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## THE TWENTIETH-CENTURY COLONIALISM WITHIN UKRAINIAN ACADEMIC AND PUBLIC DISCOURSE IN THE ERA OF INDEPENDENCE\*

### ABSTRACT

The article analyses the notion post-, anti- colonialism in Ukrainian political and public discourse since 1991. The author focuses on the debate about coloniality and its reflections on Ukrainian political thought in XX century. The first part of the article devotes to the problems of applying postcolonial theories to the Ukrainian context and the specifics of the relationship between the Soviet Union's center and the national republics that represented the periphery. The second part analyses the influence of the legacy of Ukrainian national communists on the notion of colonialism in contemporary Ukrainian historiography, while the third part focus on the processes of decolonization represented in public discourse. Finally, the author analyses how Euromaidan launched the politics of decommunization and how it affected the post-Soviet space.

### KEYWORDS:

Colonialism, Ukraine, Ukrainian national-communist, Russia, decommunization, decolonization, the Soviet Union, discourse, Euromaidan

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The collapse of the Soviet Union kick-started a powerful process of decolonization among post-Soviet countries, with the Russian Federation – successor to the USSR – playing the unpleasant role of the heir to Russian empire and its colonial practices. Decolonization and revision of historical narratives in the countries of the so-called “near abroad” radically changed the image of Russia. This situation worried the Russian leadership, which used “common historical memory” as an instrument of influence in the post-Soviet space. Clearly, the positive image of Russia was an important element of this political technology.

In 2009, Russian experts analysed the history textbooks of CIS countries and concluded that – with the exception of Belarus and Armenia – these countries did not perceive the role of the Russian Empire and the USSR as a positive one in their history. If this trend continues for the next twenty years, the image of Russia as a notorious empire will be decisively imprinted in the minds of the peoples of the former USSR. This trend is unacceptable for Russians. Ukrainian historian Vladyslav Hrynevych rightfully observed that the processes that had caused the indignation of the Russian leadership were quite natural for a post-imperial space, where the collision of post-colonial and imperial discourses is inevitable. The reformatting of the Soviet past among the CIS countries was natural because “a new future requires a new past”.<sup>1</sup>

The debate regarding the nature of the dependence of the modern Ukrainian state on other countries, primarily Russia, is not only the subject of lively historical discussions; it is also the object of attention of public opinion and is an important component of state policy in terms of memory. The essence of the discussion boils down to one question: was this dependence a result of external violence or did it – at least in part – have internal legitimization? The application of the concept of colonialism remains an important element of these discussions. Such discussions were quite relevant for Central and Eastern Europe, where most of the countries had been able to implement their modern national projects only after the collapse of the colonial empires in the aftermath of World War I. In this context, Ukraine is quite an interesting and, to some extent, unique phenomenon, since it is the only country in Eastern Europe<sup>2</sup> that attempted to implement its modern project within the Soviet Union; concurrently,

<sup>1</sup> Vladyslav Hrynevych, ‘Vijny pam’jatej jak konflikt postkolonial’noho ta impers’koho dyskursiv’, *Ukraina Moderna*, 17 March 2016 <<https://uamoderna.com/blog/vladislav-grinevich/memory-wars-imperial-discourses>> [accessed 17 September 2019].

<sup>2</sup> In 2011, Professor Serhii Plokyh proposed applying the term “New Eastern Europe” to Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova, arguing that there are some real geographical, cultural, ethnic, and historical factors that distinguish this region from the neighboring ones. Despite the ambiguity of this approach, which leads to the artificial differentiation of the Baltic-Black Sea region, one can single out the abovementioned countries into a separate sub-region; such an approach has heuristic potential. See: Serhii Plokyh, ‘The “New Eastern Europe”: What to Do with the Histories of Ukraine, Belarus, and Moldova?’, *East European Politics & Societies*, 25 (2011), 763–69.

Ukraine has its own intellectual tradition of processing the experience of colonialism and Marxist criticism.

The goal of this article is to analyse the history of colonialism as a concept within twentieth-century Ukrainian intellectual thinking and to assess this history's impact on the field of contemporary Ukrainian humanities.

At the dawn of Ukrainian independence, colonialism was a marginal term that occasionally emerged in the rhetoric of the newly formed Ukrainian political parties.<sup>3</sup> Gradually, the concept of colonialism moved into the mainstream of the intellectual and political community. Its popularity exploded during the presidency of Viktor Yushchenko (2005–2010). According to the Ukrainian historian Heorhiy Kasyanov, the first 'historical president' actively used the colonial approach that had been created in the United States and Canada and which borrowed from the practices of the post-war Ukrainian emigration and diaspora.<sup>4</sup> The public demand for a historical policy of decolonization became apparent during the Orange Revolution, and the Russian Federation's interference in Ukraine's internal political processes had a strong impact on this demand. Russia's aggression against Ukraine, which began in March 2014 with the occupation of Crimea and Donbas, only reinforced this trend. In 2015, this demand resurfaced with the introduction of a policy of decommunization, the goal of which was to clear Soviet markers and names from the public spaces of Ukrainian cities and villages.<sup>5</sup> Since the legitimacy of the national liberation struggle of the Ukrainian people was secured at the legislative level, and the communist regime, on a par with the Nazi regime, was recognized as criminal, the developments of 2015 reinvigorated the discussions on the colonial status of Ukraine within the USSR.

It is worth noting that the term "colony" in relation to Ukraine as part of the Russian/Soviet empire was coined by the Ukrainian Communists and was supported by the left wing of the Ukrainian Social Democrats and Socialist-Revolutionaries, most of whom perished during the Stalinist purges and the Great Terror policy. Paradoxically, the heritage of the National Communists was preserved and refined by Ukrainian nationalists during World War II and the third wave of Ukrainian emigration to the United States and Canada. The focus on the struggle against the Soviet Union, where the Russian people acted as a state-building body, determined

<sup>3</sup> Stephen Velychenko, 'The issue of Russian colonialism in Ukrainian thought. Dependency identity and development', *Ab Imperio*, 1 (2002), 323–67 (p. 323).

<sup>4</sup> Heorhiy Kas'janov, *Danse macabre: holod 1932–1933 rokiv u polityci, masovij svidomosti ta istoriografiji (1980-ti – počatok 2000-ch)* (Kyjiv: Naš čas, 2010), pp. 56–79.

<sup>5</sup> Vladyslav Hrynevych, 'Revolucija, vijna i proces tvorennja ukrajins'koji naciji', *Ukrajina Moderna*, 8 November 2015 <<https://uamoderna.com/blogy/vladislav-grinevich/revolution-war-nation>> [accessed 8 November 2019].

the direction of the diasporic intellectual thinking that methodically introduced the colonial paradigm.<sup>6</sup>

How did the concept of 'colonialism' evolve within the Ukrainian political thinking of the twentieth century? What is the ratio of the use of colonial approaches in the field of cultural and socio-economic history? What are the prospects of colonial theory for studying the history of Ukraine in the twentieth century? How is the term 'colonialism' currently being used in intellectual and public discourse? These are only some of the questions to which we will draw attention and try answer within the framework of this article.

#### PRO ET CONTRA: (POST/ANTI) COLONIAL THEORIES AND THE HISTORY OF POST-SOVIET COUNTRIES

Reflecting on the Ukrainian situation from the standpoint of post-colonial criticism, the Swedish researcher Roman Horbyk notes that this problem is complex since we have to deal with several diverse trajectories at once: Western colonialism towards Eastern Europe; Russian colonialism in Eastern Europe and Central Asia; Polish imperialism and the general self-Orientalism/internal colonization of Eastern European peoples. Since all of these colonial experiences are quite difficult to combine within the framework of post-colonial theory, Horbyk proposes shifting the focus of attention from the question of 'who colonized whom?' to 'how did the modern subject form itself within the system of power relations?'.<sup>7</sup> Empires shape and influence colonies in the same way as colonies shape and influence an empire. The ambivalence of the Ukrainian colonial situation is obvious. Ukrainians helped to build the Russian Empire, but they later became its victims. According to Horbyk, the cultural and ideological influence on Muscovy of seventeenth-century Ukrainian intellectuals can be compared with cultural imperialism. On the other hand, he also notes that the incorporation of the Hetmanate, like any colonization, would have been impossible without the support of interested local groups.

The attention that Roman Horbyk pays to the discursive Soviet practices that were designed to construct Ukrainian Soviet subjectivity in the 1920s best reflects the essence of the discussions on the application of post-colonial approaches to the history of Eastern Europe. After all, this

<sup>6</sup> Jana Prymačenko, *Pivničnoamerykanska istoriografija dijital'nosti OUN i UPA* (Kyjiv, 2010), pp. 25–32.

<sup>7</sup> Roman Horbyk, 'Ideologies of the Self Constructing the Modern Ukrainian Subject in the Other's Modernity', *Kyiv-Mohyla Humanities Journal*, 3 (2016), 89–103 (pp. 90–92).

attention makes it possible to overcome a simplified ideological vision which rejects basic concepts of post-colonial theory, such as hybridity, subjectivity, and subordination.<sup>8</sup>

The use of colonial optics in the context of the implementation of the Ukrainian modern project, which took place within the framework of Soviet modernization, is the main aspect of modern Ukrainian discussions about colonialism. Actually, the key question is: was Ukraine a Russian colony within the USSR?

The concept of “Russia is the prison of peoples”, which was actively used by the Bolsheviks in their propaganda against the Tsarist regime, was based on the idea that all the peoples of the Russian Empire, including the Russians themselves, were belittled by imperialism. The Soviet modern project of *korenizatsiya*, or nativization – creating a culture that is “national in form, socialist in content” – was presented as anti-colonial. In essence, the Bolsheviks led the process of cultural and political emancipation of the ethnic groups that used to inhabit the Russian Empire – a process that had been caused by World War I. But was this project anti-colonial in regards to Ukraine? How relevant is the use of colonial approaches to the Soviet period of Eastern European history?

Post-colonial studies, as well as the new imperial history itself, came to life as part of a ‘new cultural history’ of the West in the 1980s and quickly gained popularity among Western scholars.<sup>9</sup> Canadian literary critic Myroslav Shkandrij was one of the first to apply postcolonial approaches to Ukrainian history. He believes that the integration of Ukrainian elites into imperial structures was a classic example of the colonial policy used by the Russian empire to subdue newly acquired territories. A striking example of such a colonial policy is the prolonged marginalization and oppression of Ukrainian culture.<sup>10</sup> In support of his position, he refers to another diasporic scholar, Mark Pavlyshyn, and proposes applying three approaches to modern Ukrainian literature and culture: colonial, anti-colonial, and postcolonial. The colonial approach refers to those elements in literature that help spread the structures and myths of colonial relations of power. The anti-colonial approach rejects these structures or seeks opportunities to change them with the aim of exacting revenge on the Russian empire by humiliating the culture of the metropolis and emphasizing the benefits of the cultural heritage of the colony,

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., pp. 94–95.

<sup>9</sup> Andriy Zajarnjuk, ‘Pro te, jak social’na istorija stavala kul’turnoju’, *Ukrajina Moderna*, 9 (2005), 249–69; Natalja Laas, ‘Social’na istorija SRSR v amerykans’kij istoriohrafiji: teoretyčni dyskusiji 1980–2000-oh rr.’, *Ukrajins’kyj istoryčnyj žurnal*, 4 (2010), 170–91.

<sup>10</sup> Myroslav Shkandrij, ‘Colonial, Anti-colonial and Postcolonial in Ukrainian Literature’, in *Twentieth Century Ukrainian Literature: Essays in Honour of Dmytro Shtohryn*, ed. by Jaroslav Rozumnyj (Kyiv: Kyiv Mohyla Academy Publishing House, 2011), pp. 282–97 (pp. 284–85).

which in this case is Ukraine. In turn, the postcolonial approach is relevant to both of these categories within literature and culture and regards these approaches as equal.<sup>11</sup>

For quite some time, postcolonial theory was applied only within the framework of literary studies. Historians were not in a hurry to use it, fearing erosion of the boundaries of historical research. Canadian historian Stephen Velychenko became the first to actively apply these approaches to the military and political history of the USSR. He emphasized the following,

While examining only the cultural aspects of domination and subordination, which they [literary critics] consider 'cultural and linguistic imperialism'... postcolonialists consider their methodology to be a kind of therapy that helps formerly colonized peoples become cognizant of themselves through knowledge of their past. By limiting the colonial-imperial relations to the literary and cultural sphere, they seem to take on the role of guides, whose only goal is to clarify the essence of domination and liberation.<sup>12</sup>

Velychenko believes that postcolonialism has been successful within Western historiography primarily thanks to the generous donations of large corporations, which hired postcolonialism researchers as consultants in order to increase the efficiency of their international branches. Another negative aspect of this methodology, in his opinion, is that it leads to a 'victim complex'. As a supporter of the colonial approach, Velychenko admits that no dedicated scholar of Ukrainian history supports the idea of the colonial status of Ukraine within the USSR.<sup>13</sup>

For a long time, the colonial approach to Soviet Ukraine was limited to the problem of "the colonization of discourse", which silences the voice of the "colonized nation". At the same time, socio-economic aspects were put aside precisely because of the ambivalence of the Ukrainian colonial situation, which created a number of difficulties for the justification of colonial relations in economic categories.

The concern regarded the so-called "white colonialism toward whites", which American researcher Ewa Thompson quite aptly defined as the "military subjugation of a territory and population that already has its own national consciousness, political system, law, language, and

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 292.

<sup>12</sup> Stephen Velychenko, 'Postkolonijalizm, Evropa ta ukrajins'ka istorija', *Ukrajina Moderna*, 9 (2005), 237–48 (p. 237).

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., pp. 222–33.

social customs".<sup>14</sup> In this sense, according to Thompson, the image of Central Europe created by "outside observers" hardly differs from nineteenth-century European travellers' descriptions of Africa. Based on the historical experience of Poland, this American scholar distinguishes two stages of discursive colonization of Central Europe, which, to some extent, can be extrapolated to the Ukrainian situation: 1. From the eighteenth century to the collapse of the USSR (except for the interwar period); 2. The modern era – the struggle for liberation from the baggage of colonial discourse. Consequently, the "colonization of discourse" is nothing more than the creation of an image of a "colonized nation" by those who are far from expressing this nation's interests.<sup>15</sup>

Considering Central-Eastern Europe as a space that formed as a result of the expansion of the Russian and German empires, the Polish historian Jan Kieniewicz interprets national society as an organism struck by imperial influence, while the intelligentsia within this system take on the role of the antibodies that the organism produces to combat this threat – the colonial empire.<sup>16</sup> Interpreting the intelligentsia–empire conflict as a conflict of values, Kieniewicz notes that, even under the conditions of civilizational pressure, the right to choose a behavioural model was up to representatives of intelligentsia. After all, an intelligentsia that acts, *a priori*, as a force of modernization that is responsible for the transformation principles of a dependent society<sup>17</sup> always reserves certain rights that make it responsible for this society, regardless of the conditions.<sup>18</sup>

A significant contribution to the debate on the application of postcolonial theory to the post-Soviet space was made by the American historian David Chioni Moore. He noted that the term 'post-colonial' was introduced into the academic community as a euphemism and as a substitute for such attributes as 'not Western', 'Third World', 'minority', and 'developing countries'. Within the dichotomy of contrasting the 'first' and the 'third' worlds, the 'second world' seems to constitute a separate phenomenon. It is the presence of a discursive line between the 'West' and the 'East' that acts as a deterrent that separates Europeans in the post-Soviet space from the postcolonial third world. Europeans *a priori* cannot be colonized since they play the role of the colonizers.

<sup>14</sup> Ewa Thompson 'Istorija Central'noji Evropy jak postkolonijal'na naracija', *Ukrajina Moderna*, 16 (2010), 227–34 (p. 227).

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 229–30.

<sup>16</sup> Jan Kenevič, 'Intelligencija i imperija', *Ab Imperio*, 1 (2011), 131–62 (p. 134).

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 149–52.

<sup>18</sup> Some of these ideas have previously been voiced in one of my articles. See: Jana Prymačenko, 'Ukrajins'ka chudožnja intelihiencija 1920-ch rokiv jak istoriohraficne javyščje: problemy metodolohiji doslidžennja', *Ukrajins'kyj istoryčnyj žurnal*, 3 (2013), 184–97.

For a long while, post-Soviet countries did not fit into the post-colonial paradigm because of the difference between the Russian-Soviet and Anglo-French variants of colonial relations, with the latter being considered a benchmark. In his analysis of the Russian situation, Moore points out that the understanding of Russia as a colonial empire has always been hampered by the absence of seas and oceans between the metropolitan and the colonial countries, something that was inherently present within the 'classical' understanding of colonial empires. Besides, Russia itself was not considered a part of the Western world.

Moore criticized Edward Said for his unwillingness to include Russia among the colonial empires based solely on the criterion of distance. After all, the distance from Moscow to Tashkent was no less than the distance between Britain and its overseas colonies. Moore calls this concept the myth of 'contiguity', which disguises the true colonial essence of the Russian empire.<sup>19</sup>

This American scholar also pointed out the differences within the trajectory of colonization processes in Russia. If the eastward movement was a kind of revenge for the Mongol domination by which the Russian Empire colonized the peoples whose vassal it used to be, the trajectory of the westward movement was completely different. Moore proposes considering the case with the Soviet colonization of Central Europe as a fourth, culturally reversible, type of colonization. If standard 'Western' colonization entails the "orientalization" of a subject – with the colonized people being a priori passive, ahistorical, feminine, or barbaric – the 'fourth case' introduces the opposite scenario, which is related to the Russian complex regarding the supremacy of Western culture. In turn, the countries of Central Europe perceived the Russian and Soviet domination as Asian or barbaric.

David Moore noted that, in the case of Soviet colonialism, one could observe all the classic colonial practices being applied to the subjugated countries: the lack of sovereign power, travel restrictions, military occupation, etatism, and forced education in the language of the colonizers.<sup>20</sup>

Ewa Thompson indirectly supports David Moore's argument. While analysing the Russian literature of the late Soviet era, she mentions another characteristic feature of Russian colonialism, namely the fact that Russians even continued to confuse the concept of *Imperium* with Russia after the collapse of the USSR. Similarly to the Western bards who glorified

<sup>19</sup> David C. Moore, 'Is the Post- in Postcolonial the Post- in Post-Soviet? Toward a Global Postcolonial Critique', *Globalizing Literary Studies, special issue of PMLA*, 116.1 (2001), 118–28.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 121.

the empires of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Russian writers of the post-Soviet era believed that the former territories of the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union should forever preserve their ties with Moscow. Russia's imperial vision outlived the USSR and lodged itself in the minds of Russians.<sup>21</sup>

The Bolsheviks offered their own alternative to the systems of control that were available when they came to power after the October revolution in 1917. In order to 'not remain' an empire, Lenin came up with the idea of a multi-level 'voluntary' alliance of republics.<sup>22</sup> Terry Martin called this model a strategy of 'affirmative action', which he elaborated on in his book *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923–1939*,<sup>23</sup> which stirred up a great debate in post-Soviet lands.<sup>24</sup> The "national in form, socialist in content" approach became an alternative to the imperial, colonial, caste, universalist systems, as well as the "melting pot" ideology of the time. However, according to Leninist–Marxist theory, sooner or later all nationalities would become *Homo Sovieticus*.<sup>25</sup>

David Moore admitted that in the process of analysing the Soviet project one can find arguments both for and against its colonial essence, while expanding the scope of application of the term 'post-colonial' can lead to the loss of its analytical force. In the end, he comes to the conclusion that "the colonial relations at the turn of the millennium... become as fundamental to world identities as other 'universal' categories such as race, and class, and caste, and age, and gender".<sup>26</sup> It is difficult to disagree with this statement.

British scholar Taras Kuzio believes that post-Soviet countries, like the rest of the post-colonial world, are experiencing 'imperial transit', i.e., attempts to build a national state on the basis of inherited quasi-statehood. However, in the post-Soviet countries this 'imperial transit' is different from the authoritarian transition that took place in Southern and Central Europe and Latin America, where nation-building and state-building did not play such an important role during the transition to democracy. Analysing the situation in more depth, Kuzio observes that the 'imperial transit' of Ukraine, Moldova and Kazakhstan is radically different from the processes of the 1970s–1980s in Latin

<sup>21</sup> Ewa M. Thompson, *Imperial Knowledge: Russian Literature and Colonialism* (Westport–Connecticut, 2000), pp. 129–31.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 123.

<sup>23</sup> Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923–1939* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001).

<sup>24</sup> Oleksandr Rubl'ov, and Larysa Jakubova, 'Pro 'Imperiju pozytyvnoji diji' Teri Martyna', *Historians.in.ua*, 1 August 2013 <<https://www.historians.in.ua/index.php/en/dyskusiya/796-oleksandr-rublov-larysa-yakubovapro-imperiiu-pozytyvnoi-dii-teri-martyna>> [accessed 1 August 2019].

<sup>25</sup> Moore, *Is the Post- in the Postcolonial Post- in the Post-Soviet?*, p. 122.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 124.

American countries, which seceded from the Spanish and Portuguese empires in the nineteenth century. These processes are also different from the transformations that took place earlier in Southern Europe at the core of the two former empires: the Austro-Hungarian and the Ottoman. Instead, the 'imperial transit' of Ukraine, Moldova, and Kazakhstan is similar to the processes that occurred in the post-colonial countries of Africa and Asia.

According to Kuzio, of these three countries, only Moldova manifests processes that are similar to those that happened to the post-colonial states of the former Western empires. It is also important to mention that Russia and Turkey, unlike Western European empires, were unable to create their own national states before the creation of their empires. The Turkish national state emerged after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire; the Russian Federation had the potential to evolve into the Russian national state after the collapse of the Soviet empire, but imperial resentment prevailed.<sup>27</sup>

Probably the most striking example of re-thinking of the Ukrainian Soviet experience in post-colonial categories comes from Mykola Riabchuk, who thoroughly critiqued Moore's fundamental article, making the observation that post-colonial studies are based on racial inferiority, but this does not deny the other colonial experiences of oppression and discrimination. Using Moore's classification, Riabchuk views Ukraine and Belarus as an intermediary link between two poles: on one hand, classical colonialism in Russian-Soviet Asia and the Caucasus; on the other hand, the relatively mild, non-colonial dominance of the USSR in Eastern Europe. Ukrainians and Belarusians did not create sovereign states, but at the same time – provided they were loyal to the system – they did not suffer from discrimination.<sup>28</sup>

In Moore's classification, during the times of the Russian Empire the incorporation of Ukraine took place via the 'dynastic' route. According to Riabchuk, Soviet modernization, accompanied by the extermination of intelligentsia and peasantry, turned Ukrainian villages into internal colonies. Actually, the transformation of cities into the 'first' world and villages into the 'third' was an all-Soviet practice, but in Russia this gap was not deepened by the linguistic aspect. Riabchuk says,

For all the similarity between the global third world and the Soviet internal colonial world, one should remember

<sup>27</sup> Taras Kuzio, 'History? Memory and national building in post-Soviet colonial space', *Nationalities papers*, 30.2 (2002), pp. 259–60.

<sup>28</sup> Mykola Riabčuk, 'Vidminy kolonializmu: pro zastosoვნnist' postkolonial'noji metodolohiji do vyvčennja postkomunistyčnoji Schidnoji Jevropy', *Naukovi zapysky IPIEND*, 2 (2013), 41–58 (pp. 48–49).

the essential difference – the absence of a fundamental racist component in Soviet colonialism. Communism as a system, in various ways, was lawless and discriminatory against many groups, including ethnic ones; however, at the individual level, Soviet subjects had incomparably more opportunities to avoid discrimination than coloured Africans, whose fate was largely determined by the very colour of their skin. For Ukrainians, their “blackness” was represented by the miserable, despised, inferior, “collective farm” language. It was not difficult to switch to a different one, at least in the second generation, thereby putting an equal sign between urbanization and Russification...<sup>29</sup>

Only Galicia managed to avoid the Russification of its cities since this region, as well as the population of the Baltic and Central European countries, perceived the Russians as occupiers and therefore did not display an inferiority complex.<sup>30</sup>

To conclude, let us note that the application of postcolonial theory to Ukraine and, in a broader context, Eastern Europe demonstrates the specifics of the relationship between the centre and the periphery. The question of how to fit postcolonial theories into the Ukrainian context has been discussed for quite some time. It is obvious that the history of Ukraine, especially its Soviet period, is multilevel and complex, thus it requires unconventional approaches. The application of the comparative approach makes it possible to fit the Ukrainian experience into the general paradigm of colonial discourse, while micro-historical studies demonstrate national specifics. It is hard to deny that when it comes to Ukraine or Eastern Europe, the experience of colonialism has a distinctly non-classical form, and this should be taken into account when applying colonial optics.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 50–51.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 52.

## COLONIALISM IN UKRAINIAN SOCIO-POLITICAL THOUGHT OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY: CULTURE VERSUS ECONOMICS

Within Ukrainian historiography and public opinion, it is much easier to think about the issue of colonialism from the point of view of cultural rather than economic processes. Firstly, this is true thanks to the great impact of the creative intelligentsia on the state-building processes in Ukraine, starting from the Ukrainian national liberation struggle of 1917–1921, which brought to the fore such important figures as historian Mykhailo Hrushevskyy, writer Volodymyr Vynnychenko, and journalist and publicist Simon Petliura. In fact, it is precisely the creative intelligentsia who, according to Miroslav Hroch's model of non-state nations, determine nation-building processes and form an imaginary community which later transforms into a political nation. Secondly, socio-economic history lost ground during the Independence era, which was a natural reaction to the long period of domination of vulgar Marxism within Soviet science. Therefore, it is not surprising that, during the first period of the creation of independent Ukrainian historical science, the main emphasis was on the so-called 'blank spots'. The Ukrainian national liberation struggle of 1917–1921, as well as the Executed Renaissance and the literary discussion that preceded the policy of curtailing Ukrainianization, appeared to take centre stage. The main focus of researchers' attention shifted to the Ukrainian writer and publicist Mykola Khvylovyi, People's Commissioner of Education in the Ukrainian SSR Oleksander Shums'kyi,<sup>31</sup> and his

<sup>31</sup> Oleksander Shums'kyi (1890–1946): Ukrainian party and state leader. From September 1924 to February 1927, he served as People's Commissar of Education of the Ukrainian SSR. He actively pursued the policy of Ukrainianization and supported the development of Ukrainian culture, in particular the work of Mykola Khvylovyi. For this reason, he came into conflict with Lazar Kaganovich, the Secretary General of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine (CK KPbU), who was appointed in April 1925. Joseph Stalin, the Secretary General of the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party (CK RKPb), intervened in this discussion; in a letter to the members of the Politburo of CK KP(b)U, he made Oleksander Shums'kyi responsible for spreading anti-Russian sentiment in Ukraine. At the May Plenum of CK KPbU in 1926, Shums'kyi was forced to officially admit his mistakes, but even that did not save him. In 1927, he was removed from office on charges of undermining the work of People's Commissariat of Education of the Ukrainian SSR. In February–March 1927, the Plenum of CK KPbU confirmed the existence of the so-called *shumskism*, or the "nationalist inclination of Shums'kyi". He was forced to leave Ukraine and work in Russia, occupying various positions. On 13 May 1933, Shums'kyi was arrested on charges related to the fabricated UVO case (Ukrainian Military Organization) and sentenced to ten years in prison. After spending two years in the Solovki special camp, he was sentenced to ten years of exile in Krasnoyarsk by the resolution of the Special Meeting of the NKVD that took place on 10 December 1935. On 13 May 1943, having served his sentence, Shums'kyi remained in Krasnoyarsk "for medical treatment". While in prison, he did not stop fighting for his public rehabilitation, did not admit any of the charges, and appealed to CK KPbU numerous times. In a letter to Stalin dated 18 October 1945, he criticized the national policy of the USSR, in particular the idea of elevating the Russian people as Ukraine's "elder brothers". On his way back to Ukraine in September 1946, Shum'skyi was killed by a special group of the Ministry of National Security of the USSR at the personal order of Joseph Stalin. Oleksander Shums'kyi was rehabilitated on 11 September 1958. See: Heorhij Papakin, 'Šums'kyj Oleksandr Jakovyč', in *Encyklopedija istoriji Ukrajinjy* (hereafter *EIU*), ed. by Valerij Smolij, and others, 10 vols (Kyjiv: Naukova dumka, 2003–2013), X (2013), pp. 671–72.

successor Mykola Skrypnyk,<sup>32</sup> while Ukrainian communists and economists Vasyl' Shakhrai, Serhii Mazlakh<sup>33</sup> and Mykhailo Volobuiev<sup>34</sup> attracted far less attention.

The purpose of this part of the article is to mark the main milestones in the development of colonial theory within twentieth-century Ukrainian public opinion. Here, I resort to a certain schematization that simplifies the overall picture. The accomplishments of Ukrainian interwar and post-war emigration are beyond the scope of my analysis, since I am focused mainly on what was created in 'mainland' Ukraine in response to the current political situation. This approach by no means reduces the achievements of Ukrainian emigration and the diaspora, where ideas that had originated in Ukraine developed.

- <sup>32</sup> Mykola Skrypnyk (1872–1933): Ukrainian Soviet party and state leader. In March 1927, he was appointed People's Commissar of Education of the Ukrainian SSR; in February 1933, he was appointed Head of the State Planning Commission and the Deputy Head of the People's Commissars' Committee of the Ukrainian SSR. While serving at this high state level, Skrypnyk actively participated in the process of creation of the USSR. At the same time, as a member of the Commission on the development of the Federal Constitution, he fought for guarantees of Ukraine's sovereignty within the Union State. He actively pursued the policy of Ukrainization and significantly expanded the fields where Ukrainian language could be used. Another project of his was training personnel from representatives of the native nationality. Concurrently, much was done to ensure the national and cultural development of all national minorities living in Ukraine. Mykola Skrypnyk was one of the most significant Soviet theorists of the national question. With the start of the campaign accusing Ukrainian elites of 'national evasion', he pleaded not guilty and committed suicide in Kharkiv. See: Valerij Soldatenko, 'Skrypnyk Mykola Oleksijovyč', in *EUU*, IX (2012), pp. 618–19.
- <sup>33</sup> Serhii Mazlakh (born Serhii Robsman, 1878–1937): politician, one of the founders of Ukrainian national communism. Together with Vasyl' Shakhrai, he founded and edited the Bolshevik newspaper *Molot*. He did not share the views propagated by Bolshevik extremism. He publicly supported the First and Third Universals of the Ukrainian Central *Rada*, recognizing it as the highest governing authority in Ukraine and, at the same time, putting forward the idea of its transformation through elections into the Ukrainian Central *Rada* of Workers', Peasants', and Soldiers' Deputies. Mazlakh collaborated with Shakhrai on a political pamphlet *Concerning the Moment: What is Happening in Ukraine and to Ukraine* (1919). This text justified the state independence and unity of Ukraine, while the success of the social revolution was seen as dependent on the solution to the national question. In 1923–1924, Mazlakh served as the manager of a Donbas logistics organization, as well as the editor of the magazines *Donbas Economy* and *Znannia* (The Knowledge). Later, he was appointed the Head of the Central Statistical Office and continued with the policy of Ukrainization of the personnel. Starting March 1931, he held a number of high-level positions in the USSR State Planning Commission in Moscow. On 7 August 1937, Serhii Mazlakh was arrested by the NKVD, allegedly as a member of a "counter-revolutionary right-wing organization". Soon after, allegations of Ukrainian nationalism were added to the list of accusations. Despite the fact that Mazlakh did not confess, on the grounds of these falsified charges he was sentenced to death by the Military Board of the USSR Supreme Court of the USSR on 25 November 1937, and he was executed in Moscow. See: Oleksandr Jurenko, 'Mazlach Serhij Mychajlovyč', in *EUU*, VI (2009), pp. 430–31.
- <sup>34</sup> Mykhailo Volobuiev (alias: Artemov; 1903–1972): Ukrainian economist. In 1928, he published an article *Toward the Issue of Ukrainian Economy* in the Ukrainian *Bilshovyk* journal, which outlined the phases of the Russian Empire's colonial policy development in Ukraine prior to the events of October 1917, thereby refuting the statement about the complete unity of the pre-revolutionary Ukrainian and Russian economies. Volobuiev emphasized that Moscow governing institutions (including the USSR State Planning Commission) continued with their imperial policy, at times avoiding even the very name of Ukraine, instead giving preference to the names such as South, Southern District, South of European Russia, or Southern-Russian Economy. Volobuiev stipulated the idea that Ukraine had its own path of economic development and had to join the world economy. Using concrete examples, he demonstrated the irrationality of the centralized usage of natural and economic resources of Ukraine by the planning institutions of the USSR. He proposed considering the economy of the USSR as a system of national economies, with each national economy keeping its own integrity. His views were qualified as an economic platform for 'national evasion'; as a result, he was subjected to public ostracism. Volobuiev was arrested on 7 December 1933, on charges of participating in the "Ukrainian counter-revolutionary organization seeking to overthrow the Soviet power by means of armed resistance". On 8 May 1934, Volobuiev was sentenced to five years of correctional camps by the decision of the special judicial *troika*, authorized by the State Political Directorate (GPU) of the Ukrainian SSR, but his sentence was changed to exile to Kazakhstan. After his release, he lived in the Krasnodar Territory of the Russian Federation. During the war with Nazi Germany, he worked for Soviet intelligence. In August of 1957, Mykhailo Volobuiev was rehabilitated. In the last years of his life, he worked as a teacher in Rostov-on-Don. See: Jurij Šapoval, 'Volobujev (Artemov) Mychajlo Symonovyč ta joho stattja' Do problemy ukrajins'koji ekonomiky', in *EUU*, I (2003), p. 614.

Vasyl' Shakhrai was the founder of Ukrainian national communism. His creative legacy is relatively small compared to the impact his work had in and after the 1920s on subsequent generations of Ukrainian intellectuals. In his works *Revolution in Ukraine* and *Concerning the Moment* (co-authored with Serhii Mazlakh), Shakhrai reflects on the reasons for the defeat of Soviet power in Ukraine in 1918. He poses an uncomfortable question to Vladimir Lenin: when it comes to Ukraine, why do nations' rights to self-determination diverge from real politics?<sup>35</sup> In fact, he accuses the Bolsheviks of continuing the autocratic policy of the Tsarist regime under the disguise of internationalism, which found its embodiment in the policy of centralized management of national borderlands. Specifically, the governance of the Communist party of Ukraine (KPbU) was carried out by Moscow-appointed emissaries. Under the 'dictatorship of the proletariat', it was the KPbU that was the highest governing body in charge of all economic and cultural policies in Ukraine. Vasyl' Shakhrai insisted on the creation of a separate Ukrainian Communist party that was different from the KPbU, which was just a branch of the Russian Communist party (RKPb). Moreover, Ukrainian communists, in his opinion, should have been represented in the *Comintern* (*Communist International*), and Ukraine should have acted as a state ally of Russia, concurrently preserving its independence.

In his work *Revolution in Ukraine*, Shakhrai openly declared,

The situation of Ukraine is such that the way to unification with the neighbouring states lies only through independence... Otherwise, there is a possibility of wars against the socialist state, as well as revolution.

National antagonisms will not dissipate that fast, and hatred, quite legitimately, will remain with the oppressed and oppressor for some time. It will evaporate only after the victory of socialism and after entirely democratic relationships between the nations have been established.

[...]

The victorious proletariat cannot impose any happiness on other ethnos without undermining its own victory.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Serhij Mazlakh, and Vasyl' Šachraj, *Do chvyli (Ščo dijet'sja na Ukrajinu i z Ukrajinuju)* (N'ju-Jork: Proloh, 1967), pp. 281–96.

<sup>36</sup> Vasyl' Šachraj, *Revoljucija na Ukrajinu*, ed. by Andrej Zdorov, and others (Odessa: TÈS, 2017), pp. 125–26.

Later, Mykola Khvylovyi expressed similar ideas, but the ‘parents’ of Ukrainian National Communism were the first to pay the price for these subversive thoughts. On 9 March 1919, CK<sup>37</sup> KPbU expelled Vasyl’ Shakhrai and Serhii Mazlakh from the party for engaging in “actions directed against the party”, while Shakhrai’s *Concerning the Moment* was withdrawn from circulation.

Shahray’s standpoint had a significant impact on the left-wing Ukrainian Social-Democrats (*esdeks*) and Socialist-Revolutionaries (*esers*), who held the founding Congress of the Ukrainian Communist party (UKP) in January of 1920. The participants of the Congress did not yet know about the death of Shakhrai in Kuban at the hands of Denikin’s followers, so they appointed him a member of CK KPbU and the honorary chairman of the Congress.<sup>38</sup> For a long time, the UKP was a real political force and competed with the KPbU, but in 1925 it was dissolved by the *Comintern* and some of its members joined the ranks of the KPbU. Subsequently, many of them were repressed.<sup>39</sup>

The issue of Ukraine’s real right to self-determination, as was discussed by Vasyl’ Shakhrai in his works, became the ground for exploration of the cultural and economic emancipation of Ukraine in the 1920s. The colonization of the cultural discourse was raised by the Ukrainian writer Mykola Khvylovyi<sup>40</sup> in his famous series of pamphlets, which stirred up a politically invested literary discussion in 1925. Khvylovyi’s last pamphlet, *Ukraine or Little Russia?*, was banned by the Soviet censors.<sup>41</sup> The author argued that only Ukraine’s real independence within the USSR would allow it to undergo a class differentiation that would accelerate the development of communism.<sup>42</sup> Khvylovyi insisted on the ideological affinity of Ukraine with the “psychologically oriented Europe” and denied Moscow the role of a cultural intermediary, encouraging young Ukrainian writers to learn languages and get acquainted with Western art directly. The literary debate, which began as a struggle for high standards in art, very quickly grew into

<sup>37</sup> CK – Central’nyj Komitet – Central Committee.

<sup>38</sup> Andrej Zdorov, ‘Ukrainskij bolševik Vasilij Šachraj: stranicy biografii’, in *Revoljucija na Ukraine*, pp. 15–16.

<sup>39</sup> Viktor Pryluc’kyj, ‘Ukrajins’ka Komunistyčna Partija (UKP)’, *Encyklopedija istoriji Ukrajinu: Ukrajinu–Ukrajinu*, 2 vols (Kyjiv: Naukova dumka, 2018–2019), II (2019), pp. 589–90.

<sup>40</sup> Mykola Khvylovyi (born Mykola Fitilev; 1893–1933): Ukrainian writer and publicist, one of the ideological leaders of Ukrainian National Communism. He actively participated in the literary discussion of 1925–1928. These discussions highlighted the ideological and aesthetic explorations of the post-revolutionary generation of Ukrainian writers; however, they were politicized by the Bolsheviks. Khvylovyi’s pamphlets *Quo Vadis?* (1925), *Thoughts against the Current* (1926), and *Apologists of Scribbling* (1926) advocated for Ukraine’s movement towards Europe and encouraged letting go of psychological dependence on Moscow – two processes that were seen as a guarantee of the revival of Ukrainian statehood. By the resolution of the Politburo CK KPbU dated 15 May 1927, the literary discussions were terminated, while their initiators, as well as leaders of the Ukrainian National Communist movement, were subsequently eliminated. On 13 May 1933, Mykola Khvylovyi committed suicide in Kharkiv. See: Vitalij Ablicov, ‘Chvylovyj Mykola’, in *ELU*, X (2013), pp. 364–65.

<sup>41</sup> Jurij Šapoval, ‘Car i rab chytoščiv’. Dolja Mykoly Chvylovoho u svetli spravy-formuljara’, in *Torknutys’ istoriji* (Dnipropetrovs’k: Lira, 2013), pp. 128–61.

<sup>42</sup> Mykola Chvylovyj, ‘Ukrajina čy Malorosija?’, in *Mykola Chvylovyj. Vybrani tvory*, ed. by Rostyslav Mel’nykiv (Kyjiv, 2011), pp. 742–43.

a political debate. This trajectory was not accidental. The Bolsheviks, who at that time had not yet completely solidified their presence in Ukraine, were aware of the dangers of Ukraine's cultural emancipation. In addition, this emancipation was initiated not by the political opponents of the Bolsheviks but by their party associates – the Ukrainian National Communists.<sup>43</sup> Khvylovyi pointed out the affinity of the mindsets of the Ukrainian and European cultures, and this observation raised the issue of Ukrainian national identity on a fundamental level. The Ukrainian writer predicted an era of 'Asian Renaissance', which, on the basis of the old European tradition, would not only provide impetus to this tradition's renewal but would also be at the forefront of the entire process of renewal. Here, Khvylovyi refers to the idea of 'modernization without Westernization', which was popular within the public discourse of the 1920s. Even though the entire concept of Soviet modernization was constructed with the help of an idealized vision of Europe and North America, it [the concept] was presented as Asian.<sup>44</sup> However, Stalin did not like Khvylovyi's idea of "Ukraine [...] moving toward socialism a little differently, albeit within a Soviet political union with Russia".<sup>45</sup>

The issues of economic colonialism found their way into Mykhailo Volobuiev's lengthy article 'Toward the Issue of the Ukrainian Economy', which was published in *Bilshovyk Ukrainy* in 1928 (#2-3). Based on in-depth analysis of Ukrainian-Russian economic relations since the time of the Hetmanate, Volobuiev showed that these relations had been unequal and introduced the concept of a 'colony of a European type' to describe the relationship between dependence and subordination.<sup>46</sup>

Rather unexpectedly, another author who analysed Ukraine's economic dependence on Russia in depth was Petro Fedun (aka Petro Poltava), the leader of the OUN's (Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists) main propaganda cell, and later the deputy of the Ukrainian Supreme Liberation Council (UHVR).<sup>47</sup> His article *The Colonial Economic Policy of the Bolshevik Imperialists in Ukraine* (1945) is a good example of Marxist criticism.<sup>48</sup> In it, Fedun distinguished between the three types of imperialist states: capitalist, fascist, and Bolshevik.<sup>49</sup> He considered Ukraine the "India of Stalinist USSR",<sup>50</sup> imitating the language of the Ukrainian

<sup>43</sup> Jana Prymačenko, 'Ukrains'ka literaturna dyskusija 1920-ch rr.: vid pytannja profesijnnych standartiv do problemy nacional'noji identyčnosti', *Problemy istoriji Ukrainy: fakty, sudžennja, pošuky: Mižvidomčyj zbirnyk naukovych prac*, 23 (2015), 228–47.

<sup>44</sup> Horbyk, 'Ideologies of the Self', pp. 97–98.

<sup>45</sup> Chvylovyj, 'Ukraina čy Malorosija?', p. 752.

<sup>46</sup> *Dokumenty ukrains'koho komunizmu*, ed. by Ivan Majstrenko (N'ju-Jork: Proloh, 1962).

<sup>47</sup> Halyna Herasymova, 'Poltava Petro', in *ELU*, VIII (2011), pp. 361–62.

<sup>48</sup> Petro Fedun-'Poltava', 'Kolonial'na hospodars'ka polityka bil'sovyc'kych imperialistiv v Ukraini', in *Petro Fedun-'Poltava', Koncepcija Samostijnoji Ukrainy*, ed. by Mychajlo Romanjuk, 2 vols (L'viv, 2008), I, pp. 43–98.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 70.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 97.

National Communists.<sup>51</sup> In this article, he further substantiated the idea that the Ukrainian people had no influence on the formation of their economic life. Fedun showed that the Bolsheviks were consistent ideological followers of the Russian policy of imperialism. Moreover, it was the Bolsheviks who invented a more sophisticated system for the exploitation of Ukrainian lands – the so-called Stalinist collective farms. As examples of signs of the Kremlin's colonial policy, Fedun mentioned economic zoning, according to which “certain economic areas of the USSR are forced to follow certain production directives that are most profitable from the point of view of all-Union planning”. As a result, agricultural production quotas of wheat and beets, as well as extensive methods of farming, were artificially imposed, making the Ukrainian economy uncompetitive on the world market.<sup>52</sup> Petro Fedun emphasized that the main industrial centres were concentrated in Russia, while Ukraine was transformed into a raw materials appendage that was facilitated by the development of a railway network connecting the centre with the national outskirts.<sup>53</sup> Leaning on the criteria of imperialism established by the ‘Stalinist authors’, Fedun exposed the colonial nature of the Kremlin's economic policy towards Ukraine and defined the Stalinist USSR as a new type of empire.<sup>54</sup>

The emergence of analytical studies of this kind among the journalistic writings of the Ukrainian liberation movement was the outcome of the collision between nationalists and the Soviet reality. As a result, the OUN started transitioning into a democratic platform, which was approved by the decisions of the Third Extraordinary Grand Assembly of the OUN(B) in August 1943. In terms of rhetoric, the decisions of the OUN(B) Assembly had an anti-colonial orientation. The rejection of the ethnic organizing principle of Ukraine in favour of the territorial one, the involvement of representatives of all ethnicities residing in the USSR in the struggle against Moscow's imperialism, and the guaranteed rights of national minorities – all these factors reflect the shift in mentality that took place in the OUN's ideology during World War II.<sup>55</sup>

The decisions of the Third Extraordinary Grand Assembly of the OUN(B) had far-reaching consequences for the organization itself. The democratic course was actively supported during the emigration that occurred after the end of World War II. Stepan Bandera and Yaroslav Stets'ko's attempt to withdraw the decision of the Third Assembly and

<sup>51</sup> Prymačenko, ‘Ukrajins'ka literaturna dyskusija’.

<sup>52</sup> Fedun-‘Poltava’, ‘Kolonial'na hospodars'ka polityka bil'sovyc'kych imperialistiv v Ukrajinі’, p. 66.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 43–98.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 71.

<sup>55</sup> Velykij zbir Oun, ‘Materialy III Nadzvyčajnoho Velykoho Zboru Orhanizaciji Ukrajins'kych Nacionalistiv (S. Bandery)’, in *Ukrajins'ka suspil'no-polityčna dumka v 20 stolitti. Dokumenty i materialy*, ed. by Taras Hunčak, and Roman Sol'čanyk, 3 vols (N'ju-Jork, 1983), III, pp. 57–73 (pp. 63–64).

return the movement to its pre-war positions of ethnic nationalism and chiefdom led to a split within the organization. In 1954, a group of *dviikari* (joint leaders, Lev Rebet and Zenon Matla) seceded from the OUN(B), creating an organization OUN(Abroad) in 1956.<sup>56</sup> They united around the Ukrainian publishing house *Prologue* in the United States, which in 1962 published a collection of *Documents of Ukrainian Communism* (as part of the “Social-Political Thinking” series). This collection included already classic works of Ukrainian National Communism: excerpts from Vasyl' Shakhrai and Serhii Mazlakh's brochure *Concerning the Moment*, Mykola Khvylovyi's pamphlets, Mykhailo Volobuiev's article, and speeches by Mykola Skrypnyk, the People's Commissar of Education of the Ukrainian SSR.<sup>57</sup> The collection's editor was a Ukrainian national communist and prisoner of Soviet concentration camps Ivan Maistrenko, who lived in Germany in the aftermath of World War II, taking an active part in the public and political life of the Ukrainian diaspora.<sup>58</sup>

The shift toward the left within the right-wing Ukrainian movement was due to the presence of a powerful social-democratic intellectual tradition within Ukrainian political thinking.<sup>59</sup> In particular, when analysing twentieth-century Ukrainian political thinking, Ukrainian historian Ivan Lysiak-Rudnyts'kyi proposed a four-fold structure in which democratic and totalitarian traditions are represented by two directions on the left and right political spectrums. He classified populism and conservatism as parts of the democratic tradition, while communism and nationalism came from the totalitarian one.<sup>60</sup> Lysiak-Rudnyts'kyi emphasized that Stalin destroyed Ukrainian National Communism, but World War II gave it a second chance, which materialized in the generation of the Ukrainian *shestydesiatnyky* (The Sixtiers), who exposed the defects of Russian imperialism from the positions of Marxist criticism.<sup>61</sup> Due to official restrictions, the dissident movement of the 1960s in the USSR took distinctly cultural forms.<sup>62</sup>

<sup>56</sup> Jana Prymačenko, 'Pivničnoamerykans'ka istoriohrafija pro dijāl'nist' nacionalistyčnogo pidpillja v umovach nimec'koji okupaciji ŪRSR', *Ukrajins'kyj istoryčnyj žurnal*, 6 (2009), pp. 25–32.

<sup>57</sup> *Dokumenty ukrajins'koho komunizmu*.

<sup>58</sup> Oleksandr Jurenko, 'Majstrenko Ivan', in *EIU*, VI (2009), p. 437.

<sup>59</sup> Ivan Lysjak-Rudnyts'kyj, 'Nacionalizm', in *I. Lysjak-Rudnyts'kyj Istoryčni ese*, ed. by Jaroslav Hrycak, 2 vols (Kyjiv: Osnovy, 1994), II, pp. 249–59.

<sup>60</sup> Ivan Lysjak-Rudnyts'kyj, 'Napriamy ukrajins'koji polityčnoji dumky', in *I. Lysjak-Rudnyts'kyj Istoryčni ese*, II, pp. 59–88 (p. 66).

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 59–88.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 86.

After Mykola Khvylovyi, the second person to raise the problem of cultural colonialism was the Ukrainian writer-*shestydesiatnyk* Ivan Dziuba.<sup>63</sup> In his work *Internationalism or Russification?*, written in September to December 1965, Dziuba exposed the misconceptions of the Soviet national policy that aimed to destroy the Ukrainian language and culture. His work received wide publicity in the West, which led to the author's persecution and cost him a career in the USSR.<sup>64</sup> Dziuba's contribution to the subject of colonialism was duly appreciated only after Ukraine's independence.

As analysis of twentieth-century Ukrainian political thinking demonstrates, the intellectual tradition of using the terms 'colony' and 'colonialism' to describe the co-dependence between the centre and the periphery took shape within the framework of Marxist criticism in Ukraine. Ukrainian intellectuals traced a special type of this dependency, which Mykhailo Volobuiev defined as a "colony of a European type". It should be noted that, at the present stage, the subject of the colonization of cultural discourse receives the majority of the attention, which can be explained by the dominance of the populist approach within Ukrainian historiography in the era of Independence. Nevertheless, the subject of colonial relations within the political and economic fields is starting to attract increased attention from researchers.

## DISCUSSIONS ON THE COLONIAL STATUS OF UKRAINE WITHIN THE USSR IN MODERN UKRAINIAN HISTORIOGRAPHY

In his *opus magnum*, the three-volume monograph *The Red Challenge*, Stanislav Kulchyts'ky reflects on the fundamental question: was communism in Ukraine a product of external intervention, or was it an organic manifestation of Ukrainian reality? After all, the answer to this question hinges on the assessment and interpretation of the Soviet period of Ukrainian history. Kulchyts'ky believes that the virus of communism was masterfully implanted

<sup>63</sup> Ivan Dziuba (1931–2022): Ukrainian literary critic, writer, public and political figure. He was a member of the Writers' Union of Ukraine (1959–1972; 1980–2022), a full member of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine (1992–2022), and a Hero of Ukraine (2001). Dziuba was persecuted for his views. In 1972, he was arrested and sentenced to five years in prison for 'anti-Soviet activities', then released a year and a half later and rehabilitated in 1991. Dziuba actively participated in the dissident movement and was one of the founders of the People's Movement in Ukraine (*Rukh*). In 1992–1994, he served as the Minister of Culture of Ukraine. A literary critic who has been widely published since 1952, he defended the right of Ukrainian literature for freedom of thought and its own aesthetic quest. Dziuba authored numerous *samyvdav* materials (uncensored underground publications), specifically his work *Internationalism or Russification?* (1965), which analyzes the mechanism of forced Russification among the various ethnicities of the USSR, primarily the Ukrainian one. This process was carried out under the hypocritical slogan of "internationalism". Ivan Dziuba passed away in Kyiv on 22 February 2022. See: Mykola Železnjak, 'Dzjuba Ivan Mychaljlovyc', in *ELU*, II (2004), pp. 378–79.

<sup>64</sup> Ivan Dzijuba, *Internacionalizm čy rusyfikacija?* (Kyjiv, 1998).

by Vladimir Lenin into the existing social confrontation in Ukraine, which explicitly manifested itself in the idea of 'black redistribution'.<sup>65</sup>

This prominent scholar of modern Ukrainian history observed that communism in Ukraine was both a consequence of the Russian conquest and a product of purely domestic origin. But, as we all know, the devil is in the details. So, what was the ratio of the external to the internal? Kulchyts'kyi is sure that communism would not have been installed in Ukraine had it not been for the Russian armed intervention:

The depth of the social and economic transformations associated with it [communism] caused intense social resistance, the suppression of which could be accomplished only with the help of Vladimir Lenin's dictatorship, which was quite unique in terms of its means. When this dictatorship in Ukraine took on the shape of the second Soviet republic, it failed to address the counteracting reaction of the freedom-loving and economically strong Ukrainian peasantry. As soon as the class confrontation was freed from the virus of communism, the Ukrainian village destroyed Soviet power. However, with the exception of a small area in the northwest, where the Directorate [of the Ukrainian National Republic] was fading, Ukraine became the stage for the Russian civil war. Ukraine was stuck between the armies of Leon Trotsky and Anton Denikin. The victory of the Red Army condemned the Ukrainian people to a common destiny with the Russians.<sup>66</sup>

Another Ukrainian researcher, Andrii Zdorov, who adheres to Marxism and is actively working to preserve the heritage of Ukrainian National Communism and the development of communist ideas, defines the social order that existed in the USSR as state capitalism. Due to the objective absence of the conditions necessary for a socialist revolution, a year after the October coup (which the author interprets as a step toward the formation of a proletariat dictatorship), in the fall of 1918 the revolution morphed into the dictatorship of the Bolshevik party, and later of the Stalinist bureaucracy.

Similarly to Stanislav Kulchyts'kyi, Andrii Zdorov does not agree with the statement that Bolshevism is a purely Russian phenomenon brought to Ukraine with Russian bayonets. Instead, Zdorov proposes considering the situation in Ukraine not from the traditional point of view of

<sup>65</sup> Stanislav Kul'čyc'kyj, *Červonyj vyklyk. Istorija komunizmu v Ukrajinі vid joho narodžennja do zahybeli*, 3 vols (Kyjiv: Tempora, 2013), I, pp. 302–03.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 304.

Stalinist-Brezhnev historiography about the ‘Great October Socialist Revolution’; instead, the term ‘Ukrainian October’, proposed in the early 1920s by Mykola Skrypnyk, should be used. Moreover, he narrows the scope of study of the ‘Ukrainian October’ to just three months: from November of 1917 to 18 February 1918, when, as a result of the signing of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk by the Ukrainian Central Rada, German and Austro-Hungarian troops entered the territory of Ukraine. Zdorov defines this period – in a spirit of Marxist criticism – as an intervention.<sup>67</sup>

In Ukrainian historiography, there is still no consensus as to whether it is correct to interpret this period of Ukrainian history as a German occupation. After all, we are talking here about a contractual relationship that, nevertheless, is quite difficult to define from a legal standpoint. Essentially, a relationship resembling a protectorate was established between the Ukrainian National Republic (UNR) on the one hand, and Germany and Austria-Hungary on the other.<sup>68</sup> But, due to the lack of a real power hierarchy in Ukraine, this relationship *de facto* turned into an occupation. Still, as Zdorov rightly observes, the German army was not able to radically change social processes in Ukraine.<sup>69</sup> Consequently, he believes that Bolshevism has Ukrainian roots. This, in fact, is evidenced by the ideological origin of Shakhrai – “the father of Ukrainian national communism” – who came from the Bolshevik Party.

Andrii Zdorov acknowledges that the activities of KP(b)U<sup>70</sup> (established in July 1918, a branch of the Russian RKP(b), later called VKP(b)<sup>71</sup> and then KPSS<sup>72</sup>) do not leave much space for ambivalent interpretations. It was Vasyl' Shakhrai who was the first to put forward the idea of creating an independent Ukrainian Communist Party (UKP) – an idea which came to fruition after his death in January 1920. He became the founder of the movement of Ukrainian ‘national communists’.<sup>73</sup>

Currently, the scope of Marxist criticism still remains rather small within Ukrainian historical research, which is related to the fact that social-democratic ideas were discredited in the Soviet period. But the intellectual ideas of Ukrainian communism are slowly coming back to Ukrainian public discourse. In 2017, Ukrainian Marxists Andrii Zdorov and Artem Klymenko reprinted *Revolution in Ukraine*, a classic work by Vasyl' Shakhrai.

<sup>67</sup> Andrii Zdorov, *Ukrajins'kyj žovten'. Bil'sovyc'ka revoljucija v Ukrajinі: social'no-polityčnyj aspekt (lystopad 1917 – ljuť 1918 rr.)* (Odesa: Astroprint, 2007), p. 3.

<sup>68</sup> Oleksij Lupandin, ‘Avstro-nimec'kych vijs'k kontrol' 1918’, in *EIU*, I (2003), p. 19.

<sup>69</sup> Zdorov, *Ukrajins'kyj žovten'*, p. 4.

<sup>70</sup> KP(b)U – Komunistyčna partija (bil'sovykyv) Ukrajinj – Communist Party (of Bolshevik) of Ukraine.

<sup>71</sup> Vsesojuznaja kommunističeskaja partija (bol'sevikov) – All-Union Communist party (of Bolshevik), the party of Russian Bolshevik that was a governing party of the Soviet Union. Until 1925 it was called RKP(b) – Rossijskaja kommunističeskaja partija (bol'sevikov) – Russian Communist party (of Bolshevik).

<sup>72</sup> KPSS – Kommunističeskaja partija Sovetskogo Sojuza – Communist Party of the Soviet Union is official name of the governing party of the USSR since 1952.

<sup>73</sup> Andrej Zdorov, ‘Figura umolčanija’, in *Revoljucija na Ukraine*, pp. 3–5.

The editors' decision to reprint the Russian-language version of Shakhrai's work was informed by the fact that, unlike *Concerning the Moment* (this author's first classic work), *Revolution* had not previously been republished, therefore this reprint became a rare edition. Also, the editors wanted to provide an opportunity for the Russian-speaking audience to familiarize itself with the book since the Russian factor dominates both academic and public discourse, where Russia is primarily considered the 'Other'.

The editors sought to communicate Shakhrai's belief system to a wide audience. According to this system, no universal method is available to solve the national question. In each individual case, one has to act according to the context. In addition, as early as 1919, Shakhrai made an attempt to explain to Russian readers why Ukrainian independence had to be real, not imaginary.<sup>74</sup>

Andrii Zdorov and Artem Klymenko admit that the majority of the gains of the "Great Revolution of 1917–1921" were liquidated by the "Stalinist state-capitalist counter-revolution,"<sup>75</sup> and the newly formed exploitative class of the state bourgeoisie mercilessly exterminated those who remained adamant adherents of communism until the very end. However, here is what the editors want the modern Ukrainian reader to pay attention to:

The genuine 'manifesto of Ukrainian communism', that is the famous book *Concerning the Moment*, was created by the Bolsheviks, even though they were 'black sheep' within the party ranks, outright 'heretics' who were expelled for their 'counter-revolutionary', almost 'Petliura-inspired' views. In itself, this is undoubtedly an interesting fact. It clearly points to the complex ideological evolution that prevented the left wing of Ukrainian socialist parties, which in March 1917 formed the Central Rada, from rapidly morphing into communist organizations; in other words, they were prevented from keeping pace with the general dynamics of radicalization of the revolutionary process. Later, the leading Ukrainian theorist of ukapism [from UKP, Ukrainian Communist Party],

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Artem Klymenko, 'Vyokremleńnja iz zahal'nosocialistyčnogo ruchu ta borot'ba ukrajins'kych komunistyčnych partij pid čas velykoji revoljuciji 1917–1921 rokiv. Istoryko-populjarnyj narys', in *Revoljucija na Ukraïne*, p. 137.

Andrii Richyts'kyi [pseudonym of Anatolii Pisots'kyi],<sup>76</sup> explained this phenomenon in terms of the occupation policy of the Russian Communist party, which maintained the unity of the future ukapists with that part of domestic social democracy that defended the ideal of the parliamentary superclass democracy and denied the slogan “all power to the Soviets!” Concurrently, as Richyts'kyi noted, they had “utopian hopes” of winning over all the USDRP [Ukrainian Social-Democratic Worker's Party] with the help of Soviet ideology.<sup>77</sup>

A number of questions arise from an academic perspective. The first and fundamental one concerns terminology, which, as we know, is not disputed but negotiated. Ukrainian historian Hennadii Yefimenko observes, on the one hand, the inconsistency between the connotations of terms used in the USSR, and, on the other hand, the genuine meaning of these terms. The ideologization of terminology leads to a focus on its emotional effect, not its content. Yefimenko points out the inadequacy of the term ‘colony’ as a way of assessing Ukrainian-Russian relations. This term's great popularity among researchers of the Ukrainian diaspora – as well as within post-Soviet historiography, where only this term's negative connotation is used – narrows down the analytical framework of this approach.

Hennadii Yefimenko emphasizes that, firstly, the Kremlin did not consider Ukraine its colony precisely because it [the Kremlin] rejected the idea of Ukraine as something separate. For most Kremlin rulers, Ukraine was just the ‘south of Russia’. This stems from Yefimenko's view that the USSR was an ethnocratic,<sup>78</sup> not a colonial, empire. Following Stanislav Kulchyts'kyi, Yefimenko believes that the relations that developed between the centre and the periphery in the USSR should not be considered

<sup>76</sup> Andrii Richyts'kyi (real name Anatolii Pisots'kyi; 1893–1934): political and public leader, economist, journalist, and literary critic. One of the ideologists and authors of the party program reorganized from the USDRP (the Independents) faction of the Ukrainian Communist party; a member of CK UKP. In 1923–1924, Richnyts'kyi headed the statistical department of the Ukrainian Bank. After the resolution of the Comintern to dissolve the UKP (24 December 1924), he joined the KPbU together with other members of CK UKP. From 1925, he worked as the Head of the socio-economic literature department of the State Publishing House of Ukraine (DVU); in 1928–1930, he was the Chairman of the Board of DVU. Concurrently, he was a professor at the Institute of Marxism-Leninism, a member of the Department of National Issues of the All-Ukrainian Association of Marxist-Leninist Research Institutes, and a member of the Editorial Board of *Bilshovyk Ukrainy*. On 9 August 1933, the secretariat of CK KPbU relieved Rechyts'kyi of all his posts. On 8 September 1933, he was arrested by the State Political Office of the Ukrainian SSR on charges of belonging to the ‘Ukrainian Military Organization’ and carrying out ‘active provocative counter-revolutionary work aimed at overthrowing the Soviet power in Ukraine.’ Andrii Richyts'kyi was shot on 25 April 1934, according to the decision of the visiting Extraordinary Session of the Supreme Court of the Ukrainian SSR. See: Oleksandr Rubl'ov, ‘Andrii Ričyc'kyj’, in *EIU*, IX (2012), pp. 238–40.

<sup>77</sup> Klymenko, ‘Vyokremleńnja iz zahal'nosocialistyčnoho ruchu’, p. 139.

<sup>78</sup> Ethnocratic state: a term used by Hennadij Jefimenko to explain the functioning of a Soviet state where there existed a certain hierarchy of nationalities. This term is related to the concept of ‘politicization of ethnicity’, which Stanislav Kulchyts'kyi commonly uses to explain how the Bolsheviks solved the national question in the USSR. According to this approach, the Russian ethnos in the USSR had state-building status. It was followed by the ‘titular nations’ of the national republics, then by the national minorities, which formed autonomous republics and territories.

within the framework of the ‘metropolis–colony’ colonial dichotomy, but rather at the level of a centre of power and a *subordinate centre*.<sup>79</sup>

In Ukrainian historiography, there is still a large disparity among studies devoted to “nationalist inclinations” within the ranks of KPbU. On the one hand, the issues of *Khvylovism* as a certain anti-colonial current within the environment of Ukrainian intelligentsia, as well as *Shumskism* as a corresponding current on the part of Ukrainian communists who held important posts in the Committee of People’s Commissars of the Ukrainian SSR, have been covered quite well. On the other hand, research on the current of *volobuievshchyna* did not advance beyond the analysis of the above-mentioned article by Mykhailo Volobuyev (published in *Bilshovyk Ukrainy* in 1928).

Hennadii Yefimenko insists that the 25-year-old Volobuiev only summarized the achievements of his colleagues, namely economists from the State Planning Commission. In addition, he rejects the view that Volobuiev’s ‘Toward the Issue of the Ukrainian Economy’ article could be a provocation by the Soviet intelligence services. Actually, Yefimenko focuses on the reasons behind setting up an artificial public discussion on the economic relations between the Ukrainian SSR and the centre.<sup>80</sup>

Yefimenko argues that since Volobuiev’s article resonated with the moods of the Ukrainian leadership, the hypothesis that it was published in *Bilshovyk Ukrainy* as a provocation and a pretext to begin fighting another ‘deviation’ such as *Shumskism* and *Khvylovism*, is not accurate. The NarKom of Education, Mykola Skrypnyk, used this article to initiate a discussion about the fallacy of Moscow’s economic policy towards Ukraine. Volobuiev himself was not a person of the necessary level of magnitude; instead, it was this article that made him notoriously famous and later cost him his freedom. According to Yefimenko, the only logical explanation for the appearance of Volobuiev’s article is the following,

The Ukrainian leadership, and in particular M[ykola] Skrypnyk, who placed this article in a leading Ukrainian journal, wanted to use volobuievshchyna in the fight against the centre-oriented aspirations of Moscow, as well as increase funding for Ukraine during the first five-year plan. In order to divert the strike from Moscow away from the leadership of Ukraine, as well as for the greater resonance of his article, M[ykhailo] Volobuiev used a number of emotional epithets to show Moscow in a bad light

<sup>79</sup> Hennadij Jefimenko, ‘Bil’sovyc’kyj centr i Radjans’ka Ukraïna: ekonomichni aspekty nacional’noji polityky Kremlja u 1917–1925 rr.’, *Ukraïns’kyj istoryčnyj žurnal*, 2 (2009), 96–109 (pp. 102–03).

<sup>80</sup> Hennadij Jefimenko, ‘Pro pryčyny pojavy volobujevščyny’, *Problemy istoriji Ukraïny: fakty, sudžennja, pošuky*, 14 (2005), 94–136 (pp. 94–96).

as a colonial profiteer. The hope was that such an article would finally hit a nerve with the Kremlin, because all the other cries of Ukrainian economists and government officials had been left unanswered. Ukrainians, having learned from the example of fighting Shumskism by forcing the policy of Ukrainization, tried to use the fight against *volobuievshchyna* to get the Kremlin to implement its declarations in the field of economic relations between the Ukrainian SSR and the USSR. One cannot characterize this attempt as particularly successful... However, this manoeuvre of the Ukrainian government was not unsuccessful either. For a while, the Ukrainian leadership had a small horror story at its disposal – see, our dear Moscow comrades, the failure to fulfil your own promises contributes to the proliferation of similar problems.<sup>81</sup>

Hennadii Yefimenko emphasizes that the level of investment in Ukrainian industry during the first five-year plan increased significantly, both in absolute terms and percentage-wise. Before 1928, investments were at 18.6% of the allotted budget, but they increased by 20.6% in the first five-year plan, 18.5% during the second five-year plan, and 14.9% in the three and a half years of the third (uncompleted) plan.<sup>82</sup>

But the question of how much these indicators can be attributed to the success of the Ukrainian leadership remains open. Investing in the Ukrainian SSR, where one of the largest coal basins was located, plus Ukraine's proximity to the profitable European market, was in the strategic interests of the Kremlin. As Yefimenko rightly observed, the Kremlin considered Ukraine just 'southern Russia', and even the emergence of the Ukrainian SSR did not fundamentally change this attitude.

A supporter of the colonial approach, Canadian historian Stephen Velychenko also demonstrates the vulnerable points of contemporary Ukrainian discussions. In his 2009 polemics with Ukrainian researchers regarding the colonial status of the UkrSSR, Velychenko points to four main problems: 1. the lack of discussion on Ukrainian-Russian economic relations from the perspective of Bolshevik theory of colonialism and imperialism; 2. the absence of thorough studies analysing whether Russia really needed Ukraine from standpoint of economics, and whether there was the opposite need for Russia in Ukraine; 3. the role of "imperial-chauvinistic" prejudices among lower-ranking Russian Bolsheviks and their supporters in the implementation of imperialist policy towards Ukraine under the banner of

<sup>81</sup> Yefimenko, 'Pro pryčyny pojavy' volobujevščyny', p. 131.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., p. 130.

Marxism; 4. the weakness of the Ukrainian National Communists' opinion is that it deems it impossible to implement a Ukrainian socialist state project that is separate from Russia.<sup>83</sup> Velychenko criticizes Yefimenko for abandoning the colonial approach solely on the basis of the absence of clear signs of colonial dependence.

Let's note that Yefimenko's analysis is based on three purely formal factors: 1. locals could have a successful career in the imperial centre; 2. Russia did nothing positive for Ukraine, unlike other parent states such as France and Great Britain did for their colonies; 3. the main market for Ukraine's produce was not Russia. Velychenko has a point when he considers these arguments weak. Similarly to David Chioni Moore, he observes that a number of biases that have gripped Western academia make it problematic to use the term 'colony' in regards to Ukraine,

The concept of colonialism is currently used almost exclusively in relation to the overseas dominions of the Western European countries; this type of relationship, however, does not run the entire gamut of dependency/subordination relations in history. Therefore, there is no reason to limit this concept to one type of dependency. The British rule in Ireland, French rule in Algeria, and Japanese rule in Korea, as well as Russian rule in Ukraine also differ from the now dominant definition of 'colonialism'. Does this mean that these countries cannot be called 'colonies'? Likewise, the fact that there existed no private ownership of means of production in the Soviet-type countries does not indicate that "colonialism" was impossible there because of the absence of capitalism, which some consider a prerequisite for colonialism.<sup>84</sup>

It is worth adding that Stephen Velychenko notes that "the community of Russian urban settlers-colonists, from which almost all Ukrainian Bolsheviks originate, did not give rise to Creole-separatist nationalism, although Artem could have become the Ukrainian Creole-Russian double of Simon Bolívar in the fleeting Donetsk-Kryvyi Rih republic".<sup>85</sup> In any case, like most researchers, Velychenko believes that the local Bolsheviks could not have held power in Ukraine by themselves without the help of the Red Army.

<sup>83</sup> Stepan Velychenko, 'Čy bula Ukraïna rosijs'koju kolonijeju? Dejaki zauvažennja ščodo ponjattja kolonializm', *Ukraïna Moderna*, 14 (2009), 266–80 (pp. 266–72).

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 279.

<sup>85</sup> Stepan Velychenko, *Imperializm i nacionalizm po-červonomu: ukraïns'ka marksysts'ka krytyka rosijs'koho komunistyčnogo panuvannja v Ukraïni (1918–1925)* (L'viv, 2017), p. 282.

In analysing the heritage of Ukrainian Marxists, Velychenko compares their ideas with those of Joseph Schumpeter. Both pay great importance not only to the economic exploitation but also to the imperialist prejudices that were the driving force behind Russian colonialism. They perceived cultural and ideological imperialism and colonialism as no better than economic colonialism.<sup>86</sup>

Velychenko emphasizes the need to make use of the works of Ukrainian national communists in the analysis of Ukrainian-Russian relations. It was them who proposed stepping beyond the binary category of oppressor–oppressed and involving a third group: Russified and Russian urban settlers-colonists who stood between the Ukrainians and the imperial metropolis.<sup>87</sup> After all, cultural and linguistic imperialism, as well as the assimilation generated by it, were no less evil than ‘traditional’ economic imperialism.<sup>88</sup>

It is too early to put an end to the debate regarding the anti-colonial legacy of Ukrainian National Communism. It seems that only such a discussion can provide an adequate toolkit for the study of Ukraine as a non-classical colony of the ‘European type’.

## POSTCOLONIAL THEORIES IN MODERN UKRAINIAN POLITICAL AND SOCIAL DISCOURSE

Reflecting on the post-communist transformation in Ukraine on the eve of the Revolution of Dignity, Mykola Riabchuk observed that “Ukrainian national identity in Ukraine is now opposed not by the Russian imperial identity, and even more so, not by the Russian national identity, but by a specific variety of a local, post-imperial identity. Due to the lack of a better term, this post-imperial identity can be described as ‘Little Russian’ or ‘Creole’.<sup>89</sup> For Riabchuk, the main issue is the fact that the political emancipation of the ‘Creole’ identity, which coincided with the disintegration of the USSR, turned out to be the primary process that did not manage to solidify in cultural and psychological terms and remained dependent on the no longer existing – at least *de jure* – Soviet empire. At the same time, Riabchuk noted that the ‘Creole’ identity remained a ‘promising’ project that could be actualized in various ways.<sup>90</sup> The events that took place in

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 287.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 288.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 292–93.

<sup>89</sup> Mykola Rjabčuk, ‘Sjak-tak, abyjak: dvadcat’ rokov postkomunistyčnoji transformaciji v Ukrajinii’, in *Ukrajina. procesy nacijetvorennja*, ed. by Andreas Kappeler (Kyjiv: K.I.S, 2011), p. 386.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 387.

the spring of 2014 confirmed that his opinion was fair. These events can be considered a new point of reference in the history of independent Ukraine.

In their analysis of the nature of the *Euromaidan* protest, researchers distinguish its anti-colonial and national liberation component. Riabchuk considers the revolution an attempt by Ukrainians to resolve the issue of “emancipation from the ‘Russian world’” on the level of culture and mentality, which would finally make it possible to permanently overcome Ukraine’s neo-colonial status.<sup>91</sup> This opinion is supported by the political scientist Anton Shekhovtsov. He draws analogies between Ukraine and post-war Austria, which, similarly to Ukraine, *de facto* continued to be occupied, while *de jure* it had the status of an independent state. However, in the case of Ukraine the ‘occupation’ was not external but internal. For the old Soviet administrative elites, independent Ukraine created more favourable conditions for the implementation of their business interests. Latent ‘occupation’ and the immaturity of Ukrainian society led to a largely conflict-free existence for more than 20 years. The relative peace of Ukrainian life was disturbed by the appearance of a new generation in the political arena, as well as the understanding that, under the then-current conditions, these young people had no prospects for a decent life in their own country. Shekhovtsov distinguishes between at least four components of the Revolution of Dignity: 1. democratic (directed against authoritarianism, the despotism of the police and officials); 2. anti-colonial (against the imperialist tendencies of Russia and the *sovok*<sup>92</sup> mentality); 3. social (for social justice and against corruption); 4. liberal (for the European civilizational choice).<sup>93</sup>

German historian Leonid Luks and American researcher Marci Shore also draw historical parallels that refer us to the classic example of Poland’s national liberation struggle. According to their comparative analysis, independent Ukraine and communist Poland emerged as Russian/Soviet ‘external colonies’. These researchers see similarities between the Polish *Solidarity* and the *Euromaidan* movements primarily in terms of the integrative idea of national resistance against the occupier, which made the unification of various political groups possible. Marci Shore calls the Ukrainian *Euromaidan* an enhanced form of civil society. In her opinion, the ethnic, religious, linguistic, socioeconomic, generational, and ideological diversity of *Maidan* resembles *Solidarity*.<sup>94</sup> This Polish resistance movement also in-

<sup>91</sup> Mykola Rjabčuk, ‘Ukrajina maje pokazaty, ščo vona zdatna plysty’, *Historians.in.ua*, 24 April 2014 <<https://www.historians.in.ua/index.php/en/intervyyu/1136-mykola-riabchuk-ukraina-maie-pokazaty-shcho-vona-zdatna-plysty>> [accessed 10 October 2019].

<sup>92</sup> This colloquialism is used to show disdain for everyday Soviet practices or as a synonym for everything Soviet.

<sup>93</sup> Anton Šechovcov, ‘Ukrainskaja revolucija – evropejskaja i nacional’naja’, *Forum novejšej vostočnoevropejskoj istorii i kul’tury*, 2 (2013), 27–30.

<sup>94</sup> Marsi Šor, ‘Solidarnist’ pryholomšenyh: čomu Pol’šča rozumije Ukrajinu’, *Historians.in.ua*, 10 May 2014 <<https://www.historians.in.ua/index.php/en/istoriya-i-pamyat-vazhki-pitannya/1154-marsi-shor-solidarnist-pryholomshenykh-chomu-polshcha-rozumiie-ukrainu>> [accessed 10 October 2019].

cluded a wide range of participants, from the right of the spectrum to left, who in other circumstances would hardly end up in one camp.<sup>95</sup>

However, the change in the political situation after the Revolution of Dignity of 2013–2014 unexpectedly actualized the anti-colonial discourse from the era of the Ukrainian national liberation struggle of 1917–1921. The similarity between the situations in 1918 and 2014, as many experts remarked, was striking. Independent Ukraine, which was never able to incorporate the Soviet experience at the level of symbolic capital, returned to the implementation of the modern project of Ukrainian statehood, which took place in the context of the dissolution of continental empires after World War I. In fact, this project was put on hold as a result of the compromise between the Ukrainian Social Democrats and the Bolsheviks, and because of Stalinist purges.

Ola Hnatiuk rightly observed in her book *Farewell to the Empire: Ukrainian Discussions about Identity* that after Ukraine became independent, the question “Europe or ‘Prosvita’<sup>96</sup>” – originally raised by a spokesman of the Ukrainian anti-colonial stance, Mykola Khvylovyi – returned to the Ukrainian discourse: “Modernizers have re-entered the exhausting clinch with traditionalists”.<sup>97</sup> Discussions around the Ukrainian identity rose to a new level during the Revolution of Dignity, which accelerated the formation of the Ukrainian political nation. These events took place in the context of Russian aggression, which was interpreted by a number of political scientists as Ukraine’s national liberation war against the imperial aspirations of the Kremlin.<sup>98</sup> In this situation, the anti-colonial discourse of *Euromaidan* turned into the mainstream of public and academic history.

Therefore, it is not surprising that the legacy of Ukrainian National Communism has been discussed with renewed vigour. In 2017, Ukrainian Marxists Andrii Zdorov and Artem Klymenko, who initiated the reprint of Vasyl’ Shakhrai’s classical work *Revolution in Ukraine*, indignantly stated in the preface to this publication that someone like Shakhrai “is of no interest to either the former Head of the Institute of National Remembrance, Valerii Soldatenko, or to its current Director, Volodymyr V’iatrovych”.<sup>99</sup> While the position of V’iatrovych, according to Zdorov and Klymenko, was consistent and understandable, Soldatenko’s lack of interest raised questions. After all,

<sup>95</sup> This analysis was published in one of my articles. See: Jana Prymačenko, ‘Antykolonial’nyj dyskurs ONU/UIPA v sučasnomu konteksti borot’by za jevropejs’ku identyčnist’, *Ukrajins’kyj istoryčnyj zbirnyk*, 17 (2014), 328–38.

<sup>96</sup> Prosvita – Ukrainian public organization for cultural and educational enlightenment, founded in Lviv in 1868. Prosvita promoted Ukrainian culture, resisting the colonial policy of the empires. Khvylovyi used this word with a negative connotation as a synonym for local vernacular culture. He opposed the approach that suggested following Ukrainian popular culture. Instead, Khvylovyi insisted that Ukrainian culture is a part of European culture, which was why Ukrainian writers had to match the high standard of European literature.

<sup>97</sup> Olja Hnatjuk, *Proščannja z imperijeju: ukrajins’ki dyskusiji pro identyčnist’* (Kyjiv: Krytyka, 2006), pp. 190–97.

<sup>98</sup> Oleksandr Paschaver, ‘Majdan – ce veršyna ukrajins’koi istoriji’, *Gazeta.ua*, 10 July 2018 <[https://gazeta.ua/articles/opinions-journal/\\_majdan-ce-vershina-ukrayinskoi-istoriji/846847](https://gazeta.ua/articles/opinions-journal/_majdan-ce-vershina-ukrayinskoi-istoriji/846847)> [accessed 10 October 2019].

<sup>99</sup> At the time of publication of the book, Volodymyr Viatrovych held the position of the Head of the Institute of National Economy.

Soldatenko was not only a well-known researcher of the history of Bolshevik organizations in Ukraine, as well as the Ukrainian Revolution of 1917–1921, but he was also an earnest communist. Somehow, the editors of the reprint came to the conclusion that Ukrainian National Communism was equally uninteresting to both ‘nationalists’ and Soviet communists.<sup>100</sup>

Furthermore, according to Zdorov and Klymenko, in the context of the undeclared war between Russia and Ukraine, the very word ‘communist’ within Ukrainian public opinion became synonymous with ‘Russian patriot’/‘Russian chauvinist’. This is why the process of decommunization did not provoke resistance within Ukrainian society.

Still, Zdorov and Klymenko are not quite fair in their analysis of the policy of ‘decommunization’, or in regards to the position of Volodymyr V'iatrovych, the former Director of the Ukrainian Institute of National Remembrance. Firstly, the decommunization package did not impact a number of cultural leaders and scientists of the Soviet era, including national communists Oleksander Shums'kyi, Mykola Khvylovyi, Mykhailo Volobuiev, and Mykola Skrypnyk. Secondly, V'iatrovych adheres to the colonial assessment of the Soviet period in Ukraine, which is presented as an occupation imposed from above. His belief system is based on the intellectual heritage of the World War II Ukrainian liberation movement. A number of OUN publicists have reinterpreted the legacy of Ukrainian National Communism in their works. In fact, as we discussed earlier, some OUN and UPA leaders considered themselves part of the Ukrainian anti-colonial national liberation movement.

Given the political circumstances in which *Euromaidan* and Russian aggression took place, the consolidation of the colonial perspective within the social and political discourse is only natural. However, comprehension of the very phenomenon of the Revolution of Dignity has only just begun. The Russian historian Ilya Gerasimov, who initiated the discussion on the pages of *Ab imperio* journal, referred to *Euromaidan* as the first post-colonial revolution. Not only did it overthrow the tyrant, but also its agenda was determined by the citizens of Ukraine, not by Putin or Yanukovych. In addition, the unification of people during *Euromaidan* happened on the basis of shared values. It is the transcending of one's identity that, for Gerasimov, was one of the key signs of leaving the colonial paradigm behind.<sup>101</sup>

Yaroslav Hrytsak, as well as a number of other researchers, believe that *Euromaidan* was a breakthrough in world history because it signalled that post-modernism was becoming the past. But will this process create impetus for paradigmatic shifts in the study of the history of Ukraine? According to Hrytsak,

<sup>100</sup> Zdorov, ‘Figura umolčaniya’, pp. 4–5.

<sup>101</sup> Gerasimov, Ilya, ‘Ukraine 2014: The First Postcolonial Revolution. Introduction to the Forum’, *Ab imperio*, 3 (2014), 22–44.

this question is a rhetorical one. After all, the main theoretical and methodological discussions about Ukraine are still taking place outside of Ukraine.<sup>102</sup>

*Euromaidan* has indeed opened up new perspectives for the debate about the place of Soviet heritage in the history of Ukraine. But will this debate be carried out to the fullest? This question remains open. Clearly, at the moment Ukraine is trying to implement its modern project, which contradicts the Western postmodern discourse and generates a number of misunderstandings. On the other hand, *Euromaidan* has put Ukraine at the forefront of global world processes, and this gives a chance for a complete reformatting of historical and socio-political discourse.

#### UKRAINE AND COLONIALISM: POST-, NEO- OR ANTI-?

Anti- and post-colonial discourse has impressive academic backing in the Ukrainian political thinking of the twentieth century. It can provide the analytical framework for studying the history of Russian-Ukrainian relations.

The process of the nationalization/decolonization of history in this era of globalization, which takes place against the background of a crisis in the international security system that is unprecedented since World War II, at times holds history hostage to the political situation. This process reinforces the responsibility of historians as representatives of academia.

The world is at a crossroads. In the context of the global confrontation between 'modernism' and 'tradition', it is extremely important for Ukraine to find its place within the new world system. The heated debates that we are witnessing, both within academia and in public circles, are meant to put an end to the Ukrainian debate about identity.

The departure from interpreting the common Russian-Ukrainian past in terms of a binary opposition 'metropolis/empire – periphery/colony' allows us to examine empires as a 'context-forming category', within which attention can be focused on the discourse of power and power relations, as well as mutual cultural influences.<sup>103</sup>

The belated process of decolonization, the implementation of the modern Ukrainian project in the context of globalization and the post-modernism that has dominated Western discourse, has led to a number of misunderstandings on the part of the Western world. Ukraine has often appeared as an incomprehensible, problematic, and at times uneducated 'child' in the eyes of the West. The 'crisis of adolescence' was a consequence

<sup>102</sup> Jaroslav Hrycak, 'Dyskusiji pro Jevromadan', *Ukrajina Moderna*, 24 February 2016 <<https://uamoderna.com/blog/yaroslav-griczak/euromaidan-discussions>> [accessed 19 September 2019].

<sup>103</sup> Il'jaja Gerasimov, and others, 'Mnogoobrazie inakovosti v XX veke', *Ab Imperio*, 1 (2011), 9–14 (p. 10); Stiven Chou, 'Zapad i vse ostalstalnoe', *Ab Imperio*, 1 (2011), 21–52 (p. 24).

of the insurmountable traumas of the totalitarian past and the absence of a state policy of de-Sovietization of Ukrainian society.

It is the 'northern neighbour' that has been and still remains the primary 'Other' for Ukrainians. The book *Ukraine is not Russia* (2003)<sup>104</sup> by the second president of Ukraine, Leonid Kuchma, confirms this statement and reinvigorates Ukrainian discussions about identity. *Euromaidan* and the Russian intervention have contributed to the return of anti-colonial discourse. These events only deepened (post/neo-/anti-)colonial discussions about Central and Eastern Europe in general, and Ukraine in particular.

#### PS. THE RUSSIAN NEO-COLONIAL WAR IN UKRAINE

As mentioned in the first footnote, this article was written two years prior to the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine. I have left the text unchanged because the issues raised in the article, as well as the interim conclusions, have not lost their relevance.

The neo-colonial Russian war has stirred up an immense debate within Western academic circles regarding Russian imperialism and the Kremlin's colonial policy. Decolonization is becoming a global trend, and colonial studies of the history of Central and Eastern Europe are reaching a new level. In this context, the proposed analysis and cross-section of Ukrainian political opinion may prove useful for this discussion.

Finally, I would like to recall the opinion of a Canadian historian of Ukrainian background, Andrii Zayarniuk, regarding the current situation in Ukraine:

While other formerly colonial nations moved from anti-colonial struggles, through neo-colonialism to post-coloniality, independent Ukraine's trajectory seemed to be the opposite: from post-coloniality through Russian neo-colonialism to the anticolonial struggles of national survival.<sup>105</sup>

Obviously, Russia/USSR's policy towards Ukraine has been colonial, but scholars will have to decide on the typology of Russian-Ukrainian dependence relations. The consequences of this imperialist war will be long-lasting and global, because mankind has embarked on another round of decolonization and dissolution of empires.

<sup>104</sup> Leonid Kučma, *Ukrajina – ne Rosija* (Kyjiv, 2004).

<sup>105</sup> Andriy Zayarnyuk, 'Historians as Enablers? Historiography, Imperialism, and the Legitimization of Russian Aggression', *East/West: Journal of Ukrainian Studies*, 9.2 (2022), 191–212 (p. 209).

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