

The Thinker

Quarter 3 2025 / VOLUME 104

A PAN - AFRICAN QUARTERLY FOR THOUGHT LEADERS

Journal ISSN: 2075 2458



SPECIAL ISSUE ON

Decoloniality/Decolonization in the Twenty First Century: What, Why, Where, Whom, What For?

EDITORS

Walter D. Mignolo and

Sabelo J. Ndlovu Gastheni

The Thinker

A PAN - AFRICAN QUARTERLY FOR THOUGHT LEADERS

Journal ISSN: 2075 2458

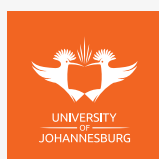
CALL FOR PAPERS

AFRICA

Open submissions on any aspect

For further enquiries,
please contact the editors,
Prof Ronit Frenkel and
Prof Nedine Moonsamy,
thethinker@uj.ac.za

Journal ISSN: 2075 2458



20 YEARS
— 2005-2025 —

Our Future. Reimagined.



@ujlibrary

IN THIS ISSUE

FOREWORD

Decoloniality/Decolonization in the Twenty First Century: What, Why, Where, Whom, What For?

by Walter D. Mignolo and Sabelo J. Ndlovu Gastheni.

11

PEER-REVIEWED ARTICLES

Thinking against Coloniality from the Malay World: A Personal Reflection

by Syed Farid Alatas.

15

Haitian Creole. A Perpetual Victor on Coloniality

by Jean Casimir.

24

Insurgent Decolonial Theory and the Role of the Intellectual

by Jairo I. Fúnez-Flores.

31

Theorizing Decolonial Silence in the Neoliberal University

by Annapurna Menon.

44

Delinking, Decoloniality and De-Westernization

by Walter D. Mignolo.

56

Epistemic Freedom: Itineraries of a Concept

by Sabelo J. Ndlovu Gastheni.

69

The Emergence and Development of Africa Decolonial Research Network (ADERN) in South Africa: A Reflection on Trajectories, Challenges, and Prospects

by Morgan Ndlovu.

79

The Fraught Terrain of Decolonization/Decoloniality in India

by Aditya Nigam.

86

Double Critique Revisited, Or Does It Matter Who is the Most Legitimate Victim?

by Madina Tlostanova.

93

On Decolonial Crackings and Sowings: I-We Reflections on/from Higher Education

by Catherine Elizabeth Walsh.

102

The University of Johannesburg acquired *The Thinker* in April 2019 from Dr Essop Pahad. Over the last decade, *The Thinker* has gained a reputation as a journal that explores Pan-African issues across fields and times. Ronit Frenkel, as the incoming editor, plans on maintaining the pan-African scope of the journal while increasing its coverage into fields such as books, art, literature and popular cultures. *The Thinker* is a 'hybrid' journal, publishing both journalistic pieces with more academic articles and contributors can now opt to have their submissions peer reviewed. We welcome Africa-centred articles from diverse perspectives, in order to enrich both knowledge of the continent and of issues impacting the continent.



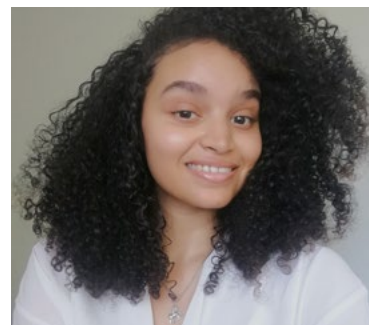
Prof Ronit Frenkel

Nedine Moonsamy is an associate professor in the English department at the University of Johannesburg. She is currently writing a monograph on contemporary South African Fiction and otherwise conducts research on science fiction in Africa. Her debut novel, *The Unfamous Five* (Modjaji Books, 2019) was shortlisted for the HSS Fiction Award (2021), and her poetry was shortlisted for the inaugural New Contrast National Poetry Award (2021).



Nedine Moonsamy

Tamia Phiri is a PhD candidate in the field of English literature at the University of Johannesburg. Her doctoral research explores trauma, memory, and Coloured identity in post-apartheid South African texts. She is also a poet and creative writer, with poetry featured in the *Journal of African Youth Literature* and *Brittle Paper*.



Tamia Phiri

All contributing analysts write in their personal capacity

Walter D. Mignolo is William H. Wannamaker Distinguished Emeritus Professor of Romance Studies and Professor of Literature, at Duke University. He is the former director of the Center for Global Studies and Humanities. He was a research associate at the Simón Bolívar Andean University, Quito, 2002-2020 and an honorary research associate at CISA (Center for Indian Studies in South Africa), Wits University in Johannesburg (2014-2020). He was an Advisor to the DOC (Dialogue of Civilizations) Research Institute, based in Berlin. He received an Honorary Doctorate from the National University of Buenos Aires, Argentina and an Honorary Degree from Goldsmith University in London in 2018. In 2023 he received an Honorary Doctorate from the National University of Formosa and the National University of Córdoba, respectively.

Among his books related to the subject are: *The Darker Side of the Renaissance. Literacy, Territoriality and Colonization* (1995, translated into Chinese and Spanish 2015); *Delinking: The rhetoric of modernity, the logic of coloniality and the grammar of decoloniality*, 2007), translated into German, French, Swedish, Romanian and Spanish. *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledge and Border Thinking* (2000, translated into Spanish, Portuguese, Korean and Turkish; *The Idea of Latin America*, 2006, translated into Spanish, Korean and Italian. With Catherine Walsh he published *On Decoloniality. Concepts, Analytics, Praxes* (2018) translated into Italian and Portuguese, in Brazil. In 2020, he published *Global Coloniality and the World Disorder*, in Taiwan, in Mandarin language. With Rita Segato and Catherine Walsh, he is co-editor of *Anibal Quijano's* first publication in English: *Foundational Text on the Coloniality of Power* (2024).

Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni is currently Professor of History and holder of Canada Research Chair (CRC) Tier 1 Pluralistic Societies: Epistemic Pluralism and Ecologies of Knowledges at the University of Calgary in Canada. Before this appointment, he was Professor and holder of Chair of Epistemologies of the Global South with Emphasis on Africa and Vice-Dean of Research in the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence at the University of Bayreuth in

Germany. His other appointments include Professor Extraordinarius in the Department of Leadership and Transformation (DLT) in the Principal & Vice-Chancellor's Office at the University of South Africa (UNISA); Professor Extraordinarius at the Centre for Gender and African Studies at the University of Free State (UFS) in South Africa; Honorary Professor in the School of Education (Education & Development Studies) at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) in South Africa; Research Associate at the Ali Mazrui Centre for Higher Education at the University of Johannesburg (UJ) in South Africa; and Research Associate at The Ferguson Centre for African and Asian Studies at The Open University in the United Kingdom. Professor Ndlovu-Gatsheni is a prolific scholar with over a 100 publications including more than 20 books to his name. His latest publications include *Epistemic Freedom in Africa: Deprovincialization and Decolonization* (Routledge, 2018); *Decolonization, Development and Knowledge in Africa: Turning Over A New Leaf* (Routledge, 2020); *Marxism and Decolonization in the 21st Century: Living Theories and True Ideas* (Routledge, 2022) co-edited with Morgan Ndlovu; and *Beyond the Coloniality of Internationalism: Reworlding the World from the Global South* (CODESRIA Book Series, 2024). The leading African historian Professor Toyin Falola has written a book-length study on his work entitled *Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Decolonial African Studies* (Routledge, 2024).

Syed Farid Alatas is Professor of Sociology at the National University of Singapore, and Visiting Professor at the Department of Anthropology & Sociology at the University of Malaya. He also headed the Department of Malay Studies at NUS from 2007 till 2013. Prior to joining NUS he taught at the University of Malaya in the Department of Southeast Asian Studies. In the early 1990s, he was a Research Associate at the Women and Human Resource Studies Unit, Universiti Sains Malaysia. Alatas has authored numerous books and articles, including *Applying Ibn Khaldun: The Recovery of a Lost Tradition in Sociology* (Routledge, 2014), and (with Vineeta Sinha) *Sociological Theory Beyond the Canon* (Palgrave, 2017); "Political Economies of Knowledge Production: On and Around Academic Dependency", *Journal of Historical Sociology* 35, 1

(2022): 14-23; and “Knowledge Hegemonies and Autonomous Knowledge”, *Third World Quarterly* (published online: 04 Oct 2022). His areas of interest are social theory, religion and reform, the sociology of Islam, intra- and inter-religious dialogue, and the study of Eurocentrism.

Jean Casimir, PhD Sociology, teaches at the Faculty of Human Sciences, State University of Haiti. He obtained his professorship at the National Autonomous University of Mexico, where he taught for several years. He was a visiting Professor at Stanford University, at the University of the West Indies in Kingston, Jamaica, and a Mellon Visiting Professor at Duke University. He published on social structures of Mexico, Brazil, Haiti and the Caribbean in general. His major work *La cultura oprimida* published in Mexico in 1981 is also offered in French. He received the Jean-Price Mars 2013 Award of the Faculty of Ethnology at the University of Haiti and the 2016 Haitian Studies Association Award for Excellence. He has published in Haitian Creole and Spanish and English. His actual research focusses on the Haitian State, a study in historical sociology. Casimir is a former Ambassador of his country to the United States of America and to the Organization of American States. He has recently published *The Haitians: A Decolonial History* (UNC Press, 2020).

Jairo I. Fúnez-Flores is an Assistant Professor of Curriculum Studies at Texas Tech University. His research is situated at the intersection of sociocultural studies in curriculum theory, decolonial theory, anticolonial struggles, critical ethnography, and social movement research. Currently, he is writing a book on insurgent decolonial theory which situates radical thought in sites of struggle. He has published articles in *Theory, Culture & Society*, *Globalisation*, *Societies and Education*, *Sociology Compass*, and *Educational Studies*. He is also the co-editor of the Bristol University Press book series *Decolonization and Social Worlds* and lead editor of *The SAGE Handbook of Decolonial Theory*.

Dr Annapurna Menon is an International Relations scholar engaged in understanding the logics of postcolonial colonialisms, currently teaching at the University of Sheffield. Her PhD research focused on India's colonial policies in Jammu and Kashmir, and her current research interests are based on

issues of knowledge production and academic freedom, Hindutva politics and social movements.

Morgan Ndlovu is Professor at the Centre of Education Rights and Transformation (CERT) the University of Johannesburg. He writes on decoloniality and indigeneity with specific reference to Africa and the Global South.

Prof. Aditya Nigam is a political theorist, formerly with the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, Delhi. Long associated with the Left movement, he has had an abiding interest in social and political movements and theoretical and philosophical questions related to social transformation. He has been interested in developing a critique and perspective of Capital from the perspective of the global South. His recent work has been concerned with the decolonization of social and political theory and a re-examination of the philosophical discourse of modernity from a decolonizing perspective. He writes in English, Hindi and Bengali. Nigam is one of the founder-members of the political blog, Kafila. online where he writes on contemporary issues. He is the author of *The Insurrection of Little Selves: The Crisis of Secular Nationalism in India* (2006), *Power and Contestation: India Since 1989*, with Nivedita Menon (2007), *After Utopia: Modernity, Socialism and the Postcolony* (2010), and *Desire Named Development* (2011), *Decolonizing Theory: Thinking Across Traditions* (2020), *Aasman aur Bhi Hain* (in Hindi, Setu Prakashan, Delhi), *Border-Marxisms and Historical Materialism: Untimely Encounters* (2023), *Protyashar Ishtehar: Degrowth o Poonjibader Porer Jeebon* (in Bengali, Gronthik, Dhaka forthcoming)

Madina Tlostanova is a feminist thinker and fiction writer, professor of gender studies at Linköping University, Sweden. Her interests include decoloniality, feminist theories from the Global South, the postsocialist human condition, fiction and art, critical future studies. Her most recent collection of essays and speculative fiction is *Narratives of Unsettlement. Being Out-of-joint as a Generative Human Condition* (Routledge, 2023). Currently she is working on a monograph on the stateless future.

Catherine E. Walsh is an intellectual militant long involved in the processes of social, political, epistemic, and existence-based struggles, first in the United States and, since the mid-1990s,

in Abya Yala/Latin America. Until her recent retirement/deinstitutionalization, Catherine was senior professor and founder-director of the international doctorate in Latin American (Inter) Cultural Studies at the Universidad Andina Simón Bolívar-Ecuador, where, over 25 years, she also coordinated the Intercultural Workshop, the Chair of Afro-Andean Studies and the Afro-Andean Documentary Fund, the largest archive in Latin America of Black collective memory. She has been an invited speaker and scholar in five continents, and is the author of more than 300 publications, including *Rising Up, Living On. Re-existences, Sowings, and Decolonial Cracks* (Duke Press, 2023). In 2019 Catherine was awarded the prestigious “Frantz Fanon Lifetime Achievement Award” by the Caribbean Philosophical Association.

The Thinker

A PAN - AFRICAN QUARTERLY FOR THOUGHT LEADERS

Journal ISSN: 2075 2458

The Journal for Progressive Thought

www.thethinker.co.za

Publisher

English Department
University of Johannesburg (UJ)
Auckland Park Kingsway Campus
Auckland Park
Johannesburg
Tel: +27 11 559 2553

Editors

Prof Ronit Frenkel & Prof Nedine Moonsamy
thethinker@uj.ac.za

Assistant Editor

Tamia Phiri
thethinker@uj.ac.za

Design Direction

UJ Graphic Design Studio
+27 11 559 2805

Advisory Council

Dr Ademola Araoye (Nigeria)
Prof Puleng Lenka Bula (South Africa)
Dr Faisal Devji (Tanzania)
Prof Chris Landsberg (South Africa)
Prof Tshilidzi Marwala (South Africa)
Prof Sabelo J Ndlovu-Gatsheni (Zimbabwe)
Dr Morley Nkosi (South Africa)
Dr Francis Onditi (Kenya)
Prof Eghosa E Osaghae (Nigeria)
Dr Mzulcisi Qobo (South Africa)
Dr Garth le Pere (South Africa)
Prof Alioune Sall (Senegal)
Addai Sebo (Ghana)
Dr Mongane Serote (South Africa)
Prof Mammo Muchie (Ethopia)



20 YEARS
— 2005-2025 —

Our Future. Reimagined.

Material in this publication may not be reproduced in any form without proper citation. Views and opinions expressed in *The Thinker* are not necessarily those of the University of Johannesburg. They can accept no liability of whatsoever nature arising out of or in connection with the contents of the publication.

© 2023 University of Johannesburg www.thethinker.co.za

FOREWORD



Image: Pedro Lasch, Global Indianization/Indianización Global, 2009. Courtesy of the artist.

By Walter D. Mignolo, Duke University, the U.S.A, and
Sabelo J. Ndlovu Gastheni, University of Calgary, Canada.

We would like to share with you, in the mood of introductory remarks on this special issue, some of the points we made in the letter we sent inviting contributions. We would like to share with you some of the key issues underscored in the letter, so that you can become a participant reader reflecting on your own take on colonialism/coloniality as well as decolonization/decoloniality. It's an invitation engage your own reflections of what is or would have been your take when reading the contribution to this volume, if you feel like expressing your own perspective.

The vogue and popularity of decolonization/decoloniality have grown exponentially in the recent past, reaching a vast spectrum from the academic disciplines, including the professional schools (law, design, computer), to the institutional spectrum of universities, museums, art schools, media schools and journalism.

Since “decolonization” sprang in the public sphere and state politics, during the Cold War, the decolonial debate has a fertile ground today in international relations, domestic state politics and political economy, still dominated by Western vocabulary and its assumed universality. However, we, in the planet, are witnessing and experiencing the end of the era dominated by narratives and

arguments based on abstract universals in the realm of knowledge and intersubjective relations and a unipolar world order in the realms of international relation.

The era of abstract universals is closing, and the era of concrete pluriversality and international multipolarity is opening. Narratives and arguments advancing the decolonial perspective (call it decolonial turn, decolonial option) in all areas of our (in the planet) lived experience are more necessary than ever. The reality is that coloniality it is not over; it is all over. Consequently, decoloniality is not just an academic but a political and existential question. The revival (re-emergence, re-existence) of the Indigenous knowing and understanding, ethical and political, around the world has been increasing and heard beyond their communal existence. Their re-emergence in all praxis of living is increasingly breaking up the apparent homogeneity of Western knowledge and praxis of living.

Recently the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (U.S. Helsinki Commission), organized a couple of conferences on decolonizing Russia (Commission on Security 2022). The title was “Decoloring Russia. A Moral and Strategic Imperative.” We would avoid comments when reading that the European Commission is proposing to decolonize Russia but would like to underscore the two imperatives, moral and strategic. Strategic is obvious. It was the geopolitical design of the US. To control Eurasia, since the early nineties. The moral imperative is the necessary rhetoric to justify the continuation of Western coloniality. It is argued in this respect that the decolonization of Russia is necessary for peace. Whatever decolonizing means for the author making such a claim, it is overlooking that for making peace, the decolonization of NATO is also equally necessary (Stepha 2024).

This is one among several reasons for the necessity and urgency to review and debate the meaning, scope, ethics, and politics of decolonization/decoloniality. Most likely, the U.S. Helsinki Commission by decolonization means “regime change.” Which is one example that “decolonization” came to mean the destitution of what I do not like by something that is contrary to the universal truth that is held by those who request the decolonization of Russia. If that is the case, then there would be no difference between

decolonization, Christian conversion, European liberal civilizing mission, U.S. liberal modernization and development missions, the neoliberal market democracy and a/the homogenous global order.

Moreover, the recent events in Niger and Gabon have put on the table telling signs of the change of era we in the planet are undergoing, and clear signs that Western abstract universals lost their meaning. However, to say that the military coup, with overwhelming popular support, is a threat to democracy means to support the persistence of French coloniality, without colonial settlers, and to support the presence of the U.S. military bases in Africa. Leaving aside the canonical debate on the illegality of a military coup that deposed a president democratically elected, we shall decolonially inquire on the meaning of democracy when the term is activated to maintain French coloniality and U.S. military bases in Africa to warrant national security. Both are clear examples that the end of colonization did not mean the end of coloniality, that Western abstract universals are falling out of place and the responses today are on the one hand decolonization in the public sphere and de-westernization in inter-state relations.

However, it will not be exactly appropriate to say that Niger’s and Gabon’s military uprising were acts of decolonization, even if they could be seen as a continuation of decolonization during the Cold War. Only that we are no longer in the Cold War, and the legacies of the Bandung Conference (1955) could be seen as both, the seeds of decolonization and the seeds of de-westernization. Decolonization, within the context of the Cold War, resulted in the establishment of nation-states governed by indigenous populations. It was de-westernization in that it was a state project followed up by the independence of Singapore and the change of direction Deng Xiaoping introduced in the government and the history of China.

II

The first motivation of this special issue was the assumption that coloniality is far from over, it is all over, to borrow a felicitous sentence from a Divinity School graduate student at Duke University. Hence, if coloniality is not over, so must be decoloniality. With this premise in mind our first move was to invite scholars/intellectuals/activists from the

spread of the planet, as wide as we could reach. We have considered also participants based in the former Third World, today the Global South, as well as those who migrated from the Third World to the First, as well as those who have moved from the Second World (or Poor North) (Tlostanova 2011). Secondly, we invited participants to set aside an academic expectation for “papers” or “studies”, but to provide “reflections” that are not so much about what is coloniality out there and what decoloniality shall be. Rather, to explore where and how coloniality affects them, impinges on their lives and what, therefore, decoloniality means to them.

The calls for decolonization/decoloniality in the 21st century have taken the world by storm in its critique of existing knowledge and praxes of living as well as its animation of hopes and visions of the change of era. We are no longer living in the era of the Cold War when decolonization had a clear destination: to send the settlers home and to create national states governed by the indigenous or native population. It was a splendor and a misery. The splendor was getting the settlers out of the territory. The miseries were to found nation-states without calling into question the political theory, the political economy and the world order that maintained the colonial nation-states dependent on the international global order established after the Treaty of Westphalia, 1648, to resolve European problems. The nation-states did not emerge in Europe after sending the colonial settler's home, but from an emerging ethno-bourgeoisie and the political and economic control managed by the monarchies and the church. The ascending ethno-class took over the civilizing mission and the colonial expansion of Europe in Asia and Africa.

The Americas, the Caribbean and South/Central America is another story grounded in the Renaissance, not in the Enlightenment. The second period of the European Renaissance goes from 1500 to 1650. The Treaty of Westphalia is the emblematic closing of the Renaissance and the opening of the Enlightenment. But still, within the same era, the era of Westernization of the world, or of what Carl Schmitt called “the second *nomos* of the earth.” The “third *nomos*” or the change of era was marked by the collapse of the Soviet Union (Schmitt, [1955], 2003, 351-355; Mignolo, 2021, 483-530). From 1990 to today, the era that opened was announced as “the end of history”

when, in fact, it was the “beginning of a new history or a new era.” All that to underscore that a) decolonization/decoloniality during the Cold War was a project framed within the Westernization of the planet or the second *nomos* of the earth; b) decolonization/decoloniality after 1990, has to confront the re-Westernization of the world that erupted with the Washington Consensus and the neoliberal convictions that from then on it was Westernization all the way down, without barrier and without obstacle. In 2025 it is clear to many that it was not the case.

III

Two pivotal global events demand our attention: first, the rationale articulated by the Israeli state for its military offensive in October 2023, which labeled the actions of Hamas as terrorism and invoked the right to self-defense. The second event was the Russian special operation in Ukraine or invasion in Western vocabulary. Yet, for Palestinians, October 2023 was a chapter in an ongoing struggle against a settler-colonial project that began in 1948 with the establishment of Israel—an act facilitated by British imperialism and the emerging global dominance of the United States. The language and urgency of decolonization are inescapable here, as Palestinians continue to live under occupation, denied statehood and self-determination, and subjected to systematic dispossession and violence with the support of powerful Western states (Khalidi 2024).

It is crucial to recall that 1948 is not only the year of Israel's founding but also the onset of apartheid in South Africa, which remained in place until 1994. Today, Israel's policies—its military occupation, expanding settlements, and the siege of Gaza—are widely regarded by international human rights organizations as violations of international law and, in some analyses, as forms of apartheid. Israel's actions are sustained by unwavering military and economic support from the United States, even as an increasing number of states, including some within the European Union, publicly denounce the ongoing violence. However, these condemnations are rarely matched by meaningful consequences or policy shifts.

The International Criminal Court (ICC) has seen formal accusations of war crimes: Benjamin

Netanyahu, Israel's Prime Minister, faces charges presented by South Africa, while Russian President Vladimir Putin stands accused by Ukraine. These cases lay bare the double standards in the application of international law and the rhetoric of Western media and governments. Selective outrage and inconsistent support for human rights not only undermine the credibility of the so-called rules-based international order but also perpetuate cycles of domination, oppression, disavowal and, as a consequence, conflicts.

There is a persistent pattern: while the U.S. and the EU often position themselves as defenders of democracy and the rule of law, their support for Israel continues even in the face of grave and well-documented abuses. Expressions of solidarity with Palestinians are often suppressed, especially in the U.S., where pro-Palestinian activism can be met with legal and social reprisals. Meanwhile, only cautious, belated statements of support for a Palestinian state emerge from European leaders, revealing both the limits of Western solidarity and the power structures that maintain the efforts to manage the colonial matrix of power. Israel continues with the unconditional military and economic support of the U.S., despite the increasing number of states condemning the genocide, including growing dissent within the U.S., but without effective consequences, so far.

The situation in Ukraine is more complex as it is, on the one hand, an inter-State conflict, involving NATO, the EU, the U.S. and Russia. As in any conflict, the interpretation depends on the assumptions (assumptions are always non-rational) from where you start. In Ukraine, the Western official states and NATO assumptions is that the invasion was *unprovoked*. The Russian and the BRICS countries assume that the Russian special operation was *provoked* by a neoliberal design since 1900 to expand NATO to the East. These designs have been explained by Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard. American Primacy and Its Strategic Imperatives* (1997). Given the confusion about the invocation of decolonization in the provoked/unprovoked Ukrainian conflict, and the notorious bias of the EU and the U.S. mainstream media, it is useful to quote the first paragraph of Chapter 2, titled "The Eurasian Chessboard", where the author outlines the role of Ukraine-America geostrategic imperatives

For America, the chief geopolitical prize is Eurasia. For half a millennium, world affairs were dominated by Eurasian powers and peoples who fought with one another for regional domination and reached out for global power. Now a non-Eurasian power is preeminent in Eurasia—and America's global primacy is directly dependent on how long and how effectively its preponderance on the Eurasian continent is sustained.

(Brzezinski, 1997, 30).

On the following page he quotes Samuel Huntington (1993): "A world without U.S. primacy will be a world with more violence and disorder, and less democracy and economic growth, than a world where the United States continues to have more influence than any other country in shaping global affairs." (cited in Brzezinski, 1997, 31). At Harvard, a political scientist can voice such assertions with institutional support, regardless of how speculative they might sound. One needs to only glance at the World Population Review (2025) to weigh the bias of these claims.

It's also crucial to note that the Ukrainian people themselves were not directly involved in the decisions behind the so-called unprovoked or provoked war; rather, it was the Ukrainian State that acted. If decolonization is to be invoked, it should address inter-state (often mistakenly called national) relations—meaning the Ukrainian State, NATO and its member states, and Russia should be engaged. In this context, the Ukrainian people have become hostages to their State's active choices, not merely passive victims. This conflict, then, can be better understood as a clash between "primacy" or re-Westernization and the "disobedience" that energizes state-led de-westernization.

These two events—the situations in Israel/Palestine and Ukraine/Russia—highlight the ongoing transformation of coloniality, often masked or justified by the language of Western modernity and the defense of Western values. The West certainly has the right to uphold its values, but it does not have the authority to deny other civilizations the right to defend their own. In Ukraine's case, those who claim that the invasion was unprovoked often call for a ceasefire and for Ukraine's national interests to be secured (Ivakhiv 2022, 2023). Conversely, those who believe that the conflict was provoked

see Russia's national security as paramount, given NATO's expansion toward its borders. From this perspective, the root cause of the war lies in NATO's actions, with each side presenting its arguments through official statements and media coverage. Russia and Ukraine both assert their right to national security: Russia sees itself as threatened by NATO, while Ukraine feels threatened by Russia. In the case of Israel, those supporting Israel's right to self-defense often ignore that Palestinians also have the right to defend themselves after decades of settler colonialism.

Both events are connected to the mutation of Westernization into re-westernization (refreshing so to speak Western strategies of leadership and domination managed by the US, EU, NATO, G7). However, the unipolar global designs as sole manager of the colonial matrix of power provoked the emergence of de-westernizing States responses (China, Russia, Iran, BRICS). Ukraine is the site of confrontation between two projects disputing the management of the colonial matrix of power. Israel is a Western post (properly the West here means to the West of Jerusalem). From the perspective of Beijing, West Asia, with a focus in Iran, is a key location in the triangulation with China and Russia in preventing the march of Westernization towards Eurasia.

In these explosive circumstances of planetary resonance, what could the decolonial tasks and roles be? The dramatic turnaround of the context and situation in which decolonization operated and decoloniality was thought out during the Cold War demands serious and judicious reflections and elucidations on where decolonization/decoloniality could and should be operative. The goal of sending the settler home and founding nation-states governed by the natives or indigenous peoples doesn't seem to be a desirable goal at this point. Not because there are still a stateless population, which they are all over (the Palestinian is a case in point) but because the nation-state is more of a problem than a solution.

The public sphere—encompassing universities, schools, museums, journalism, social media, and all institutions that influence and shape subjectivities and social relationships—is where decoloniality finds its urgency. There is no doubt that both individual and collective perspectives are shaped

by inter-state events such as those previously discussed. While decoloniality may have little direct impact on inter-state relations, except to powerful conceptual apparatus to unveil the colonial matrix of power under international law and its constant violation, its (ours) intervention(s) in the public sphere remains both necessary and timely. It is important to recognize that decoloniality is one option among many, and those who participate in or support it often view their engagement as a priority. Ultimately, the imperative lies in our actions, not solely in how we undertake them.

These are among the reasons we invite reflections grounded in the local histories and personal experiences sensing modernity and coloniality. Let us pause briefly to clarify the relational meaning within three pairs of concepts:

- Modernity serves as the abstract horizon, while modernizations represent its concrete implementations across various times, places, and local histories.
- Coloniality is the abstract horizon, with colonializations as its practical enactments in different periods, regions, and historical contexts.
- Decoloniality stands as the abstract horizon, whereas decolonizations are the realizations of its principles in diverse times, locations, and local histories.

Decoloniality could be conceived as a “turn” or as an “option”. As a turn, it means that decoloniality is a change of direction, but it also means that it is the decolonial turn, that decoloniality has arrived. It could be assumed also as an “option”. Meaning that we leave options: (there is nothing else but the options populating the semiosphere, a concept borrowed from Jurij Lotman, which refers to the universe of signs shaping our cultural lived experience next to the lived experience of our organism in the biosphere) options of faith (generally called religions), options of ideas (generally called ideologies), options of knowledge (generally called disciplines). In both senses of the term decoloniality, turn or option, the sphere of knowing and understanding is operative. Knowledge and understanding guides our doing, while our doing guides our thinking.

Readers will find in this issue a wide spectrum of reflections, extending from South Africa and Malaysia/Singapore to Russia/Scandinavia, Haiti,

South America, South Asia, the U.S., and Europe. Decoloniality, alongside the diverse range of decolonial tasks within the public sphere, offers both a powerful analytical lens and an ethical foundation for everyday practice. It has often been remarked that the transformation of worlds—plural—depends on the willingness of their inhabitants to change themselves. Yet, the process of transformation rarely unfolds according to our expectations, as myriad options coexist: some advocate for change, while others strive to preserve the status quo.

The decolonial option operates in one semiotic domain within the broader semiosphere. Our bio-semiotic corporality demands ongoing reflections: on why do we do what we do, when, where, with what purpose, to the benefit of whom, and in relation to what? This volume does not claim to resolve these questions, but rather a potential beginning of conversations.

References

- Brezinski, Z. (1997). *The great chess board. American primacy and its geostrategic imperatives*. New York: Basic Books.
- Commission On Security and Cooperation in Europe. U.S. Helsinki Commission. (2022). Decolonizing Russia: a moral and strategic imperative [online]. Available from: <https://www.csce.gov/briefings/decolonizing-russia-a-moral-and-strategic-imperative/>. Accessed August 17, 2025.
- Ivakhiv, A. (2022). Decolonialism and the Invasion of Ukraine. *e-flux* [online], 23 March 2022. Available from: <https://www.e-flux.com/notes/457576/decolonialism-and-the-invasion-of-ukraine>. Accessed August 17, 2025
- Ivakhiv, A. (2023). Russia, decolonization, and the capitalism democracy muddle. *e-flux* [online], 18 May 2023. Available from: <https://www.e-flux.com/notes/540812/russia-decolonization-and-the-capitalism-democracy-muddle>. Accessed August 17, 2025.
- Khalidi, R. (2024). De-mystifying the decolonization of Palestine. *Forum for social economies* [online], 53(1), pp.101-111. Available from: DOI: 10.1080/07360932.2023.2229524. Accessed July 17, 2025.
- Mignolo, Walter D. (2021) "The Rise of the Third *Nomos* of the Earth." In *The Politics of Decolonial Investigations*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Schmitt, Carl (1955, 2003). "The New *Nomos* of the Earth." In *The Nomos of the Earth in the International Law of Jus Publicum Europeaeum*. Translated by E.L. Ulmen. London: Telos Press.
- Sthepa, V. (2024). The OSCE declares 'decolonization of Russia' as necessary for peace. *Eurasia Daily Monitor* [online], 21(105). Available from: <https://jamestown.org/program/osce-declares-decolonization-of-russia-as-necessary-for-peace/#:~:text=The%20organization%20for%20Security%20and%20Co-operation%20in%20Europe,is%20pursuing%20a%20%E2%80%9Cpolicy%20of%20genocide%E2%80%9D%20in%20Ukraine>. Accessed August 17, 2025.
- Tlostanova, M. (2011). The south of the poor north: caucasus subjectivity and the complex secondary 'Australism.' *The global south* [online], 5(1), pp. 66-84. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.2979/globalouth.5.1.66>. Accessed August 17, 2025.
- World Population Review. How Many Countries has the U.S. invaded as for 2025 [online]. Available from: <https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/how-many-countries-has-the-us-invaded>. Accessed August 17, 2025.