the creation of statements. This is something that becomes valuable when analysing a concept such as the colonial legacy, as it allows for examination into the author, target audience, date and context behind each source itself. Within any sort of post-colonial area of study, analysis of the author and target audience become important when also considering any bias the author may have, and if this adds further to the discourse itself.

Finally, this method will allow for the social context behind texts to also be considered as part of the analysis of language. As this thesis will be analysing a pop-culture mega event as part of the discourse, the social context behind performances is a useful when considered as part of the overall discourse to be analysed. Critical discourse analysis will allow me to analyse what is said and not said within performances, as well as how this also relates to colonial narratives within current political beliefs.

Chapter 1 - Culture

Eurovision has proven itself to be a melting pot of European culture throughout the history of the contest. Often used as a form of cultural nation branding and for promoting national identity, Eurovision still presents itself as a contest that promotes culture and cultural relations. Whilst the contest is technically between broadcasters, it is the name of the nation-state that contestants compete under.

Cultural erasure was one of the main focuses of colonialism, with settlers aiming to strip native populations of their cultural identity. Indigenous populations saw their languages, belief systems and music stigmatised and removed from society. Bayart and Bertrand argue that this is something that appears in the architecture, cuisine, clothing and fabrics and urbanisation within modern society, and that these all have been shaped by colonialism and imperialism in both former colonised nation-states as well as the former colonisers⁵². Even when looking at the language used to describe native practices and culture today, there is still elements of othering through how they are referred too as ‘ethnic’ and ‘cultural’.

This chapter will analyse how colonialism has impacted upon native populations, and what this tells us about the impact that the colonial legacy has had upon culture through the case studies of Ireland, Indigenous populations such as the Aboriginal Australians and native populations of former and current Overseas Territories, and finally through the case study of Estonia as a former Soviet state.

⁵² Jean-François Bayart and Romain Bertrand, “De quel ‘legs colonial’ parle-t-on?,” *Esprit*, no. 12 (December 2006): 137-138.

1.1 Language

In 1999, the language rule of Eurovision was officially lifted, meaning contestants were no longer limited to singing in one of their national languages. We can see in Fig. 1. the percentages of songs that were sent in a language other than English between 2007-2021⁵³. This raises the question of why English became such a dominant language, and certainly up until the change in the language rule two of the most dominant languages that were used at Eurovision were French, and English. As of 2019, 46.3% of winning songs have been sung in English, whilst 20.9% have been sung in French⁵⁴. Motschenbacher identifies that the use of English isn't just to appeal to Anglophones, but as a way of transnational communication⁵⁵. In the same article, Motsenbacher identifies that English also has

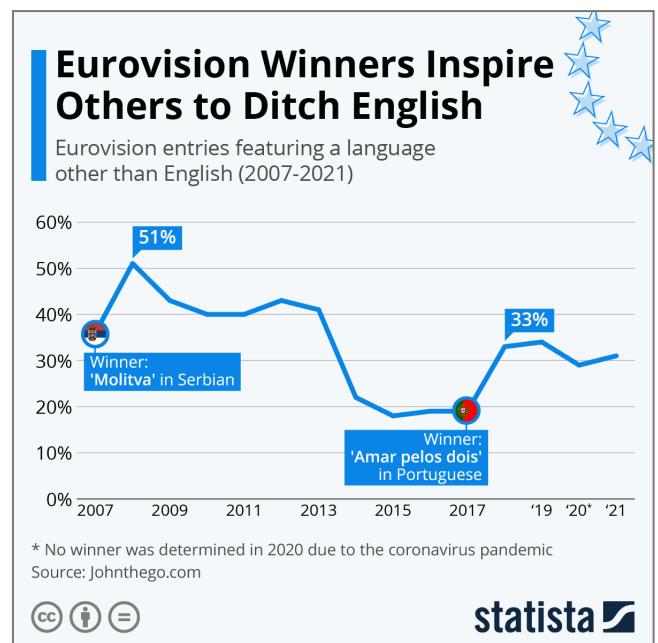


Figure 1. "Eurovision Winners Inspire Others to Ditch English." *Statista*, May 21, 2021. <https://www.statista.com/chart/24905/eurovision-song-contest-languages/>.

⁵³ Figure 1. "Eurovision Winners Inspire Others to Ditch English." *Statista*, May 21, 2021. <https://www.statista.com/chart/24905/eurovision-song-contest-languages/>.

⁵⁴ Victor M. Escudero, "Only Songs Performed in English Do Well?," *Eurovision Song Contest*, December 3, 2019, <https://eurovision.tv/story/only-songs-performed-in-english-do-well>.

⁵⁵ Heiko Motschenbacher, "The ESC's Language Policy and the Language Ideologies It Indexes," in *Language, Normativity and Europeanisation: Discursive Evidence from the Eurovision Song Contest* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016): 142-143 https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-37-56301-9_4.

benefits such as commercial success when used as a non-native language over other language choices⁵⁶.

The original rule introduced in 1966 states regarding languages states;

*“Entries must be performed in one of the official languages of the participating country”*⁵⁷

This rule was reintroduced in 1978, and remained in place until 1998. Whilst this rule was in place it meant that French could be used as a language outside of France, as French is an official language in Belgium, Luxembourg, Morocco, Switzerland and Monaco who all competed during this time period. By comparison, it is only the United Kingdom, Ireland and Malta that recognise English as an official language. Alfarnham states that one of the reasons behind the widespread use of English is due to the British Empire being the largest and the growth of the United States contributing to the need for English to be learnt as a second and third language for the purposes of communication⁵⁸. The use of the English language within Europe can be directly tied to the colonial legacy. Whilst the hegemonic power of the United States can be said to have contributed to the growth in the use of English, the language itself was brought to the Americas through British colonisation.

⁵⁶ Motschenbacher, *Language, Normativity and Europeanisation*, chap. 4: 143-144

⁵⁷ Escudero, “Only Songs Performed in English.”

⁵⁸ Ibrahim Alfarhan, “English as a Global Language and the Effects on Culture and Identity,” *American Research Journal of English and Literature* 2 (2016): 3-4, <https://doi.org/10.21694/2378-9026.16010>.

The decline of the Irish language started with the British plantation and colonising of Ireland. Ireland is often considered to be the early model for later British colonisation. Exclusion was used as a protectionist policy of keeping English from the native Irish to stop cultural immersion by the settlers⁵⁹. The argument presents that this was more of a *hierarchy* than a *hegemony*, if we understand that the reason for the separation was not to immerse the Irish as British subjects and to British culture, but instead to exclude them from the language and culture of the ruling class. Rather than this being a hegemonic adaption with the native Irish, it was instead closer to a process where the British established a cultural hierarchy that placed themselves as the dominant power and culture over that of the natives.

The common argument taken by historians regarding Ireland is that it was not really colonisation, but more a civilisation of the native Irish, even though the British used many similar policies on their arrival to America⁶⁰. However what this doesn't consider is that the idea of 'civilising' a native population is in itself a colonial narrative. As English was introduced as the dominant, or hierarchical, language it began the language shift amongst the population from Irish to English. Language shifts are also indicative of the potential for a cultural shift⁶¹. The cultural shift within Ireland started with the removal of language, and remains due to the hegemonic power that the United Kingdom⁶² still has over Ireland. Ó Catháin identifies that

⁵⁹ Tony Crowley, "Colonialism and Language," *Scripps Faculty Publications and Research, Scholarship @ Claremont*, January 1, 2008

⁶⁰ Edward Cavanagh, "Kingdom or Colony? English or British?: Early Modern Ireland and the Colonialism Question," *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History* 14, no. 2 (Summer 2013), <https://doi.org/10.1353/cch.2013.0031>

⁶¹ Peter McGee, "Endangered Languages: The Case of Irish Gaelic," *Training, Language and Culture* 2, no. 4 (2018): 29, <https://doi.org/10.29366/2018tlc.2.4.2>.

⁶² The United Kingdom will also be referred to as the UK

language shifts often come from a political and societal changes, with the increased use of English being identified as a cause. This is also seen within the political institutions that led to the creation of the Irish Free State and them modern day Republic of Ireland.

One of the points raised is the lack of status given to the Irish language, using the example of how many Irish politicians made their speeches and ran their campaigns in English⁶³. Ó Catháin makes the claim that the native Irish figures were ‘persuaded of the ‘superiority’ of English⁶⁴’. What this fails to recognise is the why behind English was considered to be superior. The superiority of the English language comes from the hierarchical system that existed within colonial Ireland. As English became the language used within governments, it forced conformity amongst the Irish politicians. If they wanted to be included within government, they had to use English rather than As Gaeilge within parliament. The lack of status was given to the Irish language in how English was established as the parliamentary language and the language of the elites.

The Irish language suffered a decline to 2% of native monolingual speakers by the 1900s⁶⁵. In 1937, Bunreacht na hÉireann (The Constitution of Ireland), specifies in Article 8 of The State that;

“1 The Irish language as the national language is the first official language.

⁶³ Brian Ó Catháin, “The Irish Language in Present-day Ireland,” in *Sociolinguistics in Ireland*, ed. Raymond Hickey (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2016), 43-48, https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137453471_2

⁶⁴ Ó Catháin, “The Irish Language in Present-day Ireland,” 47.

⁶⁵ Crowley, “Colonialism and Language,”

2 The English language is recognised as a second official language.

3 Provision may, however, be made by law for the exclusive use of either of the said languages for any one or more official purposes, either throughout the State or in any part thereof.⁶⁶

However despite As Gaeilge being the official first language of Ireland, English has become the language that is predominantly used within every day interactions and within the Irish political system. It was the first president of Ireland, Douglas Hyde, that remarked that English was the language of modernisation⁶⁷. If the head of state is designating English to be the language of modernisation, then it only follows that the continuing use of English was prioritised over reintroducing the Irish language amongst the population. The argument then can also be made that in designating the English language to be the language of modernisation, this shows that the hegemonic power of the English remained in place amongst the Irish.

Within Eurovision, even when the language rules were in place, Ireland has only ever sent one song to Eurovision As Gaeilge, “*Coel na Ghrá*” sung by Sandie Jones in 1972. During the early 20th century radio and TV broadcasting became more accessible. *Rádió Teilifís Éireann*⁶⁸ made their first broadcast in 1961, five years after the creation of the Eurovision Song Contest. However despite efforts made within government to include the Irish language roughly 2.5% of programming was As Gaeilge. It took 35 years before the first Irish language TV

⁶⁶ Government of Ireland, *Bunreacht na hÉireann [Constitution of Ireland]* (1937), Irish Statute Book, <https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/cons/en/html>.

⁶⁷ McGee, “Endangered Languages,” 32

⁶⁸ This will also be known as RTÉ

channel was created in 1996 despite growing pressures placed upon RTÉ to include more Irish language programming⁶⁹. Essentially, native monolingual Irish speakers were further excluded from accessing television broadcasts as they simply were not aired. It therefore makes sense that Ireland has only sent one song to Eurovision As Gaeilge. RTÉ as the participating broadcaster will only send a performing act that it feels represents them and will have success in the competition. RTÉ state in their 2023 Annual Report that part of the vision for RTÉ is the promotion of Irish culture⁷⁰. From this statement, it becomes apparent that within Ireland, the use of the English language has now become part of Irish culture, and then the Irish cultural identity.

There are similar patterns in other European former colonies regarding the use of native languages. Between 2000 and 2023, Finland had only sent two songs in Finnish in 2008 and 2015, with both failing to qualify. It was only in 2023 that Finland managed to qualify with a Finnish language song, Käärijä's 2023 entry "Cha Cha Cha" sung entirely in Finnish secured second place in the contest⁷¹. Similar patterns can be found in other former imperial nation states, since 2000 Estonia have sent 5 songs in Estonian, including one in the regional language Võro⁷². Latvia have sent 3 songs that feature Latvian since their debut in the contest in 2000⁷³,

⁶⁹ Iarfhlaith Watson, "The Irish Language and the Media," in *Sociolinguistics in Ireland*, ed. Raymond Hickey (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 68–73.

⁷⁰ *RTÉ Annual Report and Group Consolidated Financial Statements 2023* (Dublin: RTÉ, 16 September 2024), <https://about.rte.ie/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/RTE-Annual-Report-2023-English-Final.pdf>.

⁷¹ Eurovisionworld, "Finland in Eurovision: Voting & Points," *Eurovisionworld*, accessed April 20, 2025, <https://eurovisionworld.com/eurovision/finland>.

⁷² Eurovisionworld, "Estonia in Eurovision: Voting & Points," *Eurovisionworld*, accessed April 20, 2025, <https://eurovisionworld.com/eurovision/estonia>.

⁷³ Eurovisionworld, "Latvia in Eurovision: Voting & Points," *Eurovisionworld*, accessed April 20, 2025, <https://eurovisionworld.com/eurovision/latvia>.

Georgia have sent 4 songs with Georgian since their 2007 debut⁷⁴. Whilst there is some evidence that there is a resurgence of preference amongst the voting general public for songs sung in native languages, since 2000 only five songs have won the contest that did not include at least some English phrases.

The use of English in the song contest extends further than performances. The contest hosts present in English, rather than using their own native languages. The language used across fan media is predominantly English, or provides an English translation. Statements made by the EBU and Eurovision are written and posted in English. This establishes English as one of the dominant languages of Europe, despite it only being an official language of four participating countries. Shin and Kubota argue that there is a link between globalisation and neocolonialism, and that globalisation is a manifestation of colonialism, due to the element of power within the global system that can be created and controlled⁷⁵. If it is then considered that the English language has become a global language through globalisation, then it benefits still from this process. Through the case study of Ireland, we can see how non-native languages have become established within colonised nation-states, and how through globalisation this process continues to happen with the exclusion of As Gaeilge speakers from national finals due to the dominance that English holds within Irish culture as part of the colonial legacy.

⁷⁴ Eurovisionworld, “Georgia: Eurovision Song Contest Entries,” *Eurovisionworld*, accessed April 20, 2025, <https://eurovisionworld.com/eurovision/georgia>.

⁷⁵ Hyunjung Shin and Ryuko Kubota, “Postcolonialism and Globalization in Language Education,” in *The Handbook of Educational Linguistics*, ed. Bernard Spolsky and Francis M. Hult (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), 208, <https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470694138.ch15>.

1.2 Indigenous Identities

Within Europe it is the white, western European culture that is the most easily recognised. Mechkarini, Rutherford and Sébe recognise that this is part of the colonial legacy, and that it is part of the national identity of many former colonial powers in that they pick and choose which parts of their cultures they want to platform as part of their own nation branding⁷⁶. Sierp furthers this, arguing that the EU itself suffers from amnesia when it comes the colonial legacy of member states, and of the EU itself⁷⁷. During the founding of the European institutions such as the European Economic Community, the Council of Europe and even the EBU many western European nations still held colonies. Now known as 'Overseas Territories', the United Kingdom and France both hold significant amounts of territory, whilst Greenland is still considered part of Denmark and under Danish control.

The relationship that Eurovision, and Europe, has with Indigenous identity and culture is one that is largely glossed over in terms of the colonial legacy of Europe. The negative connotations associated with colonialism and the lack of formal apologies from many of the former European colonial powers gives implications for the view that is held towards the Indigenous populations. Sierp identifies how the European Union still stresses the idea of Europeanisation in terms of agricultural and environmental colonialism⁷⁸. As a contest that prides itself on

⁷⁶ Sara Mechkarini, Dega Siân Rutherford, and Berny Sèbe, "Unmasking the Colonial Past: Memory, Narrative, and Legacy," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 51, no. 5 (2023): 829-830, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03086534.2023.2262873>.

⁷⁷ Aline Sierp, "EU Memory Politics and Europe's Forgotten Colonial Past," *Interventions* 22, no. 6 (2020): 688, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369801x.2020.1749701>.

⁷⁸ Sierp, "EU Memory Politics and Europe's Forgotten Colonial Past,"

diversity, Eurovision has shown a lack of representation of Indigenous culture. This is not to say that there haven't been Indigenous artists who have been representatives within Eurovision for their chosen nation states, however for many they are not representing their Indigenous communities and culture, but instead performing a westernised pop song that has little connection to their own culture. It was in 2024, that for the first time in nine years since Australia first participated in 2015 that a First Nations Aboriginal language was used at Eurovision⁷⁹.

This is not to say that entries considered to be 'ethnic' or 'cultural' aren't common in Eurovision, but often these entries feature well-known elements of the dominant western culture, rather than that of the Indigenous or minority cultures within a nation-state. Often acts that are considered to be more ethnic and cultural have lower placings within Eurovision as they do not have the same cultural reach due to specific cultural references⁸⁰. One of the problems within how these acts are viewed also comes with the use of the terms 'ethnic' and 'cultural'. The study by Krishnamurthy identifies two issues with these terms, the first being that the use of 'ethnic' within media has a pattern that sees it linked with 'minorities' and 'violence', the second being how this term is applied differently depending on which group is being spoken about⁸¹. In using terms such as 'ethnic' and 'cultural' when talking

⁷⁹ The University of Sydney, "Australia's Eurovision Entry Is the First to Sing in First Nations Language: Meet Electric Fields," *News & Opinion*, May 8, 2024, <https://www.sydney.edu.au/news-opinion/news/2024/05/08/australia-eurovision-first-to-sing-in-first-nations-indigenous-language-electric-fields.html>.

⁸⁰ Azra Akšamija, "Eurovision Song Contest: Between Symbolism of European Unity and a Vision of the Wild, Wild East," in *Europe Lost and Found*, ed. Debbie Lisle, William Callahan, and Cynthia Weber (2005): 4

⁸¹ Ramesh Krishnamurthy, "Ethnic, Racial and Tribal: The Language of Racism?" in *Texts and Practices: Readings in Critical Discourse Analysis*, ed. Carmen-Rosa Caldas-Coulthard and R. Malcolm Coulthard (London: Routledge, 1996), 142-146, <https://doi.org/10.13140/2.1.4838.0167>.

about the expression of Indigenous culture, it falls into the same pattern of othering culture. By using these terms it creates a category and places non-dominant culture into this category, and separates and identifies Indigenous culture as being 'other' to the national culture. The othering of Indigenous identities can be seen through the words of the founder of the Carlisle Indian Industrial School, Richard H. Pratt. Pratt infamously remarked that;

"A great general has said that the only good Indian is a dead one... In a sense, I agree with the sentiment, but only in this: that all the Indian there is in the race should be dead. Kill the Indian in him, and save the man⁸²."

Within this statement, 'Indian' is the term given to the Indigenous Native Americans, rather to those from India. The idea behind the 'Indian Schools' was one that saw children taken from families and removed from their culture. This is something that was seen across the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, with many of these children being referred to as 'lost generations'. The same colonial mindset and way of thinking is something that is still subconsciously taught within schools. Shain identifies how this has been spread and grown within The U.K through the use of the schooling system and how embedded within it the undertones of the colonial legacy are⁸³. In a way, this creates a similarity between the 'Indian schools' and modern day schooling, as both are used as a way to socialise the culture of colonialism into students.

⁸² Richard H. Pratt, "The Advantages of Mingling Indians with Whites," in *Proceedings of the National Conference of Charities and Correction at the Nineteenth Annual Session Held in Denver, Col., June 23-29, 1892*, ed. Isabel C. Barrows (Boston: Geo. H. Ellis, 1892), 46.

⁸³ Farzana Shain, "Race Matters: Confronting the Legacy of Empire and Colonialism," *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 41, no. 2 (2020): 273, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01425692.2020.1717104>.

To refer back to Australia, the 2024 performance by Electric Fields of ‘One Milkali (One Blood)’ does not just feature Indigenous instrumentals, costumes or dancing, but instead embraces Aboriginal culture. The LED lights feature Aboriginal symbols and artwork, whilst during the performance an Aboriginal didgeridoo player comes onto the stage and performs a traditional dance, dressed in traditional Aboriginal clothing⁸⁴. It features a mixture of the language used by the Anangu, Pitjantjatjara, Yankunytjatjara, and English. The song, in many ways, combined the Indigenous Aboriginal identity with the identity of modern Australia as a settler colony turned independent nation-state. The lyrics of the song make reference to both elements of modern culture, such as the ‘Fleetwood Macs and the Janets’ whilst also repeating the line ‘I may be dreaming’ as part of the chorus and referencing the should and belonging to ‘her’. The use of dreaming could be seen to be a reference to the Dreaming, as well as the spiritual ideas of the earth and personhood that are a large part of Aboriginal Australian beliefs. The performance did not qualify past the semi-final, and an element of this could be due to the quality of the song and its live performance. However it becomes important to also consider other factors, such as the differences between Indigenous and Aboriginal culture and European culture.

O’Sullivan raises the point that within Aboriginal pre-Christian communities, gender did not follow the same binaries as that of the western colonisers. The enforcement of gender binaries was not just a promotion of Christian, western

⁸⁴ Eurovision Song Contest. “Electric Fields – One Milkali (One Blood) (LIVE) | Australia 🇦🇺 | First Semi-Final | Eurovision 2024.” *Eurovision.tv*, May 7, 2024. <https://eurovision.tv/video/electric-fields-one-milkali-one-blood-live-australia-first-semi-final-eurovision-2024>.

values but it also destroyed Aboriginal societal hierarchy that existed through the kinship⁸⁵. First Nations Dakota scholar Kim TallBear gives an insight into the life of Indigenous people being forced into monogamic structures that do not exist within their culture and community, and within this she highlights that the categorisation in terms of sexuality and gender is something that was introduced by colonisers⁸⁶. In an interview the lead singer of the group, Zaachariaha Fielding, speaks about his experience as an Aboriginal person and how the expression of Aboriginal culture and society is not one that is able to be translated into English⁸⁷. Fielding identifies himself as being part of the queer community, and uses both male and female pronouns whilst presenting with a more feminine style. To a western audience, Fielding's appearance could be said to be 'androgynous' or 'genderqueer' however within his own Aboriginal culture these binaries do not exist.

Whilst an argument could be made that the performance didn't qualify due to homophobia within Europe, there have been many other queer and LGBTQ+ performers who have seen success in the contest. Instead, it is more likely that for a European audience they were not able to understand the context of the performance. In an interview with *T* Australia in 2021, Fielding states;

⁸⁵ Sandy O'Sullivan, "The Colonial Project of Gender (and Everything Else)," *Genealogy* 5, no. 3 (2021): 2-6, <https://doi.org/10.3390/genealogy5030067>.

⁸⁶ Kim TallBear, "Making Love and Relations beyond Settler Sex and Family," in *Making Kin Not Population: Reconceiving Generations*, ed. Adele Clarke and Donna Haraway (Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press, 2018), 152-255.

⁸⁷ wiwibloggs, "🇦🇺 Electric Fields (Australia Eurovision 2024) | Emporia Lounge Interview in Malmö," *YouTube* video, 16:15, published May 3, 2025, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bXZ8SW0F_YI.

“Western culture has a lot of rules and it just made it difficult to adjust.. I’m still finding it hard, but I’m doing OK⁸⁸. ”

This quotation highlights the differences between western and Indigenous culture through Fielding’s lived experience. Even for the modern experience of those raised within Aboriginal communities, integration with western culture is one that appears with rules and restrictions as to the behaviours expected within society. Similarly, when looking at the experience of those from former colonies and current overseas territories, patterns emerge within how contestants are selected for their performance at Eurovision.

The only Indigenous European population, the Sámi, have represented Norway several times with the first performance showcasing Sámi culture being in 1980, the song “Sámiid Ædnan” by Sverre Kjelsberg & Mattis Hætta⁸⁹ was sent to protest against the proposed plans for Norway to build windmills within Sámi reindeer herding lands. Despite the population of the Sámi spanning Norway, Sweden, Finland and parts of Russia, Norway and Sweden have been the only two countries that have sent performers that feature Sámi performers. Since 2000, France has sent 10 performers with heritage from former colonies, The U.K has sent 3 performers, The Netherlands has sent 3 performers and Spain has sent 1 performer. The lack of representation can be argued to be due to the amnesia

⁸⁸ *T Australia*, “Tomorrow’s Heroes: Zaachariaha Fielding,” *T Australia* (Australia), December 28, 2021, <https://taustralia.com.au/tomorrows-heroes-zaachariaha-fielding/>. appygallery.com+6taustralia.com.au+6en.wikipedia.org+6

⁸⁹ Eurovision Song Contest. “Sverre Kjelsberg & Mattis Hætta - Sámiid Ædnan (LIVE) | Norway  | Eurovision 1980” *Youtube video*, 3:08, published November 28th, 2022 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b0L81ql8QGY&ab_channel=EurovisionSongContest

regarding the colonial legacy in Europe that Sierp identifies, however due to the representative nature of the contest it does become possible that it really is a question of how countries want to see their history and culture represented⁹⁰. The case of France will be explored in more depth later in this chapter, however it is important to consider that despite

The Dutch entry in 2021, “*Birth of a New Age*” by Jeangu Macrooy was one that drew mixed reactions due to the song being one that very much touched on Macrooy’s own colonial heritage. Macrooy is an Afro-Surinamese performer, and the song features lyrics in Sranan Tongo. The performance of the song itself features distinct references to Macrooy’s heritage, blending together pop music with kawina music⁹¹. Macrooy’s performance can be seen as relating to the need for a new age, free from the legacy of colonialism⁹². Susdorf’s analysis of the song and the reactions to the song raises an argument similar to the ones raised by Sierp regarding how Europe remembers its colonialism, and whilst “*Birth of a New Age*” is written from the perspective of being anti-colonial, to the European audience it seems to instead promote the same idea of glossing over colonialism and inviting in this new utopia of diversity is accepted⁹³. This interpretation is one that can be seen to be making the colonial history more ‘palatable’ for the European audience,

⁹⁰ Sierp, “EU Memory Politics and Europe’s Forgotten Colonial Past,” 688

⁹¹ Eurovision Song Contest. “Jeangu Macrooy – Birth of a New Age – The Netherlands  – Grand Final – Eurovision 2021.” *YouTube Video*, 3:07. May 22, 2021. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o3Da5cr2fTs>.

⁹² Marek Susdorf, “Dutch Politics of Music-Washing at Eurovision: The Monstrous Hybrid of Commodified Musical Legacies of Slavery, Imperialist Utopianism, and White Nationalism,” *Popular Music and Society*, (2025): 6, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03007766.2025.2468989>.

⁹³ Susdorf, “Dutch Politics of Music-Washing at Eurovision,” 5-7.

however despite this the song did not perform well in the contest and finished 23rd out of 26 songs, and scoring 0 points in the televote.

Another example of how the colonial legacy impacts on performances is that of France. Despite having sent 10 acts who have heritage from a former French colony, the majority of these acts have faced degrees of white-washing to make them appear more 'French'. 2023's representative, La Zarra, is of both French Canadian and Moroccan heritage. She gave an interview with Shiham TV where she spoke about her experience with the French broadcaster France Télévisions. La Zarra claims that she was told about her appearance;

"T'es arabe, avec les cheveux bruns, tu as l'air trop arabe. Quand tu es blonde, tu as l'air moins arabe, et les Français n'aiment pas les Arabes"⁹⁴.

This statement translates roughly to;

"You're Arab, with brown hair, you look too Arab. When you're blonde, you look less Arab, and the French don't like Arabs"

Whilst France Télévisions responded to refute the claims, the wider relationship that France has with its former colonies in Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco is one that reflects a much wider problem within their treatment in French society.

France's approach to race relations has been close to non-existent, meaning that there is none of the same recognition given to the minorities that had migrated to France as a result of French colonisation⁹⁵. France passed Loi no 2005-185, with

⁹⁴ Siham TV, "Confidences avec La Zarra : Son parcours, l'Eurovision, et ses combats," YouTube video, 1:21:35, posted March 10, 2024, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nS2IPYXn_Ul&ab_channel=SihamTV.

⁹⁵ Carissa Porter, "Unveiling Feeling French Xenophobia: A Study of Prejudice Against Arabs in France," *University of Arkansas Undergraduate Research Journal* 13, no. 1 (Fall 2012) 9-10

Article 4 bringing into law the teaching of the positives of colonialism within French history. The amendment that was brought in as part of this law stated that;

“ University research programs give the history of the French presence overseas, particularly in North Africa, the place it deserves. School curricula recognise in particular the positive role of the French presence overseas, particularly in North Africa, and give the history and sacrifices of French army fighters from these territories the prominent place to which they are entitled⁹⁶. ”

This introduction of this law, even though it was later amended, seems to only back up La Zarra's claims that racism was involved with how she was treated by the French broadcaster during her Eurovision participation. Other French laws banning the wearing of the burqa and niqab have been criticised for their Islamophobia, however when considering how France has treated their own French-Arab citizens, these laws merely seem to be a continuation of France's own colonial legacy. For her performance of “*Évidemment*”, La Zarra was styled with blonde hair, a glittery headpiece in the style of a beret and a large glittered black dress with red accents⁹⁷. Any references to her Moroccan heritage were removed from the performance.

1.3 Estonia, Cultural Capital and Reputation

⁹⁶ France, Loi n° 2005-158 du 23 février 2005 portant reconnaissance de la Nation et contribution nationale en faveur des Français rapatriés, Journal Officiel de la République Française, February 24, 2005, <https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/jorf/id/JORFTEXT000000444898/>.

⁹⁷ Eurovision Song Contest, "La Zarra - Évidemment (LIVE) | France  | Grand Final | Eurovision 2023," YouTube video, 3:03, posted May 13, 2023, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fOtQJ4o-HoA&ab_channel=EurovisionSongContest

Estonia's 2025 entry, Tommy Cash, with the song "*Espresso Macchiato*". Cash identifies as Estonian, with Russian and Ukrainian heritage. This is something that becomes important when considering Cash is also known for his artistic work that largely focuses on 'post-Soviet' imagery, as well as his own upbringing as part of the ethnically Russian minority within Estonia⁹⁸. Yet the song itself is performed in a mash up of Italian and English, and features references to Italian and Italian-American culture. Cash has not yet provided an answer as to why he decided to reference Italian culture over the culture of his native Estonia, or following the narrative of his other work as part of the post-Soviet identity that he claims.

To use the sociological theory of cultural capital, in its application to international relations we can determine how cultural capital also impacts on hegemony and hierarchy. Igarashi and Saito identify how *cosmopolitanism* impacts upon cultural capital and that in becoming cosmopolitan, it requires a certain amount of social, cultural and economic capital⁹⁹. To then apply this idea to international relations, rather than looking at cultural capital as something that is acquired and built up by the individual, the individual is replaced by the state. Using this theory, it then means that the cultural capital of Estonia and the cultural capital of Italy can be compared to further examine the differences in the cultural impact of both nation-states.

⁹⁸ Matthias Pasdzierny, "Produced by Some Chemical Waste and Cum: TOMMY €A\$H and His Concept of Signifying 'Post-Sovietness,'" *Res Musica* 10 (2018)

⁹⁹ Hiroki Igarashi and Hiro Saito, "Cosmopolitanism as Cultural Capital: Exploring the Intersection of Globalization, Education and Stratification," *Cultural Sociology* 8, no. 3 (2014): 223-224, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1749975514523935>.

The question of why Italian references, rather than Estonian, are made within the song is one that can be understood through examining the cultural capital of each state. One of the contributing factors to cultural capital is that of economics, and Fig. 2 illustrates the real GDP per capita of Estonia vs Italy¹⁰⁰. As the graph shows, Italian Real GDP is higher than that of Estonian Real GDP. To then look further into the idea of cultural capital, alongside applying the idea of social status, we can also consider the cultural history of both Italy and Estonia as well as their colonial history.

Italian culture has a hegemony amongst Europe, with Italian marbles being in demand globally, the Italian painters recognised as some of 'the greats' and Italian food such as wine, coffee and pizza being easily recognisable to a global audience. Italian architecture influenced the building of many historical palaces.

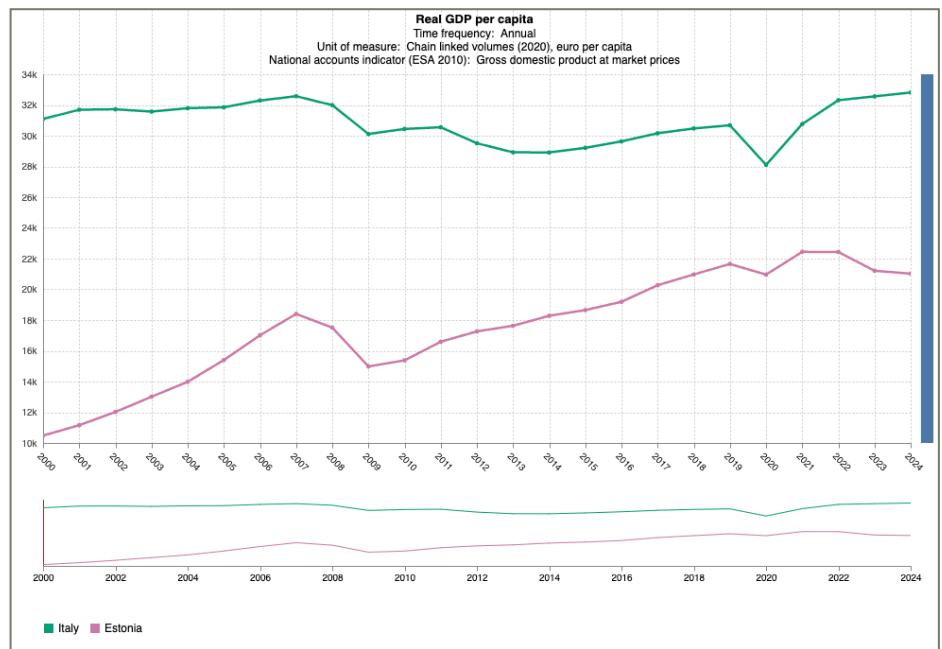


Fig. 2 Eurostat, "Real GDP per Capita," online data code sdg_08_10, DOI: 10.2908/sdg_08_10, last updated April 23, 2025, accessed April 25, 2025, <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/main/data/database>.

Estonia as a comparison, in terms of culture, was subjected to something similar to Ireland where the settlers were the ones who made up the ruling classes

¹⁰⁰ Eurostat, "Real GDP per Capita," online data code sdg_08_10, DOI: 10.2908/sdg_08_10, last updated April 23, 2025, accessed April 25, 2025, <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/main/data/database>.

and introduced their own culture¹⁰¹. Estonian culture was one that was suppressed and perceived as under threat by Estonians from the Russians who arrived after 1940. Symbols related to Estonia do not have the same hegemonic reach, and the reputation of Estonia is one that has suffered as a result of Soviet colonialism. Soviet monuments still make up many of the tourist attractions within the capital city of Tallinn, despite attempts to rebrand the city as being one of the oldest cities in Europe. Russian is still widely understood and used as a lingua franca amongst many of the population. Culturally, Estonia is still in a stage of recovery in terms of reclaiming its cultural identity back from the Soviets and attempting to reclaim its cultural and historic narrative. As a comparison, Italy as a hegemonic and former colonial power does not have the same challenges that Estonia faces when it comes to establishing itself and its reputation. Culturally, Italy has become easily identifiable through its language, food, art and rich history.

To put it in other terms, symbols and stereotypes of Italians are more easily identifiable. Italian cultural capital and Italian hegemony has seen these references become recognised globally through how Italian culture has been allowed to spread. To Return to “*Espresso Macchiato*”, references made within the song to ‘spaghetti’ and ‘mafioso’¹⁰² are ones that are so easily identifiable as being a direct relation to Italy, combined with the purposeful mispronunciation and broken Italian

¹⁰¹ Pille Petersoo, “Reconsidering Otherness: Constructing Estonian Identity,” *Nations and Nationalism* 13, no. 1 (2007): 122, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1469-8129.2007.00276.x>.

¹⁰² Ruxandra Tudor, “Tommy Cash ‘Espresso Macchiato’ Lyrics | Estonia Eurovision 2025,” *Wiwibloggs*, April 10, 2025, <https://wiwibloggs.com/2025/04/10/tommy-cash-espresso-macchiato-lyrics/284155/>.

lyrics¹⁰³ that it caused uproar amongst Italian politicians through being deemed to be offensive stereotyping. Despite this, the song still received points from Italy both the semi-final and grand final in 2025, placing second in the contest and second in the televote. Whilst amongst fan-spheres the argument was the success of the song was due to how well known Tommy Cash is outside of Eurovision.

As mentioned earlier, Cash's parents are both Russian and Ukrainian. Estonia achieved independence from the Soviet Union on August 20th, 1991. One of the reactions within Estonia was the anti-Russian sentiment and the 'othering' of Soviet Russians¹⁰⁴. The influx of Russian migrants to Estonia saw the Minister of Foreign Affairs Tiit Made refer to the Russian population in Estonia who arrived post World War Two as colonisers, refusing to recognise any Russians who had arrived during the time of Soviet control of Estonia as part of a minority within Estonian society¹⁰⁵. The kickback against the Russian-Estonians appeared in the forms of othering, and through comments made such as those by Tiit Made it created an imagery of Russian speaking immigrants as those who only sought violence and to harm the culture and society of the native Estonians. The othering was largely focused on the Russian speaking population, through things such as the promotion of the linguistic similarities between Estonian and Finnish, whilst any similarities between Estonian

¹⁰³ Eurovision Song Contest, "Tommy Cash - Espresso Macchiato (LIVE) | Estonia  | Grand Final | Eurovision 2025," *YouTube video*, 3:03, posted May 17, 2025, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9b9Z5HSCX0I&ab_channel=EurovisionSongContest

¹⁰⁴ Petersoo, "Reconsidering Otherness," 127-129

¹⁰⁵ Petersoo, "Reconsidering Otherness," 124-25

and Russian were shunned¹⁰⁶. Yet Tommy Cash has been open regarding his heritage, in an interview with Müürileht he described himself as;

“not an Estonian boy, I'm a Ukrainian/Kazakh/Russian/Estonian combo!”¹⁰⁷

His selection to represent Estonia saw him receive enough votes within the national final, Eesti Laul, that if he had been running in a presidential election, he would have been either the sixth or seventh largest party. For Estonia, it becomes possible to say that Cash represents the parts of Estonian culture that it has tried to erase as a response to its colonial past. He has become a figure of cultural integration and one that is recognisable and relatable within the Estonian population. Whilst the cultural capital and reputation of Estonia is one that still suffers with the negative connotations that came from their Soviet occupation, the emergence of a figure like Cash is helping to improve the relationship that Estonia has with its own culture.

Chapter 2: Ideology

When it comes to European ideology, a distinction should be made between an ideology that is shared by Europe, and the individual ideologies of European states. Petrović makes the argument that within Europe, the growth of what he calls the ‘EU Ideology’ is one that comes from the growth of the European Union and sees a broader and possibly more general ideology applied to European nation-states¹⁰⁸.

¹⁰⁶ Paul Jordan, *The Modern Fairy Tale: Nation Branding, National Identity and the Eurovision Song Contest in Estonia* (Tartu: University of Tartu Press, 2014), 19–22.

¹⁰⁷ Müürileht, "Uus Eesti Biit: Tommy Cash," August 13, 2013, <https://www.muurileht.ee/uus-eesti-biit-tommy-cash/>.

¹⁰⁸ Nikola Petrović, "EU Ideology," *Innovation: The European Journal of Social Science Research* 29, no. 1 (2016): 57

But to look at this idea of an ideology through a post-colonial perspective, it raises the question as to where this ideology and the ideals and values that make up this ideology originate from.

Petrović identifies that the beginnings of this broader European ideology stem from both national ideologies of member states, and that it is those within a pro-European view that largely push for the identification of European ideology as being such a broad term with shared values, and that the concept of a European ideology is one that has been built by elites through European integration¹⁰⁹. However if the ideology itself is built by elites, how is it determined who is considered an elite. If the elites are considered to be the most powerful nations, then surely it also must be considered as to why these nation-states are the most powerful and where their power stems from.

McCormick identifies seventeen different qualities that become part of what he calls 'Europeanism'¹¹⁰, however as part of this definition McCormick also equates Europeanism with the imagery of the symbols of the EU¹¹¹. However Europe exists outside of the EU, and to equate the concept of Europeanism with one that only belongs to EU member states excludes countries outside of the EU but within the continent of Europe. Those who do not fit with what are considered European ideals are then excluded from being part of Europeanism. In tying the idea of Europeanism to the EU, it creates a trap of basing the idea of a European Ideology on the principles of the EU, rather than considering that the idea of a shared ideology within Europe existed before the formation of the European institutions.

The imaginary of Europe is not a new concept that was birthed with the creation of the EU in 1993, but one that dates back further. In 1930, the words 'European Union' appeared for the first time during the League of Nations conference in

¹⁰⁹ Petrović, "EU Ideology": 58-59

¹¹⁰ John McCormick, *Europeanism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010; online ed., Oxford Academic, 1 September 2010): 217–20, <https://doi-org.eur.idm.oclc.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199556212.001.0001>.

¹¹¹ McCormick, *Europeanism*: 215

Geneva on September 15th¹¹². Winston Churchill suggested the creation of the Council of Europe in his speech at the British Broadcasting Corporation on March 21st, 1993.

“One can imagine that under a world institution embodying or representing the United Nations, and some day all nations, there should come into being a Council of Europe and a Council of Asia...upon the creation of the Council of Europe and the settlement of Europe that the first practical task will be centred... In Europe dwell the historic parent races from whom our Western civilisation has been so largely derived. I believe myself to be what is called a good European and I should deem it a noble task to take part in reviving the fertile genius and in restoring the true greatness of Europe... we must try to make the Council of Europe, or whatever it may be called, into a really effective league with all the strongest forces concerned woven into its texture with a high court to adjust disputes and with forces, armed forces, national or international or both, held ready to enforce these decisions and prevent renewed aggression and the preparation of future wars.”¹¹³

The Council of Europe was created in 1949, with the original members being Belgium, Denmark, France, Great Britain, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Norway and Sweden. Turkey and Greece joined several months later. The birth of the EBU also occurred around this time, and the expansion of the EBU as well as Eurovision is one that has mimicked EU policies of expansion and Europeanisation to some extent. As Eurovision has developed, it has developed what could be called its own form of ideology. The code of conduct and contest rules have helped to foster and develop the ethos and morals of the contest, along with the press statements and bulletins giving their various rulings regarding participation and who is included and excluded. Through Churchill's speech, it becomes possible to understand what the driving forces behind the ideologies that emerged with the new European institutions were, and who it was that was behind them. With many former colonial powers being firmly located in the driving seats, it

¹¹² League of Nations, Organisation of a System of European Federal Union (Geneva, September 15, 1930).

¹¹³ Winston Churchill, Post-War Councils on World Problems: A Four Year Plan for England, broadcast from London over BBC, March 21, 1943.

shows how ideology has been shaped as not just one that has become western European driven, but follows similar principles to that of colonial ideology.

In this chapter, the case studies of Turkey and The Balkans will be used. These case studies will be used to further analyse how ideology has shaped how former colonial powers view each other in the case of Turkey, and how exclusion has been used as part of the wider European ideology in a similar form to colonial ideology to exclude Balkan states who do not conform to Europeanisation.

2.1 Europe and Turkey

Turkey's participation in Eurovision has always been one that was filled with undertones of ideological propaganda. Turkey joined the contest in 1975, and was the second non-European broadcaster to join the contest as a regular participant after Israel. Turkish participation remained until the Turkish Radio and Television Corporation¹¹⁴ withdrew their participation in 2013. TRT pulled its broadcast of the competition following the Finnish entries inclusion of same sex kissing between singer Krista Siegfrids and a backing singer. The reason given in a statement by TRT was :

“ I have told the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) on the Eurovision issue that they deviated from their values. As a result, other countries also left Eurovision. There is a mental chaos at the EBU because of its executives. If they can fix it, we can join Eurovision again¹¹⁵. ”

Ibrahim Eren, the head of TRT released the following statement in 2018;

“ We don't consider to rejoin the contest. We have reasons like the voting system. As a public broadcaster, we also cannot broadcast live at 9 p.m. –when

¹¹⁴ This shall also be referred to as TRT

¹¹⁵ Anthony Granger, "Turkey: EBU Responds to Head of TRT's Eurovision Comments," *Eurovoix*, August 10, 2018, <https://eurovoix.com/2018/08/10/turkey-ebu-responds-to-head-of-trts-eurovision-comments/>.

*children are still awake— someone like the bearded Austrian who wore a skirt, do not believe in genders and says that he is both a man and a woman*¹¹⁶. ”

Eren's statement is referencing the 2014 winner of the contest, Conchita Wurst. Wurst won with the song “*Rise Like A Phoenix*”, in what was considered to be a controversial win within some parts of Europe as Wurst is a bearded drag queen. The two statements from the Turkish broadcaster show how Turkey was moving away from the idea of being part of the wider Europe, through rejecting the process of Europeanism. This is a stark contrast to Turkey's performances in the 2000s. When Turkey won the contest in 2003, and hosted in 2004 one of the things that became apparent was the Turkish opinion towards the EU. In using the slogan “under the same stars” it identifies Turkey as the same as the rest of Europe, and uses this as part of pro-European and pro-EU propaganda. Given how much Turkey put into using Eurovision as part of their campaign for recognition as ‘European’, their withdrawal comes from a changing of attitudes towards Turkey as well as a changing of Turkish regimes.

The main opponents to Turkish EU membership have been countries with large Turkish populations, however the main opponents came from the Christian Democratic Parties of Europe¹¹⁷. There is an underlying sense of there being opposition to Turkey within Western Europe also stemming from a place of racism, the main opposition to Turkey all being nation-states that have the largest populations of Turkish immigrants¹¹⁸. The influence and legacy that the Ottomans had over the Balkans and Eastern Europe leaves Turkey stuck in a place between wanting to be considered European, but also fearing that in becoming European,

¹¹⁶ Anthony Granger, "Turkey: EBU Responds to Head of TRT's Eurovision Comments," *Eurovoix*, August 10, 2018, <https://eurovoix.com/2018/08/10/turkey-ebu-responds-to-head-of-trts-eurovision-comments/>.

¹¹⁷ Kürşad Ertuğrul and Öznur Akçalı Yılmaz, "The Otherness of Turkey in European Integration," *Turkish Studies* 19, no. 1 (2018): 52, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14683849.2017.1408691>.

¹¹⁸ Meltem Müftüler-Baç, "Through the Looking Glass: Turkey in Europe," *Turkish Studies* 1, no. 1 (2000): 25, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14683840008721219>.

they will lose their sovereignty and integrity¹¹⁹. The threat that Turkey provides to the ideology of western Europe is no different than the threat that western Europe provides to Turkey. Both are similar in that the themes are those of a fear of the threat to the existing ideology. The inclusion of Turkey is one that would see more than just an integration in terms of economic and geographic size, but would also see changes in how Europeanism has been allowed to tell its own history and the ideals on which the European Collective Identity has formed¹²⁰. There is also the added layer of looking at how Western Europe is now addressing an alternative imperialist power. Despite Turkey being a member of the EEC and NATO, in 2007 French President Nicolas Sarkozy stated;

“I do not think that Turkey has a place in Europe¹²¹.”

The French opposition to Turkey is one that can be seen through their own prejudice towards the French-Arab population. As mentioned in Chapter 1 regarding culture, French law has banned the wearing of the burqa and niqab. However even within this, France is one country within the EU. Geographically, Turkey is situated within both Europe and Asia, meaning that it is technically European. However like many of the Balkan states, the technicality that comes with being European does not necessarily provide automatic inclusion.

It raises a question as to *why* the opposition to Turkey is so prominent within so many former colonial powers, something that is also seen in the opposition to Russia. With both Russia and Turkey having their own imperial and colonial history as colonisers rather than the colonised, it does lead to questions regarding if there is a power play between former colonial power. Could the opposition to Turkey

¹¹⁹ Dietrich Jung, *Turkey and Europe: Ongoing Hypocrisy?* (Copenhagen: Copenhagen Peace Research Institute, September 2001), <https://ciatext.cc.columbia.edu/wps/jud03/>.

¹²⁰ Kürşad Ertuğrul and Öznur Akçalı Yılmaz, "The Otherness of Turkey in European Integration," *Turkish Studies* 19, no. 1 (2018): 50-51, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14683849.2017.1396895>.

¹²¹ Soner Cagaptay, "Sarkozy's Policy on Turkey's EU Accession: Bad for France?" *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy*, January 1, 2008, <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/sarkozys-policy-turkeys-eu-accession-bad-france>.

being considered part of Europe stem from Turkey being a nation-state that has the same strong identity that is seen within former colonial powers, which has built to the distrust within Europe that Turkish inclusion would also be an attempt to increase their influence over more insecure states, especially the Balkans which were formerly part of the Ottoman Empire. In viewing Turkey as a rival colonial power, the stereotypes that have fuelled the anti-Turkish inclusion within the EU have found themselves begin to grow roots and flourish¹²².

Morozov and Rumelili identify how the history between the Ottoman's and Europe has also shaped how Turkey is viewed, and how Turkey views Europe as a way of explaining the distrust between the EU and Turkey¹²³. For Turkey to be considered European, it means removing the parts of its national imaginary that could be said to define the Turkish identity, as well as parts of Turkish ideology. Whilst more secular Europeans claim that the EU and ideals of Europeanisation are not rooted within Christianity, the religious hegemony and merging of church and state in the early foundation of Western European nation-states has also made religion and the religious morals that have shaped Western European politics and identities part of the European Ideology. For Turkey, the ties it holds with other Islamic nations such as Yemen and Azerbaijan have simply raised suspicion amongst Europe and caused questions over whether it is possible to Turkey to then maintain the 'Turkic' identity as well as adopting a 'European' identity¹²⁴. As Europe has seen more anti-Islamic, anti-immigration, anti-cosmopolitan and anti-enlargement politicians become elected into power, combined with a growth of euroscepticism and Russophobia, as well as the stalling and constant challenges to Turkey's membership of the EU, it has seen Turkey pull back from Europe and seek out alliances elsewhere that align more with the current Turkish national ideology.

¹²² Viatcheslav Morozov and Bahar Rumelili, "The External Constitution of European Identity: Russia and Turkey as Europe-Makers," *Cooperation and Conflict* 47, no. 1 (March 2012): 28–48, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010836711433124>.

¹²³ Morozov and Rumelili, "External Constitution of European Identity,"

¹²⁴ José Casanova, "The Long, Difficult, and Tortuous Journey of Turkey into Europe and the Dilemmas of European Civilization," *Constellations* 13, no. 2 (2006): 236–237, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8675.2006.00333.x>.

How Turkey considers their position as European also becomes apparent through the creation of Turkvision as a response to withdrawing from Eurovision. The contest copied the idea of Eurovision, except the contest was centred around Turkey and their allies. It featured more non-Western European and Eurasian competing countries, as well as the inclusion of the Turkish occupied Northern Cyprus¹²⁵. ‘Turkvision’ perhaps supports the idea that it was not necessarily being part of a cultural, creative competition that was the problem for Turkey, but rather that Turkey felt as though they had been othered to the point of exclusion. In creating a contest where Turkey is able to surround itself with its political and ideological allies, it is sending a message to Europe to essentially say ‘we do not need Europe anymore’ and create a show of cultural and ideological strength.

2.3 The Balkans and Othering

Lika’s article uses the Balkans as a case study, specifically what is known as the region as the ‘Western Balkans’ that currently is not part of the EU. What becomes interesting is how the ‘Western Balkans’ have been branded as ‘Western’ whilst there has been no branding for the other nation-states that have become designated as ‘Balkan’ and are now considered to be part of Europe through their EU membership and cooperation with Western Europe¹²⁶. The split in the Balkans between those that have become more aligned with Western Europe and those who still have not been deemed to have become ‘Europeanised’ yet¹²⁷. The idea of Europeanisation is one that feels eerily similar to how colonisers would try and ‘civilise’ the native peoples of the lands that they settled in terms of what ‘Europeanisation’ entails. Subotić uses the term ‘Europeanisation’ to entail a nation-state conforming to EU rules, standards and ideals where it did not previously. This

¹²⁵ Turkvision, “Which Countries Will Participate in Turkvision?” *Turkvision.info*, archived November 23, 2013, <https://web.archive.org/web/20131123193423/http://www.turkvision.info/Which-Countries-will-Participate-in-Turkvision-2-h.htm>.

¹²⁶ Liridon Lika, “The Meaning of the Western Balkans Concept for the EU: Genuine Inclusion or Polite Exclusion?” *Journal of Contemporary European Studies* 31, no. 1 (2023): 71-73, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14782804.2022.2060382>.

¹²⁷ Jelena Subotić, “Europe Is a State of Mind: Identity and Europeanization in the Balkans,” *International Studies Quarterly* 55, no. 2 (2011): 311, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2478.2011.00649.x>.

also involves there being a system like that of a reward system, with incentives and pressure placed upon states. They are rewarded for following incentives, and pressured into making sure that they follow¹²⁸.

There is something to be said in the process of Europeanisation within the Balkans, as was referred to in an earlier chapter, there is the theory that globalisation is a form of colonisation. When viewing Europeanism from a colonial perspective, a pattern begins to emerge that resembles the idea of the colonial concept of civilisation. This appears within the Balkans through how the Balkan states that accepted and followed the process of Europeanisation have been accepted into the wider European community, such as Croatia, Greece and Slovenia. The Balkan states that have not completely complied with Europeanism still face some elements of othering and pressure to conform, and there is a general view of suspicion towards them. Sierp identifies how the European Union still stresses the idea of Europeanisation in terms of agricultural and environmental colonialism¹²⁹. However what this article excludes is how for states such as the Balkans, the radical changes to society are in their own way forms of colonialism. When looking at how the Balkan states have been viewed by western Europe, we can see that the view emerges that they are seen as European, yet not European enough. This view comes from the colonial history of some of the Balkan states, where they did become colonies of western powers, as well as the idea that the Balkans need what can be described as a form of 'civilisation' and additional help and support that only western Europe can provide for them¹³⁰.

The reputation that has been given to the Balkans is one that stems from the violence within the region during the 1990s. When considering reputation, it should be remembered that reputation does not necessarily reflect the current status of a nation-state, but instead how they are viewed upon the global scale. In terms of the

¹²⁸ Subotić, "Europe Is a State of Mind: Identity and Europeanization in the Balkans," 311-312

¹²⁹ Sierp, "EU Memory Politics and Europe's Forgotten Colonial Past,"

¹³⁰ Tanja Petrović, "Europe's New Colonialisms," *Advances in Political Psychology* 37, no. S1 (2016): 110-113, <https://doi.org/10.1111/pops.12323>.

reputation given to the Balkans, it is one that seems to be used by western Europe to justify their exclusion from part of being European¹³¹. This reputation also impacts on how other European institutions outside of the EU interact with the Balkan states. When reviewing statements made by the EBU, a pattern emerges that sees the Balkan's often mentioned in terms of statements that criticise issues such as press freedom, broadcaster reforms and media plurality. This contrasts with the language used within the statements made by the EBU regarding western Europe, where statements instead seem to reflect maintaining high standards within their broadcasting work, protection of public service media from private influence and digital sovereignty.

Within the Balkans, there was a feeling that the expansion of the EU was done as one to benefit the west rather than to actually give the benefits of membership to Balkan states. It builds on this idea that within the Balkans, they will only be able to achieve normalisation through EU membership¹³². This differs from the treatment of Turkey, as Turkey has been established to be a functioning society, whilst the reputation of the Balkans within western Europe is one that shows them as weaker, smaller nation states created and in need of civilising to be able to be saved from themselves. During the period of EU expansion, the promise to the Balkans was that they could join as long as they met the Copenhagen Criteria, however they continually failed to meet this criteria despite efforts. Whilst there were few Balkan states that managed to meet the required goals, even states that now would be considered to be 'European' such as Croatia only were accepted into the EU as late as 2014. The values of western Europe were ones that were considered to be incompatible with many of the Balkans, leading them to gain the reputation as states that were stagnant, foreign and lacking in development in contrast to the reputation

¹³¹ Jasmin Hasanović, "Mirroring Europeanization: Balkanization and Auto-Colonial Narrative in Bosnia and Herzegovina," in *The Unwanted Europeanness?*, ed. Jasmin Hasanović (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2021), 53–72, <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110684216-004>.

¹³² Petrović, "Europe's New Colonialisms," 119–120

that western Europe gave itself that focused around progression, urbanisation, integration and development¹³³.

The highest number of withdrawals from the competition in recent years have all been from Balkan nations. Whilst the 'Big 5'¹³⁴ countries are able to auto-qualify for the grand final due to their financial contributions, Bosnia and Herzegovina have been unable to compete since 2016 due to debts owed to the broadcasting union that have caused them to be sanctioned¹³⁵, North Macedonia and Montenegro withdrew from the contest in 2023 due to the increase in the fee in the aftermath of the banning of Russia¹³⁶, Slovakia confirmed they would not be returning in 2025¹³⁷, as did Romania¹³⁸, whilst Moldova withdrew in 2025 stating financial difficulties and being unable to justify the cost of competing with the quality of performances within their national final¹³⁹. As Eurovision enlarged to include the Balkan states, it was after the success of both Baltic and Balkan entrants in the late 1990s and early 2000s that the rules regarding the voting procedures were changed. In 2009, the

¹³³ Magdalena Koch, "We and They – The Our and the Other. The Balkans of the 20th Century from a Colonial and Post-Colonial Perspective," *Porównania* 6, no. VI (2009): 75–93, <https://www.academia.edu/27918767/>
We and they the our and the other The Balkans of the 20th century from a colonial and postcolonial perspective.

¹³⁴ The 'Big 5' consists of Italy, Spain, France, The U.K and Germany. These broadcasters pay the most into the Eurovision Song Contest, and as a result do not have to go through a semi-final qualifying performance. It is important to note that all of these countries during their history have had colonies.

¹³⁵ Anthony Granger, "Bosnia & Herzegovina: EBU Imposes Sanctions on BHRT," *Eurovoix*, December 14, 2016, <https://eurovoix.com/2016/12/14/bosnia-herzegovina-ebu-imposes-sanctions-bhrt/>.

¹³⁶ Daniel Rosney, "Eurovision: Montenegro and North Macedonia Pull Out of Liverpool Contest," *BBC News*, October 17, 2022, <https://www.bbc.com/news/entertainment-arts-63276833>.

¹³⁷ Denis Kurris, "Eurovision: We Will Not See Slovakia Return to the Contest in 2025," *ESCplus*, April 8, 2024, <https://www.esc-plus.com/eurovision-we-will-not-see-slovakia-return-to-the-contest-in-2025/>.

¹³⁸ Cristian Otopeanu, "România nu participă nici la Eurovision 2025. Cum explică Dan Turturică, șef TVR: 'Relația trebuie resetată'," *Libertatea*, April 14, 2025, <https://www.libertatea.ro/stiri/romania-eurovision-2025-dan-turturica-sef-tvr-relatia-trebuie-resetata-5271037>.

¹³⁹ Anthony Granger, "Moldova: Etapa Națională Cancelled, Withdraws from Eurovision 2025," *Eurovoix*, January 22, 2025, <https://eurovoix.com/2025/01/22/moldova-etapa-nationala-cancelled-withdraws-from-eurovision-2025/>.

voting system changed as it was felt that the Balkan and former Yugoslavian states were benefitting by voting for their neighbours and this was unfair to the western European countries. This is without considering the differences between performance and song quality that was being sent by the Balkans and Eastern Europe compared with that of western Europe¹⁴⁰. With the West taking the contest less seriously, as more of a camp festival of songs, the East used Eurovision as a chance to establish themselves and their culture on a stage that the whole of Europe and beyond was watching¹⁴¹. In changing the voting system to the benefit of western Europe, it could be said that this was also a form of ‘changing the goalposts’ that has been seen in the ways that the EU has ‘changed the goalposts’ for membership.

The role that Eurovision has played for the Balkan states is one that has a reach further than just the chance of competition and winning. Much like Turkey, Eurovision was used as a vessel to spread propaganda regarding their status as part of Europe and the campaign for European inclusion¹⁴². Performances such as Bosnia and Herzegovina’s 2004 entry, Deen, with the song “*In The Disco*” features a much more westernised style of performance. The song itself has a beat that would be much more commonly found within the clubs of western Europe and makes a move away from the traditional ‘Balkan ballad’ that combined traditional instrumentals with more modern pop music. Deen himself presents in a much more westernised view through his clothing and style of dance. Deen was an openly gay performer, and his performance is considered to be one with a sexualised style¹⁴³. The performance was described as being self-westernised, and a form of mimicry of western culture that came from the postcolonial narrative than being one that came from Bosnia and Herzegovina actually adopting western ideals¹⁴⁴. Especially for a

¹⁴⁰ Marcus Pyka, "The Power of Violins and Rose Petals: The Eurovision Song Contest as an Arena of European Crisis," *Journal of European Studies* 49, no. 3–4 (2019): 465–466.

¹⁴¹ Akšamija, “Eurovision Song Contest,” (2005)

¹⁴² Vuletic, Dean. “The Balkans in the Eurovision Song Contest.” In *The Routledge Handbook of Eurovision*, edited by Dean Vuletic, 85–87. London: Routledge, 2024. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003328162-7>.

¹⁴³ European Broadcasting Union, “Deen, ‘In The Disco’ (Bosnia and Herzegovina), Eurovision Song Contest 2004,” YouTube video, 3:10, February 25, 2013, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=23h_RssJQo.

¹⁴⁴ Aksamija, “Eurovision Song Contest,” 7.

country with a large muslim population like Bosnia, to send an act that very much does not follow in the traditional ideals definitely was an attempt to reach out and show how that they did have common ground with western Europe.

The performance itself can also be seen as a reflection of how a Balkan state such as Bosnia and Herzegovina views western culture. It also represents the need that was felt within the Balkans to become part of the west. The difference between the culture and ideology is highlighted through how mimicry is used, as a way of complying with Europeanisation that in its own way is able to undermine it¹⁴⁵. Whilst this thesis has not fully explored the relationship between Eurovision and mimicry as a concept of postcolonial theory, this is something that would benefit from further research. To further expand on the earlier point regarding Balkan participation, the Balkan states that have remained within Eurovision are largely those that are considered to be 'European', rather than part of the 'Western Balkans' and the 'Turkic Balkans'¹⁴⁶. The benefits of EU membership through the economics trickle down into how broadcasters receive their funding, and how Europe interacts with them as nation states. Within the European Balkans, their reputation does not seem to have the same negative connotations as the Western Balkans. The path to integration through Europeanisation therefore is one that can be said to focus around how western Europe uses a framework laid out by colonial Europe to shape its interactions. By adopting the ideology, it allows for inclusion and integration. By integrating, it makes it easier for states to then use cultural mega events such as Eurovision as part of their nation branding and identity politics.

¹⁴⁵ Homi K. Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse," in *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*, ed. Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 152–153.

¹⁴⁶ Magdalena Koch, "We and They. The Our and the Other. The Balkans of the XXth Century from a Colonial and Post-Colonial Perspective," *Porównania* 6, no. VI (2009): 79–82,

Conclusion

To understand the colonial legacy of Europe, it includes understanding exactly how the role of ideology and culture have become part of the legacy. The concept of exclusion and othering is one that appears within not just postcolonial theory, but the very narratives of the European institutions that exist. When regarding why it exists within them, the obvious conclusion is due to the dominance of former colonial powers both at their creation and in their continued governance. Institutions such as the EU will always exist with elements of a colonial ideology due to their creation and the actors behind their creation. As the culture of colonialism has become part of the culture of western Europe, it becomes a part of western Europe.

As part of this understanding, the analysis on case studies such as France and the relationship that France has with its former and current colonies becomes an indicator as to how colonialism is still embedded into European culture. There are still elements of pride and an unashamed feeling within some western European countries, as conquering and seizing foreign lands is seen as a measure of pride and nationalism. Within the idea of the imaginary, the colonial imaginary is one that still exists especially within the growth of populism and racism within Europe. As more right wing governments begin to become elected, there is a growth in narratives about migrants and where migrants belong, whilst forgetting that migration is a result of colonialism. Within the individual western European nation-state, there are trends that reflect minority groups as being more likely to be victims of crime, poverty and state violence. What this points towards is evidence that there is still a hierarchical system in place, and one that remains based around the idea of western, predominantly white civilisation being considered to be 'civilised' over those who are considered to be non-white, and non-western.

The legacy extends outside of Europe itself, with similar patterns of alcoholism, poverty, violence and abuse found within the Aboriginal and Indigenous populations in Australia and New Zealand. The Australian Aboriginal populations have been one that has ended up decimated in terms of their culture as a result of colonialism, with many of the native tribes being eradicated through colonial violence. It can only be

estimated as to the amount of Indigenous Australian languages that have been lost due to language death. Part of this language death is also part of the destruction of the concept of kinship amongst Aboriginal Australians. As a direct result of the colonial schools that were created, cultural history has been destroyed and lost due to the forced assimilation of the lost generation of Indigenous Australians. Within Australia, the acceptance and identity of Aboriginal Australians is still a topic that is considered to be controversial within parliamentary debate, and still plays a large role in the discrimination that Aboriginal Australians currently face.

Within Europe, we can see evidence of how colonial practices have shaped modern day societies. In the case of Ireland, it has created a segregated society and a two-party state though the existence of the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, as well as a violent and bloody history regarding identity and cultural politics. The use of exclusion towards nation-states such as Turkey due to ideological differences has continued the othering of the Turkish within migrant populations, and similarly to France, a growth in racism and islamophobia has emerged despite these minority populations being the ones that face some of the most societal discrimination. The role that colonialism has played in how it creates its narratives and reputations for nation-states is one that continues to shape how western Europeans, and therefore the western European institutions, view these states as actors. In creating narratives regarding Turkey, it does so as a form of othering and this can be explained as a justification to keep Turkey away from the institutions so it is no longer a potential threat to the colonial legacy. Turkey differs from other candidates for EU membership and to 'become' European due to the size and spread of the Ottoman history, and how Turkey still plays a role as a one of the major Eurasian powers within the region. This comes down to then excluding Turkey, as a way to eliminate this threat, and creating a narrative regarding negative impressions of Turkey and potential supporters of Turkey within the Balkans to justify their exclusion and keep them as the 'other'.

With the European colonial legacy being one that is present within the institutions and their governing bodies, this does not exempt the EBU or Eurovision. The most obvious differences emerge in the quality of performances and production

of the songs sent by western European nation states versus others. It has been a long running in joke within Eurovision fans regarding the ability of Balkan states to afford to host the contest, as well as to afford to compete. This was something that became a reality in 2025 with the Moldovan withdrawal, when Moldova's broadcaster admitted they were unable to fund participation in the contest in Switzerland due to the high costs of competing. The withdrawal of Balkan states on economic grounds is part of this divide between western Europe and eastern Europe. It also excludes many eastern European and Baltic states from the chance and ability to compete within the contest based on their economic power. The agency given to other Indigenous groups such as the Sámi has not been covered in this thesis, nor have the relationships with ecocolonialism and the Sámi and the Nordic relationship between their native populations and Eurovision, and this is an area that would benefit from further research.

Whilst Eurovision sets itself out as a contest that celebrates diversity, this feeling is not necessarily one shared by the participating broadcasters when it comes to the selection of their representatives. In the majority of performers being representatives of the dominant culture within states, it allows for the contest to set a narrative and enforces stereotypes regarding how we view national culture. Combined with the budgetary differences within performance, this also negatively impacts the poorer competing states. Performances that appear to be less polished, or too different are not as well received by the general public, and therefore have less chance of going through to the grand final. The amount of capital that broadcasters are able to pay towards Eurovision also gives certain broadcasters more influence within the decision making of the contest itself, and therefore more of a say regarding inclusion and exclusion. Given that the 'Big 5' are all former colonial states, this gives the power to the former colonial states rather than an equal share of influence.

In conclusion, the colonial legacy is one that exposes itself through how it shapes policy and how it becomes socialised as part of a norm. Whilst there is an argument created that the colonial legacy is instead ideological and cultural hegemony, the origins of that hegemony are ones that come from the colonial power

imbalances within Europe. The English language would not be experiencing linguistic hegemony if it the United States hadn't been colonised by the British, and Italy would not experience cultural hegemony if it had not been a colonial power in the Mediterranean. The use of Spanish and Spanish culture that exist within South America would not exist if it was not for Spanish colonialism. In understanding the impact of colonialism, and the different ways that it impacts different minority groups, Indigenous people, existing populations and other actors within a nation state, it provides a platform as to how the European colonial legacy.

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