

Valentin Yakushik

Ph.D. in Political Science and Ph.D. in Law, Professor
University of “Kyiv-Mohyla Academy”

COMPETING DISCOURSES OF ‘POST-COLONIALISM’ IN PRESENT-DAY UKRAINE

Contemporary Ukrainian political discourse presents divergent and sharply contested analytical and conceptual frameworks and modes of analysis, with advocates of each attempting to provide substantive positions a) on different periods and ‘layers’ of Ukrainian history, and b) to align certain Ukrainian territories, social communities and groups with specific civilizational forms, thereby seeking to identify Ukraine as possessing innate or ‘natural’ civilizational affinities.

These political discourses present both competing and kin national, regional and local messages. Thus, for example, posters prominent during the flaming and burning Maidan in 2013-2014 asserted both that ‘Ukraine is Europe(an)’ and ‘Kolomyia is Europe(an)’.

Some of the previously popular, legitimate (and legal) modes of discourse, usually confrontational with the pro-European family of discourses, are now officially stigmatised and even demonized within the territory currently under the control of the central government of the country. As a result they have moved underground or emigrated, or, alternatively, were transferred ‘into the subconscious’, replacing the formulations of their most important theses with euphemisms, adopting a form of Aesopian language and resorting to allegorical narrative techniques. These now officially delegitimised narratives primarily concern the discourses of the ‘Russian World’ and communism, but also some forms of anarchism.

Following the discussion instituted at the 3rd International Conference “Challenges of Post-Colonialism: Philosophy, Religion and Education” (2017) [1] it should be noted that the ‘post-colonial’ and ‘anti-colonial’ discourse in contemporary Ukraine is represented by a number of significant currents of thought:

1. **The discourse of pro-European’ and ‘Transatlantic’ neo-liberals and neo-conservatives**, whether real or mummies (i.e. posing as something which they are not) aims to demonstrate the ‘European nature’ of Ukraine, asserting the natural attractiveness and superiority of modern democratic, pluralistic socio-economic and political systems of the Global West, asserting these as non-neocolonial; this is offered in sharp contrast with the near total criticism of the colonial practices of Russian tsarism and Soviet communism. The socio-political ideal underlying such narratives argues for full incorporation of Ukraine into the structures and processes of the Global West as can feasibly be achieved given current situational realities and the correlation of cultural, political and economic

forces globally. In Ukraine this mode of post-colonial discourse seeks to collapse distinctions between the two most important varieties of such world currents, namely the ‘Soros-Clinton’ mainstream and the Trump variety, presenting these as nuances of no particular importance in their content, indicative only of the orientation towards a particular group of influences in the Global West. Representatives of these modes of political thought characterise the possible revival of the Soviet Union (or the ‘Soviet Empire’) as the main danger facing Ukraine [2].

2. **The discourse of radical nationalism, whether national socialist, or national traditionalist, or national conservative**, present a socio-political ideal of Ukrainian society in opposition to all outsiders, whether Russian, Communist, Western, or Eastern, colonialism and neo-colonialism and the colonialism of transnational corporations.

3. In contemporary Ukraine **the discourses of both social democracy and the New Left** are in a depressed state and, in many respects, in their infancy. The degree of anti-capitalist, anti-Western, anti-communist, anti-Asiatic, etc orientation can vary significantly, depending on the specific civilizational, cultural and historical roots of the bearers of such postcolonial (and anticolonial) discourses and the existing organizational forms through which these are manifested.

4. **The discourse of civilizational conservatives** emphasizes their antithesis and direct political opposition to all supporters of any break with the multiculturalist and traditional Christian Orthodox foundations of the key components of Ukrainian society, and the denigration and diminution of all remaining cultural and historical ties with other East Slavic societies (see for example [3]). As such they are opposed to various forms of a) ethnic nationalism, b) cosmopolitanism, c) attempts at expansion by other civilisations onto the territory of Ukraine. One area (and/or aspect) of the sharp confrontation between advocates of a) pro-Western post-colonial discourse and b) civilizational conservatives’ latent or explicit emphasis of anti-colonialism, is related to appeals to religious and ecclesiastic issues, contained in various controversial projects, supported by the official authorities, of catholicity and the autocephaly of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church [4]. The main sphere of confrontation between civilizational conservatives and their major opponents lies in conservatives’ opposition to the official policy of the incorporation of Ukraine into Europe, along with the distancing of Ukraine from Russia [5].

Among the professional community of Ukrainian social scientists, problems relating to the change of civilizational affiliation of Ukrainian society present one of the primary focuses of discussion [6]. In such discussions there is a notable prevalence of the voices supporting the official mainstream.

5. **The discourse of contemporary anarchists** and, in particular, of the movement ‘People Outside the State’. The main emphasis there is placed on the problem of ‘internal colonialism’, the unjust distribution of resources and

administrative powers between the bureaucratic centre, which is currently controlled by oligarchic groups, and local communities [7].

6. **The discourse of pragmatists** focuses principally on the ‘recognition of practical inevitability’ of significant changes in cultural and political hegemony in the modern world in the near future. Under the influence of ‘orientologists’ this discourse distinguishes a) traditional colonialism and imperialism and b) policies and politics of ‘postcolonial empires’ and their proxies and clients. This discourse comprises the following major ideas:

- “building a community with a shared future for mankind”, i.e. “to connect the prospects and destinies of every nation and country closely together, share weal and woe, and turn planet Earth into a harmonious family”;

- building “a safe world free of fear”, where “a country cannot gain its security at the cost of others” and where “all countries should pursue a new security concept featuring common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable development”;

- creating “fair, just and shared security to jointly eliminate the root cause of war” and to “strive to eliminate poverty and promote common prosperity”;

- pushing forward “open, inclusive, beneficial, balanced, and win-win economic globalization, to deliver benefits to all countries”;

- “an open and inclusive world” where “cultural barriers” are being broken and “all kinds of civilizations exist and grow in harmony”;

- “building of a clean and beautiful world with picturesque scenery” what presupposes comprehensive “efforts to ensure coexistence between man and nature, cherish the environment as we cherish our own lives, respect and protect nature, and safeguard the irreplaceable planet Earth” [8].

In this regard, the relevant pragmatists support ‘the Belt and Road’ initiative and the ‘New Silk Road’ infrastructural mega-project.

References:

1. Якушик В. М. Актуальність проблематики постколоніалізму і залежного розвитку в сучасному політичному дискурсі в Україні // «Виклики постколоніалізму: філософія, релігія, освіта»: Матеріали III Міжнародної науково-практичної конференції (м. Київ, 18 – 19 травня 2017 року). – Київ: Вид-во НПУ імені М. П. Драгоманова, 2017. – С. 29-30. [Electronic resource].

– Mode of access: http://enpuir.npu.edu.ua/bitstream/123456789/14304/1/konf_fmاد.pdf

2. Росія прагне дестабілізувати Україну і повернути її у Радянський Союз – Президент. 08.05.2018. [Electronic resource]. – Mode of access: <http://www.president.gov.ua/news/rosiya-pragne-destabilizuvati-ukrayinu-i-povernuti-yiyi-u-ra-47278>

3. Глава держави: У нашому військовому календарі не має бути нічого спільного з країною-агресором. 08.05.2018. [Electronic resource]. – Mode of

access: <http://www.president.gov.ua/news/glava-derzhavi-u-nashomu-vijskovomu-kalendar-ne-maye-buti-n-47290>; Президент підписав Указ про остаточне припинення участі України у статутних органах СНД. 19.05.2018. [Electronic resource]. – Mode of access: <http://www.president.gov.ua/news/prezident-pidpisav-ukaz-pro-ostatochne-pripinennya-uchasti-u-47554>; Президент: Російський культурний імперіалізм був артпідготовкою для російської агресії проти України. 20.05.2018. [Electronic resource]. – Mode of access: <http://www.president.gov.ua/news/prezident-rosijskij-kulturnij-imperializm-buv-artpidgotovkoju-47578>

4. Отримавши автокефалію Української Православної Церкви, ми повернемося до витоків своєї історії – Президент. 05.05.2018. [Electronic resource]. – Mode of access: <http://www.president.gov.ua/news/otrimavshi-avtokefaliyu-ukrayinskoji-pravoslavnoji-cerkvi-mi-47274>; Україна має свій шлях до Бога і він не через Москву – Президент про надання Томосу для української церкви. 20.05.2018. [Electronic resource]. – Mode of access: <http://www.president.gov.ua/news/ukrayina-maye-svij-shlyah-do-boga-i-vin-ne-cherez-moskvu-pre-47566>

5. «Безвіз» є прощанням із російською імперією – Порошенко під час зустрічі з Грібаускайте. 09.06.2017. [Electronic resource]. – Mode of access: <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/28538621.html>; Порошенко: безвіз с ЕС – окончательный разрыв Украины с советской империей. 20.05.2017. [Electronic resource]. – Mode of access: <https://www.unian.net/politics/1933026-poroshenko-bezviz-s-es-okonchatelnyiy-razryv-ukrainyi-s-sovetskoj-imperiey.html>; Порошенко: Цей день увійде в історію як остаточний вихід з російської імперії. 11.06.2017. [Electronic resource]. – Mode of access: <https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-politics/2245319-porosenko-cej-den-uvijde-v-istoriu-ak-ostatocnij-vihid-z-rosijskoi-imperii.html>

6. VII Конгрес політологів України «Цивілізаційне самовизначення України наприкінці ХХ – на початку ХХІ ст.». Київ, 23 березня 2018 року. [Electronic resource]. – Mode of access: http://www.ipiend.gov.ua/uploads/Events/2018/20180323/programa_kongresu.pdf; http://www.ipiend.gov.ua/?mid=16&action=news_detail&new_id=378

7. Сибирцев А. Люди вне государства. [Electronic resource]. – Mode of access: <http://longread.strana.ua/lyudi-vne-gosudarstva>; СБУ атакує «Людей вне государства». 22.03.2017. [Electronic resource]. – Mode of access: https://www.2000.ua/novosti/ukraina_novosti/sbu-atakuet-lyudei-vne-gosudarstva-.htm

8. Concept of ‘community with shared future for mankind’ being transformed into action: Xi. 01.12.2018. [Electronic resource]. – Mode of access: http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2017-12/01/content_35160220.htm