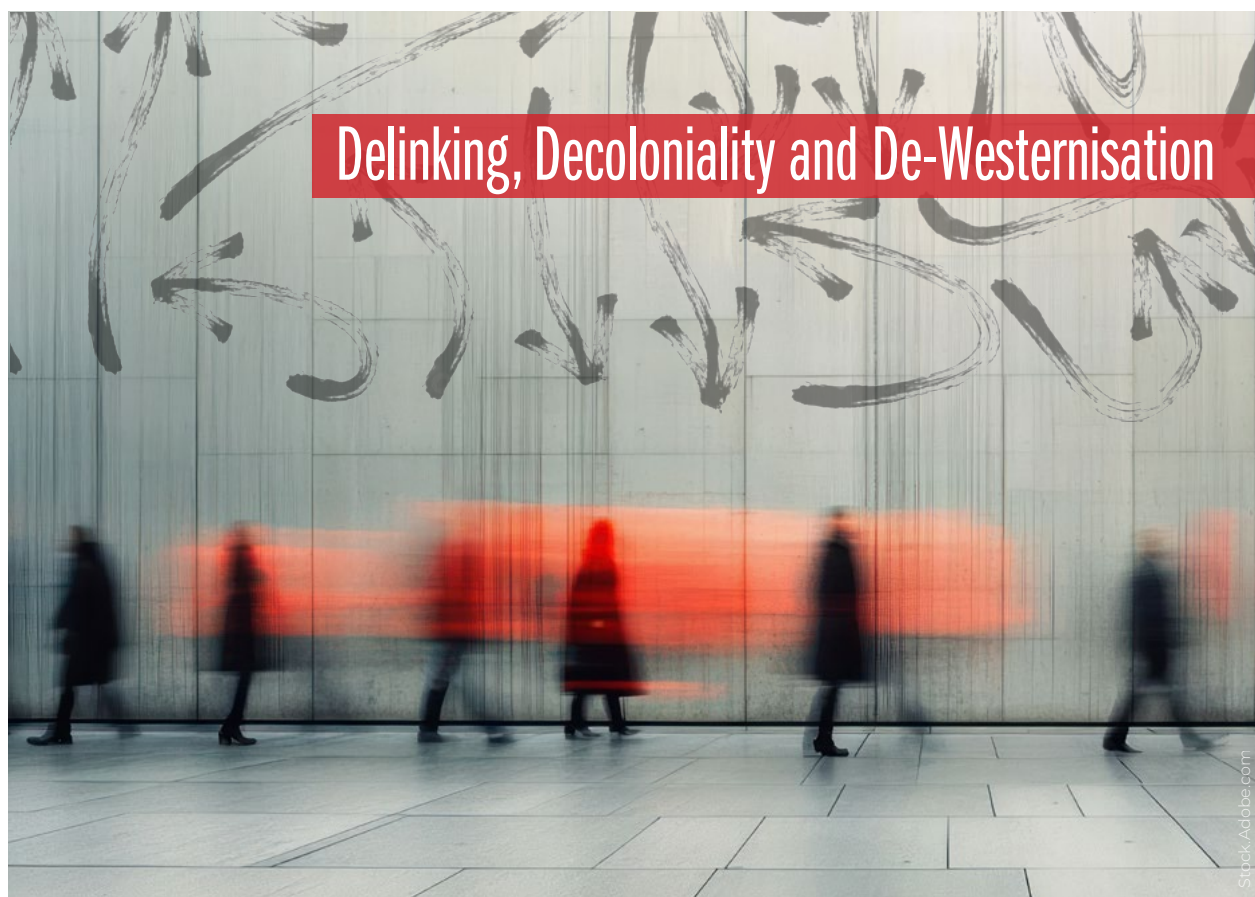


Delinking, Decoloniality and De-Westernisation



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Abstract

The planetary world-wide conversation on decoloniality, there has been some conceptual confusion that in this essay I am attempting to elucidate. The elucidation is not based on the premise that decoloniality is endowed with a universal meaning, like modernity, but it is based on the analytic and prospective meaning that decoloniality acquired after the seminal work of Peruvian sociologist and activist Anibal Quijano. Additionally, my argument is based on the conceptual distinctions I have been making since 2010, between decoloniality and de-westernization.

I

The meaning and extent of decolonization in the third decade of the twentieth century have grown exponentially. My goal is to explore one aspect of its proliferation: the invocation of the decolonial by scholars and public intellectuals of the so-called “far right”.

Several essays and op-eds have highlighted the use of decolonization by the so-called ‘far right’ scholars and state officials. Miri Davidson, an

assistant professor of political science at Warwick College, published a well-read and translated essay in “Sidecar”, a publication of the *New Left Review*. I received a copy of the Spanish translation from friends in Buenos Aires. They were surprised not only by the fact that the so-called far right was invoking the decolonial but also by the parallels Davidson drawn with Anibal Quijano and Walter Mignolo. Regarding Russian political theorist

Alexander Dugin, Davidson observes:

Dugin asserts we live in a “pluriverse” of distinct civilizations, each moving according to its rhythm. “There is no unified historical process. Every person has their historical model that moves in a different rhythm and sometimes in different directions.” The parallels with the decolonial school of Mignolo and Anibal Quijano are hard to miss. Each civilization blossoms out of a unique epistemological framework, but such efflorescence has been stunted by the “unitary episteme of Modernity” (Dugin’s words, but they could be Mignolo’s) (Davidson 2024).

Among the essays and op-eds addressing the issue, some detail the disparities behind superficial appearances (see Menon 2022 and Shah 2024). In my perspective, argued in this essay, there is a failure to distinguish decoloniality from de-westernization, which leads to confusion between decoloniality and Eurasianism in the case of Dugin, and Europeanism in the case of de Benoist (2024).¹ I will return to this later. In the meantime, let’s recall a long essay by Alexandra Lewis and Marie Lall, which perceives the nuances beneath the surface similarities:

Mignolo’s work (and those of the other authors mentioned) is far more nuanced than anti-Westernist co-option indicates. He advocates delinking from Western knowledge hegemony for an epistemic shift towards “plural-versatility.” Delinking doesn’t imply cutting off knowledge exchange with the West but instead raising non-Western ways of thinking and knowing within global discourse to liberate humanity from the conceptually parasitic shackles of colonialism (2023: 1475).

Lewis and Lall explain in the same article “how the critique of the monopoly of Western liberal thought through the decolonization movement that increased the number of voices heard has been co-opted by nationalist politics in India and Russia” (2023: 1472). My goal here is neither to critique the uses of decolonization by the “far right” nor to defend my position. I am responsible for what I say, not for what my critics claim I say. I will speculate on who, where, when, why, and what decolonization is invoked. The appeal to decolonization by right-

wing scholars and intellectuals intrigued me. I researched what the decolonial perspective could offer to the so-called ‘far-right’. During the initial research stage, I realized it was necessary to distinguish three spheres of the ‘far-right’. The reason for my insistence on ‘so-called’ will become apparent below.

The first sphere is the state, encompassing public statements from governing bodies such as presidents, ministers of foreign relations, and state offices of communication. In this context, Davidson invokes Vladimir Putin and Serge Lavrov.² It is also noticeable that right-wing state officials in the European Union and think tanks appeal to decolonization. Former Polish president Andrej Duda called for the decolonization of Russia (see Korybko 2024), and the neoliberal Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, based in Helsinki and sponsored by the US, made the same call in two related conferences (see U.S. Helsinki Commission 2022).

The second sphere is illustrated by well-known writers like Renaud Camus in France, recognized for his infamous theory of the “great replacement” (immigrants replacing the white European natives). In his writings, he mentions social organizations like the Identitarian Generation (Valencia-Garcia 2018). Davidson quotes Camus as saying: “All the major texts in the fight against decolonization apply admirably to France, especially those of Frantz Fanon”—and claimed that Indigenous Europe needs its own FLN” (Davidson 2024). Camus seems to fuse “the fight against (French) colonization,” which is Frantz Fanon’s case, to justify the far-right in France’s fight against decolonization (Davidson 2024). In my view, Camus cannot be paired with Alain de Benoist. Not all the ‘far-rights’ are the same, even in France³. What is the logic allowing the analogy of decolonization in the Third World during the Cold War and decolonization in the First World thirty years after the collapse of the Soviet Union? What prompted De Benoist to claim, in 1988, that the Third World and Europe are involved in the same combat? (1988).

I will focus on the third sphere shaped by scholars, activists, and public figures. Alain de Benoist, a French philosopher and founder of *La Nouvelle Droite* in the late sixties; Alexander Dugin, a Russian political theorist known for his book, *The*

Fourth Political Theory, published in 2009; and Sai Deepak, an Indian legal scholar and active lawyer, are often associated with decolonial thought.

My use of quotation marks around ‘so-called far-right’ will become clear now. While it makes historical sense to place De Benoist on the right (he founded the French New Right) which doesn’t necessarily mean a generic ‘far right’. I find it questionable to use the same descriptor for Dugin and Deepak. Although geographically, Russia is in Europe, like Belarus and Ukraine, in the current geopolitical power dynamics, it is not. The European Union and Europe are distinct entities, distinctively self-fashioned and separated from Asia. The former upholds the privileges of Eurocentrism and Westernization, while the latter challenges them. This distinction is crucial to understanding De Benoist’s call for rebuilding Europeanism, Dugin’s promoting Eurasianism (see Pizzolo and Michael 2020, Laruelle 2012, Bassin Glebov and Laruelle 2015) and Deepak defending Hindu civilizational identity. Understanding the unique histories of De Benoist, Dugin, and Deepak is crucial. They share common adversaries and critique the three Western ideologies while their common adversaries form the basis of three distinct horizons of meaning. Delinking from Western liberalism is what they have in common, although each horizon is singular and neither of them proposes the type of universalism enforced by Western Christianity, liberalism and socialism-communism.

Geopolitically and culturally, De Benoist works within the three major Western ideologies that emerged by the mid-nineteenth century: Conservatism, Liberalism, and Socialism. The three ideologies share a common ambition: Colonialism. These ideologies, rooted in Imperial Western Europe, underpin Eurocentrism. They support the political rhetoric of modernity and its darker side, the logic of coloniality. Modernity reflects Europe’s internal organization, while coloniality drives European expansion. In this ideological framework, De Benoist operates within European modernity and Western civilization, while Dugin and Deepak contend with the intrusion of coloniality in their local histories.

De Benoist’s way out is the reconstitution of European Paganism. In contrast, Dugin and Deepak contend with the imposition of these ideologies on

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their local histories. These ideologies are products of Western imperial Europe (Eurocentrism), not all of Europe. Russian intellectuals, though geographically and intellectually close to Europe, did not contribute to the creation of these ideologies; they experienced their effects. Fyodor Dostoyevsky’s famous quote captures this sentiment: “In Europe, we were hangers-on and slaves whereas in Asia we shall go as masters” (Dostoyevsky 1977:38). The dynamics have shifted more in Asia than in Europe.

When Russia is considered part of Europe, it is always debatable whether Russia can be counted within Western Civilization, either by Russians themselves or by Europeans. It would be misleading to think that the current rapprochement between U.S. President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin is not aimed at maintaining the global primacy of Western civilization. Consequently, De Benoist and Dugin may be geographically European but belong to two geopolitically distinct civilizations. Both Western and Russian civilizations trace their foundations to Greece and Rome, but they differ. For Russia, Greece is the source of Orthodox Christianity, and Moscow was declared the Third Rome in the early sixteenth century. From the perspective of Western civilization, Greece is the cradle of democracy, and Rome is the cradle of Western Christianity.

It is important to distinguish settlers’ colonialism with coloniality. Russia never experienced settler colonialism like India did, but it did not escape Western coloniality. Ignoring the intrusion of Western modernity/coloniality in their local civilizations, placing Russia and India (Dugin and

Deepak) in the same category as France (de Benoist) and labeling it 'far right' overlooks the imperial difference with Russia and the colonial difference with India created by Western modernity. The imperial difference destabilized Russia, while the colonial difference destabilized India. The British dismantled the Mughal Sultanate, a historical event equivalent to the dismantling of the Aztec and Inca civilizations. For Deepak, both the Mughal Sultanate and the British Empire disrupted the continuity of Hinduism, which he sees as the soul of Indian civilization. Unlike Dugin and Deepak, de Benoist comes from a country that projected coloniality (the colonial and imperial differences) in the constitution of Western modernity (see Tlostanova 2018, Hendi, Burlyuk, O' Sullivan and Arystanbek 2018). Each appeal to the decolonial is linked to their efforts to break away from Western modernity.⁴ De Benoist's assessments occur within the decline of Western hegemony, Dugin and Deepak aim to accelerate the reconstitution of their civilizations, which the West had taught them to despise, inciting them to become modern. Which means, to become like *us*.

II

Before invoking decolonization, De Benoist (and the New Right) claimed Gramsci. 'Gramscian from the Right' becomes a common expression among members themselves as well as scholars analyzing the trajectory (see Abrahamsen, Drolet, Williams, Vucetic, Narita and Gheciu 2024, and Platonova 2022). Why is the New Right transposing (for some will be appropriation) Gramsci and the decolonial? The appeal to Gramsci's key concepts (the construction of counter-hegemony and the war of positions confronting liberalism and the dominance of fascism) doesn't mean that the New Right became the New Left of the 1960s that also needed Gramsci to break away from the communist party.⁵ Thus, invoking the decolonial doesn't mean that De Benoist, Duda, and the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe seriously engage in decoloniality: look at what they do, not only at what they say. The questions then are: In what context is Gramsci or the decolonial being invoked, and what needs is the invocation fulfilling?

At the end of the eighties, De Benoist published *L'Europe, le Tiers Monde: Meme Combat/Europe, the Third World. Same Struggle* (1986). The Third

World struggle for decolonization meant liberation from European colonialism. In the Third World, decolonization meant liberation from Europe. For De Benoist in Europe, 'the same struggle' means decolonization as liberation from Europe. This claim is central to De Benoist's Europeanism, which implies freedom from liberal and neoliberal Europe, and the reconstitution of European ethno-pluralism based on his reconstitution of Paganism. The reconstitution of ethno-pluralism is a counterproposal to homogenization in its Western Christian, liberal/neoliberal, and communist forms.⁶

Dugin is not interested in the reconstitution of Europe but in the liberation of Russia from Western liberalism and its avatars. His position counters that of Duda and of the Helsinki Commission for the Security of Europe. He categorizes Western liberal ideologies into three: Liberalism, Communism (socialism), and Fascism (conservatism). His vision is the reconstitution of Eurasianism, often referred to as neo-Eurasianism to distinguish it from the classic Eurasianism of the 1930s. It all depends on what interests you defended and what is your position in the colonial/imperial matrix of power. As Davidson states:

Dugin, a close associate of de Benoist, has integrated this decolonial Spirit into his worldview even more deeply [...]. *Russia, he claims, shares much with the postcolonial world: it, too, is a victim of the assimilating drive inherent to Western liberalism, which forces a world of ontological diversity into a flat, homogeneous, de-particularized mass* (2024).

Dugin's invocation of the decolonial, which Davidson interprets as postcolonial, is synonymous with liberation. During the Cold War, decolonization and liberation were two key and complementary terms. The goal of decolonial struggles was to liberate the natives from colonial settlers. It is in this context that Dugin uses the terms liberation and decolonization:

We need to *liberate ourselves* and all the peoples, Turkish people, Russian people, Chinese people, European people, and American people from this international liberal swamp. We need to *liberate ourselves* from the totalitarian discourse constructed on the 'self-evident' dogma that only liberalism can be accepted as a universal

ideology, that only Western values should be assimilated as something universal (2020: 10).

Davison observes that these words sound like those enunciated by Anibal Quijano in 1992. And she is right. Here is Quijano,

epistemological decolonization, as decoloniality, is needed to clear the way for new intercultural communication, for an interchange of experiences and meanings, *as the basis of another rationality* which may legitimately pretend to some universality. Finally, nothing is less rational than the pretension that the specific cosmic vision of a particular ethnos should be considered universal rationality, even if such an ethnos is called Western Europe, because this is a pretense to impose a provincialism as universalism (1992: 117).

In the case of Dugin's and other similar claims, it is indispensable to uncouple the meaning of liberation from decolonization.⁷ As mentioned above, Russia did not endure settler colonialism but did not escape coloniality. Liberating from Westernization (delinking from the three master ideologies) of the world should be understood as de-westernization rather than decolonization (see Latouche 1989, O' Gorman 1958). Dugin, De Benoist, Deepak, Quijano, and I share a common critique of Western global designs to homogenize the planet, from Western Christianity in the sixteenth century to Western neoliberalism since the second half of the twentieth century (see Mignolo 2012, Mignolo 2014). Still, decolonization and de-westernization are two distinct kinds of responses. Although liberation is the aim, the historical and political circumstances in which they are conceived and implemented, as well as their purposes and aspirations, are significantly different.

Decolonization, in its various global forms, is driven by political society in the public sphere and is currently incompatible with state projects (Mignolo 2021). Conversely, de-westernization is led by the state and can be supported by scholars and intellectual activists, such as Dugin and Deepak (Mignolo 2020). De Benoist's arguments do not align with the French state or the European Union. From a decolonial perspective, Dugin's calls for Russian liberation from liberal and neoliberal ideologies must be seen as part of the global movement

towards de-westernization. Ignoring these calls would endorse the belief in the universality of Western political ideologies and the unipolarity of the global order. While Westernization equates to unipolarity, de-westernization equates to multipolarity (Mahbubani 2008).⁸ Progressive ideologies also seek to eliminate non-conforming elements, whether in the U.S., France, or the European Union.

De-westernization, though originating in Asia, is not confined to Asia or to non-settler colonial countries, like Russia, China or Japan. Brazil and South Africa, both BRICS members with settler colonial histories, are also embracing de-westernization. Decolonization, however, is driven by political society in the public sphere and often clashes with state projects. De-westernization does not challenge the colonial power structure, which includes capitalism and digital technology, but disputes control over it. Decoloniality, on the other hand, questions the very existence of this power structure. Both narratives point towards divergent horizons of meaning.

Within de-westernization conceptual frameworks, *The Fourth Political Theory* (2012) serves as a foundational work in Alexander Dugin's Eurasianism ideology. Eurasianism is a de-western delinking from the three main Western ideologies: Conservatism, Liberalism, and Socialism. *The Fourth Political Theory* derived from Eurasianism, cannot be integrated into these ideologies. It marks a break from Dugin's earlier thoughts from the late eighties, when he sought liberation from Western liberalism and Soviet communism. During the eighties, Dugin explored spirituality and saw fascism as a potential solution. However, the fall of the Soviet Union shifted his focus to geopolitics, leading to his 1997 publication of *Foundations of Geopolitics*. That same year, Zbigniew Brzezinski published *The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and the Geostrategic Imperatives* (1997), a key neoliberal geopolitical work. While Dugin is an informal Russian government ideologue, Brzezinski served as an ideologue for the US government. Brzezinski emphasized the U.S.'s control over Eurasian landmasses, rich in population and resources, as key for economic future. Dugin's *The Fourth Political Theory* focuses on Eurasia's autonomy, opposing the U.S. perspective. Brzezinski saw NATO's expansion from Europe to Vladivostok as inevitable, with Ukraine

crucial for curbing Russian ambitions. Dugin's sees Eurasianism as the political and epistemic path towards autonomy. Choose your perspective.

De Benoist's vision of Europe, detailed in the *Manifesto for a European Renaissance* (1999), promotes acknowledging differences to counter neoliberal homogenization by the EU. It calls for reconstituting what Christianity, liberalism, and neoliberalism have destituted, with paganism and ethno-pluralism as key concepts. Four years later, Jurgen Habermas published his own *Manifesto of European Renaissance* (2003), signed by postmodern intellectuals like Derrida, Eco, and Rorty. They called for a revitalized European identity beyond the nation, respecting differences and embracing enlightenment, modernity, and technological progress. De Benoist, however, opposed the enlightenment, unlike Habermas, who is heir to the first Frankfurt School. Habermas's renaissance was widely discussed among progressive and postmodern intellectuals, while De Benoist's was largely ignored, with the progressive machine effectively silencing him.

De Benoist and Habermas differ in their visions of European Renaissance. Habermas supports a strong (neo)liberal EU, while De Benoist advocates for reconstituting European roots dismantled by liberal modernity and postmodernity. Critics that question decoloniality overlook that the colonial matrix of power produces differences and hierarchies while Westernization is a project of homogenization that devalues differences while producing them. The decolonial perspective aims at revealing the double standard (devaluing differences while producing them) of Western modernity while at the same time promoting communal respect for ethnic and sexual differences without hierarchies, sustainable economies, awareness of living organisms. The decolonial perspective, like de-westernization, delinks from Western universalism (Christian, Liberal and Socialist) promoting peoples liberation and planetary pluriversality beyond states' regulations. In both cases, civilization states (de-westernization) and people's public sphere, they are manifestations of the upcoming cosmopolitan localism.

De Benoist's use of *pluriversum* in the manifesto refers to the reconstitution of Pagan *pluriversum*, which was replaced by Christian *universum*.

This aligns with Mahbubani's idea that de-westernization means the return of history and Quijano's notion of the decolonial return of the future. Europe's cultural heritage, acknowledged by all political views, includes ancient Greece, Western Rome, Western Christianity, and the European Renaissance. These elements shaped European modernity and justified colonial expansion, displacing local Pagan traditions. De Benoist's *pluriversum* is based on cultural, not biological, ethno-pluralism. He rejects closed ethnic-national formations, contrary to the myth of one nation to one state. Accusing De Benoist of "federalist fascism" and "dreaming of a pan-European empire" may reveal the ideology of the accusers rather than his arguments. It's uncommon to label someone as a 'neoliberal fascist dreaming of a homogenous European garden' extended over the planet. Neoliberalism is rarely seen as an aberration of Liberalism, like Fascism and Stalinism were aberrations of Conservatism and Socialism (see Eggers 2021).

De Benoist's *pluriversum* and Dugin's *pluriverse* aren't the same as the decolonial concept of *pluriversality*. They use similar words but have different meanings. Think of Humberto Maturana's multi-verse in science, which aligns with the decolonial pluriverse in humanities and social sciences. All of them confront Western universalism and the will to homogenize. During the Kosovo war, Bill Clinton urged us to focus on our common humanity. On the contrary, The Zapatistas claims that "because we are all equal, we have the right to be different." Often critics of de-westernization and decoloniality overlook how neoliberalism aims to homogenize the planet (see Davidson 2024).

Dugin and Deepak reject Western interferences in Russia and India, respectively. Similarly, De Benoist's New Right opposes liberal and neoliberal interferences in the Europe's pagan foundations. Understanding local histories disrupted by coloniality helps avoid labeling De Benoist, Dugin, and Deepak as generic 'far rights' or "fascists." It also prevents the assumption that their differing thoughts and projects should be condemned because it is not like ours. Ancient Greece is significant for Dugin due to shared Orthodox Christianity with Russia, a key part of Eurasianism, but it differs from de Benoist's Greece. Deepak's project to replace the name India with Bharat, rooted in Sanskrit, is indifferent to Greece and

Rome. *Pueblos Originations* in the Americas have replaced America and Latin America with Abya-Yala. However, there is no state ideology in the Americas that would promote the reconstitutions of Abya-Yala, like the reconstitution of Europeanism, Eurasianism or Hinduism.

III

In the Americas, there are three main decolonial paths. One is the decolonial project of Indigenous peoples, from the Mapuches in Southern Chile and Argentina to the First Nations of Canada. Despite numerous nations, tribes, and cultures, two important concepts are resurgence (Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, First Nation in Canada) and Bien Vivir (*Sumak Kawsay* in Ecuador's Quichua language and *Suma Qamaña* in Bolivia's Aymara language). Another key aspect is the decolonial praxis by actors of the African Diaspora in South America and the Caribbean. This legacy spans from enslaved revolts in the sixteenth century to the Haitian Revolution and includes rich scholarly, intellectual, and artistic contributions. Figures like Aime Cesaire and Frantz Fanon are heirs of the Middle Passage which grounds the Afro-Caribbean and Afro-South American diaspora.⁹

The third is the one I am elaborating here, introduced by Anibal Quijano. Quijano's decolonial reconfiguration of decolonization as manifestations of decoloniality (like modernization means manifestations of modernity), conceived after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the limits of decolonization during the Cold War, is neither an Indigenous nor an Afro-diasporic project. The *Pueblos Originarios* and the African diaspora in South America and the Caribbean have their own experiences, languages, and ways of living to confront coloniality and elaborate on their own decolonial visions and ambitions. Therefore, the concept of decoloniality introduced by Quijano, which is grounded in the history of people of European descent coexisting with *Pueblos Originarios* and African diaspora, is equivalent, parallel and complimentary, but is grounded in the local histories of European migrations to South America. If decolonization is a familiar expression to the three projects, because colonization is a common experience to the three demographic heterogeneous components, none of them can be subsumed under the other. It's crucial, however, to

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work together, which has been and continues to be the case confronting coloniality, based on our respective local histories and personal storytelling.

It's worth re-reading my initial quote of Davidson, where she points out the parallels between the far right and the Latin American decolonial school. These parallels show the surface, not the conditions of their occurrence. As mentioned earlier, Quijano and Mignolo's local histories differ significantly from those of De Benoist, Dugin, and Deepak. Think of Peru and Argentina vis-à-vis Russia, India, and France; they occupy distinct positions in the colonial matrix of power. Colonial legacies in Peru and Argentina range from early Spanish and Portuguese settlers to British and French and the US coloniality without settler colonialism. This isn't the case for India under British settler colonialism; Deepak will add the Muslim colonization of India (Bharat) before the formation of the colonial matrix of power from 1500 on, France was an imperial country, and Russia was never under Western colonial settlers. So, to throw the words decoloniality and decolonization out of context, are just to create empty words floating around.

Quijano and Mignolo, like De Benoist and Deepak, critique imperial Christianity. For Dugin, Eastern Orthodox Christianity isn't an adversary, but Western Christianity is for De Benoist. While Western Christianity drove early colonial expansion and laid the foundations of secular imperialism after the 18th century, it also carries the seeds of its self-criticism. Pope Francis and theologies of liberation around the globe are examples. Quijano and Mignolo also share a critique of modernity with De Benoist, Dugin, and Deepak. In 1993, Latin American philosopher Enrique Dussel linked modernity with Eurocentrism and noted that:

Modernity includes a rational "concept" of emancipation that we affirm and subsume. But, at the same time, it develops an irrational myth, justification for genocidal violence. The postmodernists criticize modern reason as a reason for terror; we criticize modern reason because of the irrational myth it conceals (1993: 65).

De Benoist's, Dugin's, and Deepak's focus on specific cultural horizons like Europeanism, Eurasianism, and Hinduism does not align with decolonial goals promoted by Quijano, Dussel and Mignolo. Quijano's 1990s decolonial shift is based on three core principles:

- Breaking away from the three major ideologies of Western modernity
- Engaging in epistemological reconstitutions
- Promoting and contributing to a) the return of the futures disrupted by the interference of modernity/coloniality and b) promoting and contributing to building the conditions of *Bien Vivir*.

Epistemological reconstitutions drive decolonial liberations without a fixed horizon of meaning, unlike Eurasianism, Europeanism, and Hinduism. Huntington sees Latin America as a civilization, but reconstituting Latin Americanism isn't as clear-cut. The idea of Latin America was created after independence by people of European descent, collaborating with French politicians, to stop Anglo America's advance south. So, Latin America has a European origin, unlike Eurasianism and Hinduism. Europeanism wasn't imposed by a foreign civilization but is a project by and of Europeans themselves. Plus, Latin Americanism coexists with Pueblos Originarios and the African Diaspora in South, Central America, and the Caribbean, who

aren't keen on being Latin Americans. These "isms" emerged from colonial expansion, each with its own decolonial task. So, reconstituting Latin Americanism isn't really a decolonial task, although Latin American "identity" has been and still is a concern of liberals and conservatives alike.¹⁰

Decoloniality and de-westernization share common goals: breaking away from Western modernity, engaging in epistemological reconstitutions, and ensuring the return of interrupted futures. The de-westernized version proposes transforming the nation-state into the civilization state, advocated by Russia, China, India, Turkey, and Iran. Nation-states, a Western civilization concept, assumes one nation per state. The civilization-state, however, merges multiple nations into one civilization. This shift aligns with the emerging multipolar inter-state world order which the decolonial perspective supports, although it is not its primary goal: *Bien Vivir* is a project of political society in the public sphere, not state and inter-state one. *Bien Vivir* doesn't have a predetermined semantic horizon of meaning such as Europeanism, Eurocentrism, or Hinduism, but it is an open horizon to be worked out by all and everyone who finds in the decolonial a path to healing colonial wounds. It is not an identitarian horizon, such as Latin Americanism, but rather open horizons of aspirations and efforts to be realized locally by the political society in the public sphere. Nevertheless, it's not surprising to see similarities between decolonial and de-western confrontations with neoliberal global designs aiming to homogenize and manage an intended unipolar world system. For Quijano's decolonial perspective, the civilization state is an analytic issue, not a goal, unlike de-westernization.

But that's not all. Decolonial and de-western critiques of Western modernity, seen in Conservatism, Liberalism, and Socialism, share another common feature: they don't fit into the same system of these three ideologies. Dugin's "fourth political theory" (which for Dugin is the spirit of Eurasianism) is a clear example of de-Western epistemological delinking from the three main ideologies of Western modernity. It could be added that Deepak's Hinduism is also a fourth political theory vis-à-vis Western modernity while De Benoist's Europeanism is a sort of fourth intramural political theory (2000). And so is the decolonial perspective grounded on the radical

decolonial delinking that could be summarized by invoking the Bandung Conference of 1955. Although Quijano's did not invoke the Bandung Conference, its legacy is relevant to understanding Quijano's reconfiguration of decoloniality (see Mignolo 2012). The 'return of the future' is not just one, the one envisioned by the ideologies of Western modernity, but the de-western and decolonial return of the futures disrupted, since 1500, by the expansion of Western modernity. Which shall not be confused with the 'return of the past'.

Exiting the failures of modernization, to borrow Yuko Hasegawa's expression, is today an increasing demand and a necessity. The horizon of hopes that Western modernity has shattered, do not have preordained designs. Is a wide horizon to be conquered by many reconstitutions of interrupted futures. It cannot be an homogeneous horizon. Consequently, it would require common work to delegitimize the colonial and imperial differences that Western modernity created. If the de-western horizons of hope are different from the decolonial ones, the decolonial in South America and the Caribbean will differ from those pursued or that could be pursued in South Asia, Southern Africa, North America, Russia, China, or West Africa. The Kurdish women's liberation in Rojava and the Zapatistas in Southern Mexico share similar horizons of hope (see Mesbah 2024). However, each implements its designs according to local possibilities, needs, and constituencies. The Zapatistas is primarily an Indigenous project led by both Indigenous women and men, while Rojava is entirely an organization of "Indigenous" women.

In 2011, Quijano published "*Bien Vivir entre el Desarrollo y la colonialidad del poder*" (2016). *Bien Vivir* and development are decolonially incompatible. For de-westernization, development is not a problem, but it cannot be a predetermined horizon. Economic development is detached from liberalism and neoliberalism and integrated into states that lead de-westernization. However, *Bien Vivir*, based on *Sumak Kawsay* and *Suma Qamaña*, and development cannot coexist. *Suma* and *Sumak* translate as "plenitude" (Latin "plenus," English "full"), and *Kawsay* as "living" and "knowing." Thus, the decolonial task is to work towards living in plenitude and harmony. To do so requires delinking from the failures of modernity to build horizons of hopes. The task requires epistemological and aesthetic (sensorial) reconstitutions.

Having said that, it shall be remarked that the decolonial perspective introduced by Quijano, that requires an analytic of the logic of coloniality and the rhetoric of modernity, doesn't imply that the horizon of meanings relevant in South, Central America and the Caribbean shall be the same for the rest of the planet. To think like that would be to think in terms of homogeneization and universalization of the local, established by Western modernity. The women's liberation in *Rojava* and the *Zapatistas* in Southern Mexico are working towards the decolonial horizon of *Bien Vivir*, *Sumak Kawsay* that, in their own words are "a world where many worlds could coexist" (the *Zapatistas*) and "Jingology" (*Rojava's* women's liberation) (see Mesbah 2024). Although neither of them uses the term 'decolonial' to describe their projects, it could be understood as such from Quijano's perspective. This does not mean they are decolonial, but they could be seen as such from the South American decolonial perspective. Decoloniality is being elaborated in Africa, based on their own local histories, colonial experiences, needs and desires. Similar considerations shall be made for any decolonial project in thoughts, deeds and desires.

IV Closing Reflections

The era we're all experiencing on this planet is making the old premises, beliefs, and concepts we took for granted obsolete. This change is noticeable, and many have already pointed it out. This essay focused on the difference between decolonization and de-westernization, which is shaking up the international order previously dominated by Conservatism, Liberalism, and Socialism, along with their ties to Colonialism. Decolonization and de-westernization are breaking free from these ideologies and their control over economic, military, media, and academic institutions.

Decolonization rose during the Cold War, coinciding with the defeat of Conservatism's totalitarian regimes like Nazism and Fascism by Liberal and Socialist/Communist regimes. De-Westernization gained momentum after the fall of Stalinism in the Soviet Union responding to the increasing totalitarian bents of Liberalism and its neo-liberal version emerged victorious, grounded on the belief in the 'end of history'. Now, decades later, we're facing the totalitarian side of Liberalism,

especially its Neoliberal version in the U.S. and E.U. In response, decolonization and de-westernization are rising to challenge the common thread of historical Colonialism and its logic, Coloniality.

After the Cold War, de-Westernization took over the goals of decolonization in the interstate system, aiming to form strong states to resist totalitarian Neo-liberal designs. The 1955 Bandung Conference sparked decoloniality and planted the seeds of de-westernization. As circumstances changed, decoloniality became crucial in public struggles for meaning and community formation while de-westernization became interstate confrontations for controlling the colonial matrix of power. Both decolonization and de-westernization attracted and are attracting increasing attention, causing discomfort among “progressive” scholars, intellectuals, and activists still tied to the three major Western ideologies and their aftermath, especially in Euro-centered spheres of post-modernity and neo-Marxism.

The nation-state, a cornerstone of Western civilization and anti-imperialism, is confronted by de-westernization. The logic is clear: if Russia and India are nation-states, Western civilization is the only civilization (unipolarity). If Russia, India, China, Turkey, and Iran reconstitute themselves as civilizations, unipolarity is displaced, and multipolarity means the coexistence of several civilizations rather than the privilege of just one. The ‘clash’ of civilizations could become ‘cooperation among’ civilizations without one indispensable nation setting the rules. De Benoist’s argument aims to delink from the EU’s Europe and Western civilization to reconstitute Europeanism, meaning Europe as a civilization, among others. The call is significant: Europeanism displacing the neoliberal EU, and becoming one among many civilizations. In this context, *pluriverse* or *pluriversum* is parallel and complementary to a multipolar global order that defies universalism and unipolarity. However, the civilizational *pluriversum* shouldn’t be confused with decolonial *pluniversum*, which is *pluri-gnosis* building rationality tangential to the hegemony of Western *epistemic* rationality and, at least in principle, to the inter-civilization states global order (see Mignolo 2012).¹¹

Decoloniality and de-westernization both use the word *pluriverse*, but they mean different things.

Decoloniality wants to break away from universality, while de-westernization aims to move away from unipolarity. De-westernization is driven by strong, capitalist states, while decoloniality is led by public actors within and outside existing institutions (museums, universities, hospitals, governments). Hegemony, as we learned from Antonio Gramsci, isn’t a material thing but the invisible force of ideas taken as reality. Reality differs for Conservatives, Liberals, and Socialists, but Western ideological hegemony impacts on the beliefs of people in the public sphere. People in institutions come from and return to the public sphere. Institutions don’t govern themselves (yet?).

Yes, you read it right: the hegemony of the three ideologies and their mutations, in the West, are the backbone of Eurocentrism. That’s why it’s common to talk about the right or the left, conservatives, social democrats, and the like in Europe and the rest of the world from the North Atlantic perspective. This perspective is framed within the avatars of the three ideologies. Hegemony, as Gramsci taught us, must be confronted with ideas, narratives, arguments, in other words, knowledge. Based, of course, on the ‘materiality history’, of what is going on around, on and in us. Eurocentrism controlled institutional knowledge globally, but no longer. Decoloniality and de-westernization are breaking away from Western ideological (and epistemological) hegemony and embark on ‘other rationalities’ (epistemological reconstitutions). However, the goals of non-Western rationalities differ for decolonial and de-western actors and institutions. Decoloniality presupposes de-westernization, but de-westernization doesn’t imply decoloniality.

In October 2020, during the pandemic, while working on *The Politics of Decolonial Investigations*, I couldn’t do much with the manuscript then, except acknowledge that the cycle of Westernization was over. The agony will last decades and won’t be pretty. Multipolarity in the interstate system displaces unipolar Westernization; pluriversality displaces Western universality of knowing and sensing. Decoloniality in the public sphere and de-westernization in the inter-state system have opened the gates for Western totalitarianism in its three branches, Conservatives, Socialists/Communists, and (Neo) Liberals. Consequently, it’s no surprise to find commonalities between decoloniality and de-

westernization, which is different to the similar vocabulary of the 'far right'. Gramsci has been employed by Conservatives intellectual since the past century. That doesn't make the 'far right' Marxist, as it doesn't make it decolonial either because of common critiques of Liberalism, Neoliberalism, state Communism, Fascism, Nazism and Zionism. The commonality of the enunciated hides the divergences of the enunciations.

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Endnotes

- ¹ An expanded version of this argument deepens the confusion. “On the concept of the pluriverse in Walter Mignolo and the European New Right.” On my Sai Deepak’s endorsement, I should have endorsed it as a powerful de-western argument, and a serious reading of the Latin American decolonial school, to which he devoted chapters 2 and 3 of *India, that is Bharat. Coloniality, Civilization, Constitution*. See the conversations that ensued, <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/7TKAjjv87K3UZir1/>
- ² A double misreading of my position in the Ukraine-Russian conflict is circulating. One is that Putin’s expression is anti-colonialism, not decolonization. The other are the reasons to explain Russia’s special operation in Ukraine. It all depends on where you start: it was an unprovoked invasion, or it was an invasion provoked by NATO to “contain” Russia. See Walter D. Mignolo, “It is a change of era, no longer an era of changes”. The European perspective is also noticeable in the superficial parallels between, decolonial thoughts and de Benoist Europeanism in France, Dugin’ Eurasianism in Russia and Deepak’s Hinduism in India.
- ³ See Alain de Benoist, “The Time of the Civilizational States.” A comprehensive analysis of de Benoist’s arguments in Alberto Spektorowski, “Identity Politics and the Decolonization of the Western Mind: The Intellectual Resilience of Alain de Benoist and the Nouvelle Droite.”
- ⁴ On this concept see Walter D. Mignolo, *La désobéissance épistémique. Rhétorique de la modernité, logique de la colonialité et grammaire de la décolonialité*. For a reliable interpretation of the concept see Lewis and Lall, “From decolonization to authoritarianism.”
- ⁵ The New Right and the New Left are sort of European brothers, born both in the 60s the latter and in the seventies the former. Both were updating of the two basic ideologies of Western modernity, Conservatism (the New Right) and Socialism (the New Left). Liberalism was the winner of WWII, and neoliberalism was born in the late forties, at the University of Chicago. A key figure of the New Left was Stuart Hall, who introduced the colonial question in the left. A sensible reading of Hall’s trajectory in James Vernon, “When Stuart Hall was White.” For the New Right, Pierre André Taguieff, *Entretiens, Origines et métamorphose de la Nouvelle Droite*. “; and Daria Platonova Dugina, « A History of the Ideas of the New Right.”
- ⁶ Ethno-pluralism shall not be confused with multiculturalism. The latter was a necessity in the U.S., after the civil right movement, to sideline the previous idea of the melting pot. Multiculturalism is a mask for the mono-cultural state to accommodate the immigration from the Third World. The former is a concept calling into question the ethnic hegemony of the modern nation-state: one state for one ethnos. Natio is the Latin translation of the Greek ethnos.
- ⁷ A Russian artist and geographer at the Dutch Institute, Nikolai Smirnov, published a detailed titled “Left-Wing Eurasianism and Post-Colonial Theory.” One of his goals is that “[...] we should consider Eurasianism, along with Négritude, as one of the first experiments in postcolonialism, as a forerunner of postcolonial theory. Eurasianism was strategic essentialism *avant la lettre*. Its abrupt break with the Romano-Germanic culture that enthralled contemporary Russian elites functioned like decolonization, deploying the Oedipus complex in terms of geography. As I argue here, it would be more appropriate to describe Dugin’s and Smirnov’s arguments as de-western rather than decolonial, as I explain below.
- ⁸ Kishore Mahbubani, “Dewesternization: The Return of History.” I underscore the subtitle: the return of history, not the end of history.
- ⁹ One example, among many, Jean Casimir, *The Haitian. A Decolonial History*.
- ¹⁰ In fact, Mignolo’s argument goes in divergent directions in relation to the de-western will to reconstitute a geopolitical civilizational identity. See *The Idea of Latin America*.
- ¹¹ I have been opting for *gnosis over epistemology* since *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges and Border Thinking*. Epistemic reconstitution and border thinking are two key gnosis concepts.