International Critical Thought

ISSN: 2159-8282 (Print) 2159-8312 (Online) Journal homepage: http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rict20

From Financial Crisis to a Crisis of Interpellation: Unpacking Ideology Production in the European Union and Clarifying How Its Failures Affect Foreign Affairs

Michael Merlingen

To cite this article: Michael Merlingen (2018) From Financial Crisis to a Crisis of Interpellation: Unpacking Ideology Production in the European Union and Clarifying How Its Failures Affect Foreign Affairs, International Critical Thought, 8:4, 553-573, DOI: 10.1080/21598282.2018.1539923

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/21598282.2018.1539923

© 2018 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group

Published online: 16 Nov 2018.

Submit your article to this journal

Article views: 17

View Crossmark data

Full Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at
http://www.tandfonline.com/action/journalInformation?journalCode=rict20

INTERNATIONAL CRITICAL THOUGHT
2018, VOL. 8, NO. 4, 553–573
https://doi.org/10.1080/21598282.2018.1539923

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

OPEN ACCESS Check for updates

From Financial Crisis to a Crisis of Interpellation: Unpacking Ideology Production in the European Union and Clarifying How Its Failures Affect Foreign Affairs

Michael Merlingen

Department of International Relations, Central European University, Budapest, Hungary

ABSTRACT
We identify an ideology gap in the Marxist EU (European Union) literature, which we then set out to narrow by identifying and analysing core elements of the particularising EU version of the global ideology of feel-good and ethical capitalism through which the EU interpellates certain subaltern classes towards identifying with the deepening and widening of neoliberal governance. We then show, by means of discourse analysis, how ideological state apparatuses (ISAs) secure but also occasionally undermine the ideological bloc of dominant and dominated classes. We conclude by arguing that the ideological dimension of EU foreign policy is becoming increasingly important as the EU's self-ascribed status as a uniquely normative power in world politics offers multiple opportunities for ISAs to obscure the reality of a materially increasingly polarised EU whose internal structure has acquired pronounced imperialist properties during the recent financial crisis. This does not harbour well for international order in Europe and beyond.

ARTICLE HISTORY
Received 2 March 2018
Revised 16 April 2018
Accepted 29 May 2018

KEYWORDS
EU financial crisis; EU foreign policy; class analysis; interpellation; middle class

Introduction

In the academic field of European Union (EU) studies, Marxist literatures have only a limited presence. This is perhaps not a surprise given the generally pro-EU sentiment that informs much of this literature, even if it is critical of certain aspects of European integration. These critiques are often a form of indirect praise insofar as they argue that in one way or another the EU has not lived up to its positive potential. The most productive Marxist research programme of the EU is Neo-Gramscianism, which has recently been supplemented, especially in German-speaking academia, by a neo-Poulantzasian programme. Nicos Poulantzas had an ambiguous relation with Gramsci, both drawing on him and distanciating himself from his theses (Thomas 2006). Both classical Marxists took the relative autonomy of politics and ideology from relations of production seriously. This elevates hegemony to a central concept in their frameworks. As Jessop (1985, 152) observed, Poulantzas drew from Gramsci, "the notion of hegemony as the distinctive

CONTACT Michael Merlingen ✉ merling@ceu.edu

© 2018 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group
This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives License (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/), which permits non-commercial re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited, and is not altered, transformed, or built upon in any way.

form of political class struggle in capitalist societies." Following their intellectual founders, neo-Gramscian and neo-Poulantzasian approaches to the EU zero in on the production, reproduction and contestations of neoliberal hegemony within the EU. For instance, they map the existence of competing neoliberal hegemony projects and analyse their struggle for supremacy; they explore the connections between these politico-economic projects and particular social forces within the political economy of the EU; they systematically relate the power of social forces to the institutional and ideational matrix within which they struggle; they dissect the class alliances and compromises they forge; and they investigate the negative socioeconomic and political effects of neoliberal hegemony in the EU. Neo-Gramscian and neo-Poulantzasian approaches to the EU thus highlight what EU studies neglect or deny: the class character of EU policies, the class politics in and over EU institutions and the disciplinary corset with which EU-level governance constrains member state policy autonomy and popular sovereignty.

These studies are a crucially important contribution to a critique of, or reality check on, the ruling ideology in the EU, whose internally differentiated strands converge in bringing the EU under description as an exemplary political community that combines an efficient economic organisation and deep democracy with a unique ethical commitment to solidarity and human dignity. However, there is in the Marxist literature a lack of attention to how EU institutions manufacture popular consent. The literature tends to overplay the importance of what Poulantzas (2000, 31) calls "the categories of repression-prohibition and ideology-concealment" while paying less attention to the "positive measures" by which the EU ensemble of state apparatuses secures the popular hegemony of neoliberal ideology.[1] Among these positive measures are material concessions by the capitalist power bloc to its social base among the subaltern classes and, more important for the purpose of this article, "the State's material ideological practices" (Poulantzas 2000, 66). One of the policy-relevant effects of this analytical gap in Marxist analyses of the EU is an underestimation of the staying power of neoliberalism even in its phase of permanent austerity. At least on the ideological level, the "'living dead' neoliberalism" turns out to remain quite vibrant (Bruff 2014).

In this paper, we seek to narrow the ideology gap in the Marxist EU literature. After a brief discussion of how to think productively about ideology and the class nature of the EU, we identify and analyse core elements of the dominant ideology through which the EU ensemble of state apparatuses legitimises the deepening and widening of neoliberal governance. We argue that the main addressee of this ideology is the new petty bourgeoisie, which is the subaltern class ally of the transnational capitalist bloc in power in the EU. We then show how the EU response to the financial crisis in the Euro-area, notably in Greece, opened up serious cracks in the ideological bloc of dominant and dominated classes. To illustrate this point, we look at how *The Guardian*, which is one of the EU ideological state apparatuses (ISAs) speaking to, and on behalf of, the new petty bourgeoisie—narrated the EU response to the Greek crisis in 2012. The manner in which the newspaper approached the discrepancy between the descriptors of the ruling ideology and the lived experiences of Greeks broke key connectors in the signifying chain of the ruling ideology. Yet these cracks were quickly papered over by how *The Guardian* subsequently mediatised the events leading up to the ouster of the Ukrainian president Yanukovych and to his replacement by an unconditionally pro-Western government. The take-aways from our analysis are as follows. EU ISAs secure but also occasionally undermine the ideological ties that bind the capitalist power bloc to subaltern classes. The ideological dimension of EU foreign policy is becoming increasingly important as the EU's self-ascribed status as a uniquely normative power in world politics—its normative power Europe discourse—offers multiple opportunities for EU ISAs to obscure the reality of a materially increasingly polarised EU whose internal structure has acquired pronounced imperialist properties during the recent financial crisis. This does not harbour well for international order in Europe and beyond. As to our conceptual vocabulary, we draw on, but at points also go beyond, Poulantzas and Louis Althusser.

Ideology as Interpellation

To think about the workings of ideology in the EU we draw on Althusser. His analytical focus on the mechanisms of top-down subject formation, which differs from Gramsci's concern with everyday common sense and the possibility its composite nature offers for constructing a counter-hegemony, corresponds to, and offers appropriate concepts for, the empirical investigation of this article. Althusser's entry point into the problem of ideology is the argument that the reproduction of capitalist order requires the reproduction of people's submission to the ruling ideology (Althusser 2014). He makes this reproductive requirement thinkable in terms of the following process: (i) interpellation or hailing by a state authority with the call being addressed to citizens; (ii) self-identification of citizens as the subjects of this authoritative call; (iii) misrecognition of citizens as autonomous agents even as they are constituted by the authority of the call; (iv) subject formation and normalisation of citizens in line with the subject positions offered by the interpellation. Through this conceptualisation Althusser makes ideology understandable as "a practice producing subjects" (Laclau 1977, 109). This manufacturing process has two aspects: "the function of misrecognition [méconnaissance]," which in its different elaborations as obfuscation, mystification and so on is a mainstay of Marxist ideology critique, and the "recognition function," with whose elaboration Althusser reinvigorated Marxist thinking about ideology (Althusser 2014, 817, 818). Both dimensions can be understood as being about "impos[ing] … obviousness as obviousness, which we cannot fail to recognize and before which we have the inevitable and natural reaction of crying out (aloud or in the 'silence of consciousness'): 'That's obvious! That's right! That's true!'" (Althusser 2014, 817). The symbolic power to make particular social relations appear as obvious, natural, inevitable—as in Margaret Thatcher's "There Is No Alternative" (TINA) slogan—is the power of concealment. More generally, the misrecognition function of ideology is about the attachment of people's visions of the good or happy life to existing capitalist social relations even as these very same relations undermine their capacity to achieve their hopes. Yet this symbolic power of concealment and misdirection is also at the same time a power of subject formation, which "can be imagined along the lines of the most commonplace, everyday hailing by (or not by) the police: 'Hey, you there!'" (Althusser 2014, 610). For Althusser the "elementary ideological effect" is the "'obviousness' … that you and I are subjects (free, ethical, etc.)" even as we are only occupants of class places and supports of the associated societal functions serving the ceaseless accumulation of capital (Althusser 2014, 817). While this is an overly rigid formulation, Althusser's general claim is insightful: ideology is crucially about subject formation, which in turn is about the interpellative structuration of how people imagine and live the relation to their real conditions of existence, and thus about how people form their visions of the good or happy life and how they go about realising their visions.

While for Althusser a ruling ideology is the product of top-down ideological socialisation, he also stresses that to be effective hierarchical interpellation must be embedded in "material ritual practice … in everyday life," which, we can assume, includes people's habitualised consumption of the symbolic products of ideological state apparatuses, say, the habit of reading the daily morning newspaper (Althusser 2014, 818). In this perspective, a key feature of capitalist ideology, in liberal-democratic conditions, is the reliance on a "mechanism of self-subjection" or voluntary subjection, which encourages and enables people to develop their own personal life projects and aspirations in line with ruling class projects (Laclau 1977, 101).

Althusser embeds his interpellation model in the materiality of "an objective and institutionalized system" comprising numerous public and private ISAs (Laclau 1977, 55). What unites these heterogeneous ISAs, and the reason why Althusser subsumed them all under the label of the "state," is their function in maintaining and defending social cohesion in and through hegemonic bourgeois-ideological discourses. Distinct ISAs specialise in manufacturing different brands of the dominant culture, different knowledges and ways of life which are so many different forms of the ruling ideology that binds together dominant class fractions and their subaltern allies and that disorganises subaltern classes outside this alliance. Also, ISAs may differ widely in their self-reflexivity and critical distance towards certain aspects of the dominant way of organising public and private life. Poulantzas (2008, 376), for instance, speaks of the "dissociated" reproduction of the dominant ideology and its internal "contradictions." Even the "State does not produce a unified discourse, but several discourses that are adapted to the various classes" (Poulantzas 2000, 33). The overall effect of this dispersed bourgeois mode of ideology production is that the ruling ideology undergoes constant modulations, decompositions and recompositions as it is reproduced by relatively autonomous ISAs and challenged by counter-hegemonic narratives. Hence, a hegemonic ideology is a social achievement, which despite its sedimentation and embeddedness in material practices of political economy, statecraft and everyday life remains brittle and subject to challenges and change. It is conditioned by social struggles and constitutes a terrain of social struggles over how to frame social tensions, dysfunctions and conflicts.

Althusser's interpellation model of subject formation has been justifiably criticised for, among other things, being overly functionalist and insufficiently materialist (Lewis 2017; Martel 2017). While Althusser was a powerful critique of Hegelian Marxism, his concept of "ideology as interpellation" at points comes close to György Lukács's (1971, 51) concept of "ideology as reification," according to which people's "empirically given" consciousness is completely structured by alienation, which itself is an expression of commodity fetishism. Despite their fundamental differences, both Althusser and Lukács believe that the ruling ideology is capable of comprehensively duping the masses. While acknowledging the heterogeneity of the ruling ideology and even the contradictions within and between its different strands, Althusser downplays the agency of the targets of interpellation whose ideological habitus is not comprehensively determined and controlled by the ruling ideology. Althusser envisages counter-interpellation organised by communist party intellectuals as the main, if not the only way to battle hegemonic ideology, while having no concepts to grasp how individuals wrestle and negotiate with, speak back to and on occasions resist aspects of the dominant narratives and categories offered to them to make sense of and orient their lives. He has no concepts to grasp how the subaltern in and through their daily practices develop and enact partial counter-narratives, often in the form of what James Scott (1990) calls hidden transcripts (as opposed to explicit anti-or non-capitalist projects), to locate and orient themselves in the messy world. Also, Althusser has no concepts to grasp how and why interpellation fails or misfires in the absence of any resistive agency (Martel 2017). Finally, if we define capitalist relations of reproduction as involving "social practices necessary to bring the worker back to work on an everyday basis" (Huber 2013, 16), then Althusser offers us a truncated conceptual toolbox to explain how these practices are organised. Althusser argues that reproduction is organised by ISAs and by RSAs (repressive state apparatuses) such as the police or the courts. Already Poulantzas (2000, 30–31) criticised that this reduces political domination in capitalism to "police terror or internalized repression," while overlooking that "the relation of the masses to power and the State—in what is termed among other things a consensus—always possesses a material substratum," that is, "material measures which are of positive significance for the popular masses."

These shortcomings notwithstanding, we draw on Althusser because we believe that ideological "socialisation from above," while co-existing side by side with horizontal, or peer-to-peer, forms of interpellation, is crucial if we want to understand "the role of ideology in allowing dominant systems to perpetuate themselves" (Martel 2017, 16). While our Althusserian focus on top-down interpellation thus offers a limited take on ideological reproduction in the EU, it does go beyond Althusser in showing how interpellation can misfire. Interestingly, such failures are sometimes not the result of overt resistance by the addressees against authoritative interpellations, but the result of too much identification with the call, which becomes a problem when the gaps between the expectations this identification generates and real-world developments become too big to ignore. However, the cultural politics of capital offer opportunities for interventions aimed at re-establishing the authority of capitalist interpellations even in conditions when the material substratum fuelling consent to capitalist relations is being depleted. As we shall see, the EU discourse (official and academic) that brings the EU under description as a unique normative power in world politics offers a cultural resource which contributes to sustaining the identification of certain subaltern classes with the neoliberal EU.

The Class Nature of the EU

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the transformation of statehood in the then European Community (EC) gathered considerable momentum. Through the 1986 Single European Act (SEA), which was about the creation of a borderless and competitive common market, and through the agreement to complement the single market by a common currency a few years later, national socio-economic policy-making powers have been hollowed out as states have been integrated ever more deeply into a spatially fragmented, multi-scalar and postnational ensemble of European state apparatuses (Bieling 2003; Streeck 2014; Van Apeldoorn 2002; Wissel and Wolff 2017). This process has been rationalised and legitimised by a neoliberal class project which has sought to overcome barriers to neoliberal "modernisation" at the level of member states. By uploading their project to the EU level, domestic capitalist forces, which include interiorised transnational capital and their subordinate allies such as transnationally mobile cadres, have been able to punch above their weight and to overcome national resistance by often well entrenched pro-labour interests against the neoliberal agenda. EU-level governance can thus be grasped as the effect of a particular class strategy aimed at establishing new relations of force at the EU level, which bypass, hollow out and transform established domestic class relations of force.

This class strategy has been made possible by the fact that EU-level state apparatuses (both supranational and intergovernmental) are marked by a systematic "asymmetry" in the opportunities they provide for "negative and positive integration," and, by implication, for the pursuit of neoliberal agendas and anti-neoliberal ones (Scharpf 2008).[2] This pro-capital structural selectivity of EU-level state apparatuses assumes different forms (on structural selectivity, see Jessop 2010). The main mechanism has been the SEA which ushered in seemingly low-key technical rule changes that proved to have momentous policy implications. The SEA allocated to the European Commission and the European Court of Justice market-making and market-enforcing competences and smoothed voting procedures governing EU legislation in the area of market-making. The effect has been the spread of markets into ever more spheres of life, with the European Commission enforcing competition in the single market and the European Court of Justice acting as the judicial arbiter of the free flow of people, capital, goods and services. In contrast to this "Brusselisation" or transnationalisation of power in pro-market policy fields, market-correcting and market-limiting competences have remained stuck at the national level, which has made them subject to intra-EU beggar-thy-neighbour policies. In the 2000s, a novel mechanism of structural selectivity emerged in the EU as the European Commission and member states sought to extend the established policy toolbox of EU legal acts by strengthening infra-legal forms of policy coordination. The Open Method of Coordination is a disciplinary mechanism that narrows the range of permissible policies in the EU through benchmarking. It relies on European Commission surveillance of national policies and government-to-government peer reviews. While in principle compatible with any policy agenda, the requirement for member states to agree on what constitutes best practice has ensured that in the existing context of a systemic privileging of market-making policies, this policy method has been a vehicle for advancing the neoliberal agenda in policy fields such as employment, welfare and education (Bruff 2017). Finally, a more generic mechanism of structural selectivity, which is found at the EU level just as it is found in national jurisdictions, takes the institutional form of new constitutionalism, which removes public decision-making from relations of democratic control and accountability and turns them over to independent expert institutions (Gill 1998).

These various pro-capital biases built into the institutional set-up of EU-level state apparatuses have made them the preferred policy forum for neoliberal forces. The EU-level of the European ensemble of state apparatuses has thus been crucial to "the constitutive strategy of the neoliberal hegemony project," namely, "the market-oriented, competitive reorganisation of almost every aspect of social life, the economy and politics" (Kannankulam and Georgi 2014, 66).

Two Global Ideology Projects of Neoliberal Capitalism

The deepening and widening of the neoliberal agenda across the globe has been accompanied by the roll-out of supporting ideologies. In this section, we identify two closely related global ideology projects that are central to manufacturing a popular culture of feel-good and ethical capitalism. In the section that follows, we document how the EU moulds these generic discourses into particularising discourses that frame EU neoliberalism as exemplary and uniquely ethical. The main addressee of these EU narratives is the new petty bourgeoisie.

Discourses aimed at constructing and reproducing cultures of feel-good and ethical capitalism interpellate citizens towards cognitively and emotionally identifying with the neoliberal order, or key aspects of it, while concealing or downplaying the socio-economic costs and the anti-democratic thrust of the neoliberal agenda. Like previous pro-capitalist ideology productions, such neoliberal ideology projects brand capitalism in order to repress and contain experiences and narratives of capitalism that bring it under description as dispossession, exploitation, domination, alienation and violence.

One global hegemony project offers hip variations of the age-old identification of capitalist class interests with the interests of society as a whole. One of the better-known narratives is produced by the "conscious capitalism" movement, which brings capitalism and capitalists under description as "good," "ethical," "noble" and "heroic" (Mackey and Sisodia 2013, 88). A key goal of the movement is to make people understand that firms' ceaseless quest for profit is just a means in their quest for "purpose beyond profit" (Mackey and Sisodia 2013, 189), where purpose is understood as "marrying business value with societal value" (Smith 2016). As the founder of the movement, who launched the supermarket chain Whole Foods, explains:

> Making high profits is the means to the end of fulfilling Whole Foods' core business mission. We want to improve the health and well-being of everyone on the planet through higher-quality foods and better nutrition, and we can't fulfill this mission unless we are highly profitable. Just as people cannot live without eating, so a business cannot live without profits. But most people don't live to eat, and neither must businesses live just to make profits. (Mackey, cited in George 2013, 25)

In short, the conscious capitalism brand, and other variants of the ethical capitalism ideology, represent capitalism as truly being about empowering individuals and improving societies.

To understand why people buy into this mystification of capitalism, we have to analyse its connection to a related ideology project, which is about interpellating citizens into two particular neoliberal subject positions: citizen-consumers and market-citizens. Market-citizens are asked to conceive of their lives in terms of competition, strategy, self-management, discipline, creativity and communication. Market-citizens are encouraged and, if needed, constrained to take advantage of new technologies and new opportunities for education and training to empower themselves by investing in their human capital with a view to maximising returns on themselves. Market citizens are cast as entrepreneurs of themselves. A very particular expression of this mode of being-as-capital has recently emerged in the form of the quantified-self movement, whose adherents use technology to track and measure their activities and status (bodily, mental) with a view to optimisation. As to citizen-consumers, they are individuals who are interpellated towards having a desire for spectacular consumption, that is, consumption through which they affirm to themselves, and render public, their unique identities and lifestyles as well as their socially responsible values. One of the better-known purveyors of this interpellation strategy is the Fairtrade movement, which was a counter-cultural and counter-hegemonic project before it moved into the mainstream by developing organic links with the principal supermarket chains and mainstream political forces. The Fairtrade movement asks consumers to connect their market choices to global concerns such as social justice and environmental protection. Yet while Fairtrade has carved out a particular niche in the responsible products marketplace, the reflective citizen-consumer interpellation is today incorporated into virtually all upmarket branding, packaging and advertising strategies. These stress the immaterial values of products and link them to the power of consumers to vote with their buying choices for the kind of world they want to live in. These interpellations do not entail "hostile privatism" according to which citizens imagine their "lives severed from ties to society and public forms of collective life," a form of subjectivity which critical scholars detected in previous versions of bourgeois hegemony projects (Huber 2013, 23). Both the market-citizen and the citizen-consumer interpellations aim at giving individuals a sense of power, even sovereignty over their lives, and at making them feel good about the personal opportunities and moral choices that the marketplace is said to offer them. These interpellations thus organically connect to a conception of capitalism as ethical and pro-social. The slogans that best represent the spirit of these neoliberal discourses is not the austere and rigid TINA that Margaret Thatcher used when she rolled back Keynesian institutions and policies, but hip and agency-stressing phrases such as "just do it!" as well as social justice phrases such as "make the world a better place!"

The EU Version of Feel-Good and Ethical Capitalism and Its Class Addressee

The EU outlines its strategy of deepening and widening the neoliberal agenda in documents such as the 2000 Lisbon Agenda and the follow-up Europe 2020 strategy (agreed in 2010) as well as a host of other strategic documents targeting particular issue areas such as entrepreneurship or social policy. These documents lay out an orthodox neoliberal strategy of "radical transformation of the European economy" (European Council 2000) aimed at enhancing the production of absolute and relative surplus value and at extending the societal scope of the profit imperative. The EU pursues policies that "lower the costs of doing business and remove unnecessary red tape" (European Council 2000), "redirect public expenditure towards increasing the relative importance of capital accumulation" (European Council 2000) and "revolutionise the culture of entrepreneurship in Europe" (European Commission 2013).

In its strategic communication aimed at securing the hegemony of the neoliberal agenda, the EU pays careful attention to contain these reforms within depoliticised representations. EU symbolic production draws on and particularises global ideologies of feel-good and ethical capitalism by framing EU neoliberalism as being exemplary and at the same time special. This is done, firstly, by connecting the neoliberal class project to terms such as: "tremendous potential for reducing social exclusion"; "dignity"; "solidarity"; "empower people"; "investing in people"; adapting society "to the personal choices of women and men"; "improving citizens' quality of life and the environment"; "reconcil[ing] working life and family life"; "job-rich growth"; "greater socio-economic opportunities"; and "development of human capital" (Council of Ministers 2015; European Commission 2010; European Council 2000).

By lacing its strategic communication with these signifiers, the EU creates a chain of signification that transforms neoliberal EU capitalism into a phantasmagorical land in which firms and markets are empowered to augment their profits so that they can better pursue their ulterior social purposes beyond profits: deliver "smart, sustainable and inclusive growth" (European Commission 2010). In this EU chain of signification, European citizens make their appearance as entrepreneurs or market-citizen. To begin with, there are the entrepreneurs of themselves, whom the EU characterises as focused on the "development" and "formation" of their "human capital," which they do by taking advantage of an EU catalysed and coordinated "substantial annual increase in per capita investment in human resources" (European Council 2000). Another key property of occupants of this subject position is their eager commitment to "lifelong learning and adaptability through flexible management of working time and job rotation" (European Council 2000). In a similar vein, the EU chain of signification assembles the subject position of entrepreneurs of others who are said to possess superior "skills and attitudes including creativity, initiative, tenacity, teamwork, understanding of risk and a sense of responsibility," which enable them to "transform ideas into action" and, hence, to be "a powerful driver of economic growth and job creation." By "[c]ommercialising new ideas [they] improve productivity and create wealth" (European Commission 2013). Finally, the EU constructs the subject position of citizen-consumers who are "empowered to play a full part in the single market" because they have the "ability and confidence to buy goods and services cross-border, in particular on-line" (European Commission 2010).

Second, to further underline the unique character of its neoliberalism, the EU attributes to itself a set of unique values, which it says infuses EU socio-economic and political order with powerful other-regarding norms, making it a formidable force for good.[3] The EU persistently describes itself as being "underpinned by Europe's unique social models" (European Commission 2010), which commit it to "combat social exclusion and discrimination, promote social justice and protection, equality between women and men, solidarity between generations and protection of the rights of the child" (European Parliament 2017). The EU claims normative superiority over its competitors in the world economy when it states that

> we [EU citizens] can also count on our strong values, democratic institutions, our consideration for economic, social and territorial cohesion and solidarity, our respect for the environment, our cultural diversity, respect for gender equality—just to name a few. (European Commission 2010)

We argue that the main subaltern addressee of this ideology is the intermediate social class which Poulantzas called the new petty bourgeoisie in order to distinguish it from the traditional petty bourgeoisie engaged in simple commodity production. The members of the new petty bourgeoisie are educated wage-earners who exercise cadre functions in the private for-profit sector, the non-profit sector and (national and transnational) state apparatuses. This heterogeneous group of employees forms a class "precisely due to their place in the exercise of capitalist powers" (Milios and Economakis 2015, 8). They exercise supervision and management function crucial to the extraction of surplus value in the production process, and they play a crucial role in the organisation of capitalist state power (as state functionaries) and in "the process of its social reproduction" (for instance as employees of private think-tanks or teachers) (Milios and Economakis 2015, 8).

Poulantzas distinguishes between class place (structural class determination) in the relations of production and class position in the ideological field. The new petty bourgeoisie, which consists of "different fractions" (Poulantzas 1976a, 287), is said to have no "autonomous class position" and, therefore, no "real class ideologies," unlike the bourgeoisie and the working class (Poulantzas 1976a, 287). The new petty bourgeoisie has only an "ideological sub-ensemble," an amalgam of bourgeois ideology elements and, to a lesser degree, working class ideology elements, into which it "inserts certain specific ideological "elements" that derive from its own class determination" (Poulantzas 1976a, 288). The precise nature of this mix is said to be shaped by the class struggle conjuncture. While we believe that Poulantzas underestimates the extent to which class formation is a process of self-making (Skeggs 2005; Thompson 1966; Zimmerman and Eddens 2018) and falls into the trap of essentialism when defining the "main ideological features" of the new petty bourgeoisie on the basis of its class place (Poulantzas 1976a, 290), we find his concept of this intermediate class and his views on its ideological affinity with bourgeois ideology and its typical (but not necessary) function as "veritable class props of the power bloc" a productive entry point into thinking about the class addresses of neoliberal hegemony (Poulantzas 2000, 142). The new petty bourgeoisie is crucial to the EU power bloc not only because of its role in the exercise of capitalist relations of power, say, as *fonctonnaires* in EU-level state apparatuses, but also because it is a central subaltern pillar of the two-nation governing strategy constitutive of EU neoliberal governance, whose reduced social base excludes the working class and other lower income strata (see next section).

The Economic and Political-Ideological Effects of the EU Financial Crisis

In this section, we briefly contrast the phantasmagoria created by neoliberal EU ideology with the actual effects of neoliberal policies. The general point to be made here is that the political and socio-economic costs of the EU's neoliberal project and in particular of its neoliberal austerity management of the financial crisis have been considerable. In EU bail-out countries, authoritarian statism has reached previously unimaginable levels. Building on Poulantzas (2000), the concept of authoritarian statism can be used to grasp key facets of a shift in the nature of a hegemonic project. In the 1970s and 1980s, Western capitalist states began to transition from an inclusive one-nation governing strategy informed by an uneven social democratic consensus to a two-nation strategy, which allows market forces to marginalise those people who are insufficiently productive or whose labour is no longer needed at all (Jessop et al. 1984). In the EU, as elsewhere, the current neoliberal two-nation hegemonic project is characterised by a tight connection between finance-led transnational capital and the state, and the correlated reluctance of the state-capital couplet to offer the working class and other lower income strata material benefits in return for their active consent to government. A corollary of this decline of the relative autonomy of the state and of the narrowing of its social base is a growing reliance on RSAs, which however may be backed by considerable popular support, to contain opposition to the new order (Bruff 2014; Gallas 2016; Kannankulam 2008; Oberndorfer 2017; Sotiris 2017).

National austerity policies in peripheral EU countries with unsustainable levels of sovereign debt have been driven by external policy agendas, transmitted to states by means of policy conditionality, and by the national policy agendas of at least some capital fractions and political forces. EU institutions (European Central Bank, European Commission, Eurogroup) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) have empowered these pro-austerity forces in bail-out countries, and compelled resistant forces to join them in their effort to design and enforce austerity policies in contexts when domestic legitimacy has been brittle or altogether absent, as in the case of Greece. At the same time, governments in bail-out countries (and elsewhere) have built up their repressive capacities to contain popular resistance against the execution of neoliberal crisis policies. This development has been accompanied by a hollowing out of the powers of national parliaments, which have been compelled to formally approve decisions shaped by markets and international and EU-level institutions, with little public debate and sometimes even against the express will of the electorate. On the socio-economic front, neoliberal austerity policies have recreated big structural gaps in the life conditions and opportunities separating members of different social classes. They have, among other things, dispossessed a growing number of people from stable jobs that pay living wages, from affordable housing and pensions that allow people to age with dignity. More generally, they have rolled back institutions and policies that gave subaltern groups at least some capacity to shape, individually and collectively, the material conditions of their lives.

Given these downsides of EU neoliberal policies in general and the EU's management of the financial crisis in particular, it is not surprising that, unevenly across countries, popular consent (active and passive) given to the EU has declined considerably. At the same time, the ideologies of feel-good and ethical EU capitalism have remained hegemonic in the relations binding together the capitalist power bloc and its new petty bourgeois class ally. However, this hegemony has become more precarious and brittle, which poses a particular risk to the EU because its unique institutional structure makes it particularly vulnerability to a break-down of hegemony.

A key reason for the capacity of the dominant ideology to reproduce itself during the EU financial crisis, even as the hegemony developed serious cracks, was the fact that the capitalist class fractions making up the power bloc stayed together. Capitalist rule in the form of a power bloc is always a precarious achievement—"a complex contradictory unity in dominance" (Poulantzas 1973, 237)—because the capitalist class is fractured, not least because of the differential location of its members in the process of production. During the financial crisis, the unstable equilibrium between fractions in the EU power bloc has become even more unstable as there have been serious disagreements over the best tactics of how to address the economic crisis and popular resistance. The competing hegemony projects, which have circulated within the power blocs at different levels across the EU, have ranged from orthodox austerity projects, which have so far prevailed at the EU level, to limited pro-growth projects, which may or may not include more prudential financial market supervision and regulation. But the neoliberal agenda of deepening and widening the powers of capital and the purview of markets has been defended by the key national power blocs and thus by the transnational power bloc at the EU level. The EU financial crisis has not led to a "deepening and sharpening of the internal contradictions between the dominant classes and class fractions" (Poulantzas 1974, 71), which would entail a "crisis of hegemony within the power bloc" (Poulantzas 1976b, 92). A correlate of the ability of capitalist class fractions to hold together the power bloc at the EU level has been the absence of "profound fissures in the institutional system" of the EU state apparatuses (Poulantzas 1974, 63), which has enabled them to maintain considerable policy coherence, not least in transnationally coordinating and managing the EU financial crisis.

The non-economic effects of the financial crisis have emerged in the EU in their most concentrated form on the politico-ideological scene, manifesting themselves as a weakening of the power bloc's intellectual, cultural and moral hegemony over EU citizens, including its subaltern class allies. This weakening has entailed a representational crisis of mainstream political parties, a crisis of authority of mainstream political elites and a legitimacy crisis of state apparatuses (Jessop 2015). Eurobarometer polls document the decline of trust in the EU and national governments and the growth of negative feelings about the EU (for instance, *Financial Times*, 3 January 2014). Mistrust of mainstream political elites has led to a considerable strengthening of far-right and far-left parties in national parliaments across the EU. In 2013 the preparations for the Brexit referendum started, and in 2016 the leave-vote won. Already in 2013, Iceland decided not to apply for EU membership. Protests against neoliberal policies have multiplied, often taking new organisational forms such as those used by Occupy. All this has been fuelled and sustained by a proliferation and intensification of populist, counter-hegemonic ideological productions, which have gained unprecedented ground among the population. The most powerful counter-hegemonic narratives have been constructed by established far-right parties, by new far-left (or left populist) parties such as Podemos and Syriza (before its turn towards centre-left social democracy) as well as by new grass-roots movements.

The EU financial crisis has thus been characterised by relative stability of the EU power bloc and the ensemble of EU state apparatuses, and by relative instability of the power bloc's hegemony over citizens. For the EU such a weakening of the interpellative power of its ruling ideology is especially worrisome. EU-level state apparatuses are organically connected to a transnational civil society composed of numerous EU-level think-tanks, NGOs, professional associations and so on, which, however, lack the kind of deep popular grounding that many national civil societies have. Hence the transnational European state-society complex does not provide strong earthworks and fortresses that could channel popular dissatisfaction with the EU and opposition to its policies in directions that do not endanger the rule of the power bloc. In short, the European level of government constitutes the weak link of the EU ensemble of state apparatuses in terms of its groundedness in civil society even as its policies are crucial for securing and advancing the neoliberalisation of European societies. The EU financial crisis tore at this link.

An Illustration of the Decomposition of the Ideological Bloc Binding the New Petty Bourgeoisie to the Dominant Class

An economic crisis does not get automatically translated into a politico-ideological crisis. For this to happen the obviousness or self-evident truths of the dominant ideology must be challenged by themes, tropes, forms of reasoning, story lines and so on that undermine or sever the connections between signifiers and signifieds, or words and meanings, constituted by the naturalised signifying chain through which the hegemonic understanding of social relations and policies is established. "The crisis of the dominant ideology [is] revealed, as every crisis is, in the disarticulation of its constituent interpellations" (Laclau 1977, 128). Such disarticulation can be the effect of counter-hegemonic projects. Here we focus on disarticulations that stem from a persistent disjuncture between, on the one hand, the expectations generated by an ideology and the policies it legitimises and, on the other hand, developments on the ground and people's lived experiences. The notion of disjuncture is akin to Gramsci's notion of "'a refractory reality' that helps check the 'degree of realism and practicability of various ideologies'" (cited in Rehmann 2014, 141).

In this section, we want to illustrate, and dig deeper into, the ideological crisis of EU feel-good and ethical capitalism by looking at how one of the private pillars of the EU ISAs—*The Guardian*—reported on the Greek crisis. This centre-left, social-liberal newspaper has a pronounced, albeit nuanced pro-EU editorial line and a readership that goes well beyond its UK home base. We zero in on a private ISA element on the assumption that their symbolic productions are more likely than those of public ISAs, say the strategic communications of EU institutions, to register, reflect and influence any sense of dissonance that their targets experience between the promises of the dominant ideology and actual policy outcomes. This makes private ISAs a better diagnostic tool for evaluating in detail whether, and if so how, the dominant ideology starts to disarticulate. We selected *The Guardian* because of the class composition of its readership. The discourse produced by *The Guardian*, and newspapers with a similar class profile, both shape and represent the ideological dispositions of (key fractions of) the new petty bourgeoisie.

The Guardian describes the profile of its UK readership as follows: "76% of *Guardian* select UK audience are progressives, who are affluent forward-looking individuals, curious about the world and embrace change and technology" (*The Guardian* 2016). To unpack this a bit further, half of *Guardian* readers "consider themselves very good at managing money whilst 54% feel it is important to be well insured." About a third of its readers "own stocks and shares (mostly bought through a private fund manager)." They "are extremely tech-savvy, well aware of new technology and like to keep up with the latest developments." *Guardian* readers "prefer holidays off the beaten track" and afford holidays considerably more often than the average UK citizen. They are "more likely than the average GB adult to enjoy eating foreign food [and] are stylish and like spending a lot of money on clothes" (*The Guardian* 2010).

We can infer from this readership profile that the class place of the typical *Guardian* reader is neither that of the traditional working class nor that of the traditional petty bourgeoisie. It is that of the new petty bourgeoisie (and perhaps that of the "small employers' class" which Milios and Economakis [2015, 11] call the "middle bourgeoisie"). Also, we can infer that the ideological class position of the typical *Guardian* reader is that of a particular wing of this class, the liberal, highly educated new petty bourgeoisie. We can surmise that the profile also covers progressive sections of the bourgeoisie. The attitudinal and behavioural characteristics of the *Guardian* readership as described in the readership profile correspond to the citizen-consumer and market-citizen discussed earlier. They are (self-)disciplined entrepreneurs of themselves who occupy socio-economic positions that enable them to experience neoliberal capitalism as a positive force in their lives and to identify themselves with its spirit. They engage in spectacular consumption, consuming products and services that cultivate and display their unique and ethically responsible life-styles, and they believe that entrepreneurship, markets and competition have a purpose beyond profit. We can assume that they tend to be the winners, or the children of the winners, of the neoliberal EU agenda, though segments of that class may be hit hard by a prolonged economic crisis (Milios and Economakis 2015). Any fraying of the hold of the ideology of feel-good and ethical capitalism over this class is likely to spell serious trouble for the bloc in power in the EU. Such trouble was stirred up by how *The Guardian* reported on the financial crisis in Greece, a process which we can assume repeated itself across similar left-liberal newspapers across the EU. In what follows we document how *Guardian* stories about the Greek crisis in 2012 began to disarticulate the signifying chain forged by the hegemonic neoliberal ideology. We select this year to illustrate, in the next section, how these cracks in the dominant ideology were papered over by how *The Guardian* reported the crisis in Ukraine in 2013 and 2014.

A search of *The Guardian* for the year 2012, which uses the search terms Greece, EU and crisis connected by the logical operator "AND,"[4] results in 823 segments when using the LexisNexis retrieval service. A search limited to leading articles, and using the same search sequence, results in 48 articles. Excluding contributions by non-*Guardian* journalists such as politicians and other public figures leaves us with 27 leading articles. Out of this group we coded 18 items as adopting a neutral tone when writing about how the EU handled the Greek crisis, and 9 as adopting a critical tone. There was no leading article that fully supported the EU response to the Greek financial crisis; positive assessments of some measures or policies were always tempered by critical comments on others. We assume that the ratio of neutral to critical pieces in the segment of leading articles closely reflects the ratio of neutral to critical tone in all 823 segments. Our informed guess is based on the fact that in its leading articles or editorials, each "newspaper seeks to express its distinctive normative view on issues of public concern. The objective is to advise, evaluate, comment, rebuke, and imagine the world as the newspaper wishes it to be" (Pfetsch, Adam, and Eschner 2010, 151).

Guardian journalists disarticulated the connection between neoliberal capitalism, on the one hand, and predicates such as "tremendous potential for reducing social exclusion," "quality of life," "job-rich growth," and "greater socio-economic opportunities" by wording the Greek crisis in terms such as "savage austerity," which leads to "public fury" and "pitched battles with riot police" (Traynor and Smith 2011). The newspaper destabilised the articulation of the EU with "solidarity" through the use of terms such as "shocking" to describe the attitude of Greece's EU partners towards the circumstances of ordinary Greeks, and the EU's "cold-hearted resolution" to insist on the "remedy" of "bleeding [the Greek] patients to make them better" (Inman 2012). Journalists undercut the ascription of a caring ethos to EU governance, which the dominant ideology seeks to secure by insistently referencing the EU's "unique social models," by weaving new meaning threads that tie together "wage cuts, job losses, higher taxes, health, education and retirement services slashed" with "polic[ing] by faceless technocrats flying in from Brussels and Washington" (Traynor 2012). *Guardian* stories tore at the connection between, on the one hand, neoliberal capitalism and, on the other, personal "dignity" and a society adapted "to the personal choices of women and men" by rerouting the meaning of neoliberal reforms in Greece through experiential terms such as "alienation," "incomprehension" and "done-unto-ness" (Lanchester 2011). Reporting on Greece displaced terms such as "empower[ing] people" and "investing in people," which predicate neoliberal markets in the ruling ideology, by counter-predicates such as "dramatic erosion of [personal] autonomy" (*The Guardian* 2012). Journalists deconstructed the ideological-connotative link between the EU and "social and territorial cohesion" by instead associating the EU's neoliberal agenda with "a dramatic erosion of … national dignity" in Greece and with EU "fiscal imperialism" (*The Guardian* 2012). Journalists disrupted the EU interpellation which incites citizens across the EU to identify with an "EU we," a "we [who] can also count on our strong values, democratic institutions" and so on, by rewording what the EU describes as financial aid to Greece as a policy by means of which the country is "systematically stripped of its sovereignty, as EU and IMF officials swarm over its ministries drafting budgets, setting policy deadlines, 'advising' on tax and pushing through state selloffs" (Milne 2011).

The disarticulation we document is considerable in its scope and depth. It is reasonable to assume that this process of deconstruction of the ruling ideology by *The Guardian* would have accelerated and expanded if it had continued without any checks for the length of the Greek crisis. Our illustration suggests that this process of disarticulation was fuelled by the growing disjuncture between the ideology of feel-good and ethical neoliberal capitalism and the brute and brutal "facticity" of the situation on the ground in Greece, which many Greeks experienced as being akin to a war being waged against them (Baboulias 2012). Moreover, it is possible that in the absence of any powerful countervailing narratives, the *Guardian* stories about how Greeks experienced the austerity imposed on them by EU institutions and the IMF might have spilled over into a more systematic and consistently critical reporting on the growing dissonance experienced by lower income groups across the EU between the promises of neoliberal capitalism and their actual lot. Insofar as *The Guardian* reporting on Greece was mirrored by how other quality newspapers across the EU with a similar editorial line and class composition of their readership reported on the crisis, the power bloc in the EU had a real problem on its hand. While a durable alliance between dominant and dominated classes never just depends on the ideological glue binding them together but also, crucially, on the material benefits the subaltern class receives from the dominant economic and political organisation of society, a growing ideological distance between class allies poses serious risks to the unity and durability of their cooperation, and thus to ruling class political domination, in particular when it is also challenged by opposition from popular classes.

The Recomposition of the Ideological Bloc: *The Guardian* Reasserts the Dominant EU Ideology through Its Mediatisation of the Ukrainian Crisis

In this section, we document how the damage to the ideological bloc just described was contained and ideological cohesion was quickly re-established. This was accomplished by the mediatisation of the crisis in Ukraine. Subsequently other internal and foreign policy events such as the terror attack on Charlie Hebdo in France and the civil war in Syria have offered further opportunities to ISAs to contrast the ethical and caring EU with unethical others, with the effect of reaffirming a key component of the ruling EU ideology. To illustrate how this works, we zero in on the beginnings of the Ukrainian crisis. Using again *The Guardian* as our example, we document how the newspaper framed events in line with the script of the hegemonic ideology. Two moves were central to this process. On the one hand, the *Guardian* stories constructed an identity between the personal dreams and values of the demonstrators on Maidan square and elsewhere in Ukraine and the social dreams and values allegedly espoused and promoted by the EU. These pieces configured the EU in a manner that directly contradicted how the newspaper had previously configured the EU in relation to the Greek crisis. In a second move, *The Guardian* contrasted the supposedly caring and cosmopolitan EU policy on Ukraine with the brutal *realpolitik* of Russia. These two moves powerfully reasserted the uniquely ethical character of the EU, interpellating readers to identity with it.

After Ukraine had regained its national sovereignty, successive governments pursued a policy of equidistance between the EU and Russia, with some governments veering closer to the EU and others closer to Russia. This policy became more difficult when the EU reinforced its drive to align Eastern European economies with the EU economy. President Viktor Yanukovych negotiated Ukraine's integration into the EU's Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area while trying not to alienate Russia, which had responded to the EU's reinforced Eastern Partnership policy by developing its own politico-economic integration scheme. When Yanukovych refused to sign the EU trade agreement at the end of 2013, announcing that instead he would explore the possibility of closer economic cooperation with Russia, mass demonstration erupted in many parts of western Ukraine. Over the next few months, both the EU and Russia used a combination of promises and warnings to pull Ukraine into their orbit. In Ukraine, a tug of war developed between increasingly radicalised demonstrators, who wanted to topple the democratically elected government and who were strongly supported by Western governments and politicians, and the state apparatus, which gradually hardened its response to the demonstrators in an attempt to regain control of the situation. In February 2014, a deal between the government and the opposition came apart as quickly as it was signed, and the president was ousted from power while a stridently pro-EU and pro-NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organisation) government took power in Kiev. In what follows, we look at how *The Guardian* narrated these events between November 2013 and February 2014, that is, we exclude from our illustration the events that followed the ouster of Yanukovych: the Russian annexation of Crimea and the military conflict erupting in eastern Ukraine.

An editorial at the beginning of December observed that, "Ukraine has the potential to become one of the pillars of the European Union … [and] could in time join Germany, France, Spain, Britain, Italy and Poland in the upper league of the EU." The editorial continued that the EU was holding out its hand to lead Ukraine "out of corruption," help it "to become more efficient" and advance it "towards democracy and the rule of law" (*The Guardian* 2013a). When the Ukrainian government let it be known that it would reconsider signing the trade agreement with the EU if Brussels offered funds to offset the expected high economic and social costs to the economy of fully opening it up to Western competition and capital, *The Guardian* (Walker 2013) commented that this "would be almost impossible … at a time when [the EU was] struggling to help several indebted Eurozone member states." This constituted a radical change of the narrative frame through which the newspaper had previously represented EU policy towards Greece, a frame in which "helping" was not an operative term. Also, EU policy towards Greece had been criticised by *The Guardian* for its disregard of national sovereignty and of popular preferences as expressed in elections. In the context of the Ukrainian crisis, this discursive link was broken when the newspaper described the EU role in Ukraine as being about assisting the country achieve "its EU dream" so that its people could "make a free choice about their own government and national direction without further internal disorder and without outside … interference" (*The Guardian* 2014). This identification of the EU with an ethical, other-regarding power was further reinforced by suggesting that unlike Russia, the EU (and the USA) had no self-regarding interests at stake in the struggle over the future alignment of Ukraine. An editorial thus stated that, "European and American envoys have rushed to Kiev in the hope of containing the crisis, while the Russians are naturally also trying to shape events to suit their interests" (*The Guardian* 2013b). But this was not the only contrast between Russia and the EU that *The Guardian* highlighted in its reporting on Ukraine. It went out of its way to word Russia as "authoritarian," "corrupt," "politically backward," and economically "inefficient" (*The Guardian* 2013a, 2014). "Putin's Russia" was described as "a Slav version of Pinochet's Chile," and Putin himself was framed as "Little Mussolini" (Kampfner 2013; Tisdall 2014). Unlike the EU, he had a "zero-sum approach to international relations" which was characterised by "inflexibility" (Tisdall 2014). In short, the manner in which *The Guardian* framed the Ukrainian crisis powerfully reaffirmed the dominant EU ideology that brings the neoliberal EU under description as an economically successful, democratic and just social formation, which empowers the less fortunate to achieve their dreams. It thus encouraged its pro-EU new petty bourgeois readers to overcome their "bad conscience" about how EU institutions dealt with Greece, and with the losers of EU neoliberal policies more generally, by feeling good about how the EU was supposedly rescuing about 44 million people from the clutches of a proto-fascist Russia and to help them create a self-determined, democratic and wealthy country.

Conclusion: The Growing Importance of the Ideological Functions of EU Foreign Policy Apparatuses and Its Dangers

We want to suggest that there is something more general to take away from our empirical illustrations and our analysis of ideology composition, decomposition and recomposition. Since the beginning of the 2000s, the neoliberalisation of the EU has led to a pronounced intra-EU polarisation between losers and winners, in terms of individuals, regions and whole countries. A correlate of this process, which has accelerated in the recent financial crisis, is that the EU has become more imperialist in its internal composition. The deepening imperialist structure of the EU, which is correlated with the intensification of authoritarian statism, is the spatial manifestation of what Harvey (2007) calls the principal achievement of neoliberalism: redistribution from the poor to the rich. In this context, the risk for the EU power bloc is that the ideology of feel-good and ethical capitalism loses traction among a growing segment of the population and, most troublesome, among segments of the new petty bourgeoisie. This risk places a premium on alternative narratives capable of securing the hegemony of neoliberalism by distracting citizens from its socio-economic pathologies and by inciting them to identify with something larger than supposedly petty issues such as socio-economic problems, inequality and the hollowing out of democracy. There seem to be two principal strategies available to the EU to secure the hegemony of the neoliberal agenda under these conditions. First, there is the politics of fear predicated on the securitisation of phenomena such as terrorist attacks in the EU. A politics of fear is a well-rehearsed mystification strategy in which ideological and repressive state apparatuses figure as both the producers of fear and the alleviators of fear, with citizens getting entrapped in a security dilemma from which there seems to exist no escape as measures aimed at enhancing the referent object of securitisation have the opposite effect of highlighting its continued vulnerability. The other strategy to secure the hegemony of the neoliberal agenda in the EU is foreign policy diversion. This strategy can draw on an official EU foreign policy narrative of "normative power Europe," which dates back to the 1970s when the then European Community member states cooperated in the framework of European Political Cooperation to advance the human rights basket of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe. Against the backdrop of this EU foreign policy role identity, which has spawned a cottage industry in EU studies on the EU as a force for good in international relations, European foreign policy offers manifold opportunities for ISAs to narrate EU engagements abroad as uniquely ethical in orientation, in contrast to other great powers such as the USA and in particular in contrast to Russia. Such a discourse obscures the classed inequities of power and life chances within the EU and the *realpolitik* dimension in its relation with semi-peripheral and peripheral countries in its neighbourhood and beyond it. Moreover, there is the risk that foreign policy narratives that are predicated upon devaluing foreign governments and other actors in order to overcome internal social tensions and conflicts generate (unintended) negative externalities. The intensity and scope of the current anti-Russia discourse across the EU is an indication of the power of foreign policy narratives to secure social cohesion. At the same time, it shows the grave dangers of such a legitimation strategy. The new cold war in Europe has hollowed out international cooperation and peace. An even greater danger is that the success of foreign policy narratives in patching over internal legitimacy strains within the EU by representing it as a force for good on the international stage tempts EU leaders to actively manufacture foreign policy events, or to insist on maximalist positions which prevent an early crisis resolution. They could then instrumentalise the crisis to represent the EU as a noble normative power in opposition to the rascals of the drama.

Notes

1. Here we draw on that strand of neo-Poulantzasian scholarship which describes the EU as a "heterogeneous European ensemble of state apparatuses," with "institutions located on various scales *within* it" (Kannankulam and Georgi 2014, 68; emphasis added). "No coherent European state has emerged; the EU rather displays a spatially fragmented form of statehood" whose components exist in "a cooperative—competitive relation" (Wissel and Wolff 2017, 232, 239).
2. Negative integration is about market-making, the abolishing of obstacles to trade and competition. Positive integration is about supranational regulation.
3. Being "a formidable force for good in the world" is how the EU described itself in its 2003 security strategy.
4. "AND" is a logical operator that we used to connect two or more search terms in our search of the LexisNexis database. It is not an abbreviation in this sentence.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank the two anonymous referees for their constructive comments.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Notes on Contributor

Michael Merlingen is a professor at the Department of International Relations, Central European University, Budapest, Hungary. His main research interests lie in Foucauldian IR and historical-materialist IR, in Foucault and Marx. He is particularly puzzled by how the international/global is implicated in the enclosure of our socio-economic and political imaginaries and the production of our affects, that is, by what with Foucault one might call the demonic aspect of liberal world order and with Marx one might call alienation or the impoverishment of thought and practice engendered by this world order.

References

Althusser, L. 2014. *On the Reproduction of Capitalism: Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses*. London: Verso. i-Book.

Baboulias, Y. 2012. "Greece, in 2012: Fascists Beating Up People While the Police Look On." Accessed June 12. https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2012/oct/12/greece-fascists-beating-people-police.

Bieling, H. J. 2003. "Social Forces in the Making of the New European Economy: The Case of Financial Market Integration." *New Political Economy* 8 (2): 203–224.

Bruff, I. 2014. "The Rise of Authoritarian Neoliberalism." *Rethinking Marxism* 26 (1): 113–129.

Bruff, I. 2017. "Cease to Exist? The European 'Social' Model and the Hardening of 'Soft' EU Law." In *States of Discipline: Authoritarian Neoliberalism and the Contested Reproduction of Capitalist Order*, edited by C. B. Tansel, 149–169. London: Rowman & Littlefield.

Council of Ministers. 2015. "Council Decision of 5 October on Guidelines for the Employment Policies of the Member States for 2015." Accessed June 12, 2018. http://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/docs/ELECTRONIC/100134/119956/F-1488742211/EEU-100134%20(EN).pdf.

European Commission. 2010. "Communication from the Commission: Europe 2020—A Strategy for Smart, Sustainable and Inclusive Growth." Accessed June 12, 2018. http://ec.europa.eu/eu2020/pdf/COMPLET%20EN%20BARROSO%20%20%20007%20-%20Europe%202020%20-%20EN%20version.pdf.

European Commission. 2013. "Communication From the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan—Reigniting the Entrepreneurial Spirit in Europe." Accessed June 12, 2018. http://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regdoc/rep/1/2012/EN/1-2012-795-EN-F1-1.Pdf.

European Council. 2000. "Presidency Conclusions—Lisbon European Council, 23 and 24 March." Accessed June 12, 2018. http://www.europarl.europa.eu/bulletins/pdf/1s2000en.pdf.

European Patliament. 2017. "The European Parliament, the Council and the Commission Solemnly Proclaim the Following Text as the European Pillar of Social Rights: European Pillar of Social Rights." Accessed June 12, 2018. https://www.vlada.cz/assets/media-centrum/aktualne/European-pillar-of-social-rights.pdf.

Gallas, A. 2016. *The Thatcherite Offensive: A Neo-Poulantzasian Analysis*. Leiden: Brill.

George, B. 2013. "Foreword: Getting Capitalism Back on Track." In *Conscious Capitalism: Liberating the Heroic Spirit of Business*, edited by J. Mackey and R. Sisodia, 17–29. Boston, MA: Harvard Business Review Press. i-Book.

Gill, S. 1998. "European Governance and New Constitutionalism: Economic and Monetary Union and Alternatives to Disciplinary Neoliberalism in Europe." *New Political Economy* 3 (1): 5–26.

Harvey, D. 2007. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Huber, M. T. 2013. *Lifeblood: Oil, Freedom, and the Forces of Capital*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Inman, P. 2012. "Germany Has Run Out of Patience." Accessed June 12, 2018. https://www.theguardian.com/business/economics-blog/2012/mar/04/debt-crisis-eu.

Jessop, B. 1985. *Nicos Poulantzas: Marxist Theory and Political Strategy*. Houndmills: Macmillan.

Jessop, B. 2010. *State Power: A Strategic-Relational Approach*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Jessop, B. 2015. “Margaret Thatcher and Thatcherism: Dead Nut Not Buried.” *British Politics* 10 (1): 16–30.

Jessop, B., K. Bonnett, S. Bromley, S. Bromley, and T. Ling. 1984. “Authoritarian Populism, Two Nations, and Thatcherism.” *New Left Review* I/147: 32–60.

Kampfner, J. 2013. “The Battle for Ukraine’s Identity.” Accessed June 12, 2018. https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/dec/11/battle-ukraine-protests-identity-putin-russia-eu.

Kannankulam, J. 2008. *Autoritärer Etatismus im Neoliberalismus: Zur Staatstheorie von Nicos Poulantzas* [Authoritarian Statism in Neoliberalism: On the State Theory of Nicos Poulantzas]. Hamburg: VSA-Verlag.

Kannankulam, J., and F. Georgi. 2014. “Varieties of Capitalism or Varieties of Relationships of Forces? Outlines of a Historical Materialist Policy Analysis.” *Capital & Class* 38 (1): 59–71.

Laclau, E. 1977. *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory: Capitalism, Fascism, Populism*. London: NLB.

Lanchester, J. 2011. “Can the Eurozone Survive the Greek Debt Crisis?” Accessed June 12, 2018. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/jul/13/eurozone-greek-debt-crisis-euro.

Lewis, T. E. 2017. “A Marxist Education of the Encounter: Althusser, Interpellation, and the Seminar.” *Rethinking Marxism* 29 (2): 303–317.

Lukács, G. 1971. *History and Class Consciouness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Mackey, J., and R. Sisodia. 2013. *Conscious Capitalism: Liberating the Heroic Spirit of Business*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business Review Press.

Martel, J. R. 2017. *The Misinterpellated Subject*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Milios, J., and G. Economakis. 2015. “The Working Class and the Middle Classes: Allies in a Common Anti-neoliberal Strategy?” Accessed June 12, 2018. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/284542070.

Milne, S. 2011. “The Elite Still Can’t Face Up to It: Europe’s Model Has Failed.” Accessed June 12, 2018. https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2011/nov/02/elite-europe-model-failed.

Oberndorfer, L. 2017. “Demokratie in der Krise. Der Autoritäre Wettbewerbsetatismus und das linke Regierungsprojekt in Griechenland.” [Democracy in Crisis: Authoritarian Competitive Statism and the Left Government Project in Greece.] In *Mit Poulantzas arbeiten . . . um aktuelle Macht-und Herrschaftsverhältnisse zu verstehen* [Working with Poulantzas . . . in Order to Understand Current Relations of Power and Rule], edited by T. Boos, H. Lichtenberger, and A. Puller, 178–206. Hamburg: VSA-Verlag.

Pfetsch, B., S. Adam, and B. Eschner. 2010. “The Media’s Voice over Europe: Issue Salience, Openness, and Conflict Lines in Editorials.” In *The Making of a European Public Sphere: Media Discourse and Political Contention*, edited by R. Koopmans, and P. Statham, 151–170. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Poulantzas, N. 1973. *Political Power and Social Class*. London: NLB.

Poulantzas, N. 1974. *Fascism and Dictatorship: The Third International and the Problem of Fascism*. London: Verso.

Poulantzas, N. 1976a. *Classes in Contemporary Capitalism*. London: NLB.

Poulantzas, N. 1976b. *The Crisis of the Dictatorships: Portugal, Greece, Spain*. London: New Left Books.

Poulantzas, N. 2000. *State, Power, Socialism*. London: Verso.

Poulantzas, N. 2008. *The Poulantzas Reader: Marxism, Law, and the State*. London: Verso.

Rehmann, J. 2014. *Theories of Ideology: The Powers of Alienation and Subjection*. Chicago, IL: Haymarket Books.

Scharpf, F. W. 2008. “Negative und Positive Integration.” [Negative and Positive Integration.] In *Die Politische Ökonomie der europäischen Integration* [The Political Economy of European Integration], edited by M. Höpner and A. Schäfer, 49–87. Frankfurt a.M.: Campus Verlag.

Scott, J. C. 1990. *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Skeggs, B. 2005. “The Making of Class and Gender through Visualizing Moral Subject Formation.” *Sociology* 39 (5): 965–982.

Smith, F. 2016. "Lessons from a Decade of 'Conscious Capitalism'." Accessed June 12, 2018. https://www.forbes.com/sites/fredsmith/2016/11/11/lessons-from-a-decade-of-conscious-capitalism/#155ddde92e0c.

Sotiris, P. 2017. "The Authoritarian and Disciplinary Mechanism of Reduced Sovereignty in the EU: The Case of Greece." In *States of Discipline: Authoritarian Neoliberalism and the Contested Reproduction of Capitalist Order*, edited by C. B. Tansel, 171–187. London: Rowman & Littlefield.

Streeck, W. 2014. *Buying Time: The Delayed Crisis of Democratic Capitalism*. London: Verso.

The Guardian. 2010. "Guardian Reader Profile." Accessed June 12, 2018. https://www.theguardian.com/advertising/advertising-guardian-readership-profile.

The Guardian. 2012. "The Euro: More Summits, More Problems." Accessed June 12, 2018. https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2012/jan/29/euro-summit-europe-problems.

The Guardian. 2013a. "Ukraine: The Road Not Taken." Accessed June 12, 2018. https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/dec/02/ukraine-road-not-taken.

The Guardian. 2013b. "Ukraine: On the Edge." Accessed June 12, 2018. https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/dec/12/ukraine-on-the-edge-editorial.

The Guardian. 2014. "Leading Article: Ukraine: Running Out of Road." Accessed June 12, 2018. https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/jan/30/ukraine-running-out-road.

The Guardian. 2016. "Audience Profile." Accessed June 12, 2018. https://www.theguardian.com/select/audience-profile.

Thomas, P. D. 2006. "Konjunktur des integralen Staates? Poulantzas' Gramsci-Lektüre." [Relevance of the Integral State? Poulantzas Reads Gramsci.] In *Poulantzas lesen. Zur Aktualität marxistischer Staatstheorie* [Reading Poulantzas: On the Relevance of Marxist State Theory], edited by L. Bretthauer, A. Gallas, and J. Kannankulam, 307–323. Hamburg: VSA-Verlag.

Thompson, E. P. 1966. *The Making of the English Working Class*. New York, NY: Vintage.

Tisdall, S. 2014. "Ukraine: Analysis 'Little Mussolini' Flexes His Muscles." Accessed June 12, 2018. http://www.lexisnexis.com/lnacui2api/api/version1/getDocCui?lni=5BK5-TF11-JC8W-64SW&csi=138620&hl=t&hv=t&hnsd=f&hns=t&hgn=t&oc=00240&perma=true&secondRedirectIndicator=true.

Traynor, I. 2012. "European Governments Are Running Out of Options." Accessed June 12, 2018. https://www.globalpolicy.org/component/content/article/229-world-economic-crisis/51263-european-governments-are-running-out-of-options-.html.

Traynor, I., and H. Smith. 2011. "Europe Warned of Financial Chaos over Greek Debt Crisis." Accessed June 12, 2018. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/jun/15/europe-warned-greece-financial-crisis.

Van Apeldoorn, B. 2002. *Transnational Capitalism and the Struggle over European Integration*. London: Routledge.

Walker, S. 2013. "Ukraine Protests: Outrage as Police Attack Kiev Barricades." Accessed June 12, 2018. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/dec/11/kiev-protests-police-barricades-chainsaws.

Wissel, J., and S. Wolff. 2017. "Political Regulation and the Strategic Production of Space: The European Union as a Post-Fordist State Spatial Project." *Antipode* 49 (1): 231–248.

Zimmerman, H., and A. Eddens. 2018. "Governing the Liberal Self in a 'Post-Truth' Era: Science, Class and the Debate over GMOs." *Cultural Studies* 32 (6): 953–974.