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Nationalism and Colonialism: Oceans, Civilizations, Races

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ABSTRACT

The article is devoted to the analysis of the complex interrelations between the imaginaries of nation and colony, and, by the same token, between nationalism and colonialism. The author argues that modern nationalism has always contained colonialism as its integral part and parcel. Colonies are interpreted as “mirrors” for the nation-building; while oceans, civilizations and races are the factors which keep distance between what is considered to be national and what is to be interpreted as colonial. In their turn, movement of the population, education and modernization were important tools for bridging the gaps between nations and their colonies. Russian national, imperial and colonial experience in this context is rather anomalous, because, according to the author, it constantly blurs the existing boundaries and mix up differences. One of the interesting results of this historical experience is current insensitivity of Russian society to such pressing issues of the today’s European and American politics as the war against symbolic representations of the racist nationalism.

KEYWORDS

colonialism, nationalism, imperialism, nation-building, modernity, modern history of Russia, social imaginaries, racism, civilizations, ethnic identities, frontier, orientalism

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Introduction

Nations and nationalism as we today know them are modern phenomena. The very idea that communities of human beings whose sense of belonging is based upon certain historically constructed common features (ranging from language to racial characteristics or myths of common origin) are to politically and economically organize their life together on certain territory, is closely connected with the modern condition (see, however, Smith, 1986, and Armstrong, 1982 for the accounts of ancient ethnic origin of the national identities). Even if, as some authors claim, nationalism has medieval sources (Adrian Hastings, for example, traces these sources back to the obscure times of Bede the Venerable, see Hastings, 1997, p. 38) today's nationalism is distinctively modern.

In its turn, modernity, according to Cornelius Castoriadis' characterization, "is best defined by the conflict, but also the mutual contamination and entanglement, of two imaginary significations: autonomy on the one hand, unlimited expansion of 'rational mastery', on the other. They ambiguously coexisted under the common roof of 'reason'" (Castoriadis, 1997, pp. 37–38). Arguably, both autonomy and rational mastery in their turn are enabled by a certain type of collectivity, which provides the ground for the collective decision-making and shared responsibility for the future. Such collectivity is seen as the last source of sovereignty (Anderson, 2006, p. 7; Miller, 1995, p. 30), and, thus, as the "final" autonomous being. Being the last sovereign, this collectivity is entitled to produce the laws, through obeying which it also exercises its autonomy.

As such this collectivity represents moral community (Miller, 1995, pp. 49–80; Moore, 2001, pp. 25–35), providing basis for solidarity, mobilization, political obligations, collective responsibility, feelings of belonging and common destiny, etc. In short, these communities took the holy place previously occupied by the Church and God Himself, the position of the source of all sovereignty and all power (Anderson, 2006, pp. 9–38). Worshipped under the name of the nations, these communities became the main object of the modern religion of nationalism.

Both autonomy and rational mastery are "imaginary significations", that is "multiform complexes of meaning that give rise to more determinate patterns and at the same time remain open to other interpretations" (Arnason, 1989, p. 34). Modern people are interpreting them as the members of nations, which, by the same token, are indeed "imagined communities" (Anderson, 2006). It is imagination that connects nations with autonomy and mastery: through imaginations nations understand themselves as autonomous (free) and rational (powerful); and it is through autonomous and creative imagination that large anonymous communities form the sense of belonging and obtain the moral obligations needed for them to become modern nations.

Since imagination is a phenomenon of human creativity, nationalism essentially is a creative reconstruction (through experience and interpretation) of the human world. Although in various nationalistic myths the nations are often represented as primordial entities, as something rooted in the "blood and soil" (Barry, 1999, pp. 17–20), they are, however, constantly imagined and constructed. It can be said, then, that there are no

nations, but only various national building processes, or, by the same token, various nationalisms. Nationalism, therefore, can be described as a creative imagination of the national building process. It is not surprising, then, that many authors trace sources of nation-building to the spread of the vernacular literary traditions (Anderson, 2006, pp. 37–46; Hastings, 1997, pp. 21–25). National literature, it seems, created not only the Russians (Lotman, 1987, p. 196, p. 320); its imaginative role was crucial in formation of all modern nations. According to Yu. Lotman, when the world of the medieval cultural values and moral principles was substituted with the modern culture, it is the literature – and this is especially obvious in Russia – which took the role of the spiritual and moral guide of the social life (see: Lotman, 1987, p. 320).

Imagination (including literary one) is crucial for both *interpretation* and *experience* of the reality. It is through the lens of imagination that autonomous human beings are making sense of their world, experience it and interpret this experience. That is why, according to Peter Wagner, modernity itself is *experience and interpretation* of the modern conditions (Wagner, 2008). The reality to be interpreted and experienced is rephrased by Wagner as *problématiques*, to which any society needs to give an answer. Namely, “the question about the rules for life in common constitutes the *political problématique* [...]”; the one about satisfaction of needs, the *economic problématique* [...]”; and the one about valid knowledge, the *epistemic problématique*” (Wagner, 2008, p. 4). Literature, science, music, theater, political institutions, economic arrangements etc. all are somehow answering the questions on how the community should govern its life together, by which means it will satisfy its material needs, and how the valid knowledge is produced.

Wagner’s characterization is rather persuasive. However, it would also make sense to ask the question on what “the society”, which needs to give an answer to the *problématiques* is? Wagner’s description seems to suggest that this society is a kind of linguistic, historical and cultural community (since it requires common experience [history and culture] as well as shared interpretations [culture and language]), united by common political, economic and epistemic life. In short, the society in question is modern nation.

It is nation, then, which seeks to autonomously answer modern questions. At the same time, however, the opposite is also true: the nations are formed in the process of answering these questions. Nations are shaped by their answers and in this way obtain their national histories. This answering, in its turn, is not happened in isolation: nations in their nation-building face other realities, in which they are reflected like in (sometimes very distorting) mirrors. These mirrors include other nations and ethnic groups, as well as nature and geography of the national territory and so on. Nation-building, thus, is both limited and enabled by these externalities.

Now, this article is devoted to the analysis of the imaginary of the nation and nationalism in terms of its interrelations with another important modern imaginary: one of colony and colonialism. It will briefly demonstrate how interplay of the concepts of nation and colony produces modern understanding of the community. Since, as the text will show, it is the concept of the colony, which provides both the image of “the other”, and the mirror needed for the effective nation-building, the colony is imagined

as what is distant geographically, different civilizationally and alien racially. The distance, however, is both postulated and bridged: postulated by oceans and bridged by resettlement, postulated by civilizational gap and bridged by education, and, finally, postulated by race, and bridged by citizenship.

The main question, which the article seeks to answer, then, is a question on the nature of this dialectic of distancing and approximation in the interplay of the ideas of colonialism and nationalism. Another important task relates to the analysis of the peculiarities of Russian colonial-and-national imaginary to the “model” European one. In many instances, as we will see, Russia is an anomaly, but it is exactly this anomaly, which makes its case especially useful for the conceptual analysis.

Modern Mirrors

It is not at all accidental that the formation of modern European nations coincided with the development of the worldwide colonial system. Colonies seemed to provide Europe with the finest possible mirrors, helping European nations to find answers to the modern questions. On the one hand, colonies gave to the Europeans contrasting examples of the “backward” peoples, thus, justifying civilizational mission and “white man’s burden”, but, on the other hand, represented something like testing areas for the institutional arrangements to be used domestically afterwards. In India, for example, the British colonists tried the first joint-stock company (Metcalf & Metcalf, 2006, p. 44), the first government-run schools, trigonometrical survey, separate cemetery, competitive examination for the civil service etc.: “The institutions of the modern state took shape in the colony, which can be seen as something of a laboratory of administrative practice, before making their way back to England” (ibid., p. 83).

Being a laboratory, the colony, however, at the same time must remain separate, different, alien, since only in such way it can perform its function of the mirror. It is just very natural, then, that various colonial rebellions strengthened metropolitan nationalism. Until very recently this cultural alienation very often took racial forms. Sepoy mutiny, for example, intensified British racism and resulted in creation of the separately demarcated spaces in Indian cities. “These spaces communicated racial difference. [...] They represented, moreover, as part of lived experience, an association of British culture with the ‘modern’ in contrast to the older sections of the city seen as ‘medieval’ or ‘traditional’ – always the necessary foil to modernity. The ‘colonial city’ was predicated on such duality” (Metcalf & Metcalf, 2006, p. 108).

Duality of metropolitan and colonial, modern and traditional created world of the simple binary oppositions, which survived up to the twenty-first century. The discourse of the binary oppositions, where “we” are described as mastering “our culture”, autonomous, civilized and mature, while “they” are heteronomous, barbaric, childish, and are dominated by their culture, can be found both in Imperial British description of India and in recent George W. Bush’s “war against terror”. Wendy Brown comments:

“We” have culture while culture has “them”, or we have culture while they are a culture. Or, we are a democracy while they are a culture. This asymmetry turns

on an imagined opposition between culture and individual moral autonomy, in which the former vanquishes the latter unless culture is itself subordinated by liberalism. The logic derived from this opposition between nonliberalized culture and moral autonomy then articulates a further set of oppositions between nonliberalized culture and freedom and between nonliberalized culture and equality (Brown, 2006, p. 151).

Theoretically, however, nationalism is ambiguous. On the one hand, it is nurtured by the differentiation, colonialism, and alienation; on the other hand, it also contains an important emancipatory trend: in theory, all nations are equally entitled to the national state. Thus, in the universalistic nationalism as well as in the very universality of the *Droits de l'Homme et du Citoyen* there has always been a seed of the elimination of the very same colonial dependency, which so actively participated in the formation of this nationalism.

Thus, the Great French Revolution, which intended to establish *liberty, equality* and *fraternity* for the citizens of the metropole, led to the demand of the equal rights among the colonized population as well as to the abolition of the slavery in some of the French colonies. Maintaining colonial system after the Revolution, in its turn, required complex theoretical argumentation on the unpreparedness of the colonies to the full autonomy, and, by the same token, radical displacement of the full exercise of the autonomy to the future. Thus, for example, in the French Caribbean the administrators confronted

the dilemmas of a Republican imperialism in which colonial exploitation had to be institutionalized and justified within an ideological system based on the principle of universal rights. The solutions these administrators crafted were a foundation for the forms of governance employed by the French “imperial nation-state” of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In this empire, as in the revolutionary French Caribbean, the colonized sometimes used claims to universal rights in demands for representation. But even as the colonial state presented itself as the bearer of the liberatory possibilities of democracy, administrators argued that the majority of the colonized did not have the cultural and intellectual capacities necessary to responsibly exercise political rights. The promise of access to rights was extended by the colonial administration but was constantly deferred to some unspecified moment in the future (Dubois, 2004, pp. 3–4).

In the beginning the rights were understood in the nationalist framework of thought as applicable to the co-citizens only, as a part of the nation-building process. Their very universality, however, gradually made them an instrument, applicable to much larger realm of international relations. As Samuel Moyn explains it,

droits de l'homme et du citoyen meant something different from today's “human rights”. For most of modern history, rights have been part and parcel of battles over the meanings and entitlements of citizenship, and therefore have been

dependent on national borders for their pursuit, achievement and protection. In the beginning, they were typically invoked by a people to found a nation-state of their own, not to police someone else's. They were a justification for state sovereignty, not a source of appeal to some authority—like international law—outside and above it (Moyn, 2014, p. 58).

The very history of the idea of human rights, thus, clearly demonstrates historical dialectics of the national and colonial: being applicable first to the national realm only, the rights became a tool of overcoming the very gap between the national and colonial.

These introductory remarks seem to be enough to firmly support our claim that nation and colony, as well as the ideologies of nationalism and colonialism, are closely connected, entangled concepts. They are engaged in complex dialectical interrelations with each other. Nationalism of the metropole is reinforced by the reflection in the mirror of the colony; in its very reflection, however, it contributes to the production of the colony's nationalism, which, in its turn, destabilizes colonial system. If this is so, we have at least two rather different nationalisms: of the metropole and of the colony. The first starts with the idea of the civilizational (cultural, racial) superiority and combines domestic nation-building with civilizational mission abroad; the second is consolidated in the liberation struggle and had to define its tasks in negative terms. In the absence of the positive programme the anti-colonial nationalism is often weakened immediately after the liberation and tend to re-produce neo-colonial conditions.

The difference between these two types of the nationalism was well-known to revolutionary Soviet politicians, who supported anti-colonial (e.g. anti-Russian) nationalism of the “backward people”, and by all means suppressed Russian nationalism, in which they saw chauvinism of the former metropole. As Lenin dictated in 1922,

A distinction must necessarily be made between the nationalism of an oppressor nation and the nationalism of an oppressed nation, the nationalism of a large nation and the nationalism of a small nation. [...] Thus, internationalism on the part of oppressor or so-called “great” nation [...] must consist not only in the observance of the formal equality of nations, but even in an inequality, of the oppressor nation, the great nation, that must make up for the inequality which obtains in actual practice” (Lenin, 1970, pp. 358–359).

In Russia of the 1920s, this approach led to the creation of what Terry Martin called *affirmative action empire* (Martin, 2001).

For us, however, this distinction is important because it demonstrates intricate complex dialectics of the national and colonial. The rest of this article is essentially an attempt to analyze some aspects of this dialectics: we start from identifying the main characteristics of colonialism and proceed with the analysis of their interrelations with different types of the nationalism. It is impossible, of course, to provide here a fully comprehensive all-embracing picture; that is why we focus upon just *some* features, which, however, seem to be among the most crucial characterizations of modern colonialism and nationalism.

Plantation

Modern colonialism is part and parcel of modernity. Arguably, it is colonialism that represented the first historical form of both globalization and modernization. It is through its colonies that Europe tried to modernize (or to civilize, according to the dominant terminology of this time) the world, and thus to make European modernity truly global (see for example, Ferro, 1997, p. 86). On the one hand, colonies provided Europe with an image of “the Other,” thus contributing to the consolidation of the idea of Europe itself. It was colonialism, undoubtedly, that introduced a “new accumulation regime,” and thus “drew Europe into a global economy” (Stråth & Wagner, 2017, p. 92) contributing also to the unification of Europe (ibid., pp. 48–52). On the other hand, colonial experience linked modernity with oppression, or rather, “modernity itself [...] inaugurated a history of oppression” (ibid., p. 12). In short, we cannot hope to understand modernity without the history of colonization, which was at the same time a history of modernization, and a history of oppression and imperial domination. What, however, do we have in mind, when we talk of colonial experience?

It seems that today “colonialism” and “colonial” sometimes mean many different things. The authors are talking about colonization of the land and colonization of the people, colonization as external domination and colonization as modernization, colonization of the foreign peoples and domestic colonization of the peasants (see e.g. Etkind, 2003, p. 111). But does not it essentially blur all borders and differences between various types of domination? After all, domination always is alienation, a production of the cultural distance, that is, for some authors, a colonization.

Now, to define intricate relations between the national and the colonial it would seem to make much more sense to start with more traditional concept of colonization. First of all, one early modern meaning of colonization was “plantation” – and not only of exotic plants such as sugar cane or Pará rubber trees, as we would probably expect, but of people. Such was, at least, Francis Bacon’s understanding in his essay 33 “On plantations” (Bacon, 1625/2001). Colonies, then, presuppose transfer of people from their motherland to elsewhere, their “plantation” on the other soil. This, in its turn also means more or less clear distinction between internal, national, and external, colonial. That is why it was always easier to talk about the colonies in the context of ocean empires, where internal and external were separated by masses of water than in relation to the continental empires, where, like in Russia, the boundaries between national and colonial have always been rather blurred. In any case, we talk of the colonies only when some trans-plantation of people takes place. That is why we talk about ancient Greek colonies or German colonies in the Volga region of the eighteenth to the nineteenth century Russia.

When, however, we refer to modern colonies as sources of wealth for the metropole or as the tools for “modernization” or a primitive form of modern “globalization”, we always think of them as maintaining tight connections with the country of origin or as being externally dominated by the mother country. The colonies were able to become the tools of modernization, thus, because “history of the colonies is surely the history of the ways in which the power, prestige and profits

of some countries were enhanced [...] by external dependencies of migrant settlers” (Finley, 1976, p. 174). That is why the USA of the nineteenth century can be referred to as a British ex-colony, but communities of German Mennonites in Russia of the eighteenth century have never really been true colonies of the German principalities. It is in this context of the tight connections with the metropole, that Bacon thinks that the new plantations must be taken care of before they can produce handsome profit: “Planting of countries is like planting of woods; for you must make account to lose almost twenty years’ profit, and expect your recompense in the end” (Bacon, 1625/2001, p. 123).

In addition to these three main elements – trans-plantation, external territory and formal (state) dependency – the very notion of soil seems to be of paramount importance. The main object of colonization seems to be exactly the soil, the land and not just a group of people. The external land, the territory, is where the trans-plantation happens. In the ideal case, the land should be free, empty or belong to nobody. The discourse of nobody’s land or *terra nullius* is, thus, very important for the justification of colonization. This discourse equally applies to the vast Siberian territory in Russia or the lands of the present-day KwaZulu-Natal and Highveld after the turmoil of Mfecane and Difaqane, which led to the depopulation of these territories, subsequently occupied by white settlers (Giliomee & Mbenga, 2007, pp. 124–138; Natrass, 2017, pp. 57–58). As Bacon put it, “I like a plantation in a pure soil; that is, where people are not displaced to the end to plant in others. For else it is rather an extirpation than a plantation” (Bacon, 1625/2001, p. 123).

Now, all three traditional elements of the colonial situation – transplantation, external territory and formal dependency – reproduce sharp difference and distance between national and colonial, between the land, that plants and the soil, in which the colony is planted. Kept in this way on a distance, colony becomes a good mirror for the nation. Colonial is understood as external, while national in the contrast is defined as internal and domestic. In this understanding colonial distance is defined geographically, while bridged politically (through dependency) and demographically (via transplantation of the population). The clearest case, then, is presented by the ocean Empires, where the colony and the nation were divided by the water. In these Empires the notion of colony (of what belong to us “there”) seems to be very important for the definition of the nation (of who we are “here”).

Russian case, on the other hand, seems to be much less evident. Being the country, which is colonizing itself (see: Klyuchevsky, 1904/1908, p. 24), it was constantly transforming the frontier into national territory, thus, changing would be colonies into what gradually came to be defined as the core of the nation. Consider for example, that in the period of the sixteenth – eighteenth centuries Russia had proper borders only in its western part. As Michael Khodarkovsky explains,

borders required that neighboring peoples define and agree upon common lines of partition. [...] A frontier is a region that forms a margin of a settled or developed territory, a politico-geographical area lying beyond the integrated region of the political unit. [...] In the west, where Russia confronted other sovereign states,

the territorial limits of the states were demarcated by the borders. In the south and east, where Russia's colonization efforts encountered disparate peoples not organized onto states and with no boundaries between them, the zone of separation between Russia and its neighbors was a frontier (Khodarkovsky, 2002, p. 47).

This partly explains the fact why it was always difficult for the Russian Empire to clearly distinguish between the national and the colonial.

Another differentiation seems to be relevant here for better understanding the nuances of the interdependency of the colonial and the national. It is differentiation between *jus soli* and *jus sanguinis*, between soil-based and blood-based nationalisms, which Rogers Brubaker finds in French and German nationalisms respectively. Stating that "the modern nation-state is [...] inherently nationalistic" and that "its legitimacy depends on its furthering [...] the interests of a particular, bounded citizenry", he observes: "French understandings of nationhood have been state-centered and assimilationist, German understandings ethnocultural and 'differentialist'" (Brubaker, 1992, pp. 10–11).

These two nationalisms treat the distance between the colonies and the nation differently. If for the French *jus soli* people from colonies can become members of the French nation, the community of descent of the *jus sanguinis* is rather exclusivist and perceive the gap with the other peoples as unbridgeable. Even if it seems too much to say that "[...] *jus sanguinis* leads logically to ethnic cleansing, *jus soli* to ethnic integration" (Hastings, 1997, p. 34), the differentiation between these two types of nationalism helps us to understand different variants of the relations between colonialism and nationalism.

Thus, France, for example, has finally come to treat its colonies as certain extension of the French nation. That is why French citizenship (that is membership in the French nation) has been given at birth to any child, at least one parent of whom was also born in France (including Algeria or other colonial territories before independence). This late French understanding of the colonies as extensions of the metropole nation is, of course, very different from, for example, British almost apartheid concept of the Indian sub-continent. Interestingly, in his famous study of 1902 J. A. Hobson located the cause of this different understanding of the national and colonial in the influence of imperialistic attitudes.

For Hobson colonialism is not only very different from imperialism, but, in its original spirit, is contradictory to imperial domination. Genuine colonialism is, for Hobson, "migration of part of a nation to vacant or sparsely peopled foreign lands, the emigrants carrying with them full rights of citizenship in the mother country, or else establishing local self-government with her institutions and under her final control, may be considered a genuine expansion of nationality" (Hobson, 1902, p. 6).

Imperialism, however, is a domination over foreign territories, which does not always imply migration of people. Some colonies, according to Hobson, choose self-governance in the spirit of genuine colonialism (South Africa, for example), while others (such as India) are exploited in the spirit of imperialism. Colonial imperialism,

thus, for Hobson, is a perversion of colonialism, when colonies are not considered anymore as extensions of nationality but are imperialistically exploited.

France and Germany for him are equally imperialistic, and the French and German territories in Africa and Asia are not real colonies, since they “were in no real sense plantations of French and German national life beyond the seas; nowhere, not even in Algeria, did they represent true European civilization; their political and economic structure of society is wholly alien from that of the mother country” (Hobson, 1902, p. 7). Anyway, it is pronounced difference between the colonial and the national, which for Hobson was the main evidence of the imperialistic (and therefore quasi-colonial) domination. Colonialism, thus, is always located somewhere in between nationalism, on the one hand, and imperialism, on the other.

Civilization

Terra nullius, however, is rarely “pure” in Bacon’s terminology, since it is often occupied by different indigenous peoples. Existence of indigenous population certainly complicates the issue and requires an elaborated theory of what is *terra nullius* if it is already occupied, and whether new-coming settlers can really wage just wars against local people who are defending the land upon which they have lived for millennia. It is here that the notions of civilization and barbarism enter the complex colonial discourse. Bacon already used the notion of superiority of civilization over barbarism as a reason for colonial domination, and the notion of modern moral education of the “savages” as a justification for the land expropriation:

If you plant where savages are, do not only entertain them with trifles and gingles, but use them justly and graciously, with sufficient guard nevertheless; and do not win their favor by helping them to invade their enemies, but for their defense it is not amiss; and send of them over to the country that plants, that they may see a better condition than their own, and commend it when they return (Bacon, 1625/2001, pp. 125–126).

The discourse of colonization is thus connected with the discourse of civilization on the one hand, and education, on the other. How, then, is civilization conceptualized, and why does this conceptualization help to justify expropriation of the land from “uncivilized” people or rather to understand this land as a proper *terra nullius*? First of all, there is a Christian theological background in early modern thinking about land ownership. As David Boucher noted: “The basic premise among jurists and philosophers in the early modern period regarding property rights was that God gave the whole world in common to mankind, and those portions that remained unoccupied or uncultivated, which did not necessarily mean upon which no people resided, were available for legitimate occupation” (Boucher, 2016, p. 71). Moreover, since God gave the land to humankind to make the most of it through its cultivation by labor, only those who cultivate the land (and not simply occupy it) can claim the property right. Property comes with labor and not with occupation. Thus, uncultivated land is conceptualized

as *terra nullius* even if it is occupied by “savage” hunters and gatherers: “Vitoria, Ayala, Suarez, Gentile, Locke, Wolff and Vattel, for example, contend that people have an obligation to cultivate the land, and if they do not, they have no right to prevent those who would” (Boucher, 2016, p. 71).

Thus, colonialism, originally at least, is more about the land and the property, than about the “colonized” people. Legitimation of the expropriations, however, was a starting point for the civilization discourse, which drew sharp boundaries between modern European nations and the “savage” indigenous populations of the colonies. Colonization, then, came also with a special “white man’s burden”: to serve, in Kipling’s words, “your new-caught sullen peoples, half devil and half child” (Kipling, 1899). We have seen that already Bacon recommended to send the “savages” to “the country that plants”, so that they would see for themselves the advantages of the European ways of life and would commend them after returning home. The “white man’s burden” then is conceptualized as the education for modernization. This educational dimension of colonial imperialism seems to be a unique feature of modernity. If Rome, according to Vergil, must only govern the peoples (Vergil, n.d., 851–853), modern Europe had to educate them.

John Stuart Mill, for example, has famously made moral education in colonies an important element of his concept of liberty. For him,

Despotism is a legitimate mode of government in dealing with barbarians, provided the end be their improvement, and the means justified by actually effecting that end. Liberty, as a principle, has no application to any state of things anterior to the time when mankind have become capable of being improved by free and equal discussion (Mill, 1991, p. 31).

“Barbarians”, “savages”, are “half children”, and since nobody grants to children (who can harm themselves and others) the full liberty of adult people, it cannot be granted to the “barbarians” either. If, in thinking of the “savages”, John Locke focused upon rational mastery of the world (effective use of the land), Mill pays attention to the individual autonomy (capacity to be improved by free discussion). Both elements define “civilization” in contrast to “barbarism”. Although Mill himself referred to the subjects of Charlemagne as “the barbarians” of these passages (Mill, 1991, p. 31), one cannot help thinking that for him, at some point a high officer of the East India Company, this notion covered also the population of the Indian sub-continent.

Civilization discourse is really ambiguous in so far as it concerns relations between the nation and its colonies. On the one hand, it compares “barbarians” to the children, and thus, being a discourse of moral education, is aimed at the equality, at eliminating domination, at moral maturity of the “savages”. Children are growing up, and so do the barbarians. On the other hand, the discourse tends to displace the maturity and autonomy of the colonial population to more or less distant future. One of the mechanisms of this displacement is a myth of the slow “sleepy” nature of the “oriental” civilizations. They all are too slow in reaching moral maturity of the readiness to the exercise of autonomy. Thus, they will have to remain colonies for a long period.

This displacement, in its turn, contributed to the establishing of the persistent cultural distance between the colony and the metropole. This cultural distancing in addition to the geographical one became another key instrument for the differentiation between the national and the colonial.

Russia, again, had some important peculiarities. On the one hand, a world mission of Russian Empire has been interpreted in terms of civilizing Asian people. Even those authors, who as Engels were skeptical about a “Russian world”, have semi-reluctantly recognized this mission. Thus, Engels wrote in 1851 to Marx: “Russia, on the other hand, is truly progressive by comparison with the East. Russian rule, for all its infamy, all its Slavic filth, is civilizing for the Black and Caspian Seas and Central Asia, for the Bashkirs and Tatars” (Engels, 1913/2010, p. 363). This arrogant phrase is closely echoed by the nationalistic Fyodor Dostoyevsky: In Europe we were dependents and slaves; we will come to Asia as the masters. In Europe, we were Tatars; in Asia, we are Europeans. Our mission, our civilizing mission in Asia will attract our spirit. Just build two railroads, one to Siberia, another to Central Asia (see: Dostoyevsky, 1881/1984, pp. 36–37; see however Danilevskiy, 1869/2016, p. 98).

On the other hand, being a strong European Empire in the mirror of its Asian possessions, Russia itself was an “Asian” “backward” country in the mirror of the “enlightened Europe”. This self-orientalization narrowed the gap between the Russians and “Asian tribes” on the borders of the Empire. Taken together with the lack of the clear physical borders, it significantly blurred the difference between the nation and colony. Thus, if for the much of the nineteenth century, Siberia was perceived as a colony (see, for example, Yadrintsev, 1882), and its Russian population – almost as a separate proto-nation, in the twentieth century it became an integral (and central) part of the Russian national territory.

That is why, in spite of the constant calls to treat newly acquired Russian lands according to the European colonial model (see: Khomyakov, 2020, p. 239), the officials of the Empire have always insisted that these lands are not really the colonies, but extensions of the Russian national territory (for a discussion see Sunderland, 2010). “Colonization” in Russia has always meant “resettlement” or “development of the territories”, so that in 1920s there existed a State Research Institute of Colonization (Goskolonit). This absence of the strict differentiation between the colonial and the national, has certainly influenced upon the very imaginary of Russian nation (see, for example, Khomyakov, 2020, p. 240). Therefore, for the Imperial ex- prime minister Sergei Witte, the Russian Empire represents agglomeration of different nationalities, therefore, essentially, there is no Russia, there is only the Russian Empire (see: Witte, 1923/1960, p. 129).

Races

The discourse of civilization was, on the one hand, supported by various modern racial theories, but, on the other hand, was also in radical contradiction to them. Races are different, and according to the racial theories, these differences can be ordered hierarchically. This explains why the “lower races” are so slow in their

development, and, thus, legitimizes civilizational mission of the “higher races”. On the other hand, races are primordial and, thus, *insuperably different*. What insuperability justifies, however, is rather apartheid, separation of the races in the society, and not so much education, civilization or modernization of the “lower races”. Insuperability of the differences makes civilizational efforts futile. Racism, thus, produces perfect separation of the nation and its colonies, even if they exist, as in South Africa, in the framework of the single society.

We have already mentioned masses of water, which endowed ocean empires with clear boundaries between national and colonial territories. Now we see that the most powerful discourse, which rendered population of those territories different, was, in reality, the discourse of the race (or, in some cases, of ethnos). Existence of obvious physical differences made race an effective instrument for separating external and internal. Races and oceans, thus, played similar roles in modern colonialism (there is a rich literature on these issues. See, for example, Betts, 1982, demonstrating how the French Empire was constantly re-producing differences between white colon and black or yellow *indigènes*). Oceans, however, can be sailed and, thus, bridged, while racial differences are imagined as perennial.

More liberal forms of racism, however, did not deny possibilities of education. Even if the “lower” races are slower, they are still able to imitate the ways of the higher civilizing nation. Some Russian liberals of the nineteenth century were professing this kind of the racism. A brilliant historian of Siberia, Afanasy Shchapov (1831–1876) wrote in 1864: Let us be humane and scientifically attentive to our lower brothers, the alien tribes. They are also waiting for facilitation of their struggle with the climate, hunger, with the violence of the higher tribe, waiting for the enlightenment and for their conflation with the higher, more developed Slavic Russian tribe (see: Shchapov, 1865/1906, p. 366). See similar considerations in works of the Shchapov’s follower, Nikolay Yadrintsev (Yadrintsev, 1891, p. 189; Yadrintsev, 1882, p. 123). Lower races are slower in their development, but nothing really precludes them from getting to the level of the “higher races”, whose task is to help their “brothers” in this difficult process.

In general, however, racism helped to substitute what Hobson called “colonial spirit” with purely imperialistic exploitation, and to abandon the very thought of the possibility of considering “colonial” as an extension of the “national”. Later Leninist literature would tightly connect colonialism to imperialism and to the development of transnational monopolies. In this interpretation colonialism is essentially a fight between imperialistic nations for the new markets and exploitation of some nations by the others (Lenin, 1917/1964).

As for the racial issues, although, as we have seen above, Russian intellectuals had not escaped the racist theories, these theories in general, it seems, were not as widespread and popular as they were elsewhere. Racist considerations, at the same time, were substituted in Russia with equally primordial ethnic ones. Ethnicity played in Russia almost the same role, which in the ocean Empires has been played by the race. Interestingly, “ethnic” characterizations in Russia were generally used in description of the “undeveloped” or “backward” people, while population of the

“central” and “western” (predominantly Christian) regions of the Empire was described as “nations”. Later primordial ethnicity has often been described as “nationality”, while “nation” required certain level of the modernization and development.

In general, however, the terminology has never been stable in the country, which stubbornly denied its colonial nature even after conquering Caucasus and Central Asia. Michael Khodarkovsky describes it in the following way:

It was not until the mid-eighteenth century that the collective terms for Russia’s non-Christian subjects emerged in the official Russian language. The non-Christians were now more systematically referred to as *inovertsy* (of a different faith), and by the early nineteenth century as *inorodtsy* (of a different origin, descent, and later race). The two terms conflated notions of people and faith, emphasizing unmistakably that the non-Christians were different from the Russians in both religion and race. Religion also marked the boundaries in the usage of the term “nation” (*natsiia*), which by the late eighteenth century was largely for the Christian peoples [...] within Russian Empire, while the non-Christians were referred to as a people (*narod* or *ludi*) (Khodarkovsky, 2002, pp. 188–189).

What was religion in the eighteenth century became modernization or westernization in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries:

If all societies are classified relative to their degree of “westernization” – and they have been so classified in Russia [...] then a truly “meaningful” change has to result in the West being “outwested”, that is, in certain economic, social, and cultural expectations being fulfilled. [...] The Estonians, for example, who in nineteenth-century Russia tended to be portrayed as “sullen Finns” and inarticulate rural barbarians [...] came to represent the epitome of Western development and sophistication after their reincorporation into the empire in 1940 (Slezkine, 1994, pp. 390–391).

This absence of the clear racial classifications is yet another evidence of the blurred boundary between national and colonial in Russian Empire. In Russia, thus, we have a very peculiar imperial arrangement, where nation and colony are not separated by any clear border in the form of the oceanic water, are not interpreted in terms of racial differences, and where the mother nation imagined itself a backward colony of the Enlightened Europe. Being a civilized nation with clear “white man’s mission” in the East, the Russians thought of themselves as of barbaric people in relation to Europe. Although Soviet modernization changed the picture rather radically, one still can really describe Soviet Union neither as a colonial empire nor as a national state (see: Khomyakov, 2020, pp. 225-263; Slezkine, 2004, p. 275). The blurred boundaries and unclear borders between different nations and numerous ethnic groups, thus, seem to represent one of the defining features of Russian modernity.

Conclusion

In conclusion let us to recapitulate. The national is separated from the colonial by physical boundaries, distance between civilization and barbarism, racial or ethnic differences. In classical European colonialism, these differences were sharp and clear. They started to disappear only with a radical development of the emancipatory logic of nationalism and with the technological innovations of the jet plane, which made distant places easily accessible for the mass tourists. Ideology and technology, thus, equally contributed to the world's emancipation.

In Russia, on the contrary, the borders were constantly erased, the frontier cultivated, the differences mixed up. Racial issues have never been so acute here as in Europe or the New World and civilizing other tribes very often turned out to be self-civilization. Russia has always been both orientalizing and orientalized, imperial and colonial, Eastern and Western, civilized and barbaric, European and Asian, in short, nation and colony. Russian nation-building has been accompanied by the intertwined processes of colonization and self-decolonization and has always been influenced by the imagination of the borders and frontiers.

The triptych of alienation/bridging of oceans/navigation, civilization/education and racism/modernization has not really worked in Russia in the way it worked for the European ocean Empires. In result, Russian self-image in the colonial mirrors was very often too distorted and unclear to significantly help in nation-building; much clearer image has been provided by the mirror of the Enlightened Europe, in which one of the largest Empires appeared to be a backward barbaric semi-colony.

These peculiarities seem to persist until today. Current rise of anti-colonial and anti-racist protests after killing of George Floyd is undoubtedly connected with the history of exclusive interpretation of nation and with colonialism built into nationalism and processes of nation-building. *Black Lives Matter* movement's war against symbols and monuments is essentially a radical re-interpretation of the founding events of the American and European nations. Discourses are being reconsidered everywhere: started in the ex-colonial America, it went as far as Imperial Spain and Portugal. The discussion of the racist elements in European nationalism is gradually rising almost everywhere. Thus, for example, a recent publication on Portuguese national identity asks: "With the growth of anti-racist movement in Portugal, our entire national narrative is being challenged, confronting us with the possibility of racism as a structural reality in Portugal. Are we a racist country?" (Braga, 2020).

In a way, this development undermines very foundations of the liberal nationalism, which, as we have seen, had been developing in close connection with colonialism. In this sense, elimination of the remnants of the colonial system might well turn out to be a start of the dusk of nationalism, which many experts were expecting for a long time. Eric Hobsbaum, for example, saw in the rise of the literature of nationalism an indicator of its near demise: "[...] The very fact that historians are at least beginning to make some progress in the study and analysis of nations and nationalism suggest that, as so often, the phenomenon is past its peak. The owl of Minerva which brings

wisdom, said Hegel, flies out at dusk. It is a good sign that it is now circling round nations and nationalism” (Hobsbawm, 1990, p. 192).

Russia seems to be excluded from this process. Because of its peculiar history and unique relations between the imaginary of the Russian nation and the idea of colonial Empire, it lacks European and American sensitivity to the issues of race. One of the current radical examples of this insensitiveness is a politically motivated and culturally conditioned paper of otherwise prominent scholar, Alexander V. Lukin. Interestingly, among other things, he argues that “the West (the U.S. and Europe) are no longer free societies”, while “Universities in Russia are [...] much freer than in the U.S. and Western Europe where they have turned into places where lecturers and students are forced to repent and get expelled for inadvertent remarks” (Lukin, 2020).

Russia and the post-colonial world of the European Empires and their more or less distant ex-colonies speak today very different languages. What seems of paramount importance in the West sounds ridiculous in Russia, which in result suddenly started to feel more emancipated than liberal Europe itself? Probably, however, it is historically determined insensitivity mistakenly taken for the freedom.

Russia has, of course, its own foundational historical myths, fundamental for the current imaginary of the Russian nation. And it is as difficult for the Russians to speak of them freely, as it is currently is difficult for the Americans to express their disagreement with the anti-racist war with the symbols. Most influential among these Russian myths are history of the WWII, the role of Russian language as well as some remnants of the colonial past (see, for example, discussions around the monuments to the conqueror of Caucasus, General Ermolov). Race, however, is not included in these themes. Surely, it does not make Russia much freer than Europe and the US as far as the freedom of speech is concerned; it does render it different, however.

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